



Faith & Freedom

The Founding Fathers
in Their Own Words

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Introduction

This book is intended as a reminder to twenty-first-century Americans that most of the men we recognize as our nation's Founding Fathers were exceptional people who were guided by their Christian faith in establishing the foundation upon which the United States of America became the most powerful and prosperous nation the world has ever known.

Regarding the importance of understanding our history, Supreme Court Justice Joseph Story wrote in his *Commentaries on the Constitution* (1833):

Let the American youth never forget, that they possess a noble inheritance, bought by the toils and sufferings and blood of their ancestors; and capacity, if wisely improved, and faithfully guarded, of transmitting to their latest posterity all the substantial blessings of life, the peaceful enjoyment of liberty, property, religion, and independence. The structure has been erected by architects of consummate skill and fidelity; its foundations are solid; its compartments are beautiful, as well as useful; its arrangements are full of wisdom and order; and its defenses are impregnable from without. It has been reared for immortality, if the work of man may justly aspire to such a title. It may nevertheless, perish in an hour by the folly, or corruption, or negligence of its only keepers, THE PEOPLE.

To properly understand our history, we need to know as much as possible about the men who were involved in making that history. It was faith in the God of the Judeo-Christian Bible that drove America's earliest settlers to seek a place where they would have the freedom to live their lives and raise their children according to their deep-seated beliefs. Most of the Founding Fathers shared that same faith.

"The Founding Fathers were students of the Bible," pointed out John Eidsmoe in his well-researched book *Christianity and the Constitution*. According to Eidsmoe's research, fifty-two of the fifty-five delegates to the Constitutional Convention of 1787 were members of various Christian denominations. There was also "one lapsed Quaker and sometimes Anglican, and one [alleged] open Deist—Dr. Franklin, who attended every kind of Christian worship, called for public prayer, and contributed to all denominations."

"America is often called 'a Christian nation' not because it was founded as such, but because its Founding Fathers were either Christians or had been influenced throughout their entire lives by the Christian consensus that surrounded them," Tim LaHaye said in his informative book *Faith of Our Founding Fathers*. "Christianity is a way of life. And that way of life had so permeated this nation by 1787 that it extended its influence to every area, including the fields of law, government, morality, marriage, and business."

Because of space limitations, I focused on the lives and words of twelve of the most prominent of the more than 200 men who came to be known as Founding Fathers. In order to provide an accurate description of their character and intent, I felt it was fundamentally important to include direct quotations from the men themselves that unambiguously illustrated their thinking about God, the Bible, the proper role of government, and the nature of man.

All Americans should find inspiration in the wisdom, character, and faith of the people who designed a government that has provided more freedom, more opportunities to excel, and a higher quality of life for its citizens than any other nation in recorded history.

Making certain young Americans understand their history and their godly heritage is vitally

to the future of the United States and to the memory of the God-fearing, Bible-believing men and women who created that heritage. As author Michael Crichton points out, “If you don’t know history, you don’t know anything. You’re a leaf that doesn’t know it’s part of a tree.”

Patrick Henry

Spirit of the Independence Movement

It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians; not on religions, but on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For this very reason people of other faiths have been afforded asylum, prosperity, and freedom of worship here.

PATRICK HENRY

On March 23, 1775, just twenty-seven days before “the shot heard ‘round the world” was fired, Patrick Henry delivered a speech that ended with words that have become synonymous with his name: “Give me liberty or give me death!”

Much had been written and said in favor of American independence prior to Henry's famous exhortation. But historians have generally recognized that his passionate oration, in which he forcefully made the point that the colonies must now choose between freedom and slavery, was one of the most important events causing the smoldering embers of discontent to become a bonfire of revolution.

On April 19, the ongoing exchange of hot words and diplomatic wrangling between the thirteen colonies and the mother country was succeeded by an exchange of bullets and bombs during the battles of Lexington and Concord. That fateful day was immortalized by Ralph Waldo Emerson in his poem “Concord Hymn,” in which he mentioned the “spirit that made those heroes dare to die, and leave their children free.”

That spirit existed in abundance among the men we recognize as Founding Fathers, but two of them, Patrick Henry and Samuel Adams, have been honored with the special label “spirit of the independence movement.” Both men were outspoken Christians who reflected the principle recorded in 2 Corinthians 3:17: “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”

Henry and Adams made frequent references to their belief that independence was God-ordained and that He would give them victory over a much stronger opponent, a conviction not universally shared by their fellow colonists. Although a substantial portion of the population had grave misgivings regarding armed rebellion against the British Empire, momentum in favor of separation reached critical mass following Henry's passionate exhortation, which he delivered following a couple of more conciliatory speeches by fellow delegates to the Virginia Convention. Every American should be familiar with Henry's brilliant but powerful words as recorded on March 23, 1775:

Mr. President: No man thinks more highly than I do of the patriotism, as well as abilities, of the very worthy gentlemen who have just addressed the House. But different men often see the same subject in different lights; and, therefore, I hope that it will not be thought disrespectful to those gentlemen, if entertaining as I do, opinions of a character very opposite to theirs, I shall speak forth my sentiments freely and without reserve. This is no time for ceremony. The question before the House is one of awful moment to this country. For my own part I consider it as nothing less than a question of freedom or slavery; and in proportion to the magnitude of the subject ought to be the freedom of the debate. It is only in this way that we can hope to arrive at truth, and fulfill the great responsibility which we hold to God and our country. Should I keep back my opinions at such a time, through fear of giving offense, I should consider myself guilty of treason toward my country, and of an act of disloyalty toward the majesty of heaven, which I revere above all earthly kings.

Mr. President, it is natural to man to indulge in the illusions of hope. We are apt to shut our eyes against a painful truth, and listen to the song of that siren, till she transforms us into beasts. Is this the part of wise men, engaged in great and arduous struggle for liberty? Are we disposed to be on the number of those who, having eyes, see not, and having ears, hear not, the things which so nearly concern their temporal salvation? For my part, whatever anguish of spirit it may cost, I am willing to know the whole truth; to know the worst and provide for it.

I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided; and that is the lamp of experience. I know of no way of judging of the future but by the past. And judging by the past I wish to know what there has been in the conduct of the British ministry for the last ten years to justify those hopes with which gentlemen have been pleased to solace themselves and the House? Is it that insidious smile with which our petition has been lately received? Trust it not, sir; it will prove a snare to your feet. Suffer not yourselves to be betrayed with a kiss. Ask yourselves how this gracious reception of our petition comports with these warlike preparations which cover our waters and darken our land. Are fleets and armies necessary to a work of love and reconciliation? Have we shown ourselves so unwilling to be reconciled, that force must be called in to win back our love? Let us not deceive ourselves, sir. These are the implements of war and subjugation; the last arguments to which kings resort. I ask gentlemen, sir, what means this martial array, if its purpose be not to force us to submission? Can gentlemen assign any other possible motives for it? Has Great Britain any enemy, in this quarter of the world, to call for all this accumulation of navies and armies? No, sir, she has none. They are meant for us; they can be meant for no other.

They are sent over to bind and rivet upon us those chains which the British ministry have been so long forging. And what have we to oppose them? Shall we try argument? Sir, we have been trying that for the last ten years. Have we anything new to offer on the subject?

Nothing. We have held the subject up in every light of which it is capable; but it has been all in vain. Shall we resort to entreaty and humble supplication? What terms shall we find which have not been already exhausted? Let us not, I beseech you, sir, deceive ourselves longer. Sir, we have done everything that could be done to avert the storm which is now coming on. We have petitioned; we have remonstrated; we have supplicated; we have prostrated ourselves before the throne, and have implored its interposition to arrest the tyrannical hands of the ministry and parliament. Our petitions have been slighted; our remonstrances have produced additional violence and insult; our supplications have been disregarded; and we have been spurned, with contempt, from the foot of the throne. In vain, after these things, may we indulge the fond hope of peace and reconciliation. There is no longer any room for hope. If we wish to be free—if we mean to preserve inviolate those inestimable privileges for which we have been so long contending—if we mean not basely to abandon the noble struggle in which we have been so long engaged, and which we have pledged ourselves never to abandon until the glorious object of our contest shall be obtained, we must fight! I repeat it, sir, we must fight! An appeal to arms and to the God of Hosts is all that is left us!

They tell us, sir, that we are weak; unable to cope with so formidable an adversary. But when shall we be stronger? Will it be the next week, or the next year? Will it be when we are totally disarmed, and when a British guard shall be stationed in every house? Shall we gather strength by irresolution and inaction? Shall we acquire the means of effectual resistance by lying supinely on our backs, and hugging the delusive phantom of hope, until our enemies shall have bound us hand and foot? Sir, we are not weak, if we make a proper use of the means which the God of nature hath placed in our power. Three millions of people, armed in the Holy cause of Liberty, and in such a country as that which we possess, are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us. Besides, sir, we shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations; and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us. The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave. Besides, sir, we have no election. If we were base enough to desire it, it is now too late to retire from the contest. There is no retreat but in submission and slavery! Our chains are forged! Their clanking may be heard on the plains of Boston! The war is inevitable—and let it come! I repeat it, sir, let it come!

It is in vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry peace, peace—but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the North will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are

already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!

Most in attendance were moved, and many shouted “To arms! To arms!” That included Thomas Jefferson, who later commented on Henry’s speech in his autobiography: “I attended the debate at the door of the lobby of the House of Burgesses, and heard the splendid display of Mr. Henry’s talents as a popular orator. They were great indeed; such as I have never heard from any other man. He appeared to speak as Homer wrote.”

Henry’s words leave no room for doubt regarding his belief in a vital link connecting biblical principles with proper governance. “It is when a people forget God that tyrants forge their chains,” he said. “A vitiated state of morals, a corrupted public conscience, is incompatible with freedom. No free government, or the blessings of liberty, can be preserved to any people but by a firm adherence to justice, moderation, temperance, frugality, and industry; and by a frequent recurrence to fundamental principles.”

The fundamental principles to which Henry referred are those whose basis is found in the Judeo-Christian Bible. “The Bible,” he said, “is a book worth more than all the other books that were ever printed.”

“Virtue, morality, and religion. This is the armor, my friend, and this alone that renders us invincible. These are the tactics we should study. If we lose these, we are conquered, fallen, indeed ... so long as our manners and principles remain sound, there is no danger,” Henry said.

Many who question the Christian faith of the Founding Fathers point to the issue of slavery as proof that they couldn’t have been Christians—or at least not very good ones, since slavery was not outlawed in the Constitution. But many of the Founders, including Henry, George Washington, and Benjamin Franklin, did make reference to the shamefulness of the practice of forced slavery, but, regrettably, they understood there was a more urgent national priority—to produce a constitution that could be ratified. Because of the entrenched position of slave owners in a number of southern states, they understood that the chances of getting the required number of states to ratify a constitution that included the outlawing of slavery were nonexistent. For that reason, they made the pragmatic decision to sidestep that divisive issue until the overriding need of establishing a unified nation under an acceptable national constitution was achieved.

Speaking for himself, but representing the feelings of most of the Founders on the issue of slavery, Henry wrote:

Is it not amazing that at a time when the rights of humanity are defined and understood with precision, in a country, above all others, fond of liberty, that in such an age and in such a country we find men professing a religion the most humane, mild, gentle and generous, adopting a principle as repugnant to humanity as it is inconsistent with the Bible, and destructive to liberty? Every thinking, honest man rejects it in speculation; how few in practice from conscientious motives! ... I believe a time will come when an opportunity will be offered to abolish this lamentable evil. Everything we do is to improve it, if it happens in our day; if not, let us transmit to our descendants, together with our slaves, a pity for their unhappy lot and an abhorrence of slavery. If we cannot reduce this wished-for reformation to practice, let us treat the unhappy victims with lenity. It is the furthest advance we can make toward justice. It is a debt we owe to the purity of our religion, to show that it

Henry was born May 29, 1736, on a tobacco plantation in Studley, Hanover County, Virginia. Henry received much of his education from his aristocratic father, Colonel John Henry, and his mother, Sarah, whose ancestry included King Alfred the Great of Scotland and William the Conqueror.

Both of young Patrick's parents were descended from families that boasted a number of prominent orators, preachers, and statesmen. Henry credited the writings of a cousin, Dr. William Robertson, with influencing his attitudes regarding honesty, loyalty, and courage—moral qualities he practiced and preached during his adult life.

Henry's formal education ended when he was removed from common school, as the colonial free public schools were called, at the age of ten. Under his father's tutelage, he was introduced to classic literature, the Bible, and the Greek and Latin languages. In addition to his interest in learning, Henry loved the outdoors and spent much of his youth hunting, fishing, and hiking.

Soon after Henry received his license to practice law in 1760, his name became well known, especially for his success in handling criminal cases. His reputation as a defender of colonial rights was enhanced by his involvement in a case in which he prevailed against King George III, which gave him a legal victory that helped him to become prominent in political circles.

Henry was elected as a delegate to the First Continental Congress in 1774 and to the Second Continental Congress in 1775. In 1776, he was elected to the first of his three terms as governor of Virginia.

Although elected as a delegate to the 1787 Constitutional Convention, Henry refused to attend because he believed a strong federal government would diminish many fundamental rights of the states. Once the Bill of Rights was added to the Constitution, however, he became reconciled to the advantages of a stronger federal government.

Along with so many of his fellow Founders, Patrick Henry was labeled a deist by some who apparently didn't know much about him. Here's his response to that charge: "Amongst other strange things said of me, I hear it is said by the deists that I am one of their number; and indeed, that some good people think I am no Christian. This thought gives me much more pain than the appellation of Tory; because I think religion of infinitely higher importance than politics; and I find much cause to reproach myself that I have lived so long and have given no decided and public proofs of my being a Christian. But, indeed, this is a character which I prize far above all this world has, or can boast."

Further attesting to his deep religious beliefs, he wrote in his last will and testament, "This is all the inheritance I can give to my dear family. The religion of Christ can give them more which will make them rich indeed."

Samuel Adams

Father of the American Revolution

I could say a thousand things to you, if I had leisure. I could dwell on the importance of piety and religion, of industry and frugality, of prudence, economy, regularity and even Government, all of which are essential to the well being of a family. But I have not time. I cannot however help repeating piety, because I think it indispensable. Religion in a family is at once its brightest ornament and its best security.

SAMUEL ADAMS

Samuel Adams was one of the earliest and most effective of the Founding Fathers in building support for colonial independence and in generating opposition to the English Parliament every provocation. Those activities earned Adams the title “Father of the American Revolution.”

In terms of population, the prospect of war against the British looked like a David versus Goliath situation, and there was much to support that characterization. By 1770, the population of the Colonies was approximately 2.5 million, 20 percent of whom were slaves while the combined population of the British Isles totaled approximately 9 million. Adams didn't see that as an insurmountable problem. “It does not take a majority to prevail,” he said, “but rather an irate, tireless minority, keen on setting brushfires of freedom in the minds of men.” Adams himself was an irate and tireless setter of brushfires that eventually brought freedom to his beloved country.

British leaders understood the dynamic role Adams played in the independence movement so well that General Thomas Gage, in an effort to end hostilities with the colonists before they began, offered pardons to all rebels except for Adams and John Hancock “whose offenses are of too flagitious nature to admit of any other consideration than that of condign punishment.”

General Gage also tried bribery as a method of silencing Adams, offering him “great gifts and advancement” if he would stop agitating the Colonists. Adams indignantly refused. The incident was recorded in historian B.J. Lossing's *The Signers of the Declaration of Independence*

When the governor was asked why Mr. Adams had not been silenced by office, he replied, that “such obstinacy and inflexible disposition of the man, that he can never be conciliated by any office or gift whatever.” And when, in 1774, Governor Gage, by authority of ministers, sent Colonel Fenton to offer Adams a magnificent consideration if he would cease his hostility to government, or menace him with all the evils of attainder, that inflexible patriot gave this remarkable answer to Fenton: “I trust I have long since made my peace with the King of kings. No personal consideration shall induce me to abandon the righteous cause of my country. Tell Governor Gage, it is the advice of Samuel Adams to him, no longer to insult the feelings of an exasperated people.”

Adams first began to attract the attention of King George and Parliament in 1764, when he took a strong public stand against enforcement of the Sugar and Molasses Acts, which imposed shipment restrictions and high taxes on those commodities imported into the English colonies. Those unprecedented taxes were the first economic acts by the British that incited

serious consideration of independence among the colonists.

Adding fuel to the fire, in 1765 the British Parliament passed the Stamp Act, which imposed a tax on all legal documents, newspapers, pamphlets, and even playing cards. The tax was denounced as “taxation without representation,” an effective rallying cry that influenced many to join the movement for independence. Formed to oppose the Stamp Act, the Sons of Liberty, a rapidly growing patriotic society, made it difficult, if not impossible, through a campaign of physical violence, to distribute the stamps. Adams and Paul Revere headed the Boston chapter.

Adams was also the motivating force behind formation of the Stamp Act Congress, which convened in New York specifically to develop a plan of resistance to the infuriating tax. The Sons of Liberty successfully organized colonial merchants in opposing the importation of British merchandise, a boycott that resulted in a substantial reduction in the volume of British goods coming into the colonies. Although Parliament repealed the Stamp Act in 1766, it is still seen today as one of the major causes of the American Revolution.

With encouragement from the Sons of Liberty, Committees of Correspondence began to appear throughout the colonies. Originally, such Committees had been established as a way for colonial legislatures to communicate with each other, but now they became essential tools for shaping public opinion and for generating opposition to British rule. They were also successful in generating an important sense of interdependence and identity throughout the colonies. For the first time, the revolutionary-minded colonists were able to develop a unified policy of resistance.

Adams’s extensive writings contributed to his reputation as a persistent promoter of the cause to revolution. “If ye love wealth better than liberty,” Adams wrote, “the tranquility of servitude than the animating contest of freedom, go from us in peace. We ask not your counsels or arms. Crouch down and lick the hands which feed you. May your chains sit lightly upon you, and may posterity forget that ye were our countrymen!”

Most of his writings appeared originally in the *Boston Gazette*, a large circulation newspaper for its time. In 1772, the *Gazette* published Adams’s “The Rights of the Colonists,” in which he emphasized this tenet of the revolution: “The right to freedom being the gift of the Almighty.... The rights of Colonists as Christians ... may be best understood by reading and carefully studying the institution of The Great Law Giver and Head of the Christian Church, which are to be found clearly written and promulgated in the New Testament.”

To dramatize abhorrence generated by the Tea Act the British Parliament passed on March 10, 1763, Adams instigated an event the world knows today as the Boston Tea Party. On December 16, 1773, colonists dressed as Native Americans dumped three shiploads of English tea into Boston Harbor.

Passage by the British Parliament in 1774 of four laws designed as punishment for the Boston Tea Party, known to the colonists as the Intolerable Acts, provided the impetus for convening a Colonial Congress. The four punitive acts were the Boston Port Act, which closed Boston to trade; the Massachusetts Government Act, which revoked the Colony’s charter; the Quartering Act, which required Colonists to provide quartering for British soldiers; and the Impartial Administration of Justice Act, which removed British officials from the jurisdiction

of Massachusetts courts.

In recognition of his leadership role in generating support for establishment of a general congress, Adams was elected as a delegate to the First Continental Congress, which convened on September 5, 1774. Delegates to the First Continental Congress called for a second congress to be convened on May 10, 1775, if the British persisted in their “Coercive Acts,” another popular name for the 1774 Parliamentary measures the colonists considered intolerable. Prior to that date, the die had already been cast by a number of events, including the intransigence of Parliament and the battles of Lexington and Concord.

Facing the growing crisis, the Second Continental Congress was convened as scheduled with Adams again serving as a delegate. The primary responsibilities of the congress were threefold: to formulate and oversee the conduct of the war, to advance and preserve the newly formed “union” of the thirteen colonies, and to develop a governing document to guide the emerging independent country. Virginia delegate George Washington was commissioned to organize and command a Continental Army. Committees were established to generate plans for the conduct of international trade, to develop fiscal policies, and to find ways to seek much-needed military and financial assistance from overseas.

Developing a rudimentary constitution proved to be tedious and contentious work, with Congress finally reaching agreement on the Articles of Confederation on November 15, 1777. It then took more than three years from the time the congressional delegates approved the Articles before the colonies officially ratified them. In the meantime, the Second Continental Congress approved the Declaration of Independence on July 2, 1776, and formally adopted it two days later—though all the signatures weren’t collected until August 2.

At the signing of the Declaration, Adams said,

“We have this day restored the Sovereign to Whom all men ought to be obedient. He reigns in heaven and from the rising to the setting of the sun, let His kingdom come.” Also in reference to the Declaration, Adams said, “The people seem to recognize this as though it were a decree promulgated from heaven.”

Adams spoke often regarding the importance of character and public morality: “A general dissolution of principles and manners will more surely overthrow the liberties of America than the whole force of the common enemy,” he said. “While the people are virtuous they cannot be subdued; but when once they lose their virtue they will be ready to surrender their liberties to the first external or internal invader. If virtue and knowledge are diffused among the people, they will never be enslaved. This will be their great security.”

Adams believed strongly in educating young people about God and morality: “Let divines and philosophers, statesmen and patriots, unite their endeavors to renovate the age, by impressing the minds of men with the importance of educating their little boys and girls, and inculcating in the minds of youth the fear and love of the Deity and universal philanthropy; and, in subordination to these great principles, the love of their country; of instructing them in the art of self-government without which they never can act a wise part in the government of societies, great or small; in short, of leading them in the study and practice of the exalted virtues of the Christian system.”

Lossing described Adams’s ubiquitous role as a driving force for American independence

his authoritative 1848 book:

The journals of Congress during that time show his name upon almost every important committee of that body. And probably no man did more toward bringing about the American Revolution, and in effecting the independence of the Colonies, than Samuel Adams. He was the first to assert boldly those political truths upon which rested the whole superstructure of our confederacy—he was the first to act in support of those truths—and when, in the General Council of States, independence was proposed, and the timid faltered, and the over-prudent hesitated, the voice of Samuel Adams was ever loudest in denunciations of a temporizing policy, and also in the utterance of strong encouragement to the fainthearted. “I should advise,” he said on one occasion, “persisting in our struggle for liberty, though it were revealed from Heaven that nine hundred and ninety-nine were to perish, and only one of a thousand were to survive and retain his liberty! One such freeman must possess more virtue, and enjoy more happiness, than a thousand slaves; and let him propagate his like, and transmit to them what he hath so nobly preserved.”

One of Samuel Adams’s strongest statements of his faith was included in his will. “Principally, and first of all, I resign my soul to the Almighty Being who gave it, and my body to the earth. I commit to the dust, relying on the merits of Jesus Christ for the pardon of my sins.”

Adams was known to some of his contemporaries as “the last Puritan,” a term that has since become a pejorative in the minds of many today. To Adams, though, it was high praise.

John Adams

Atlas of American Independence

Suppose a nation in some distant region should take the Bible for their only law book and every member should regulate his conduct by the precepts there exhibited! Every member would be obliged in conscience to temperance, frugality, and industry; to justice, kindness, and charity towards his fellow men; and to piety, love, and reverence toward Almighty God. What a Eutopia, what a Paradise would this region be.

JOHN ADAMS

Richard Stockton, a friend and fellow signer of the Declaration of Independence, labeled John Adams “The Atlas of American Independence” because of the heavy burden Adams shouldered as one of the most notable leaders in shaping and advancing policies and events that led to freedom for their beloved homeland.

Regarding Adams’s intellect and the role he played in the independence movement, Clemson University professor Bradley Thompson wrote:

Adams witnessed the American Revolution from beginning to end. In 1761 he assisted James Otis in defending Boston merchants against enforcement of Britain’s Sugar Act. Gradually, Adams became a key leader of the radical political movement in Boston and one of the earliest and most principled voices for independence at the Continental Congress. Likewise, as a public intellectual, he wrote some of the most important and influential essays, constitutions, and treatises of the Revolutionary period movement. John Adams exemplifies the mind of the American Revolution.

Adams had been in favor of early attempts at reconciliation with England, but that changed irrevocably following the Boston Tea Party in 1773. From that point on, Adams was staunchly committed to the cause of American independence. By 1774, Adams urged his fellow Americans to adopt “revolution principles”—a resolve to do what had to be done in order to guarantee American rights and liberties.

Because the power of his intellect and the quality of his writing had become well known among his fellow rebels, Adams was one of five men chosen to draft the Declaration of Independence—along with Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman, and Robert R. Livingston. It was Adams who insisted that Jefferson produce the original draft, after the committee members narrowed it down to the two of them. When Jefferson completed the Declaration, Adams became its most articulate and passionate presenter as the document was unveiled to the assembled members of the Second Continental Congress. Following a speech Adams delivered on the floor of Congress in support of independence, Jefferson used the word *colossus* to describe him.

In that speech, Adams spoke as a prophet:

The second day of July, 1776, will be the most memorable epoch in the history of America, to be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival, commemorated as the day of deliverance by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty from one end of the Continent to the other, from this time forward forevermore. You will think me transported with enthusiasm, but I am not. I am well aware of the toil, the blood, and treasure that it will cost us to maintain this

Declaration and support and defend these states; yet, through all the gloom, I can see the rays of light and glory; that the end is worth all the means; that posterity will triumph in that day's transaction, even though we shall rue it, which I trust in God we shall not.

The Declaration of Independence was proclaimed on July 2 but wasn't officially signed until July 4, a day Adams said later "will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the day of deliverance with pomp and parade, with guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other."

Adams was born October 19, 1735, in Braintree (now Quincy), Massachusetts, where he received his primary and secondary schooling. Entering Harvard at the age of sixteen, he graduated in 1755 then became a teacher while he continued studying law. Adams began his law practice in Braintree before moving on to Boston where he made the acquaintance of many influential men with whom he would later be actively engaged in the quest for independence. It was there that he established himself as one of the colonies' most respected lawyers and constitutional scholars.

In 1764, Adams married Abigail Smith, a pastor's daughter. During their fifty-four-year marriage, Abigail was a strong source of support for her husband's role in the rebellion. Convinced by many of her writings, many of which have become important historical documents. Between 1774 and 1784, they exchanged hundreds of letters that shed much light on their close relationship and the extraordinary times during which they lived.

In a letter written to Abigail dated September 16, 1774, Adams recounted this experience:

When the Congress first met, Mr. Cushing made a motion that it should be opened with prayer. It was opposed by Mr. Jay, of New York, and Mr. Rutledge of South Carolina, because we were so divided in religious sentiments, some Episcopalians, some Quakers, some Anabaptists, some Presbyterians, and some Congregationalists, that we could not join the same act of worship. Mr. Samuel Adams arose and said he was no bigot, and could hear a prayer from a gentleman of piety and virtue, who was at the same time a friend to his country. He was a stranger in Philadelphia, but had heard that Mr. Duche (Dushay they pronounce it) deserved that character, and therefore he moved that Mr. Duche, an Episcopal clergyman, might be desired to read prayers to the Congress, tomorrow morning. The motion was seconded and passed in the affirmative. Mr. Randolph, our president waited on Mr. Duche, and received for an answer that if his health would permit he certainly would. Accordingly, next morning he appeared with his clerk and in his pontificals, and read several prayers in the established form; and then read the Collect for the seventh day of September, which was the thirty-fifth Psalm. You must remember this was the next morning after we heard the horrible rumor of the cannonade of Boston. I never saw a greater effect upon an audience. It seemed as if Heaven had ordained that Psalm to be read on that morning.

After this Mr. Duche, unexpected to everybody, struck out into an extemporary prayer, which filled the bosom of every man present. I must confess I never heard a better prayer, or one so well pronounced. Episcopalian as he is, Dr. Cooper himself (Dr. Samuel Cooper, well known as a zealous patriot and pastor of the church in Brattle Square, Boston) never prayed with such fervor, such earnestness and pathos, and in language so elegant and sublime—for America, for Congress, for the Province of Massachusetts Bay, and especially the town of Boston. It has had an excellent effect upon everybody here. I must beg you to read that Psalm. If there was any faith in the Sortes Biblicae, it would be thought providential.

It will amuse your friends to read this letter and the thirty-fifth Psalm to them. Read it to your father and Mr. Wibird. I wonder what our Braintree Churchmen will think of this! Mr. Duche is one of the most ingenious men, and best characters, and greatest orators in the Episcopal order, upon this continent. Yet a zealous friend of Liberty and his country.

Psalm 35, which was often used as a prayer during the critical period of time leading up to the Revolutionary War, was timely, indeed, especially verses 1–10 (NASB):

*Contend, O Lord, with those who contend with me;
Fight against those who fight against me.
Take hold of buckler and shield,
And rise up for my help.
Draw also the spear and the battle-axe to meet those who pursue me;
Say to my soul, "I am your salvation."
Let those be ashamed and dishonored who seek my life;
Let those be turned back and humiliated who devise evil against me.
Let them be like chaff before the wind,
With the angel of the Lord driving them on.
Let their way be dark and slippery,
With the angel of the Lord pursuing them.
For without cause they hid their net for me;
Without cause they dug a pit for my soul.
Let destruction come upon him, unawares;
And let the net which he hid catch himself;
Into that very destruction let him fall.
And my soul shall rejoice in the Lord;
It shall exult in His salvation.
All my bones will say,
"Lord, who is like Thee,
Who delivers the afflicted from him who is too strong for him,
And the afflicted and the needy from him who robs him?"*

Abigail Adams's own writings reflect her strong belief in the God of the Bible, to whom she often referred as she did in this letter to her husband: "I feel no anxiety at the large armament designed against us. The remarkable interpositions of heaven in our favor cannot be too gratefully acknowledged. He who fed the Israelites in the wilderness, who clothes the lilies of the field and who feeds the young ravens when they cry, will not forsake a people engaged in so right a cause, if we remember His loving kindness."

John and Abigail were members of the Congregational Church at Brattle Square in Boston. When in Philadelphia, Adams, along with his friend and fellow Founder Benjamin Rush, regularly attended worship services at the Old Pine Presbyterian Church where they enjoyed the sermons of Reverend George Duffield, who openly supported the American Revolution. (In 1776, Duffield was named Chaplain to the Continental Congress.)

When the Second Continental Congress convened on May 10, 1775, Adams was selected chairman of the Board of War and Ordnance, the committee primarily responsible for

conducting the Revolutionary War. When Congress authorized the establishment of the Continental Army, Adams nominated George Washington to be its commanding general, a move that turned out to be one of the most important decisions of the independence movement.

In 1779, after serving nearly two years on a diplomatic mission to France, Adams returned to his home in Massachusetts, where he played a leading role in the convention that produced the Massachusetts Constitution. That document became a model for a number of other state constitutions and, a few years later, was influential in shaping the Federal Constitution.

Adams was elected to the first of his two terms as vice president of the United States in 1789, finishing second to George Washington in total number of electoral votes cast for president. According to the system in place at that time, the candidate receiving the most votes became president and the person receiving the next highest number of votes became vice president.

As originally conceived, the office of vice president was intended primarily as a means of providing a successor in the event of the president's death or incapacitation. The industrialist Adams called the vice presidency "the most insignificant office that ever the invention of man contrived."

When President Washington decided not to run for a third term in 1796, Adams, Jefferson, Aaron Burr, and Thomas Pinckney each declared his candidacy. Adams and Pinckney were Federalists while Jefferson and Burr were Republicans, a party that later came to be known as the Democratic-Republican Party. They were also known as anti-Federalists because of their opposition to what they considered to be too much centralization of power in a national government. The election of 1796 was, for all practical purposes, the beginning of our two-party political system, an approach Washington opposed because he didn't like the idea of dividing the country into partisan groups.

As winner of the largest number of electoral votes, Adams became the second president of the United States, and Jefferson, recipient of the second largest number, became vice president. This was the only time in U.S. history when a president and vice president from opposing political parties occupied the top two elected offices.

Adams was inaugurated on March 4, 1797, in Philadelphia, before the nation's capital was moved to Washington, D.C. He moved into the unfinished White House on November 1, 1800. The day after he took up his new residency, Adams wrote a letter to Abigail in which he included the following prayer: "I Pray Heaven to bestow THE BEST OF BLESSINGS ON This House and All that shall hereafter Inhabit it, May no one but Honest and Wise Men ever rule under This Roof." His prayer can still be seen engraved upon the mantel of the White House State Dining Room.

After Adams lost the 1800 election to Jefferson, the two Founding Fathers became bitter rivals until their reconciliation in 1812, when they began a correspondence that has been characterized as "the most impressive in the history of American letters." In a letter to Jefferson after the death of Abigail, Adams said, "That you and I shall meet in a better world. I have no doubt than we now exist on the same globe; if my reason did not convince me of this, Cicero's Dream of Scipio, and his Essay on Friendship and Old Age would have been sufficient for that purpose. But Jesus taught us that a future state is a social state, when H

promised to prepare places in His Father's house of many mansions, for His disciples."

Both men died on July 4, 1826, within hours of each other.

Evidence of Adams's strong belief in the importance of the Christian religion and biblical principles as the foundation upon which the United States of America rests appears over and over again in his writings. "The general principles on which the fathers achieved independence were the general principles of Christianity," Adams wrote in a letter to Jefferson. "I will avow that I then believed, and now believe, that those general principles of Christianity are as eternal and immutable as the existence and attributes of God; and that those principles of liberty are as unalterable as human nature."

John Adams practiced what he preached.

George Washington

Father of Our Country

It is impossible to account for the creation of the universe, without the agency of a Supreme Being. It is impossible to govern the universe without the aid of a Supreme Being. It is impossible to reason without arriving at a Supreme Being.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Similarities between David, king of ancient Israel, and George Washington are striking among people familiar with the Judeo-Christian Bible and with early U.S. history. David, under God's direction and protection, led the forces that established Israel as a sovereign nation, and Washington, first as a military leader and later as a statesman and political leader, was instrumental in securing nationhood for the United States of America.

It doesn't take much imagination to liken the contest between colonial America and Great Britain to the battle between little David and gigantic Goliath. Eyewitness accounts of Washington's seemingly miraculous deliverance in battle have led many to believe he was the beneficiary of the same supernatural protection as King David.

Just as David was convinced he was being guided and protected by the invisible hand of God, so Washington believed God would intervene on his and America's behalf. No one who has read much about Washington can deny that he, like David, was devoted to his God and that he, again like David, spent much time in prayer. In that respect, Washington and the kings of Israel can be seen as "men after God's own heart."

Washington was born into a Christian family on February 22, 1732, in Westmoreland County, Virginia. Washington's father was described as "a man of monumental proportions, a figure of great energy, and an established member of the Virginia gentry." Augustine Washington's prominence opened doors of opportunity for his sons.

While still a teenager, George Washington was appointed surveyor for Culpeper County. In that capacity, he worked in frontier areas of Virginia, an experience that taught him much about problems involved in the advancement of civilization into undeveloped areas of the country. That exposure, plus the military experience he acquired while serving in Virginia militia, would serve him well in the future.

Later, as a colonel in the British Army, Washington was appointed as an aide to General Edward Braddock during the French and Indian War. He spent three years in that position, and in the while learning about the principles and responsibilities of a professional army officer. Eventually, Washington was given authority over British forces responsible for defending Virginia's frontier.

An event that seemed to confirm Washington's special destiny occurred during the 1754 Battle of the Monongahela, when General Braddock's forces "were being annihilated" according to an account that was once included in American textbooks. During that fierce battle, Washington "rode back and forth among the troops delivering General Braddock's orders. As the battle raged, every officer on horseback, except Washington, was shot down. Even General Braddock was killed at which point the troops fled in confusion."

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