

In The Fathers' Corner

by Keith Davis

Our country was founded by God fearing, religious and spiritual believers. We know this because their writings reflect their devotion and praise to the Creator and His Word as revealed in the Bible. They knew God was instrumental in the formation of the United States of America.

In each issue of the “People’s Pen”, we look at just a few of the many writings that exemplify the Founding Fathers’ beliefs.

Founding Fathers' Words:

If there is one man who exemplifies the term “Founding Father,” it’s Roger Sherman of Connecticut. He was one of only 6 who signed the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the Constitution. He was the only Founder who signed those documents and the Articles of the “Continental Association,” an economic boycott in response to Britain’s “Boston Port Act,” one of the “Coercive Acts,” which were aimed at reforming administration of the colonies and came about partly as a result of the Boston Tea Party.



Sherman was born in 1721 in Newton, Mass. Among many things, he served as mayor of New Haven, in the House of Representatives, the Senate of the Connecticut and the United States, was a surveyor and a judge. He died in 1793 in New Haven, Conn.

Robert T. Conrad, of Sanderson's “Biography of the Signers to the Declaration of Independence,” wrote:

“Before he had attained the age of twenty-one years, he (Roger Sherman) made a public profession of his religion, and continued more than half a century a zealous defender of its doctrines. Exemplary in his attention to the forms and discipline of the church to which he was attached, he evinced, by his conduct, the importance of the application of the moral doctrines of Christianity to the duties of social life.”

From the book “Life of Roger Sherman” by Lewis H. Boutell, we find great references to his spiritual principles. Here is his statement of belief:

"I believe that there is one only living and true God, existing in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the same in substance equal in power and glory. That the scriptures of the old and new testaments are a revelation from God, and a complete rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him. That God has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, so as thereby he is not the author or approver of sin. That he creates all things, and preserves and governs all creatures and all their actions, in a manner perfectly consistent with the freedom of will in moral agents, and the usefulness of means. That he made man at first perfectly holy, that the first man sinned, and as he was the public head of his posterity, they all became sinners in consequence of his first transgression, are wholly indisposed to that which is good and inclined to evil, and on account of sin are liable to all the miseries of this life, to death, and to the pains of hell forever.

"I believe that God having elected some of mankind to eternal life, did send his own Son to become man, die in the room and stead of sinners and thus to lay a foundation for the offer of pardon and salvation to all mankind, so as all may be saved who are willing to accept the gospel offer: also by his special grace and spirit, to regenerate, sanctify and enable to persevere in holiness, all who shall be saved; and to procure in consequence of their repentance and faith in himself their justification by virtue of his atonement as the only meritorious cause.

"I believe a visible church to be a congregation of those who make a credible profession of their faith in Christ, and obedience to him, joined by the bond of the covenant.

"I believe that the souls of believers are at their death made perfectly holy, and immediately taken to glory: that at the end of this world there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a final judgment of all mankind, when the righteous shall be publicly acquitted by Christ the Judge and admitted to everlasting life and glory, and the wicked be sentenced to everlasting punishment."

Finally, he spoke, “Let us live no more to ourselves, but to Him who loved us, and gave Himself to die for us.”

He declared these words with great conviction and showing a clear understanding of the meaning and process of salvation. Praise God that such a man was an integral part of the formation of America’s documents and laws!

Historic footnotes:

We've previously discussed one of the secular world's favorite misappropriations of American history, the old "separation of church and state" phrase. There is one other it likes to dredge out and misuse and is from the 1797 Treaty of Tripoli. The expression is "The Government of the United States of America in not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion," and is often incorrectly attributed to George Washington, who had left office by the time the treaty had arrived in America and had never even seen it.

This treaty with the Muslim Barbary Powers of Tunis, Morocco, Algiers, and Tripoli was to stem the attacks on American shipping by Muslims, who were at war with any country they viewed as Christian. When Article XI of the treaty statement is read in full, a different story emerges:

As the government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion as it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion or tranquility of Musselmen (meaning Muslims) and as the said States have never entered into any war or act of hostility against any Mahometan nation, it is declared by the parties that no pretext arising from religious opinions shall ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries.

Simply put, the countries were being told that our Constitution's First Amendment against the federal government establishing a state religion, and religious matters were left to the states. The warring Muslims were being assured that the Christianity of America was quite different from being a country with a state established religion, as had always been the case. But nothing was taken away from the Founding fathers' deep belief that God was leading the way in our Nation's founding. (Notice the conciliatory tone of the treaty. Does that sound familiar?)

As John Adams wrote to Thomas Jefferson in 1813, "The general principles on which the fathers achieved independence were the general principles of Christianity. I will avow that I then believed, and now believe, that those general principles of Christianity are as eternal and immutable as the existence and attributes of God; and that those principles of liberty are as unalterable as human nature."