

1804, makes it pretty likely that what they have is the pardon signed by Jefferson for a George McFarland. Based on Jefferson's papers and correspondence from October 1804, and the fact that Congress was not in session at this time, the only official documents he would have signed on October 18 were appointments and this pardon. Out of these possibilities, the one most likely to have been written by someone who would have dated it "*In the year of our Lord Christ*" is the pardon. On October 4, 1804, Jefferson listed this pardon on a "to do list"¹⁶ he was making for James Madison, who was at home in Virginia in the early part of the month. By the time Madison returned to Washington and got someone to write the pardon, it would probably have been around October 18.

Whatever the *WallBuilders* document is, it does not support the claim that Jefferson "*closed his presidential documents*" in the manner that this particular document was closed. Not one presidential document actually written by Jefferson was even dated "*in the year of our Lord*," let alone "*In the year of our Lord Christ*."

An interesting thing about the Liars for Jesus is that even in cases where a story is basically true, they manage to turn it into a lie by adding lies to it. More often than not, the lies are added to make Thomas Jefferson the center of the story. Church services being held in the Capitol building is a good example of this. Church services actually were held in the Capitol building, and Jefferson really was known to attend them. This true story, however, isn't good enough, so lies are added to it to make Jefferson more involved.

The following is from the version that appears on David Barton's *WallBuilders* website: "According to the congressional records for late November of 1800, Congress spent the first few weeks organizing the Capitol rooms, committees, locations, etc. Then, on December 4, 1800, Congress approved the use of the Capitol building as a church building."

16. Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, October 4 and 5, 1804, James Morton Smith, ed., *The Republic of Letters: The Correspondence Between Thomas Jefferson and James Madison 1776-1826*, vol. 2, (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 1347.

Jefferson obviously did not intend to mail these "letters" to Madison's home in Virginia knowing that Madison would be leaving any day to return to Washington. They were clearly a list of things to do after he returned.

The approval of the Capitol for church was given by both the House and the Senate, with House approval being given by Speaker of the House, Frederick Augustus Muhlenberg, and Senate approval being given by the President of the Senate, Thomas Jefferson. Interestingly, Jefferson's approval came while he was still officially the Vice-President but after he had just been elected President."

Neither the Senate nor Thomas Jefferson had anything whatsoever to do with this. The House of Representatives didn't need or ask for the approval of the Senate when the chaplains requested the use of the House chamber for Sunday services. The House itself didn't even vote on it. The Speaker simply announced that the chaplains had proposed to hold services in their chamber on Sundays, and the House got on with the more important business of the day – deciding where the stenographers should sit.¹⁷

Typical of religious right American history authors, David Barton has no problem twisting a few other things to make them fit his lies. To involve Jefferson in this story, and make it appear that he had some sort of power to prevent these religious services, Barton not only claims that this use of the House chamber needed the Senate's approval, but implies that Jefferson, as president of the Senate, had the authority to approve this on behalf of the Senate. Barton also has Jefferson already elected president on December 4, 1800. The election of 1800, held on December 3, was, of course, a tie between Jefferson and Aaron Burr. Jefferson was not elected until the House of Representatives elected him in February 1801. And, obviously, even if Jefferson had been the clear winner on December 3, he would not have known this on December 4.

According to James H. Hutson, in the *Religion and the Founding of the American Republic* companion book: "As president, Jefferson put his rejuvenated faith into practice in the most conspicuous form of public witness possible, regularly attending worship services

17. *The Debates and Proceedings of the Congress of the United States of America*, vol. 10, 6th Cong., 2nd Sess., (Washington D.C.: Gales & Seaton, 1851), 797-799.

where the delegates of the entire nation could see him—in the ‘hall’ of the House of Representatives. According to the recollections of an early Washington insider, ‘Jefferson during his whole administration, was a most regular attendant. The seat he chose the first sabbath day, and the adjoining one, which his private secretary occupied, were ever afterwards [sic] by the courtesy of the congregation, left for him.’”

Also according to Hutson: “How did attending church services in Congress, which was, after all, public property, square with the constitutional scruples generally imputed to Jefferson about mixing religious and public spheres? Perhaps he reasoned that, since the House of Representatives, a member of a separate and independent branch of the government, was organizing and sponsoring the services, his principles would not be unduly compromised. This would not explain, however, why Jefferson permitted executive branch employees under his direct control, members of the Marine Band, to participate in House church services. Splendidly attired in their scarlet uniforms, the Marine musicians made a ‘dazzling appearance’ in the House on Sundays, as they tried to help the congregation by providing instrumental accompaniment to its psalm singing.”

D. James Kennedy, in his book *What If America Were A Christian Nation Again?*, goes even further, claiming that Jefferson not only permitted, but ordered the Marine band to play at these services.

According to Kennedy: “He wasn’t pleased with the music, so he ordered the marine band to come to church on Sunday. They were paid out of the federal treasury to support the singing of hymns and psalms in the church.”

The “*early Washington insider*” referred to and quoted by Hutson

was Margaret Bayard Smith, wife of Samuel Harrison Smith, a Philadelphia newspaper editor who moved to Washington in 1800 to establish a national newspaper, *The National Intelligencer*. By selectively quoting Mrs. Smith's description of Sundays at the Capitol, authors like Hutson give the impression that what took place there were solemn religious services, which, most importantly, were attended by Thomas Jefferson. Judging by Mrs. Smith's entire description of these services, however, it's not surprising that Jefferson, who complained about the lack of any social life in Washington, was such a "*regular attendant*."

...I have called these Sunday assemblies in the capitol, a *congregation*, but the almost exclusive appropriation of that word to religious assemblies, prevents its being a descriptive term as applied in the present case, since the gay company who thronged the H. R. looked very little like a religious assembly. The occasion presented for display was not only a novel, but a favourable one for the youth, beauty and fashion of the city, Georgetown and environs. The members of Congress, gladly gave up their seats for such fair auditors, and either lounged in the lobbies, or round the fire places, or stood beside the ladies of their acquaintance. This sabbath-day-resort became so fashionable, that the floor of the house offered insufficient space, the platform behind the Speaker's chair, and every spot where a chair could be wedged in was crowded with ladies in their gayest costume and their attendant beaux and who led them to their seats with the same gallantry as is exhibited in a ball room. Smiles, nods, whispers, nay sometimes tittering marked their recognition of each other, and beguiled the tedium of the service. Often, when cold, a lady would leave her seat and led by her attending beau would make her way through the crowd to one of the fire-places where she could laugh and talk at her ease. One of the officers of the house, followed by his attendant with a great bag over his shoulder, precisely at 12 o'clock, would make his way through the hall to the depository of letters to put them in the mail-bag, which sometimes had a most ludicrous effect, and always diverted attention from the

preacher. The musick was as little in union with devotional feelings, as the place. The marine-band, were the performers. Their scarlet uniform, their various instruments, made quite a dazzling appearance in the gallery. The marches they played were good and inspiring, but in their attempts to accompany the psalm-singing of the congregation, they completely failed and after a while, the practice was discontinued,—it was *too* ridiculous.¹⁸

More serious, and much more sparsely attended, religious services were held in other public buildings. These solemn, four hour long communion services, as Hutson points out, were held in buildings under the control of the executive branch. This is pointed out, of course, to make Jefferson responsible for these services, although there isn't one shred of evidence that the organizers of the services asked Jefferson for permission to hold them. Hutson, ignoring Mrs. Smith's description of the services at the Capitol, also makes the following understatement about the difference between those services and the far more serious services in the other buildings.

According to Hutson: "Church services in the executive branch buildings were more 'religious' than those in the Capitol, because the sacraments were celebrated in the former, but not, apparently, in the latter."

The obvious reason that church services were held in the public buildings of Washington during the Jefferson administration was that the city did not yet have churches, or any other buildings, that could accommodate them. When the government moved to Washington in 1800, the only churches that existed were a tobacco shed being used by the Episcopalians, and a small Catholic chapel built in 1794 for the Irish stonemasons who had moved to the city to work on the federal buildings. The practice of holding services at the Capitol, once started, continued much longer than was necessary, and services were still being held there decades after churches were built. According to Mrs.

18. Gaillard Hunt, ed., *The First Forty Years of Washington Society, Portrayed by the Family Letters of Mrs. Samuel Harrison Smith (Margaret Bayard) from the Collection of Her Grandson, J. Henley Smith*, (New York, C. Scribner's Sons, 1906), 13-14.

Smith's account, however, these gatherings were more social than religious until many years after the days of Jefferson.

Authors who insist that Jefferson was a devout, lifelong Christian need to cover every period of his life, from his childhood to his retirement, and usually include a number of lies and half-truths about his actions as a member of the Virginia legislature and Governor of Virginia. These lies will be addressed in Volume II, in chapters about the specific subjects they relate to. Two of the most popular stories from this period of time, however, have to do with Jefferson's involvement, as a private citizen, with his local church in Virginia. The first is about Jefferson's service as a church vestryman.

D. James Kennedy, in his book *What If America Were A Christian Nation Again?*, claims that Jefferson "followed the Anglican faith in its orthodoxy all his life. He went to a Christian school and was taught by Christian pastors. As a grown man, he served on the vestry of the Anglican Church, which was the equivalent of being an elder in the Presbyterian Church."

Serving on the vestry of an Anglican Church is often claimed by religious right authors to be evidence of Thomas Jefferson's, as well as George Washington's, devotion to religion. Both Jefferson and Washington, did, in fact, serve as vestrymen. So did most other wealthy landowners in colonial Virginia. For many of them, however, this had little or nothing to do with religion. Prior to the disestablishment of the Anglican Church, these vestries were also the local governments. This was as much the equivalent of being on the town council as being an elder in the Presbyterian Church. In addition to managing the affairs of the church, the vestrymen were the local officials who levied and collected taxes, appropriated money for welfare and public works, and fixed and confirmed land boundaries.

William Meade, Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Virginia, gave the following reason for Jefferson's, as well as Jefferson's mentor George Wythe's, service as vestrymen.

Even Mr. Jefferson and [George] Wythe, who did not conceal their disbelief in Christianity, took their parts in the