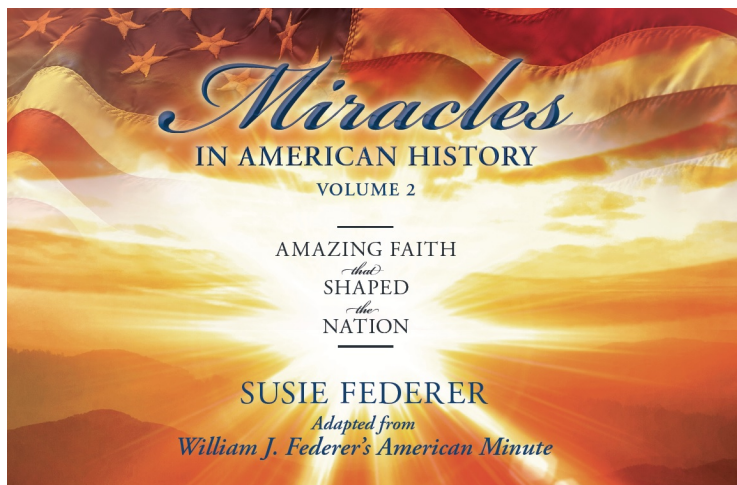


# American Minute with Bill Federer

John Wesley's "Religion of the Heart" & Francis Asbury, Circuit Riding Preacher "one of the builders of our nation"

The King of England was the head of the Anglican Church from the time of Henry VIII in 1534.

[Download as PDF ...](#)



[Miracles in American History- Vol. TWO: Amazing Faith that Shaped the Nation](#)

Beginning in 1535, all English subjects, including those in English colonies, were required to the Oath of Supremacy:



"I (state your name) do utterly testify and **declare in my Conscience, that the King's Highness is the only Supreme Governor of this Realm ... in all Spiritual or Ecclesiastical things ... So help me God.**"

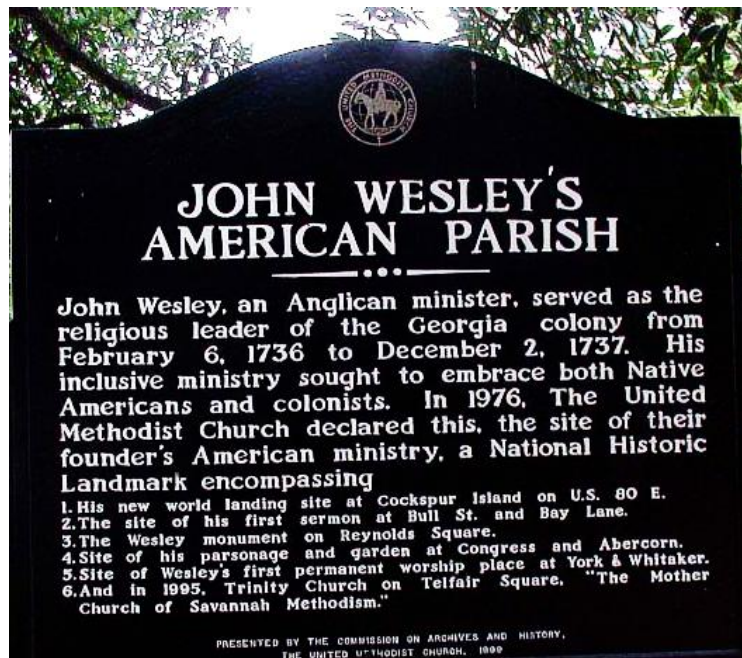


For most of England's history from 1535 to 1829, **not to take the Oath of Supremacy** was considered **treason**, resulting in **government prosecution, fines, arrest, imprisonment,** and in cases,

being **hanged, drawn and quartered, beheaded, or burned at the stake.**

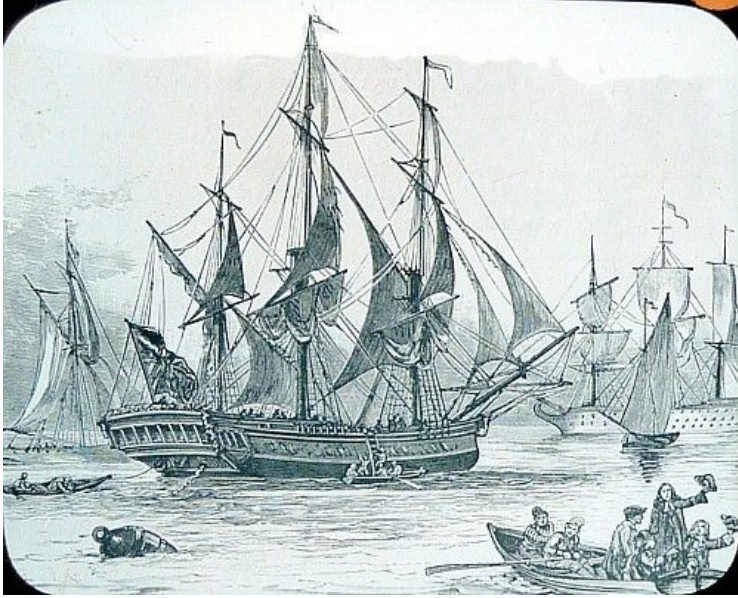
In 1735, a young Oxford graduate and named **John Wesley** was sent as the **Anglican minister** to the new American Colony of **Georgia.**

He had hopes of evangelizing the Indians.



His brother, **Charles Wesley**, was secretary to **Georgia's Governor, James Oglethorpe.**

On the trip over,



their ship, the *Simmonds*, was also carrying a group of 25 **German Moravian missionaries**, as **Wesley** noted in his journal:

"Sunday, January 25, 1736, At seven

I went to the **Germans (Moravians)**. I had long before observed ... their humility ... by performing those servile offices for the other passengers, which none of the English would undertake ... saying ... 'their loving Savior had done more for them' ...

If they were pushed, struck, or thrown down, they rose again and went away; but no complaint was found in their mouth."

The **Moravian missionary** movement was begun just a decade earlier, in 1727, by **Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf** and the **Christian refugees** whom he had allowed to live on his estate in **Bohemia**, on the border of **Germany** and the **Czech Republic**.



On the **Wesleys'** trip to Georgia, their ship, the

*Simmonds*, was caught in a terrible storm which shredded the main sail and flooded the deck.



**John Wesley** saw how everyone panicked in fear except for the **Moravians**, who continued to sing praise songs. He noticed their relationship with



the Lord was closer than his, as he wrote in his journal:

"There was now an opportunity of trying whether they were delivered from the spirit of fear ...

In the midst of the psalm wherewith their service began, the sea broke over, split the main-sail in pieces, covered the ship, and poured in between the decks, as if the great deep had already swallowed us up.

A terrible screaming began among the English.

... The **Germans (Moravians)** calmly sung on.

I asked one of them afterwards, 'Was you not afraid?'

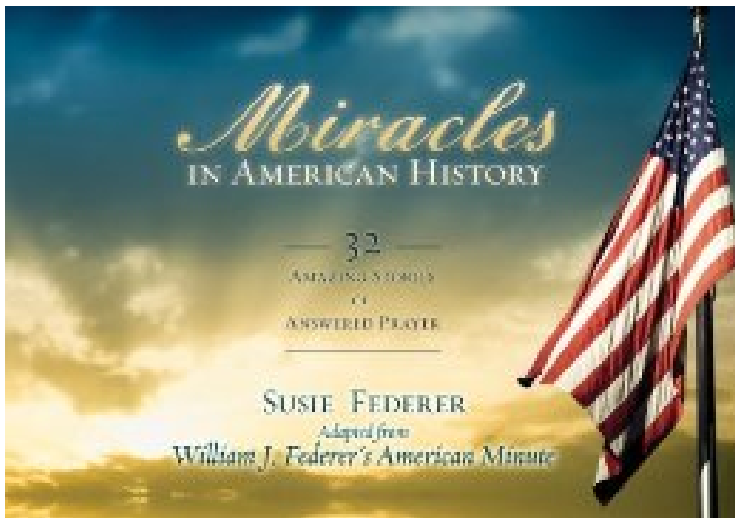
He answered, 'I



thank God, no.' I asked, 'But were not your women and children afraid?' He replied, mildly, 'No; our women and children are not afraid to die.'

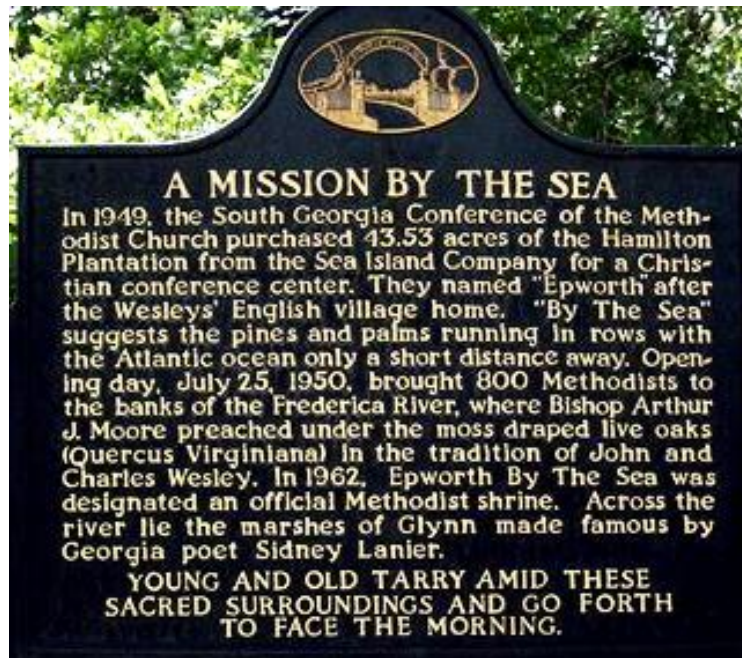
From them I went to their crying, trembling neighbors, and pointed out to them the difference in the hour of trial, between him that feareth God, and him that feareth him not.

At twelve the wind fell. This was the most glorious day which I have hitherto seen."



[Miracles in American History- Amazing Stories of Answered Prayer](#)

**John Wesley** was unsuccessful in his ministry in **Georgia**, and after a year, the **Wesleys** sailed back to England.



**Depressed at their failure, they accepted an invitation to**



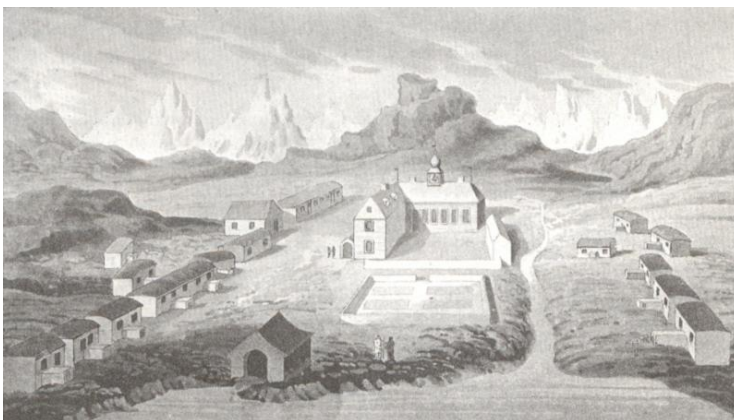
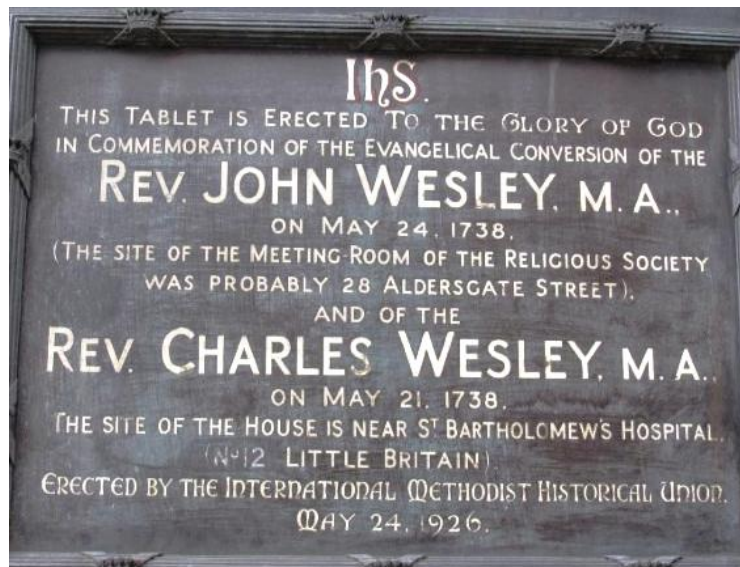
attend a **Moravian prayer meeting** in Aldersgate in May of 1738.

“In the evening, I went very unwillingly to a

Society in Aldersgate-Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans ...

About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, **I felt my heart strangely warmed ...”**

... I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.”



Later in 1738, **John Wesley** traveled to **Moravia** in eastern Germany where he lived and worshiped for several months

with **Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf** and the **Moravian believers**, experiencing first hand their sincere

Christianity, being **"the religion of the heart."**

**Wesley** wrote in his journal:

"God has given me, at length, the desire of my heart. I am with a church ... in whom is the mind of Christ, and who so walk as He walked ...



As they all have one Lord and one faith, so they are partakers with one spirit, the spirit of meekness and love, which uniformly and continually animates all their conversation.

Oh! How high and holy a thing Christianity is! ..."

**Wesley** continued, contrasting the **Moravian church** with his previous church experience under the King's government:



"How widely different from that, I know not what, which is so called, though it neither purifies the heart, nor renews the life, after the image of our Blessed Redeemer.

I grieve to think how that holy name by which we are called must be blasphemed among the heathen, while they see discontented Christians, passionate Christians, resentful Christians, earthly-minded Christians.

Yea, to come to what we are apt to count small things, while they see Christians judging one another, ridiculing one another, speaking evil of one another, increasing

instead of bearing one another's burdens."



**John Wesley** left Germany and returned to England. He and his brother, Charles, began a **revival movement within the Anglican Church.**

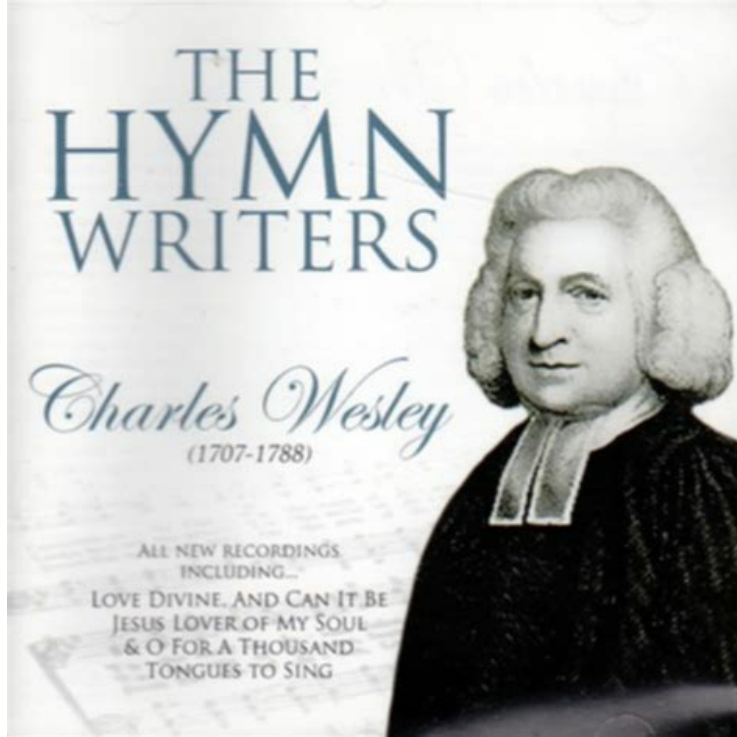
It was called "**Methodism**" because they had a **method of seeking the Lord**, which included **hours and hours of praying.**

**John Wesley** preached thousands of sermons and organized a system of itinerant preachers who traveled through shires and towns in England in a circuit, or a circle of towns.



**Charles Wesley** wrote over 6,500 hymns.





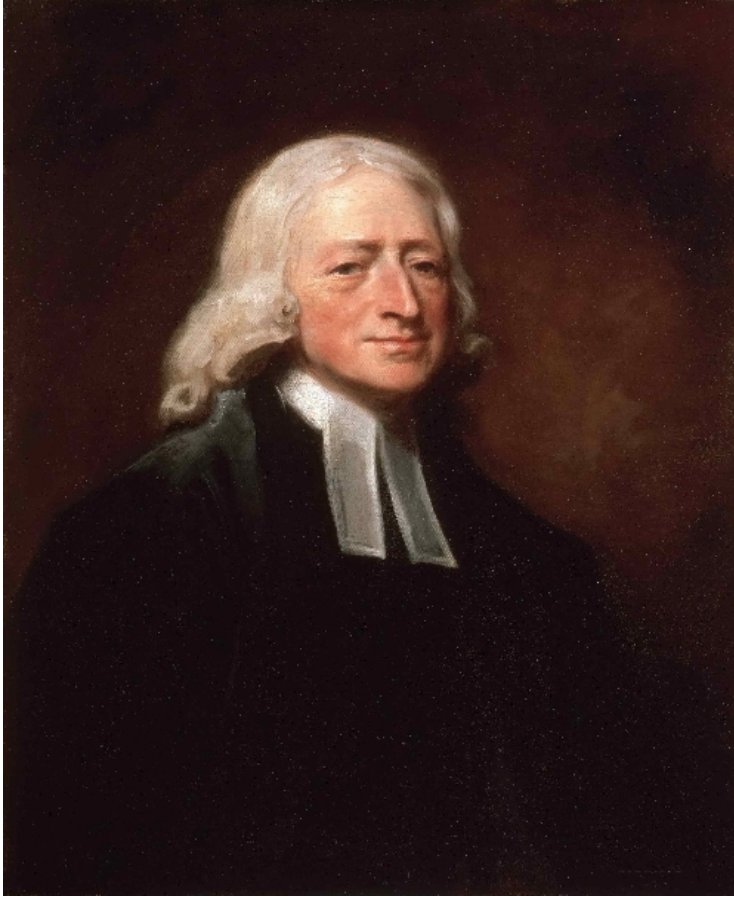
Their friend, **George Whitefield**, became **one of the era's most notable preachers**, coming to America seven times, preaching to thousands and befriending leaders such as **Ben Franklin**.



**Whitefield** spoke at least 18,000 times to an estimate 10 million hearers in England and America.

**John Wesley** spoke of the **inner witness** of the presence of the **Holy Spirit** in one's heart, as:

"... an **inward impression** on the

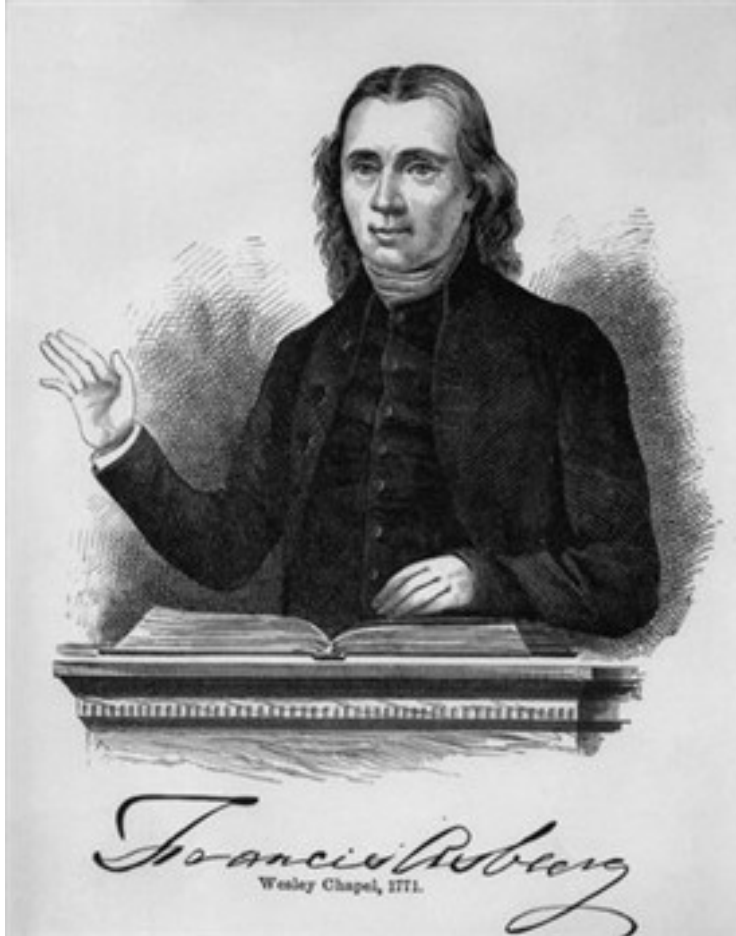


soul of believers, whereby the **Spirit of God** directly testifies to their spirit that they are the children of God."

Someone who was inspired by **John Wesley** to be an Anglican Methodist lay minister was 18-year-old **Francis Asbury**, born August 20, 1745.



At the age 22, **Francis Asbury** was appointed by **John Wesley** to be a traveling preacher across England.



When **George Whitefield** died in 1771, the question arose as to who would follow in his footsteps and preach in America.

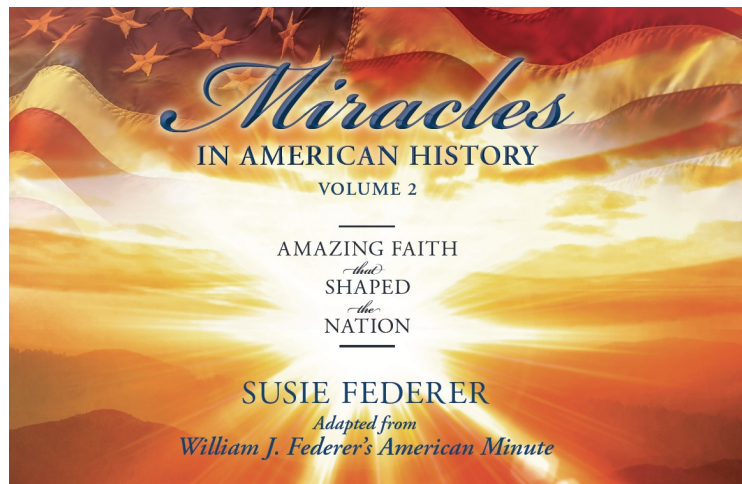
**Francis Asbury**, at the age of 26, volunteered.





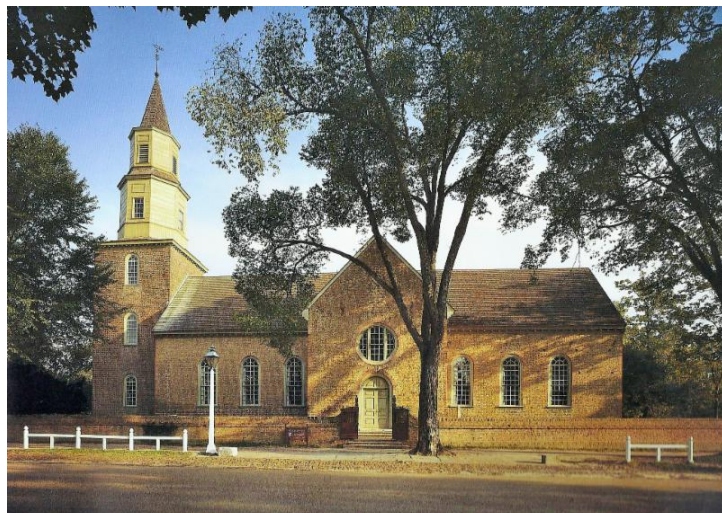
In 1771, **Francis Asbury** arrived in America, and for the next 45 years, he rode **300,000 miles on horseback**, from the Atlantic to the Appalachians, from Maine to the Gulf of Mexico, **spreading the Gospel.**

[Miracles in American History- Vol. TWO: Amazing Faith that Shaped the Nation](#)



Prior to the Revolution, the **Anglican Church** was the **official established state church** in:

- **Virginia** in 1609;
- **New York** in 1693;
- **Maryland** in 1702;



- **South Carolina** in 1706;
- **North Carolina** in 1730; and
- **Georgia** in 1758.



**REVOLUTIONARY ANGLICANISM**  
 The Colonial Church of England Clergy during the American Revolution  
 Nancy L. Rhoden

In English colonies, everyone paid taxes to the **King's government**, and the government paid the salaries of the **Anglican pastors**.

Pastors lived on church-government owned farms called "glebes."

When the Revolutionary War began, patriots in New York pulled down the statue of King George on July 9, 1776, and melted it into 42,086 musket balls.



Several American colonies made it an act of treason for pastors to continue saying public prayers for the King.



In 1777, **British General Howe** invaded Philadelphia and imprisoned **Rev. Jacob Duche'**, the **Anglican chaplain of the Continental Congress**.



Unfortunately, Duche' succumbed to their pressure and abandoned the American cause.

As the Revolution progressed, **Anglican ministers** faced a **crisis of conscience**.

They had to choose between **allegiance to the King and state**, or **allegiance to the patriotic American cause**.

The problem was, if they joined with those fighting for independence, they would lose their means of livelihood.

# Loyalist Exodus



As a result, most Anglican ministers returned to England, but **Francis Asbury** was one of the few who **chose to stay in America.**

**Asbury** stated:



"I can by no means agree to leave such a field for gathering souls to Christ as we have in America."

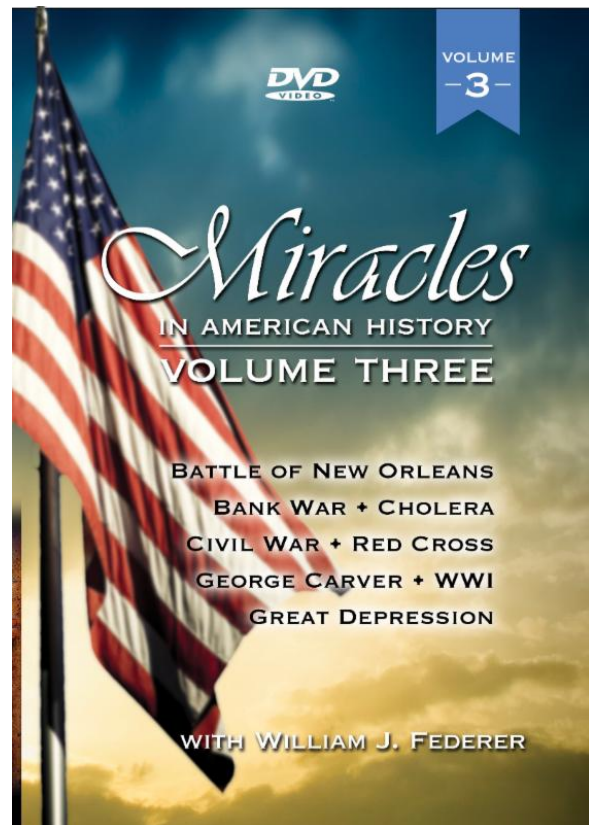
**Francis Asbury** preached over 16,000 sermons in churches, town squares and court houses,



addressing everyone he met, from travelers to workers in the fields to laborers in tobacco houses.

He rode an average of 6,000 miles a year.

[DVD Miracles in American History-Amazing Stories of Answered Prayer](#)

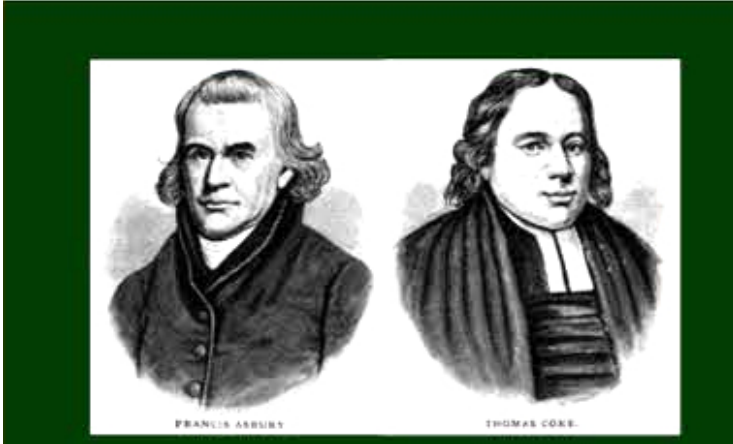


In 1784, 81-year-old **John Wesley** appointed **Francis Asbury** and **Thomas Coke** to oversee the Methodist revival

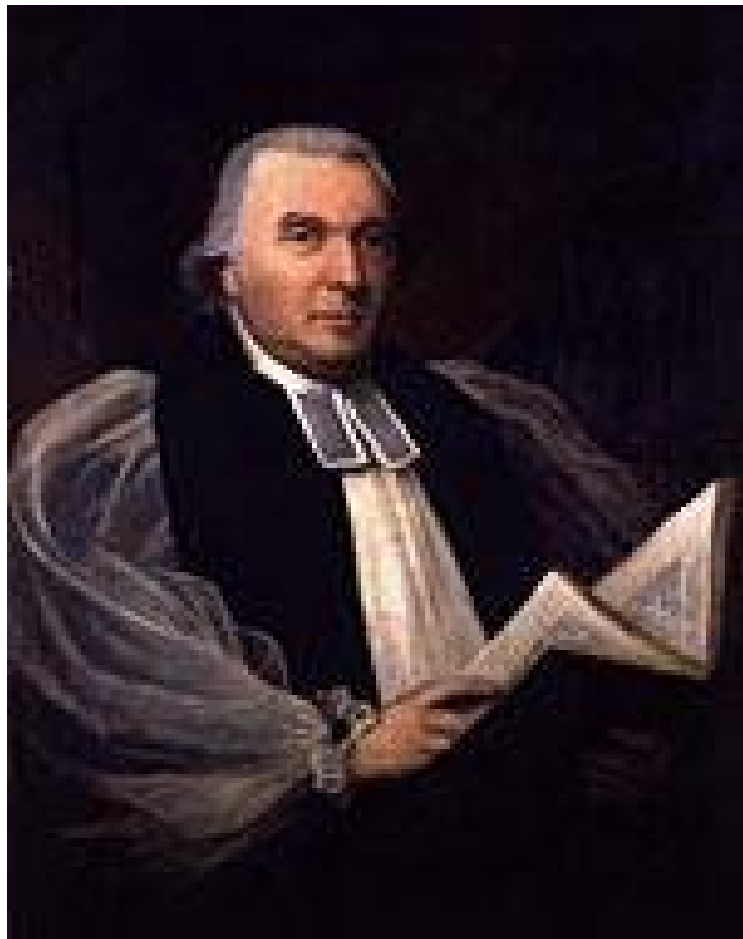


## Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke The First Methodist Bishops

movement in the  
America.



The crisis of conscience for Anglican ministers came to a head in 1784, when **Rev. Samuel Seabury of Connecticut** sought consecration as an Anglican bishop but **could not take the Oath of Supremacy to the King.**



A **Bishop in Scotland** agreed to consecrate **Rev. Seabury.**

In 1785, **Bishop Seabury** began ordaining ministers in Connecticut.



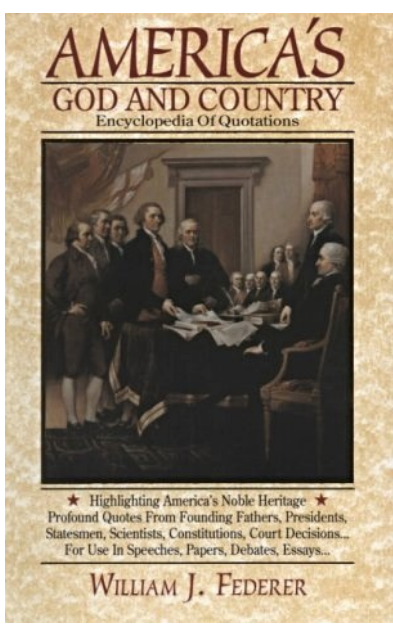
This was the beginning of the official split of the **Episcopal Church in America** away from the **Anglican Church of England**.

**Episcopal ministers, Rev. William Smith of Maryland and Rev. William White of Philadelphia, in 1786, proposed a revised Book of Common Prayer where references to the King were replaced with references to Congress.**

T H E  
**B O O K**  
 O F  
**COMMON PRAYER,**  
 And ADMINISTRATION of the  
**S A C R A M E N T S,**  
 And other  
**RITEs and CEREMONIES,**  
*As revised and proposed to the Use*  
 O F  
**The Protestant Episcopal CHURCH,**  
 At a Convention of the said CHURCH in the States of  
 NEW-YORK,                                 |     MARYLAND,  
 NEW-JERSEY,                             |     VIRGINIA,  
 PENNSYLVANIA,                         |     AND  
 DELAWARE.                               |     SOUTH-CAROLINA,  
 Held in Philadelphia, from September 17th to October 7th, 1785.

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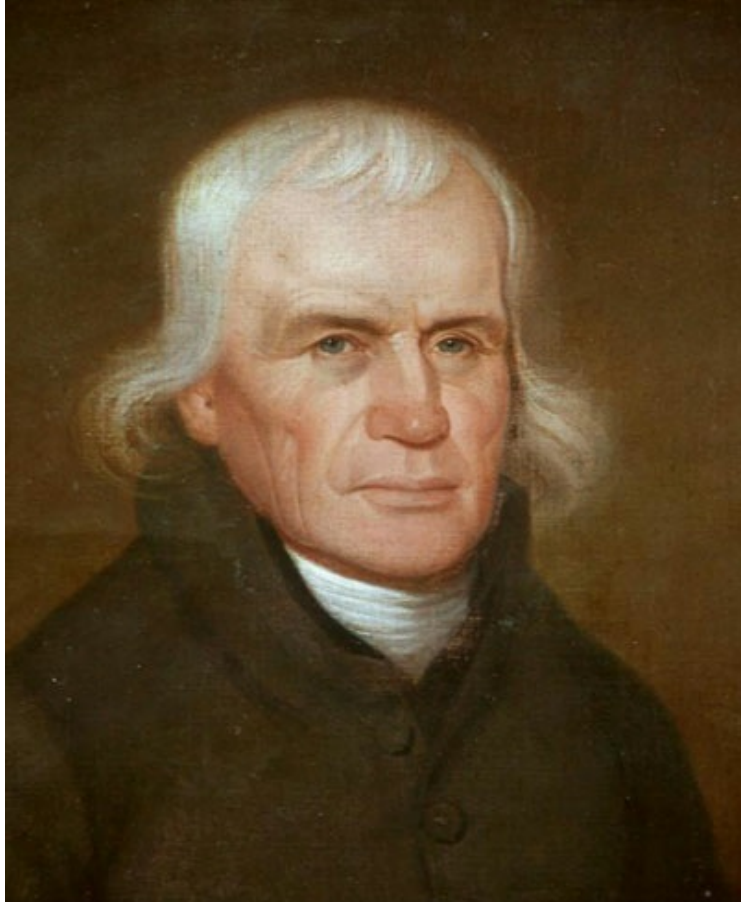
P H I L A D E L P H I A,  
 Printed by H A L L and S E L L E R S:  
 And sold for the Benefit of sundry Corporations and Societies,  
 instituted for the Support of the Widows and Children of  
 deceased Clergymen. MDCCLXXXV.



[America's God and Country Encyclopedia of Quotations](#)

Near that same  
 time, at the  
 Baltimore  
 Christmas

Conference in 1784, **Francis Asbury** moved the **Methodist revival movement** into its own **denomination** - the **Methodist Episcopal Church**.



This had tremendous political impact in **Virginia** as the **Anglican Church** had been the **officially established state church** since the colony's founding charter in **1606**.

In 1786, with Americans having just fought a war of independence from the King, the

**Virginia Assembly** was faced with a question.

Should Virginia **replace the established Anglican Church** with the **new Episcopal Church**, or should

they disestablish the concept of an established church altogether?



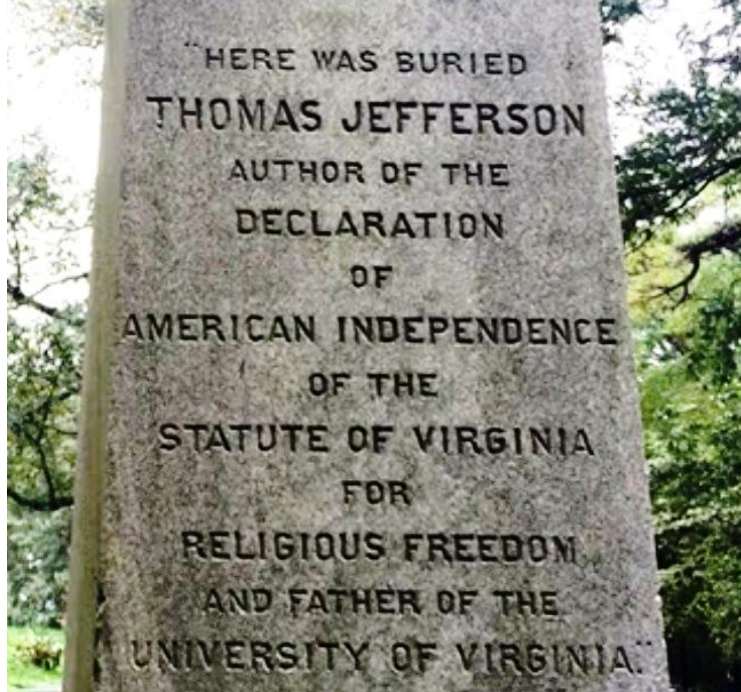
It looked as if the **Episcopal Church** would be **established**, being supported by leaders such as George Washington and Patrick Henry.

But **Francis Asbury's** separation of the **Methodist movement** into **its own denomination** meant there would not be enough

**Episcopal members** in the **Virginia legislature** to vote for that church to be established.

Therefore, in 1786, Virginia officially **disestablished**

the Anglican, now Episcopal, Church, thereby allowing all other denominations to be treated equally.



Responding quickly, Britain passed the **Consecration of Bishops Abroad Act of 1786** which allowed Anglican Archbishops to consecrate Episcopal Bishops.

In 1787, they ordained **Episcopal Bishop Samuel Provoost of New York**, who was chaplain of the Continental Congress and the first chaplain of the U.S. Senate;

and **Episcopal Bishop William White of Philadelphia**, who served as the second chaplain of the U.S. Senate.



In 1789, Episcopal clergy met in Philadelphia to ratify the **initial constitution of the Episcopal Church in America.**

Nearly one-fourth of all U.S. Presidents were

Episcopalian, more than any other denomination, followed by Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist.



The majority of U.S. Senate Chaplains have been Episcopal (19), followed by Methodist (17), Presbyterian (14), Baptist (6), Unitarian (2), Congregational (1), Lutheran (1), Catholic (1), Seventh-Day Adventist (1).



The fourth Episcopal bishop in America, and the first in Virginia, was **Bishop James Madison**, cousin of fellow Virginian James Madison, the fourth U.S. President.

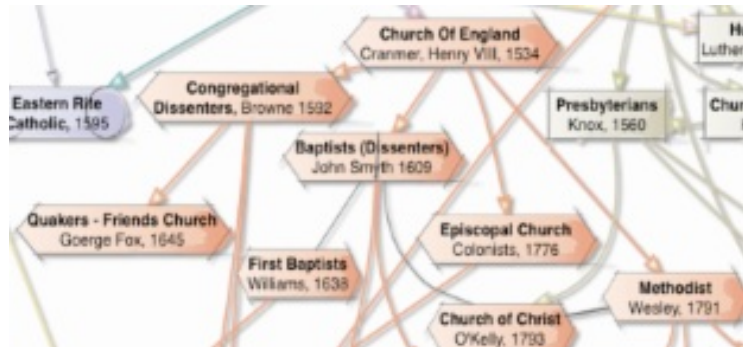
In recapping, just as the **Anglican Church** separated from the **Catholic Church**, beginning in 1534, the American



Revolution resulted in the **Methodist Episcopal Church**, in 1784, and the **Episcopal Church**, in 1785, separating from the **Anglican Church**.



Other denominations had their own histories of separating from the **Anglican Church** during the previous two centuries:



- **Presbyterians,**
- **Congregationalists,**
- **Puritans,**
- **Separatists,**
- **Pilgrims,**
- **Quakers, and**
- **Baptists.**

**Why so many churches?**

Answering that question are **Robert D. Woodberry**, assistant professor of sociology at the University of Texas–Austin, and

**Timothy S. Shah**,  
of the Ethics and  
Public Policy  
Center and the  
Pew Forum on  
Religion and  
Public Life, who  
together wrote  
**"The Pioneering  
Protestants"**  
(*Journal of  
Democracy*, Vol.  
15, No. 2, April  
2004).

Christianity and Democracy

## THE PIONEERING PROTESTANTS

*Robert D. Woodberry and Timothy S. Shah*

*Robert D. Woodberry is assistant professor of sociology at the University of Texas–Austin. Much of the research supporting this essay is available from him through bobwood@mail.la.utexas.edu. Timothy S. Shah, of the Ethics and Public Policy Center and the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, is coeditor of a forthcoming Oxford University Press series on evangelical Protestantism and democracy in the global South.*

“The authority of Christ,” wrote the Scots Calvinist divine William Graham in 1768, “removes all civil distinctions, and all superiority founded upon such distinctions, in his kingdom. All are upon a level equally, as they shall soon be before the awful tribunal of the great Judge.” This stirring fusion of theology, eschatology, and politics not

**Robert Woodberry and Timothy Shah stated:**

"When Luther in 1521 defied an imperial order to recant by insisting that '**my conscience** is captive to the Word of God,' he stopped being the reformer of an old order and instead became the founder of a new stream of Christianity.

He could flout the commands of popes, church councils, and emperors, but not those of **his own individual conscience ...**"

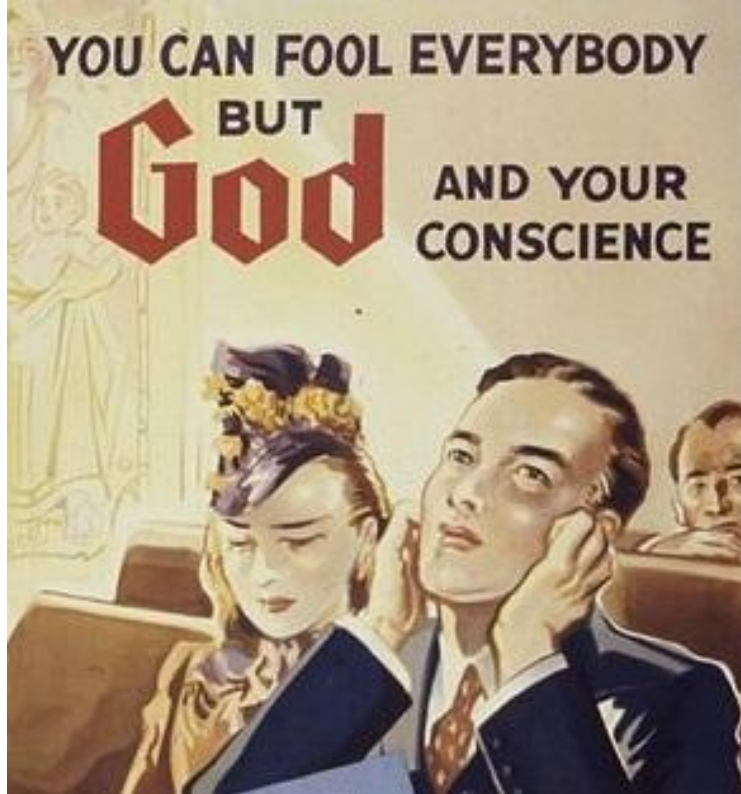
**Woodberry and Shah** continued:

"Most **Protestants** follow his lead ... They tend to believe that people can acquire saving faith only as they **personally and individually** appropriate God's

Word ...

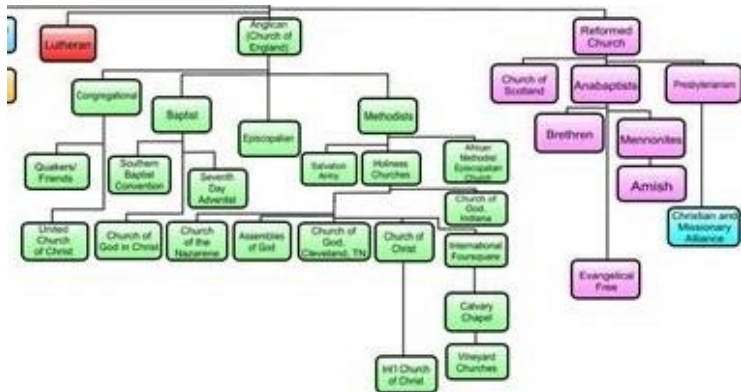
They tend toward separation and independence from ancient church structures and traditions as well as political authorities.

The main reason for this is the important role of **individual conscience**.



Because saving faith must be **uncoerced** and **individual**, it requires in practice a **diversity of independent churches** to satisfy the **inevitable diversity of individual consciences.**"

How did diversity of churches lay the foundation for American independence?



**Woodberry** and **Shah** added:

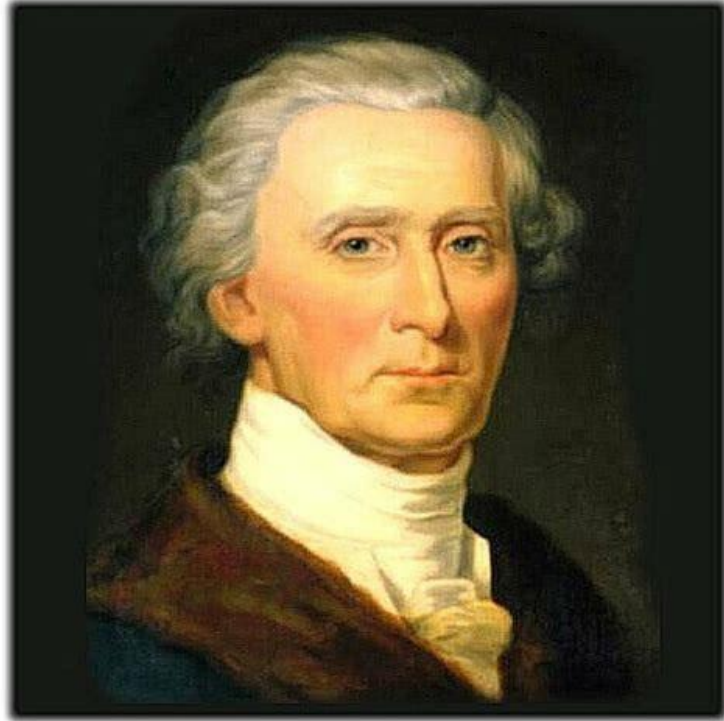
**"The authority of Christ,"** wrote the Scots Calvinist divine William Graham in 1768, **'removes all civil distinctions ... All are upon a level equally, as they shall soon be before the awful tribunal of the great Judge.'**

This stirring fusion of **theology**, **eschatology**, and **politics** not only characterizes Scottish Calvinism but

also says much about the relationship between **Protestantism and democracy.**

As an **egalitarian** (believing everyone is equal) **religion** profoundly opposed to hierarchy, **Protestant Christianity** would seem to enjoy a **powerful affinity with democracy.**"

Rather than view the many denominations negatively, it was instead viewed positively, that they would be a check on each other to insure no one would be established as the official state denomination.



**Charles Carroll**, the **only Catholic to sign the Declaration**, wrote to Rev. John Stanford, October, 9, 1827:

"Observing the **Christian religion divided into many sects**, I founded the hope that **no one would be so predominant as to become the religion of the state.**

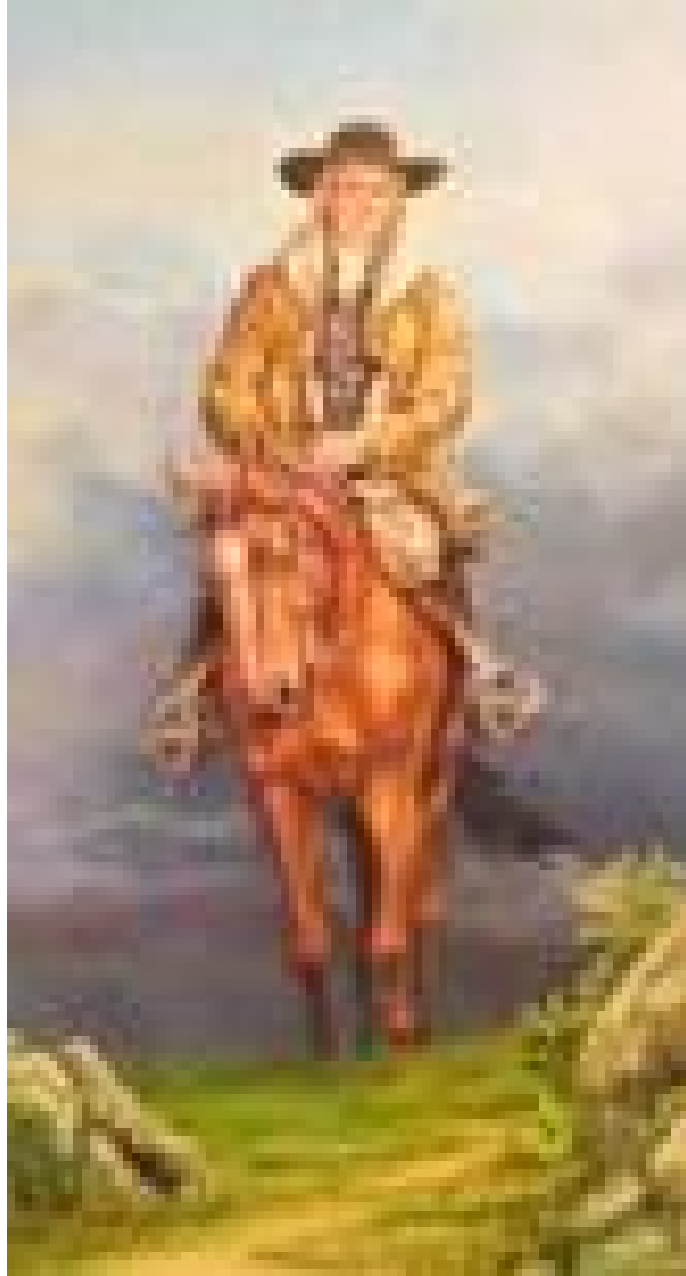
That hope was thus early entertained because **all of them joined in the same cause.**"

**Rev. Francis Asbury** was **one of the first two Methodist Bishops.**

He stated:

"We should so work as if we were to be saved by our works; and so rely on Jesus Christ, as if we did no works."

"My soul is more at rest from the tempter when I am busily employed."



**Asbury** wrote:

"My desire is to live more to God today than yesterday, and to be more holy this day than the last."

"God is gracious beyond the power of language to describe."

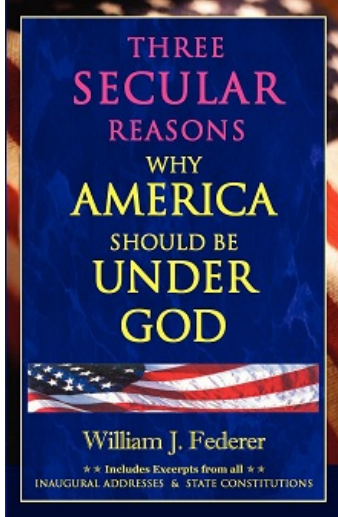


"O what pride, conforming to the world and following its fashions! Warn them, warn them for me, while you have strength and time and be faithful to your duty."



"Preach as if you had seen heaven and its celestial inhabitants, and had hovered over the bottomless pit, and beheld the tortures, and heard the groans of the damned."

[Three Secular Reasons Why America Should Be Under God](#)



**Francis Asbury's** leadership resulted in the **Methodist Church** in America **growing** from just 1,200 people to 214,000, with 700 ordained ministers, by the time of his death in 1816.



**Methodist Bishop Francis Asbury** befriended **Richard Bassett**, a signer of the U.S. Constitution.

**Richard Bassett** converted to being a Methodist, **freed his slaves**, paid them as hired labor and rode joyfully with them to revival meetings.

Shortly after being sworn in as the **first President**,

**George Washington** was visited in New York on May 19, 1789, by the **first two Methodist Bishops in America, Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke.**



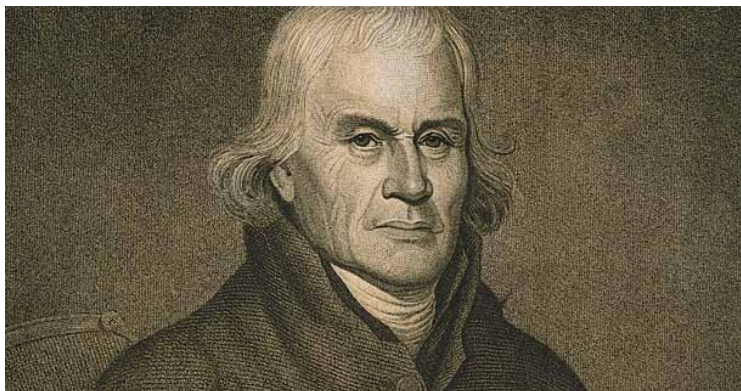
The **Bishops** greeted **Washington** with the words:

"We ... express to you ... our sincere congratulations, on your appointment to the presidency of these States.

We ... place as full a confidence in your wisdom and integrity, for the preservation of those civil and religious liberties which have been transmitted to us by the Providence of GOD ...

Dependence on the Great Governor of the Universe which you have repeatedly expressed, acknowledging Him the source of every blessing, and particularly of the most excellent Constitution of these States, which is at present the admiration of the world ..."

**Bishop Asbury and Coke** continued:



"We enjoy a holy expectation that you will always prove a faithful



and impartial patron of genuine, vital religion - the grand end of our creation and present probationary existence ...

We promise you our fervent prayers to the Throne of Grace, that GOD Almighty may endue you with all the graces and gifts of his Holy Spirit, that may enable you to fill up your important station to His glory."



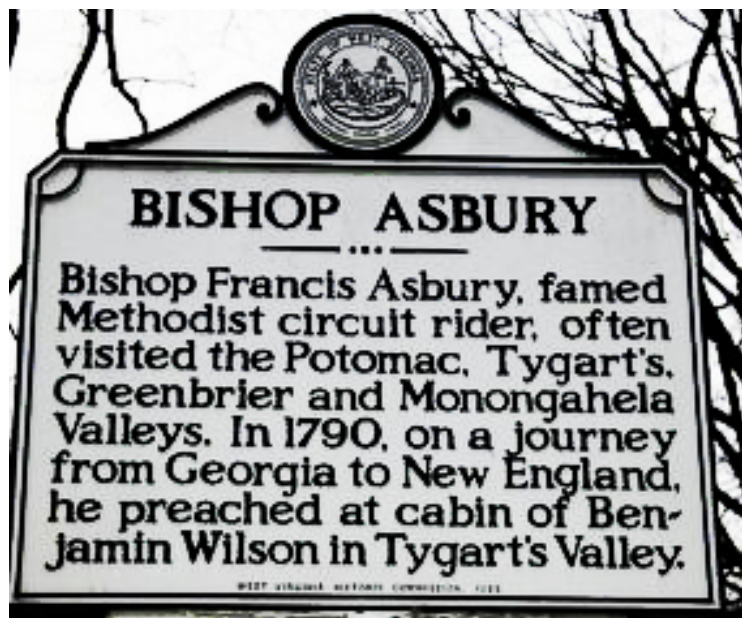
On May 29, 1789, President Washington wrote a reply:

"To the **Bishops of the Methodist-Episcopal Church ...**

I return to you ... my thanks for the demonstrations of affection and the expressions of joy ... on my late appointment.

... It shall still be my endeavor ... to contribute ... towards the preservation of the civil and religious liberties of the American people ...

I hope, by the assistance of Divine Providence, not altogether to disappoint the confidence which you have been pleased to repose in me



... in acknowledgments of homage to the Great Governor of the Universe ..."

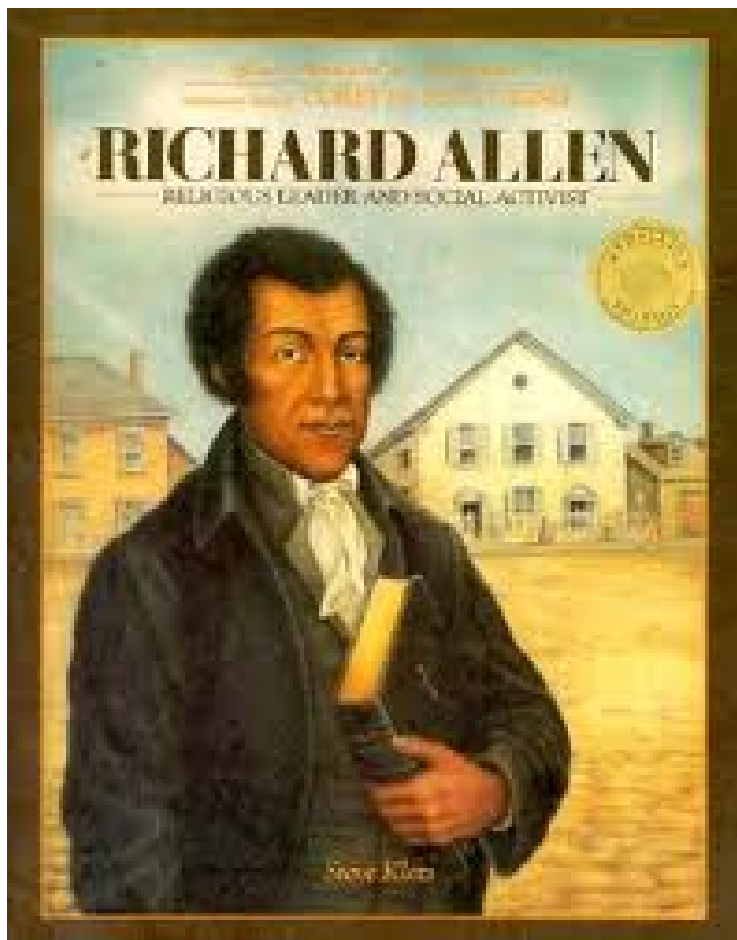
**Washington**  
continued:

"I trust the people of **every denomination** ... will have every occasion to be convinced that I shall always strive

to prove a faithful and impartial patron of genuine, vital religion ...



I take in the kindest part the promise you make of presenting your prayers at the Throne of Grace for me, and that I likewise implore the Divine benediction on yourselves and your religious community."



In 1799, **Francis Asbury** ordained the **first African-American Methodist minister, Richard Allen**, and dedicated the **first African Methodist Episcopal Church**.

**Francis Asbury's**

carriage driver and traveling assistant was "**Black Harry**" **Hosier**.

He had been at **Asbury's Christmas Conference** of December 24, 1784, which began the Methodist Church.

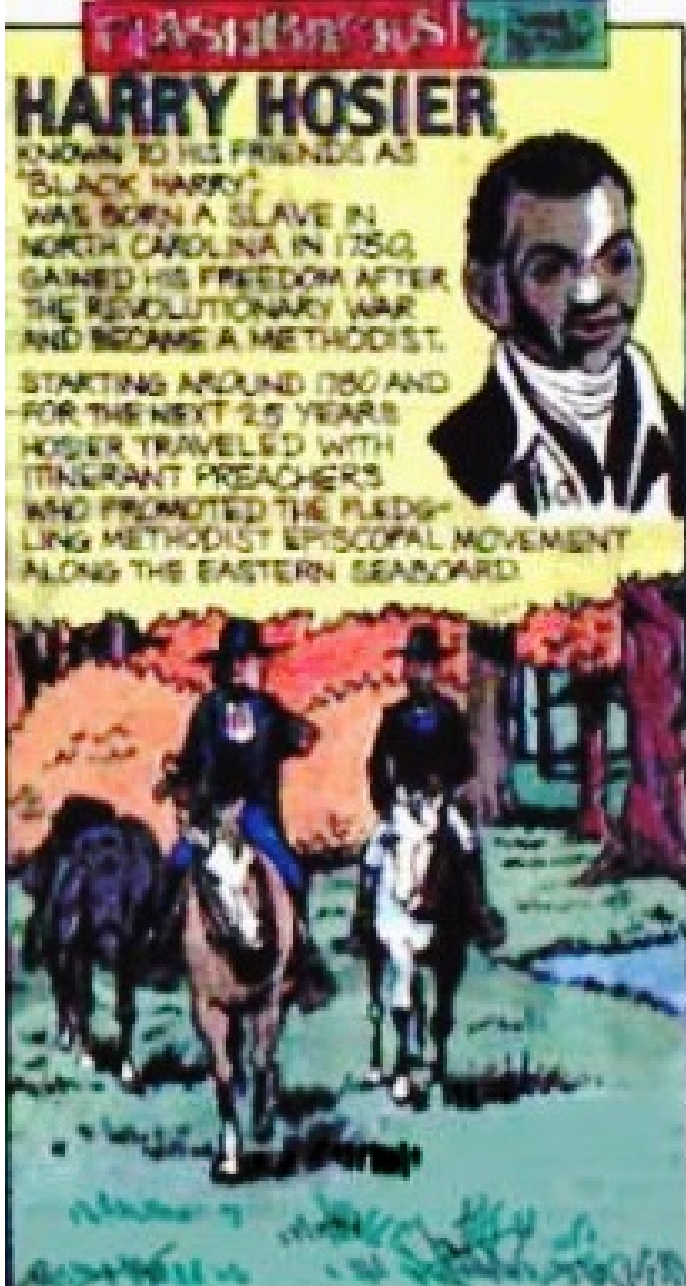
Though illiterate, Hosier listened to **Francis Asbury's** sermons and **memorized long passages of Scripture**.



*Harry Hosier (1750?-1806).*

**"Black Harry" Hosier** became one of the country's most popular preachers, drawing crowds in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Boston, Connecticut, Philadelphia, Delaware, Baltimore and New York.

**Hosier** rejected slavery, lifted up the common working



man, and charged audiences "that they must be holy."

**Hosier's** popularity gave birth to the name "**Hoosier**" being used to refer to persons of humble, low-born background who firmly held to fundamental Bible values, as the settlers who crossed the Ohio River to the Indiana shore.



**President Calvin Coolidge** unveiled



an **Equestrian Statue of Francis Asbury** in Washington, D.C., 1924, stating:

**"Francis Asbury, the first American Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal**

**Church ... made a tremendous contribution ..."**

**Coolidge** continued:

**"Our government rests upon religion.** It is from that source that we derive our reverence for truth and justice, for equality and liberty, and for the rights of mankind.



Unless the people believe in these principles they cannot believe in our government ...

Calling the people to righteousness (was) a direct preparation for self-government.

It was for a continuation of this work that **Francis Asbury** was raised up ..."

**Coolidge** added:

"The government of a country never gets ahead of the

religion of a country.

There is no way by which we can substitute the authority of law for the virtue of man ...

Real reforms which society in these days is seeking will come as a result of our religious convictions, or they will not come at all.



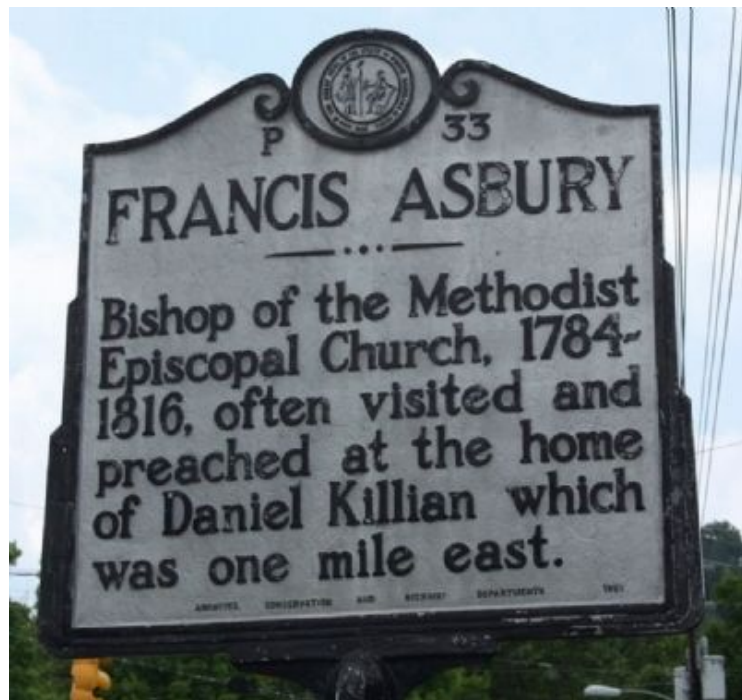
GOING TO CONFERENCE

Peace, justice, humanity, charity - these cannot be legislated into being. They are the result of a Divine Grace ..."

**Coolidge**  
continued about  
**Francis Asbury:**

"Frontier mothers must have brought their children to him to receive his blessings!

It is more than probable that **Nancy Hanks, the mother of Lincoln, had heard him in her youth.**



**Adams** and **Jefferson** must have known him, and **Jackson** must have seen in him a flaming spirit as unconquerable as his own ...

He is entitled to rank as **one of the builders of our nation.**

On the **foundation of a religious civilization** which he sought to build, our country has enjoyed greater blessing of liberty and prosperity than was ever before the lot of man.

These cannot continue if we neglect the work which he did."

**Coolidge**  
concluded:

"We cannot depend on the government to do **the work of religion.**

I do not see how anyone could recount the story of this early **Bishop (Asbury)** without feeling a **renewed faith in our own country."**



--

[Download as PDF ... John Wesley's "Religion of the Heart" & Francis Asbury, Circuit Riding Preacher "one of the builders of our nation"](#)

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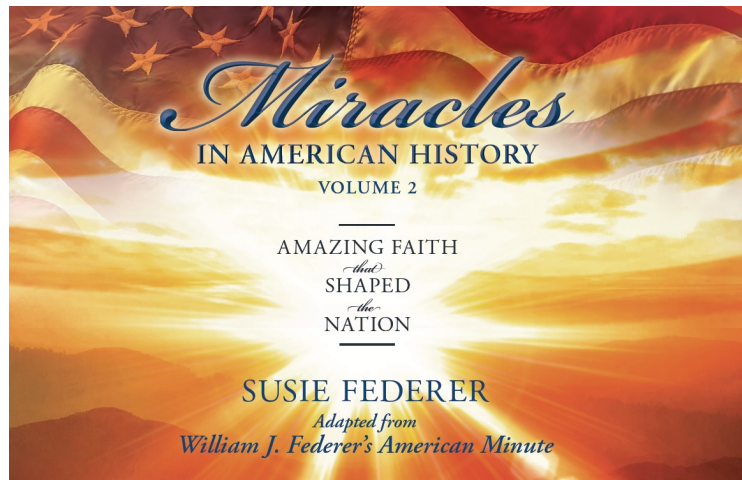


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