

The Boston Port Bill

Jedidiah Morse

Annals of the American Revolution

"This act, passed March 25, 1774, and called The Boston Port Bill, threw the inhabitants into the greatest consternation. The town of Boston passed a resolution, expressing their sense of this oppressive measure, and a desire that all the colonies would concur to stop all importations from Great Britain. Most of the colonies entered into spirited resolutions, on this occasion, to unite with Massachusetts in a firm opposition to the unconstitutional measures of the Parliament. The first of June, the day on which the Port Bill was to take place, was appointed to be kept as a day of humiliation, fasting and prayer throughout the colonies, to seek the divine direction and aid, in that critical and gloomy juncture of affairs.

"It ought here to be observed, that this rational and pious custom of observing fasts in times of distress and impending danger, and of celebrating days of public thanksgiving, after having received special tokens of divine favor, has ever prevailed in New-England since its first settlement, and in some parts of other states. These public supplications and acknowledgements to Heaven, at the commencement of hostilities, and during the whole progress of the war, were more frequent than usual, and were attended with uncommon fervour and solemnity. They were considered by the people, as an humble appeal to Heaven for the justness of their cause, and designed to manifest their dependence on the god of hosts for aid and success in maintaining it against their hostile brethren.

The New England Clergy and the American Revolution,

Alice Baldwin

"The New England clergy of the eighteenth century occupied a position of peculiar influence and power in the life of their own communities and of the several colonies... They were for the most part a 'learned clergy', graduates of Harvard or of Yale... They preached not only on Sunday but on many special occasions prescribed by the churches or ordered by the colonial assemblies, such as days of fasting and prayer and days of thanksgiving... The sources from which the New England ministers developed their theories may be learned partly from the quotations and foot-notes which frequently are to be found in sermons and pamphlets, partly from diaries, letters, and other documents... The most common source was the Bible... Indeed there was never a principle derived from more secular reading that was not strengthened and sanctified by the Scriptures ...

"The next great source was the works of John Locke*, his essays on religious toleration and human understanding as well as those on government. He was quoted by name as early as 1738, but his influence is to be seen in earlier works. Especially after 1763 the references to him are numerous, not only by the more prominent ministers of the larger towns but by those of the country villages as well."