

# The Gladiator and the Monk

The Decline of Rome and the Rise of Christianity

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

BY THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IN GENERAL CONGRESS ASSEMBLED

When in the Course of human Events, it becomes necessary for one People to dissolve the Political Bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the Powers of the Earth, the separate and equal Station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent Respect to the Opinions of Mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the Separation.

## Three Great Events of 1776

- A Book
- A Declaration
- A Prayer

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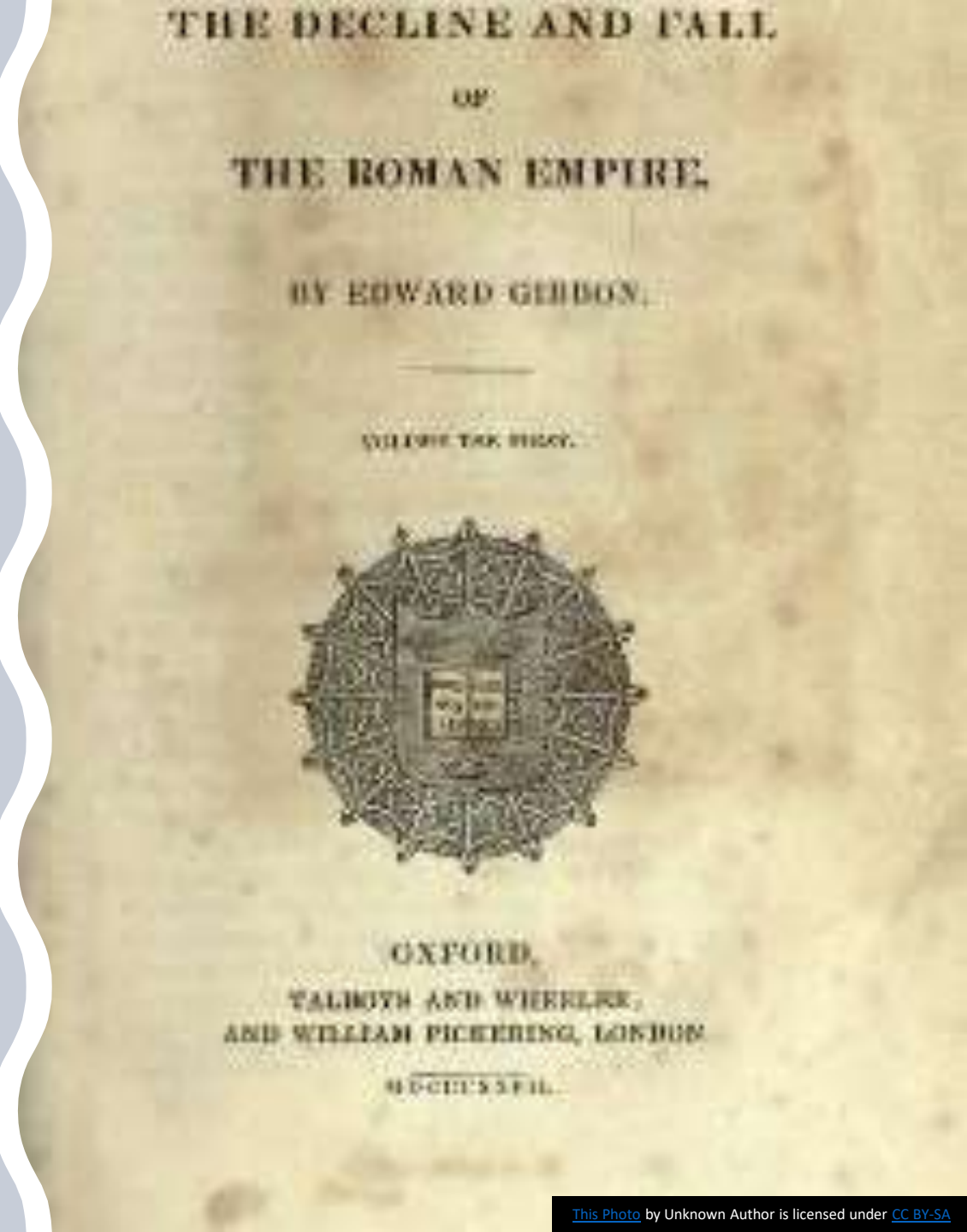


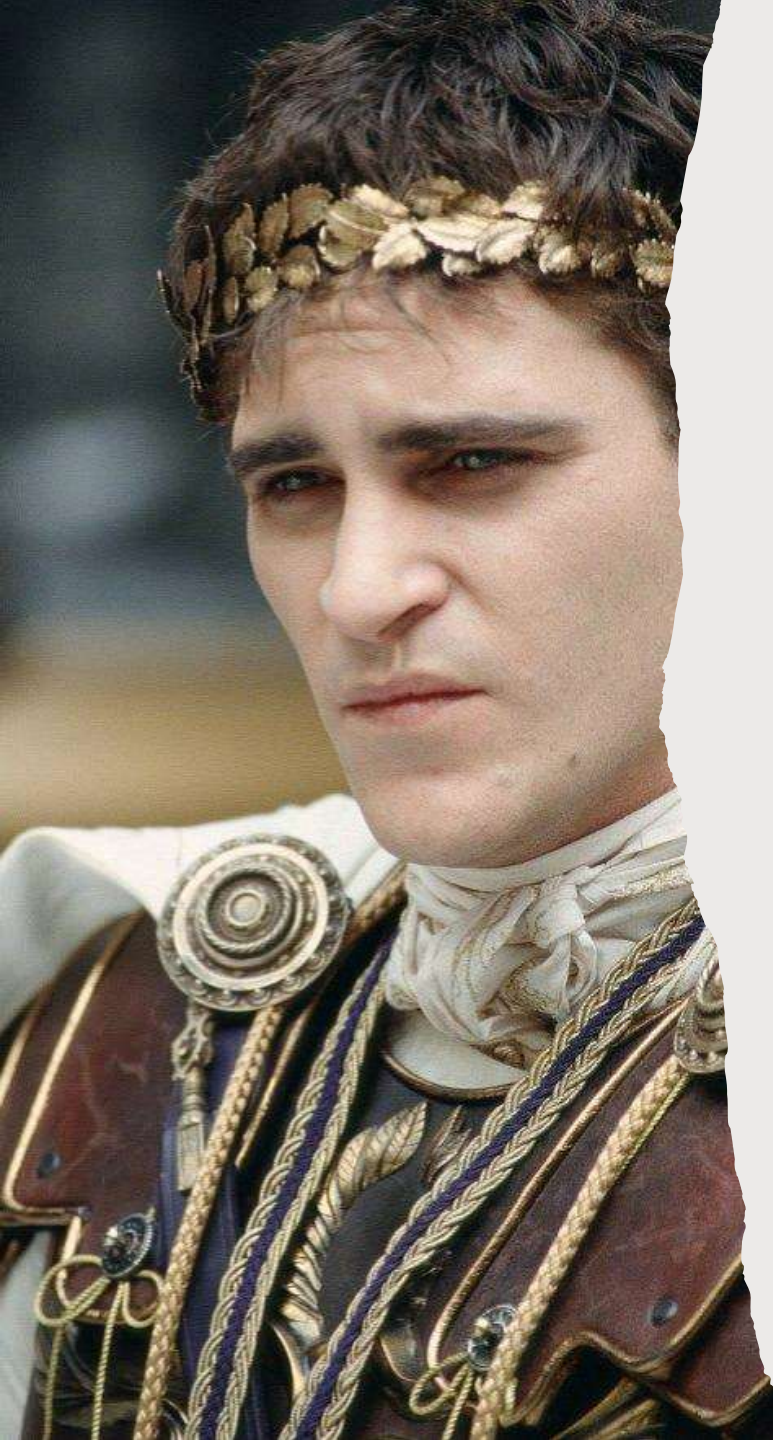


# 1776 – The Book:

## The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire by Edward Gibbon

Gibbon dates the beginning of the decline to 180 AD and starts the book then.





## 180 AD: Emperor Lucius Aurelius Commodus

- Played by Joaquin Phoenix in the film, "Gladiator"
- Unlike Roman Emperors Caligula and Nero, Commodus was not a psychopath but was a malignant narcissist
- His father, Marcus Aurelius, loved him and made him co-emperor at 15
- At 19, he became sole emperor and began dismantling the empire.







# How Commodus Destroyed the Empire:

- He sought to eliminate all conflict through negotiation and capitulation
- He was a narcissist who presented himself as a god. No one could disagree with the Emperor.
- He encouraged incompetent and corrupt sycophants and ideologues in high office
- Due to his lies, narcissism, and incompetence, people lost faith in the office of Emperor.
- The military took over under the Severans, a dynasty of full-fledged military dictators.

# Gibbon's Theory on the Decline





# Why Rome Collapsed

- There was gradual loss of civic virtue among its citizens. The citizens demanded to be served by the Rome, rather than to serve Rome.
- The family unit collapsed, leading to a declining birth rate.
- Romans, Gibbon believed, had become effeminate, unwilling to live a tougher, "manly" military lifestyle. Homosexuality was praised.
- They had become weak, outsourcing their duties to defend their Empire to barbarian mercenaries, who then became so numerous and ingrained that they were able to take over the Empire.
- The currency was devalued and inflation decimated their economy.





# Christians Suffered

- From Emperor Nero in 60 AD until Emperor Diocletian in the early 300s, Christians were persecuted.
- On February 24, 303, Diocletian's first "Edict against the Christians" was published. Diocletian ordered the destruction of Bibles and churches across the entire Roman empire.
- A city in Phrygia, consisting entirely of Christians, was burnt, and all the inhabitants perished in the flames.
- Many Christians had their ears cut off, their noses slit, their right eyes put out, their limbs broken, and their flesh seared in conspicuous places with red-hot irons.





# Christianity Flourished as the Empire Died

- “In a time when the threat of death, even from illness, was a pressing reality, the promise of eternal life ...struck a positive chord”, Larry Hurtado, Why on Earth Did Anyone Become a Christian in the First 300 Years?
- “Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our consciences, but shouts in our pains. It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” C. S. Lewis, The Problem of Pain
- How would the church respond to persecution in America?



# 306 AD – 337 AD

## Constantine the Great

- First Christian Emperor
- Former Pagan
- Edict of Milan in 313 declared tolerance for Christians
- Ushered in a form of authorized Christianity.
- 324 Defeats Maxentius and Licinius
- 325 Convoled Council of Nicaea and made the empire a Christian empire
- 327 Helena sent to Palestine to oversee church building
- Pagans moved into the church
- The gladiatorial games continued.







The Monk



Telemachus:

The Monk Who Ended the Roman Gladiatorial Games  
– January 1, 404 AD

# Gibbon Wrote to Warn England

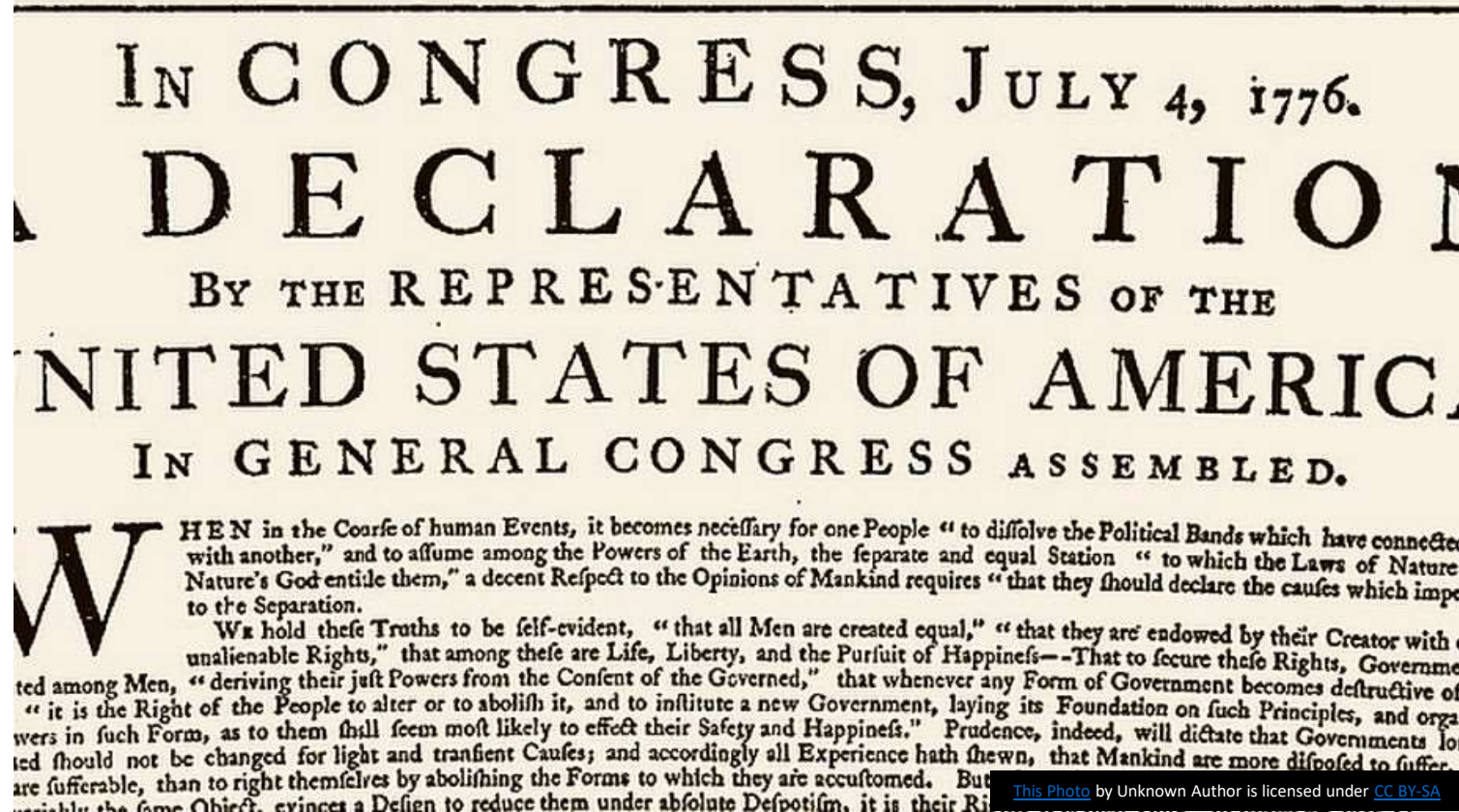
- Gibbon's concern was the decline of his own nation of England. The British Empire would ultimately collapse in 1946 as a result of its overwhelming debt.
- Impending bankruptcy forced it to borrow from the United States, having depended on U.S. power to bail it out of WWII. Ultimately, it ceded its position to America, who owned its debts, and had the military power.
- The British Pound would be replaced by the U.S. Dollar as the reserve currency of the world
- The irony was that shortly after Gibbon wrote the first volume, a new nation was conceived and begun in 1776.
- And as Gibbon warned about what causes a nation to fail, our founders had different thoughts than the Romans on what can build a nation.
- God had moved His focus to America







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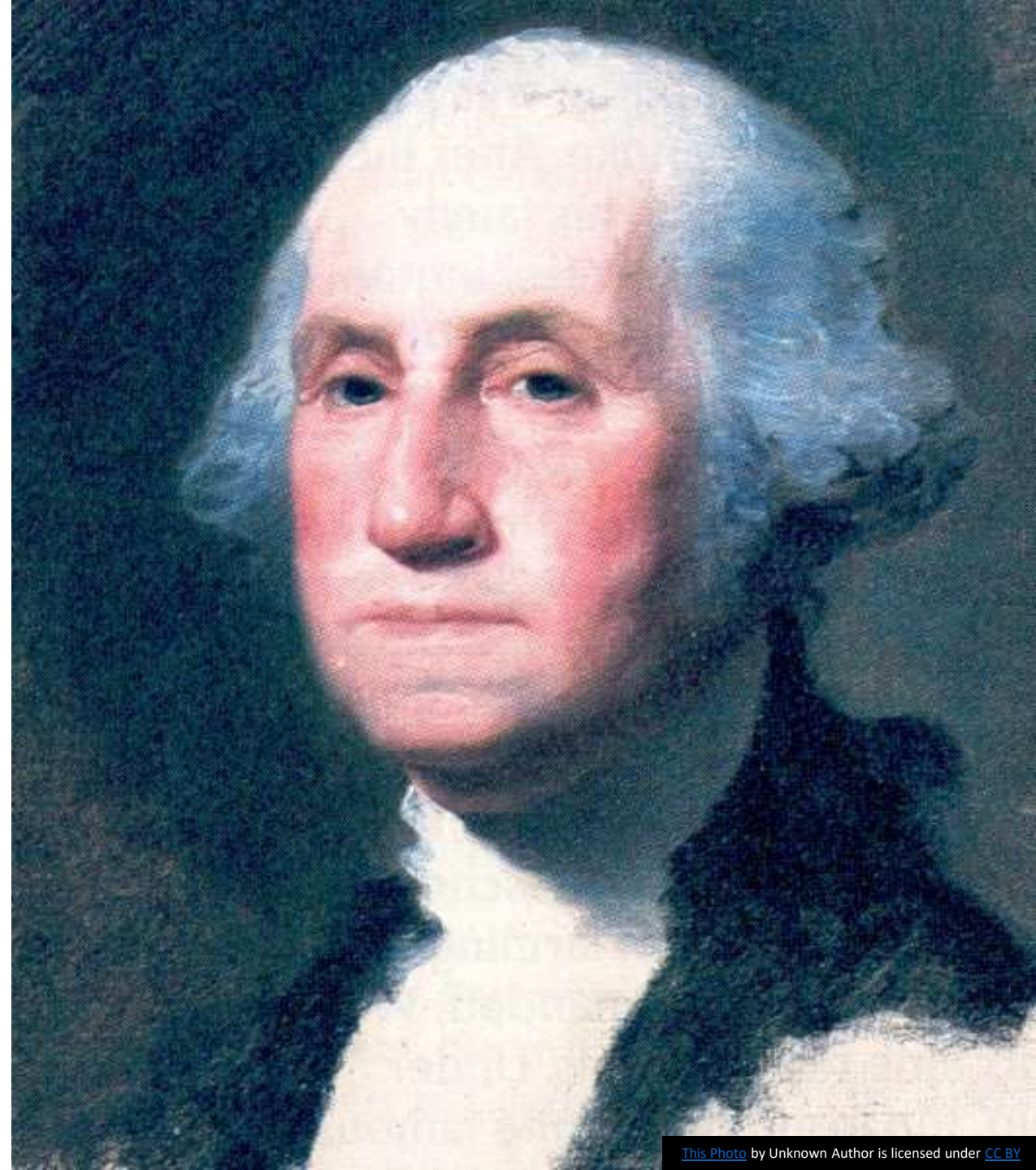
## The Declaration of 1776

- The United States of America was founded in prayer by men who sought God's favor



# George Washington

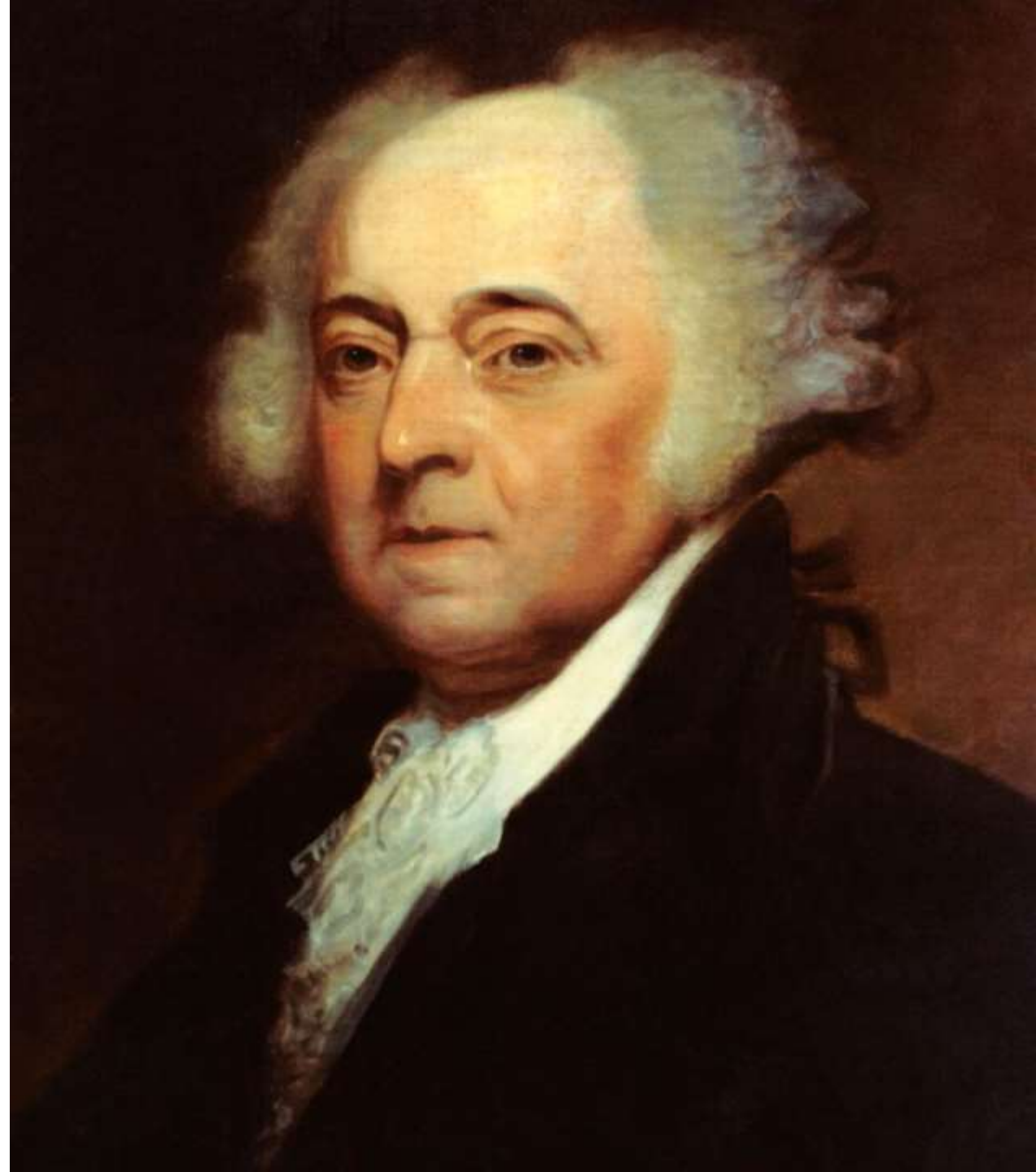
- “And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion... reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle...Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”
- Farewell Address, Sept 17, 1796





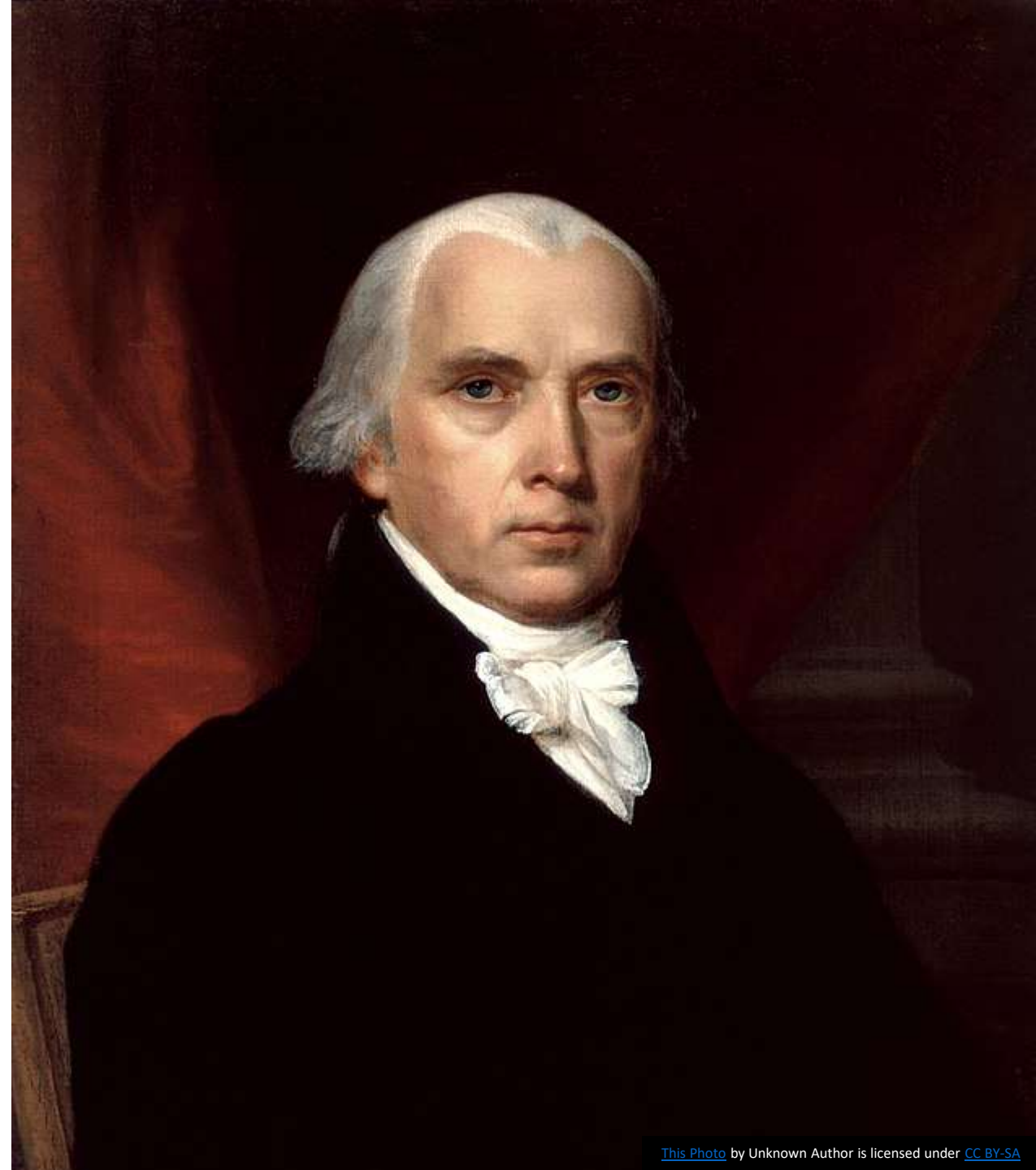
# John Adams

- “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.” August 28, 1811



# James Madison

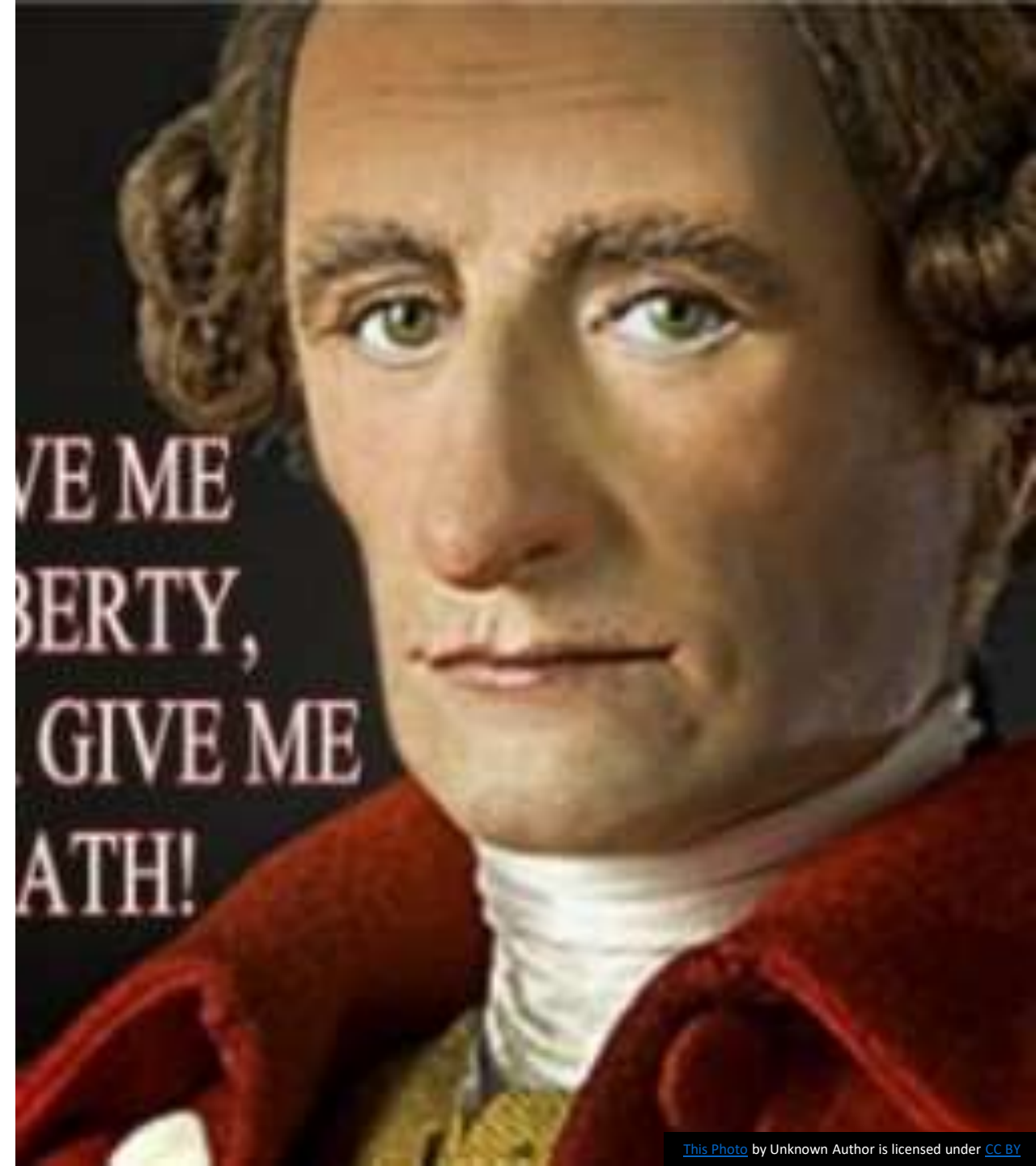
- “We have staked the whole future of American civilization, not on the power of government, far from it. We have staked the future of all of our political institutions upon the capacity of mankind for self-government; upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves, to control ourselves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



# The Great Prayer of 1776

- Two years before the colonies declared their independence from England, the continental congress made its very first official act a call to prayer.
- In March of 1776, in a time of impending war and distress, our founders determined to cast off the restraints of a far off government and its ruler who sought to tax them at unheard of levels and remove from them their God given rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
- On March 16, 1776, General William Livingston presented a resolution for national prayer which passed unanimously. On that day, the continental congress appointed the third Friday of May, -May 17 – 1776 as a day of humiliation, prayer and fasting for all the colonies.
- And so indeed the people prayed and fasted in every colony on that third Friday in May 1776. And it is therefore no surprise that six weeks later, the declaration of independence became the base document of our nation, perhaps the greatest document in the history of the world. It was composed and America was founded as a result of this prayer.



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# The Testimony of History

- A few brave men and women were in fact able – through prayer, sacrifice and perseverance - to free an entire nation from the domination of an ever expanding and out of touch government. The secret however was not in the crowds on the street, but rather, the small groups that bonded on their knees. We were founded by men and women of deep faith who prayed across denominational lines and begged God to intervene in their defense.
- **And the testimony of history is this: God answered their prayer.**



# Thine is the Power...

- “This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the Lord Almighty. Zechariah 4:6
- And He said to me, “**My** grace is sufficient for you, for **My strength is made perfect in weakness.**” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast **in my infirmities**, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 2 Corinthians 12:9

