

February 2017

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## The Republic for Which We Stand

The story of a Pastor, an Ancient Hebrew Republic, and the U.S. Constitution

*"...imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." --Hebrews 6:12*

Another Presidents' Day has passed without significant fanfare, save for some super-duper used car sales. This so-called "holiday," falling on the third Monday each February, was a maneuver by President Richard Nixon in 1971 to grant a three-day weekend for federal employees. Formally, a national holiday was exclusively observed each February 22—the birthday of George Washington—America's first president. While Nixon's third-Monday proposal was approved by Congress, his recommendation for a name-change to Presidents' Day was not.

Unfortunately, Nixon's move to be included in the annual observance of one the most remarkable men in modernity, has further-fueled our national amnesia concerning not only the heroic exploits of Washington and other exceptional leaders of his day, but also America's Providential founding.

While the founders sensed and later wrote about the arguably Divine interposition on their behalf during *The War for Independence*, that "Invisible Hand" continued to be in evidence when the successful patriot combatants later met to "form a more perfect union."

During the summer of 1787, delegates from 13 newly independent states gathered in Philadelphia with one question in mind: What now? Having unshackled themselves from England's tyrant King George, they were aware that other foreign powers were watching to see if they might now be easier pickings—considering the depravations of their costly eight-year war for independence.

Other concerns included a general fear that in deposing a British dictator, a door could be left open for the rise of an American dictator. Although a considerable variety of safeguards were on the table that summer providing much spirited debate among the delegates, a simple but formidable document (a constitution) was submitted to the 13 states for ratification.

By fall, 1788, the proposed Constitution had been approved by eight states. But a ninth affirmative vote was necessary for ratification, and the would-be nation awaited an up-or-down vote from lawmakers in New Hampshire. It might be that what happened next, was a "God-thing!"

Our longtime friend Dr. Marshall Foster with the World History Institute writes that, "...the New Hampshire legislature chose Dr. Samuel Langdon, former president of Harvard and esteemed clergyman, to address the representatives."<sup>1</sup> Dr. Foster continues:

"How did Langdon encourage a skeptical New Hampshire legislature to ratify the proposed Constitution? He reminded them that the new U.S. Constitution was patterned after the divine constitution of Moses and the decentralized republic of the Ancient Hebrews (1400-1000 B.C.). He said that this liberation form of accountable and just government is 'a pattern to the world in all ages' for any nation desiring freedom and prosperity."

“The Israelites were transformed from a band of disorderly families coming out of bondage in Egypt into self-governing, orderly tribes. Langdon said there was no example in history of a people making ‘this quick progress of the Israelites, from abject slavery, ignorance, and almost total want of order, to a national establishment perfected in all its parts far beyond all other kingdoms and states!’

“Langdon detailed how the Hebrews formed their successful republic. First, before the Hebrew tribes arrived at Mt. Sinai, Moses instructed them to elect character-filled leaders at the local level. They were to be competent, godly, honest and hating bribes (see Exodus 18). These local elections decentralized power in their new republic...

**Second**, at Mt. Sinai, God graciously gave His people a few concise but perfect laws that would be applied without partiality and would protect lives, families, private property, personal freedoms, and reputations: The Ten Commandments.

Langdon described the Lord’s compassion: ‘God did not leave a people wholly unskilled in legislation to make laws for themselves—He took this important matter wholly into His own hands... Had the inexperienced multitude been left to themselves to draw up a system of civil and military government, it would have been entirely beyond their abilities to comprehend so complicated a subject; they must have committed innumerable mistakes...’ The Lord created a bottom-up, representative constitutional republic with maximum freedom and no need for an earthly king. Through the centuries, this plan has liberated hundreds of millions of people from bondage.

**Third**, Langdon detailed the basic structure of the Hebrew republic. He said, ‘A senate was constructed as necessary for the future government of the nation, under a chief commander [executive]...the people were consulted, the whole congregation [an assembly] being called together on all important occasions: the government therefore was a proper republic.

‘Moreover, to complete the establishment of civil government, courts were to be appointed...and elders most distinguished for wisdom and integrity were to be made judges.’ These courts were a safeguard to ensure that the laws would be applied on an equitable basis without class distinction or partiality. Appeals were allowed to a supreme court.

Langdon explained that the proposed U.S. Constitution mirrored the divinely inspired Hebrew Republic and would maximize freedom and limit tyranny. He called upon the New Hampshire legislature to approve the proposed Constitution. With their approval, the new Constitution would become law.

Ultimately, Langdon declared that once this Constitution was ratified, the people, through their vigilance and character, would determine the success or failure of their nation. He concluded by saying that “the best constitution, badly managed, will soon fall and be changed into anarchy or tyranny...On the people, therefore, of these United States it depends whether wise men, or fools, good or bad men, shall govern them; whether they shall have righteous laws, a faithful administration of government and permanent good order, peace and liberty; or, on the contrary, feel unsupportable burdens, and see all their affairs run to confusion and ruin.”<sup>1</sup> *ibid*

In a letter to General Benjamin Lincoln following the War, George Washington wrote:

“No Country upon Earth ever had it more in its power to attain these blessings... Much to be regretted indeed would it be, were we to neglect the means and depart from the road which Providence has pointed us to, so plainly; I cannot believe it will ever come to pass... We may, now and then, get bewildered; but I hope and trust that there is good sense and virtue enough left to recover the right path.”<sup>2</sup>

*Rick Forcier*

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<sup>1</sup> Foster, Marshall, *The Forgotten Inspiration for the U.S. Constitution*, World History Journal, January/February 2017

<sup>2</sup> Federer, William J., *America’s God and Country Encyclopedia of Quotations*, Fame Publishing, Inc., 1994, pg.648