

Is Hollywood Poised to Slander George Washington?

Ever since the 1970s, it seems many of our heroes are being toppled—especially by the media and entertainment industry. This happens whether or not such a toppling is deserved.

We're often scolded, "Don't impose your morality on me," with no thought given to the immorality they might impose on the rest of us.

Now, it looks like Hollywood is ready to impose its immorality on a man who not only doesn't deserve it, but is not here to defend himself: George Washington.

They're working on a TV series—with complete artistic license—showing the father of our country hopping in bed with his best friend's wife. And Hollywood elites wonder why millions of tradition-minded Americans have been avoiding their work for years?

This is not a bio-piece on some politician whose womanizing has been well-documented. But rather, this is a series on a man whose contemporaries praised him endlessly for his character.

If I could write an open letter to the producers, writers and bosses, I'd say, "Don't include this. Don't stoop to a scandal-sheet version of George Washington—especially since the facts are not on your side." The true facts about our first commander-in-chief are compelling in themselves.

The facts reveal over and over Washington doing the impossible—leading a rag-tag army of farmers and others, and beating the largest army in the world at the time—defeating the full might of the British Empire, for the sacred cause of liberty.

And Washington himself gave the Lord the credit for the victory. As he said in his First Inaugural Address, "Every step by which [we] have advanced to the character of an independent nation seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency."

But now he is to be depicted as a philanderer. The writer for the upcoming NBC dramatic series is David Seidler, a British gentleman who did a wonderful job for the Oscar-winning film *The King's Speech*. Ron Chernow wrote the book *Washington: A Life*, the basis of this new series.

Seidler is quoted by writer Nellie Andreeva on as saying: "There's George Washington the national icon, gazing out from the dollar bill with his mouthful of supposedly wooden teeth, and then there's the George Washington who had an adulterous affair with his best friend's wife."

It's bad enough that Hollywood revisionists leave out (for the most part) the importance of Washington's faith. But now they want to make him guilty of adultery. That said, I do applaud the overall excellent HBO series on John Adams, where, for example, they showed Washington being sworn in. And true to the facts, they depicted him with his hand on the Bible, adding the common words for an oath "So help me, God" and leaning over and kissing the sacred text.

I co-wrote a massive book on the true George Washington. The lead author is the president of one of our leading seminaries, Westminster, in Philadelphia. Dr. Peter Lillback compiled research on our first president for about 20 years. We teamed up to produce the 1,200-page book, *George Washington's Sacred Fire* (2006), which documents beyond a reasonable doubt that he was a devout 18th century Anglican. Glenn Beck helped it become a best-seller.

In that volume, we address some of the objections to the idea that Washington was a true Christian. Included there are

allegations of potential scandals, including a passage on his relationship with Sally Fairfax. After looking at the allegation, Peter and I sum up, "We believe there is no evidence of an adulterous affair between George Washington and Sally Fairfax. The charge is baseless. But, may we suggest that Washington may well have wrestled with romantic feelings for Sally in his youthful years?"

When I first heard about NBC's upcoming series, I thought, "Oh no, here they go again, with their historical deconstruction." Fault Washington for a bad temper (at times), but not this.

A few days ago, I shot off an email to Dr. Lillback: "Peter, is there the slightest possibility that GW slept with his best friend's wife?!? Is there a scintilla of evidence anywhere that that might have happened? Hollywood is poised to poison the well on our guy!"

Dr. Lillback wrote back: "Dear Jerry: No way could it have happened, according to the evidence. Alexander Hamilton did have an affair, and it ended in the duel that took his life. GW and his wife and the Fairfaxes remained friends till the latter returned to England. It is clear that the lonely, single colonial officer had romantic feelings for Sally, however. What's great is that he did the right thing, even though his heart felt otherwise. ... God bless, Pete."

Perhaps Hollywood producers don't realize there's a distinction between being tempted and giving into temptation. As Martin Luther said: You can't stop a bird from flying overhead (temptation), but you can prevent it from building a nest in your hair (giving in to it).

Here's an appeal to the producers, the writer(s), the board of directors, NBC, etc.: The true story of George Washington is fascinating in and of itself. Don't ruin your series by depicting him engaged in adultery when the evidence suggests he did not. As the saying goes, "We're all entitled to our own

opinions. But we're not entitled to our own facts."

I pray a passion for truth will win out at NBC—as opposed to a passion for the sensational. My older brother, Rick, once asked sarcastically, "Why let the truth get in the way of a good story?" Answer: Because at the end of the day, truth is all that matters.

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