

## America the Exceptional

### 1. America the Exceptional.

Ps 33:12-18 Blessed *is* the nation whose God *is* the LORD; *and* the people *whom* he hath chosen for his own inheritance.

13The LORD looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men.

14From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth.

15He fashioneth their hearts alike; he considereth all their works.

16There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength.

17An horse *is* a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver *any* by his great strength.

18Behold, the eye of the LORD *is* upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy;

On September 7, 1774, the Scripture reading for that day in the Anglican church was providentially placed.

Ps 35:1-4 *A Psalm* of David. Plead *my cause*, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me.

2Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help.

3Draw out also the spear, and stop *the way* against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I *am* thy salvation.

4Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt.

As the Rev. Duche read the Scripture he was moved to pray:

Be Thou present, O God of Wisdom, and direct the counsel of this Honorable Assembly; enable them to settle all things on the best and surest foundations; that the scene of blood may be speedily closed; that Order, Harmony and Peace may be effectually restored, and that Truth and Justice, Religion and Piety, prevail and flourish among the people ..Preserve the health of their bodies, and the vigor of their minds, shower down on them, and the millions they here represent, such temporal Blessings as

Thou seest expedient for them in this world, and crown them with everlasting Glory in the world to come. All this we ask in the name and through the merits of Jesus Christ, Thy Son and our Saviour, Amen.

John Adams wrote:

Washington was kneeling there with Henry, Randolph, Rutledge, Lee, and Jay, and by their side there stood, bowed in reverence the Puritan Patriots of New England ... 'It was enough' says Mr. Adams, 'to melt a heart of stone. I saw the tears gush into the eyes of the old, grave, Pacific Quakers of Philadelphia.

Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.

Every nation will serve God's purpose, but not all nations are founded *upon* that purpose.

Isa 60:12 For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, *those* nations shall be utterly wasted.

I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth - that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid.

— Benjamin Franklin

Andrew Reed and James Matheson were congregational ministers who visited America in 1836 and wrote this assessment:

Universal suffrage, whatever may be its abstract merits or demerits, is neither desirable nor possible, except the people are the subjects of universal education and universal piety. America will be great if America is good. If not, her greatness will vanish away like a morning cloud.<sup>1</sup>

We sing *America the Beautiful* and so it is. I would like to alter that a little bit and preach about America the *Exceptional*. This is appropriate to do when we consider the reasons *we* think America is exceptional. American

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<sup>1</sup> *A Narrative of the Visit to the American Churches by the Deputation from the Congregational Union of England and Wales* (London, 1836)

Exceptionalism is understood in various ways.

To some, American Exceptionalism is a reference to an arrogant sense of superiority. Judging by the numbers of people who are willing to come here by hook or by crook, I would say that a lot of people do find America to be superior. For those who do not, they are free to emigrate. There are those who disagree about the proposed wall at the southern border, but ALL of us can agree on this: Praise God, America has never built walls to keep her people inside!.

I want to say that underlying the ideas and ideals of America is God's providential hand that has enabled America to *still* be the beacon of freedom and liberty to the world. No nation before America brought into focus the enduring ideals that produced a nation established by a constitution. That same constitution is the oldest and longest lasting constitution on the face of the earth today. That constitution was borne of men who knew that their rights did not come from the permission of men, but were inalienable from God. They saw the constitution as a limit on government, protecting the conscience of man before his God.

America was built on ideals rather than an ethnic identity. If there were six different men in a room and I asked you to pick out the Chinese, or Filipino, or Indian, or Kenyan, or Polish, or Irish guy, you would be able to do it. What if the same six men were in the room and I asked you to pick out the Americans? You could argue that all citizens of France are not French, but you can definitely say that all Americans are American.

The ground of America was so prepared for the seeds of revival that fanned the flames of missionary outreach as never before. The Abolitionist Movement that ended slavery was led by those who feared God. The Civil Rights movement was undergirded by people of faith. America by God's grace has stood by Israel. American presidents and legislators, in spite of the secularists pressures and intrusions, have honored God and His Word.

Joshua Lawson, a new citizen [2020] originally from Canada wrote this:

...to those who disparage America: Why do so many risk imprisonment attempting to live illegally in a place so rotten? Or, why do so many spend decades and thousands of dollars to try to legally join an “unfair” or “racist” country? I can’t speak to the exact individual motivations of any immigrant other than

myself, by I'm confident millions of people across the globe want a better life in America because it is an exceptional nation built on an idea that has been a beacon of hope for centuries.

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No other country in the world is so steeped in the idea of purpose-driven new beginnings, a concept exemplified beautifully in the Great Seal of the United States. On the obverse side, the seal features the national coat of arms with the phrase *E pluribus unum* ("Out of Many, One"), a reminder that U.S. citizenship doesn't belong to a single ethnic group, race, or people, but to all who come legally and pledge their allegiance to defend one united country.

The reverse side of the Great Seal can be seen on the \$1 bill. It features two phrases: ...[The first] is translated as "He [God] has favored our undertakings" or "Providence favors our undertakings."

Both renderings speak to the hand of the same Higher Power referenced in the *Declaration of Independence* in overseeing the formation of the country and its endeavors. The [second] phrase means "A new order of the ages," and was intended by its designer, Charles Thomson, to mark the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776 as "the beginning of the new American Era."

What remains most inspiring about America is that ours is the first government in history founded on the idea that all men are created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights. It's a nation that empowers individuals, not the state. We The People tell the government what it can do, not the other way around.

Many Americans may forget how blessed they are to live in a country that has the U.S. Constitution's First, Second, Ninth, and Fourteenth Amendments. The rights, privileges, and immunities spoken of in those amendments are, as a whole, unique to America.

Even in First World countries like Canada or the United Kingdom, there aren't any true protections for free speech. Nor is there the ability to defend yourself with arms

against the threat of government tyranny. Nor is there the assertion that certain natural rights are granted to you by God through your humanity and cannot be taken away.

America is, at its heart, an idealistic project unlike any the world has ever known. Yet the Founders weren't recklessly utopian...

In the 19th century, America took a great step towards living up to the ideals of its Founding. The Civil War and the final sacrifice of 700,000 dead led to a more perfect realization of Jefferson's affirmation, while the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments engrained it into law. In the 20th century, renewed efforts saw the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 followed by the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

The long march towards fulfilling the founding promise of our republic continues. We and future Americans must be worthy of that challenge. It means taking seriously the education of our children as well as President Reagan's reminder that an appreciation for freedom is not passed on through the bloodstream — it must be *retaught*, *reinstigated*, and cherished by starry-eyed immigrants and longtime citizens alike.

This July 4, as I with an indescribable pride look forward to celebrating my first Independence Day as an American citizen, I will tell all who listen: Yes, this is the greatest country in the world. Even amidst our present crisis, I am filled with undaunted confidence that, if we remember why America has always been the hope of the earth, if we rediscover and re-enshrine our Founding principles, we'll emerge stronger than ever, and able to face anything that comes our way.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Contentment vs. complacency or bitterness.

There are those who justify the present violence, looting, and burning as necessary to provoke change in America since America was founded on violence. The rioters are being

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<sup>2</sup><https://thefederalist.com/2020/07/01/why-i-just-became-an-american-citizen-and-still-have-hope-for-the-future/>

lauded by the media and certain political leaders as "mostly peaceful" have no concept of the founding of this country.

July 4th is often associated with the Revolutionary War, or The American Revolution. Indeed, the founding fathers referred to it as the American Revolution. In my opinion, it is a little off to refer to the war fought between England and America this way. You might call it by another way it is referred to: The War of Independence. July 4th is a celebration of American independence with the signing of the *Declaration of Independence*.

People are not familiar with the fact that the colonists had tried for ten years prior to the *Declaration of Independence* to use non-violent means to deal with royal mismanagement of the colonies.<sup>3 4</sup> For example, people know about the *Declaration of Independence* of 1776, but they typically do not know about the *Olive Branch Petition* of 1775 that came before it.<sup>5</sup> The colonists did not rebel *against* the king, but the king took action against the colonists forcing them into a defensive position and then ignored the olive branch of peace and reconciliation making the *Proclamation of Rebellion* against the colonists. The American *Declaration of Independence* which followed was not a declaration of war, but a summary of the complaints against the *lack* of governance from the king and a justification for self-governance. America did not attack England, but fought off England.

The large difference between these modern anarchists and the American founders is that the founders did not *initiate* such violence.

We have a constitutional republic that guarantees us the protection of our freedom to speak. A democracy is ripe for mob rule, and that is certainly how the violent are operating. Today's cancel culture is eerily similar to the Enlightenment and the Reign of Terror that followed in France (but I leave that for you to research).

1Cor 3:19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.

The Christian response is contentment.

Phil 4:11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have

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<sup>3</sup><https://politicalviolenceataglance.org/2015/07/09/the-founding-myth-of-the-united-states-of-america/>

<sup>4</sup><http://elsa.sabbath.net/files/2011/05/Resistance-Politics-and-the-American-Struggle-for-Independence.pdf>

<sup>5</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olive\\_Branch\\_Petition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olive_Branch_Petition)

learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content.

1Tim 6:6-8 But godliness with contentment is great gain.

7For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out.

8And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

We need to be careful to not confuse contentment with complacency. To be content is to be grateful for what God has given us, but not to the point that we are lazy and unwilling to serve Him.

2Cor 9:8 And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may abound to every good work:

Someone who is complacent is resigned to what he has and refuses to grow and develop. The reverse of complacency is bitterness. Bitterness is born of ingratitude, envy, and covetousness. Those who are bitter are *never* able to be satisfied (unless they repent of their bitterness, of course). As long as someone else has more than them they will always be restless. Paul describes this bitter man in Romans:

Rom 3:14-18 Whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness:

15Their feet *are* swift to shed blood:

16Destruction and misery *are* in their ways:

17And the way of peace have they not known:

18There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Of course, the problem is that nothing will every be equal.

These last two attitudes, complacency and bitterness, are the enemy of contentment. Being content means being thankful for every *opportunity* God gives you as well as every *thing* that God gives you. Being complacent means rejecting responsibility and being *resigned* to what God gives you. Complacency ignores the *opportunities* that God gives you. Bitterness as the reverse of complacency ignores the good *things* we have received and focuses on the opportunities in a never ending search for satisfaction.

Complacent: unwilling to work and unmoved by what God has given

Bitter: willing to work *mischiev* because their work is based on ingratitude against God.

Content: willing to work *righteousness* because of their gratitude to God.

It is a bitter people who are never satisfied with what they have but live in envy of those who have more. They are anxious to tear down, unable to appreciate what God has given.

### 3. Humble before God.

"God who gave us life gave us liberty. And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the Gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with His wrath? Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that His justice cannot sleep forever;..."

— Thomas Jefferson

Deut 8:10-18 When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee.

11Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day:

12Lest *when* thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt *therein*;

13And *when* thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied;

14Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;

15Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, *wherein were* fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where *there was* no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint;

16Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end;

17And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of *mine* hand hath gotten me this wealth.

18But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for *it is* he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as *it is* this day.

I bow on my knee before God but not before man. I bow on my knee

before God and I stand up for America. We celebrate America and its independence. By standing for our flag we are not standing for the sin under which we labor, but for the ideals that free us from that sin. As long as there are human beings that make up a country, there will be sinners who are racists, cheats, adulterers, liars, etc. It would be problematic if we never progressed, but we are not defined by our failures. We *are* defined by our ideals.

In these times, wreckless and dangerous mobs are tearing down statues that celebrate men who we already know are imperfect by virtue of the fact that they are human. However, what we *do* celebrate are the labors of these men who have advanced the ideals of this country under God in spite of their humanity. South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem spoke at Mount Rushmore celebrating Independence Day and quoted former President Theodore Roosevelt:

It is not the critic who counts;  
not the man who points out  
how the strong man stumbles,  
or where the doer of deeds  
could have done them better.  
The credit belongs to the man  
who is actually in the arena,  
whose face is marred by dust  
and sweat and blood; who  
strives valiantly; who errs,  
who comes short again and  
again, because there is no  
effort without error and  
shortcoming; but who does  
actually strive to do the deeds;  
who knows great enthusiasms,  
the great devotions; who  
spends himself in a worthy  
cause; who at the best knows  
in the end the triumph of high  
achievement, and who at the  
worst, if he fails, at least fails  
while daring greatly, so that  
his place shall never be with  
[those] cold and timid souls  
who neither know victory  
[nor] defeat.

Governor Noem stated that such a quote is a perfect direction for leaders in the modern era, adding that “we honor these men and women for their contributions, their leadership, all the positive things that they represent...This Independence Day, let us be grateful that we have such words and such examples to follow, and that others were willing to sacrifice so much to create a land in which liberty and law can be protected.”<sup>6</sup>

2Chr 7:14 If my people, which  
are called by my name, shall

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<sup>6</sup><https://www.dailywire.com/news/south-dakota-gov-founding-ideals-cannot-be-dismissed-as-the-irrelevant-opinions-of-flawed-men>

humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

1Tim 2:1-4 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks, be made for all men;

2For kings, and *for* all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

3For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;

4Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

1. America the Exceptional. Ps 33:12-18, Rom 8:28, Isa 60:12
2. Contentment vs. complacency or bitterness. 1Cor 3:19, Phil 4:11, 1Tim 6:6-8, 2Cor 9:8, Rom 3:14-18
3. Humble before God. Deut 8:10-18, 2Chr 7:14, 1Tim 2:1-4