



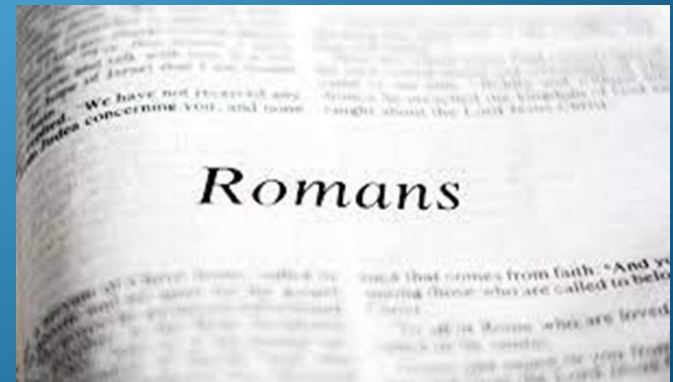
George Washington & The Bible



Dr. Peter A. Lillback

Westminster Seminary & The Providence Forum

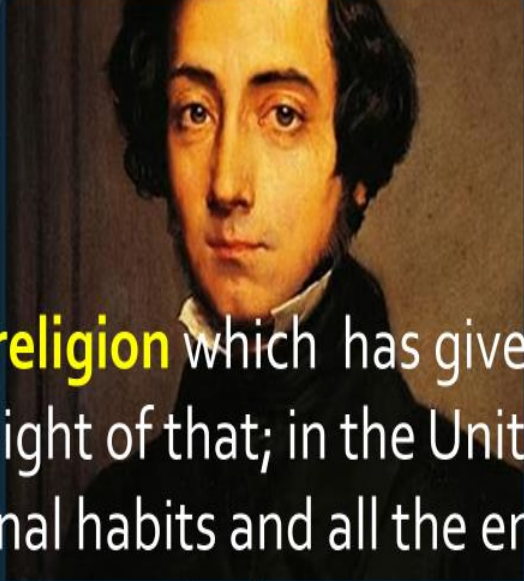
2026



THE CHRISTIAN FAITH CHERISHES **FREEDOM** IN CHRIST—**STANDING FIRM** IN SPIRITUAL, ETHICAL, AND PERSONAL LIBERTY

- “For **freedom** Christ has set us free; **stand firm** therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” (Galatians 5:1)
- “But if you can gain your **freedom**, avail yourself of the opportunity....”
(1 Corinthians 7:21)
- “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is **freedom**.”
(2 Corinthians 3:17)

“...you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” They answered him, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free?’” **Jesus** answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the **Son** sets you free, you will be free indeed. (John 8:32-36)



ALEXIS DE TOQUEVILLE

(1805-1859)

"It is **religion** which has given birth to Anglo-American societies; one must never lose sight of that; in the United States **religion** is thus intimately linked to all national habits and all the emotions which one's native country arouses; that gives it a particular strength.... **Christianity** has therefore maintained a strong sway over the American mind and—something I wish to note above all—it rules not only like a philosophy taken up after evaluation but like a **religion** believed without discussion. In the United States, **Christian** sects are infinitely varied and are endlessly modified, while **Christianity** itself is an established and unassailable fact which no one undertakes either to attack or defend. The Americans, have accepted without question the main teachings of the **Christian religion**, are obliged to accept in the same way a great number of moral truths which derive from it and hold it together." (*Democracy in America.*)

The Logic of our Founders

If you want to be **free**,
you need a **republic**.

If you want a republic, you need a **constitution**.

If you want a constitution, you need a **moral people**.

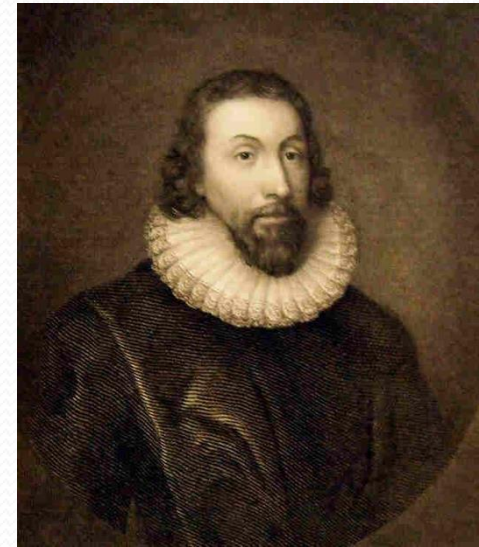
If you want moral people you need **religion**.

Where do you find true religion?

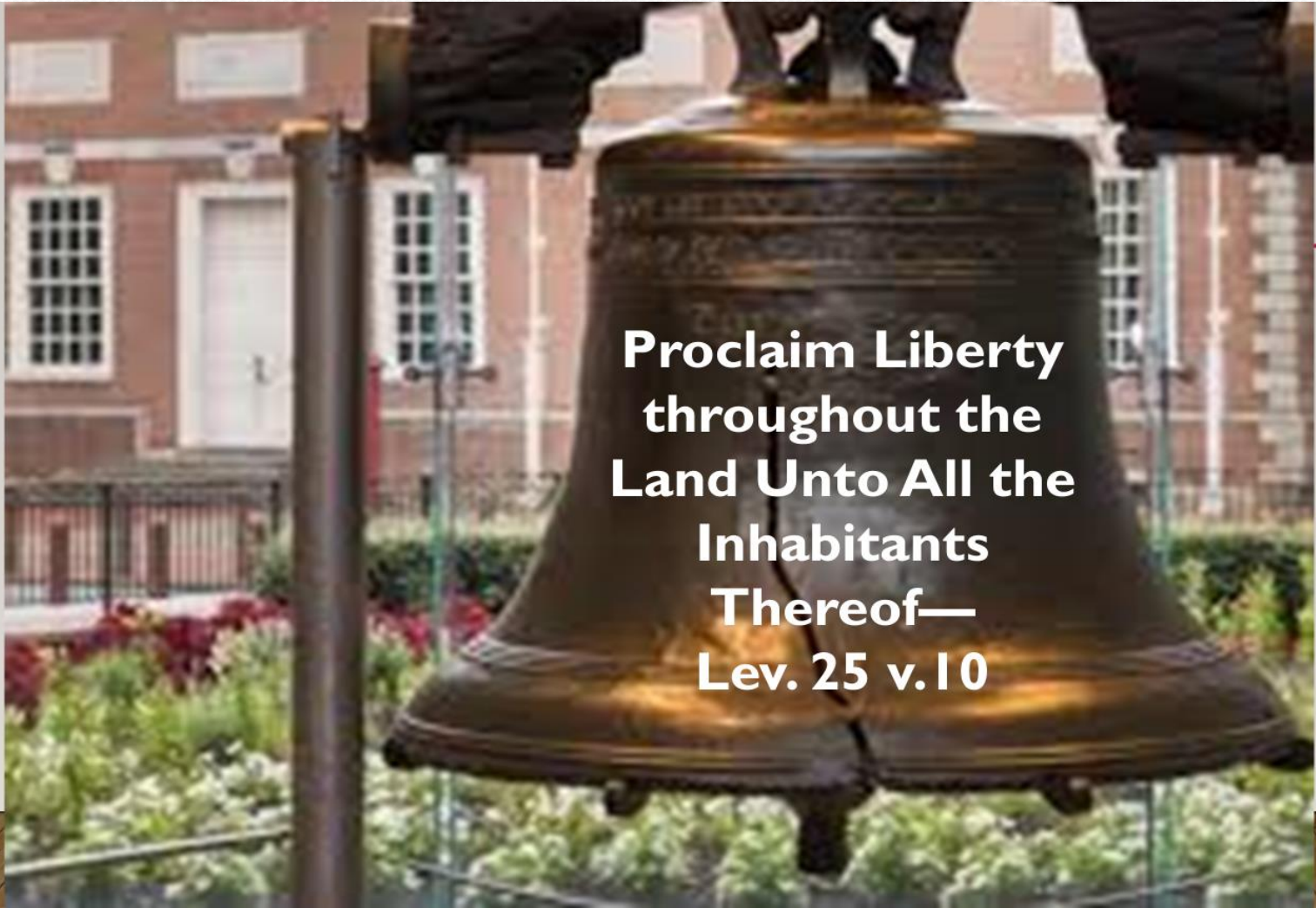
In the **Bible**.

The Bible Was Important in Early America

- America and the King James Bible began around the same time.
- For the next three hundred years English-speaking Americans grew up knowing the Bible better than any other book.
- The link between America and the Bible was made clear in **John Winthrop's claim** about the Puritans: "God had singled them out, like Israel of old, to be instruments of salvation for mankind."



Do you know the Bible Verse That's on the **Liberty Bell**?



**Proclaim Liberty
throughout the
Land Unto All the
Inhabitants
Thereof—
Lev. 25 v.10**



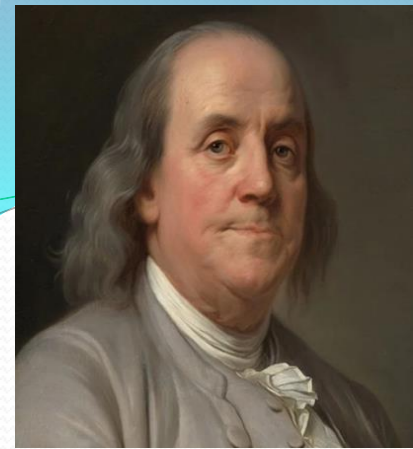
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proof 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 labour 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 little partial local interests; our projects will be confounded, and we ourselves shall become a reproach and bye word down to future ages. And what is worse, mankind may hereafter from this unfortunate instance, 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 blessings 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.

THE US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND US SENATE HAVE OPENED IN PRAYER SINCE THEIR BEGINNINGS.



The Impact of Franklin's Proposal

President Washington was inaugurated for the first time on April 30, 1789.

Five days before his inauguration, the first chaplain of the US Senate was approved (April 25, 1789), electing the Right Rev. Samuel Provoost, the Episcopal chaplain of New York.



The day following Washington's inauguration, May 1, 1789, Presbyterian Minister Rev. William Linn was elected as the Chaplain of the US House of Representatives.



Both houses continue to open with prayer and have had a chaplain lead in prayer since 1789.

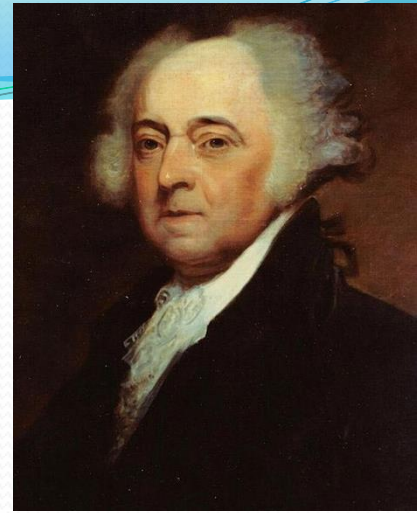
Washington's Farewell Address on Sept. 17, 1796



“Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, **Religion and Morality** are **indispensable supports**. ... reason and experience both forbid us to expect that **national morality** can prevail in exclusion of **religious principle**.”

Religion and the Republic

President John Adams said on Oct. 11, 1798:



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

The Struggle With the King Was Supported by the Bible's Account of the Establishment of Israel Without a Monarchy.

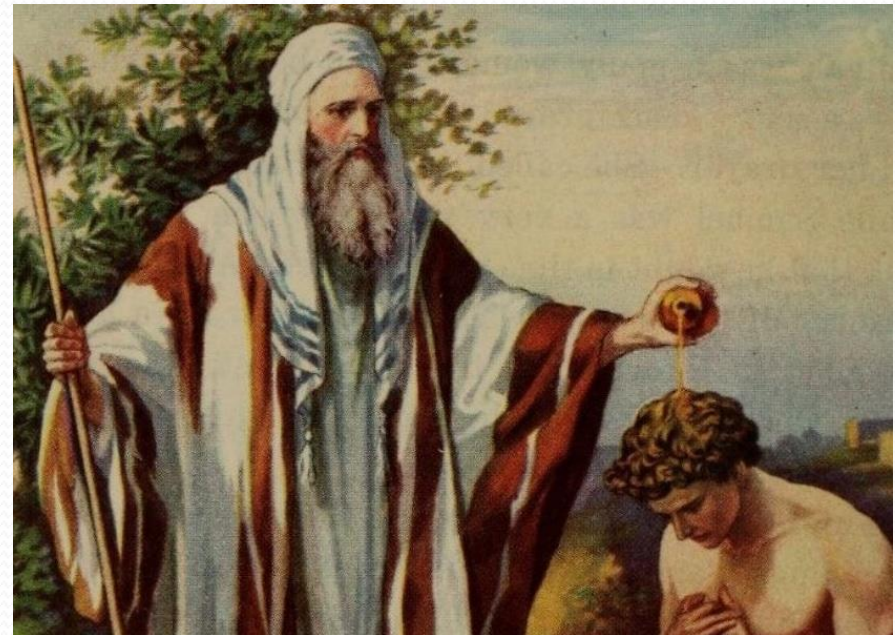
- This was a debate between New Testament texts that appeared to support the divine right of kings and Old Testament passages where Israel was established without a king.
- When the monarchy of Israel began, Samuel warned Israel of their disobedience in calling for a King other than God. Israel's insistence on a monarchy would yield punishments, administered ironically by royal injustices against the people.



The Struggle Against the British King Was Supported by an Appeal to the Prophet Samuel's Warning Regarding a King

Strauss declares:

“...the history of the Hebrew Commonwealth was referred to, narrated, rehearsed, and analogies drawn therefrom by the advocates of a **republican form of government** in answer to those who favored **monarchy**, so that the admonitions of **Samuel** were as familiar to the people of America as the words of the Lord's Prayer.”



Was George Washington A Deist?

A **Deist** believes God is remote.
He is uninvolved with this world.

In contrast with **Theism**:

God is personally active in the
world and is knowable.



Hard & Soft Deism



Hard Deism:

1. No Providence.
2. No Prayer.
3. No Clergy.
4. No Word of God.
5. No Divine Christ.

Thomas Paine

Soft Deism:

1. Providence.
2. Prayer.
3. Clergy.
4. No Word of God.
5. No Divine Christ.

Thomas Jefferson

What Was Washington's View?



“While we are zealously performing the duties of good Citizens and soldiers we certainly ought not to be inattentive to the higher duties of Religion. To the distinguished Character of Patriot, it should be our highest Glory to add the more distinguished Character of **Christian**.”

General Orders at Valley Forge, May 2, 1778

*“On my honor and the faith of a **Christian**, what I have written to you is true.” Private letter 1760*

Washington and Providence



“But by the all-powerful dispensations of **Providence**, I have been protected beyond all human probability or expectation; for I had four bullets through my coat, and two horses shot under me, yet escaped unhurt, although death was leveling my companions on every side of me.”

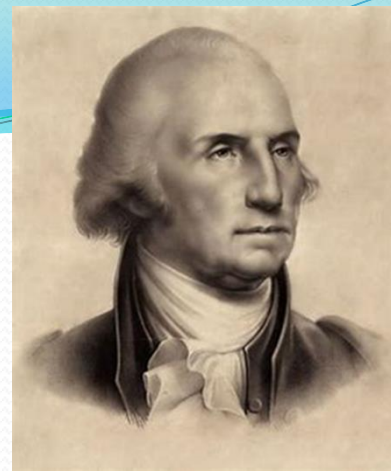
July 18, 1755

Washington Believed in God's Providential Protection of America.

- At Yorktown on Oct. 20, 1781, he celebrated God's "reiterated and astonishing interpositions of Providence".
- Three years earlier on August 20, 1778, he spoke of himself as a "preacher" "on the Doctrine of Providence" and thought anyone who lacked faith in God's providential care for America was "worse than an infidel" and "more than wicked" if he lacked in gratitude!



Washington's Prayer: "The Divine Author & A Happy Nation"

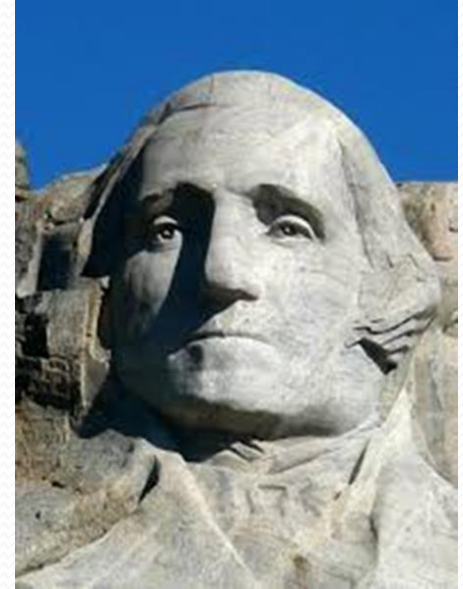


“I now make it **my earnest prayer**, that God would have you, and the State over which you preside, in his holy protection...that he would most graciously be pleased to dispose us all, to do Justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that Charity, humility and pacific temper of mind, which were the Characteristics of **the Divine Author of our blessed Religion**, and without an humble imitation in these things, we can never hope to be **a happy nation.**”

Farewell Address as the Victorious General to the 13 Governors

Washington Had a High View of the *Bible*. He Called It:

- The Bible
- Scripture
- Holy Writ
- The Word of God
- He quoted or alluded to the Bible some 200 times from Genesis to Revelation.
- (See appendix 2 of *George Washington's Sacred Fire*.)



Washington's Actions Were Consistent with His High View of the Bible.

- He encouraged Charles Thomson, the only translator of the Septuagint Bible into English, by reading his work.
- He encouraged young Native Americans to learn “above all, the pure and benign light of Revelation.”
- He had positively entertained the possibility of giving his victorious troops a copy of Robert Aitken's newly printed Bible—the first English Bible printed in America.
- As President, he endorsed John Brown's *Self-Interpreting Bible*, an evangelical study Bible.

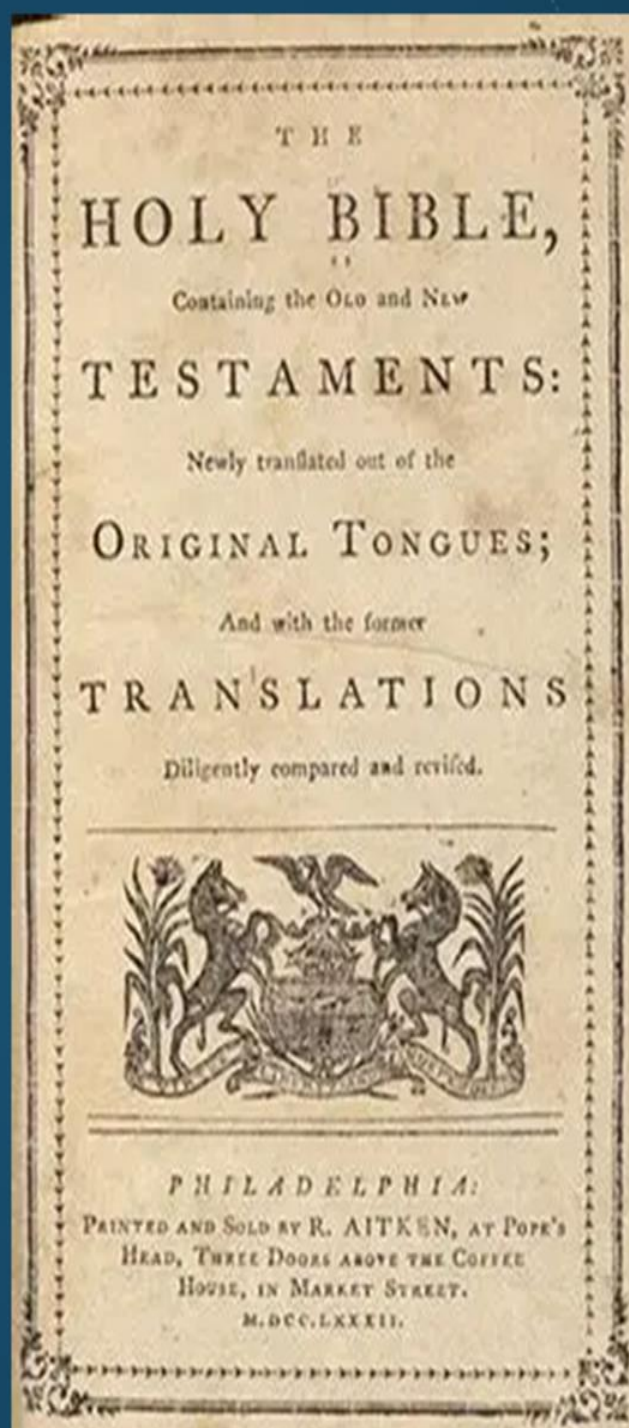


CONGRESS' BIBLE—1782

- Cover page of The Aitken Bible

The Congressional Committee making the recommendation was James Duane (NY), Thomas McKean (DE) and John Witherspoon (NJ).

The Chaplains involved were Rev. Dr. William White (Christ Church in Philadelphia) and Rev. George Duffield (Third Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia).

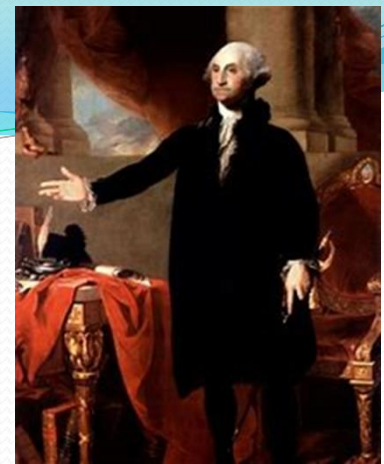


CONGRESS' BIBLE—1782—ROBERT AITKEN'S BIBLE



- Congress gave Aitken a ringing endorsement in the form of a congressional resolution to “publish this Recommendation in the manner he shall think proper” to help sell and circulate the Bible. The complete text of this Congressional resolution is:
- Whereupon,
RESOLVED,
THAT the United States in Congress assembled highly approve the pious and laudable undertaking of Mr. Aitken, as subservient to the interest of religion, as well as an instance of the progress of arts in this country, and being satisfied from the above report of his care and accuracy in the execution of the work, they recommend this edition of the Bible to the inhabitants of the United States, and hereby authorize him to publish this Recommendation in the manner he shall think proper.

Washington's First Inaugural Address



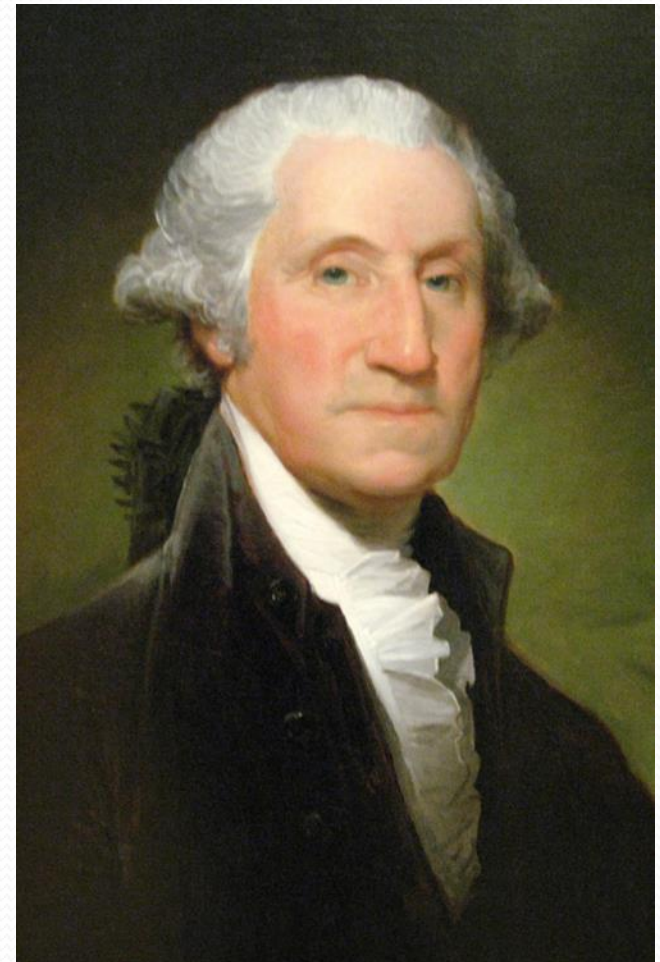
It would be peculiarly improper to omit, in this first official act, my fervent supplications to that Almighty Being who rules over the universe, and who presides in the councils of nations...

no people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the Invisible Hand which conducts the affairs of men more than the people of the United States.

...We ought to be no less persuaded that the propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which Heaven itself has ordained.

The Word of God: Washington's Proposed Letter to Congress

*“The blessed Religion
revealed in **the word of God**
will remain an eternal and awful
monument
to prove that the best Institutions
may be abused by human depravity;
and that they may even, in some
instances be made subservient to
the vilest of purposes.”*



Washington Quoted the OT

- Washington quoted or alluded to over one hundred Old Testament texts. His writings manifest cognizance of over forty texts from Moses:
- Genesis—17
- Exodus—10
- Leviticus—2
- Numbers—4
- Deuteronomy—10

Washington Knew Biblical History

His knowledge included:

- the creation and fall
- Noah's flood,
- the Exodus
- Easter/Passover,
- Ten Commandments
- the Conquest of Canaan
- the Holy Land

Washington Knew Biblical History

His knowledge included:

- blessings and curses
- false prophets
- the Psalms
- the wise man of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes
- the day when war will be learned no more
- the book of Ezekiel.

Washington wrote to MARQUIS DE CHASTELLUX, April 25, 1788

- “...that the swords might be turned into plough-shares, the spears into pruning hooks, and, **as the Scripture expresses it, "the nations learn war no more."**
- In his surveyor's book as a young man he wrote, “If you can't find it in the Book of Ezekiel, look for it in Israel.”



Consider George Washington
And Israel

When Washington Prayed, He Mentioned Israel by Name

- Washington was a praying man, a regular user of the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*. From the *daily* evening prayer, Washington regularly spoke the name of **Israel**. The 1662 edition reminded the worshiper that the Messiah was to have been born among the people of Israel:
- Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace : according to thy word. For mine eyes have seen : thy salvation,
- Which thou hast prepared : before the face of all people;
- To be a light to lighten the Gentiles : and to be **the glory of thy people Israel**.
- Called the *Nunc dimittis*, this text comes from Luke 2:29–32.
- For Christians like Washington, the Messiah's coming to earth was “the glory of [God's] people Israel”. This placed “Israel” in a favorable light not only for Washington the Anglican but also for other Christians since Israel was inseparably connected with the coming of Christ.

The Bible Impacted Early America

- Biblical names of colonial Americans and biblical names of their towns.
- **Israel** was a common name in Washington's lifetime. He wrote it well over 150 times as in the case of Major General Israel Putnam.



Washington wrote many **Biblical Names** that were significant in *Israel's* history:

- The names from the Old Testament span the alphabet from A to Z:
- from Adam—392 and Aaron—58 to Zechariah—8 and Zophar—1.
- 1. The Old Testament “A” names include: Abel—10; Aaron—58; Abijah—9; Abner—21; Abraham—182; Absalom—3; Amasa—1; Amos—19; Ariel—7; Asa—17; Asher—4; Azariah—11.

Washington wrote many **Biblical Personal Names** that were significant in *Israel's* history:

- Adam—392; Abel—10; Seth—28; Jared—2; Enoch—59; Seth—28; Enoch—59; Noah—25; Abraham—182; Shem—4; Isaac—178; Jacob—192; Israel—178; Reuben—34; Dan—1; Asher—4; Simeon—18; Judah—4; Joseph—735; Ephraim—63; Levi—25; Benjamin—793;
- Moses—154; Aaron—58; Jethro—4; Levi—21; Joshua—102; Caleb—161;
- Othniel—1; Gideon—4; Sampson—12; Ruth—3; Jesse—36;
- Elijah—35; Samuel—783; Eli—11; Jedidiah—88; Hezekiah—29; Josiah—76; Naaman—2; Ezra—31; Nehemiah—9; Esther—18;
- Job—12; David—1,000+; Solomon—26;
- Isaiah—8; Jeremiah—157; Ezekiel—58 ; Daniel—363; Joel—21; Amos—19; Obadiah—2; Jonah—2; Michael—91; Zechariah—8; Malachi—4.

Washington wrote many **Biblical Place Names** that were significant in Israel's history:

- Old and New Testament place names include:
Canaan—4; Jerusalem--8; Salem—78; Eden—39;
Bethlehem—46; Gilead—2; Persia—4; Ephrata—1;
Jordan—14; Babylon—1; Sodom(y)—1;
Damascus—1; Edom—3; Lebanon—39; Greece—6;
Susa—1; Galilee—1; Euphrates—2; Sharon—10;
Arabia—1; Hebron—2; Egypt—6; Italy—9;
Athens—1; Alexandria—800.

Washington knew of Biblical *Israel*

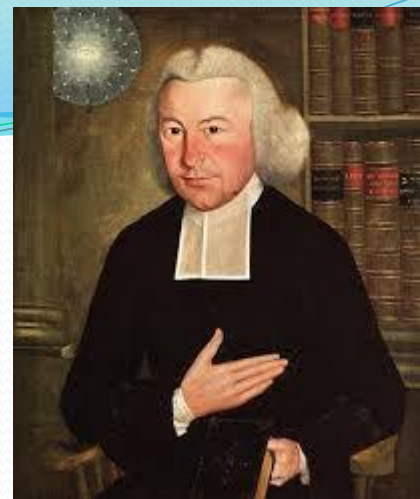
- He referred to Israel metaphorically by the Biblical phrase—“no peace in Israel”.
- He longed to retire from his service in the Military confessing to a clergyman, “I shall quit the helm with as much satisfaction, and retire to a private station with as much content, as ever the wearied pilgrim felt upon his safe arrival in the Holy-land, or haven of hope....”

Washington and the Founders Hoped for the Restoration of *Israel*.

- Retired General Washington possessed a 1785 sermon entitled “The United States Elevated to Glory and Honour”, based on Deuteronomy 26:19, “To make thee high above all nations ... in name, and in honour; and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the Lord thy God.” (KJV).
- This sermon presented the hope of a future glorious age of the Church marked by the great success of the newly established United States.

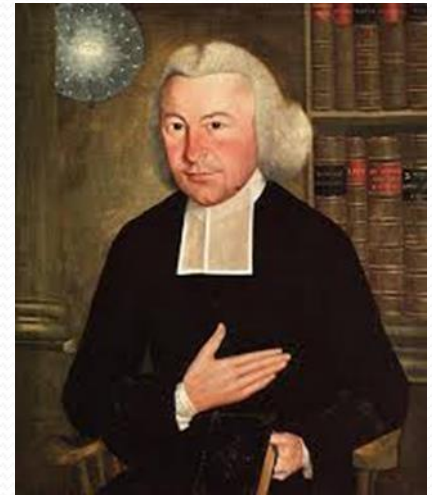
Washington and the Founders Hoped for the Restoration of *Israel*.

- Dr. Stiles wrote,
- *Moses and the Prophets*, by divine direction interspersed their writings with promises, that, ... GOD ... would ... recover and *gather* [Israel] *from all the nations* ... Then the words of *Moses*, hitherto accomplished but in part, will be literally fulfilled; when this branch of the posterity of *Abraham* shall be nationally collected, and become a very distinguished and glorious people....
- I have assumed the text, ... as introductory to a discourse upon the political welfare of GOD'S American *Israel*; and as allusively prophetic of the future prosperity and splendor of the *United States*.



The Connection of *Israel* and America

- President Stile's remarkable phrases:
- “the posterity of *Abraham* shall be nationally collected” and
- “the political welfare of GOD’S *American Israel*... the future prosperity and splendor of the *United States*”;
- Indicate just how closely the new nation and the Israel of the Old Testament were connected.



Washington Paralleled the United States with *Israel's* Experience.

- Washington was described by his contemporaries and by later scholars with comparisons to Old Testament leaders like Joshua, David, Daniel, or Gideon.
- Consistent with Mosaic parallelism Washington referenced **Jehovah**, the Jewish name for God, comparing American independence with Israel's exodus. Writing to the Hebrew Congregation of the city of Savannah in May, 1790, Washington identified the God of providence who accomplished American independence as none other than Israel's Jehovah, the Deliverer of the Hebrews:

Washington Paralleled the United States with *Israel's* Experience of **Jehovah**

- May **the same wonder-working Deity**, who long since delivering the Hebrews from their Egyptian Oppressors planted them in the promised land—whose Providential Agency has lately been conspicuous in establishing these United States as an independent Nation—still continue to water them with the dews of Heaven and to make the inhabitants of every denomination participate in the temporal and spiritual blessings of that people **whose God is Jehovah.**

Washington's letter to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island

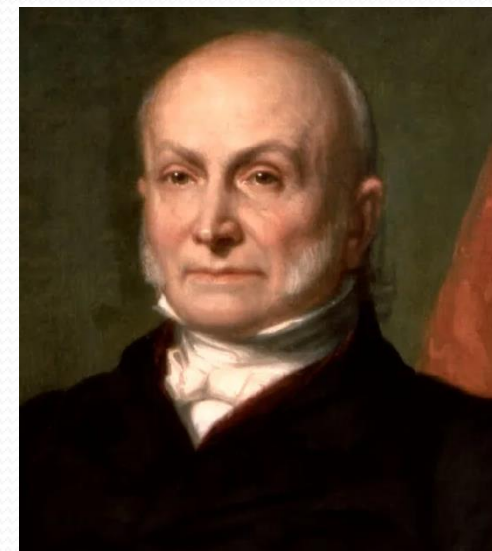
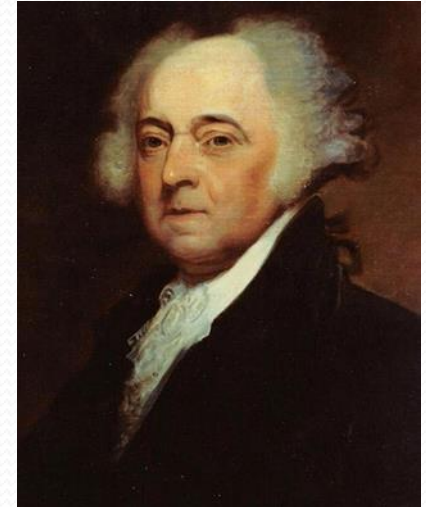
- Applied his favorite Bible verse, Micah 4:4—a prophetic millennial text—to the Jewish people:
- May the children of the Stock of Abraham, who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other inhabitants, **while everyone shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree and there shall be none to make him afraid.**

The Idea of a Renewed State of *Israel* Was Probably Not New to Washington

John Adams wrote: "I really wish the Jews again in Judea an independent nation for, as I believe, the most enlightened men of it have participated in the amelioration of the philosophy of the age."

John Adams wrote to Thomas Jefferson stating: "I will insist that the Hebrews have done more to civilize man than any other nation."

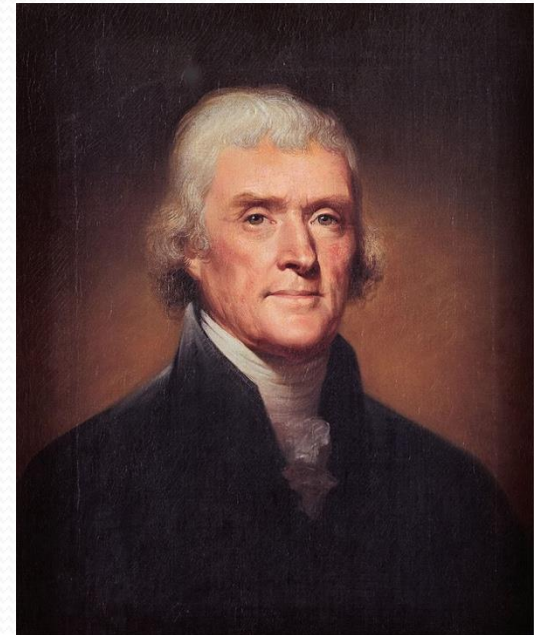
John Quincy Adams wrote to Major Mordecai Manuel Noah that he believed in the "rebuilding of Judea as an independent nation."



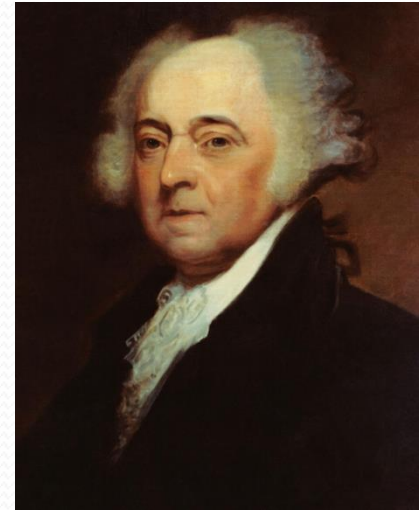
The Idea of a Renewed State of *Israel* Was Probably Not New to Washington

Thomas Jefferson wrote: Your sect by sufferings has furnished a remarkable proof of the universal spirit of religious intolerance inherent in every sect, disclaimed by all while feeble and practiced by all when in power. ... public opinion needs reformation on that point..”

John Adams wrote, This country has done much. I wish it may do more...It has pleased the Provident of the ‘first cause,’ the universal cause, that Abraham should give religion, not only to Hebrew, but to Christians and Mahometans, the greatest part of the modern civilized world.



- Washington's successor, **John Adams**, declared,
- I wish your nation may be admitted to all privileges of citizens in every country of the world.
- Farther I could find it in my heart to wish that you had been at the head of a hundred thousand Israelites . . . & marching with them into Judea & making a conquest of that country & restoring your nation to the dominion of it. For I really wish the Jews again in Judea an independent nation.



Was There Such a Postmillennial Hope in Washington?

- Washington too held the hope for a future millennial peace on earth that would fulfill the Old Testament promises of peace for mankind, seen in two of his letters written while President. President Washington wrote to the Earl of Buchan from Philadelphia on May 26, 1794:
- ...the malignant passions of man, ... it is to be feared, place the prospects of peace too far off, and the promised **millenium** at an awful distance from our day.

President Washington Wrote to Dr. James Anderson from Philadelphia on December 24, 1795:

- ... in politics, as in religion my tenets are few and simple: the leading one of which...is to be honest and just ourselves, and to exact it from others; meddling as little as possible in their affairs where our own are not involved. If this maxim was generally adopted Wars would cease, and our swords would soon be converted into reap-hooks, and our harvests be more abundant, peaceful, and happy.
- 'Tis wonderful it should be otherwise and the earth should be moistened with human gore, instead of the refreshing streams, ...alas! the **millenium** will not I fear appear in our days. The restless mind of man cannot be at peace....

Consider Washington's Prophecy for the Future of the US Constitution

Washington's proposed letter to Congress written as he was preparing to lead the first Congress under the new Constitution includes a profound warning of the dangers facing America in regard to the survivability of the Constitution....

Washington was not a prophet and could not make a final prediction about the ultimate fate of the Constitution.

“I pretend to no unusual foresight into futurity, and therefore cannot undertake to decide, with certainty, what may be its ultimate fate.”



If we lose our Constitution's blessings of liberty, it would not be the first time that human foolishness has squandered the blessings of heaven.

“If the blessings of Heaven showered thick around us should be spilled on the ground or converted to curses, through the fault of those for whom they were intended, it would not be the first instance of folly or perverseness in short-sighted mortals.”



In our uncertain world good things have often ended up as disappointing evils and this could happen with our Constitution too.

“If a promised good should terminate in an unexpected evil, it would not be a solitary example of disappointment in this mutable state of existence.”

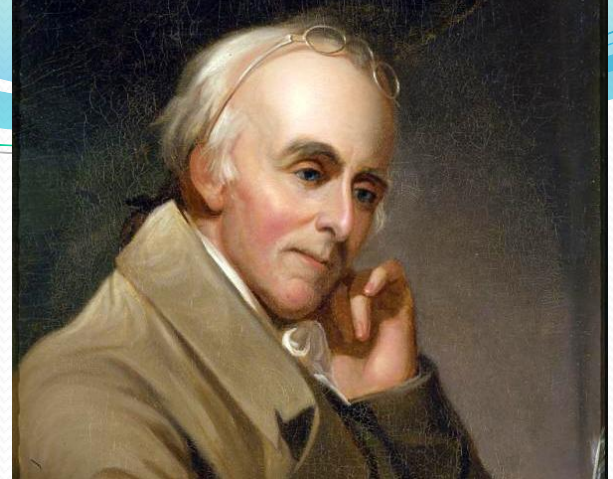
The word of God's revelation of the Christian religion provides an eternal example of the fact that the best human organizations can be used for evil ends.

“The blessed Religion revealed in the word of God will remain an eternal and awful monument to prove that the best Institutions may be abused by human depravity; and that they may even, in some instances be made subservient to the vilest of purposes.” (Washington is here referring to the events surrounding the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.)

America's future power-hungry leaders could get away with a disregard of the Constitution's limitations and harm our unalienable rights because the voters have become lazy or selfish.

“Should, hereafter, those who are entrusted with the management of this government, incited by the lust of power and prompted by the Supineness or venality of their Constituents, overleap the known barriers of this Constitution and violate the unalienable rights of humanity:”

The Bible and the Republic



Benjamin Rush, Founding Father, Signer of the Declaration, Father of American Psychiatry and a Leader of the Abolition Movement wrote,

“I lament that we waste so much time and money in punishing crimes and take so little pains to prevent them. We profess to be republicans and yet we neglect the only means of establishing and perpetuating our republican forms of government; that is, the universal education of our youth in the principles of Christianity by means of the **Bible**; for this divine book, above all others, favors that equality among mankind, that respect for just laws, and all those sober and frugal virtues which constitute the soul of republicanism.”




The Founders Knew That Republics Can Be Lost

Benjamin Franklin when leaving the Constitutional Convention was asked by a woman, “What kind of government have you given us, Mr. Franklin?”

He answered, “A Republic, Madam, if you can keep it.”





No mere human document is eternal and indestructible even if it began with God's favor and was declared to be holy.

“it will only serve to show, that no compact among men (however provident in its construction and sacred in its ratification) can be pronounced everlasting and inviolable,”

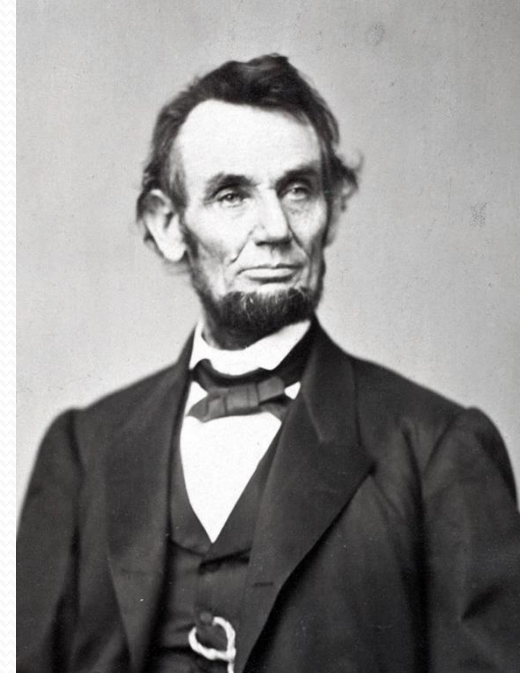
No words on a piece of paper can withstand unbridled political ambition that remains unchecked due to an immoral electorate.

“and if I may so express myself, that no Wall of words, that no mound of parchment can be so formed as to stand against the sweeping torrent of boundless ambition on the one side, aided by the sapping current of corrupted morals on the other.” (Writings of George Washington, Vol. 30, 4-1789).

Washington's First Inaugural Address

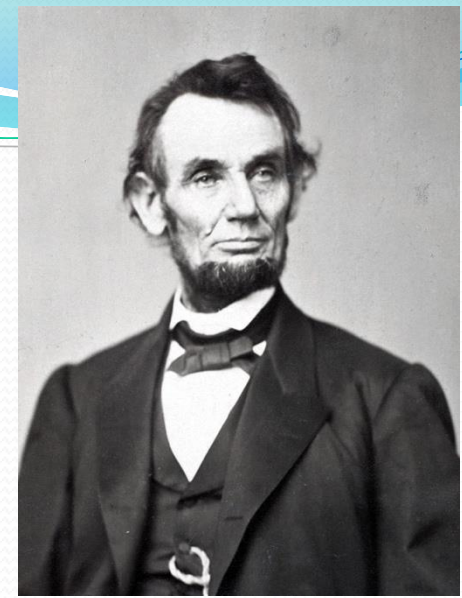
It would be peculiarly improper to omit, in this first official act, my fervent supplications to that Almighty Being who rules over the universe, and who presides in the councils of nations...No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the Invisible Hand which conducts the affairs of men more than the people of the United States. Every step by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency...We ought to be no less persuaded that the **propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which Heaven itself has ordained.**

Abraham Lincoln: “A House Divided Against Itself Cannot Stand” (Mark 3:25; Matthew 12:22-28)



- The Bible informed the style of American authors and statesmen to the time of Abraham Lincoln. Consider His Gettysburg Address, his Call for Fasting and Prayer and Second Inaugural Address—
- “Fourscore ...” (Psalm 90); “A New birth of freedom”... “Shall not perish”—John 3:16.
- “We have forgotten God.”—Deuteronomy 8:11-17
- “Woe unto the world because of offenses! For it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!”—Matthew 18:7-9

The Last Words of Abraham Lincoln



- **Abraham Lincoln's** last words were deeply shaped by the Bible.
- Mary Todd Lincoln reported, “He said he wanted to visit the Holy Land and see those places hallowed by the footprints of the Saviour. He was saying there was no city he so much desired to see as Jerusalem. And with the words half spoken on his tongue, the bullet of the assassin entered the brain, and the soul of the great and good President was carried by the angels to the New Jerusalem above.”

Washington's Last Concern— Should Be Our Great Concern

Washington's Farewell Address on Sept. 17, 1796
declares:

“Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, **Religion and Morality** are **indispensable supports**. ... reason and experience both forbid us to expect that **national morality** can prevail in exclusion of **religious principle**.”



Will our Republic last?

Let us ask again, “What kind of government have you given us, Mr. Franklin?”

He still answers, “A Republic, if you can keep it.”



Conclusion

Let us pray that the city of Washington as well as all Americans will once again value Scripture with the concern seen in George Washington

—before it's too late.