

Lesson 3

American Revolution (1765-1785)

America's Liberty and Independence: Founded on the Christian Faith

The central role of Christianity in the colonization of America (as presented in Lessons 1 and 2) continued through the Revolutionary Period. In fact, the story of America's independence reveals there would be no America—the land of liberty—without Christianity. George Washington recognized God's hand in the birth of America, writing that “the liberties of America are the object of Divine protection.”¹ Moreover, he had strong words for those who did not acknowledge God's hand upon the Americans during the revolution, writing in 1778: “The hand of Providence has been so conspicuous in all of this [the events of the first three years of the war], that he must be worse than an infidel that lacks faith, and more than wicked, that has not gratitude enough to acknowledge his obligations.”²

Events precipitating the war and America's eventual independence began in 1765. In that year, to pay for the debt of the French and Indian War, England imposed a tax upon the colonists through the Stamp Act. The colonists were not opposed to paying for their defense, but they were opposed to the idea of the Parliament being able to tax them without their consent, or the consent of their representatives, for this violated the principle of property.³ One man who led the opposition to the Stamp Act was Patrick Henry in Virginia.



Patrick Henry: "If this be treason, make the most of it."

In May, 1765, Patrick Henry was elected to the House of Burgesses from Louisa County. The topic of foremost concern for the Virginia legislature was the newly passed Stamp Act. Though Henry was a novice at the assembly, when he found no one willing to oppose the tax he felt compelled to take action, so he wrote down some resolutions on his own. He would later write of the

events: “Upon offering them to the house, violent debates ensued. Many threats were uttered, and much abuse cast on me, by the party for submission.”⁴

During the debates on his resolutions, Patrick Henry spoke out boldly against the Stamp Act saying that only the legislatures of the colonies had the right to tax the American people. On the floor of the House of Burgesses he went on to say:

Caesar had his Brutus; Charles the First, his Cromwell; and George the Third...

“Treason! Treason!” shouted the Speaker of the House.

“Treason! Treason!” echoed from every part of the room.

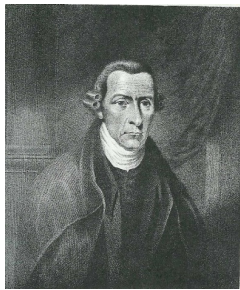
Without faltering for an instant, and fixing on the Speaker an eye that flashed fire, the orator added—“...may profit by their example. If this be treason, make the most of it.”⁵

In his autobiography, Jefferson said of Henry’s speech:

I attended the debate at the door of the lobby of the House of Burgesses, and heard the splendid display of Mr. Henry’s talents as a popular orator. They were great indeed; such as I have never heard from any other man. He appeared to me to speak as Homer wrote.⁶

Henry explained the outcome:

After a long and warm contest, the resolutions passed by a very small majority, perhaps of one or two only. The alarm spread throughout America with astonishing quickness, and the ministerial party were overwhelmed. The great point of resistance to British taxation was universally established in the colonies. This brought on the war, which finally separated the two countries, and gave independence to ours. Whether this will prove a blessing or a curse, will depend upon the use our people make of the blessings which a gracious God hath bestowed on us. If they are wise, they will be great and happy. If they are of a contrary character, they will be miserable. Righteousness alone can exalt them as a nation. Reader! whoever thou art, remember this; and in thy sphere, practice virtue thyself, and encourage it in others.⁷



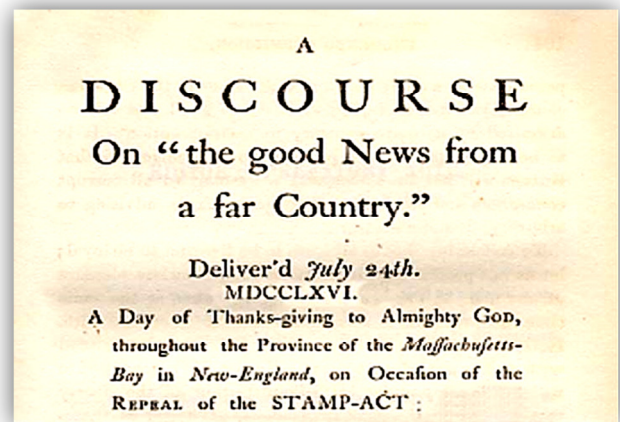
Patrick Henry

Henry wrote on his copies of the resolutions that “they formed the first opposition to the Stamp Act, and the scheme of taxing America by the British parliament.”⁸ Numerous leaders in America attributed to Henry the leading role in the great revolution. Historian William Wirt Henry writes:

America was filled with Mr. Henry’s fame, and he was recognized on both sides of the Atlantic as the man who rang the alarm bell which had aroused the continent. His wonderful powers of oratory engaged the attention and excited the admiration of men, and the more so as they were not considered the result of laborious training, but as the direct gift of Heaven. Long before the British poet applied the description to him, he was recognized as—the forest-born Demosthenes, whose thunder shook the Philip of the seas.⁹

Patrick Henry “was hailed as the leader raised up by Providence for the occasion.”¹⁰

Due to the efforts of Henry and other patriots, the Stamp Act was repealed. The response of the colony of Massachusetts was to proclaim a day of prayer and thanksgiving. Dr. Charles Chauncy was chosen to deliver a sermon to commemorate the glorious event. He chose his text from Proverbs 25:25. The title page of his printed sermon read: “A Discourse on ‘the good News from a far Country.’ Delivered July 24th. MDCCLXVI. A Day of Thanksgiving to Almighty God, throughout the Province of the Massachusetts-Bay in New-England, on Occasion of the Repeal of the STAMP-ACT.”¹¹



Dr. Charles Chauncy’s sermon delivered on July 24, 1766, in response to the repeal of the Stamp Act.

Proclamations for days of prayer and thanksgiving like that of Massachusetts, with corresponding sermons, were not unusual. Civil governments on the state and local level had proclaimed over 1,000 days of prayer and thanksgiving or prayer and fasting during the 150 years of colonization.¹² Americans would continue these regular public proclamations throughout the Revolutionary War, the establishment of the constitutional republic, and for well over 100 years. Various states, and at times the national government, continue this practice to today.

Samuel Adams and the Committees of Correspondence

Although Rev. Jonathan Mayhew was the first to propose the idea of using circular letters to unite the colonies (see Lesson 2), he died shortly thereafter. It was brought to pass by the man who became known as the “Father of the Revolution”—Samuel Adams. George Bancroft wrote that Adams “was a member of the church; and the austere purity of his life witnessed the sincerity of his profession. Evening and morning his house was a house of prayer; and no one more revered the Christian Sabbath....The walls of his modest mansion never witnessed anything inconsistent with the discipline of the man whose desire for his birthplace was that ‘Boston might become a Christian Sparta.’”¹³



Samuel Adams

The title, the “Father of the American Revolution,” was applied to Samuel Adams due to his unequalled efforts promoting the Revolution. He understood the conflict between the colonies and England was more than an economic or political struggle. He recognized, as only a Christian truly could, that the British government had violated the colonists’ rights as men, Christians, and subjects.

Not only did Samuel Adams understand the principles upon which the American Revolution was based but he also saw that in order for independence to be realized these ideas would have to be dispersed throughout the colonies. He worked for twenty years promoting the cause of liberty.

In 1772, Samuel Adams proposed “Committees of Correspondence” to be established throughout the colonies because he desired all people to be educated in order that they could reason out their rights and political convictions based upon Biblical principles. His desire was for the colonies to be united “not by external bonds, but by the vital force of distinctive ideas and principles.”¹⁴ This unity of ideas and principles helped to promote union among the colonists. The common ideas sown within the colonists by Samuel Adams and many other Christian thinking men of that and earlier generations resulted in the external union of the colonies into the United States of America.

The response of other colonies to Adams’ “Committees of Correspondence” was not immediate because to educate in principles, as Adams desired, is much more difficult and requires more time than just teaching issues. Nevertheless, Samuel Adams did not lose heart for he had faith in the cause of independence. One incident revealing his faith was seen when Adams received a letter from a Plymouth patriot concerning establishing a committee in that area of Massachusetts. In the letter, the patriot expressed fear that most people would not join in the effort for “they are dead,” he wrote, “and the dead can’t be raised without a miracle.” Adams replied that there was no place for despair within their lives and that “all are not dead; and where there is a spark of patriotic fire, we will rekindle it.”¹⁵

The first letter circulated among the colonists in 1772 was called the *Rights of the Colonists* and was written by Sam Adams himself. It was, according to biographer William V. Wells, the “most systematic presentation of the American cause and the first public denial of the right of the British Parliament to tax the colonists.” Adams wrote: “The supreme power cannot justly take from any man any part of his property, without his consent in the person or by his representative.” He said,

the natural rights of the colonists are these: first, a right to life; secondly, to liberty; thirdly, to property; together with the right to support and defend them in the best manner they can....The rights of the colonists as Christians...may be best understood by reading and carefully studying the institutes of the great Law Giver and Head of the Christian Church, which are to be found clearly written and promulgated in the New Testament.¹⁶

Samuel Adams understood that the principles necessary for changing a society come from the Bible.

Taxation without the consent of the colonists was by no means the only reason why the Americans began to resist England. The Declaration of Independence lists 27 reasons. The threat to their religious liberties was of great concern as well. John Adams wrote: "If Parliament could tax us, they could establish the Church of England, with all its creeds, articles, tests, ceremonies, and tithes, and prohibit all other churches, as conventicles and schism-shops."¹⁷

The Boston Tea Party

The Stamp Act was repealed, but the belief of the English government to tax the colonies without their consent continued with the Townsend Act in 1767 and the Tea Act in 1773. With a tax on tea, the colonists refused to buy English tea. Consequently, it began to pile up in warehouses in England. Merchants petitioned the Parliament to do something about this. Parliament's response was to vote to subsidize the tea and make it cheap, thinking the colonists would then buy it.

Benjamin Franklin said:

They have no idea that any people can act from any other principle but that of interest; and they believe that three pence on a pound of tea, of which one does not perhaps drink ten pounds in a year, is sufficient to overcome all the patriotism of an American.¹⁸

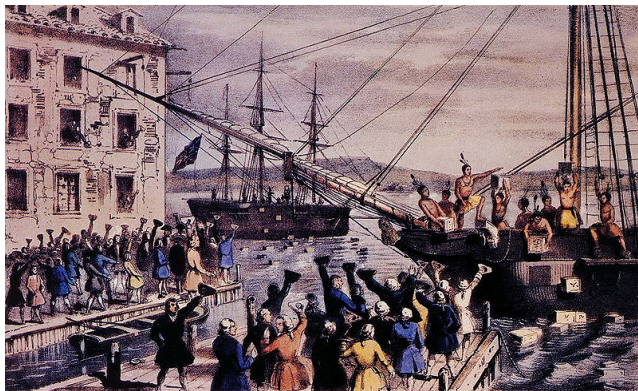


Benjamin Franklin

Our Founders were men of principle. They reasoned and acted from principles that were rooted in the Bible. It was not money but principles that motivated the colonists. The attempt of England to tax them without their consent violated the principle of property. The Americans refused to buy the tea even though it was cheap.

When King George III decided to send the tea and make the colonists purchase it, patriots in the major shipping ports held town meetings to decide what to do when the tea arrived. Ships were turned back at four cities, but one docked in Boston. The patriots put a guard at the docks to prevent the tea from being unloaded. Almost 7,000 people gathered at the Old South Meeting House to hear from Mr. Rotch, the owner of the ships. He explained that if he attempted to sail from Boston without unloading the tea, his life and business would be in danger, for the British said they would confiscate his ships unless the tea was unloaded by a certain date. The action the colonists took to deal with the intransigent British authorities and protect Mr. Rotch's property became known as the "Boston Tea Party." To protect the

individuals involved, the men disguised themselves as Indians. Historian Richard Frothingham records the incident:



The Boston Tea Party

The party in disguise...whooping like Indians, went on board the vessels, and, warning their officers and those of the customhouse to keep out of the way, unlaid the hatches, hoisted the chests of tea on deck, cut them open, and hove the tea overboard. They proved quiet and systematic workers. No one interfered with them. No other property was injured; no person was harmed; no tea was allowed to be carried away; and the silence of the crowd on shore was such that the breaking of the chests was distinctly heard by them. "The whole," [Governor] Hutchinson wrote, "was done with very little tumult."¹⁹

Boston Port Bill

When King George III and the English government got word of what the colonists had done, they responded by passing the Boston Port Bill, which closed the port of Boston and was intended to shut down all commerce on June 1st and starve the townspeople into submission.

Committees of

Correspondence spread the news by letter throughout all

the colonies. The colonies began to respond. Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Virginia called for days of fasting and prayer. Thomas Jefferson penned the resolve in Virginia "to implore the Divine Interposition...to give us one heart and one mind firmly to oppose, by all just and proper means, every injury to American rights."²⁰ Frothingham writes of the day the Port Act went into effect:

The day was widely observed as a day of fasting and prayer. The manifestations of sympathy were general. Business was suspended. Bells were muffled and tolled from morning to night; flags were kept at half-mast; streets were dressed in mourning; public buildings and shops were draped in black; large congregations filled the churches.

In Virginia, the members of the House of Burgesses assembled at their place of meeting; went in procession, with the speaker at their head, to the church and listened to a discourse. "Never," a



Members of the House gathered with a large assembly at Bruton Parish Church in Williamsburg to observe the Day of Prayer.

Ordered, therefore, that the Members of this House do attend in their Places at the Hour of ten in the Forenoon, on the said 1st Day of *June* next, in Order to proceed with the Speaker and the Mace to the Church in this City for the Purposes aforesaid; and that the Reverend Mr. *Price* be appointed to read Prayers, and the Reverend Mr. *Gwatkin* to preach a Sermon suitable to the Occasion.

Ordered, that this Order be forthwith printed and published.

By the HOUSE of BURGESSSES.

GEORGE WYTHE, C. H. B.

In the proclamation authored by Jefferson, the Members of the House set apart June 1 "as a Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer" and ordered the Members of the Virginia House to attend church to pray and hear a sermon.

lady wrote, "since my residence in Virginia have I seen so large a congregation as was this day assembled to hear Divine service." The preacher selected for his text the words: "be strong and of good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them; for the Lord thy God, He it is that doth go with thee. He will not fail thee nor forsake thee." "The people," Jefferson says, "met generally, with anxiety and alarm in their countenances; and the effect of the day, through the whole colony, was like a shock of electricity, arousing every man and placing him erect and solidly on his center." These words describe the effect of the Port Act throughout the thirteen colonies.²¹

The colonies responded with material support as well, obtained, not by governmental decree but, more significantly, by individual action. A grassroots movement of zealous workers went door to door to gather patriotic offerings. These gifts were sent to Boston accompanied with letters of support. Out of the diversity of the colonies, a deep Christian unity was being revealed on a national level. John Adams spoke of the miraculous nature of this union: “Thirteen clocks were made to strike together, a perfection of mechanism which no artist had ever before effected.”²²

Here we see an excellent historical example of the principle of Christian union. The external union of the colonies came about due to an internal unity of ideas and principles that had been sown in the hearts of the American people by the families and churches. Our national motto reflects this Christian union: *E Pluribus Unum* (one from the many).



Our national motto, *E Pluribus Unum*, reflects the principle of Christian union.

The First Continental Congress

Further evidence of our national unity and union was found in the convening of the first Continental Congress in September, 1774. One of the first acts of the Congress that met in Carpenters Hall in Philadelphia was to pass the following resolution: “Resolved, that the reverend Mr. Duché be desired to open the Congress tomorrow morning with prayers, at the Carpenter’s Hall at nine o’clock.” *The Journal of the Proceeding of Congress* records for September 7, 1774:

Agreeable to the resolve of yesterday, the meeting was opened with prayers by the Reverend Mr. Duché. Voted, that the thanks of the Congress be given to Mr. Duché, by Mr. Cushing and Mr. Ward, for performing Divine service, and for the excellent prayer, which he composed and delivered on the occasion.²³

John Adams wrote to his wife, Abigail, of Rev. Duché’s prayer at Congress:

[N]ext Morning he appeared...and read several prayers, in the established form; and then read the collect for the seventh day of September, which was the thirty-fifth Psalm. You must remember this was the next morning after we heard the horrible rumor, of the Cannonade of Boston. I never saw a greater effect upon an audience. It seemed as if Heaven had ordained that Psalm to be read on that morning.



George Washington, Patrick Henry, and members of the First Continental Congress join with Rev. Jacob Duché in prayer.

After this Mr. Duché, unexpected to everybody struck out into an extemporaneous prayer, which filled the bosom of every man present. I must confess, I never heard a better prayer, or one so well pronounced. Episcopalian as he is, Dr. Cooper himself never prayed with such fervor,

such ardor, such earnestness and pathos, and in language so elegant and sublime—for America, for the Congress, for the province of Massachusetts Bay, and especially the town of Boston. It has had an excellent effect upon everybody here.²⁴

Delegate Silas Deane wrote that “Mr. Duché...prayed without book about ten minutes so pertinently, with such fervency, purity, and sublimity of style and sentiment...that even Quakers shed tears.”²⁵ Deane declared that Duché’s prayer “was worth riding one hundred mile to hear.”²⁶

The Battle of Lexington

About seven months after the first Continental Congress met in Philadelphia, Paul Revere set out on his famous ride to warn the colonists, and in particular two leaders of the “rebellion,” Samuel Adams and John Hancock, that the British were coming. He knew precisely where to find them—at the home of Rev. Jonas Clark in Lexington. Rev. Clark had for some time been teaching his church and prominent men of Massachusetts Biblical ideas of liberty. He had also prepared his parishioners to defend themselves if necessary. After being warned that British troops were on the way, he was asked if the people of Lexington would fight. He replied, “I have trained them for this very hour.” The shot that was heard around the world took place on the morning of April 19, 1775. Fighting began on the lawn of Rev. Clark’s church, and it was his parishioners who died that day. Upon seeing them slain he declared, “From this day will be dated the liberty of the world!”²⁷

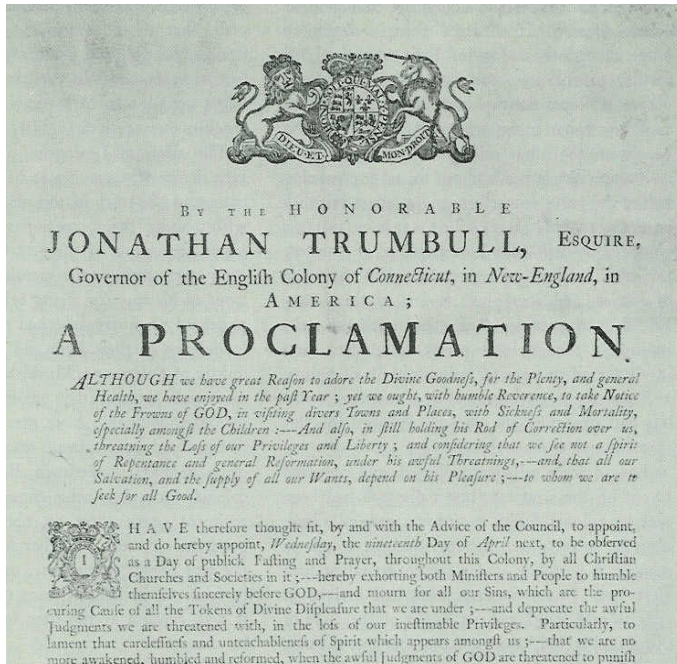
About one month before the Battle of Lexington, the Governor of Connecticut had considered what he and his state could do regarding the growing conflict between England and the colonies. Jonathan Trumbull was an ordained minister who had early in his career left the pulpit ministry to serve in the civil ministry. As Governor of Connecticut during the entire Revolutionary War, he provided great support to General Washington, who called him Brother Jonathan. In March, 1775, his determined course of action was to call upon the colony to observe a

day of public fasting and prayer...that God would graciously pour out His Holy Spirit on us, to bring us to a thorough repentance and effectual reformation;...That He would restore, preserve, and secure the liberties of this, and all the other American Colonies, and make this land a mountain of holiness and habitation of righteousness forever....That God would preserve and confirm the union of the colonies in the pursuit and practice of that religion and virtue which will honor Him.²⁸

Governor Trumbull recognized they needed God’s help in those trying times, and so he proclaimed a day of prayer and fasting. What day had he selected for them to be praying? “Wednesday, the nineteenth day of April.”²⁹ Thus, on the day that fighting began that eventually led to the independence of America and a new era of liberty in the world, God had an entire colony praying. Many colonists believed this did not happen by chance, but was one of many Providential events that occurred during the war.



Statue of Jonathan Trumbull in the U.S. Capitol.



Gov. Trumbull's Prayer Proclamation

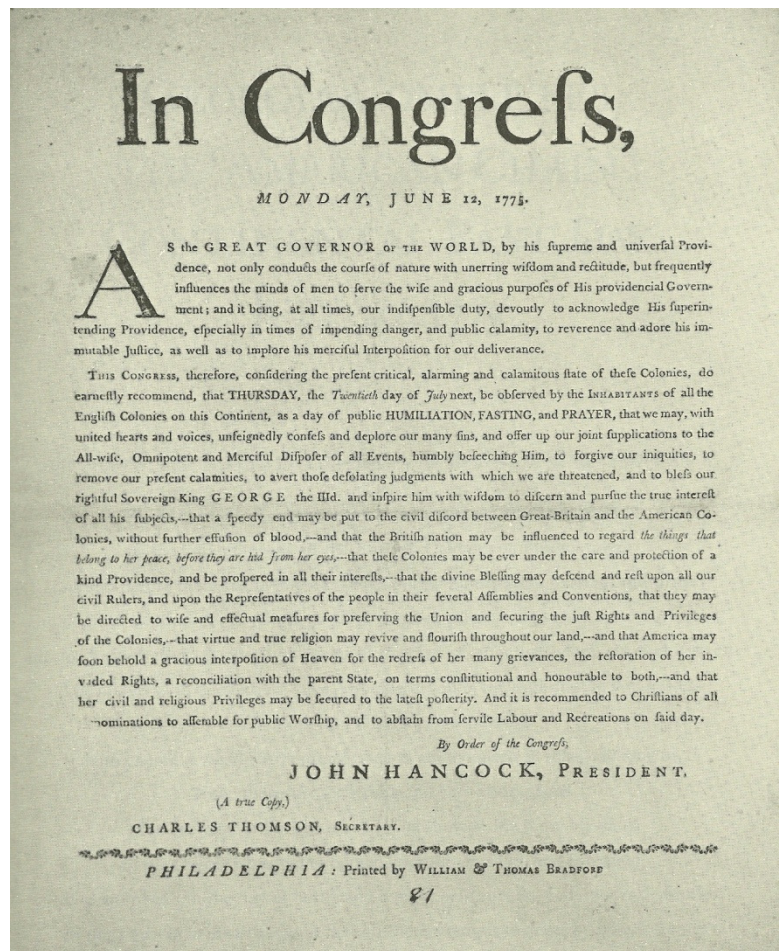
Fighting had begun, but it would be 14 months before the colonists declared their independence. They still considered themselves British and sought all means possible to end the conflict without a total break from England. By July, 1776, the delegates to the Congress had come to agree it was time to declare independence.

Who were these men who risked so much for posterity? Today they are often presented as self-serving atheists, secularists, or at best deists. But in reality they were almost all Christians. In fact, all but two or three of the signers were orthodox Christians, and 29 (of 56 total) of them held seminary degrees.³¹ Reading their voluminous writings, including their last will and testaments, reveal their strong faith. Here are just a few of their words.

Robert Treat Paine plainly expressed his faith in his will: "I am constrained to express my adoration of the Supreme Being, the Author of my existence, in full belief of His Providential goodness and His forgiving mercy revealed to the world through Jesus Christ, through Whom I hope for never-ending happiness in a future

In response to the battle at Lexington and Concord, England declared Massachusetts would be put under martial law. The response of the Continental Congress was to proclaim the first colony-wide day of fasting and prayer to be observed on July 20, 1775, the day martial law was to go into effect. In the proclamation they appealed to "the Great Governor of the world" who "frequently influences the minds of men to serve the wise and gracious purposes of His Providential government." They "recommended to Christians of all denominations to assemble for public...humiliation, fasting and prayer."³⁰ A vast majority of the three million inhabitants of America observed this day of fasting and prayer.

The Price the Signers Paid



Proclamation for the first colony-wide day of fasting and prayer, issued by the Continental Congress on June 12, 1775, John Hancock, President, and observed July 20.

state.”³² In his will, Samuel Adams said, “I rely upon the merits of Jesus Christ for a pardon of all my sins.”³³

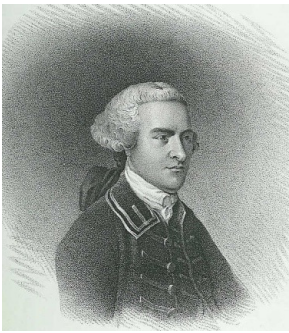
Charles Carroll wrote: “On the mercy of my Redeemer I rely for salvation, and on His merits; not on the works that I have done in obedience to His precepts.”³⁴ Roger Sherman, who also signed the United States Constitution, stated:

I believe that there is one only living and true God, existing in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost....that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are a revelation from God....that God did send His own Son to become man, die in the room and stead of sinners, and thus to lay a foundation for the offer of pardon and salvation to all mankind so as all may be saved who are willing to accept the Gospel offer.³⁵



Roger Sherman

Benjamin Rush declared: “My only hope of salvation is in the infinite, transcendent love of God manifested to the world by the death of His Son upon the cross. Nothing but His blood will wash away my sins. I rely exclusively upon it. Come, Lord Jesus! Come quickly!”³⁶

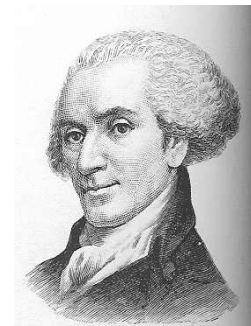


The men who signed the Declaration of Independence were not thinking they would be famous, but rather, they would most likely be killed for their action. After signing the document with unusually large writing, the President of the Continental Congress, John Hancock, declared: “His majesty can now read my name without glasses. And he can also double the price on my head.”³⁷ Then he went on to say at that tense moment, “we must be unanimous; there must be no pulling different ways; we must all hang together.” Benjamin Franklin responded in his characteristic wit, “Yes, we must indeed all hang together, or most assuredly we shall all hang separately!”³⁸

A cursive signature of John Hancock, written in dark ink.

Many years later, after observing the celebration of the 4th of July in Philadelphia, Benjamin Rush wrote to his friend John Adams that the celebrants had not mentioned the great price paid by the signers:

Scarcely a word was said of the solicitude and labors and fears and sorrows and sleepless nights of the men who projected, proposed, defended, and subscribed the Declaration of Independence.... Do you recollect the pensive and awful silence which pervaded the house when we were called up, one after another, to the table of the President of Congress to subscribe what was believed by many at that time to be our own death warrants? The silence and the gloom of the morning was interrupted, I well recollect, only for a moment by Colonel Harrison of Virginia, who said to Mr. Gerry at the table: “I shall have a great advantage over you, Mr. Gerry, when we are all hung for what we are now doing. From the size and weight of my body I shall die in a few minutes, but from the lightness of your body you will dance in the air an hour or two before you are dead.” The speech procured a transient smile, but it was soon succeeded by the solemnity with which the whole business was conducted.³⁹



Elbridge Gerry

Death was a very real possibility, and so the fifty-six men who signed the Declaration did so only after much thought and consideration. After all, they had more to lose than anyone in the colonies. They were the brightest minds, had the greatest talents, many had great wealth, and most had families they loved dearly. In signing that document they were not considering it as an avenue for fame, glory, or future advancement. They all knew they would be identified above all others by the British as the leaders of the “rebellion,” and, consequently, those most likely to suffer retribution. They knew that “history was strewn with the bones and blood of freedom fighters.”⁴⁰ And they were up against the greatest military power on earth, and so faced a very real chance of losing everything.

They all suffered in some way. Virtually all the men had greater wealth before taking up the cause of liberty than afterwards. T.R. Fehrenbach writes:

Nine Signers died of wounds or hardships during the Revolutionary War. Five were captured or imprisoned, in some cases with brutal treatment. The wives, sons, and daughters of others were killed, jailed, mistreated, persecuted, or left penniless. One was driven from his wife’s deathbed and lost all his children. The houses of twelve signers were burned to the ground. Seventeen lost everything they owned. Every signer was proscribed as a traitor; every one was hunted. Most were driven into flight; most were at one time or another barred from their families or homes. Most were offered immunity, freedom, rewards, their property, or the lives and release of loved ones to break their pledged word or to take the King’s protection. Their fortunes were forfeit, but their honor was not. No Signer defected, or changed his stand, throughout the darkest hours. Their honor, like the nation, remained intact.⁴¹



All but two or three of the signers of the Declaration were Christians. They all sacrificed much to purchase liberty for posterity.

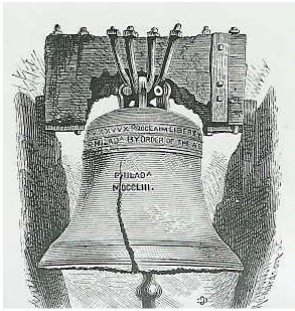
These men have died and most have been forgotten by Americans today. It is sad that we have forgotten these Founders of America, but it is tragic that we have forgotten the high price they paid for liberty—that liberty which we possess today, but may lose if we forget its great cost.

Since our liberty is a result of faith and morality, our Founding Fathers believed we must cry out to God and obey Him. John Adams wrote that the day of Independence

will be the most memorable epoch in the history of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated, by succeeding generations...as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty,...from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward forever more.⁴²

On July 8, 1776, the Liberty Bell rang out from the State House in Philadelphia, calling together the assembly of the citizens to hear the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence, which had been approved four days before. Its ringing led the celebration that followed.

A Scripture was engraved on that bell, Leviticus 25:10—“Proclaim Liberty throughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof. Lev. XXV, X.” This verse was very appropriate because it speaks of the jubilee year of liberty, where debts were forgiven, land was returned to the original owners, and enslaved



Leviticus 25:10 is engraved on the Liberty Bell.

Israelites were set free. With the birth of America, a new era of liberty was beginning in the world. As Rev. Clark observed, “From this day will be dated the liberty of the world!”⁴³

God’s liberty could be proclaimed, and eventually secured, because the people had been prepared from within to support freedom. A foundation of religion, morality, and Biblical truth had been established in their lives.

Concerning the observance of American independence, President of the Continental Congress Elias Boudinot said:

Let us...unite all our endeavors this day to remember with reverential gratitude to our Supreme Benefactor all the wonderful things He has done for us, in a miraculous deliverance from a second Egypt—another house of bondage....“This day is kept as a day of joy and gladness, because of the great things the Lord has done for us, when we were delivered from the threatening power of an invading foe.”....Who knows but the country for which we have fought and bled may hereafter become a theater of greater events than have yet been known to mankind? May these invigorating prospects lead us to the exercise of every virtue, religious, moral, and political....And may these great principles in the end become instrumental in bringing about that happy state of the world when from every human breast, joined by the grand chorus of the skies, shall arise with the profoundest reverence, that divinely celestial anthem of universal praise, “Glory to God in the highest; peace on earth; good will towards men.”⁴⁴

The Founders believed that Americans must understand the source of, and price paid for, our liberty if that liberty is to be maintained. To them, God is the author of liberty. Engraved on the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, DC, are these words from our third President: “God who gave us life gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a



Engraved on the Jefferson Memorial are his words: “God who gave us life gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God?”
Photo Credit: “CC A-SA 3.0: Ingbruno”



John Dickinson

nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God?” Our Founders knew, in the words of Jefferson’s pastor Rev. Charles Clay, that “the sacred cause of liberty [is] the cause of God.”⁴⁵ John Dickinson, a signer of the Constitution, wrote, “Our cause...is nothing less, than to maintain the liberty with which heaven itself hath made us free.”⁴⁶ Historian of the American Revolution, David Ramsay, said: “There can be no political happiness, without liberty; there can be no liberty without morality; and there can be no morality, without religion.”⁴⁷

Congress’ Christian Action

Chaplains Appointed

One of the first acts of the American Congress after declaring Independence was to appoint chaplains to open the daily meetings of Congress in prayer. On July 9, Rev. Jacob Duché, Rev. Patrick Allison (a Baptist), and Rev. William White (an Episcopal) were among the first chaplains appointed. Congress also ordered that chaplains be provided for the Continental Army and for the various hospitals and that they be paid at the rank of Colonel.

Days of Fasting and Prayer

Throughout the war with Britain, the American Congress frequently declared days of fasting and prayer to beseech God for His aid and assistance in their struggle for freedom, as was done in response to the Boston Port Bill of June 1, 1774 and to declaration of martial law on July 20, 1775. They also declared days of thanksgiving to acknowledge the Hand of God after victories in battle and other significant events, such as the victory of Yorktown (see below). Publicly acknowledging God or seeking His help was a common part of American public life. In fact, by 1815, there had been over 1,400 government-issued calls to days of prayer, thanksgiving, and fasting. (See Appendix 1)

Importation of Bibles

In the book, *The Bible of the Revolution*, Robert Dearden and Douglas Watson wrote:

Revolutionary America without Bibles presented an impossible situation. In no country in the world was the Good Book then so relied upon. Faith in Divine Providence and the consolation and guidance of Holy Writ were necessary to all patriots in the struggle for liberty... Before the rupture with the mother country, the colonies had depended largely for their literature upon England, and entirely so for their Bibles in their native tongue. The Revolutionary War stopped importation, and at length the situation reached such an acute stage that the Chaplain of Congress, the Rev. Patrick Allison, D.D., placed before that body a petition praying for immediate relief. The memorial was assigned to a special committee which weighed the matter with great care, and on September 11, 1777, it reported:

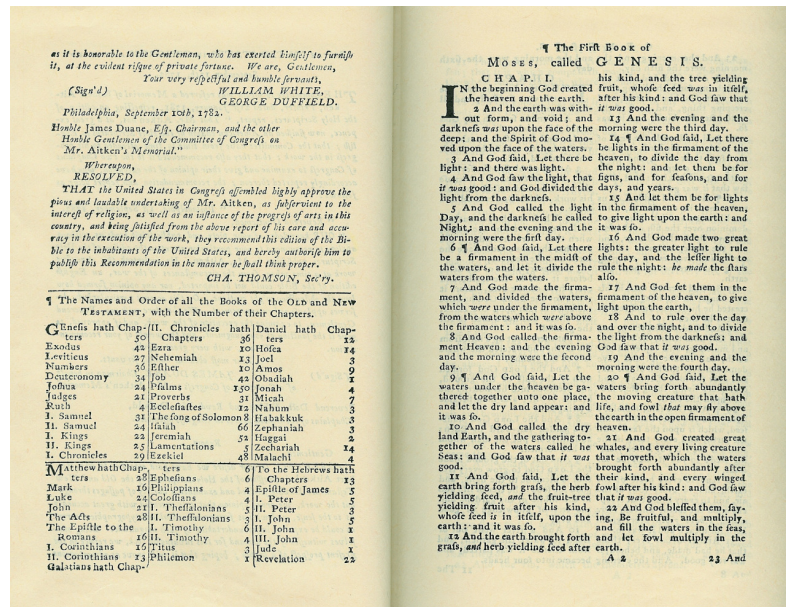
“that the use of the Bible is so universal and its importance so great that your committee refer the above to the consideration of Congress, and if Congress shall not think it expedient to order the importation of types and paper, the Committee recommend that Congress will order the Committee of Congress to import 20,000 Bibles from Holland, Scotland, or elsewhere, into the different parts of the states of the union.”

“Whereupon it was resolved accordingly to direct said Committee to import 20,000 copies of the Bible.”⁴⁸

This is another action of our early Congress that reveals their Christian values. The importance they gave to this legislation of importing Bibles is magnified when one considers the day upon which it occurred. The committee’s report to import 20,000 Bibles took place on September 11, 1777, the same day that the Battle of Brandywine was claiming the lives of 1,200 Americans and which resulted in a defeat for the Colonial Army. Congress was meeting within earshot of the cannon fire of this battle.

The Aitken Bible

Prior to America’s independence almost every house in the colonies possessed and cherished the English Bible, yet, no English Bibles had ever been printed in the colonies (some had been printed in German and native Indian languages). It would have been piracy to do so. Only after independence were



Front of Aitken Bible: “Whereupon, Resolved, That the United States in Congress assembled . . . recommend this edition of the Bible to the inhabitants of the United States.”

English Bibles printed. In 1782, Congress acted the role of a Bible society by officially approving the printing and distribution of the “Bible of the Revolution,” an American translation prepared by Robert Aitken. The endorsement of Congress in the front of the Aitken Bible read: “Whereupon, resolved, that the United States in Congress assembled...recommend this edition of the Bible to the inhabitants of the United States.”⁴⁹

The Hand of God Protects the Continental Army

Military, governmental, and church leaders during the American Revolution (along with regular citizens) believed that God performed many miracles on behalf of the American army because He desired America to win its struggle for freedom, become a nation, and fulfil its Divine purpose of being “a city set upon a hill”—an example of a free nation. Following are a few of these miraculous events.

The Evacuation of Long Island, August 1776

In August 1776, fighting erupted on the western end of Long Island between British and American forces. British General Howe and his army of 32,000 men had inflicted heavy losses upon the American army but had not succeeded in capturing or destroying it. General Howe then prepared to attack the 8,000 American troops on Brooklyn Heights.

The British army had surrounded Washington’s troops in a great semicircle, with their backs to the nearly mile-wide East River. Howe held this position for two days and did not attack. Had he struck, victory would have been certain for the superior numbers of the British force. Washington realized that to fight would mean defeat and the likely end of the war. Surrender was unthinkable. As difficult as it would be, he decided to retreat across the East River since all land routes were blocked by the British. The Continental army could have easily been surrounded by the British, but Providentially adverse weather conditions kept British ships from sailing up the East River. As a result, the Continentals were able to escape.



The Battle of Long Island

To make sure the British did not discover their retreat, Washington evacuated his army in great secrecy, even from his own troops. He sent orders for every rowboat, sailboat, and seagoing vessel in the area to be collected. At eight o’clock on the night of August 29, 1776, the evacuation began in a heavy rain; adverse winds hindered the British ships from attempting any activity. In this weather, the sailboats were of little use, and only the few rowboats were employed in the retreat. But at the rate at which the oarsmen could work, a successful evacuation seemed impossible. At eleven o’clock that evening, however, the northeast wind that had been raging for three days amazingly stopped, and the water became so calm that the boats could be loaded with extra weight. A gentle breeze also blew in from the south and southwest, which favored the Continentals progress across the river to New York.

Yet as the adverse weather changed, a new problem was created. Under the light of a full moon, the British were sure to see the movement of the American troops. Miraculously, though, the Continentals retreated all night without being heard or seen.



The retreat from Long Island

During the pre-dawn hours of Friday, August 30, through mistaken orders, General Mifflin prematurely withdrew his men, who were the covering party for the retreat. They were to be the last to be evacuated. However, he ran into General Washington, who knew that they should not be removed, and he ordered them to return. Though they were gone 45 minutes from their post the British had not even noticed.

The retreat continued through the darkness of the predawn, but as the sun began to rise, many troops were yet to be evacuated. Death seemed imminent. Maj. Benjamin Tallmadge, who was

still on the island, recorded what happened in his memoirs:

As the dawn of the next day approached, those of us who remained in the trenches became very anxious for our own safety, and when the dawn appeared there were several regiments still on duty. At this time a very dense fog began to rise (out of the ground and off the river) and it seemed to settle in a peculiar manner over both encampments.

I recall this peculiar Providential occurrence perfectly well, and so very dense was the atmosphere that I could scarcely discern a man at six yards distance....We tarried until the sun had risen, but the fog remained as dense as ever.⁵⁰

The fog remained until the last boats left Long Island.

Another miraculous event occurred during this retreat, and Washington Irving described it in his *Life of Washington*.⁵¹ Near the ferry where the troops were being evacuated, a family lived who favored the British cause. Upon seeing the army's embarkation, the lady of the house sent a servant to alert the British to what was happening. The servant managed to slip past the American guards, but upon reaching the British lines, he halted at an outpost of German-speaking mercenaries and was unable to communicate with them. The servant was put under guard until the next morning, when a British officer questioned him. Upon hearing the news of the American evacuation, some Redcoats were sent to confirm the report. They cautiously approached the Continental camp only to find it empty.

British troops hurried to the river. As they arrived, the fog lifted enough for them to see four boats on the East River. The only boat near enough to be captured contained three vagabonds who had lingered in the camp to plunder it. Otherwise, eight thousand men, with nearly all their supplies, had miraculously retreated to New York.

American Gen. Nathanael Greene called the withdrawal from Long Island "the best effected retreat I ever read or heard of."⁵² This extraordinary retreat was one of the most improbable and important events of the war, and many attributed the fortunate series of events to "a peculiar Providence."⁵³

Trenton and the Crossing of the Delaware, December 1776

A few months after the retreat from Long Island, Washington found himself in as desperate a situation as on Long Island. He was not engaged in battle or surrounded by the enemy, but his army was dwindling as the men's enlistment times were up. It was now December and at the first of the year most of the men's duty was over and few had re-enlisted. Defeat after defeat had brought the army's and the nation's morale to its lowest point. Washington knew he had to make a bold stroke and go on the offensive.

In a desperate move, Washington decided to cross the Delaware River in pre-dawn hours in order to surprise the enemy. He chose the early morning of December 26 to attack the Hessian garrison quartered at Trenton, for he knew their accustomed drinking on Christmas would help assure their deep slumber on that early morning.

As the troops prepared to cross the Delaware River, a violent snow and hailstorm suddenly came up. This hardship, however, worked in their favor by inducing the enemy's sentries to seek cover and reducing the visibility to near zero.



Washington crossing the Delaware

The Americans entered Trenton so unexpectedly and with such surprise to the Hessians that about 1,000 prisoners were taken captive after only 45 minutes of battle. Only three Americans were wounded in the fighting. Two had died, but not in fighting; they froze to death on the march.

Henry Knox described the event as follows: "The hurry, fright and confusion of the enemy was not unlike that which will be when the last trump will sound."⁵⁴

This much needed victory helped raise the spirit of the army and the nation, strengthening them to continue their struggle for liberty. As Knox wrote of the victory at Trenton, "Providence seemed to have smiled upon every part of this enterprise."⁵⁵ God was defending American liberty.

Defeat of Burgoyne at Saratoga, October 1777

On October 17, 1777, British General Burgoyne was defeated by Colonial forces at Saratoga, which was a much needed victory and an answer to prayer. General Washington had experienced many defeats at the hands of the British, such as the Battle of Brandywine the month before where 1,200 Americans lost their lives. In great need, Washington prayed fervently for a "signal stroke of Providence."⁵⁶

Others recognized the precarious position of the American cause. One Sunday in Sharon, Connecticut, Rev. Smith proclaimed that though a long night of disaster had been occurring, God would soon bring a signal victory for the American army. Before the service ended, a messenger arrived with news that British General Burgoyne had surrendered at Saratoga!

The Providence of God was evident in this victory. Earlier, General Howe was supposed to have marched north to join Burgoyne's 11,000 men at Saratoga. However, in his haste to leave London for a holiday, Lord North forgot to sign the dispatch to General Howe. The dispatch was pigeonholed and not found until years later in the archives of the British army. This inadvertence, plus the fact that contrary winds kept British reinforcements delayed at sea for three months, totally altered the outcome at Saratoga in favor of America.



Surrender of Burgoyne at Saratoga

In response to the victory, the Continental Congress proclaimed a day of thanksgiving and praise to God. In part, they stated:

Forasmuch as it is the indispensable duty of all men to adore the Superintending Providence of Almighty God,...and it having pleased Him in His abundant mercy...to crown our arms with most signal success...it is therefore recommended...to set apart Thursday, the 18th day of December, for solemn thanksgiving and praise.

They recommended for everyone to confess their sins and humbly ask God, “through the merits of Jesus Christ, mercifully to forgive and blot them out of remembrance” and thus He then would be able to pour out His blessings upon every aspect of the nation.⁵⁷

Saratoga has been called one of the seven most significant battles in history, because once France learned of this triumph, they saw that their long-time enemy might be defeated, and thus Louis XVI decided to ally with the colonies in the war. French support in terms of troops, munitions, ships, and money was invaluable to the American cause.

Discovery of Benedict Arnold’s Treason

In September 1780, “a combination of extraordinary circumstances”⁵⁸ occurred that led to the capture of British Maj. John André and the discovery of Benedict Arnold’s plan to yield West Point to the British. Washington explained what happened in a letter to Gen. William Heath.

Major General Arnold has gone to the enemy. He had had an interview with Major André, Adjutant Genl. of the British army, and had put into his possession a state of our army; of the garrison at this

post;...By a most Providential interposition, Major André was taken in returning to New York with all these papers in General Arnold’s hand writing, who hearing of the matter kept it secret, left his quarters immediately under pretense of going over to West Point on Monday forenoon,...then pushed down the river in the barge, which was not discovered till I had returned from West Point in the afternoon.⁵⁹



General Arnold plots his treasonous action with Major Andre.

After André had met with Arnold and obtained the information, he was traveling back to New York in civilian dress to deliver it to his superiors. On the road, he encountered a few American militiamen whom he mistook for loyalists. He talked too freely, which aroused their suspicion. They searched André and found the incriminating papers in his stockings. “They were offered,” Washington wrote, “a large sum of money for his release, and as many goods as they would demand, but without effect. Their conduct gives them a just claim to the thanks of their country.”⁶⁰ The militiamen took André to the nearest military outpost, where the officer, not realizing Arnold’s participation in the plot, notified him of André’s capture. Thus warned, Arnold fled to British lines. Had his treasonous plans not been found out, West Point would have fallen into British hands, which would have been a blow too great for the Continentals to sustain.

Washington wrote to Lt. Col. John Laurens, “In no instance since the commencement of the War has the interposition of Providence appeared more conspicuous than in the rescue of the post and garrison of West Point from Arnold’s villainous perfidy.”⁶¹ In his general orders for September 26, 1780, Washington declared: “Treason of the blackest dye was yesterday discovered! General Arnold who commanded at West Point, lost to every sentiment of honor, of public and private obligation, was about to deliver up that important post into the hands of the enemy. Such an event must have given the American cause a deadly wound if not a fatal stab. Happily the treason has been timely discovered to prevent the fatal misfortune. The Providential train of circumstances which led to it affords the most convincing proof that the liberties of America are the object of Divine protection.”⁶²

The Continental Congress also attributed the discovery of the treason to “Almighty God, the Father of all mercies.” They “recommended to the several states to set apart Thursday, the seventh day of December next, to be observed as a day of public thanksgiving and prayer” where the people should praise and thank God, ask Him to pardon their sins and to smile upon their endeavors, petition Him for peace and blessings, and “to cause the knowledge of Christianity to spread over all the earth.”⁶³

The Battle of Yorktown, October 1781

In October of 1781, British General Cornwallis had his troops stationed at Yorktown, Virginia. While Cornwallis waited for reinforcements, Washington marched his troops from New York to Yorktown. Unknown to Washington or Cornwallis, a French fleet under Admiral De Grasse arrived just in time to defeat the British fleet sent to relieve General Cornwallis at Yorktown.

Without reinforcements, Cornwallis was barely holding out against the siege of the American and French forces. As a last resort, he decided to retreat across the York River. At ten o’clock on the night of October 17th, sixteen boats were loaded with troops and embarked for Gloucester. After the first few boats had landed, the situation suddenly changed. In his report of what happened at Yorktown, Cornwallis wrote: “But at this critical moment, the weather, from being moderate and calm, changed to a violent storm of wind and rain, and drove all the boats, some of which had troops on board, down the river.”⁶⁴ Due to this miraculous change in the weather, Cornwallis was unable to complete his withdrawal and found his army divided when Washington’s batteries opened at daybreak. When the boats



The Surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown

finally returned, the British commander ordered them to bring back the troops that had been delivered to the opposite shore during the night. Later that day, he surrendered his forces to Washington. This essentially marked the end of the war.

General Washington and the Continental Congress recognized the Providence of God in the battle of Yorktown. *The Journals of the Continental Congress* record:

Resolved, that Congress will, at two o'clock this day, go in procession to the Dutch Lutheran Church, and return thanks to Almighty God, for crowning the allied arms of the United States and France, with success, by the surrender of the Earl of Cornwallis.⁶⁵

In his congratulatory order to the allied army on the day after the surrender on October 19, Washington wrote:

The General congratulates the army upon the glorious event of yesterday....Divine service is to be performed tomorrow in the several brigades and divisions. The Commander-in-Chief recommends that the troops not on duty should universally attend with that seriousness of deportment and gratitude of heart which the recognition of such reiterated and astonishing interpositions of Providence demand of us.⁶⁶

The victory at Yorktown was the last major battle of the Revolutionary War and because of their defeat, England agreed to end fighting and recognize the independence of the United States of America. The final Treaty with Great Britain was signed in Paris on September 3, 1783, and appropriately begins with the words: "In the name of the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity. It having pleased the Divine Providence..."⁶⁷ Most Americans were in agreement that God directed the events leading to the birth of America and a new era of liberty in the world.

Appendix

Public Proclamations

The importance of faith to our Founders can be seen by their public proclamations. The first Americans were predominantly Christians who embraced the doctrine of Divine Providence, seeing God in history as "directly supervising the affairs of men, sending evil upon the city...for their sins,...or blessing His people when they turn from their evil ways."⁶⁸ Looking to the Scriptures for the source of their law, both personal and civil, they firmly believed God's blessings would come upon those who obey His commands, and curses would come upon the disobedient (see Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26). Consequently, during times of calamity or crisis both church and civil authorities would proclaim days of fasting and prayer; and when God responded with deliverance and blessing, they would proclaim days of thanksgiving and prayer. Such days of appeal to God were not rare, but a regular part of life in early America.

From 1620 to 1815, government (mostly colonial, and later state and national) proclaimed at least 1,400 public days of fasting or thanksgiving. Such proclamations continued regularly throughout the nineteenth century, and in a smaller way up until today. During observances of fast and thanksgiving days, people would gather at their local meeting houses and churches to hear a sermon. State legislatures would also regularly invite ministers to preach on these days. Many of these sermons were printed and distributed for study.⁶⁹

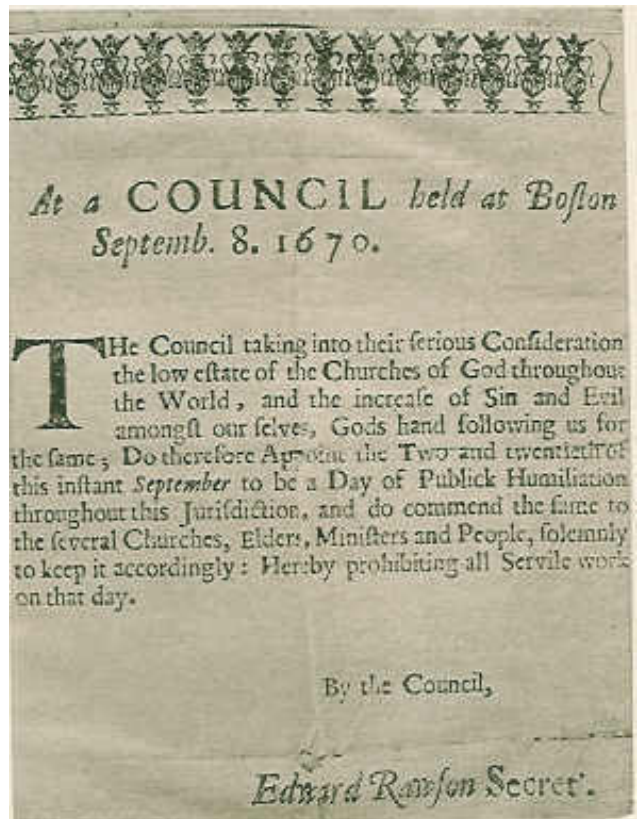
One example of a day of prayer occurred in October 1746 when France sent a fleet to attack Boston. Governor Shirley proclaimed a day of fasting and people everywhere thronged to the churches to pray for deliverance. God miraculously answered their prayers by sending a storm and pestilence to wipe out the French fleet. Everyone gave thanks to God.⁷⁰

This not only occurred before independence but also throughout the Revolution. During the Revolutionary War the Continental Congress issued at least seven different prayer and fast day proclamations and six different thanksgiving proclamations. These were issued after events such as the surrender of British General Burgoyne at Saratoga, the discovery of the treason of Benedict Arnold, and the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown. In response to the American victory at Saratoga in October 1777, the Continental Congress proclaimed a day of thanksgiving and praise to God. They stated:

Forasmuch as it is the indispensable duty of all men to adore the Superintending Providence of Almighty God,...and it having pleased Him in His abundant mercy...to crown our arms with most signal success...it is therefore recommended...to set apart Thursday, the 18th day of December, for solemn thanksgiving and praise.⁷¹

They recommended for everyone to confess their sins and humbly ask God, “through the merits of Jesus Christ, mercifully to forgive and blot them out of remembrance,” and thus He then would be able to pour out His blessings upon every aspect of the nation.⁷²

The individual states proclaimed numerous such days as well. The Virginia House of Burgesses set apart June 1, 1774, as a day of fasting and prayer in response to England closing the port of Boston. On the day British troops fired upon the minutemen at Lexington (April 19, 1775), the colony of Connecticut was observing a “day of public fasting and prayer” as proclaimed a month before by Governor Trumbull. Massachusetts set aside August 1, 1776, as a “day of solemn humiliation, fasting, and prayer” where they called upon the people “to humble themselves under the righteous hand of God; penitently to acknowledge their many heinous and aggravated sins” and asking Him to “pour out of His Spirit upon this people...and that He would spread the peaceful Kingdom of the Divine Redeemer over the face of the whole habitable world.” New York set aside August 27, 1776, “as a day of fasting, humiliation, and



Proclamation by the Massachusetts government for a fast day, September 22, 1670. Possibly the first printed broadside for a day of prayer. Fast and thanksgiving proclamations before this time were written by hand.

prayer to Almighty God, for the imploring of His Divine assistance in the organization and establishment of a form of government for the security and perpetuation of the civil and religious rights and liberties of mankind.”⁷³

If in session, Congress and the state assemblies would even go to church together as a body to observe these days. In 1787, a committee of representatives of all the states, gratefully looking back over all the preceding years, set apart October 19, 1787, “as a day of public prayer and thanksgiving” to their “all-bountiful Creator” who had conducted them “through the perils and dangers of the war” and established them as a free nation, and gave “them a name and a place among the princes and nations of the earth.”⁷⁴

The first President, George Washington, issued days of thanksgiving and days of prayer as recommended by Congress. Most Presidents up until today have followed this example, with about 200 such proclamations being issued by national government leaders.⁷⁵

¹ *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799*, edited by John C. Fitzpatrick, 39 volumes, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1931, 20:95.

² *The Writings of Washington*, 12:343.

³ America’s Founding Fathers believed that property rights are a foundational component of a free society. A person’s property is whatever he has exclusive right to possess and control. We have God-given rights to both internal property (thoughts, opinions, conscience, ideas, mind, talents) and external property (land, money, possessions, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly). Signer of the Constitution, John Dickinson, reveals the Founders’ view of how their right to property was being violated by the action of the English government, writing: “Man cannot be happy, without freedom; nor free without security of property; nor so secure, unless the sole power to dispose of it be lodged in themselves; therefore, no people can be free, but where taxes are imposed upon them with their own consent.” (Milton E. Flower, *John Dickinson, Conservative Revolutionary*, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983, p. 58)

⁴ William Wirt, *Sketches of the Life and Character of Patrick Henry*, Philadelphia: James Webster, publisher, 1818, p. 58.

⁵ Francis Simkins et al, *Virginia: History, Government, Geography*, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1964, p. 231.

⁶ William Wirt Henry, *Patrick Henry, Life, Correspondence and Speeches*, Vol. 1, 1891, p. 83.

⁷ Wirt, p. 58.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ William Wirt Henry, p. 101.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 94. Patrick Henry reflected the faith of most of our Founders. In his last will and testament, bearing the date of November 20, 1798, and written throughout, as he says, “with my own hand,” he chose to insert a touching affirmation of his own deep faith in Christianity. After distributing his estate among his descendants, he thus concludes: “This is all the inheritance I can give to my dear family. The religion of Christ can give them one which will make them rich indeed.” (Patrick Henry’s Will. From a photocopy in the author’s possession.)

¹¹ The sermon is in John Wingate Thornton, *The Pulpit of the American Revolution: or, the Political Sermons of the Period of 1776*, Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1860, pp. 105 ff.

¹² See W. De Loss Love, Jr., *The Fast and Thanksgiving Days of New England*, New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1895.

¹³ George Bancroft, quoted in Rosalie Slater, *Teaching and Learning America’s Christian History*, pp. 251-252.

¹⁴ Samuel Adams, quoted in Slater, p. 257.

¹⁵ Richard Frothingham, *The Rise of the Republic*, 1890, quoted in Verna Hall, *The Christian History of the Constitution of the United States*, San Francisco: Foundation for American Christian Education, 1978, p. 322.

¹⁶ William V. Wells, *The Life and Public Services of Samuel Adams*, Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1865, pp. 502, 504. Also Samuel Adams, “The Rights of the Colonists,” *Old South Leaflets*, No. 173, p. 1, 3.

¹⁷ John Adam’s Works, 10:287-288. Quoted in Thornton, p. xxx.

¹⁸ Richard Frothingham, *Rise of the Republic*, 1890, quoted in Verna Hall, *The Christian History of the Constitution of the United States of America*, San Francisco: Foundation of American Christian Education, 1980, p. 328.

¹⁹ Frothingham, quoted in Hall, *Christian History of the Constitution of the United States*, pp. 331-332.

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- ²⁰ From a reprint of a Proclamation of the Virginia House of Burgesses for a Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer on the 1st Day of June, Tuesday, the 24th of May, 14 GEO. III 1774.
- ²¹ Frothingham, quoted in Hall, *Christian History of the Constitution of the United States*, pp. 337.
- ²² *The Patriots*, Virginius Dabney, editor, New York: Atheneum, 1975, p. 7.
- ²³ *Journal of the Proceedings of the Congress Held at Philadelphia September 5, 1774, A Facsimile of the Official Edition Printed in 1774*, Philadelphia: printed for the Library Company of Philadelphia, 1974, pp. 214-215.
- ²⁴ *The Book of Abigail and John, Selected Letters of the Adams Family, 1762-1784*, Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1975, p. 76.
- ²⁵ Silas Deane, *The Deane Papers: Collections of the New York Historical Society for the Year 1886*, New York: Printed for the Society, 1887, Vol. I, p. 20, Wednesday, September 7, 1774.
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ Franklin Cole, ed., *They Preached Liberty*, Indianapolis: Liberty Press, p. 39.
- ²⁸ A copy of the Proclamation is in Verna M. Hall, compiler, *The Christian History of the American Revolution, Consider and Ponder*, San Francisco: Foundation for American Christian Education, 1976, p. 407.
- ²⁹ Ibid.
- ³⁰ A copy of the Proclamation is in *Consider and Ponder*, p. 510a.
- ³¹ All colleges up until this time were started by churches or by Christians with a primary mission of training godly ministers. The instruction of these seminary/colleges covered theological training but also a Biblical worldview of all spheres of life (law, science, history, etc.), so graduates pursued many vocations.
- ³² Last Will and Testament of Robert Treat Paine, in David Barton, *The Practical Benefits of Christianity*, Aledo, Tex.: WallBuilders, 2001, 7-8. For more excerpts from the wills of America's Founders see, "The Last Will & Testaments of the Founders Reveal Their Christian Faith," compiled by Stephen McDowell, *Providential Perspective*, Vol. 19, No. 4, August 2005, published by the Providence Foundation (<http://providencefoundation.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Wills-of-Founders.pdf>).
- ³³ Last Will and Testament of Samuel Adams in David Barton, *The Practical Benefits of Christianity*, 7-8.
- ³⁴ From an autographed letter written by Charles Carroll to Charles W. Wharton, Esq., on September 27, 1825, from Doughoragen, Maryland; possessed by WallBuilders.
- ³⁵ Lewis Henry Boutell, *The Life of Roger Sherman*, Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Co., 1896, pp. 271-273.
- ³⁶ Benjamin Rush, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Rush*, George Corner, ed., Princeton: University Press for the American Philosophical Society, 1948, p. 166. For more on the Christian faith of the Signers, see Stephen McDowell, *America, a Christian Nation? Examining the Evidence of the Christian Foundation of America*, Charlottesville: Providence Foundation, 2005, and Barton, *Original Intent*.
- ³⁷ This is an anecdotal story reported by many sources using varying terminology. This quote is in Robert Flood, *Men Who Shaped America*, Chicago, 1968, p. 276. Another records Hancock said: "There, I guess King George will be able to read that" (*The Annals of America, Vol. 2*, Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968, p. 449).
- ³⁸ *The Annals of America, Vol. 2*, p. 276. It cannot be confirmed if Hancock and Franklin actually made these statements, but these stories have endured because they were in character.
- ³⁹ Letter of Benjamin Rush to John Adams, July 20, 1811, quoted in *Our Sacred Honor*, edited by William J. Bennett, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997, pp. 29-30.
- ⁴⁰ T.R. Fehrenbach, *Greatness to Spare*, Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1968, p. 23.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., p. 247.
- ⁴² Letter of John Adams to Abigail, July 3d. 1776, *The Book of Abigail and John*, p. 142.
- ⁴³ Franklin Cole, ed., *They Preached Liberty*, p. 39.
- ⁴⁴ Elias Boudinot, "Oration before the Cincinnati, ...on the Fourth of July, 1793," *American Eloquence, A Collection of Speeches and Addresses*, by Frank Moore, New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1858, 1:264-269.
- ⁴⁵ Charles Clay, *An Artillery Sermon on The Governor Among the Nations*, c. 1777, contained in the Clay Family Papers (Mss 1c5795a), Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.
- ⁴⁶ Milton E. Flower, *John Dickinson Conservative Revolutionary*, Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1983, p. 67.
- ⁴⁷ *Maxims of Washington*, compiled by John Frederick Schroeder, New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1854, p. 352.
- ⁴⁸ Robert Dearden & Douglas Watson, *The Bible and the Revolution*, quoted in Rosalie Slater, *Teaching and Learning America's Christian History*, pp. 338-339.

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- ⁴⁹ *The Holy Bible*, As printed by Robert Aitken and Approved & Recommended by the Congress of the United States of America in 1782. Facsimile edition reprinted, New York: Arno Press, 1968.
- ⁵⁰ Quoted in Beliles and McDowell, *America's Providential History*, p. 30.
- ⁵¹ Washington Irving, *Life of Washington*, New York: G.P. Putnam & Co., 1856, 2:310-17.
- ⁵² George Bancroft, *History of the United States of America*, Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1878, 5:387.
- ⁵³ Washington Irving, 2:317.
- ⁵⁴ Peter Marshall and David Manuel, *The Light and the Glory*, Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1977, p. 317-318.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁶ Washington to John A. Washington, October 18, 1777, *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799*, edited by John C. Fitzpatrick, 39 volumes, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1931, 9:399.
- ⁵⁷ Morris, pp. 530-531.
- ⁵⁸ Washington to the president of Congress, October 13, 1780, *The Writings of Washington*, 20:173.
- ⁵⁹ Washington to William Heath, September 26, 1780, *The Writings of Washington*, 20:88-89.
- ⁶⁰ Washington to the president of Congress, September 26, 1780, *The Writings of Washington*, 20:92.
- ⁶¹ Washington to John Laurens, October 13, 1780, *The Writings of Washington*, 20:173
- ⁶² *The Writings of Washington*, 20:95.
- ⁶³ Journals of Congress, October 18, 1780, in Beliles and McDowell, *America's Providential History*, p. 165.
- ⁶⁴ William McAuley Hosmer, "Divine Providence—God Himself in the Battle of Yorktown," *Foundation for Christian Self-Government Newsletter*, September 1981.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁶ General Orders, October 20, 1781, *The Writings of Washington*, 23:245, 247.
- ⁶⁷ Treaty with Great Britain, *American Historical Documents, 1000-1904*, The Harvard Classics, Danbury, Conn.: Grolier Enterprises Corp., 1910 (1987), p. 174.
- ⁶⁸ DeLoss Love, Jr., *The Fast and Thanksgiving Days of New England*, New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1895, p. 41.
- ⁶⁹ Love, *The Fast and Thanksgiving Days of New England*. Love lists the days of fasting and thanksgiving. He also lists 622 fast and thanksgiving day sermons that were published, dating from 1636 to 1815.
- ⁷⁰ Catherine Drinker Bowen, *John Adams and the American Revolution*, New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1950, p. 10-12.
- ⁷¹ B.F. Morris, pp 530-531.
- ⁷² *Ibid.*
- ⁷³ Peter Force, *American Archives: A Documentary History of the English Colonies in North America*, Fourth Series, Washington: M. St. Clair and Peter Force, 1846, pp. 1278, 1471. *America's Providential History*, pp. 141-142.
- ⁷⁴ Benjamin F. Morris, *Christian Life and Character of the Civil Institutions of the United States*, Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, 2007 (reprint of 1864 edition), pp. 675-678. See W. DeLoss Love, *The Fast and Thanksgiving Days of New England* for an extensive list of government proclamations for Days of Prayer.
- ⁷⁵ See *A Compilation of the Messages of the Presidents*, James D. Richardson, ed., New York: Bureau of National Literature, 1897.