

Sunday, July 4th, 2021
THE PULPIT THUNDERED
Galatians 5:1 (NIV)

Today, the United States of America celebrates its 244th birthday. The early settlers who arrived in Virginia beginning in 1606 included ministers such as the Revs. Robert Hunt, Richard Burke, William Mease, Alexander Whitaker, William Wickham, and others. In 1619 they helped form America's first representative government: the Virginia House of Burgesses, with its members elected from among the people. That legislature met in the Jamestown church and was opened with prayer by the Rev. Mr. Bucke; the elected legislators then sat in the church choir loft to conduct legislative business. As Bishop Galloway later observed: The first movement toward democracy in America was inaugurated in the house of God and with the blessing of the minister of God.

In 1620, the Pilgrims landed in Massachusetts to establish their colony. Their pastor, John Robinson, charged them to elect civil leaders who would not only seek the "common good" but who would also eliminate special privileges and status between governors and the governed – a radical departure from the practice in the rest of the world at that time. The Pilgrims eagerly took that message to heart, organizing a representative government and holding annual elections. By 1636, they had also enacted a citizens' Bill of Rights – America's first.

In 1636, the Rev. Roger Williams established the Rhode Island Colony and its representative form of government, explaining that "[t]he sovereign, original, and foundation of civil power lies in the people." The same year, the Rev. Thomas Hooker (along with the Revs. Samuel Stone, John Davenport, and Theophilus Eaton) founded Connecticut. They not only established an elective form of government but in a 1638 sermon based on Deuteronomy 1:13 and Exodus 18:21, the Rev. Hooker explained that Biblical principles had guided the plan of government in Connecticut.

Such stories were prominent in the infancy of this land. Early on, it became clear that true liberty and the despotism of kingly authority could not coexist. Christian leaders sought the Bible for inspiration and direction. John Adams declared that "the pulpits have thundered" and specifically identified several ministers as being among the "characters the most

conspicuous, the most ardent, and influential” in the “awakening and a revival of American principles and feelings” that led to American independence.

As this country struggled against a powerful foe to gain independence, the church did more than just talk about liberty. The Black Robed Regiment was the name that the British placed on the courageous and patriotic American clergy during the Founding Era (a backhanded reference to the black robes they wore). Significantly, the British blamed the Black Regiment for American Independence, and rightfully so, for modern historians have documented that: “There is not a right asserted in the Declaration of Independence which had not been discussed by the New England clergy before 1763.” The rights listed in the Declaration of Independence were nothing more than a listing of sermon topics that had been preached from the pulpit in the two decades leading up to the American Revolution.

In the darkest night of struggle, Commander George Washington said these words:

“The reflection upon my Situation, & that of this Army, produces many an uneasy hour when all around me are wrapped in Sleep. Few People know the Predicament we are In ... If I shall be able to rise superior to these, and many other difficulties, which might be innumeraed, I shall most religiously believe that the finger of Providence is in it.”

We are here today because the “finger of Providence” intervened on our behalf. As the war for independence faded into history, our nation began its journey as a free people. Three days before the inauguration of George Washington as first President, Congress passed a resolution that the first act of government by the House, Senate, and Executive branch would be to attend church services at St. Paul’s Chapel. Our journey as a people has not been easy – nor has our pathway been perfect. But the teachings of the Word of God served as a light to lead us out of our darkness and into the blessing of truth. In another dark night of the soul of our nation, President Abraham Lincoln said this:

“My concern is not whether God is on our side; my greatest concern is to be on God's side, for God is always right.”

244 years after the announcement of freedom, we stand at the precipice of another great revolution. Our nation is hopelessly divided which in the biblical narrative is a sign of impending judgment. We are following the pathway of rebellious Israel, who turned its back upon the True God to follow the dictates of its own heart. No nation upon the earth has experienced the blessing of God like this one yet our future as a land is in doubt because of the rebellion of our hearts. While changes in the halls of government are needed, changes in the hearts of our people are imperative. The words of Founding Father, John Adams, ring loudly in our ears:

“We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge or gallantry would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net. Our Constitution is designed only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for any other.”

Once again, the pulpit and the people of God must sound the clarion call to save this nation. If the church is lukewarm in this hour, the nation will swirl down the drain of history under the judgment of God. President Abraham Lincoln said this about America:

“America will never be destroyed from the outside. If we falter and lose our freedoms, it will be because we destroyed ourselves.”

But, the word of God offers hope:

[Joel 2:12-13 \(NIV\)](#)

Today's Scriptures:

- Galatians 5:1 (NIV)
- Joel 2:12-13 (NIV)