

“CHRISTIANITY AND THE CONSTITUTION”

By John Eidsmoe

A well-written book by John Eidsmoe entitled *Christianity and the Constitution* includes detailed profiles of America’s founding fathers. Eidsmoe primarily focused his text upon determining whether these men were of the Christian faith as evidenced in their writing, speeches, and living. The author found that, “The source most often cited by the founding fathers was the Bible” (p. 51), thus proving that the vast majority of these men were indeed true believers in Christ.

The case for George Washington being a solid Christian was clearly made through mounting evidence and was put in a format that was enjoyable to read. Some of the accounts of Washington’s spiritual life were encouraging. At the age of 20, Washington once wrote out a prayer with this request, “Bless my family, kindred, friends and country, be our God & guide this day and for ever for his sake, who lay down in the grave and arose again for us, Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.”

It was said of the father of our Constitution, James Madison, that he was a better preacher than politician. James Madison questioned the states power to dictate religion, and he demonstrated his understanding of Christianity when he asked, “Will the state provide tax support only for those churches that teach salvation as by grace through faith alone, or will the state recognize as Christian those that teach salvation by works also?” (p. 109).

Alexander Hamilton understood the sinfulness of man and believed that governmental power should be divided and that laws would safeguard the rights of the people.

John Jay, the first Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme court, insisted America forsake selfish vice and trust in God. John Jay believed that God would give success to the cause of independence if Americans trusted God. He stated, “God would give success to the cause of independence if Americans trust in God” (p. 167), and “God accomplishes His will through human beings” (p. 167). Even the loss of a child demonstrated the implicit trust that these founding fathers had in God. John Jay wrote, “The removal of my excellent daughter from the house of her earthly, to the house of her heavenly father, leaves me nothing to regret or lament on her account” (p. 167). John Jay put in writing his genuine faith in God and his belief in the doctrines of the Word of God.

John Adams saw the Bible as the source of God’s truth and he believed the Bible should govern the nation. Thomas Jefferson, however, would not accept Jesus Christ as the Son of God even though he respected God and the Bible.

Roger Sherman, the only one to sign all four major documents, wrote a sermon regarding preparing oneself for Communion. He listed five areas in which a believer should examine himself: “his ‘knowledge of the Gospel scheme of salvation,’ his repentance, his faith in Jesus Christ, his love to God and man, and his obedience to the commands of God.” Roger Sherman also wrote, “Perhaps there is nothing more pleasing to the adversary of mankind than discord among Christian brothers.”

“Adam Smith wrote, ‘Government does not intervene in this economic competition except as a referee, to prohibit force, fraud, monopoly, or debauchery such as pornography, obscenity, drugs, liquor, prostitution, or other forms of vice’” (p. 68).

John Witherspoon “Helped train the men who would become the leaders of the new nation” (p. 81). In Witherspoon’s sermon, which was preached in response to

someone in his congregation he made this statement, “One who is unconcerned about the salvation of souls does not really possess Christian charity” (p. 82). Witherspoon said, “He is the best friend of American liberty who is most sincere and active in promoting true and undefiled religion and who sets himself with the greatest firmness to bear down profanity and immorality of every kind” (p. 85). Witherspoon told his listeners, “That both duty to God and duty to country called on them to be uncorrupted patriots, useful citizens, and invincible soldiers” (p. 85).

After reading through this manuscript, the influence of George Whitefield was evident upon several of our founding fathers. George Whitefield’s preaching, his holy living, his speaking forwardly, in challenging Ben Franklin was a testament of how and what Christians need to do today in our culture. Christians today need to be educated, bold, and vocal in defending the religious foundation of our country because the evidence is clearly in support of our Biblical origin.

The view that most of the founding fathers were deist was thoroughly and completely rebuked in the text. The author briefly exposed that some of the founding fathers were involved in the Masons, unfortunately he did not establish that as detrimental.

Eidsmoe’s mini-biographies demonstrated that these men were not simple-minded, but sensible, brave, and upright. They knew of the depravity of mankind and warned against it. They prayed to God for guidance and help. Today we have become a nation that shuns God and loves sin. Our forefathers were not ignorant of Satan's devices. Therefore, let us remember Benjamin Franklin's words, "God governs in the affairs of men."