

AMERICA'S CHRISTIAN HERITAGE

2/4/2017

Today we continue our study of our Christian History. America would not be recognized by our Founding Fathers if they appeared on the scene today.

I. THE FIRST SPIRITUAL AWAKENING IN AMERICA

A. Prior to the Revolutionary Period America experienced a radical Christian revival know as the Great Awakening.

1. The dates of the awakening was approximately 1730-1770

2. Two men who most influenced this movement were:

a. Jonathan Edwards

b. George Whitefield

B. Benjamin Franklin in his autobiography stated about this movement; "It was wonderful to see the change soon made in the manners of our inhabitants. From being thoughtless or indifferent about religion, it seemed as if all the world were growing religious, so that one could not walk through the town in an evening without hearing psalms sung in different families of every street."

C. Historian Paul Johnson wrote about "The Great Awakening" that it was; "The formative movement in America history, preceding the political drive for independence, and making It possible"

D. President John Adams stated about the spiritual awakening: "The Revolution was effected before the war commenced. The Revolution was in the mind and hearts of the people; and (the) change in their religious sentiments of their duties and obligations....This radical change in the principles, opinions, sentiments, and affections of the people, was the real American Revolution"

E. The most important speech about this era was made in St. Johns Church in Richmond Virginia by Patrick Henry; "Sir we are not weak, if we made 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...are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us....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 other may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!"

II. WHAT MEMBERS OF THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT SAID ABOUT THE MOVEMENT

A. Edward Burke:

1. He called it "The holy cause of liberty."
2. He warned Parliament that the Christian zeal of the Americans would never abide under tyrannical rule.
3. He noted that the colonist could never be subdued.
4. He stated; "The people are Protestants, and of that kind which is the most adverse to all implicit submission of mind and opinion. This is a persuasion not only favorable to Liberty, but built upon it."

B. Sir William Sutton:

1. Sutton read a letter from a Crown-appointed governor in New England, which warned, "If you ask an America, who is his master? He will tell you he has none, nor any governor but Jesus Christ."
2. Word had spread from the colonies to England that their movement was a spiritual movement and that Jesus Christ would give them victory.

C. Britain's King George III and the British Parliament claimed that the American Revolution was little more than "a Presbyterian rebellion."

- D. A British loyalist from Massachusetts blamed America's uprising on fiery preachers, whom he called "black-coated mobs."

III. WHAT THE PEOPLE OF THE REVOLUTION SAID AND THOUGHT.

- A. American clergymen gained the nickname "The black Regiment" because of their black ministerial robes.
- B. A familiar rallying cry in New England was "No King but King Jesus."
- C. Reverend John Witherspoon:
 - 1. He was the President of Princeton University.
 - 2. He served on more than 100 committees of the Continental Congress.
 - 3. He was a delegate from New Jersey who urged the Congress to vote for independence.
 - 4. He stated: "Gentlemen, New Jersey is ready to vote for independence. The country is not only ripe for independence, but we are in danger of becoming rotten for the want of it."
 - 5. He further stated: "It is in the man of piety and inward principle, that we may expect to find the uncorrupted patriot, the useful citizen, and the invincible soldier. God grant that in America true religion and civil liberty may be inseparable."
 - 6. Those who studied under Reverend Witherspoon at Princeton include;
 - a. President James Madison
 - b. Vice-President Aaron Burr
 - c. Nine cabinet officers
 - d. Twenty- one United States senators
 - e. Thirty-nine members of the House of Representatives.

- f. Three justices of the United States Supreme Court.
 - g. Twelve governors.
 - h. Numerous delegates to the Constitutional Convention.
7. Witherspoon was so successful in stirring the souls of America's patriots and fellow preachers that Parliament stated; "Cousin America has run off with a Presbyterian parson"
- D. Samuel Adams:
- 1. At the signing of the Declaration of Independence Adams announced: "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."
 - 2. Adams was labeled as the "Father of the American Revolution."
- E. Of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence at least 28 held seminary degrees.
- F. Five days after the Declaration was adopted, the Continental Congress approved the use of public funds to hire military chaplains.
- G. General George Washington
- 1. Sent out a letter to the various regiments which stated; "The General hopes and trust, that every officer and man, will endeavor so to live, and act, as becomes a Christian Soldier, defending the dearest rights and liberties of his country."
 - 2. Reflected in a letter to Brigadier-General Thomas Nelson, "The hand of Providence has been so conspicuous in all this that he must be worse than an infidel that lacks faith, and more wicked, than has not gratitude enough to acknowledge his obligations (to God).

- H. John Quincy Adams at the celebration of the 45th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence said; “The highest glory of the American Revolution was this: it connected in one indissoluble bond the principles of civil government with the principles of Christianity.”
- I. The founders recognized the Hand of God in the victory of the Revolution.
 - 1. They defeated the grates military power in the world.
 - 2. When the peace treaty was signed with the British they began with the words, “In the name of the most Holy and undivided Trinity...”
- J. Only the unlearned and willful ignorant would deny the Hand of God on this great nation!