

America's Founding Prayer Was Offered in the Name of Jesus

The First Continental Congress opened with Bible reading and prayer on Sept. 5, 1774, at Carpenter's Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Fifty-six delegates were present from all 13 Colonies except Georgia. Among those present were George Washington, Richard Henry Lee and Patrick Henry from Virginia and Samuel Adams and John Adams from Massachusetts. The delegates met to discuss how to deal with Britain's oppressive mandates toward the colonies.

Beginning with the Stamp Act of 1765, relations between the colonists and Great Britain had steadily deteriorated as King George continued to pile on tyrannical taxes and regulations about which they had no say. With the outbreak of protests, especially in New England, George had sent six regiments of British soldiers who had locked down the city of Boston and closed its port.

Before beginning their discussions, the delegates agreed to open with Bible reading and prayer. Adams, a Puritan from New England, suggested they invite Rev. Jacob Duche, an Anglican minister of Philadelphia who was known as a man of deep spirituality, to come and lead them in prayer.

As the elderly, gray-haired Duche stood before the Congress, he began by reading the entire 35th psalm, which powerfully impacted everyone present. It is a prayer of David for deliverance and begins with the words, "Plead my cause, O Lord, with those who strive against me; fight against those who fight against me" (Ps. 35:1, NKJV). The psalm ends with praise for God's deliverance.

After reading the psalm, Duche began praying for the delegates, for America and especially for the city of Boston

and its inhabitants. who were under siege. As he began praying, the Anglicans, such as Washington and Lee, knelt in prayer, according to their custom. The Puritans, according to their custom, sat with bowed heads and prayed. Others prayed according to their own unique customs.

But although their outward manners differed, there was a singleness of heart and purpose as they all united in prayer for God's assistance and intervention for America. Duche lifted his voice in prayer, saying,

O Lord, our high and mighty Father, heavenly king of kings, and Lord of lords, who dost from Thy throne behold all the dwellers of the earth, and reignest with power supreme over all kingdoms, empires, and governments. Look down in mercy we beseech thee on these our American states who have fled to Thee from the rod of the oppressor and thrown themselves on Thy gracious protection, desiring to be henceforth dependent only on Thee. To Thee they have appealed for the righteousness of their cause; to Thee do they now look up for that countenance and support which Thou alone can give . . . Shower down upon them and the millions they represent, such temporal blessings as Thou seest expedient for them in this world and crown them with everlasting joy in the world to come. All this we ask in the name and through the merits of Jesus Christ Thy Son and our Savior. Amen (Hyatt, 1726: The Year that Defined America, 108, emphasis added).

This was America's founding prayer, and it was recorded in the official proceedings of the Congress. Adams wrote to his wife, Abigail, of the impact of the Bible reading and prayer on the delegates, saying, "Who can realize the emotions with which they turned imploringly to heaven for divine interposition and aid. It was enough to melt a heart of stone. I never saw a greater effect upon an audience. It seems as if heaven had ordained that Psalm to be read that day. I saw tears gush into the eyes of the old, grave pacific Quakers of Philadelphia. I

must beg you to read that Psalm” (Hyatt, 108).

Duche was then invited to be the chaplain for the Congress and begin each session with Bible reading and prayer. He agreed, and this first Congress became a place where God’s Word and prayer in the name of Jesus were valued and given priority.

Sadly, these historical facts have been censored from the secularized modern versions of America’s history. It is, therefore, vital that we restore them to the American public for as Carl Sandburg said, “When a nation goes down or a society perishes, one condition may always be found; they forgot where they came from, they lost sight of what had brought them along.” {eoa}

This article is derived from Dr. Eddie Hyatt’s book, 1726: The Year that Defined America, available from Amazon and his website at . It also appeared at .

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