

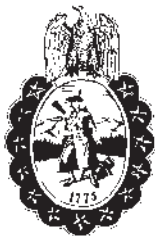
Flintlock & Powderhorn

MAGAZINE OF THE SONS OF THE REVOLUTION

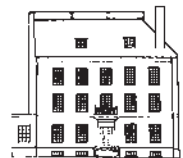


Yorktown

*Victories at Sea and on Land
That Ended the Revolution*



VOLUME 20, NUMBER 1
SPRING 2002





Flintlock & Powderhorn

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The next issue of *Flintlock & Powderhorn* will be published November 1, 2002. Deadline for article submission: September 15, 2002.

COVER: *The British surrender at Yorktown, as depicted by Felix O.C. Darley (1821-1888). Lord Cornwallis did not appear for the ceremony but sent his adjutant, Thomas O'Hara, to hand over the ceremonial sword indicating surrender. George Washington, alert to the requirements of protocol, nominated General Benjamin Lincoln to receive the sword.*

Message from General President Lunney



Religious liberty was a prime issue in the American colonists' dispute with Great Britain. John Adams cited the attempt by the British parliament to force establishment of the Church of England on the colonies as being responsible "as much as any other cause" for the American Revolution. Adams said, "The objection was not merely to the office of a bishop, though even that was dreaded, but to the authority of parliament, on which it must be founded." Historian Carl Bridenbaugh wrote: "It is indeed high time that we repossess the important historical truth that religion was a fundamental cause of the American Revolution."

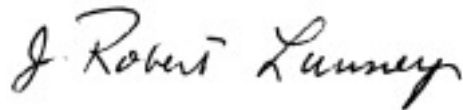
The guarantee of religious freedom was seen as paramount to the framers of the Constitution. Thus on September 25, 1789, during the first session of Congress, a number of Amendments (the Bill of Rights) to the Constitution were approved, including the First Amendment which reads, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. . . ." This was a restriction on the federal government. The Supreme Court, however, through interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment, has determined that the Bill of Rights should also restrict the individual states in their actions. The metaphor "wall of separation," indicating an impassible gulf between church and state, is nowhere to be found in the Constitution. Thomas Jefferson first used the phrase in a letter, but in his second inaugural address he placed the wall of separation *around* the church to protect it from any infringements by the government. The First Amendment provided freedom *for* religion, not—as we so often hear today—freedom *from* religion.

In an important victory for religious freedom, the Supreme Court in June 2001 ruled six to three that public schools may not discriminate against student clubs simply because they feature Bible study, religious songs and prayer. Justice Thomas, in *Good News Club v. Milford Central School*, recognized the fundamental principle that state hostility toward religion can be just as dangerous as state endorsement of religion. The Court held that it was clear that the Club teaches morals and character development to children. On this point the Court made a crucial observation: that children are just

as likely to perceive banning a religious club as hostile to religion as allowing a club to grant special favors to religion.

In the wake of the recent terrorist attacks, after which Americans across the country expressed their different faiths so openly, this decision seems especially poignant. However, there will be further battles over the boundaries of religious freedom. In fact, shortly after the high court's decision the Milford School board was reportedly considering a proposal to ban *all* student clubs rather than allow a Bible study group to meet on school grounds. The American Civil Liberties Union has filed suits to ban posting the Ten Commandments in courthouses and it has filed a federal suit to ban the nation's motto, "In God We Trust." The American Red Cross national headquarters recently supported one of its California chapters in prohibiting students from the singing of "God Bless America" at a Red Cross luncheon. In a news release stating its support for censoring the students it exclaimed its "sensitivity to religious diversity." After substantial objection to its policy the Red Cross backed off, issuing an apology saying it had made a "mistake." More recently, a federal court ruled against the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance because it contained the phrase, "one Nation under God."

As America continues its war on terrorism we must remain vigilant about our freedoms, including our religious freedom. In his Farewell Address on September 17, 1796 President George Washington prophetically reminded his countrymen that, "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports." A mission of the Sons of the Revolution should be restoring the principles of the American founding to their preeminent and rightful authority in our national life. We must continue to build the climate of thought that inspired and emanates from our Constitution.



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Please note our new e-mail address: erust333@optonline.net

Yorktown, 1781: To Go for the Gamble

by John W. Gordon, Ph.D.

The author, a professor of national security affairs at the United States Marine Corps Command and Staff College in Quantico, Virginia, offered these remarks at the Yorktown Anniversary observance on October 19, 2000 in Johnson Square in Savannah, an annual event organized by the Georgia Society. He is a Marine veteran who served in Vietnam, and subsequently served in the Marine Corps Reserve, from which he was called to active duty in 1991 in support of Operation Desert Storm/Desert Shield. He retired with the rank of colonel in 1996. Prior to his recent appointment to the Marine Corps Command and Staff College he was a professor of history at The Citadel. Dr. Gordon's new book, South Carolina and the American Revolution: A Battlefield History, will be published by the University of South Carolina Press in November 2002.

The thing we celebrate here today—General George Washington's great victory over the British at Yorktown 219 years ago, the turning-point event leading ultimately to the winning of the war and independence for Americans—should, when we consider the odds against it, almost never have happened at all.

Victory in Virginia was never a foregone conclusion. The situation in the summer of 1781 in a war that had already lasted six years was anything but promising for the Americans. They faced a major British army holding New York and a second army of hard and professional redcoats, this one under Lord Cornwallis, which recently had completed its romp through the Carolinas. Even when Washington learned that Cornwallis had gone to ground in Tidewater Virginia, he was far from certain that he should go after him. The whole prospect seemed at best a huge gamble, a roll of the dice far too risky to take.

To do so, he and his French counterpart, Rochambeau, would have to move two whole armies, one American, one French, from where they watched the British in the north all the way down to the edge of the Chesapeake Bay, a point nearly 400 miles away. But that was not all. There was a third element involved. While the armies were in motion, a full French fleet of warships would have to sail north from the Caribbean and arrive at just the right time. This matter of the French fleet was all-important. A British general such as Cornwallis always had an ace up his sleeve: the British Navy. There could be no possibility of success

unless this link between British land and naval power could be broken, if only for a moment. Put another way, a fleet, by commanding the waters off Yorktown, was the only way to put the stopper in the bottle and give the French and Americans a chance to win. Sea power was the only way by which to cut off and isolate the target of this large and complex effort: the army

THE SIEGE OF YORKTOWN



Map of the siege of Yorktown, as drawn by Henry Beebee Carrington (1824-1912). Carrington, a Connecticut native and Yale graduate, reorganized the Ohio state militia and was to earn many honors in the Civil War. After the war he led the force that in 1866 attempted to open and guard the Bozeman Trail route to Montana. He planned and built forts C.F. Smith and Phil Kearney on this route. From 1869 to 1878 he was professor of military history at Wabash College; his *Battles of the American Revolution* (1876), supplemented by a volume of maps, is a standard work.

“...these were a lot of moving parts for an 18th-century military operation. To say that it would require perfect timing, perfect execution and absolutely nothing going wrong is an understatement.”

led by Cornwallis, by now digging in at Yorktown. If the French fleet could get to the Chesapeake—if it could get there first, before the British fleet—it could keep that second fleet out. If the British fleet could be kept out of the Bay and unable to get in to help the redcoats ashore, then the American and French armies had a chance. They could surround Cornwallis and attack—and take a desperate chance to win the war.

That was the theory of the plan. But there was almost nothing to suggest that it would ever work. To start with, these were a lot of moving parts for an 18th-century military operation. To say that it would require perfect timing, perfect execution and absolutely nothing going wrong is an understatement. Its geographic sweep alone involved thousands of miles—virtually the equivalent of a World War II operation in the Pacific. The perils of communication (the Americans and French on shore would be out of touch with the French at sea for critical weeks at a time; dispatches sent by sea ran the risk of interception by the British) and weather alone could foil the plan at any given moment. Finally, it was hard enough just to coordinate the movements of that many thousands of men. And the record showed that the French and American allies had tried to do that before—and had always failed. Washington himself had not faced the British in battle in more than three years. The last time he tried, he had lost. Now he was considering going south and betting all on a move that would leave large segments of his country exposed to British attack. If the British were tired of the war, so were the Americans. American soldiers had recently mutinied because they had not been paid in more than a year. Washington had used the phrase “the end of our tether.” What would happen to the American cause if the British were to score some dramatic success, some signal victory, while he was chasing off to the south, trying to carry out this new and very ambitious plan?

But Washington did make the decision to go for Yorktown and Cornwallis. Although initially skeptical, he finally reached the conclusion that the Americans must make the try. This was a key moment. Washington risked far more than his ally, Rochambeau, who, though manifestly able, was after all the commander of an expeditionary force that ultimately would return to France. But for Washington his fate, the fate of the



Washington inspects the French batteries in the trenches at Yorktown. Drawn by Rufus F. Zogbaum for *Harper's Weekly* in its issue of October 22, 1881 celebrating the centennial of the battle.

national army he commanded and the fate of the people and the country it represented all hung on the decision to go to Yorktown.

We know that, in the event, the orchestration, the movements—everything—worked almost perfectly. The British in the north fell for the deception plan of an American and French attack—it was a feint—against their key base at New York. The French fleet duly arrived in the Chesapeake and soon deflected a British fleet trying to fight its way in to rescue Cornwallis. And the two allied armies, the French and the American, marched swiftly south at the end of the summer to take up position at Yorktown. Their heavy siege guns and infantry assaults soon did their work. Ultimately, on the date that we celebrate here today, Cornwallis surrendered, just as a British relief force was at last moving to try to save him. But it was too late. The British had had a window of opportunity to rescue Cornwallis, but had failed to use it by moving with insufficient forces too late. Indeed, some of their warships had mistakenly been withdrawn to England; a full British fleet, which in the next year would defeat the French fleet in battle, had incorrectly remained in the Caribbean rather than moving up the coast.

Washington, who had risked all, had closed the window on Cornwallis, and on the British in America. By winning at Yorktown the Americans had won both a victory and a country. ★

Genealogical Query

I would appreciate any information you could provide on the following:

1. James GRIMES, Revolutionary soldier, married Sarah BRYAN, d. abt. June 1828 (probate records);
2. Wm. BRYAN, Revolutionary soldier, founder of Bryans Station, Kentucky, son of Morgan and Martha (STRODE).

I am a direct descendant of Squire Boone.

Please reply to: Philip Sanders Troyer, 18986 Sioux Drive, Spring Lake, MN 49456. Phone: 616-846-6664.

Replies to genealogical queries should be sent directly to the enquirers.

The Decisive Battle of the Revolution Was Waged at Sea

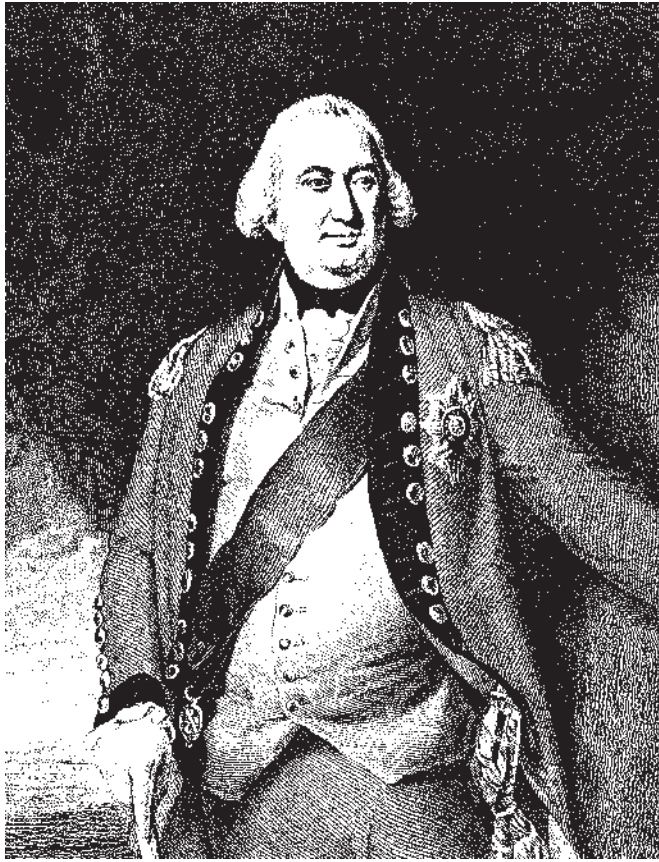
by **J. Robert Lunney**
General President, Sons of the Revolution

General President Lunney, a practicing attorney in White Plains, New York, is well-qualified to write of war at sea. He served on surrender and occupation duties with Naval Amphibious Forces in the Pacific at the end of World War II. He was called back to duty as staff officer in the U.S. Merchant Marine during the Korean War, participating in the Inchon Landing and Hungnam Evacuation during the Chosin Reservoir campaign in December 1950. He retired from the U.S. Naval Reserve as a captain in 1987, having completed just under 43 years of service. He was subsequently appointed rear admiral in the New York Naval Militia, the naval equivalent of the state's National Guard. RADM Lunney is past national president (1991-1993) of the Naval Reserve Association, the professional organization of more than 25,000 Naval Reserve officers.

Beginning about four o'clock on the afternoon of September 5, 1781, two and one-half hours of battle between warships of the British and French navies determined the outcome of the American Revolution.

This, the sea battle of Yorktown, was the most decisive battle of the relentless six-year rebellion by the 13 American colonies against England. After this battle the creation of the United States of America was certain. The hero of the engagement was Comte François Joseph Paul de Grasse, a vice admiral of the French Navy. Inquiry into the matter shows that de Grasse was the right man in exactly the right place at exactly the right time.

The capture of Charleston, South Carolina by General Sir Henry Clinton 16 months earlier was the greatest British victory of the war and the most severe defeat of an American army until Bataan in 1942. Soon after this success Clinton returned to New York and left Major General Charles Cornwallis in charge. Restless and ambitious, Cornwallis had more expansive ideas than Clinton's cautious approach to the conquest of the South. In August 1780 he destroyed an American army at Camden, South Carolina and continued in pursuit of the rebel army under General Nathanael Greene. But in the follow-



General Charles Cornwallis, British commander at Yorktown, from a portrait by John Singleton Copley.

ing year, despite some success at the battle of Guilford Courthouse, North Carolina in March 1781, a fourth of his men were casualties.

Continuing his strategy of subjugating the South, Cornwallis fell back to Wilmington, North Carolina on the Cape Fear River. With the end of a difficult campaign in the Carolinas, Cornwallis proceeded to Virginia at the beginning of May 1781. He thought that if Virginia could be pacified then all the provinces to the south would fall into the British camp for lack of supplies. Beating off harassing attacks by a small army led by General Lafayette, he withdrew down the York peninsula. In establishing himself and his combined force of approximately 7,500 men at the port of Yorktown at the beginning of August 1781 he believed he was safe. The Royal Navy commanded the sea and Yorktown could accommodate a large British fleet. Yorktown was intended to restore the mobility of his forces, not to terminate it.

A despondent Washington at one time confided to his journal that he saw no prospects of success “unless we receive a powerful aid of ships, land troops and money, from our generous allies.” Without this help, he warned that the struggle would soon be over. “If France delays a timely and powerful aid. . . it will avail us nothing should she attempt it hereafter. . . . We are at the end of our tether.”

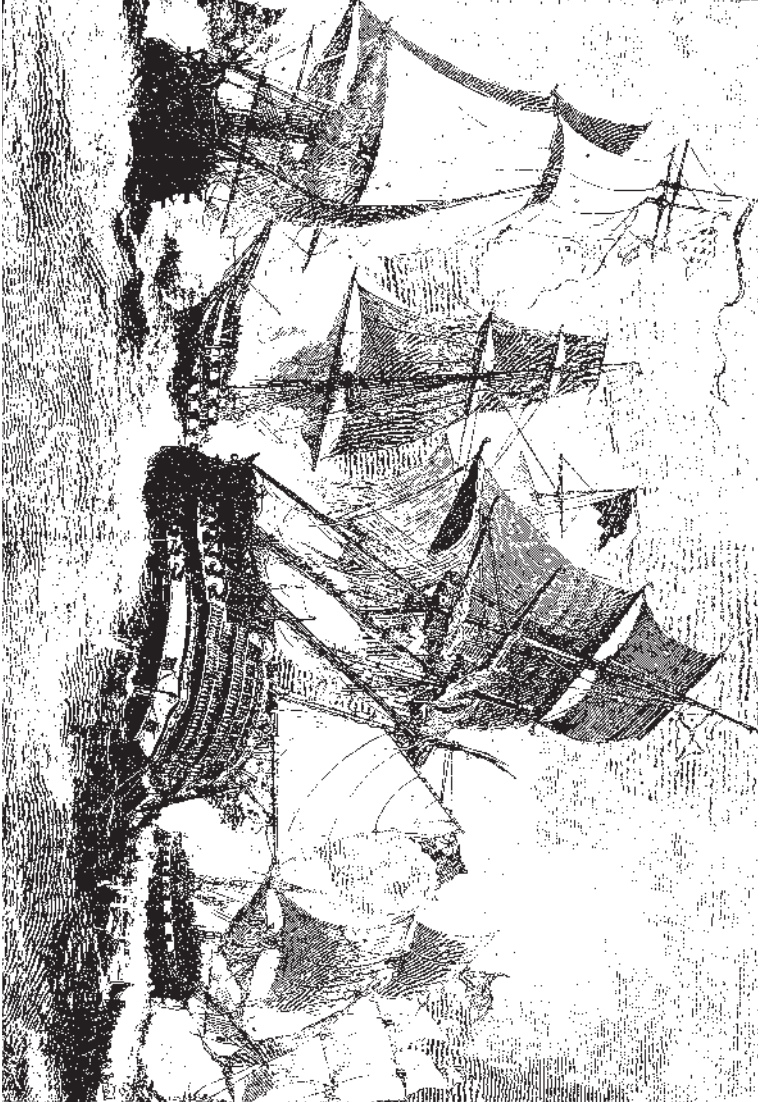
In July 1780 French aid did appear when 13 transports brought approximately 6,000 troops to Rhode Island under the Comte de Rochambeau. After about ten months of little action Rochambeau met with Washington in Wethersfield, Connecticut on May 21, 1781. Washington favored an attack on New York City but Rochambeau, skeptical about the prospects of such a project, regarded the Chesapeake a much more profitable field of endeavor. In addition, Rochambeau had learned that Vice Admiral de Grasse was expected off the American coast later in the summer. Soon a French force of about 4,000 men was on the move south from Newport. The junction with Washington’s army of some 4,500 men took place on July 6, 1781 at White Plains, New York. Although the British were led to believe an attack was to be made on New York, the combined armies marched south to Virginia. In mid-August word came from de Grasse that he was bound for the Chesapeake but had to return to the West Indies by October 15.

In a magnificent gamble, de Grasse had sailed his entire fleet of 24 ships of the line north from the Caribbean. They carried field artillery and cavalry and, most important, about 3,000 French troops under the command of the Marquis de Saint Simon. Racing north, de Grasse arrived off the Chesapeake and anchored in Lynnhaven Bay at the end of August. With no opposition from Cornwallis, Saint Simon’s force with its field artillery was landed to join Lafayette near Yorktown on the first day of September.

At the same time the Comte de Barras, taking a wide berth to avoid the British fleet at New York, was sailing south from Newport. His squadron included eight ships of the line and carried siege artillery and supplies.

Admiral Thomas Graves of the Royal Navy sailed south from New York on September 1 with 19 ships of the line. He arrived off the Chesapeake on the morning of September 5 and to his surprise found the 24 warships of the French fleet at Lynnhaven Bay. Although outnumbered by five warships, Graves ordered an immediate attack.

The British fleet carried about 1,500 cannons against nearly 2,000 French guns. De Grasse was aboard one of the most powerful battleships then afloat, the *Ville de Paris*, which carried more than 100 cannon. The battle began with de Grasse sailing out to meet the English. After a spirited bombardment by both sides the two fleets gradually disengaged. It became evident to Graves that his fleet was in no condition to continue an attack



The climactic sea battle of the Revolution took place on September 5, 1781 off the coast of Cape Henry. The French defeat of the British Fleet sealed the fate of Cornwallis at Yorktown. Drawn by J. O. Davidson for *Harper's Weekly* in its issue of September 5, 1881.

“In the end, control of the sea dictated the outcome of the siege of Yorktown.”

because of the French skill in directing fire into an enemy's masts and rigging. In addition, Graves's contradictory flag signals caused great confusion among his ships.

Eight days after the engagement Graves, realizing that he couldn't enter the Chesapeake, sailed north to New York to repair his ships and obtain reinforcements. British naval power had failed. In the meantime de Barras had arrived from Newport with eight ships of the line and had offloaded more siege artillery.

At this time Washington and Rochambeau arrived at Yorktown, linking up with Lafayette's combined force. When Washington met de Grasse aboard the *Ville de Paris*, legend has it that de Grasse embraced the much taller Washington, kissed him on both cheeks and cried, "My dear little General!"

More than 15,000 French and American troops now lay siege to Yorktown. The heavy artillery barrages and infantry assaults by the French and Americans soon did their work. The British Navy, despite many promises, failed to deliver any help. On October 19, 1781, outnumbered and running low on supplies, Cornwallis surrendered his 7,500-man army, effectively ending the war. Ironically, on that very day Graves sailed south from New York with reinforcements for Cornwallis. It was too little and too late. Graves was forced to return to New York.

In the end, control of the sea dictated the outcome of the siege of Yorktown. Historian Samuel Eliot Morison recognized the vital importance of sea power at Yorktown: "Without the naval victory of de Grasse, it would not have been the capitulation of Cornwallis, but that of Washington that history would have registered." Washington fully recognized this in a letter to de Grasse on October 20, 1781 when he wrote, "The surrender of [Yorktown] from which so great glory and advantage are derived to the allies, and the honor of which belongs to Your Excellency, has greatly anticipated our most sanguine expectations." He added, "You will have observed that, whatever efforts are made by land armies, the Navy must have the casting vote in the present contest". In a letter to Lafayette on November 15, 1781 Washington was even more forceful when he wrote. "Without a decisive naval force we can do nothing definitive. And with it, everything honorable and glorious."

Michael Lewis, in *The History of the British Navy*, makes the flat statement, "The Battle of Chesapeake Bay was one of the decisive battles of the world. Before it, the creation of the United States of America, was possible, after it, it was certain."

It was certain because Vice Admiral de Grasse was the right man in exactly the right place at exactly the right time. ★

We Hold These Truths

by D. Weston Darby Jr.

D. Weston Darby Jr., president emeritus of the Pennsylvania Society, delivered these remarks at Independence Square in Philadelphia on July 4, 2000 at the Pennsylvania Society's Let Freedom Ring ceremonies. Mr. Darby is chairman of the General Society's Constitution and Bylaws Committee.

Though the final chapters of the American testament have not been written, and hopefully never will be, it might contain some 50 writings of great power and persuasion.

It would commence with the Mayflower Compact and include, among others, Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, the Bill of Rights, the Monroe Doctrine, Abraham Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address" and Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points. In recent memory it would embrace Martin Luther King's inspirational speech "I Have a Dream" and Douglas MacArthur's mesmerizing address, "Duty, Honor, Country."

Foremost among these would be the Declaration of Independence, an icon not only for all Americans, but in fact for the whole world.

The Mayflower Compact may be considered the first precedent in America for our tradition of self-government. It was signed on a cold November day by 41 men huddled together in the damp, dimly lit hold of a very small ship floating in Cape Cod Bay off what would become Massachusetts. These men, later called Pilgrims, some of whom were Separatists—that is, persons separated from the Church of England—had emigrated for "the honor of king and country."

Acting to maintain unity, as they were far from their intended landing in Virginia, they combined themselves into a civic body for their "better ordering and preservation," and for the "general good of the colony," to which they promised "due submission and obedience." This they did as "loyal subjects" of their Sovereign Lord King James the First. The year was 1620.

One hundred and fifty-six years later, another group of men gathered in the building directly behind me, then called the State House. The circumstances were quite different. It was a hot, humid day in July, on land, in the largest city in America and the second-largest in the English-speaking world. These men, later called patriots, declared their king, now George the Third, to be a tyrant. They also proclaimed their united colonies to be free and independent states. The year was 1776.

The year before, Patrick Henry had spoken his immortal

words. The battles of Lexington, Concord and Bunker Hill were done. George Washington had been appointed commander-in-chief of the Continental Army. Earlier in the year Thomas Paine had published his inflammatory pamphlet *Common Sense*, attacking the monarchy, praising republican government and calling for immediate independence. Paine declared that the cause of America was the cause of all mankind.

On June 7 Richard Henry Lee of Virginia offered the resolution to the delegates of the Second Continental Congress that



An early view of Independence Hall in Philadelphia.

would lead to independence. A patrician by birth, Lee was the senior member of the Virginia delegation. He was 45 years old. Years later he would become a senator from Virginia in the First Congress under the Constitution.

Not wanting to vote on the resolution immediately, as there was not yet sufficient consensus—but knowing that there soon would be—the Continental Congress formed a committee of five to begin drafting the great document: John Adams, 41, of Massachusetts, a Harvard graduate, later second president of the United States; Benjamin Franklin, 70, of Pennsylvania, one of six men who would sign both the Declaration and the Constitution; Thomas Jefferson, 33, of Virginia, schooled at William and Mary and a member of the Virginia House of Burgesses; and two others who played a minimal role, Robert Livingston of New York and Roger Sherman of Connecticut.

Jefferson was chosen to be the draftsman by Adams, who incidentally had seconded Lee's resolution. It was a fortuitous choice. Jefferson, who had been taught law by George Wythe, knew exactly what he wanted to express. He was a superior writer with an excellent mind. Several years before, in Williamsburg, he had written "A Summary View of the Rights of British America." He had read George Mason's "A Declaration of Rights" and was familiar with Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*. He was well-prepared for the task.

Jefferson had taken quarters on the southwest corner of Market and Seventh streets in what became known as the Graff House.¹ He drafted the document on the second floor. Adams and Franklin suggested minor changes. The committee approved the draft and submitted it to the Continental Congress on June 28.

On July 1 Congress debated Lee's resolution for independence. At the end of the day a test vote indicated only nine delegations were in favor of independence. Pennsylvania and South Carolina were not, Delaware was evenly split and New York was still awaiting instructions from its convention. A final vote was postponed until the next day.

On the following morning South Carolina decided to join the majority; so did Pennsylvania when two of its opposing members remained absent. The count was now 11 for independence. A dramatic appearance by Caesar Rodney, who had been summoned earlier and rode all night and part of the day, broke the tie for Delaware. He favored independence.

The final vote was taken on the resolution. There were 12 votes for the United States, none for the king and one abstention. On that day, July 2, we had voted ourselves independent of Great Britain. New York made the vote unanimous on July 15.

You might well think that July 2 would be our anniversary. John Adams did, but it was not to be. Rather it was the announcement of that act, in the form of the Declaration of Independence, that has become our birthday.

On July 3 Congress commenced debate on the Declaration. It shortened the document to make it more forceful, but did not alter Jefferson's rich prose and strong logic. As his biographer Dumas Malone has written, the Declaration's "well-worn phrases still have the freshness of life because it nobly evokes the undying spirit of human freedom."

Witness that it begins, "When in the course of human events" and continues, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

The Declaration can be divided into four sections: a preamble, a statement of philosophy, a listing of charges against the king and a resolution for independence.

It is the second part—starting, "we hold these truths"—that has given the document its everlasting currency. It talks of "natural rights," a term not used today but well-known in the 18th century.

Borrowing from Dumas Malone, it can be said,

We regard the word "rights" as merely the plural of the word "right" and think of it in the moral sense. Rights, as the people in all ages understand them, are simply what is right. Force does not make right and right derives from no king. It arises from the nature of things. It comes from

God, and what God has given, no man can take away. Therefore, "rights" belong to all men because they are men and these rights last as long as life does. Liberty is right, and God intends that all men shall have it, and by the same token, the force that tyrants use can never be anything but wrong.

This was Jefferson's testament.

The Declaration resumes, "We, therefore, the representatives of the United States of America. . .declare that these united colonies are. . .free and independent states. . ." and concludes, ". . .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."

On July 4, this day 224 years ago, John Hancock, president of Congress, and Charles Thomson, secretary, authenticated the Declaration with their signatures.² It was printed that night by John Dunlap and first read to the populace by John Nixon on July 8, here in this courtyard.³

When word was received that New York supported independence, Congress had the Declaration engrossed on parchment. Timothy Matlack, an assistant to Secretary Thomson, was the penman. Most delegates, but not all, signed the document on August 2. The final signer was Thomas McKean of Delaware, who endorsed the document several years later. Altogether, 56 patriots affixed their signatures.⁴

The Revolutionary War would last for several more years. Yet to come were the triumph at Saratoga in 1777, the bitter winter at Valley Forge and the final major victory at Yorktown in 1781.

From Independence Square in Philadelphia, on this glorious day in the year 2000, I wish all of you, and all Americans everywhere, a Happy Birthday.

May God bless the United States.

★

NOTES

- ¹ The building was later destroyed, but in recent years has been reconstructed.
- ² This "working paper," which may not have been actually signed, is no longer in existence. It was sent to the printer on the evening of July 4 and is believed to have been destroyed in the routine process of typesetting, etc.
- ³ Approximately 200 copies of this printed broadside are thought to have been made during the night of July 4. Only 25 are known to exist today, most of which are owned by institutions. One of the very few in private hands was sold by Internet auction recently. The price was \$8.14 million.
- ⁴ This parchment is the one familiar to all of us. It is kept at the National Archives in Washington, DC, where it may be seen every day of the year.

“Give ‘Em Watts, Boys!”

Divine Intervention in The American Revolution

by David L. Taylor



David L. Taylor is chaplain of the Florida Society and is also president of that organization's Brigadier General John Glover Chapter. He lives in Treasure Island, FL. A veteran of the U.S. Navy, Mr. Taylor has been a member of the Sons of the Revolution since 1993. His vivid account of the Battle of Long Island appeared in these pages in Volume 18, Number 1 (Spring 2000). He includes both the essay below and his account of the Battle of Long Island in his new book, also called Give 'Em Watts, Boys! It is available on-line from 1stBooks.com and in paperback form from Ingram Publishing (ISBN 0-75963-636-2).

The Rev. James Caldwell was pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Elizabethtown, New Jersey. He was also chaplain to the Continental Army.

Hessian General Wilhelm von Knyphausen crossed from Staten Island to New Jersey with 5,000 men. On the way to the little town of Springfield, some of the soldiers crept up on the Rev. Caldwell's home at Connecticut Farms in Union. They heard talking in the kitchen and, without looking in a window, opened fire. Two balls passed through Mrs. Caldwell's body, killing her instantly. She was the mother of nine children. Whether or not it was intentional—Rev. Caldwell had a price on his head—the incident so inflamed the townspeople that the Hessians made a rapid retreat.

When Knyphausen's force returned two weeks later, his troops were stopped by furious resistance near the First Presbyterian Church of Springfield. At the height of the shooting, the patriots, taking cover behind a fence next to the church, ran out of paper for wadding needed to hold powder and ball in place in their muskets. Rev. Caldwell ran into the church and gathered up all the copies of *Watt's Psalms and Hymns* that he could carry and rushed out to the crouching riflemen. He tore pages out of the hymnals and passed them around, shouting, "Put Watts into 'em, boys! Give 'em Watts!"

Less than six months later Rev. Caldwell was shot in the back at Elizabethtown Point, where he had gone under a flag of truce. The ball pierced his heart, and he died instantly. Great was

the sorrow at his passing, Rev. Caldwell's abiding faith in the justice of the cause earned him the title, "The Fighting Parson."

This essay is a brief exploration of the part religion played in the American Revolution. No, I mean to say more: this is a look at what I believe are examples of divine intervention in the Revolution.

First, ponder the capture of Fort Ticonderoga without the loss of one life. God's hand was there, in the fort's main gate being left unlocked and the sentry's musket misfiring.

But it was not only the clergy who knew of God's commitment. A lot of the rank and file knew also. For example, Amos Farnsworth, a Yankee farmer and militiaman, would write in his journal about an exchange with the British on one of the islands in Boston Harbor:

About fifteen of us squatted down in a ditch on the marsh and stood our ground. And there came a company of British regulars on the other side of the river. . . . And we had hot fire, until the regulars retreated. But notwithstanding the bullets flew very thick, there was not a man of us killed. Surely, God has a favor toward us. . . . Thanks be to God so little hurt was done us, when the balls sung like bees around our heads.

We can move to the end of the Bunker (Breed's) Hill battle for a letter that soldier Peter Brown wrote to his mother:

The enemy. . . advanced toward us in order to swallow us up, but they found a chokey mouthful of us, although we could do nothing with our small arms as yet for distance, and had but two cannon and nary a gunner. And they from Boston and from the ships a-firing and throwing bombs, keeping us down till they got almost round us. But God, in his mercy to us, fought our battle for us, and although we were but few and so were suffered to be defeated by them, we were preserved in a most wonderful manner, far beyond expectation, to admiration. . . .

The British would wind up in possession of Bunker Hill, but at a fearful price. Of 2,200 British soldiers, nearly half—1,054 officers and men—had been killed or wounded. This was a price that brought General Howe and General Gage to tears; they swore they would never lose again in a frontal attack. The Americans had lost 441 men out of about 3,000 who saw combat. The Americans knew they had won.

What was needed was a mature, sober head and a steady hand to assume the leadership of the military, a man with a set of strong religious beliefs. That man was George Washington.



This 19th century engraving depicts a prayer service among the American troops before the Battle of Breed's Hill.

Proof of his religious beliefs can be found in an old book written by William Johnson titled *George Washington the Christian*. It contains some interesting daily devotions and prayers that Washington wrote at the age of 20. I will quote from some of these devotions, each titled with the time it was to be employed:

Sunday Morning

Let my heart, therefore, gracious God, be so affected with glory and majesty of [Thine honor] that I may not do mine own works, but wait on Thee, and discharge those weighty duties which Thou requirest of me. . . .

Sunday Evening

O mighty glorious God. . . I acknowledge and confess my faults; in the weak and imperfect performance of the duties of this day, I have called on Thee for pardon and forgiveness of sins, but so coldly and carelessly that my prayers are become my sin and stand in need of pardon. I have heard Thy holy word, but with such deadness of spirit that I have been an unprofitable and forgetful hearer. . . . But, O God, Who art rich in mercy and plenteous in redemption, mark not, I beseech Thee, what I have done amiss; remember that I am but dust, and remit my transgressions, negligences and ignorances, and cover them all with the absolute obedience of Thy dear Son, that those sacrifices (of sin, praise and thanksgiving)

which I have offered may be accepted by Thee, in and for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ offered upon the Cross for me.

Monday Morning

Direct my thoughts, words and work, wash away my sins in the immaculate Blood of the Lamb, and purge my heart by Thy Holy Spirit. . . . Daily frame me more and more into the likeness of Thy Son Jesus Christ.

This was God's man, chosen for the hour of America's greatest crisis. Washington took command of the Army.

The change in the attitude of the Continental Army that summer of 1775 was rapid and dramatic. The day after Washington formally took command, the following order was issued:

The General most earnestly requires and expects a due observance of those articles of war established for the government of the army, which forbid profane cursing, swearing and drunkenness. And in like manner, he requires and expects of all officers and soldiers not engaged in actual duty, a punctual attendance of Divine services, to implore the blessing of Heaven upon the means used for our safety and defense.

William Emerson, pastor of the church on Harvard Square in whose house Washington first stayed after his arrival in Boston, wrote a friend, "There is a great overturning in the camp, as to order and regularity. New lords, new laws. The Generals Washington and [his adjutant, Charles] Lee are upon the lines every day. New orders from His Excellency are read to the respective regiments every morning after prayers."

One of those new orders read:

The General orders this day [July 20, the first national fast day] to be religiously observed by the forces under his Command, exactly in the manner directed by the Continental Congress. It is therefore strictly enjoined on all officers and soldiers to attend Divine service. And it is expected that all those who go to worship do take their arms, ammunition and accoutrements, and are prepared for immediate action, if called upon.

They were to be like Gideon's men, drinking of the water watchfully, or like the Pilgrims, marching to their Sunday service with blunderbusses shouldered.

Discipline and more discipline—that was the rule that

“So numerous were the fighting pastors that the Tories referred to them as the ‘black regiment.’”

summer. Men learned how to march and drill, but more important, they learned how to obey. And an astonishing transformation took place: the Continental Army began to become an army in fact as well as in name. And all—save a few passed-over senior officers whose egos could never forgive him or who lusted after his position—gave credit to Washington. He, in turn, was quick to give it to God, Who he knew was responsible.

Others knew it too. Throughout America, certain committed ministers were reminding their congregations that it was only through God’s continuing mercy that America had fared as well as she had, and that repentance, not strength of arms, would decide the outcome.

Nor were the exhortations of the ministers confined to words. These men did not hesitate to put their lives on the line. During the battles of Lexington and Concord, a minister from Chelsea named Philips Payson captured two British supply wagons single-handedly. John Craighead raised a company of militia from his parish and led them himself to join Washington in New Jersey, where it is recorded that he “fought and preached alternately.” So numerous were the fighting pastors that the Tories referred to them as the “black regiment,” and blamed them for much of the resurgent zeal of the Colonial troops.

On a Sunday in 1775 30-year-old pastor Peter Muhlenberg delivered a sermon in a staid Lutheran church in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. The text was Ecclesiastes 3:1: “For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven.”

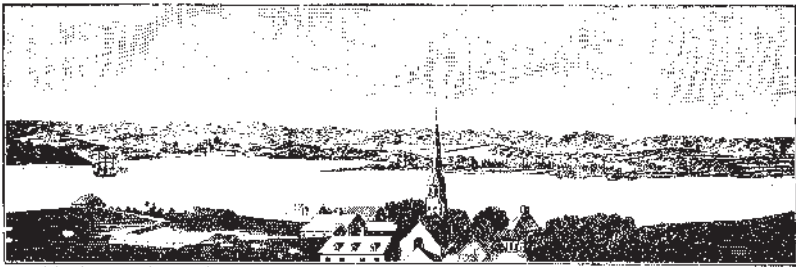
He had reached the end of his sermon, but he continued to speak. “In the language of the Holy Writ, there is a time for all things. There is a time to preach and a time to fight.” He paused, then threw off his pulpit robe to reveal to the startled congregation the uniform of a colonel in the Continental Army.

“*And now is the time to fight!*” he thundered, then called out, “Roll the drums for recruits!” The drums rolled and that same afternoon he marched off at the head of a column of 300 men. His regiment was to earn fame as the 8th Virginia. Muhlenberg was to distinguish himself in a number of battles, rising to the rank of brigadier general in charge of Washington’s first light infantry brigade.

The next God-inspired plan was turned over to Henry Knox: the removal of cannons from Fort Ticonderoga and their transport to Dorchester Heights in Boston. It was the dead of winter. Divine providence supplied the snow and Henry Knox built the sleds to carry the cannons. The caravan arrived in

Cambridge on January 18, 1776. The artillery was to be placed on the only heights that could bombard Boston and the harbor. Powder was found, and all was in readiness to move the artillery on the night of March 4, when the army started firing on the British to divert attention from what was happening on Dorchester Heights.

The Continental Army could have waited a year and not experienced more ideal weather conditions than those that occurred that night. A ground mist completely covered its operations at the base of Dorchester Heights, while the top of the hill was perfectly clear, well-lit by a nearly full moon. The final touch was a breeze blowing inland, carrying the noise of their work away from the British. Some 800 men labored to place the pre-assembled wooden frames called “chandeliers” in position and load them with fascines, tight bundles of brush, then bring them up the hill via 300 amazingly quiet teams and drovers. These men worked silently hour after hour in the moonlit darkness,



A British officer under siege in Boston whiled away the days making sketches; here you can see Bunker Hill and Breed's Hill to the right of the steeple. The artist's notes are under the sketch.

following plans which Knox had laid out with such precision that the whole line fit together as if the maneuver had been practiced many times before.

The greatest evidence that the grace of God was involved was the fact that *nothing went wrong*. No chance slip of the tongue, no wandering Tory passerby, no lowing of an ox or breaking of a cart spoiled the perfect surprise.

At dawn the reaction of the British was stunned incredulity. Captain Charles Stuart wrote that the fortifications “appeared more like magic than the work of human beings.” British Army engineer Captain Archibald Robertson described the American accomplishment as “a most astonishing night's work that must have employed from 15,000 to 20,000 men.” Vice-Admiral Molyneux Scudham informed Howe that he “could not possibly remain in the harbor under fire of the batteries from Dorchester Neck.” And Howe himself could only grumble, “The rebels have done more in one night than my whole army would have done in months.”

The honor of the British Army demanded an immediate attack on the new rebel position. Howe called a council of war, then gave orders for two forces of 2,000 men each to be assem-

bled for embarkation on the next tide. Down to the longboats went the files of redcoated infantry. But as they waited for the tide, a storm arose from nowhere. It was no ordinary storm, but contained “a wind more violent than any I have ever heard,” in the words of one British soldier. Approaching hurricane velocity, it drove thick snow laterally across the water, rendering any amphibious operation out of the question.

The storm continued all night. As it died away in the morning, Howe—in truth, greatly relieved—could now declare that the rebels had been given too much time to strengthen and fortify their positions, making a frontal attack the height of foolhardiness. Boston was now untenable for the British. A fortnight later the Americans fortified and set up a battery on Nob Hill, Dorchester’s nearest promontory. The British reacted by abruptly evacuating Boston, a city that they had held for a year and a half.

Washington readily recognized that the snowstorm represented “a remarkable interposition of Providence.” But, surprisingly, he added, “I can scarce forbear lamenting the disappointment.” For he had placed 3,000 men atop Dorchester Heights, more than had defended Bunker Hill. And—for once—they had all the powder they could use! Many were seasoned veterans, and morale was high. Washington had prepared a surprise for the British. The moment Howe had committed his troops against Dorchester Heights, with two-thirds of his effective forces out of Boston, Washington planned to land an additional 4,000 men at Boston itself. This body was to have raced to the heavily defended neck, taking the British defenders from behind and opening a passage for yet another American force waiting beyond. The British would have been finished in a single stroke.

So it would appear that Washington had good cause to lament. But, as it turned out, the city of Boston was turned over to the Americans without the loss of a single life on either side, which is certainly the way that God would prefer it.

We now move forward to Christmas Eve, 1776. What was needed was a stroke of genius: a surprise attack on Trenton.

Rapidly developing the shrewd discernment for which he would be justly famous, Washington decided to attack the Hessian garrison in Trenton in the predawn hours of December 26. Such a garrison in winter quarters could be counted on to be heavily asleep, particularly if the schnapps had flowed as liberally as was customary at Christmas.

As his troops loaded into small boats on their side of the Delaware a violent snow and hail storm suddenly arose, reducing visibility to near zero. This ensured that any sentries outside would be doing their best to stay inside, or at least to secure as much cover as possible.

Tension was running very high among the soldiers in Washington’s boat. He noticed that the quite plump General Henry Knox was sitting in the center of one of the seats in the

boat, taking up more room than necessary. Washington exclaimed loudly, "Henry, move your big ass so that someone can sit there too." This caused everyone in the boat to laugh—including Knox—thus breaking the tension.

The Hessians were totally surprised by the attack. Henry Knox described it in a letter to his wife: "The hurry, fright and confusion of the enemy was not unlike that which will be when the last trumpet will sound." In 45 minutes of fighting almost 1,000 prisoners were taken. American casualties were two men frozen to death on the march and three men wounded. The surprise of the young nation was also total, for Washington had taken the offensive in a stunning victory. "Never were men in higher spirits than our whole army is," wrote Thomas Rodney, and he spoke for much of America as well.

Was the victory at Trenton a fluke, as Washington's detractors—now themselves in disfavor—muttered? Or was it as Knox wrote, that "Providence seemed to have smiled upon every part of this enterprise"?

Cornwallis, in charge of the British campaign in New Jersey, had been convinced that the front had stabilized for the winter. Indeed, he was about to sail for England to see his ailing wife when news came that Trenton had been taken. He was ordered south with heavy reinforcements. When he reached Trenton on January 3 he rejected advice to attack Washington at once, observing that he could just as well "bag the fox" the next morning. His quartermaster general retorted, "My Lord, if you trust those people tonight, you will see nothing of them in the morning."

Leaving his campfires burning and muffling his artillery wheels, Washington slipped away to Princeton. While driving back a support column en route to join Cornwallis, he deliberately rode in front of his troops to within 30 yards of the British line in order to steady his force of wavering recruits. Washington was six feet, three inches tall, while the average Continental soldier was five feet, six inches tall. Yet he miraculously survived the first volley of both sides, rallying his troops to take the town and hold it. It was not abandoned until Washington learned that Cornwallis was approaching.

This victory, following so closely on Trenton, made up the minds of many Americans still wondering about whether to volunteer. As Nicholas Cresswell, caustic British traveler and gentleman, would note: "Volunteer companies are collecting in every country on the continent, and in a few months the rascals will be stronger than ever. Even the parsons, some of them, have turned out as volunteers and pulpit drums—or thunder, which you please to call it—summoning all the armed in this cursed babble. Damn them all!"

General Washington's only success for most of 1777 was being able to fight and run while always staying one step ahead of the British Army. The only bright glimmer was the victory at Saratoga. It had been one tough loss in battle after



George Washington visits Johann Rall, the mortally wounded Hessian commander at Trenton.

another: Brandywine, Chadd's Ford and Chew House in Germantown, which led to the loss of Philadelphia.

Such were the gloomy thoughts that may have weighed on Washington's mind as he sat on his big gray horse and watched his men file silently past on a cold and dismal December 19. They were on the way to a winter encampment at Valley Forge. He had decided that Trenton was too dangerous and that Wilmington, Lancaster or Reading would have afforded the British unmolested access to too much territory. While Valley Forge was barely 15 miles from Philadelphia, its location—in the fork where Valley Creek runs into the Schuylkill River—was easily defensible. With open fields nearby for drilling and ample wood for fuel and shelter, Washington could not have chosen a better location.

Few of the men shuffling past Washington through the snow had ever heard of Valley Forge, a name that would be chiseled into the cornerstone of this nation's history. Nor did they care, for they were exhausted, hungry and freezing. They had long since given up hope of meat for supper, a warm bed or a dry pair of stockings. Many had no stockings left; their footgear consisted of strips of blanket wound around their feet. All too quickly the blanket would wear through and they would be walking barefoot through the snow. In Washington's whole dwindling army of 11,000 men there may have been less than a dozen properly equipped for the terrible winter that lay ahead.

As they passed by, their heads down to protect against the icy wind, no drumbeat marked cadence; there was only the rattle of leafless branches overhead. There were no complaints, no greetings, nor did their general attempt to encourage them with



A depiction of the march to Valley Forge by 19th century illustrator F.O.C. Darley.

hearty words. They knew he was there, and that was enough. Though he did not speak, the tall figure on the still horse, his own shoulders hunched against the cold, was grieving for his men. As the pale afternoon light faded and gave way to a moonless and starless night, perhaps he sensed that they were marching into the dark night of the young nation's soul. It was the time of testing, the time that sooner or later seems to come to every covenanted body of Christians on this continent. The first Pilgrims and Puritans had faced their starving times; their grandsons had suffered through the horror of a massed Indian uprising. Now it was Valley Forge, the ordeal that would become known down the centuries as our "crucible of freedom."

George Washington made no secret of his Christian faith. In his general order calling for divine services every Sunday he said, "To the distinguished character of a Patriot, it should be our highest glory to add the more distinguished character of a Christian." And others, such as Henry Muhlenberg, pastor of a nearby Lutheran church, noted Washington's faith with approval:

I heard a fine example today, namely, that His Excellency General Washington rode around among his army yesterday and admonished each and every one to fear God, to put away the

wickedness that has set in and become so general, and to practice the Christian virtues. From all appearances, this gentleman does not belong to the so-called world of society, for he respects God's Word, believes in the atonement through Christ, and bears himself in humility and gentleness. Therefore, the Lord God has also singularly, yea, marvelously, preserved him from harm in the midst of countless perils, ambuscades, fatigues, etc., and has hitherto graciously held him in His hand as a chosen vessel.

When it came to prayer, however, Washington preferred to pray in private. It is doubtful that he ever prayed more fervently than he did that winter in Valley Forge.

One of a number of accounts of people accidentally discovering him in prayer involved the general's temporary landlord, Isaac Potts. Potts was a Quaker and a pacifist. One day he noticed Washington's horse tethered by a secluded grove of trees not far from his headquarters. Hearing a voice, he approached quietly and saw Washington on his knees at prayer. Not wanting to be discovered, he stood motionless until Washington had finished and returned to headquarters.

Potts then hurried home to tell his wife, "If George Washington be not a man of God, I am great deceived—and still more shall I be deceived, if God do not, through him, work out a great salvation for America."

Something else happened that winter that says much about the quality of Washington's faith. A turncoat collaborator named Michael Wittman had been captured. At his trial it was proven that he had given the British invaluable assistance on numerous occasions. He was found guilty of spying and sentenced to death by hanging. On the evening before his execution an old man with white hair asked to see Washington. He gave his name as Peter Miller. He was ushered in without delay, for Miller had done a great many favors for the army. Now he had a favor to ask of Washington: "I've come to ask you to pardon Michael Wittman." Washington was taken aback. "Impossible!" he roared. "Wittman has done all in his power to betray us, even offering to join the British and help destroy us." He shook his head. "In these times we cannot be lenient with traitors, and for that reason I cannot pardon your friend."

"Friend?" replied Miller. "He's no friend of mine. He is my bitterest enemy. He has persecuted me for years. He has even beaten me and spit in my face, knowing full well I could not strike back. Michael Wittman is no friend of mine!"

Washington was clearly puzzled. "And you still wish me to pardon him?"

"I do. I ask it of you as a great personal favor."

"Why?"

"I ask it because Jesus did as much for me."

Washington turned away and walked into the next room.

“The greatest difficulty was that, in order to conceal misfortunes from the enemy, it was necessary to conceal them from the nation also.”

— The Marquis de Lafayette

Soon he returned with a paper on which was written the pardon of Michael Wittman. “My dear friend,” he said, placing the paper in the old man’s hand, “I thank you for this.”

Such charity did not weaken Washington in the army’s eyes. The men loved him for it, as did his officers. No one who served with him could understand why there were generals and congressmen who wanted to see him replaced. But the latter did not know how it was at Valley Forge. “The greatest difficulty,” said the young Marquis de Lafayette, “was that, in order to conceal misfortunes from the enemy, it was necessary to conceal them from the nation also.”

Despite the necessity for secrecy, pastors across the nation were beginning to catch the spirit of the tremendous spiritual struggle that was being waged at Valley Forge. More and more sermons were likening Washington to Moses. There were the obvious parallels, of course, but there was also the similarity in Washington choosing to partake of the same hardships as his men. Thus did Washington covenant himself with his men in the suffering of Valley Forge, while—a day’s ride away—the British sat warm and full-bellied, enjoying after-dinner brandy by the fireside.

In the crucible of freedom, God was forging the iron of the Continental Army into steel. ★



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