

# AMERICA'S ROOTS PART II

The Birth of the Constitution  
The Founders Mature Faith

Ron Peri



We the People  
domestic Tranquility, provide  
Posterity, do ordain and establish  
George Washington  
All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress  
The House of Representatives shall be composed of Members  
shall have the Qualifications requisite for Senators of the most numerous  
shall be a Representative who shall not have attained to  
shall be elected for one Term, which shall be less than two  
shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of  
shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of  
shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of





# AFTER THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION



# PRAYER BEGETS CONSTITUTION

## MAY 17-SEP 23, 1787

**Ben Franklin at 81, Thursday, June 28, 1787:**

**“Mr. President... I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth – that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His Aid?**

**We have been assured, Sir, in the Sacred Writings, that ‘except the Lord build the House, they labor in vain that build it’. I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without His concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the Builders of Babel. We shall be divided by our partial local interests; our projects will be confounded, and we ourselves shall become a reproach and bye word down to future generations.**

**And what is worse, mankind may hereafter despair of establishing Governments by Human Wisdom and leave it to chance, war and conquest**

**I therefore beg leave to move that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessing on our deliberations, be held in this assembly every morning before we proceed to business, and that one or more of the clergy of this city be requested to officiate in that service.”**

***Prayers opened all subsequent meetings of the convention and both houses of Congress ever since.***





# CONVENTION DELEGATES WERE BELIEVERS

e.g.- Article 22 the Constitution of Delaware:

“Every person who shall be chosen a member of either house, or appointed to any office or place of trust... shall...make and subscribe to the following declaration: ‘I,\_\_\_\_, do profess faith in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ his only son, and in the Holy Spirit, and I do acknowledge the holy scriptures of the old and new testament to be given by divine inspiration.’”



# THE SONGS

- During the War of 1812 an American storm flag, 17 by 25 feet, was flown over Fort McHenry during the bombardment. It was replaced early on the morning of September 14, 1814 with a larger American garrison flag 30 by 42 feet. The larger flag signaled American victory over the British in the Battle of Baltimore. The sight of the flag inspired Francis Scott Key to write the poem "Defense of Fort M'Henry" that was later set to music and became known as "The Star Spangled Banner", the national anthem of the United States.
- "Blest with vict'ry and peace, may the Heav'n-rescued land, praise the Pow'r that hath made and preserved us a nation! Then to conquer we must, when our cause it is just; And this be our motto, "In God is our Trust!"
  - Francis Scott Key, Star Spangled Banner
- "Our father's God to Thee, Author of liberty, to Thee we sing: Long may our land be bright, with Freedom's Holy Light; protect us by Thy might, Great God, Our King"
  - Samuel Francis Smith, America



Duplicate. Original deposited by  
3 110 1715

In the Name of the most  
Holy & undivided Trinity.

It having pleased the Divine Pro-  
vidence to dispose the Hearts of the most  
Serene and most Potent Prince George the  
third, by the Grace of God, King of Great  
Britain, France & Ireland, Defender of  
the Faith, Duke of Brunswick and  
Lomburg, Arch-treasurer and the  
Elect of the Holy Roman Empire, Sec-  
ond of the United States of America  
to forget all past Misunderstandings and  
Differences that have unhappily interrup-  
ted the good Correspondence and Friend-  
ship which they mutually wish to restore,  
to establish such a beneficial and satisfac-  
tory Inter-course between the two first  
upon the Ground of reciprocal Wanting  
and mutual Convenience as may pro-  
duce and secure the perpetual Peace & Friend-  
ship

## THE TREATIES

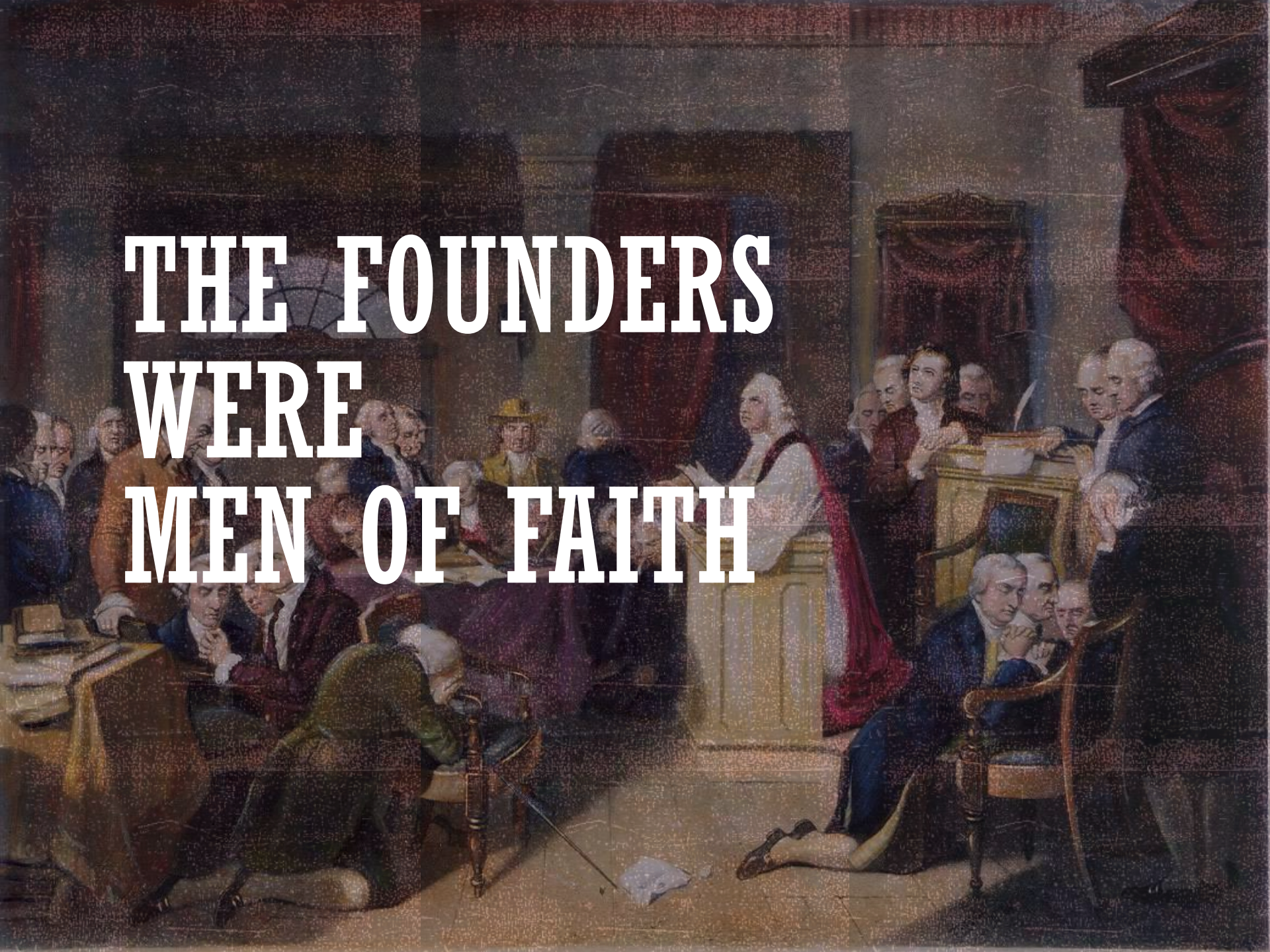
“In the name of the Most Holy and  
Undivided Trinity. It having pleased  
the Divine Providence to dispose the  
hearts of the most serene and most  
potent Prince George the Third, by the  
Grace of God, King of Great Britain...  
and of the United States of America, to  
forget all past misunderstandings and  
differences...”

The Treaty with Great Britain- 1783





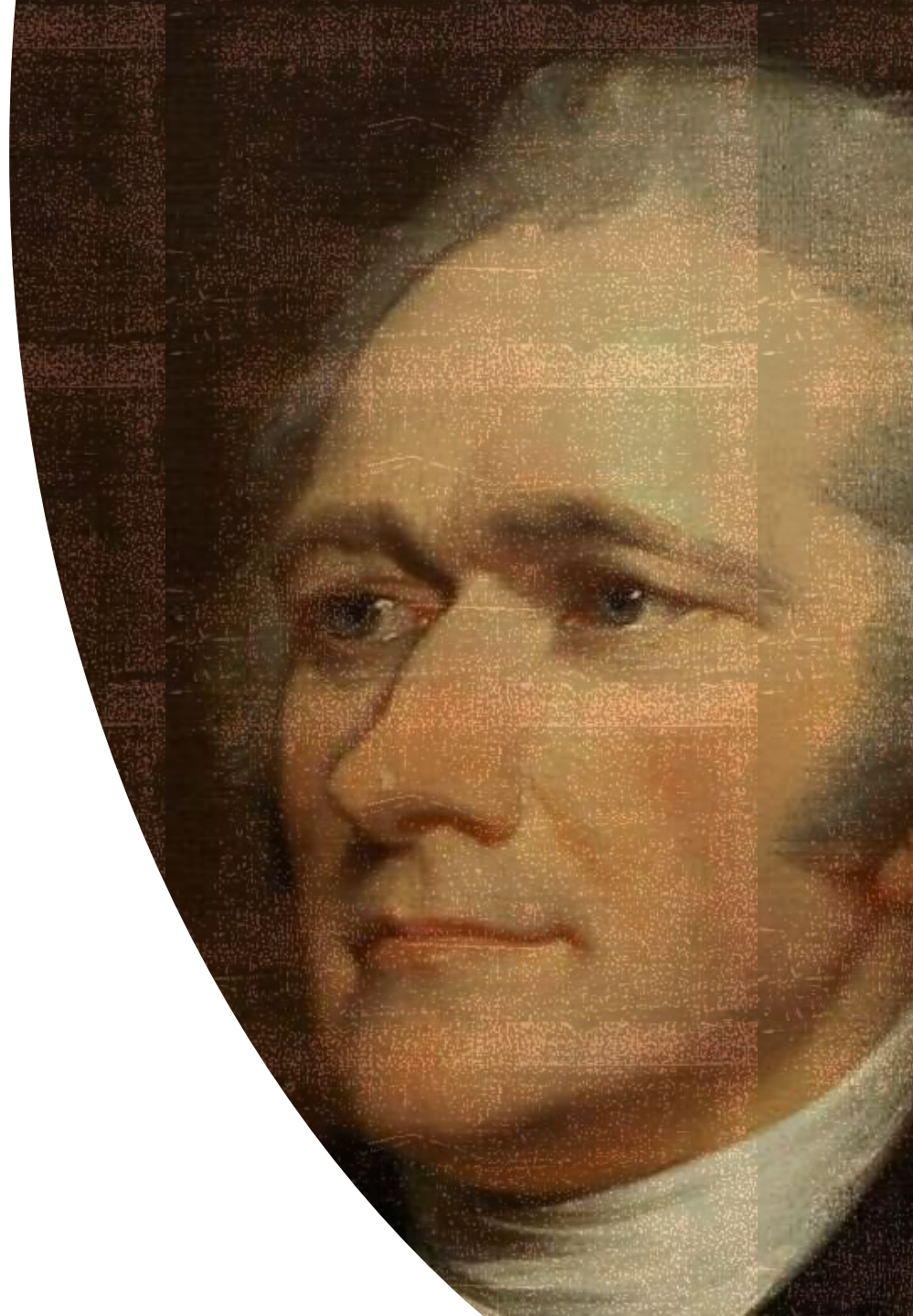
# THE FOUNDERS WERE MEN OF FAITH





# ALEXANDER HAMILTON

- “I have carefully examined the evidences of the Christian Religion, and if I was sitting as a juror upon its authenticity I would unhesitatingly give my verdict in its favor. I can prove its truth as clearly as any proposition ever submitted to the mind of man”
- “Choose the Saviour I have chosen”
- “I have a tender reliance on the mercy of the Almighty, through the merits of Jesus Christ. I am a sinner. I look to him for mercy. Pray for me.” (His dying words)



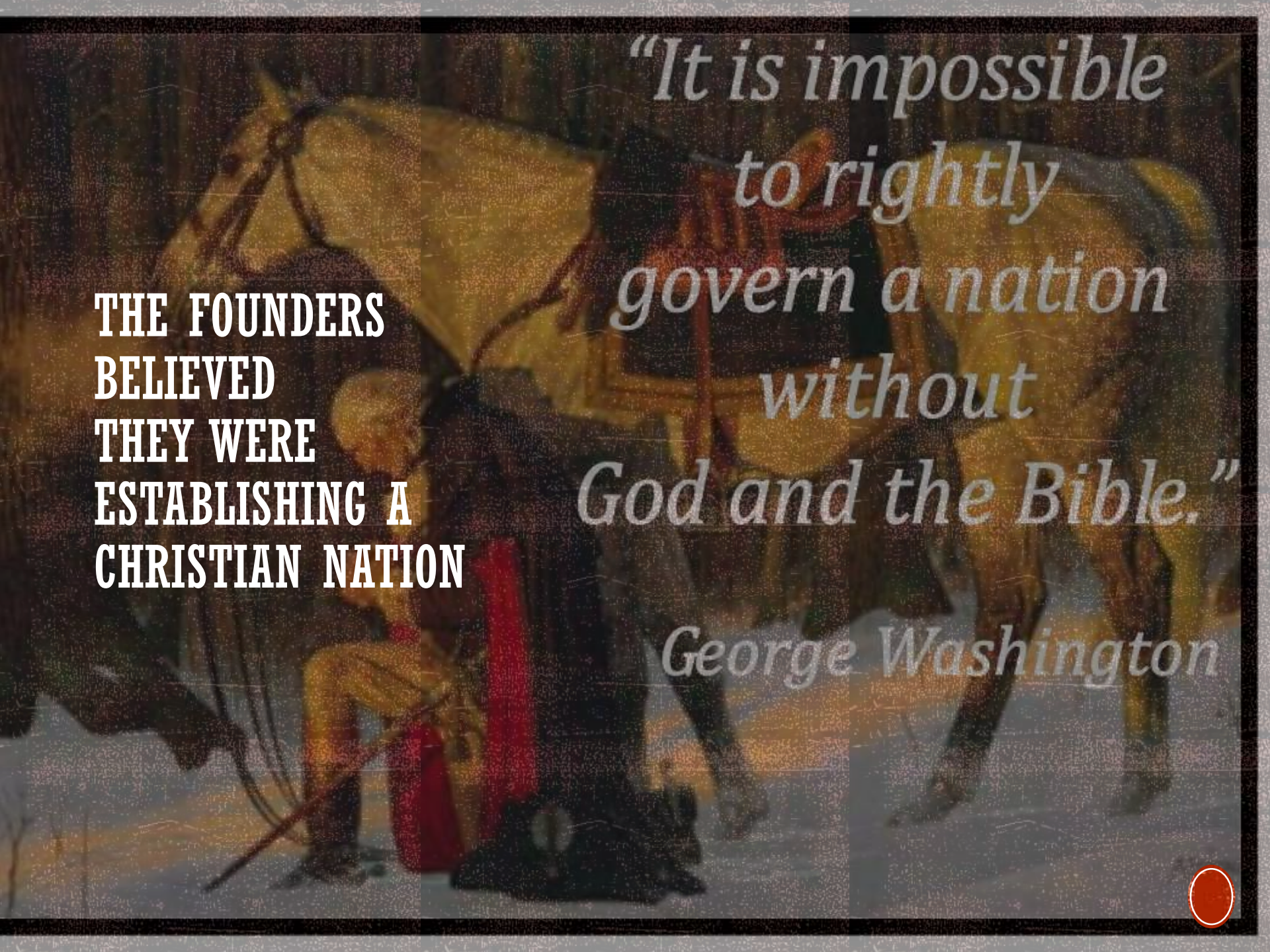


# THOMAS JEFFERSON

“My views are the result of a life of inquiry and reflection, and very different from the anti-Christian system imputed to me by those who know nothing of my opinions. To the corruptions of Christianity I am indeed opposed... I am a Christian in the only sense in which He wished any one to be; sincerely attached to his doctrines in preference to all others...”







**THE FOUNDERS  
BELIEVED  
THEY WERE  
ESTABLISHING A  
CHRISTIAN NATION**

*“It is impossible  
to rightly  
govern a nation  
without  
God and the Bible.”*

*George Washington*

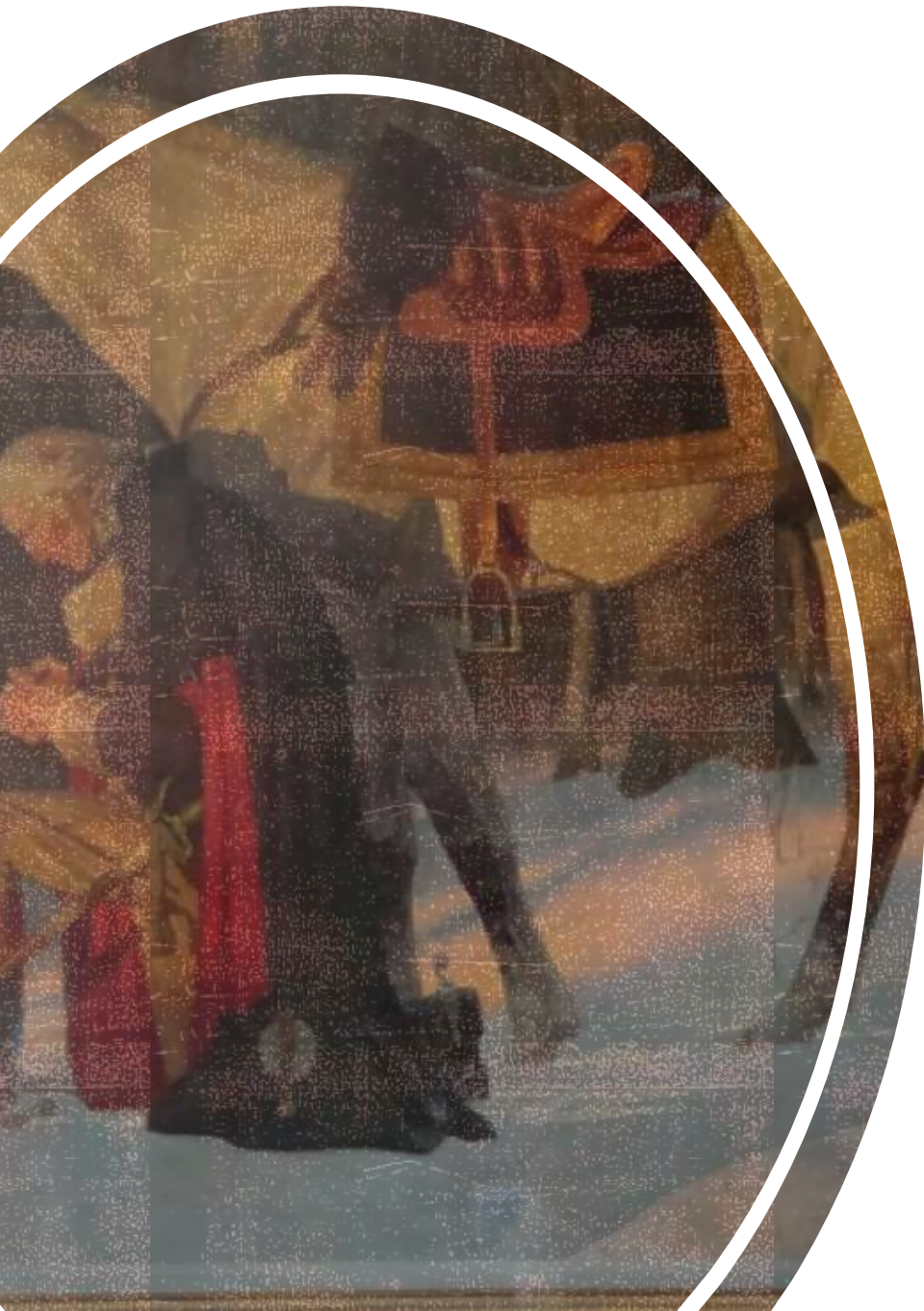




# THE ORIGINAL 'MIRACLE ON THE HUDSON'

- In May of 1776, General George Washington and his rag tag army of 7,000 were surrounded on Long Island. Facing 30,000 soldiers from the most highly trained and successful military force in the world, they were about to be destroyed and the revolution snuffed out. Outnumbered and outgunned, as they waited in New York for the onslaught of British military power, Washington issued orders for his troops to pray: On May 17, 1776, he wrote that that day was, "...to be observed as a day of fasting humiliation and prayer, humbly to supplicate the mercy of almighty God, that it would please Him to pardon all our manifold sins and transgressions, and to prosper the arms of the united colonies, and finally establish the peace and freedom of America upon a solid and lasting foundation."





# GEORGE WASHINGTON

“And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion... reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle...”

“Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”

- Farewell Address, Sept 17, 1796





# CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT ASSUMES A MORAL POPULATION

John Adams, the second president of the United States, was in the unenviable position of following the incredibly popular George Washington. He faced political problems at home and problems overseas as relations with France deteriorated. Preparing for a possible war with France, he addressed the first brigade of the militia of Massachusetts:

"We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion," Adams said.

"Avarice, ambition, revenge, or gallantry would break the strongest cords of our constitution as a whale goes through a net. Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."





**Liberty,  
once lost,  
is lost forever.**

-- *John Adams*



## RELIGION AND VIRTUE ARE AT THE CORE OF AMERICA

“Religion and virtue are the only foundations, not only of republicanism and of all free government, but of social felicity under all governments and in all the combinations of human society.”

John Adams, August 28,  
1811

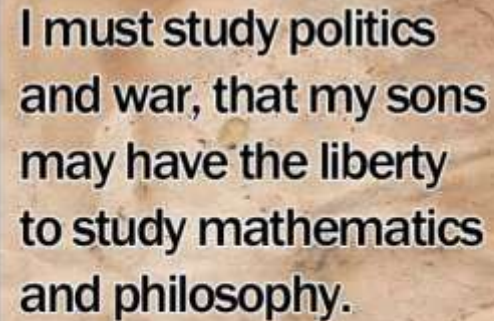




# CHRISTIANITY IS THE FOUNDATION OF AMERICA

“The general principles, upon which the Fathers achieved independence, were the only principles in which that beautiful assembly of young Gentlemen could unite...**And what were these general principles? I answer, the general principles of Christianity,** in which all these denominations were united.”

June 28, 1813, letter to Thomas Jefferson



I must study politics  
and war, that my sons  
may have the liberty  
to study mathematics  
and philosophy.

**JOHN ADAMS**





# LIBERTY IS DEPENDENT ON RELIGION

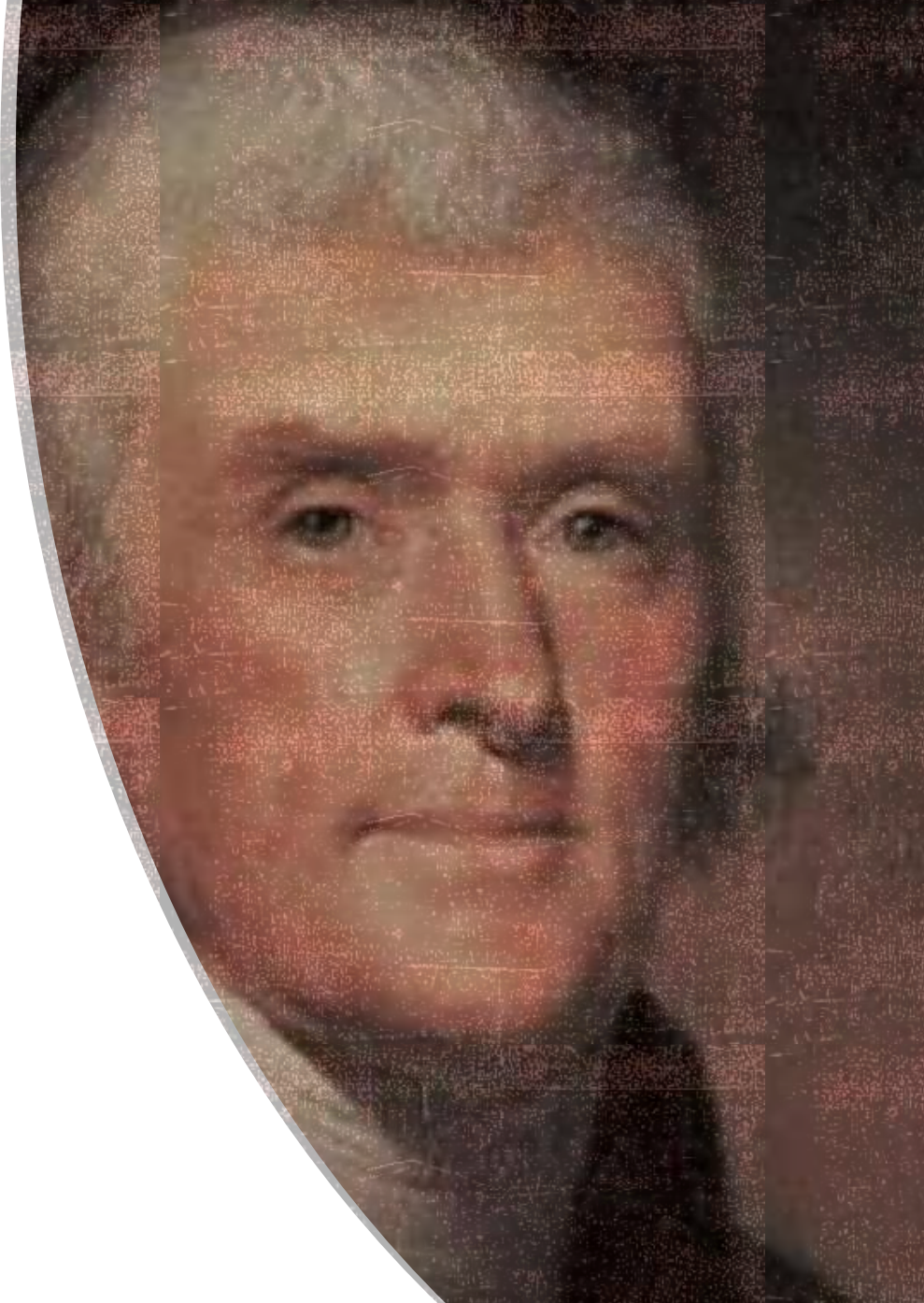
- Under President John Adams, Benjamin Rush was Treasurer of the United States Mint. Rush had been a member of the Continental Congress, signer of the Declaration of Independence, and Surgeon General of the Continental Army. More notably, he encouraged support for building more African American churches in Philadelphia. Rush was convinced this would reduce high black prison populations, since many of the convicted served time for stealing food and clothing.
- In 1806 Rush wrote: "The only foundation for a useful education in a republic is to be laid in religion. Without this there can be no virtue, and without virtue there can be no liberty, and liberty is the object and life of all republican governments."





# LIFE AND LIBERTY ARE BOTH FROM GOD

- Many have viewed Thomas Jefferson as an atheist or skeptic. But etched in the marble of the Jefferson Memorial his words written in his notes on the state of Virginia:
- "...God who gave us life gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect God is just, that his justice cannot sleep forever"





# SELECT GODLY LEADERS

- Noah Webster's advice to young men on how to choose the nation's leaders:
- "When you become entitled to exercise the right of voting for public officers, let it be impressed on your mind that God commands you to choose for rulers, just men who will rule in the fear of God. The preservation of a republican government depends on the faithful discharge of this duty; if the citizens neglect their duty, and place unprincipled men in office, the government will soon be corrupted"
- ("Advice to the Young" from Value of the Bible and Excellence of the Christian Religion, 1834):

AN  
AMERICAN DICTIONARY  
OF THE  
ENGLISH LANGUAGE:

INTENDED TO EXHIBIT,

AN INTRODUCTORY DISSERTATION

AND A CONCISE GRAMMAR

OF THE  
ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

BY NOAH WEBSTER, LL. D.

VOL. I.

PUBLISHED BY S. CONVERSE.

1828.



# JAMES MADISON

“We have staked the whole future of American civilization, not on the power of government, far from it. We have staked the future of all of our political institutions upon the capacity of mankind for self-government; upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves, to control ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God.”







# PATRICK HENRY

“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 peoples of other faiths have been afforded asylum, prosperity, and freedom of worship here.”

“Righteousness alone can exalt a nation. Whoever thou art, remember this.”







# GIVE ME LIBERTY ...

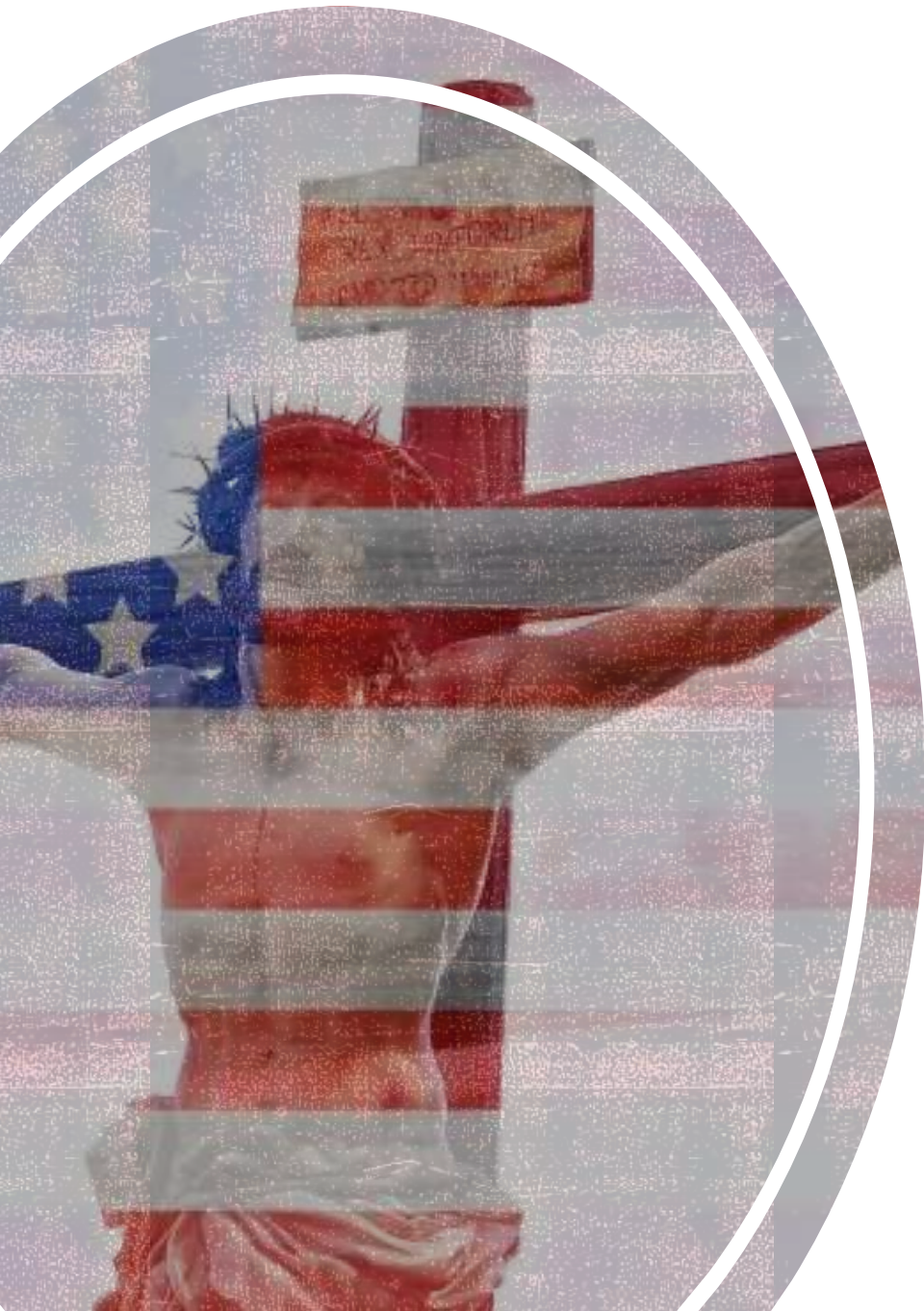
**There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations;** and He will raise up friends to fight our battles for us...

Gentlemen may cry, Peace, peace! – but there is no peace...Is life so dear and 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!"**







# GOSPEL IS AT ITS CORE

“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 peoples of other faiths have been afforded asylum, prosperity, and freedom of worship here.”

“Righteousness alone can exalt a nation. Whoever thou art, remember this.”

Patrick Henry





# THE 1ST AMENDMENT

- The Constitutional Convention had only fifty-five men. Each was a member of one of five denominations:
  - Episcopalians, Quakers, Baptists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists.
- A major point of discussion was how they might worship together, or even if they could pray together.





# THE GREAT FEAR

James Madison spoke of his great fear that:

“one denomination might obtain the preeminence, or two might combine and establish a national religion to which they would compel others to conform.”



# CHURCH AND STATE 1783

- All of Europe had state churches
  - King George III was both head of state and of the Church of England
  - Most people believed the church must be funded by the state
- All but two colonies had state supported churches
  - 1644: Rhode Island colony founded by Roger Williams w/o a church
    - Believed Constantine worse for Christianity than Nero
    - Persecuted by Puritans in Massachusetts colony
    - Considered the Church of England irredeemably corrupt
    - Convinced that there was no scriptural basis for a state church
    - Governments should only enforce the second table of the Law
  - 1776: Virginia Assembly disestablished the Anglican Church
    - Dec 6, 1776 passed a law denying funds for the state church



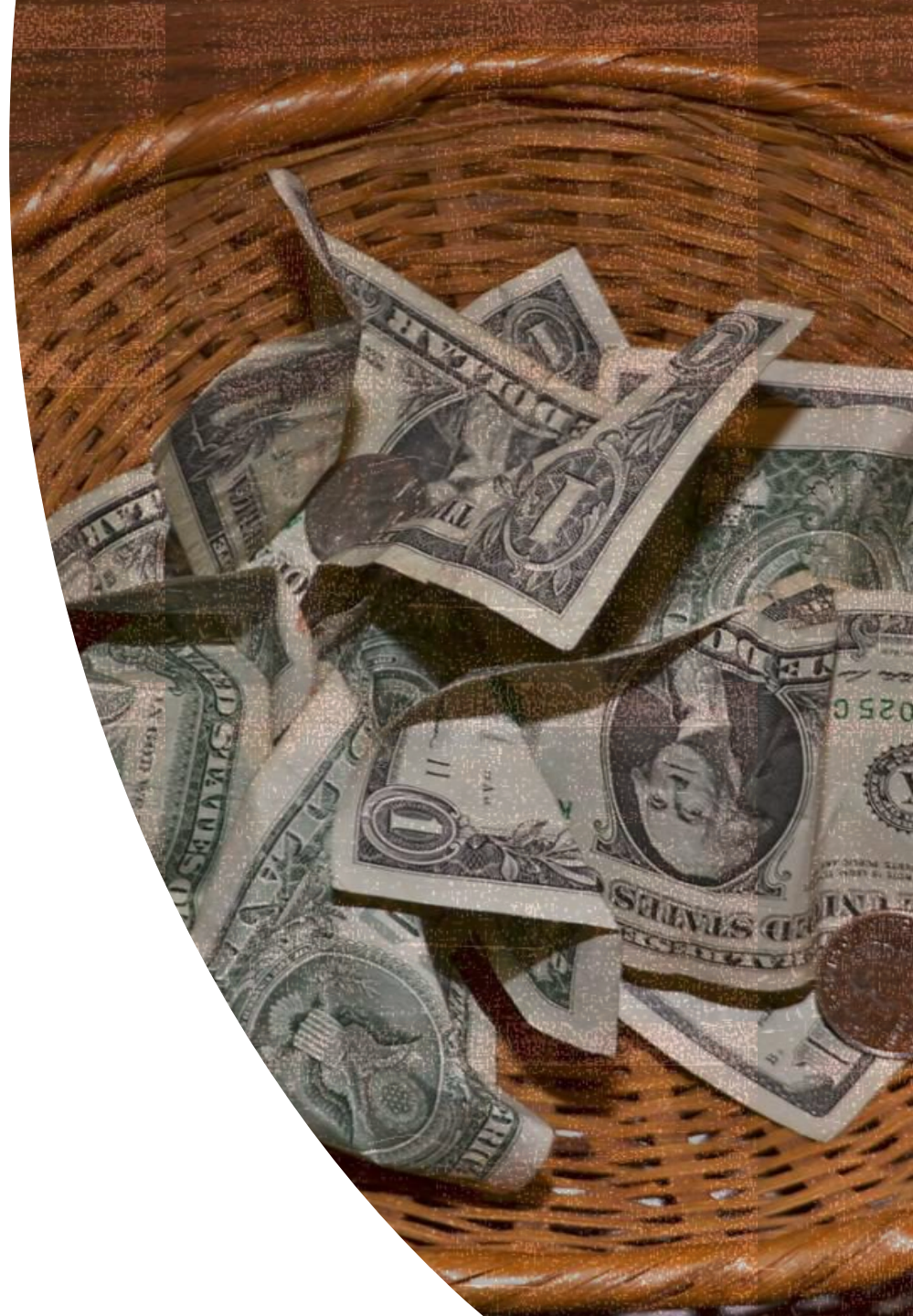


# GENERAL ASSESSMENT SCHEMES

Congregationalists and Anglicans who had received public financial support before 1776 called their state benefactors "**nursing fathers**" (Isaiah 49:23).

After independence legislators devised "**general assessment schemes**": All citizens were taxed, but given the option of designating which church to support.

Such laws took effect in **Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Hampshire** and were passed but not implemented in **Maryland and Georgia**.





# INITIAL PROPOSAL

- The federal government would recognize existing state churches under a “general assessment scheme”.
- **All citizens would be taxed, but with option of designating which church to support.**
- The proposal failed to pass.





# VARIOUS PROPOSALS

August 15, 1789 - Samuel Livermore  
proposed:

**“Congress shall make no laws  
touching religion, or infringing  
the rights of conscience.”**

**THE FIRST AMENDMENT**  
CONGRESS SHALL MAKE NO LAW RESPECT-  
ING AN ESTABLISHMENT OF RELIGION, OR  
PROHIBITING THE FREE EXERCISE THEREOF;  
OR ABRIDGING THE FREEDOM OF SPEECH, OR  
OF THE PRESS; OR THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE  
PEACEABLY TO ASSEMBLE, AND TO PETITION THE  
GOVERNMENT FOR A REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES.  
PROTECT THE FIRST AMENDMENT, SUPPORT THE CBIDF





# VARIOUS PROPOSALS

Another wording proposed was:

**“Congress shall make no law establishing any particular denomination or religion in preference to another, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”**



**THE FIRST AMENDMENT**  
CONGRESS SHALL MAKE NO LAW RESPECT-  
ING AN ESTABLISHMENT OF RELIGION, OR  
PROHIBITING THE FREE EXERCISE THEREOF;  
OR ABRIDGING THE FREEDOM OF SPEECH, OR  
OF THE PRESS; OR THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE  
PEACEABLY TO ASSEMBLE, AND TO PETITION THE  
GOVERNMENT FOR A REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES.  
PROTECT THE FIRST AMENDMENT, SUPPORT THE CBIDF





# VARIOUS PROPOSALS

September 9, 1789 wording proposed:

Congress shall make no law  
**establishing articles of faith or a  
mode of worship**, or prohibiting the  
free exercise of religion.”

*These churchmen were not dealing  
with keeping God out of government;  
they were ensuring that no state’s  
denomination would become the state  
church of the United States.*



**THE FIRST AMENDMENT**  
CONGRESS SHALL MAKE NO LAW RESPECT-  
ING AN ESTABLISHMENT OF RELIGION, OR  
PROHIBITING THE FREE EXERCISE THEREOF;  
OR ABRIDGING THE FREEDOM OF SPEECH, OR  
OF THE PRESS; OR THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE  
PEACEABLY TO ASSEMBLE, AND TO PETITION THE  
GOVERNMENT FOR A REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES.  
PROTECT THE FIRST AMENDMENT, SUPPORT THE CBIDF



## THE FIRST AMENDMENT

Finally, Representative Fisher Ames from Massachusetts proposed:

**“Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”**

**THE FIRST AMENDMENT**  
**CONGRESS SHALL MAKE NO LAW RESPECT-**  
**ING AN ESTABLISHMENT OF RELIGION, OR**  
**PROHIBITING THE FREE EXERCISE THEREOF;**  
**OR ABRIDGING THE FREEDOM OF SPEECH, OR**  
**OF THE PRESS; OR THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE**  
**PEACEABLY TO ASSEMBLE, AND TO PETITION THE**  
**GOVERNMENT FOR A REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES.**  
**PROTECT THE FIRST AMENDMENT, SUPPORT THE CBLDF**





# STATE CHURCHES REMAINED



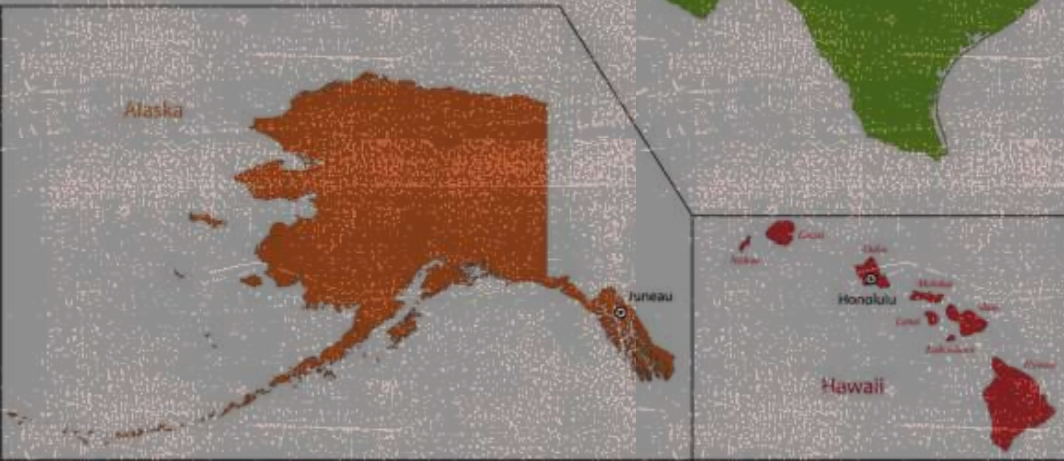
- Federal government left all religion in the hands of the states
- States continued to financially support churches
- Last state to disestablish was Massachusetts' Congregational Church in 1833
- Disestablishment moved religion from public support to private, much like the move from public schooling to private schooling today



# RELIGION LEFT TO THE STATES

“I consider the government of the U.S. as interdicted (prohibited) by the constitution from intermeddling with religious institutions, their doctrines, discipline, or exercises. This results not only from the provision that no law shall be made respecting the establishment, or free exercise, of religion, but from that also which reserves to the states the powers not delegated to the U.S. (10<sup>th</sup> Amendment)...”

- Thomas Jefferson, Jan 23, 1808.







# FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EXCLUDED

“Certainly no power to prescribe any religious exercise, or to assume authority in religious discipline, has been delegated to the general government. It must then rest with the states as far as it can be in any human authority.”

- Thomas Jefferson, Jan 23, 1808.







## ESTABLISHMENT DEFINED

“What is an establishment of religion? It must have a creed, defining what a man must believe; it must have rites and ordinances, which believers must observe; it must have ministers of defined qualifications, it must have tests for the submissive and penalties for the non-conformist.”

Report to Congress, 1854







# 1854 REPORT TO CONGRESS

“At the adoption of the Constitution... every state...provided regularly for the support of the Church as for the support of the Government.

Down to the revolution, every colony did sustain religion in some form. It was deemed peculiarly proper that the religion of liberty be upheld by a free people.

Had the people, during the Revolution, had a suspicion of any attempt to war against Christianity, that Revolution would have been strangled in its cradle.”







# 1854 REPORT TO CONGRESS

“At the time of the adoption of the Constitution and the amendments, the universal sentiment was that Christianity should be encouraged, not any one sect (denomination). Any attempt to level and discard all religion would have been viewed with universal indignation. The object was not to substitute Judaism or Mohammedanism, or infidelity, but to prevent rivalry among the Christian sects to the exclusion of others.”





# CHRIST IS THE FOUNDATION

“It (Christianity) must be considered as the foundation on which the whole structure rests. Laws will not have permanence or power without the sanction of religious sentiment, - without a firm belief that there is a Power above us that will reward our virtues and punish our vices.

Christianity... was the religion of the founders of the republic and they expected it to be the religion of their descendants. There is a great and very prevalent error on this subject in the opinion that those who organized this Government did not legislate on religion.”

Congressman Meacham to the House Committee  
on the Judiciary, March 27, 1854

IN GOD WE TRUST







# ALEXIS DE TOQUEVILLE

**“Liberty cannot be established without morality, nor morality without faith.”**

**“I sought for the greatness and genius of America in her commodious harbors and her ample rivers – and it was not there . . . in her fertile fields and boundless forests and it was not there . . . in her rich mines and her vast world commerce – and it was not there . . . in her democratic Congress and her matchless Constitution – and it was not there. **Not until I went into the churches of America and heard her pulpits aflame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and power. America is great because she is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, she will cease to be great.**”**

**Democracy in America, 1835**

