

FROM ONE HILL TO ANOTHER

Corvallis, Montana

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Rekindling the Character of America!

By Gary and Joan Carlson

The United States of America is the freest, strongest, and most prosperous nation in human history. We owe this miraculous development in large part to the life of one man - his bravery in battle, his perseverance through hardships, his patience with those who opposed him, and his wisdom while in power. What was astonishing about this gallant Virginian, who rode a white horse, was that he actually lived by the ideals of which he spoke. There were not many dry eyes in America on September 17, 1796, when George Washington announced his final farewell from public life. *From this moment on, he said, the survival of freedom on American soil would have nothing to do with him, and everything to do with the character of its people and the government they would elect.*

(Reference: P. 12, Faith and Freedom by Ben Hart."

With those words earnestly expressed by George Washington, he posed a challenge to each successive generation of Americans who would follow him? Those words still ring true today. If we have any hope of

surviving as a free nation, it is imperative that we rekindle the character traits demonstrated by Washington. We can expect no less from ourselves and from those we choose to lead our nation.

America is heading into another midterm election. Conversations around the dinner table or at the local coffee shops are beginning to focus on politics. Individuals frequently discuss the highlights of the past evening news programs and share concerns for the future of our nation. Conversations are concerned about the negativism that seems to permeate our culture today. Serious questions are beginning to surface and the regular folks of America are becoming more and more concerned about the future of our country. 1) Why is the mainstream media so biased against our current president? 2) Why does it seem like we are living in a season of violent protests, rioting and increasing use of dangerous drugs? 3) Why is terrorism rampant in the world? 4) Why is America being invaded by thousands of illegal aliens? 5) Are we on the verge of WWII with nations like North Korea, Syria and Iran? 6) What does the future hold for our children and grandchildren? These examples should lead us to the ultimate question... What can we do to curtail the downward spiral we are

seeing in America? Can we do anything? Do churches need to take an active role? They were critically important in establishing our independence in the beginning. What are they doing now?

In an attempt to answer some of these questions, and to see if we have the necessary character to overcome the apparent decline of America, let's look back at the foundation of our country. To win the war against Great Britain we needed help. In fact, we needed a few miracles to beat the mighty British military.

When the Continental Army was pinned down by the East River, British General Howe hesitated to take action when he could have won. More than once an unexpected change in the weather turned the tide in favor of the Continental Army. A violent storm erupted followed by a sudden fog, which allowed Washington and 8,000 troops, horses, wagons, and artillery to escape across the river without the British even knowing. A defeat at Brooklyn might have ended the war in favor of the British. That was a miracle. The Christmas battle at Trenton was another miracle favoring the American military. And when the American military was in desperate need of reinforcements, the Marquis Lafayette and the French Navy came to our aid. Another miracle!

Religious leaders and the American clergy played an enormous part in our winning the Revolutionary War. They were critical in helping to establish our liberty as an independent nation and helped pave the way to ensuring the religious freedom guaranteed to us in Article 1 of the Bill of Rights. Did they fervently pray for God to intervene and bring about a positive outcome for the Americans...without a doubt! But they also took action and established the "Black Robe Regiment."

"It was Sunday morning early in the year 1776. In the church where Peter Muhlenberg preached, it was a regular service for his congregation, but quite a different affair for Muhlenberg himself. Muhlenberg's text for the day was Ecclesiastes 3 where it explains, *To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven; a time to be born, and a time to die, a time to plant, and a time to pluck what is planted.* Coming to the end of his sermon, Peter Muhlenberg turned to his congregation and said, 'In the language of the holy writ, there was a time for all things, a time to preach and a time to pray, but those times have passed away.' As those assembled looked on, Pastor Muhlenberg declared, 'There is a time to fight, and that time is now coming!' Muhlenberg then proceeded to remove his robe revealing, to the shock



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of his congregation, a military uniform. Marching to the back of the church he declared, 'Who among you is with me?' On that day 300 men from his church stood up and joined Pastor Muhlenberg. They eventually became the 8th Virginia Brigade fighting for liberty." (Reference: www.heritageofthefoundingfathers.com, Article 11)

"When criticized by his brother for leaving the church to fight, Pastor Muhlenberg responded, 'I am a clergyman, it is true, but I am a member of the society, as well as, the poorest layman, and my liberty is as dear to me as any man; shall I then sit still and enjoy myself at home when the best blood of the covenant is spilling? So far am I from thinking that I act wrong, I am convinced it is my duty to do so and duty I owe to God and my country.'" (Reference: heritageofthefoundingfathers.com)

The account of Pastor Muhlenberg is but one story. There were hundreds of such men and women during that crucial period in our early history... others who chose the path that Pastor Muhlenberg took. They trusted in God and hope in the potential their new country would offer. There were many individuals who chose to sacrifice all for God, family and country in the beginning of our nation and many since that time who have done the same. Should we expect similar behavior from our clergy today? Do we need a Black Robe Regiment in 2018? Like the black robes of the past, some may say that such an approach to conflict by our church leaders is outdated. However, history affords us the advantage of hind sight. We can draw conclusions knowing the outcome. But for those of the Black Robe Regiment during the American Revolution, the outcome was unknown, yet they were still willing to step out in faith.

Now more than ever, members of the clergy should play a major role in helping our citizens solve the many problems we face. Based on our founding documents, Judeo-Christian principles are the guiding force that steadies our course as a nation. Therefore, shouldn't our

church leaders be at the helm? Is America today what God envisioned for our country and the purpose for which the forefathers bled and died?

The pastors of 1776 and their congregations lived in a time when religion and politics were woven into the same fabric. (Reference: www.heritageofthefoundingfathers.com)

Separation of Church and State was meant to keep the state out of the church. The founders did not want a government run church as was the case with the Church of England. Unfortunately, many Americans today, clergy included, have twisted this concept into keeping the church out of the affairs of government.

During 1774 the British controlled Boston, but the people through Committees of Correspondence dominated the countryside. Fiery sermons from Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Baptists roused the people to action. That same spirit manifested itself in other colonies. (Reference: [Faith and Freedom](#), P. 261 by Ben Hart)

Our Declaration of Independence and the US Constitution were a covenant between the people of America and their Heavenly Father. They were written for a Christian people. The meaning of a Republic that was inspired by God's Word spells out the mission for us as God's children and His ambassadors on earth.

Washington knew full well that a nation's laws spring from its morals and that its morals spring from its religion. And the religion of which Washington spoke was clear to all who knew him: "It is impossible to govern rightly without God and the Bible." (Reference: [Faith and Freedom](#), P.13 by Ben Hart.)

What should we learn from this brief look at our history? Most have read Sir Winston Churchill's quote: "Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it." But do we have individuals like George Washington or Pastor Muhlenberg today who are

ready to stand in the gap to support our nation? Do we have sermons by pastors today that stir the people to action? The answer is "yes!" We have many such individuals who could lead us...but are they willing to do so?

Unfortunately, the political atmosphere in America at the present time is unhealthy. We are swamped by hateful and divisive factions. Too often church leaders seem to be afraid to speak up and enter the fray. The misconception of Separation of Church and State has become an excuse to do nothing or very little. Regulations afford too many religious leaders a reason to opt out of being involved in current critical issues. It seems too many have lost their resolve.

Unlike the Colonists, we face no mighty British Army. But there is a battle facing America today. It is the battle of ideas which may be equally dangerous to our existence. Could it be that our priorities have become skewed? The driving force in 1776 was based on an understanding that our right to establish our independence, liberty, and freedom came from God. Too often in 2018 our focus is more superficial concentrating on sports, recreational activities and self-satisfaction.

But we believe America still has that patriotic spirit deep within. However, the flame that burned brightly in 1776 needs to be rekindled. Good people and good church leaders must wake up and retake the lead all across America. God's guiding hand was with us in our founding, let us be willing to reach out and take His hand to lead us once again.

Together, we can do it! 🇺🇸

God bless.
Gary and Joan



FYI:

Gary Carlson, Publisher of the *White Hat Express**, is a former Reagan Administration Political Appointee, a retired US Marine Corps Officer, and a former candidate for both the US Senate and the House of Representatives. He also teaches Political Science and the US Constitution at the Community College level.

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The term "White Hat" originates from Vietnam where Gary was a member of the 26th Marines, and the good guys were referred to as "White Hats."

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