

AMERICA'S CHRISTIAN HERITAGE

1/28/2018

We are continuing to look at the foundational truths upon which our nation was erected.

I. THE PURITANS PLACED LARGE EMPHESIS ON CHRISTIAN FAMILIES

- A. Governor John Winthrop said that as the community was a large family, so the family was a small community.
- B. John Cotton said; "It is thy part to see to it that thy children and servants be God's people."
- C. Cotton Mather said; "Well ordered families naturally produce a good order in society."
- D. James Fitch; "Such as families are, such at last the Church and Commonwealth must be."

II. THE CHRISTIAN BACKGROUND AND THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.

- A. Religious publishing and secular publishing.
 - 1. Religious publishing outnumbered secular publishing by a factor of four to one.
 - 2. Before 1750 one half of all printed literature was sermons.
 - 3. The most quoted book of the Bible was Deuteronomy.
- B. When the British closed the port of Boston, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Virginia immediately called for days of prayer and fasting.
- C. Evidence abounded that God was using the British persecution to unite the colonies.
 - 1. Gifts of food were sent to Boston.
 - 2. Encouraging letters were also sent to Boston.
 - 3. Boston was encouraged to "Stand firm, and let your intrepid courage show to the world that you are Christians."

- D. At the beginning of putting together the Declaration of Independence there was some disunity;
1. Then as now some were concerned that if a specific religious order offered prayers some would be offended.
 2. At that august meeting Sam Adams stood and said; "He was no bigot, and could hear a prayer from any gentlemen of piety and virtue who was at the same time a friend to his country."
- E. The Massachusetts legislature exhorted the people of Massachusetts to be "Altogether solicitous that no disorderly behavior, nothing unbecoming character as Americans, as citizens, and Christian, be justly chargeable to us."
- F. On March 6, 1774 John Hancock stated; "Whilst we are using the means in our power, let us humbly commit our righteous cause to the great Lord of the Universe...let us joyfully leave our concerns in the hands of Him who raises up and puts down the empires and kingdoms of the earth as He pleases."
- G. In December of 1774 the Massachusetts Congress asked the assistance of "The pastors of the Churches of Christ."
- H. John Hancock on April 15, 1775 called for a day of prayer and fasting when he stated; "In circumstances dark as these...all confidence must be withheld from the means we use and reposed only on that God who rules in the armies of heaven, without whose blessing the best human councils are but foolishness and all created power vanity."
- I. In Massachusetts one of the great Puritan Pastors was Jonas Clark:
1. Possibly the War for Independence had its beginning there because of him.
 2. When the war began he had for nearly 60 years been a faithful pastor there.
 3. Clark's home was a frequent meeting place for Patriot Leaders.
 4. Clark wrote every position paper on issues of liberty and government for the town.

5. For years Pastor Clark had taught the townspeople the Biblical right of a Christian people to defend themselves against tyranny, even by force of arms if necessary.
6. When Pastor Clark was asked if his people could defend themselves against the enemy he said; "I have prepared them for this very hour."
7. When the British began their attack against Boston ministers came from New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Vermont and other places to join in the fight.

III. WHAT HISTORIANS SAID ABOUT THE INFLUENCE OF PASTORS AND THE BIBLE.

- A. John Wingate Thornton; "The Bible was the chief textbook of the fathers of the Republic: and to the pulpit, the Puritan pulpit, we owe the moral force which won our independence."
- B. Alice Baldwin: "The Constitutional Convention and the written Constitution were the children of the pulpit."
- C. Ellis Sandoz: "Biblical fingerprints are everywhere, throughout this period."
- D. George Whitefield:
 1. Preached that "God is no respecter of persons."
 2. Preached that "Whether someone was high born or a commoner educated or ignorant, rich or poor, black or white," made absolutely no difference in terms of the salvation of that person's soul.
 3. His preaching created the democratic idea that before God all men are equal.
- E. Historians have stated that Biblical teaching shaped the thinking of New Englanders about government for 126 years prior to the Declaration.
- F. Biblical teaching created the American attitude about freedom and why it was worth fighting and dying for.
 1. The essence of the Christian faith is that Christ died to set us free from the tyranny of sin—in His own words; "I came to set the captives free."

2. It is but a small step from understanding that God wants His children free from the tyranny of sin, to believing that He wants them free from all manner of tyranny.
3. The primary motive for the coming of our forefathers to America was to create a society where they could live in religious freedom.
4. Those who came before us were not about to surrender their political freedom which was based on their religious freedoms.

IV. PRAYER BECAME A VITAL PART OF THE LIVES OF THE COLONIST.

- A. From the moment a crisis was recognized they were known as a people of prayer.
- B. Three instances of crisis where prayer was initiated.
 1. At the beginning of the preparation for the Declaration Of Independence on September 7, 1774 they prayed.
 2. On April 15, 1775 in Massachusetts John Hancock called for a day of prayer and fasting.
 3. Jonathan Trumbull called for a day of prayer and fasting in Connecticut on April 19, 1775.
- C. As war with Britain approached, Americans got down on their knees and sought God's help.
- D. During those crucial days of gaining our independence;
 1. Over one thousand days of special called days of prayer were offered.
 2. They called for days of prayer and fasting.
 3. This would be followed by special called days of prayer and thanksgiving.
 4. In a letter to his wife, John Adams said, can you imagine with the New England people praying, what great things God is about to do for us.
- E. Thankfully God did hear and the rest is our great American Heritage!