

AMERICAN'S CHRISTIAN HERITAGE

5/21/2017

Today we continue our study of our enriched history as a nation.

I. THE SIGNING OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

A. The seriousness of the signing of the Declaration Of Independence

1. 56 men representing three million people signed the document.
2. This was the most revolutionary document in history
3. If they succeeded in defending themselves against the most powerful nation on earth it was worth the risk
4. If they failed, those 56 men were signing their death warrants.

B. Copies of the declaration were not immediately made public.

1. The British Crown deemed this action treasonous and punishable by death.
2. For the first six months after the signing of the document only the publicly displayed version had two signatures.
 - a. John Hancock, president of the Continental Congress
 1. His signature was the largest on the declaration
 2. He was the first signer of the declaration
 - b. Charles Thomson, secretary of that august body.

C. The final words of the declaration reflects the commitment of the signers; "and for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor."

II. CHRISTIANITY AND THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

- A. Dr. M. E. Bradford of the University of Dallas researched the founding fathers and discovered that of the 56 signers, fifty maybe 52 were Trinitarian Christians.
- B. David Barton in his research has determined that probably 27 of the signers held seminary degrees
- C. It is obvious that America was founded primarily for religious purposes and that it was not founded by;
 - 1. Atheists
 - 2. Agnostics
 - 3. Deists
- D. To those who signed the declaration it was considered a religious as well as a secular act.
- E. The Great Awakening had been the catalyst for independence
- F. Note a sampling of the signers statements about Christianity:
 - 1. Samuel Adams; "The right to freedom being the gift of God Almighty...the rights of the colonists as Christians...may best be understood by reading and carefully studying the institutions of The Great Law Giver and the Head of the Christian Church, which are to be found clearly written and promulgated in the New Testament."
 - 2. John Adams cousin of Samuel Adams; "The Bible is the best book in the world. It contains more of my little philosophy than all the libraries I have seen; and such parts of it as I cannot reconcile to my little philosophy, I postpone for future investigation."
 - 3. Thomas Jefferson; "The God who gave us life, gave us liberty at the same time."

4. William Livingston; "The land we possess is the gift of Heaven to our fathers, and Divine Providence seems to have decreed it to our latest posterity."
5. Dr. Benjamin Rush; "I know there is an objection among many people to teaching children doctrines of any kind, because they are liable to be controverted. But let us not be wiser than our Maker. If moral precepts alone could have reformed mankind, the mission of the Son of God into all the world would have been unnecessary. The perfect morality of the Gospel rest upon the doctrine which, though often controverted, has never been refuted: I mean the vicarious life and death of the Son of God."

D. Even the nonbelievers who signed the Declaration had a Christian worldview including Benjamin Franklin.

E. The Declaration of Independence mentions God for times:

1. "The Laws of Nature and Nature's God."
2. "All men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights."
3. "Appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions."
4. "With a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence."

III. CONDITIONS IN AMERICA LED TO THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

A. Prior to the signing of the Declaration of Independence American blood had been spilled in:

1. Boston
2. Lexington
3. Concord

4. Charleston, South Carolina

- B. George Washington declared; "Unhappy it is to reflect that a brother's sword has been sheathed in a brother's breast, and that the once happy and peaceful plains of America are either to be drenched with blood or inhabited by slaves. Sad alternative! But can a virtuous man hesitate in his choice?"
- C. In 1774 the Massachusetts Provincial Congress resolved that; "Resistance to tyranny becomes the Christian and social duty of each individual...Continue steadfast, and with a proper sense of your dependence on God, nobly defend those rights which heaven gave, and no man ought to take from us."
- D. Two years before the signing of the Declaration Of Independence the people of Middlesex met at Concorde and declared; "Our fathers left us a fair inheritance, purchased by blood and treasure; this we are resolved to transmit equally fair to our children; no danger shall affright, no difficulties intimidate us; and if, in support of our rights, we are called to encounter even death, we are yet undaunted; sensible that he can never die too soon who lays down his life in support of the laws and liberties of his country."
- C. When singing the Declaration of Independence Samuel Adams said to Benjamin Rush; "If it were revealed to me that nine hundred Americans out of every thousand will perish in a war for liberty, I would vote for that war rather than see my country enslaved. The survivors of such a war, though few, would propagate a nation of free men."
- D. The American's Own Book, published in 1853 stated, "The patriots who signed that document, did it, almost literally, with ropes about their necks, it being generally supposed that they would, if unsuccessful, be hung as rebels."
- E. Indeed we owe a debt of gratitude to those who have gone before us!