

— The AGC —

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Rooted in the Great Commandment (*Matthew 22:36-40*) and the Great Commission (*Matthew 28:18-20*), and recognized by the federal government as an official ecclesiastical endorsing agency, the Associated Gospel Churches (AGC) exists to represent Biblically Christ-centered churches, for the purpose of recruiting, endorsing, educating and supporting ordained men to serve as chaplains—pastors in uniform—in publicly-restricted access institutions.

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## THE AGC JOURNAL

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## **FOR CHRIST AND COUNTRY**

*υποφέρουν από δυσκολίες μαζί μου, ως καλός  
στρατιώτης του Ιησού Χριστού*

*– II Tim 2:3*

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## **LETTER FROM THE EDITOR**

**W**elcome to the Spring edition 2024 of the Associated Gospel Churches Journal. The Journal is a service provided for those interested in military, industrial and professional Chaplain ministry. This Journal contains articles and related topics which may be of interest for those involved in such ministries. In short, articles, exhortations, and book reviews in this professional Journal function as a source of aid for pulpit helps, sermon illustrations and items of interest which will enhance the reader. Articles discuss some of the more controversial current issues of the day affecting not only American culture, but how the government chaplain needs to navigate biblical truth in a world which hates absolute truth.

The AGC Journal is a place where evangelical conservative chaplains can freely express their thoughts, experiences, and ideas. The theme of this edition of the Journal is “Rediscovering Christianity in the Age of the Revolutionary War.” The AGC Journal exists as an arm of the Associated Gospel Churches and serves as a venue which is biblically based and has as its purpose the edification of the saints and the glory of God.

### **PROFESSIONAL CHAPLAIN ITEMS OF INTEREST**

#### ***Practical Ministry in Chaplaincy: “Traits of a Military Chaplain”***

Dr. Mayhue is a Navy and war veteran who graduated from the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. He is without a doubt one of the grand masters of our time God has used for promoting the Gospel of Christ. Most people know him as the former Provost and Vice President of the Master’s University and Master’s Seminary. He is the man who the Lord used to build and make those institutions of higher learning the institutions they are today. In this article, Dr. Mayhue lays out the

qualities which make for a good and successful chaplain. As a former small boat hover craft captain, he lays out some thoughtful godly characteristics the military chaplain should possess.

***The National Seal: “Annuit Coeptis: Let’s Settle This Once and For All”***

Dr. Gardiner is a friend of the AGC and has an interest in military chaplaincy. Once America became a nation, the founding fathers set up numerous projects to find some meaningful symbols and phrases which not only are unique to America among the nations, but also give honor and glory to God. While most historians tap dance around the Christian aspects of our national symbols, Dr. Gardiner actually dives in and shows by using primary sources that the symbols we use on our money has indeed, Christian roots.

***Observations of American History: “And Then the Pulpits Thundered”***

When asked for the cause of the American Revolution against England the go to answer for most people is “no taxation without representation.” This is a simplistic answer which has the connotation that unfair taxes became the default reason for the war. However, by using primary sources only found in the personal letters of the Archbishop of Canterbury in Lambeth Palace in London (the personal residence of the Archbishop), a source which has not been used for over a century, other reasons demonstrate that before any mention of unfair taxes ever came to light, Americans mobilized against England because England was going to take away religious freedom. Dr. Freiberg is a retired Navy Chaplain and serves on the staff of Central Baptist Theological Seminary as an adjunct professor.

***Historical Chaplaincy: “The Prayer of Chaplain Abiel Leonard in General Washington’s Army (1775)”***

Dr. Lawson is a retired Army Chaplain currently serving as a college and seminary adjunct professor. He is an expert on all things relating to Chaplains in the Revolutionary War. In this article, he gives us insightful information about not only the prayer itself, but the man who was a chaplain for Washington’s army in the early days of the American Revolution. Modern chaplains take note! Reading this prayer contains portions of theology and humility which may invoke an appreciation for the Lord, but also for the seriousness of a chaplain and his mission.

## BOOK REVIEWS

In our attempt to help you find Biblical resources for certain current issues, here are some books which cover some of today's most relevant topics:

***“The Purpose Driven Church”*** by Rick Warren. Reviewed by Jim Delaney

While Rick Warren's book has been popular over the years, Pastor Jim Delaney looks at Warren's work and subsequent influence over the evangelical church through the lens of Scripture and like a life which has strayed and after having been weighed in the balance, has been found wanting. Pastor Delaney's book review gives some insight why 30 years later Warren was voted out of his own ecclesiastical organization by not adhering to the clear teaching of Scripture. Pastor Delaney is pastor at Salem Bible Church in Salem, NH.

***“The Toxic War on Masculinity: How Christianity Reconciles the Sexes”*** by Nancy Pearcey. Book Review by Nat Weeks, friend of AGC and Christian apologist.

One of the reinventions of Biblical manhood in our culture is the current label known as “Toxic Masculinity,” where a strong male role in the family is vilified. Pearcey's book goes over the causes of the changing role of men in the family and why some have used only the bad things to draw a picture of why a Scriptural role of manhood is wrong. This book is well researched, and Christian commentator Nat Weeks sums up not only the arguments presented in the book, but offers some solutions as presented by Pearcey.

If you have a comment or would like more information on something you may have read, feel free to write and contact me through the AGC.

For God's Glory,

*Bob Freiberg, editor*

*CDR, CHC, USN-ret, M.Div, Th.M, D.D., D. Min.*

## **CHRIST OUR MENTOR: REFLECTIONS ON CHRIST-LIKE QUALITIES FOR MILITARY CHAPLAINS TO MODEL<sup>1</sup>**

*Richard Mayhue*

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*Dr. Mayhue trained for ministry at Grace Theological Seminary (M.Div., Th.M., Th.D.). After seminary, he ministered from 1975-1977 as an assistant pastor at Grace Brethren Church in Worthington, Ohio, where he also served as director of the Worthington Bible Institute. From 1977-1980, Dr. Mayhue taught in the areas of New Testament and Pastoral Ministries at Grace Theological Seminary in Winona Lake, Indiana. From 1980-1984, he was a member of the pastoral staff at Grace Community Church where he served as an associate to Dr. John MacArthur in a teaching ministry and as director for the well-known Shepherd's Conference. From 1984 to 1989, he pastored the historic Grace Brethren Church of Long Beach, California. Dr. Mayhue joined the faculty of The Master's Seminary in 1989 and was appointed as Dean of the Seminary in 1990. Dr. Mayhue also served in the role as Senior Vice President and Provost of The Master's University (2000-2008). He retired in 2016 as Dean and Research Professor of Theology Emeritus.*

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**T**he AGC has invited me to write a piece on this theme. My meager qualifications consist of a brief Navy background (1966-1971) during which time I served as a junior officer (ASW—Anti-

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<sup>1</sup> See Richard L. Mayhue, "Authentic Spiritual Leadership" *MSJ* 22 (Fall 2011): 213-24 for additional thoughts on biblically-based leadership



Submarine Warfare Officer) on a Norfolk-based “tin can” which operated mostly with the 6<sup>th</sup> Fleet in the Mediterranean tracking Russian subs, piloted a Patrol Air Cushion Vehicle in Vietnam near Hue (operating frequently with the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Div., 1<sup>st</sup> Air Cavalry Div., 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Div. Mechanized, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Div.), presented daily operational briefings to then Vice Admiral Zumwalt in Saigon (COMNAVFORV–Command Naval Forces Vietnam), and taught at the ASW School in San Diego.

While in Vietnam, I received a “Dear Dick” letter from my wife demanding a divorce. Later, during my last duty station, neighbors made sure we heard the gospel, and my wife and I trusted Christ as our Savior and Lord. Shortly afterward, believing that Christ would have me train for ministry, I resigned my commission and went to seminary. “B” and I will soon celebrate our 58<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary to God’s glory.

I encountered numerous chaplains (both Navy and Army) during my service for our country but cannot remember ever consistently seeing or hearing from them the Christ-like qualities that follow. But before I begin, two caveats are in order: 1) as an unbelieving Naval officer, I was blind and deaf to the Gospel truth (2 Cor. 4:4) possibly presented by the chaplains that I came across, and 2) I am not inferring that all military chaplains fit the profile that I remember from those “before Christ” days. I have the highest admiration for you men who serve our Armed Forces as chaplains on Christ’s behalf and pray for you often.

Since my conversion, many fine military chaplains have crossed my path (especially Navy chaplains), and I base much of what follows on their patterns of following Christ’s example. There are dozens of categories that could be addressed to develop the content of this article; however, I have narrowed my approach to the military chaplain as seen through the eyes of those to whom he ministers. These qualities are just as applicable to a civilian pastor as they are to a military chaplain since they all were exemplified by our Lord Jesus Christ during His earthly ministry.

*(see next page)*

## NINE CHRIST-LIKE QUALITIES FOR MILITARY CHAPLAINS TO MODEL

A military chaplain should\* be:

1. **Visible**—spending considerable time out of the office among the assigned flock.
  - Matthew 4:23-25
  - Mark 6:6, 56
  - Matthew 9:35
  - Luke 9:6
2. **Available**—ministering beyond normal office hours.
  - Matthew 14:25
  - Luke 6:12
  - Mark 11:19
  - Luke 21:37
3. **Approachable**—practicing casual interaction on lesser issues that will often invite follow-up involvement regarding eternal truth.
  - Matthew 8:2-7
  - John 2:1-2
  - Mark 10:46-49
  - John 4:7-9
  - Luke 7:36
4. **Admirable**—ensuring that you will be respected because your life matches your message in every area.
  - Matthew 27:19, 23-24
  - John 10:32-33
  - Mark 15:3-5, 10, 14
  - John 18:23
  - Luke 23:4, 13-15, 22, 41
5. **Predictable**—employing a consistently biblical approach to your chaplaincy.
  - Matthew 7:28-29
  - Mark 12:16-17
  - Mark 1:21-22, 27
  - Luke 2:46-47
6. **Capable**—handling God’s Word accurately, clearly, and relevantly.
  - Matthew 22:23-33
  - Luke 24:27
  - Mark 12:28-37
  - John 2:13-22
  - Luke 4:1-12

7. **Personable**—working diligently to be likable/winsome in order to overcome the various caricatures of chaplains.

- Matthew 9:36
- Matthew 14:14
- Matthew 20:34
- Mark 1:41
- Mark 8:2
- Luke 7:13
- Luke 10:33

8. **Durable**—not allowing ridicule and/or rejection to diminish the enthusiasm, faithfulness, joyfulness, and thoroughness of your ministry.

- John 5:16-17
- John 15:11
- John 15:17-21
- John 16:20
- Hebrews 12:1-3

9. **Indefatigable**—continually and energetically seeking avenues of ministry to your people.

- Matthew 8:16, 24-25
- Mark 6:31
- Luke 21:37-38
- John 4:6-26

One writer well put the nature of Christ's ministry and the spirit in which a military chaplain's ministry must be conducted if he has been mentored by our Savior:

If we are going to be effective to preach to the world about a Savior who poured out his soul unto death, the most effective way of preaching it is to be willing, like-wise, to pour out our souls and our bodies and all we have for our fellow men.<sup>2</sup>

The unbelieving portion of your flock might be blinded by Satan to the truth of their need for Christ as was I, but they won't be able to ignore or forget your exemplary, Christ-like chaplaincy.

*\*On a practical note, you might find it profitable to write out a paragraph or two for each of the qualities as it specifically applies to your own chaplaincy ministry. The Scriptures cited are not intended to be unabridged summaries but rather merely used illustratively.*

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<sup>2</sup>David Gooding, *Bring Us to Glory: Daily Readings for the Christian Journey* (Belfast, N. Ireland: The Myrtlefield Trust, 2020), 50.

## EDITOR'S NOTE

Although Dr. Mayhue would never admit it, he is the person who John MacArthur used to develop his vision for The Master's Seminary. For over thirty years, Dr. Mayhue worked side by side with Dr. MacArthur to further the Gospel cause, and during that time he wrote multiple books and articles to help Pastors and Christian workers become more proficient in their perspective ministries. I asked Dr. Mayhue, of all the things he has written, if he would recommend a few things for Chaplains to use in their military ministries. Here is that list:

1. *Bible Boot Camp: Spiritual Battles in the Bible and What They Can Teach You* (Christian Focus). This provides character sketches of 12 Old Testament persons.
2. *How to Study the Bible* (Christian Focus).
3. *Practicing Proverbs: Wise Living for Foolish Times* (Christian Focus).
4. *The Healing Promise: Is It Always God's Will to Heal?* (Christian Focus). This is the most biblically-thorough book about physical healing available. It concludes that salvation is God's greatest "healing promise."
5. *Unmasking Satan: Understanding Satan's Battle Plan and Biblical Strategies for Fighting Back* (Kregel).
6. *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Crossway), John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue.

Books 1, 2, and 5 are ideal for a 13-week, group Bible study series. Books 3 and 4 could be used for a group Bible study series but might be best for individual study. All 5 could be used as Bible-based counseling tools. Book 6 could be used for longer and more serious studies in systematic theology.

For complete information on Dr. Mayhue's writings, you can consult [www.richardmayhue.net](http://www.richardmayhue.net) and [www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu).

## ANNUIT COEPTIS<sup>1</sup>

*Richard Gardiner*

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*Richard Gardiner is a graduate of the University of Maryland, Princeton Theological Seminary (M.Div.), and Marquette University (Ph.D.). He is currently a pastor and a high school teacher in Georgia. His doctoral dissertation explored the religious element in the American Revolution.*

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**W**hen it comes to the National Seal, its images, and mottoes, developed and designed by the Continental Congress from 1776-1782, there is no shortage of misinformation, conspiracy theories, and otherwise overzealous claims unsupported by historical evidence. For example, in 2011, Thomas A. Foster, serving as Chair of the History Department at DePaul University, published that the American Revolutionary leaders “opposed a theistic motto for the nation.”<sup>2</sup> Echoing Foster, several others have asserted that the Revolutionaries’ choice of *E Pluribus Unum* as a motto for the Seal proves that the Founders “preferred a

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<sup>1</sup> From Latin, “Annuat” basically translates to English as “to favor.” Coeptis is understood in English as “beginnings.” The phrase “Annuat Coeptis” will be discussed in detail in the article.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas A. Foster, “‘In God We Trust’ or ‘E Pluribus Unum’? The American Founders Preferred the Latter Motto,” (Ohio State University, 2011) <http://origins.osu.edu/history-news/god-we-trust-or-e-pluribus-unum-american-founders-preferred-latter-motto> accessed October 2023. Foster is currently a professor at Howard University.

secular motto.”<sup>3</sup> The case made by many is that the original Founders deliberately avoided references to God in their choice of national identifiers, but later generations of politicians betrayed the Founders’ secularism. Therefore, it is argued that the 1956 motto, *In God We Trust*, violated the Founders’ commitment to secularism as expressed by their choice of *E Pluribus Unum* as a motto.<sup>4</sup> This is nothing short of misinformation pertaining to the Continental Congress’ adoption of the National Seal, 1776-1782. Here, then, is a careful examination of pertinent entries in the *Journals of Congress* pertaining to the mottoes they selected for the National Seal. The purpose of this article is to annul one of many pervasive strains of widespread misinformation regarding the Founders’ consensus.

To be sure, the current national motto, *In God We Trust*, did not emerge from the American Revolutionaries in the Continental Congress. *In God We Trust* did not receive any official endorsement of the Federal Government until the Coinage Act of 1864 which caused it to be engraved on two-cent coins.<sup>5</sup> It was not adopted as the national motto by Congress until 1956.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, from the fact that *In God We Trust* did not emerge from the Continental Congress—while *E Pluribus Unum* did—one may not conclude that the Founders deliberately eschewed mottoes referencing a deity.

It is a widely known fact that one motto adopted by the Continental Congress in 1782 for use on the obverse of the National Seal was *E Pluribus Unum*, literally translated, “from many, one” or “out of plurality, unity.” That motto is accurately described as secular/non-religious. The Continental Congress and its committees, however, proposed several other mottoes and

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<sup>3</sup> Dale McGowan, *Atheism for Dummies* (John Wiley & Sons, 2013); Courtney Stewart, cited by Bekah Morr, concluded, “So the founders avoided religion, choosing instead ‘E Pluribus Unum,’” “Atheist Group’s Banners Spark A Very American Conversation,” KERA News, July 11, 2019, <http://www.keranews.org/news/2019-07-11/atheist-groups-banners-spark-a-very-american-conversation>; E. Christopher Reyes reflected on the founders’ choice of *E Pluribus Unum*, “This is a wholly secular motto for the secular government they had helped establish,” *In His Name* (AuthorHouse, 2010), 263.

<sup>4</sup> This case is made by a multitude of scholars. E.g., Ann W. Duncan & Stephen Jones, eds., *Church-State Issues in America Today* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007), 72; David Niose, *Nonbeliever Nation* (St. Martin’s Publishing Group, 2012), 175; Eric v.d. Luft, *How the Conservatives Ruined America* (Gegensatz Press, 2021); Phil Zuckerman, *Living the Secular Life: New Answers to Old Questions* (Penguin, 2015), 218; Zuckerman, “Do We, as Americans, Worship God,” *Psychology Today* (July 27, 2017); et al.

<sup>5</sup> Coinage Act of 1864, Sess. 1, ch. 66, 13 Stat. 54; Sarah Begley, “How ‘In God We Trust’ Got on the Currency in the First Place,” *Time Magazine*, January 13, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> H.J. Res. 396, 84th Cong. (1956).

symbols, and officially adopted two other mottoes for the reverse of the seal that are somewhat less familiar or understood. The two others that appear on the reverse of the seal include *Novus Ordo Seclorum* (a new order of the ages) and *Annuit Coeptis*. This third motto is the most esoteric and obscure, even to some students of history. We daresay the populace is largely unfamiliar with the proper translation of *Annuit Coeptis* as well as how and why it was selected by the Congress. A careful examination of the *Journals of Congress, 1774-1789* will remedy this deficiency.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, 1776, as soon as the United States took its separate but equal station among the nations of the earth, the Continental Congress determined that their new nation would need an official seal to lend legitimacy to its existence.<sup>7</sup> The Congress was eager to forge alliances with European nations such as Holland and France.<sup>8</sup> For that reason, the establishment of a flag, a constitution, and a seal were priorities toward their efforts to be recognized by foreign governments as a legitimate sovereign nation. In June of 1776, a committee was established to draft a plan of government (which would eventually be titled the *Articles of Confederation*).<sup>9</sup> On June 14 of the next year, the Congress adopted a flag for the United States with thirteen as the theme (the number of stars and stripes).<sup>10</sup> Whereas the adoption of the flag happened rather expeditiously in comparison, the selection of the National Seal was an endeavor that the Congress and its committees took their time developing, agonizing at times, and painstakingly amending and revising through a six-year process with many variations along the way, concluding in 1782. Getting the seal just right seemed to be difficult, and the *Journals of Congress* imply that there was disagreement, reluctance, and uncertainty along the way.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of July 1776, a committee was selected to propose a National Seal. The committee was an incredibly prestigious trio: Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams.<sup>11</sup> As was common, the seal design would involve the selection of one or more mottos. Hence the seal committee was not limited to choosing artwork to be engraved, but also involved the

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<sup>7</sup> *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789* (hereafter, *JOCC*) Washington, U.S. Govt. print office, 1904-37, Volume 5, 517.

<sup>8</sup> *JOCC*, Volume 5, 431.

<sup>9</sup> *JOCC*, Volume 5, 433.

<sup>10</sup> *JOCC*, Volume 8, 464.

<sup>11</sup> *JOCC*, Volume 5, 517.

selection of mottoes.<sup>12</sup> The earliest seal proposal contained explicitly religious, even biblical, contents. Franklin wished that an image on the National Seal would be as follows:

Moses standing on the Shore, and extending his Hand over the Sea, thereby causing the same to overwhelm Pharaoh who is sitting in an open Chariot, a Crown on his Head and a Sword in his hand. Rays from a Pillar of Fire in the Clouds reaching to Moses, to express that he acts by Command of the Deity.<sup>13</sup>

Here is a biblical account in which God approved the destruction of a wicked governing authority (Pharaoh). The accompanying motto Franklin (and Jefferson) proposed summarized that idea: *Rebellion to Tyrants is Obedience to God*.<sup>14</sup> In this sentiment the political philosophy of the Declaration was summarized, viz., whenever a government becomes tyrannical, the law of Nature and Nature's God requires the people to revolt against it. Jefferson, Franklin, and Adams also suggested that the reverse of the seal include a depiction of "The Eye of Providence in a radiant Triangle."<sup>15</sup> This image is one of the only aspects of the first committee members' proposal to end up on the official seal.

As their work was concluding the first committee sought out the advice and counsel of a professional Swiss artist living in Philadelphia at the time, Pierre Eugène du Simitière.<sup>16</sup> He drew up a sketch for the seal which featured the goddess of liberty and an American soldier, standing on either side of a shield upon which are six symbols representing six different nations from

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<sup>12</sup> Ben Franklin wrote, "An emblematical device, when rightly formed, is said to consist of two parts, a *body* and a *mind*, neither of which is complete or intelligible, without the aid of the other. The figure is called the *body*, the motto the *mind*." Benjamin Franklin, "Account of the Devices on the Continental Bills of Credit," *Pennsylvania Gazette*, September 20, 1775. In *Benjamin Franklin: Writings* (two volumes), Leo Lemay, ed. (New York: Library of America, 1987).

<sup>13</sup> *JOCC*, Volume 5, 691.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> John Adams to Abigail Adams, August 14, 1776. In *Familiar Letters of John Adams* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1876), 210.



which most American colonists originated; around those symbols are abbreviations for each of the thirteen colonies.<sup>17</sup>

Simitière is usually credited as most likely the one who recommended the Latin motto, *E Pluribus Unum*, which first appeared on his sketch. An alternative case has also been made that the motto was first suggested by Franklin.<sup>18</sup> There is consensus that the motto was gleaned from the title page of the *Gentleman's Magazine* of London.<sup>19</sup> This motto was one other element that made it all the way to the final version of the seal.

Why weren't all the first committee's earliest designs and mottoes adopted by Congress? Were they too religious? The record is silent.<sup>20</sup> There are, however, clues from which to draw an inference. The motto, *Rebellion to Tyrants is Obedience to God*, was identified by Franklin (as reported by Jefferson) to be John Bradshaw's epitaph.<sup>21</sup> So what?

John Bradshaw was the regicide most responsible for the beheading of King Charles I in 1649. In the 1640s a bitter civil war emerged in England between the forces of the King (called Cavaliers) and the forces of Parliament (called Roundheads). As the Roundheads were victorious, Bradshaw's name led the list of signatories to the king's death warrant.<sup>22</sup> At the time of the Restoration of the Monarchy a decade later, Bradshaw's body was exhumed with Cromwell's by King Charles II and posthumously beheaded as retribution for Bradshaw's role in the restored king's father's execution.<sup>23</sup> From that time forward, many used Cromwell and Bradshaw as bywords to

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<sup>17</sup> JOCC, Volume 5, 690.

<sup>18</sup> Monroe E. Deutsch, "E Pluribus Unum," *The Classical Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 7 (Apr., 1923), pp. 387-407.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> *The Journal of Congress* for August 20, 1776, only indicates that the first committee's proposal was "Ordered, To lie on the table."

<sup>21</sup> Julian P. Boyd, *Jefferson Papers*, I, 677-9. Franklin may or may not have been the originator of this legend. A version of it is also found in the 1780 memoirs of Thomas Hollis of Harvard College attributing it to ubiquitous circulation in the American Colonies. See Charles Totten, *The Great Seal of the United States, Its History and Heraldry* (New Haven, 1897), 13.

<sup>22</sup> *The Death Warrant of King Charles I* (House of Lords Record Office Memorandum No. 66; House of Lords Record Office, 1981).

<sup>23</sup> C. V. Wedgwood, *A Coffin for King Charles* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1964), 183.

identify dissolute despots, enemies of government.<sup>24</sup> In the New England Colonies, however, the regicides retained some degree of adulation and honor. Not so much in Virginia, a colony affectionately dubbed by King Charles II his “Old Dominion” and whose residents proudly wore the label, Cavaliers (soldiers of the monarchy).<sup>25</sup> The strategy among New Englanders in Congress to cater to the Virginians as much as possible<sup>26</sup> might explain Congress’ back peddling from the regicidal motto.

In short, the original motto proposal may have had the approval of Bostonians and their neighbors, or even the Boston-born Philadelphian, Ben Franklin. And even though the champion of “a little rebellion now and then”<sup>27</sup> from Virginia (Jefferson) may have given his enthusiastic assent to the regicidal epitaph, there remained a few influential Virginia gentlemen in the Congress who conserved their Cavalier heritage.<sup>28</sup> Is that the reason given for rejecting the first committee’s Roundhead motto? Likely; but we’ll probably never know for sure. Perhaps if Virginia were not so historically connected to the Cavaliers, today *Rebellion to Tyrants is Obedience to God* would be found on the back of every One Dollar Note. What we can rule out for sure is the supposition that the regicidal motto was rejected because of its reference to God, as shown below.

In the years leading up to 1780, the members of the first seal committee were dispersed to different parts of the globe in their leadership capacities. Franklin went to France, Adams to the Netherlands, and Jefferson was in Virginia serving as the Governor. As such, it became nearly impossible for the trio to convene to discharge their mission as seal designers. “Their united

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<sup>24</sup> Even the Whig author, Catherine Macaulay, in her *History of England*, written at the time of the American Revolution, charged Cromwell with “more evil than has been the lot of any other individual.” Alexander Hamilton also categorized Cromwell as a “despot,” in Federalist 21. Alexander Hamilton, *The Federalist Papers* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>25</sup> H.E. Marshall, *This Country of Ours* (Cosimo Classics, 2007), 125; Sarah Covington, “Cromwell in America,” *History Today*, Volume 72 Issue 9 (September 2022).

<sup>26</sup> Richard Gardiner, “The Frankford Advice: ‘Place Virginia at the Head of Everything’” *Journal of the American Revolution*, December 30, 2021.

<sup>27</sup> Jefferson to Madison, January 30, 1787. Jefferson was so attached to this motto that he adopted it for his own Seal. Jefferson to Gem, April 4, 1790, in *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 16:297-98.

<sup>28</sup> See, e.g., Tanisha Jean Staten, *Loyalist or Patriot: The Precarious Position of Edmund Randolph, 1774-1786* (Thesis: University of Southern Mississippi, 2013).

work ceased as a matter of necessity,” wrote Totten.<sup>29</sup> In 1780, the Congress was still without a seal and, in the absence of the members of the first committee, a second committee was appointed to continue the work. On March 25, 1780, Congress selected a new seal committee including James Lovell of Massachusetts, John Morin Scott of New York, and William Churchill Houston of New Jersey.<sup>30</sup> As the first committee relied on Simitière as their principal consultant, the new committee turned to Francis Hopkinson for expertise.

Hopkinson was a signer of the Declaration who had designed the flag<sup>31</sup> and had experience creating several seals and emblems on currency as well. But alas, Hopkinson’s drawings, for reasons that are also not explicit, were not approved by Congress.<sup>32</sup> Again, however, the rejection of the work of the second committee had nothing at all to do with any reference to God in their proposal. In fact, in stark contrast to the first committee’s proposal, the second committee’s proposed images and mottoes were entirely absent of a Deity. It might only be inferred that it was the *absence* of a reference to the Deity that resulted in the disapproval of the second committee’s proposal. Yet this cannot be proven either.

The surrender at Yorktown in 1781 resulted in some degree of urgency to finalize a National Seal insofar as an international peace treaty was in the works. In the spring of 1782, a third committee was formed. It was chaired by Arthur Middleton of South Carolina and included John Rutledge, also of South Carolina, and Elias Boudinot of New Jersey.<sup>33</sup> As the first committee turned to Simitière and the second committee turned to Hopkinson, the third committee turned to heraldist William Barton to advise them on the

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<sup>29</sup> Charles Totten, *The Great Seal of the United States, Its History and Heraldry* (New Haven, 1897), 50.

<sup>30</sup> *JOCC*, Volume 16, 283.

<sup>31</sup> Certainty as to who designed the flag is elusive. Hopkinson wrote a letter to Congress on May 26, 1780, in which he took credit for the design of the flag. The Federal Government has credited Hopkinson, see William Rea Furlon and Byron McCandless, *So Proudly We Hail* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1981), 101. The Betsy Ross hypothesis is based on a dubious oral tradition.

<sup>32</sup> *JOCC*, Volume 17, 423.

<sup>33</sup> *The Journals of Congress* do not include a record of the appointment of this committee. Heironimus gives the date of this committee May 4, 1782; Charles Totten, *The Great Seal of the United States, Its History and Heraldry* (New Haven, 1897), reports skeptically Gailliard Hunt’s claim that the third committee was actually appointed in 1780. Totten gives instead an April 1782 date.

seal. Barton was trained in London in the arts of Coats of Arms (heraldry).<sup>34</sup> Barton was the son of the Rev. Thomas Barton, a missionary for the Society of the Propagation of the Gospel, who became a chaplain to in the army which fought the French and Indians in the 1750s. William Barton's mother also descended from a family of clergymen.<sup>35</sup>

Barton brought a new suggestion as the reverse side of the national seal. The image Barton proposed, and the Latin word "Perennis" were certainly borrowed from a 1778 design by Hopkinson, the advisor to the previous committee. Hopkinson's emblem included a pyramid with thirteen levels, continuing the theme of his United States flag proposal adopted in 1777. The Eye of Providence was passed down from Franklin and Jefferson's design. The motto, *Deo Favente*, was Barton's contribution, reflecting his thorough clerical heritage. *Deo Favente* is literally translated: "with God favoring" Barton explained the relationship of his motto to the image of the eye: "'Deo Favente' which alludes to the Eye in the Arms, meant for the Eye of Providence."<sup>36</sup> Hence, the "Eye of Providence" was meant by Barton to be that which Deus (God, the root of *Deo*) alludes to. Barton, following Jefferson, Franklin, and Adams, all proposed that God be included in a motto that would identify the U.S. as a nation. Nonetheless, neither *Rebellion to Tyrants is Obedience to God* nor *Deo Favente* became a permanent feature of the National Seal.

### **Was this because of an aversion to referencing God, as many claim? Why did the founders pass over *Deo Favente*?**

On June 13, 1782, sensitive to the urgency of the matter, Congress handed over all the previous proposals, designs, and mottoes to its Secretary, Charles Thomson. Thomson's assignment was to review all the previous ideas and fuse them into an appropriate design.<sup>37</sup> Hence, the evolution of the motto from *Deo Favente* to *Annuity Coeptis* was the innovation of Thomson. Why did Thomson change Barton's words? Was he a secularist who preferred

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<sup>34</sup> Milton Rubincam, "A Memoir of the Life of William Barton, A.M. (1754–1817)," *Pennsylvania History* 12 (1945): 179–93.

<sup>35</sup> Milton Rubincam, "A Memoir of the Life of William Barton, A.M. (1754–1817)," *Pennsylvania History* 12 (1945): 179–93.

<sup>36</sup> Papers of the Continental Congress, item 23, folios 137–139.

<sup>37</sup> Richard Patterson and Richardson Dougall, *The Eagle and the Shield: A History of the Great Seal of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Historian, 1978), 71.

“less religious theism in favor of more Enlightenment” as has been alleged?<sup>38</sup> Hogwash. Thomson was looking for a phrase synonymous to *Deo Favente*, but with *thirteen* letters. Thomson recognized that the motto on the obverse of the seal, *E Pluribus Unum*, contained thirteen letters, just as the image contained thirteen stars, thirteen stripes, thirteen olive leaves, and thirteen arrows. The pyramid on the reverse also contained thirteen levels. The number of stars and stripes on the U.S. flag was thirteen. Thomson was disturbed by the fact that *Deo Favente*, a ten-letter motto, did not preserve the ubiquitous national theme of thirteen.<sup>39</sup> Thomson determined that *Annuit Coeptis*, a thirteen-letter motto, was synonymous to *Deo Favente*.

### WHAT DOES *ANNUIT COEPTIS* MEAN?

The less complex aspect of the phrase to translate is *coeptis*. *Coeptis* is the dative plural of the Latin noun *coeptum*, which means beginning. *Coeptis* is properly translated, “beginnings” or “undertakings.”<sup>40</sup>

The Latin *annuit* (he, she, it nods/favors) is subject-less and, therefore, the subject must be inferred from the context. Since the motto was meant as a thirteen-letter substitution for *Deo Favente*, the Federal Government’s authorities consistently translate *Annuit Coeptis* precisely this way: “He (God) has *avored* our undertakings”<sup>41</sup> with the content of the parentheses provided by the government authorities themselves. Charles Thomson did not leave the motto open to be misinterpreted: he provided “remarks and explanations” to Congress that clarified his intent. “The pyramid signifies Strength and

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<sup>38</sup> Chuck Hamilton, “America Has Never Been a Christian Nation,” *Chattanooga.com* (December 19, 2012).

<sup>39</sup> Robert Heironomus, *Founding Fathers, Secret Societies* (Inner Traditions, 2005). The other motto, *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, found under the Pyramid, has seventeen letters, which seems to conflict with the theme. But the Roman Numeral on the base of the Pyramid is MDCCLXXVI, nine letters, when added to the seventeen, make twenty-six, which is twice thirteen. This explains the misspelling of *Seclorum*.

<sup>40</sup> William Young, *A New Latin-English dictionary* (1793).

<sup>41</sup> United States Department of State, *The Great Seal of the United States* (Washington, DC: July, 2003), 4; 108<sup>th</sup> U.S. Congress, *Our Flag*, House Concurrent Resolution 139, 108th Congress (U.S. Government Printing Office Washington: 2003), 42; Bureau of Engraving and Printing, <https://www.bep.gov/currency/faqs> (retrieved November 7, 2023); United States Department of Justice, February 14, 1992 <https://www.justice.gov/about/history/doj-seal-history-and-motto> (retrieved November 7, 2023). Emphasis added.

Duration: the Eye over it & the Motto allude to the many *signal interpositions of providence in favour* of the American cause.”<sup>42</sup>

Thomson’s phrase “signal interpositions of providence” was used commonly among the members of Congress. Other contemporaneous texts make it abundantly clear what is denoted by the phrase. For example, a proposal for a day of prayer, utilizing Thomson’s phrase, was made in Congress on October 11, 1782, just four months after the motto was adopted by the same body:

It being the indispensable duty of all nations, not only to offer up their supplications to Almighty God, the giver of all good, for his gracious assistance in a time of public distress, but also in a solemn and public manner to give him praise for his goodness in general, and especially for great and *signal interpositions of his providence* in their behalf...<sup>43</sup>

Other members of Congress were fond of the using the same phrase, followed by the words “in favor” (cf., *favente*) when referencing God. Samuel Adams wrote: “I hope our Countrymen will render the just Tribute of Praise to the Supreme Ruler for these *signal instances of his interposition in favor* of a People struggling for their Liberties.”<sup>44</sup>

Eliphalet Dyer’s expression is the same: “I hope the most sincere Gratitude may arise to Heaven from every Quarter on this most *signal interposition of providence in our favour*.”<sup>45</sup>

In its first year of functioning, the U.S. Senate wrote to President Washington: “We are, with you, unavoidably led to acknowledge and adore the Great Arbiter of the universe, by whom empires rise and fall. A review of the *many signal instances of divine interposition in favor* of this country, claims our most pious gratitude.”<sup>46</sup>

Earlier in the year that the motto was adopted, a Puritan preacher in Chelsea, Massachusetts detailed the hand of God through the Revolution and entitled his sermon, “A memorial of Lexington Battle, and of some *signal*

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<sup>42</sup> *JOCC*, Vol. 22, 339. Emphasis added.

<sup>43</sup> *JOCC*, Vol 23, 647. Emphasis added. This may be written by Thomson himself.

<sup>44</sup> Samuel Adams to James Warren, Oct. 26, 1777, *Letters of Delegates to Congress*: Volume 8, p. 190. Emphasis added.

<sup>45</sup> Eliphalet Dyer to Joseph Trumbull, November 4, 1777, *Letters of Delegates to Congress*: Volume 8, 229. Emphasis added.

<sup>46</sup> *Journal of the Senate*, May 7, 1789. Emphasis added.

*interpositions of Providence* in the American Revolution.”<sup>47</sup> This sermon was printed and circulated and was likely read by members of Congress.

The pronoun intended by Secretary Thomson in *Annuet* was indisputably God, just as the Federal Government has consistently indicated in its official documents. Detractors have attempted to avoid the government’s translations by saying that Thomson’s subject was not God, but Providence, some sort of nebulous Deistic fate.<sup>48</sup> Is there evidence that Thomson intended “Providence” to refer to a God-less fate? Some have pointed to two similar consecutive words (*adnue coeptis*) that appear in the writings of the Roman poet Virgil which call on the Roman god Jupiter. It is alleged, without evidence, that Thomson “probably adapted” Virgil by his motto.<sup>49</sup> Hence, a ridiculous syllogism might conclude by suggesting the deity Thomson meant to reference on the National Seal was Jupiter.

Fortunately, Thomson left an abundance of primary sources in his own hand which perspicuously reveal his theological orientation. Thomson wrote, *A Synopsis of the Four Evangelists, or a Regular History of the Conception, Birth, Doctrine, Miracles, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ, in the Words of the Evangelists*, in which he condemned “infidels,” viz., those who doubt the veracity of the New Testament (as pagans and most Deists did).<sup>50</sup> In view of this, and a multitude of other of Thomson’s writings, his principal biographer wrote:

It is scarcely necessary to make any further reference to Thomson’s religious belief. He had accepted the truths of Christianity in his early youth, and his whole life displayed a beautiful upright character that was a constant inspiration to his friends. He not only became a Christian in the usual sense

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<sup>47</sup> Phillips Payson, *A memorial of Lexington Battle, and of some signal interpositions of Providence in the American Revolution. A sermon preached at Lexington, on the nineteenth of April, 1782* (Boston: Benjamin Edes & Sons, in Cornhill., 1782). Emphasis added.

<sup>48</sup> The most ubiquitous dictionary at that time was Samuel Johnson’s. Johnson defined “Providence” as, “the care of God over created beings; divine superintendence.”

<sup>49</sup> Galliard Hunt, *The Seal of the United States: How it was Developed and Adopted* (U.S. Dept. of State, 1892), 20.

<sup>50</sup> Charles Thomson, *A Synopsis of the Four Evangelists, or a Regular History of the Conception, Birth, Doctrine, Miracles, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ, in the Words of the Evangelists* (Philadelphia, 1815), preface, iii.

of the term; but he retired from public life, and for twenty-five years, was a solitary student of divine truth.<sup>51</sup>

It is a disingenuous interpretation to claim that *annuity* is subject-less, therefore, Thomson did not intend God as his subject. To discover what was intended by this motto, one only need go to the official “remarks and explanations” approved by Congress and written by Charles Thomson, the secretary of Congress.

The ‘Remarks and Explanation’ have an official character and status, in that they came directly from the principal creators of the seal design and are thus primary evidence of what Barton and Thomson intended the device to signify, and what Congress knew to be the intent of the designers when the seal was adopted.<sup>52</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Robert Heironimus’ Ph.D. dissertation was an in-depth analysis of the reverse of the National Seal. Heironimus later concluded, “there can be no doubt that the intention of this device is to symbolize the eye of God looking favorably over the new American experiment.”<sup>53</sup> It simply cannot be sustained that *Annuity Coeptis* was intended to mean anything other than “God favors our beginnings.” And the God Thomson intended in his allusion was not a pagan or deist conception. So, the bottom line is this. When the question is posed, “would the Founding Fathers have adopted a motto referencing God?” as Congress did in 1956, the answer is 100% in the affirmative. How do we know? *Because they actually did!*

Some historians routinely posit that the Founders’ choice of *E Pluribus Unum* is prima facie evidence that the Founders deliberately wanted to keep God out of their newly constituted identity. That assertion cannot withstand historical scrutiny. Indeed, all one need do to refute it is to turn the Seal over and do an analysis of the Latin. It is puzzling that many have recently insisted that *In God We Trust* must be removed from the One Dollar note because it

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<sup>51</sup> Lewis Reifsnieder Harley, *The Life of Charles Thomson: Secretary of the Continental Congress and Translator of the Bible from the Greek* (G.W. Jacobs & Co., 1900), 202.

<sup>52</sup> Richard Patterson, *The Eagle and the Shield* (Washington D.C.: Office of the Historian of the Department of State, 1976), 86.

<sup>53</sup> Robert Heironimus, *The United Symbolism of America: Deciphering Hidden Meanings in America's Most Familiar Art, Architecture, and Logos* (New Page Books, 2008), 46.



refers to a deity.<sup>54</sup> These protestors appear oblivious to the fact that on that same Dollar note is the phrase *Annuity Coeptis*, which they do not seem to mind. Is it because if it is not in English it is harmless since very few Americans know Latin? Or is it because they haven't done the historical analysis of the original sources which confirm that the intended subject of *Annuity* is God? Either way, the essence of the case against *In God We Trust* is somewhat hypocritical when the complainants find nothing theistic in *Annuity Coeptis*.

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<sup>54</sup> Sarah Begley, "'In God We Trust' Doesn't Belong on U.S. Currency, Lawsuit Says," *Time* (January 13, 2016).

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## **THE ORIGIN OF CHRISTIAN AMERICA**

### **Part Three: And Then the Pulpits Thundered**

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*This is the third in a series of three articles on the origins of Christian America. The first was published in the AGC Journal Volume 2.2 in the Fall 2022, and the second in Volume 3.2 in the Fall of 2023.*

#### **REVIEW**

**I**n this series, we are examining the idea that the Christian religion through the reading and embracing of biblical truths has brought more to free humanity from the shackles of not only superstition, but to give the gift of a free society. The first part of this series delved into the idea of Pre-Reformation and Reformation concepts which through the preaching and teaching of the Gospel brought not only salvation to the common man, but almost concurrently made a societal shift politically of the view of Divine Right Monarchy and the abuse of the Roman Catholic Church along with the corruptness of the royal class in Europe.

The second part scoped out the historical chaos of British and American society where the influence of Christianity was almost non-existent at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but then did a 180 degree about face due to the re-emergence of the preaching of God's Word during the Great Awakening (around 1738-1742) through the efforts of men like

George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards and others like them. As the Holy Spirit changed the hearts and minds of men and women of all races and social classes of both England and America, the importance of faithfulness to God and His principles became the dawn of a new way of thinking. This Christian way of looking at life in the mid-eighteenth century became the basis for change, and it is this change which laid the foundation as the cause of the American Revolution. Before “no taxation without representation” was a war cry, there was a suppression of religious freedom which started the downward spiral in relations between England and America and this brings us to the main theme of this third part.

The causes for the American Revolution were numerous and complex and it is historically wrong to claim that there is one and only one reason for the American Revolution given the complexities of the time. Historians often use in the early days what John Adams wrote about lawyer James Otis as Otis spoke out against the “Writ of Assistance” and his use of argument from natural law. Adams wrote: “Otis was a flame of fire; with a promptitude of classical allusions, a depth of research, a rapid summary of historical events and dates, a profusion of legal authorities.”<sup>1</sup> Adams incorrectly claimed it was Otis who first coined the phrase “no taxation without representation.” That honor goes to the Congregational pastor John Wise (1652-1725) when he was thrown in jail and threatened with slavery over stirring up the masses when he opposed unfair taxes proposed by the Massachusetts governor Sir Edmund Andros in 1687.

As a result of his run-in with the British government, Wise wrote two books about religion and civil government (“The Churches Quarrel Espoused,” 1710; and A Vindication of the Government of New England Churches,” 1717), which were republished in 1772 and quickly sold out with

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<sup>1</sup> John Adams, Adams, John; Tudor, William (December 22, 1819). *Novanglus, and Massachusettensis: Or, Political Essays, Published in the Years 1774 and 1775, on the Principal Points of Controversy, Between Great Britain and Her Colonies*”

numerous reprints.<sup>23</sup> This is one example where religion played a role for the cause of the American Revolution because as it played out a hundred years earlier, it showed religion was always a “hot topic” with the British government in their treatment of the colonists. Again, there were multiple causes of the war which started in 1775, but the role of religion is worth another, closer look as a contributing factor.

## THE PROBLEM OF RECEPTION HISTORY

Reception history is history done by comparing modern social mores (the received current social customs) and comparing the historic world by our standards. Unfortunately, most historians in the last hundred years have adopted some pet theory or Marxist typology where all of life and society is determined and explained in socialist terms, where EVERYTHING is explained in economic, social, or political syntax. That way of explaining history was influenced in the academic world of the university in the political turmoil of the 1960's and is still seen and felt. A fall-out of only using Marxist terms and syntax in reviewing history means that only one conclusion is inevitable and leaves out other possibilities of truth. Modern historians either gloss over or ignore the religious dimension of the human saga. Those historians who are marginally religious or even atheists or agnostic in their personal faith will never understand what motivates people to do what they do because of their faith. As a result, their history is written with a biased, almost superficial way because they do not fully understand the deep-rooted relationship of those who have a personal relationship with God through the salvation experience of Jesus Christ.

To the irreligious historian, they do not understand the meaning of Scripture when a person is born-again and feels the forgiveness of an

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<sup>2</sup> Christine LaHue, *The Resurrection of John Wise: Popular Mobilization and the Opening of the American Revolution: 1771-1775*, MA thesis, Ohio State University, 2006. p. 41-48

<sup>3</sup> Clinton Rossiter, *John Wise: Colonial Democrat*, *New England Quarterly*, March 1949, V. 22, numb 1 (Mar 1949), URL: <https://www.JSTOR.org/stable/361533>. P. 12-16. While both LaHue and Rossiter record the reprint of Wise's work, they take opposite views where one says it played a big part and the other minimizing the effects of the reprint. I would say Rossiter being of the more elite and intellectual part of the day (mid-20<sup>th</sup> century) was more effected by an unfavorable university mindset at the time about the Christian component of the American experience. It should also be noted that of all the current academic articles found on Wise in the last 100 years, all of them presented him in a favorable light, including the mention of Wise and his work by President Calvin Coolidge in a presidential address to the nation on the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Obviously, Wise's contributions have been lost in most academic circles in the past fifty years.

omnipotent God which through grace has restored a once broken relationship and now has present and eternal rewards through Christ. This is the essence of the Gospel, and it is this Gospel which has changed lives in a world given over to greed and power. The faithless historian does not understand that people who experience this type of religious conversion has a new perspective and views all life through a Biblical “grid” which is filtered through the lens of Scripture. For these people, there is only being faithful to God which matters, However, they still must deal and live in a sinful world.

It is this view of Christianity, most secular historians do not fully understand how some of the religious disagreements between the Church of England and the evangelical church in America really mattered. In the days right after the French and Indian Wars, England hatched a religious plan which was to start problems between the colonists and the government of England. This conflict was to be fought not only in the newspapers and halls of government, but in the pulpits of the local American churches.

While admittedly this only affected those who were church-goers, it was certainly a part and a vital one at that. Remember, Christianity and societal norms were different back then and even those who we would not consider to be conventional in their Christian theology were sympathetic to the ideals of the Gospel, such as grace, mercy, and kindness to their fellow man. Men like Franklin, Jefferson and others used religion and religious arguments to strengthen and give authority to their opinions. To gloss over this detail gives only a partial and biased view of the total picture. Therefore, it is important to evaluate this aspect of life for the typical colonist. Only by doing this will it help give a complete historical picture of what would motivate a peace-loving person to go to war to fight what they perceived as an evil which threatens their relationship with God at the hands of an oppressive foreign church and government.

## **THE GREAT AWAKENING**

In the second part of the series, the last section told of the importance of the Great Awakening and especially the ministry of George Whitefield. Whitefield’s preaching of the Gospel had the same effect on the common people during his time as it always has in history when God’s Word was preached. The book of Acts records when Paul preached Christ’s crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins to the common people, Paul ended up being beaten, whipped, left for dead or in danger at the hands of those who were religious or official so the government (Acts

13-20). The same is true of other times. Take the time when the Gospel was written in the language of the people during the life of John Wycliff. Reference the trials and tribulations of the Reformers, the Huguenots in France and those who wanted to reform the Church of England in their Civil War with the Puritans, as well as those who refused to belong to the church of England as dissidents.<sup>4</sup>

Whitefield and others who preached the Gospel of Christ soon became the enemies of the established church. Once Whitefield called out the hypocrisy of the clergy and the deadness of the seminaries, a steady and vindictive plethora of pamphlets and sermons soon followed. The stage was set religiously in the colonies against the Church of England and the Crown's role in suppressing anyone who said anything negative about the king, as well as his church. From Harvard to Lambeth Palace (the official residence of the Archbishop of Canterbury), an avalanche of printed material against the proponents of the "New Lights" led by the preaching of George Whitefield was published during this time. It was the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Secker which went out of his way to thwart any good the young preacher wanted to accomplish.<sup>5</sup>

The overall effects of the Great Awakening had an impact on that generation, which after about twenty years many converts became spiritual or political leaders (Alexander Hamilton, Samuel Adams, Benjamin Rush and many others) in the colonies. This in turn influenced many of the principles which later led the Revolutionary War politically, militarily, and spiritually. However, one of the "training grounds" for these leaders was the outbreak of what Americans called "The French and Indian Wars," also known as "The Seven Years War" in Europe. As far as the Americans were concerned, it was an attempt to keep Catholic France out of North America and their attempts to convert Native Americans to Roman Catholicism. France through their missionary efforts controlled much of the fishing rights and the Mississippi river valley for trade. Something had to be done about this potential danger.

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<sup>4</sup> John Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England, 1558-1639*, (London: Routledge Publishers, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Secker, *The Autobiography of Thomas Secker*, (Lambeth Palace Archives, MS 1123, pt. 1, fols. 24-38). The story behind both sources mentions how Whitefield secured 2,000 acres for a college at Bethesda. The petition had the approval of not only the governor of Georgia, but also the British government. Whitefield in his sermons was critical of the deadness of the elite Anglican clergy and while all things were proceeding for the founding of the college, Archbishop Secker and Lord Northington insisted that the charter require both an Anglican headship and liturgy. Upon hearing of the news, Whitefield dropped the project. Whitefield also had started an orphanage in Georgia and was counting on the good will of the Church of England for help, but Secker refused to be a part of it.

The war brought the Colonists and England together in a way that they previously never enjoyed. During the war, they had a common cause and enemy, especially the age-old war of Protestant versus Catholic. However, this honeymoon was not to last long. England's coffers were empty from the war and the aristocracy needed revenue and what better source was there than to milk rich America. Besides, didn't English soldiers provide protection and resources for the colonists? Using this as a pretense to get more involved in the affairs of Americans, the English civil and religious leaders introduced some sweeping changes and became the start of conflict.

### **THE TENTACLES OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND**

The seeds of religious discord had already been planted during the English civil war (1642-51) between the Puritans, dissidents, and the Anglican Church before the French and Indian War. However, when the Puritans left England during the early sixteen hundreds, they were powerful enough to have negotiated some rights guaranteed in writing within their charters. These charters given by the king granted some autonomy both financially and religiously. For the Crown and Anglican church, the pestilent religious fanaticism of these subjects was out of sight and out of mind across the Atlantic for almost a hundred and fifty years.

However, after many years of leaving the colonists alone, England was ready to go the distance in finally controlling their subjects across the pond, despite going against the original charters of many colonial states. Periodically there were attempts during this time from England to tax and control the colonists which was a recipe for multi-generational mistrust. All these efforts were never lasting and serious enough mostly because the colonists were out of sight and out of mind...except during the time of Rev. John Wise where he led a successful enough rebellion against unfair taxation to quiet England for a couple of generations.

The first problems between England and the Colonies were based on religion soon after the war. England and their Ecclesiastical elites always hated their "Christian" counterparts, the Puritans and the dissidents. George Whitefield and others of the Great Awakening made that divide even greater, mainly due to the belief that a man is justified by faith (Rom 1:16-18) and government over its people is only valid if the leadership is leading righteously before God (Deut. 17:18-20, Rom 13:1-7, I Pet 2:13-16).

This is nothing new as all one need do is read in the four Gospels and the Book of Acts to understand how self-righteous and religious people react

when faced with biblical truth. For their part, the leaders of the Church of England acted like Pharisees and Sadducees against the simple faith of the Puritans and Dissidents. However, the Anglican hierarchy tried to maintain a pretense of Christian fellowship with their Calvinistic and dissident “brothers.” While there were political and military maneuvering going on in Parliament from 1761-65, an evil plan was formulated from the Anglican church to control the established Congregational churches in the States. All this was being enacted almost at the start of the tenure of the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Secker, in 1758. Despite his deception, the Americans understood the subterfuge.

From 1761-63, a flurry of letters between Secker and leading Anglican clergy in both American and England betrayed his disdain towards anyone outside of the “Anglican umbrella.” Secker was a son of a dissident preacher but was fully converted later to the Anglican cause. His letters are full of condescending remarks against dissidents in general and leaders of the Great Awakening specifically.<sup>6</sup> For years even before these letters, there was discussion from Secker and other Bishops in England about establishing an “American Bishop” where the goal was to control and manipulate not only the clergy, but the entire fabric of colonial life and bring it under the control of Mother England.

Fortunately, even King George III saw the potential danger in doing that in stirring up the colonists. However, Secker did whatever he could wherever he could behind the scenes. A good example was the establishment of an Anglican church within earshot of Harvard Square in Boston where they had their first services in 1761. While the Congregational Churches outnumbered Anglican churches about thirty to one in New England, the mission society for the Church of England called “The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts,” almost always put their churches in towns and cities where there was already an established Christian presence, instead of rural settlements where there was no Christian witness. Jonathan Mayhew, a Boston clergyman made that a part of his complaint against England.<sup>7</sup>

While there were growing tensions between the Anglican seminaries of New York and Philadelphia (which Ben Franklin and George Whitefield helped start) with Harvard and the Dissidents, it all came to a head within 1761-2. The Congregational clergy of Massachusetts worked with local and

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<sup>6</sup> Thomas Secker, Letter dated Oct 6, 1761, Lambeth Palace, MS 1123/3, folio 276. 1761.

<sup>7</sup> Jonathan Mayhew. *Observations on the Charter and Conduct of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel*, 1763.



state legislators in passing “The Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge among the Indians of North America.”<sup>8</sup> The charter was an effort by not only the leading clergy of Boston, but also civic leaders as well as the governor and other politicians in the state of Massachusetts. As they say in the Navy, this was an “all hands affair” of the entire colony and the ramifications of this act extended even into Canada.

It was a sincere attempt by the provincial government to give money and resources to evangelize the Indians on the frontier. This would accomplish the spread of the Gospel and satisfy the great commission of Matt 28:19-21 as well as convert them to Biblical Christianity, rather than the Roman Catholicism taught by French missionaries. As converts, it was hoped they would eventually want to become loyal citizens of Massachusetts. However, this act was never achieved, due to the interference of Mother England!

Incensed by the audacity to act on their own without getting permission from Lambeth Palace, the Anglican presidents of the seminaries in Philadelphia and New York, as well as other leading Anglican clergy, wrote letters to Archbishop Secker telling him that he needs to do something to thwart this new legislation. President William Smith of Philadelphia wrote: “...you need to assert yourself into the American religious life... the colonists cannot take care of themselves.<sup>9</sup> From Kings College in New York, Rev. Samuel Johnson and Dr. Jay implored the archbishop to get help from the King.<sup>10</sup>

Secker’s response was expected. While his response letter was lengthy and detailed, he knew he had to be careful because like the advice of Gamaliel (Acts 5:33-42), where he cautioned the Sanhedrin about the appearance of fighting against the work of God by punishing the apostles, Secker had the same dilemma, and he knew what was at stake. However, unlike Gamaliel’s

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<sup>8</sup> Massachusetts General Court, May 27, 1761.

<sup>9</sup> William Smith, Letter to Archbishop Secker dated 20 July 1761, Lambeth Palace, Ms 1123/3, 1760-1763, FF-235, accessed 13 DEC 2023, p. 46. Samuel Johnson (the father, not the son), an influential Anglican priest also expressed this concern in numerous letters to Secker during this same time. Letter from Samuel Johnson to Thomas Secker about the act of the MA legislature to send missionaries and money to evangelize the American Indians on the western frontier. He made some remarks about various clergy who supported the act and promptly made plans to counteract and cancel this act. One of his remarks basically said that those clergy who supported this act were not qualified and didn’t have the proper credentials (i.e. they were not Anglican).

<sup>10</sup> Samuel Johnson, Letter to Arch. Secker dated 21 May 1761, Lambeth Palace, MS 1123/3, 1760-1763., folio 225-226, accessed 13 DEC 2023.

advice to the Sanhedrin about leaving the apostles alone, Secker then went on the rampage and wrote what he thought of the legislation:

While no one can object to the intention, they never consulted the bishop of London...I didn't recognize any of the clergy and there were not one Anglican priest...as well as all the clergy were all dissenting ministers, amongst them a Dr. Mayhue, who has been most fowl mouthed bespattered of our church, I and our missionaries in print.<sup>11</sup>

Those in the Church of England knew this was all about authority and power, not about the Gospel of Christ. Samuel Johnson also added in his letter to Secker: "Your Lordship will have the good fortune to take this affair into your consideration. It seems a dangerous one; and yet remonstrances against it unless conducted with much care and dexterity may be placed in an odious light." In the short term, a pamphlet campaign to minimize the damage of prestige was waged. Most noteworthy was the specific title of one: "The Real advantages which Ministers and People may enjoy by conforming to the church of England faithfully considered importantly represented."

The religious coup de grace happened August 19, 1762 when in an official decree from King George III and Parliament, Secker gave his blessing with money and permission for Kings College and the college at Philadelphia to use the "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts" to carry on the evangelism of the American Indian.<sup>12</sup> With this declaration, everything that the colonists hoped to do and accomplish from their legislative evangelism was wiped out with one document by the British. For the colonists' part, their reaction went deep into the heart of who they were as a people: After all these years, it was open war on the spiritual front once again.

At the same time, the religious leaders of England had been proposing installing an Anglican Bishop in America. While this may seem innocuous to the modern reader, it was another spiritual power play over the religious life for those living in the colonies. Archbishop Secker since 1751 had been advocating for an American Bishopric. Ever since the Mayflower and the original Puritan charter of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, America had

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<sup>11</sup> Thomas Secker. Letter dated Oct 6, 1761, Lambeth Palace, MS 1123/3, folio 276. 1761.

<sup>12</sup> Official proclamation by King George III at Westminster Church, August 19, 1762. This official act gave exclusive rights to not only Philadelphia and New York seminaries to evangelize the Indians (both funded and run by the Anglican church) but puts the entire British system of government from the King, Parliament and its state run church at the disposal of those Anglican seminaries in America, thereby nullifying the provincial attempt to evangelize the people at the western borders.

enjoyed spiritual autonomy from the clutches of the English Church. Even as early as 1750, secretary of Massachusetts Josiah Willard wrote to acting governor Spencer Phips, "... I can only add that the universal dissatisfaction to that scheme among persons of our Communion... from expecting that if once (Anglican) Bishops should be settled in America, it would be judged to extend their jurisdiction equally ... as men are possessed in Great Britain.<sup>13</sup>

The Americans knew that if this scheme were to happen, it would be a matter of time before the tyranny of England would be complete. This is what an Anglican Bishop in America would look like and how it would change religious freedom:

The extension in full of English ecclesiastical government to the colonies would include the establishment of separate ecclesiastical courts, having jurisdiction over testamentary and matrimonial causes and a variety of offenses such as adultery, fornication and various forms of defamation and the expense of maintaining bishops appointed for the colonies who, in the course of time would presumably press for incomes comparable to those of the English bishops, some of whom have princely revenues.<sup>14</sup>

William Gordon, a close friend of George Washington, wrote a history of the events which led up to the Revolutionary War, gives some compelling evidence then what it meant to have the church of England take over the religious affairs of the colonists in 1761. In a summary from a discussion with Ezra Stiles:

1. The English Parliament would enter heartily into all aspects of American matters. Under its sanctions all of the governments would be altered, and all councils would be appointed by the king and the assemblies be reduced to small numbers like New York.
2. After that, they would secure the power of civil government by the junction of church influence by having the authority and power to set aside those pastors who are not sympathetic to the Anglican cause. This would be done by not recognizing their ordinations and taking away their salaries. If the people would complain about this and make their own policies, then the governor could/would negate it. If the people still

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<sup>13</sup> Richard Knollenberg, *Origin of the American Revolution: 1759-1766*, (Liberty Fund, part of Simon and Schuster, Inc., Indianapolis, Ind.), 1960. P. 72. This was taken from an original quote from a 1750 letter from Willard to Phips.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

complain, then the matter would be brought before the king, and he would eventually disallow it.

3. Let bishops be introduced and provisions made for their support. All Presbyterian and dissident clergy would then have to go to the Episcopal bishops for ordination and licensure. The leading dissident clergy could then be bought off with large salaries.
4. The liturgy would be revised and altered. The episcopacy be accommodated as much as possible and once the episcopacy is well established in the culture, then increase its resemblance to the English hierarchy at pleasure.<sup>15</sup>

The colonial clergy of the 18<sup>th</sup> century widely held that civil liberties and religious ones were linked. As Jonathan Witherspoon, a product of the Scottish revival and president of Princeton and signer of the Declaration of Independence wrote in 1776, “There is not a single instance in history in which civil liberty was lost and religious liberty and religious liberty preserved entirely.”<sup>16</sup> England through the Anglican church was trying to use a trojan horse to finally get total control over the colonies and this was the way to do it.

To overtly try to take over the religious and political institutions would create open rebellion against British Governor Edmund Andros as it did during the late 17<sup>th</sup> century under pastor John Wise. During this period, however, England did something to people living in the colonies at the time. They quietly rescinded most of the original charters given to the early Puritans and dissidents which means they took away the provisions granting the colonists to have their own religious autonomy.

Fortunately, some astute Americans could see what was happening. In 1765, John Adams and Boston clergyman Jonathan Mayhew (the same guy Secker despised) wrote in the “Dissertation on Canon and Feudal Law” how the English Church by using their ecclesiastical powers were slowly squeezing the coils around the religious freedom of the colonists.

Adams wrote:

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<sup>15</sup> William Gordon, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Establishment of the Independence of the United States of America: Including an account of the late war, and of the Thirteen Colonies.*, v 1 (4), (London, printed by the author, 1788), p. 102-104.

<sup>16</sup> Gary L. Steward, *Justifying Revolution: The American Clergy's Argument for Political Resistance, 1750-1776*, (Oxford University Press, New York, NY. 2021), p. 54.

There seems to be a direct and formal design on foot, to enslave all America. This, however, must be done by degrees. The first step that is intended seems to be an entire subversion of the whole system of our fathers, by the introduction of the canon and feudal law into America... The designs and labors of a certain society (The SPG) to introduce the former of them into America, have been well exposed to the public by the writer of great ability (footnote introduced by the late Rev. Dr. Jonathan Mayhew).<sup>17</sup>

This was not just an isolated observation but seemed to be a planned and concerted effort to implement other measures at the same time against the colonists. By early 1766, the Stamp Act was in full swing as punishment for the indiscretions of the Massachusetts legislature for wanting to unilaterally evangelize the Indians of the frontier. It was in 1764 that George Whitefield took his last journey across the Atlantic to hold a series of evangelistic meetings throughout the colonies. On April 2, 1764, he called for and met with the pastors of Portsmouth, New Hampshire and warned them of the coming Armageddon from England:

I cannot in conscience leave the town without acquainting you with a secret. My heart bleeds for America. O poor New England! There is a deep-laid plot against your civil and religious liberties, and they will be lost. Your golden days are at an end. You have nothing but trouble before you. My information comes from the best authority in Great Britain. I was allowed to speak of the affair in general but enjoyed not to mention particulars. Your liberties will be lost.<sup>18</sup>

Whitefield was wise in contacting these pastors. Langdon and others were long time converts to Christianity due to the preaching of Whitefield many years earlier and had access to many other pastors of like faith and practice. It was these same pastors who understood the biblical mandates of Romans 13:1-8 and I Pet 2:13-15 which deal with honoring the king, but still

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p. 56.

<sup>18</sup> William Gordon, Gordon was a dissenting preacher from England who had firsthand knowledge of the American Revolution, as well as access to Washington and his personal papers about the war (ltr from Gordon to Washington-8 Mar 1784). This included Washington's numerous war correspondences. The account of the Portsmouth pastors' meeting with George Whitefield was given to Gordon by an eyewitness account of the meeting in Portsmouth by Samuel Langdon, local Portsmouth pastor and another friend of Washington. Langdon was the president of Harvard when Washington was doing the Boston campaign at the beginning of the war and Washington lived in Langdon's house during the entire campaign.

knowing it only applies as long as the king is right with God. These Scriptural passages tacitly understands that the king should be acting in behalf of God for the good of the people.

Taken in the totality of Scripture, they understood this contract between the Ruler and the Ruled was a mutual civil contract where both sides had to uphold their part of this contract. The King had to be righteous before God and if he was not, then he forfeited his right to if he was found to be evil. In short, it means that nothing should get in the way of a man and His God for worship, not even the king whom God has appointed to rule over the government in which the man belongs. If the king did interfere with this basic human and natural right, it was time for action.

Those in America had a choice: join the cold, dead formal Church of England or fight back to maintain their personal worship of the living Omnipotent God through His Son Jesus Christ. Scripture was clear that if given the choice, it is better to serve God over the dictates of the government (Acts 5:29). It was at this time that something wonderful happened in America. The people of God were made aware of the danger to their faith by the preaching and teaching of the Word of God through the pulpits of those pastors who were loyal to the God of the Scriptures. Certainly, to this generation, the pulpits thundered the dangerous truth and the solution of freedom to worship God according to the dictates of their consciences throughout the land!

## CONCLUSION

### **The People of God Respond Against Tyranny**

When England tried to control the people by imposing an Anglican bishop and their plot was found out by the colonists, the people were up in arms. They resisted this forcefully and as a result, even King George III eventually relented. This was huge because up to this point this was the main plan for control over the colonies. However, from this conflict the battle lines were now drawn, and England changed tactics and included in their arsenal against the colonists their political and financial strength. Having lost the battle of gaining the hearts and minds of the religious communities, they were to start a series of oppressive taxes. The ability to tax is the ability to control. England now entered a punitive stage and so they implemented the first of many taxes. The first two were the Sugar Tax and the more dreaded Stamp Act of 1765.

This new tax by the House of Lords essentially said that all official documents and correspondence had to use paper with a taxed British stamp on it. These products cost more because there was now a duty on all products for commerce, trade and civil transactions. It was hated and the colonists knew from the attempt of the Crown to control their religion, England had essentially declared religious and economic war on them. The response was swift and decisive. Given the clandestine efforts to take over the colonist through religion, now things were out in the open. Commerce warehouses were burned, tax representatives from England were tarred and feathered, Petitions were ignored and organized rebellion took hold during this time.

After a year of this from the colonists, Parliament was surprised at the reaction and so they asked one of the leading citizens of Philadelphia, Benjamin Franklin, to explain why the reaction in the colonies was so virulent. Franklin had lived in England for the past 16 years but was pleased to plead the colonist's case. Franklin's oratory went on for 4 hours.<sup>19</sup> England in response rescinded the Stamp Act in early 1766, but almost immediately put another, stronger tax in its place.

The whole of England was incensed about the supposed "ingratitude" of the colonists for protecting them with royal troops during the war. There is a footnote in Franklin's account of his examination before the House which reads:

Mr. Nugent made a violent speech next day upon this Examination. In which he said "We have experienced Austrian Ingratitude, and we yet we assisted Portugal. We experienced Portuguese Ingratitude, and yet we assisted America. But what is Austrian Ingratitude, what is the Ingratitude of Portugal compared to this of America? We have fought, bled and ruin'd ourselves, to conquer for them, and now they come and tell us to our Noses, even at the Bar of this House, that they are not obligated to us! Etc., Etc., but this Clamour was very little minded."<sup>20</sup>

It didn't matter that in the same address to the House, Franklin mentioned that the colonies provided over 25,000 soldiers, as well as feeding and clothing all others. Not to mention all those people who went deeply in debt by mortgaging their farms and houses to support the British troops. He

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<sup>19</sup> Benjamin Franklin, *Examinations Before the Committee of the Whole House of Lords*, Feb. 13, 1766.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

reminded the House that the Americans gave a greater proportion than England ever did.

The response to the cancellation of the Stamp Act in America was immediate and joyful. Celebrations went on, speeches made, and sermons were preached thanking God for His providential interference in the affairs of man.<sup>21</sup> However, this was to be short lived, for England had set itself on a course to punish and control. Tax after tax came about in the next ten years and relations spiraled downward. When the colonist resisted, England applied the hammer instead of the velvet glove. They ignored all attempts to reconcile and ignored all petitions from the colonists, instead choosing to send troops to trouble spots such as Boston. As they treated all in the colonies as criminals than British subjects, the colonists not only resisted, but went to war... and as they say, the rest is history!

However, the one thing one must remember is that the war wasn't all about unfair taxes. To ignore the religious aspect of not allowing people the freedom to worship according to the dictates of one's conscience has consequences. To some, the idea of religious freedom is not very important and not worth wasting time on, however, to others it is life itself. Hopefully, the reader of this article can understand the need for some others to have that freedom and why they would be ready to fight.

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<sup>21</sup> Nathanael Appleton, A Thanksgiving sermon on the total repeal of the stamp-act. Preached in Cambridge, New England, May 20, 1766, in the afternoon preceding the public rejoicing of the evening upon that great occasion. Many portions give detailed feelings how the people felt about being loyal to England, but still using Scripture to justify their actions. An example in page 30-31 of the sermon transcript: "And, as the Jews of old, when they were delivered from the cruel edict of the king for their destruction, were filled with gladness and praise, and kept up an anniversary solemnity in joyful remembrance of their deliverance, which was a *day of gladness and feasting, a good day, and of sending portions one to another*.<sup>†</sup> So now since this parliamentary edict which alarmed all our fears, and filled us with distress, is absolutely and entirely repealed; let everyone be girded with gladness, and every tongue sing praise to God. And as this religious exercise will be followed with public rejoicings, and external tokens of joy; let me earnestly exhort you all, both old and young, high and low, to conduct with all that decency & due decorum, which becomes those who have been in the house of God this day, pouring out our devout religious acknowledgments before him; and attending upon the counsels of his word..."



## CHAPLAIN LEONARD'S PRAYER FOR GENERAL WASHINGTON (1775)

*Kenneth Lawson*

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*After 34-plus years in the Army as an enlisted soldier and as an officer, Chaplain Ken Lawson retired from the military with the rank of colonel. He recently earned a Doctor of Ministry degree from Westminster Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania. Ken is now an adjunct college and seminary professor and serves as the historian for the Associated Gospel Churches. In his spare time he can be found serving as a part-time chaplain for a lumber mill, as well as volunteering as a local fire department chaplain.*

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### BACKGROUND

**A**biel Leonard (1740-1777) was born in Plymouth, Massachusetts during the peak of the Great Awakening in the American Colonies. Abiel was the son of Rev. Nathaniel Leonard, who was called to settle as pastor of the First Church in Plymouth in February 1724. Abiel and his many siblings grew up in an evangelical Christian home. When the Great Awakening shook New England in the 1740s, the First Church in Plymouth was in full support. The boy Abiel may have remembered George Whitefield's preaching in Plymouth on his 1744-1745 itinerant preaching tour. He certainly remembered Whitefield's return visit in 1754, when Abiel, as a fourteen-year-old boy, heard Whitefield preach at the First Church "five sermons in three days, with popular applause."<sup>1</sup>

Following in his father's footsteps, Abiel enrolled at Harvard College to prepare for the ministry, graduating in 1759. At that time, Harvard was deeply divided over the revivals of the Great Awakening. New England had basically divided into two theological positions. The New Lights supported

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<sup>1</sup> James Thatcher, *History of the Town of Plymouth; from its First Settlement in 1620, to the Year 1832*, (Boston, MA: Marsh, Capen, & Lyon Publishers, 1832), 311.

the awakening and its requirement for a new birth conversion experience for salvation. The Old Lights emphasized tradition, propriety, faith, and family genealogy in preparation for salvation.<sup>2</sup> Abiel Leonard embraced the New Light teachings of his father. He entered Harvard as a regenerated Christian, studied the theological controversies of his day, and departed Harvard with his New Light faith secure.

After a period of indecision, Abiel Leonard began preaching about 1762 at the First Congregational Church in Woodstock, Connecticut. They called him to be their minister in January 1763. The town squabbled over various ecclesiastical issues and rivalries developed between churches. During the week, Rev. Leonard taught school for the children. Much of Leonard's tenure at Woodstock was unremarkable. He was known as "a man of noble presence, a finished gentleman in manners, and an accomplished pulpit orator."<sup>3</sup> In 1775 a choir was formed at his church, a notable event for that time.<sup>4</sup> He served this church until he volunteered to be a chaplain in the Continental Army in 1775. The church did not eagerly support or openly resist his decision to leave them for military chaplain service. In his absence, Leonard had to pay for the replacement minister at the church from his military salary.

On 1 May 1775, Chaplain Abiel Leonard began serving with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Connecticut Continental Regiment. He was stationed around Boston, participating in the successful siege of the city and the ousting of British troops. He was part of the headquarters located nearby Cambridge and was a confidant of General George Washington. Elements of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Connecticut participated in the Battle of Bunker Hill, and some troops served in the September 1775, invasion of British controlled Quebec.<sup>5</sup> Chaplain Leonard completed his tour of duty in mid-December 1775.

Abiel Leonard spent a few weeks at home with his wife and children and then departed to serve as chaplain for General Henry Knox and the Regiment

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<sup>2</sup> Peggy M. Baker, "Plymouth in the Great Awakening: The Phantom Parish and the Missing Ministers," *Pilgrim Hall Museum*, [https://pilgrimhall.org/pdf/Plymouth\\_in\\_the\\_Great\\_Awakening.pdf](https://pilgrimhall.org/pdf/Plymouth_in_the_Great_Awakening.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> William F. Fowler, *The Ministers of Connecticut in the Revolution*, (Hartford, CT: Press of the Case, Lockwood, and Brainard Company, 1877), 80.

<sup>4</sup> "Our History," First Congregational Church of Woodstock," <http://firstchurchwoodstock.org/history>. For an overview, see Margaret McClellan, *History of First Congregational Church, Woodstock, Connecticut, United Church of Christ*, (Antiquarian Committee, First Congregational Church Woodstock, CT: 1976).

<sup>5</sup> "Connecticut Continental Troops, Third Regiment – General Putnam, 1775," <https://www.americanwars.org/ct-american-revolution/connecticut-continental-troops-third-regiment-1775.htm>.

of Continental Artillery. He served in this capacity from 1 January to 31 December 1776. Chaplain Leonard joined this artillery unit as it marched and dragged captured cannons from Fort Ticonderoga, New York to assist with the siege of Boston. Leonard served twelve artillery companies around Boston. Knox's artillery regiment was a critical component in hastening the end of the siege of Boston. As the British departed, Chaplain Leonard held a church service for the troops for praise and thanksgiving. General Knox and General Washington attended. Leonard's text was from Exodus 14:15, "And they took off their chariot wheels, that they drove them heavily, so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians."<sup>6</sup> As the only large artillery unit in the northeast colonies, Knox's Regiment of Artillery participated in army activities against the British in New York and New Jersey and were widely praised. Knox's guns were crucial in winning the Battle of Trenton in late December 1776.<sup>7</sup> Chaplain Abiel Leonard was popular with the troops. In January 1777, he completed his military service and returned to Woodstock, Connecticut. He had earned a stellar reputation as a soldier as well as a Christian minister and scholar. In 1776 he was granted an honorary doctorate from Yale College. The College of New Jersey at Princeton did likewise in 1777. But Leonard was not well. He suffered from mental anguish, attempted suicide, and died two months later, in August 1777. He was survived by his wife and seven children.

Rev. Abiel Leonard is mostly forgotten today. Those who know his name often associate him with the 1775 prayer he wrote for General George Washington at the siege of the British at Boston. This prayer, which can be read out loud in about five to seven minutes, shows Leonard's theology as historically Protestant and embracing the revivalist New Light theology of his day. The fact that General Washington embraced this prayer, and had it distributed to his troops, gives some insight into Washington's personal religion.<sup>8</sup> This was the first printed religious tract directed to the American military. The prayer is presented below in its entirety, slightly edited in paragraph form for readability:

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<sup>6</sup> William H. Grove, *Henry Knox's Noble Train: The Story of a Boston Bookseller's Heroic Expedition that Saved the American Revolution*, (Lanham, MD: Prometheus Books, 2020), 207.

<sup>7</sup> Noah Brooks, *Henry Knox: A Soldier of the Revolution*, (Madrid, Spain: Hardpress Publishing, 2015). Mark Puls, *Henry Knox: Visionary General of the American Revolution*, (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> For an exhaustive study, see Peter Lillback, *George Washington's Sacred Fire*, (King of Prussia, PA: The Providence Forum, 2006).

*A prayer, composed for the benefit of the soldiery, in the American army, to assist them in their private devotions; and recommended to their particular use. By Abiel Leonard, A.M. Chaplain to General Putnam's regiment, in said army.*<sup>9</sup>

### A PRAYER.

MOST great and glorious God, thy name alone is Jehovah! Thou existeth independent of all beings, and art possessed of eternal and absolute perfection! I adore thee as the supreme Governor and Judge among the nations of the earth; who hast in thy wise and good providence divided them and settled the bounds of their habitations!<sup>10</sup> Thou hast placed the inhabitants of Great-Britain, and of America, not only under the common laws of justice and equity; but also, under the most endearing bonds and obligations of brotherly love and kindness towards each other.<sup>11</sup>

Those sacred bonds have been violated; and that mutual confidence, harmony and affection, that once subsisted to mutual advantage, in a great measure is lost.<sup>12</sup> The enemies of America have sent over a great multitude to cast thy people in this land, out of thy possession, even the

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<sup>9</sup> Leonard, Abiel, *A prayer, composed for the benefit of the soldiery, in the American army, to assist them in their private devotions; and recommended to their particular use. / By Abiel Leonard, A.M. Chaplain to General Putnam's regiment, in said army.* (Cambridge, MA: 1775). <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/evans/n11180.0001.00117?page=root;size=100;view=text>.

<sup>10</sup> Abiel Leonard believed that the God of the Bible was interactive in human affairs. This contrasted with the rising deism of that day. Deists believed that God created the world then removed himself from direct influence in human affairs. Leonard believed in the eternal Jehovah God of scriptures that created the world, sustained the earth, was interactive in human affairs, and answered prayer.

<sup>11</sup> Here Abiel Leonard acknowledges the common ancestry of most American colonists with Great Britain. This was especially true in Leonard's New England. There were Dutch, German, Scottish, and other colonists in New England, but they were a small minority. Thousands of American colonists fought for the British king in the 1754-1763 French and Indian War. The bond between the mother country and the American colonies was significant.

<sup>12</sup> Leonard laments the fact that the American colonies and Great Britain developed a strained relationship. As the colonies prospered isolated from Britain, the two grew apart. Colonists insisted on full rights as Englishmen, and rallied around the cry, "No taxation without representation." The British king saw his American subjects as troublesome, ungrateful, and rebellious. Before this prayer was written in 1775, distrust had led to violence. For example, there was the March 1770 Boston Massacre; the December 1773 Boston Tea Party; the February 1775 scuffle between the Salem, Massachusetts militia and British troops at Salem's North River; and the April 1775 battle of Lexington and Concord.

good land which thou hast given them to inherit;<sup>13</sup> and to deprive them of their liberties and properties: whereby, O Lord, they have been reduced to the dreadful alternative of submitting to arbitrary laws and despotic government; or of taking up arms in defense of those rights and privileges, which thou, in thy goodness, hast conferred upon them as men and as Christians.<sup>14</sup>

I would adore and bless thy name, that thou hast given thy people a just sense of the value of their important privileges, civil and sacred; and that, that love of liberty and willingness to encounter every temporary difficulty and danger to enjoy it, which glowed in the breasts of their ancestors, and brought them over to settle this land, is enkindled in their breasts: and that they are united in their counsels, and in their measures for their protection, defense and security.<sup>15</sup>

O my God, wilt thou be graciously pleased to strengthen and establish the union of these colonies; and favour the CONGRESS with thy blessing and presence! Prosper the means of defense, —be the God of the American army,—bless all in general, and in particular command, and grant unto thy servant the COMMANDER IN CHIEF, wisdom and

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<sup>13</sup> Chaplain Leonard's choice of words here shows his theological proclivity towards the direct providence and sovereignty of God. Many early settlers of the American colonies believed, as did Leonard, that they were "thy [God's] people in this land," and that the colonies were "thy [God's] possession," meaning the colonies and colonists belonged to God and not the British king. Abiel Leonard expresses gratitude to God for "the good land thou hast given them to inherit." Here Leonard is not acknowledging a theocracy, where Jehovah God directly ruled over the people, but he was asserting that he believed the American colonies were founded with the blessing of God.

<sup>14</sup> The place of Christians taking up arms or shedding blood against tyranny and despots was well established in Christian history. The American colonists had just participated as British citizens in a prolonged war against the French. The only colonists opposed in principle to war were those minority groups from Quaker, Mennonite, or similar pacifist movements. Leonard is not here lamenting that war may come, but that war may begin against his fellow Englishmen, with both sides having sworn allegiance to the King of England. Leonard's prayer asserts that God has given men the right "of taking up arms in defense of those rights and privileges, which thou, in thy goodness, hast conferred upon them as men and as Christians." Leonard believed war could sometimes be the will of God.

<sup>15</sup> Abiel Leonard saw no difference between the sacred and the secular. He understood God to be the owner of all. He makes mention of the difficulties the "ancestors," the first settlers of the colonies endured. Many who originally heard or read his 1775 prayer could trace their family roots to this founding puritan settlers of the colonies. Leonard asserts that the same spirit of freedom, self-reliance, unity, and liberty shown in the founding generation was present among American colonists in defiance of what they saw as encroaching restrictions from the British king and parliament.

fortitude suited to his important military station, and crown him with prosperity, success and honor.<sup>16</sup>

O my God, in obedience to the call of thy providence, I have engaged myself, and plighted my faith, to jeopard my life in the high places of the field in the defense of my dear country and the liberties of it, acknowledging thy people to be my people, their interest my interest, and their God to be my God.<sup>17</sup>

Thou knowest, O Lord, that it is not from a spirit of licentiousness,—lust of independence or delight in the effusion of human blood: but from a sense of that duty I owe to my country and posterity I have voluntarily engaged in this service.— And I desire now to make a solemn dedication of myself to thee in it through Jesus Christ; presenting myself to thy Divine Majesty to be disposed of by thee to thy glory and the good of America.

Oh do thou, I most fervently intreat, wash away mine iniquities, blot them out of thy remembrance, purify and cleanse my soul in the blood of the great Captain of my salvation—accept of—own and bless me!<sup>18</sup>

Teach, I pray thee, my hands to war, and my fingers to fight<sup>19</sup> in the defense of America, and the rights and liberties of it! Impress upon my mind a true sense of my duty, and the obligation I am under to my

<sup>16</sup> Seeking God's help for military victory is a theme widely acknowledged in the Bible. For example, Moses sought the Lord's help in overcoming the Egyptian army at the Red Sea (Exodus 14-15). Praying for civil leaders, as Chaplain Leonard does here by name for the Continental Congress and for General George Washington as the Commander in Chief, is also a consistent biblical theme. For example, I Timothy 2:1-2 says, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."

<sup>17</sup> Chaplain Leonard acknowledges that serving in the Continental army against Great Britain could cost him his life. Knowing of the pending danger, he quotes from the Old Testament book of Ruth, when Ruth pledges herself to her family, her people, and the God of Israel (Ruth 1:16-17).

<sup>18</sup> Here Abiel Leonard clearly displays his New Light, evangelical Protestant theology. He speaks of Jesus Christ as the captain of his salvation (Hebrews 2:10), whose blood was shed to wash away his iniquities (Isaiah 53:4-6; 1 John 1:7), and to blot out the remembrance of his sins (Isaiah 43:25; Hebrews 8:12). Leonard saw himself as a new man from the inside out, reborn and forgiven of his sins and able to declare it. This was classic New Light doctrine.

<sup>19</sup> This is a quote from Psalm 144:1, which says, "Blessed *be* the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, *and* my fingers to fight."

country! And enable me to pay a due and ready respect and obedience to all my officers.<sup>20</sup> Grant unto me courage, zeal and resolution in the day of battle, that I may play the man<sup>21</sup> for my people, and the cities of my God; choosing rather to lay down my life, than either through cowardice or desertion betray the glorious cause I am engaged in.

And, O Lord, if it seem good in thy sight, shield and protect me; cover my head in the day of battle; and suffer not the arrows of death that may fly around me, to wound or destroy me:<sup>22</sup> but may I live to do further service to my country—to the church and people of God, and interest of Jesus Christ, and see peace and tranquility restored to this land.<sup>23</sup> Give me grace, that I may spend my time in my proper employment as a soldier;<sup>24</sup> furnishing myself with such military skill as may qualify me to stand in a day of war, and to speak with the enemy in the gate;<sup>25</sup> wisely filling up my spare hours in acts of religion.

May I detest and abhor all sinful oaths, execrations and blasphemies; never using thy name, but on solemn occasions, and then with the most

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<sup>20</sup> Chaplain Leonard's desire to "pay a due and ready respect and obedience to all my officers," falls under the biblical principle of submission to legitimate authority (Mark 12:17; Romans 13:1-2; 1 Peter 2:13-14).

<sup>21</sup> The expression "play the man" is from the King James Version of the Bible. It is famously used in II Samuel 10:12, when the Hebrew leader Joab sees that he is surrounded by enemy Syrians in battle. Joab encouraged his overwhelmed troops by seeking God in prayer and preparing to fight, to "play the man." Joab won the battle and gave credit to the Lord.

<sup>22</sup> Leonard is here freely quoting from various biblical Psalms. God as "a shield and protector" is a common theme. Psalm 140:7 speaks of the Lord covering the psalmist's head in day of battle. Psalm 91:5 states, "Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; *nor* for the arrow *that* flieth by day."

<sup>23</sup> It is interesting to note that at this early date of 1775, Chaplain Leonard was not praying that the colonies might become a separate, independent nation from Great Britain, but that there might be peace.

<sup>24</sup> The phrase "proper employment as a soldier" speaks of the dignity of military service. Jesus spoke of this dignity in Luke 3:14 and displayed his respect for soldiers in his interaction with the Roman Centurion in Luke 7:1-10.

<sup>25</sup> Gates in Bible days were places where business was conducted, and decisions were made (Genesis 19:1; Ruth 4:1,11). Chaplain Leonard quotes from Psalm 127:5, which describes the blessed man who "speaks with the enemy at the gates."

profound reverence!<sup>26</sup> May I never so far lose my liberty, as to become a servant of meats and drinks; but teach me to use thy good creatures soberly and temperately: not enslaving myself to, nor losing my reason by indulging a brutal appetite!<sup>27</sup> Enable me to flee all those vices of gaming, rioting, chambering and wantonness which have a destructive and fatal tendency: but as a stranger and pilgrim may I abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul!<sup>28</sup> Enable me to put off all anger, wrath, malice and strife; and live in love with, and in the exercise of kindness to my fellow-soldiers!<sup>29</sup> Being content with my wages, may I never do violence to any man, nor seize upon his property through covetousness or greediness of spoil!<sup>30</sup> And may I prove myself a faithful follower of Jesus Christ, whom all the armies of heaven follow; fight the good fight of faith; and have my present conflicts against the world, the flesh and the devil crowned with victory and triumph!<sup>31</sup>

Now, O my God, from a mind deeply affected with a sense of thy wisdom, power, goodness and faithfulness, I desire to commit all my concerns to thee, —to depend upon thy help and protection, in all the difficulties and dangers; and upon thy care and provision, in all the wants and necessities that can befall me!

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<sup>26</sup> There was a tendency among the troops to be careless in reverence to the name of the Lord. Using God's name in a profane way was considered a sin and a violation of the second commandment, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain," (Exodus 20: 7). Chaplain Leonard heard this irreverence towards the Lord among the troops and he corrected the men, vowing never to follow their ignoble example.

<sup>27</sup> Chaplain Leonard is here referring to Romans 14:17, which states, "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

<sup>28</sup> A quote from I Peter 2:11.

<sup>29</sup> Here Chaplain Leonard loosely quotes from Ephesians 4:31-32; "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

<sup>30</sup> In Luke 3:14, Jesus is approached by a group of Roman soldiers who are seeking spiritual advice. Jesus could have said that their occupation as soldiers was illegitimate, and to follow Him meant they had to abandon military service. But Jesus said the opposite. Jesus told these spiritually searching soldiers, "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages."

<sup>31</sup> The phrase "fight the good fight of faith" comes from I Timothy 6:12. The reference to "the world, the flesh, and the devil" is from 1 John 2:16.



And my family and kindred, whom I have left behind, I recommend to thy care; to receive the blessings of God, the comforts and supports of thy providence and the sanctification of thy Spirit.

And, O Thou, who didst preserve the children of Israel from the hand of Pharaoh and his host,—didst protect and deliver them from all dangers,—didst redeem them out of all their troubles,—and broughtest them out of the land of bondage into a state of liberty,— deliver, I pray thee, thy distressed, afflicted and oppressed people in this land out of all their troubles!<sup>32</sup> Preserve them in truth and peace, in unity and safety, in all storms, and against all temptations and enemies! And by means of the present contest<sup>33</sup> may the liberties of America be established upon a firmer foundation than ever; and she became the excellency of the whole earth, and the joy of many generations!

And grant, O Lord, that the inhabitants of Great-Britain may arise and vindicate their liberties; and a glorious reunion take place between them and thy people in this land, founded upon the principles of liberty and righteousness: that the Britons and the Americans may rejoice in the King as the minister of God to both for good.<sup>34</sup> Hear me, O my God, and accept of these my petitions through Jesus Christ, to whom with thee, O Father, and the Holy Spirit, one God, be glory, honor and praise, forever and ever.<sup>35</sup> AMEN.

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<sup>32</sup> As early as 1775, Chaplain Leonard saw that the conflict with Great Britain was causing economic hardships for the American colonists. Trade was restricted, ports were blocked, food and other goods were looted, and trade with British controlled Canada was curtailed.

<sup>33</sup> “And by means of the present contest” means that a state of war existed between Great Britain and the thirteen British colonies in America.

<sup>34</sup> Chaplain Leonard prayed for peace and reunification of the American colonies to Great Britain. His goal at this early date was for the thirteen American colonies to rejoin the British government under the king and parliament.

<sup>35</sup> The benediction of this prayer is distinctly trinitarian. The doctrine of the tri-unity of God was under attack in the eighteenth-century English-speaking world. On both sides of the Atlantic, Unitarians had made progress in diminishing the significance of the biblical text, replacing scriptural authority with the latest deist and humanist speculations. Chaplain Leonard would have none of this. Depending on the biblical text and the example of the Puritan founding fathers of New England, Leonard was an advocate for historic Protestant trinitarianism.

***Book Review:***

**THE PURPOSE DRIVEN CHURCH**

***by Rick Warren***

*Review by Jim Delaney*

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*Jim Delaney is the Pastor of Salem Bible Church in Salem, New Hampshire. \*Editor's Note\*: In 1995, megachurch pastor Rick Warren published *The Purpose Driven Church*. Within weeks it was a best seller. It has never been out of print. The book and its author have received numerous reviews in the Christian press and the mainstream press. This book has received many awards and has been the subject of much support and criticism. The influence of this book is still felt today.*

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**THE PRINCIPLE OF PRAGMATISM**

**R**ick Warren uses a surfing illustration to demonstrate how church leaders should operate. He says pastors need to learn to recognize a “wave of God’s Spirit and ride it” or “catch a spiritual wave of growth”. His advice is to learn how to recognize a wave in which people are getting saved (a successful method). He also suggests that we learn to get off dying waves. (Methods that do not seem to be producing fruit.) This is nothing more than a modern illustration of an old principle broad-minded Evangelicals have been teaching for decades, namely, “if it works, it must be right”! His advice seems to boil down to this: look around at different methods used by other churches, and if it seems to bring people in – jump on the bandwagon – ride the wave! His updated illustration of surfing is nothing more than a new and pretty face covering an old monster – the unbiblical principle of pragmatism. This is the principle that serves as a foundation to

his whole approach to church growth. The fanciest structure built on a faulty foundation is unsafe.

### **RIDICULE OF THE “OLD FASHIONED**

Warren mocks churches which “seem to think that the 1950’s was the golden age, and they are determined to preserve that era in their church.” He later makes it clear what he means by this. He encourages young pastors to leave behind that old-fashioned church music in favor of jazz or rock or whatever turns your people on! He encourages churches to imitate the culture and “dress down” for church. To his credit he states that “there are those who, fearing irrelevance, foolishly imitate the latest fad or fashion. In their attempt to relate to today’s culture they compromise the message and lose all sense of being set apart.”

Rick Warren may have maintained the same doctrinal statement, yet he and those who follow his methodology practice exactly what they say is “foolish.” He is desperately trying to be relevant, and in the process has lost all sense of being “set apart.” Walking into church with food and drink, dressed down as if at the mall, and hearing rock and jazz music may be relevant, but it is NOT much different from the world. If wearing dress clothes into the house of God and expecting conservative, Christ honoring music makes me an old fashioned, cultural relic, so be it! On page 62, Warren attempts to shelter himself from criticism on this issue. He says, “Never criticize what God is blessing, even though it may be a style of ministry that makes you uncomfortable.” (This phrase is repeated on pg.156).

In other words, the new rock music, the new dress down look, and all the “cultural changes” which make many fundamentalists uncomfortable should be overlooked IF IT WORKS! Of course, we should not try to preserve the styles of the 1950’s. But we could learn a lot from that generation. Churches in the 1950’s would never have imagined women coming to church in miniskirts. The idea of bringing rock music into the church would have shocked even the liberal denominations of that day. There is no question that standards are falling all around us today. Fundamentalists who long for the “old fashioned” standards of decency in church should be praised, not ridiculed!

### **ENAMORED WITH SUCCESS**

Fundamentalists have for years made “faithfulness to the written word of God” their hallmark. Many fine sermons have been preached in which it was

declared that God has not called us to be successful, but to be faithful. This principle is well documented in the Word of God. Noah faithfully preached for many decades, and yet seemed to have precious little fruit to show for it! While he may have only won his own family, yet he was successful in God's sight. Missionaries around the world have sown the precious seed of the gospel for years and have not seen much fruit for their labors. Yet Rick Warren strongly disagrees with that principle. He argues that God HAS called us to be successful. He cites an example from the gospel in which the Lord Jesus judged the unfruitful tree (Matt.21:19). He states that the nation of Israel lost its privileges because of unfruitfulness (Matt.21:43). He concludes from that that God HAS called us to be fruitful and that God is not pleased if we are not successful. But in those examples, he cites, the lack of fruit was the proof that Israel was an apostate, unbelieving nation. It had nothing to do winning souls for Christ.

Fruit for the Christian is not measured merely by attendance records or the size of the buildings. (If so, the Mormons are quite fruitful!) Fruit is often not seen by men. The fruit of the Spirit is the kind of fruit the New Testament encourages, and that is not easily measured. Warren states that "God expects to see results." He also states that God "has called us to be effective." His point (based on his philosophy of pragmatism) is that if a ministry is not successful and fruitful (winning many souls), then it is not faithful. Strong objections would be raised by Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and hundreds of missionaries around the world who have sacrificed all to serve Christ in places that seem to bear little fruit. God does not measure "success" in the same way men do. Warren and many other church-growth promoters seem to demand tangible fruit that men can see and touch and measure. Men can easily become intoxicated and enamored by the kind of success which is measured in bodies and buildings and bucks. God's measuring stick is quite different. He sees fruit where human eyes cannot (I Cor. 4:5). He sees failure where some men see success (II Tim.2:5).

### **A CHURCH MINISTRY BASED ON A MARKET-STUDY OF THE UNREGENERATE, NOT THE SCRIPTURES**

When Rick Warren began his church, he started out using the very same methodology as Robert Schuller. Not surprisingly, Schuller praises the book inside the front cover! Warren spent twelve weeks going door to door and surveying the "needs" of the people. Therefore he offers what he calls a "full menu" of support groups for empty nesters, divorced couples, grief recovery,

etc. In other words, offer the community/consumer what they want, and they will come. Perhaps the title “Market Driven Church” would suffice as well as “Purpose Driven Church.” While he SAYS he is not “pandering to consumerism,” his own words seem to contradict that. His market-driven mentality is well documented by his own illustration.

For instance, on page 157 he writes, “Imagine what would happen to a commercial radio station if it tried to appeal to everyone’s taste in music. A station that alternated its format between classical, heavy metal, country, rap, reggae, and southern gospel would end up alienating everyone. No one would listen to that station! Successful radio stations select a target audience. They research their broadcast area... and then choose a format that reaches their target.” He then applies that “market research methodology” to church growth. A church, to be successful, must target its audience, and then appeal to that audience. He even goes so far as to claim that Jesus targeted the audience of Israel “in order to be effective, not to be exclusive.”

Jesus’ choice of Israel as the focus of His ministry had nothing whatsoever to do with any desire on His part to be successful or effective. He ended up with only a handful of true followers. The nation chanted, “Crucify Him!” Consider Rick Warren’s approach to selecting a style of worship. His choice of music styles not only demonstrates his lack of discernment in music, but it is quite telling about his philosophy and methodology overall. On page 159 he says that a “small church must also make choices on tough issues. For example, since it’s impossible to appeal to everyone’s taste in music style in a single service, and a small church cannot offer multiple services, they must choose a target. Changing styles on alternate weeks will produce the same effect a radio station with a mixed format. No one will be happy.” Several things should be noted in this statement. First, he promotes the concept of “appealing to everyone’s taste” in music if possible. [What ever happened to pleasing GOD with our music?] Secondly, he seems to suggest that alternate services would be an acceptable method in order to appeal to different groups – the older folks who want the old-fashioned hymns, and the younger set who gravitate towards rock and roll or rap. The Bible teaches that the young should be able to LEARN from the brethren who are older and wiser. Separating them spells disaster for the church in the next generation! That next generation will know nothing about church but the “rock and roll” good-time church! Thirdly, his goal in all of this is clearly to make people happy.

Warren writes that one of the advantages of a larger church is that you will be “able to offer choices in program, events, and even worship styles.” His

real principle for church growth is clearly defined here. Ask the unregenerate community what they want in a church and give it to them! May it never be that anyone should use these principles in starting up a church in Las Vegas or San Francisco's North Beach!

This same philosophy is applied to dress. Warren has targeted his area and discovered that people in his community do not like to dress up. (Who does?!) They prefer casual, informal meetings. Therefore, Warren said, "I never wear a coat and tie when I speak at Saddleback services" (His home church). I intentionally dress down to match the mind set of those I'm trying to reach." He states that Jesus used this methodology. He and His disciples "targeted people they were most likely to reach – people like themselves. Jesus was not being prejudiced, he was being strategic." To say that Jesus targeted Israel because He could relate them culturally and in order to be strategic (successful) flies in the face of prophecy, the real purpose of His ministry, and common sense. Jesus "targeted" Israel because He was sent there by His Father, not because He felt He would be more successful there than in Egypt! What does this say about missionary endeavors? Should missionaries target only those people who are "culturally similar" to the missionary?

The Bible indicates that God's Holy Spirit leads men to specific locations and to a specific place of ministry (Acts 13:1-3; 16:6-10). The apostles were not sent to Macedonia because they were "like" those people. Greeks and Jews were very much UNLIKE each other. Should Christian churches really design their worship services and ministries based on what the unregenerate people in their community like? Should the church attempt to be "like" the community? I think not. The Bible indicates that the church SHOULD be different from the community/world! The difference should be as obvious as the difference between light and darkness... life and death!

Rick Warren writes on page 190 that he read Robert Schuller's book on church growth. Schuller went door to door asking people the question, "What do you want in a church?" and "Why don't you go to church?" Warren thought it was "a great idea, but felt the questions need to be rephrased for the more skeptical 1990's." Therefore, he designed a church that would please men. I can't imagine a method MORE contrary to the Scriptures. "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal.1:10). Granted, the context of Galatians one is the MESSAGE of the gospel and not the METHOD of ministry. Warren may consider himself "orthodox" in this matter because he has not changed the message, only the methods. But when you start off attempting to please men with your method, it CAN lead to

trying to please men with the message. This is exactly what Schuller has done. Read his book, *Self Esteem: The New Reformation!* He promotes a DIFFERENT gospel!

It should not be surprising to see a shift in the message over time, if one's real goal is to please men, make them happy, and give them what they want! In I Thess. 2:3-10, Paul again states HIS principle of ministry. His purpose was NOT to please men (vs.4). In this context, Paul speaks not only about the message, but also the method – the way he ministered in their midst. In NOTHING was Paul trying to please men or make them happy. In fact, Paul made quite a few men UNHAPPY with him and his ministry! Paul certainly did NOT enter a city, take a survey of what the ungodly pagans in the “community” would like to see in a church, and then design a church to please them! He did not suffer all he did (II Cor. 11:23-29) because his ministry was designed to appeal to the “unchurched.” His ministry was offensive to self-righteous men. His ministry was different from the community. He was led by the Holy Spirit, not a market survey.

### **DISDAIN FOR FUNDAMENTALISM AND SEPARATION**

Rick Warren's distaste for fundamentalism is expressed subtly, yet distinctly. On page 236 he writes, “Must we choose between liberalism and legalism? Is there a third alternative to imitation and isolation?” Note what he considers to be the opposite of liberalism – legalism. The opposite of liberalism and modernism is fundamentalism! He knows that but avoids using the term. Note how he refers to the doctrine of separation – isolation! After asking if we must choose between the liberals or the fundamentalists (which he calls legalists), he offers a third alternative... a new (?) method. Consider his words: “The strategy of Jesus is the antidote to both extremes: infiltration!” Rick Warren subtly refers to the fundamentalist as “extreme,” “isolationist,” and a “legalists.” Rather than having to choose between the liberal and the fundamentalist, Warren offers a third alternative: “infiltration.” His words sound strangely like a quote from Dr. Harold Ockenga. “The New Evangelicalism has changed its strategy from one of separation to one of infiltration.” Rick Warren offers this “third alternative” as if it were his own idea. It may well be that he had the same thoughts running through his mind as did Dr. Ockenga a generation ago. Their philosophy and methodology are identical. It is thoroughly compromised, broad Evangelical thinking.

Warren continues to point out the error of modern day “Pharisees” in the church today. He states with disdain that they are “more concerned about

purity than people.” Again, his argument seems aimed at the fundamentalist/separatist, who have for centuries fought for the purity of the church by practicing biblical separation. On the next page he says that “some isolationists have been extremely judgmental of seeker-sensitive churches.” I must confess that I am one of those fundamental separatists who find the entire seeker movement to be built on a faulty foundation. The Lord Jesus commands us to “judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24). Paul commands us to “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil” (I Thess.5:21-22). Although it arrives in a slick, new cover, Rick Warren’s concept of church growth has every appearance of the old-time evil called broad or compromised Evangelicalism.

### MAN-CENTERED PHILOSOPHY

Examples of this shallow Evangelical philosophy abound throughout the book. His aim is obviously to please men. Consider Rick Warren’s own words: “Figure out what mood you want your service to project, and then create it.” “We start positive and end positive.” “We use humor in our services...it is not a sin to help people feel good.” “Cultivate an informal, relaxed, and friendly atmosphere.” “We used classical, country, jazz, rock, reggae, easy listening, and even rap. The crowd never knew what was coming next. The result: we didn’t please anybody...” Therefore, they changed their music to one style: rock! “We’ve often been referred to in the press as ‘the church that likes to rock.’ We use the style of music that most people in our church listen to on the radio.” (He determined that by another survey). “We made a strategic decision to stop singing hymns in our seeker services.” “We have attracted thousands more because of our music.” “Saddleback now has a complete pop/rock orchestra.” “I sometimes wonder how many more people we might have reached in our early years if we’d had MIDI-quality music in our services.” “Use more performed music than congregational singing...” (emphasis on entertainment). “The ground we have in common with unbelievers is not the Bible, but our common needs, hurts, and interests as human beings. You cannot start with a text...” “Make your members feel special” ... “they need to feel special.”

Rick Warren’s church (and others like it) have attracted tens of thousands. His methods do work. He says that the reason for the spectacular growth has been his emphasis on creating a “purpose driven church.” It could be equally forcefully argued however, that the real reason for the spectacular growth is not at all related to his thesis. The real reason for the growth is because of the



accommodation principle of pragmatism. He asked the people what they wanted, and he gave it to them. He provided the product the market demanded, and it sold like hot cakes. If you please people, they will come and come again.

But what could be more contrary to the principles found in Scripture? Consider what God told the prophet Ezekiel in Ezek. 3:4-11. Ezekiel was told that the people would not like his ministry or message, and yet he was to preach it anyway, regardless of the response. Ezekiel was successful if he did what God said. His success in God's sight had nothing to do with the response of the people. It had to do with the faithfulness of the servant. They would know that a prophet was in their midst. He was not to ask the folks what kind of a prophetic ministry would most appeal to them. He was given a forehead harder than flint to stand for the truth against all opposition. "Whether they will hear or forbear" was not the prophet's responsibility. His goal was not to get as large a crowd as he could. His job was to preach the truth, and he did (vs.11). That is success in God's eyes. That was a fruitful and faithful ministry.

Of course, our churches will grow faster if we throw out our standards. Of course, our churches will grow faster if we please men and give them what they want. Yet, the Bible says we are to aim to please God, not men. If we are really concerned about learning how to "build a church," does it not make more sense to study God's Word, rather than studying polls and surveys of popular opinion? Conspicuous by their absence in this book on church growth were any extended expositions from the pastoral epistles. Isn't God's opinion on the matter what we should really be seeking?

Rick Warren's approach to church growth stems from his philosophy: a man-centered pragmatism. From that faulty foundation arises a ridicule of the old fashioned, and a disdain for the Christian fundamentalist/separatist. Like so many in our age, being intoxicated by the sweet aroma of worldly success, he has stooped to building a church ministry based on a market-study of the unregenerate, rather than a Bible-study from the appropriate Scriptures. God help us.

***Book Review:***

**THE TOXIC WAR ON MASCULINITY**

***by Nancy Pearcey***

*Review by Nat Weeks*

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*Nathaniel S. Weeks is a friend of AGC chaplains and has family ties to former US senators and cabinet level members of various presidents. A graduate of New England prep-schools and Dartmouth ('74), "Nat" was an avowed "amiable agnostic," but was converted by Creation ministries which showed better science than evolution did. He is a lifelong learner and scholar in his own right and has spent his entire life demonstrating and writing about the hand of God in all aspects of American history and social life.*

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**N**ancy Pearcey in her timely, insightful, and definitive work, *The Toxic War on Masculinity* (2023), addresses how men became so confused as to what it means to be a man. She is fair, insightful, sobering, and solution oriented. According to the book, before the industrial revolution (1750-1850) sons were with their fathers before and after each day of farming or trade. Many developed into solid, Christian men, however, as the fathers grew up they relocated into industrialized cities, where better paying jobs were offered. This limited the time and opportunity to influence their sons daily, except for maybe on Sunday. However, due to the exhausting workweek, dads often stopped going to church. This greatly reduced the chance for fathers to become the masculine role model they once were.

These sons became the first generation raised by women. Mothers tried to fill the gap and take their sons to church. However, by the late 1800s, women

made up ninety percent of church attendance and it gave rise to a whole generation of a “bevy of sissies.” Boys began to resist “feminine guidance” not wanting to become effeminate and lose their status as males.

Women then tried to reform their husbands, an impossible undertaking and one which released husbands from the responsibilities of being virtuous. The resulting failure could then be blamed on their wives who became viewed as nags and shrews, increasing alienation. Women then tried to reform society by shutting down taverns, saloons, brothels, and gambling houses with little long-term success because all along, the problem was the human heart.

Absent from church and without sufficient guidance from their fathers, the sons (unable to see what it meant to be a man from their mother or female teachers at Sunday School or regular school) heeded increasingly anti-Christian ideas from peers, novels, evolution, the media, Social Darwinism, and from the claims of liberal theology. Furthermore, being disconnected from traditional structures of accountability (family, church, village), and without the example of good fathers, they easily fell prey to the vices available in the big cities. When testosterone is not well channeled by an involved dad, young men can become among the world’s most destructive forces. Years of engaging in casual sex left men self-centered and immature. In 1830, the average American drank three times as much as they do today. These alienated sons became convinced that men are naturally immoral, sexually promiscuous, irresponsible criminals, violent, lustful, sexual predators with animalistic passions, fighting for power and glory, while addicted to drugs and alcohol. “Might makes right,” and “survival of the fittest,” became their war-cry. When a culture denigrates masculinity, women will be perpetually stuck with boys who have no incentive to mature or to honor their commitments.

In the last generation, the rise of using Ritalin and antidepressants is a signal for sons to say, “I need my daddy!” Lack of fathers in the home accounts for the following problems:

Absent fathers account for sixty-three percent of youth suicides, ninety percent of homeless and runaway children, eighty-five percent of children who exhibit behavioral disorders, seventy-five percent of high school dropouts, and eight five percent of youths sitting in prison. Given these statistics, is it surprising that today, sixty-five percent of American husbands, unwilling to be influenced by their wives, ignore, criticize, and drown out their voices?

Eighty-five percent of all husbands have never been taught how to be close to God or anyone in the family. Since young boys lack a father figure, they never learn how to Biblically love women or lack a role model. Lack of intimacy with God or women has given rise to the sins of pornography where self-gratification has replaced achieving closeness with their wives. Most husbands think that if they show any fear, weakness or vulnerability to their wives, their wives will lose respect for them. All of these things God the Father properly teaches us and the Word of God models how a father should train and teach his sons. Intimate things, like sharing thoughts and feelings with a wife meets both the husband and wife's needs.

Typically, husbands are not intentionally malicious or inconsiderate. They are not always acting out of a character flaw or a moral fault. Most are well-meaning men who genuinely care about their wife and family. Many good, well-intentioned men don't understand why their marriages fall apart. It's often the case of a good man behaving badly. The problem is that modern society does not teach men relationship skills. More dangerous are the husbands who view themselves as Christian but who sporadically attend church which have the very highest rates of divorce and domestic violence, in fact, twenty percent higher than their atheistic, pagan counterparts. They know enough about the Scripture admonition where "the wife must submit to the husband" (Eph. 5:22-31) to demand their rights as a husband but lack the other part of the context where a husband needs to love his wife like himself." Unfortunately, the most violent husbands in America claim to be evangelical Protestants. Statistically, if a man is not willing to share the duties and responsibilities in the marriage, there is only a nineteen percent chance the marriage will survive.

In contrast, sincere, Christian men who attend church at least three times per month find that sex is four times more satisfying for both husband and wife than for couples with no religious activity. They have the lowest rate of domestic violence and divorce of any major group in the USA, thirty-five percent less likely than secular men and fifty percent less likely than those who are nominal Christians.

After giving statistics about the problems of not having fathers in the home, Pearcey then gives some insights into what the world system says about trying to solve this problem. First, what does not work is marriage counseling. Domestic violence begins in the heart of an abuser, not in the dynamics of the relationship. For various reasons, men in churches seem to be the victim, so there is a bias against wives or maybe because of the patristic structure of the church. Pearcey mentions that currently thirty percent of

women in congregations have experienced either sexual or domestic abuse. The cure for this is to address from the pulpit and emphasize Biblical solutions for this problem. Lack of a correct Biblical role model is the result of men abusing their wives. The best way to deal with that is to remind and encourage men to take a more loving and supporting role as promoted from the pulpit.

In the later chapters, Pearcey brings up some interesting “fallout” from men not doing their part in the family. Beginning with the ‘flappers’ in the Roaring Twenties, women began to leave the church. They competently filled the jobs of men who left to fight WW1 and WW2. Now, nobody was home as a role-model for girls who desired to be available mothers and supportive wives. After showing the fall-out of men not fulfilling the role God gave them, Pearcey then gives some solutions and hope for the situation.

To attract men back to church, sermons became less emotional and focused more on reason, by addressing evolution scientifically, and liberal theology intellectually. Pastors challenged young men to satiate their thirst for risk and adventure by fighting evil, overcoming sin, protecting the innocent while advancing biblical truth throughout the world to redeem our culture and families. Billy Sunday taunted, “Are you man enough to be a Christian?” Godly manhood does not shirk responsibility but embraces it. Our future depends on the condition of society, which depends on the condition of the family, which depends on the condition of the Man of the House. A family-centered perspective is the most reliable predictor of whether a man has a good marriage. This was an A+ book which you will not regret reading!

— *The AGC* —

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