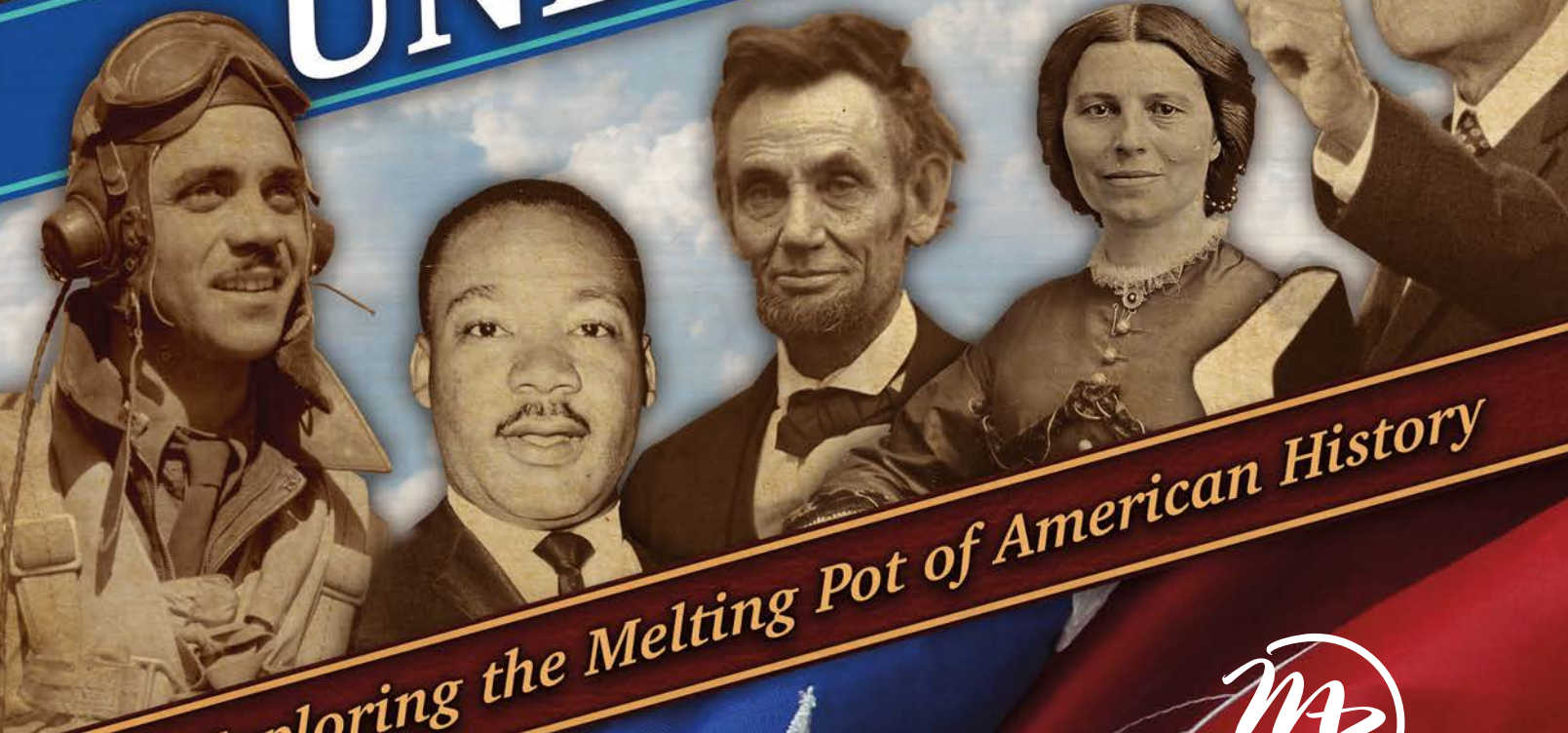


We the People of the United States
insure domestic Tranquillity, provide for the common defence
and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution

ONE NATION

UNDER GOD



Exploring the Melting Pot of American History



MASTERBOOKS[®]
— CURRICULUM —



Thank you to the curriculum development team at

Master Books:

Elizabeth Gilbert,

Jennifer Bauer, John Ribeiro,

Kristen Pratt, Laura Welch,

Liz Donnell, Melanie

Chandler, and Sony Elise.

This course was shaped through your careful work, thoughtful insight, and shared commitment to excellence.

We are grateful for the time, skill, and care you invested,

and we pray this work

will serve families and students well.

First printing: April 2026

Copyright © 2026 by Angela O'Dell and Master Books®. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, copied, broadcast, stored, or shared in any form whatsoever without written permission from the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations in articles and reviews. For information write:

Master Books, P.O. Box 726, Green Forest, AR 72638

Master Books® is a division of the New Leaf Publishing Group, LLC.

ISBN: 978-1-68344-376-6

ISBN: 978-1-61458-895-5 (digital)

LOC: Pending

All Scripture from the NKJV unless stated otherwise.

Scripture taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used with permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com

Scripture taken from the (KJV) King James Version of the Bible.

Scripture taken from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. ESV Text Edition: 2025. The ESV text may not be quoted in any publication made available to the public by a Creative Commons license. The ESV may not be translated in whole or in part into any other language. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America

Please visit our website for other great titles: www.masterbooks.com

Permission is granted for copies of reproducible pages from this text to be made for use with immediate family members living in the same household. However, no part of this book may be reproduced, copied, broadcast, stored, or shared in any form beyond this use. Permission for any other use of the material must be requested by email from the publisher at info@nlpg.com.



AUTHOR BIO:

As a homeschooling mom and author, **Angela O'Dell** embraces many aspects of the Charlotte Mason method yet knows that modern children need an education that fits the needs of this generation. Based upon her foundational belief in a living God for a living education, she has worked to bring a curriculum that will reach deep into the heart of home-educated children and their families. She has written over 20 books, including her history series and her math series. Angela's goal is to bring materials that teach and train hearts and minds to find the answers for our generation in the never-changing truth of God and His Word.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome to *One Nation Under God* 7

UNIT 1: THE ROAD TO EXPLORATION AND COLONIZATION9

Lesson 1 Tracing Our Roots..... 10

Why Should We Study Our Nation’s History?; Our Roots in the Middle Ages of Europe; The Quest for Glory, God and Gold; Geography’s Role in History; Cultural Development and Biblical Worldview Analysis

Lesson 2 Before the Colonial Era..... 23

The First People of North America; Spanish Influence on Colonial America; Early British Colonization; Focus Biography—The Real Pocahontas; Cultural Development and Biblical World Analysis

Lesson 3 Colonial Period (Part 1): The First English Colonies..... 36

The Influence of the Puritans; The Establishment of the Middle and Southern Colonies; A Closer Look—Slavery and Mercantilism; Cultural Development and Biblical Worldview Analysis

Lesson 4 Colonial Period (Part 2): Culture and Conflicts 50

The Salem Witch Trials; The First Great Awakening and Its Influence on the Revolution; Colonial Conflicts and Wars; American Art—Influence and Effect; Cultural Development and Biblical Worldview Analysis

UNIT 2: REVOLUTION AND INDEPENDENCE.....65

Lesson 5 The French and Indian War..... 66

The Bigger Picture and Causes of the French and Indian War; Colonial Involvement in the French and Indian War; The End and Consequences of the French and Indian War; Geography’s Role in History; Cultural Development and Biblical Worldview Analysis

Lesson 6 The Beginning of the Colonial Uprising 79

Early Resistance; United to Fight; Revolutionary Ideas; Focus Biography—Benjamin Franklin; Cultural Development and Biblical Worldview Analysis

Lesson 7 The American Revolution 92

The Start of the Revolutionary War; The Early Battles of the Revolution; The Declaration of Independence; A Closer Look—The Brave Women of Valley Forge; Cultural Development and Biblical Worldview Analysis

Lesson 8 The American War for Independence 105

The Fight for Independence; The Final Conflicts, The Victory, and the Outcome; Geography’s Strategic Role in the American War for Independence; Cultural Development and Biblical Worldview Analysis

UNIT 3: BECOMING ONE NATION 121

Lesson 9 E Pluribus Unum: Out of Many, One 122
The Articles of Confederation—Our First “Constitution”; The Writing of the Constitution; Geography’s Role in History; Cultural Development and Biblical Worldview Analysis

Lesson 10 To Form a More Perfect Union 136
The Structure of Our Government; Ratification and the First Presidential Election; Focus Biographies—Haym Salomon and Noah Webster; Cultural Development and Biblical Worldview Analysis

Lesson 11 The Great Debate: Federalists vs. Anti-Federalists 150
The Federalists and *The Federalist Papers*—A look at #10; The Anti-Federalists and the Bill of Rights; Focus Biography—Johnny Appleseed; Cultural Development and Biblical Worldview Analysis

Lesson 12 The Federalist Years—Establishing the American Nation 163
Events Between 1790–1800; John Adams’ Presidency; American Literature of the Early 1800s; Cultural Development and Biblical Worldview Analysis

UNIT 4: AMERICA GROWS AND CHANGES 177

Lesson 13 The Events Between 1800 and 1815 178
America in 1800; Thomas Jefferson’s Presidency; James Madison and the War of 1812; Our National Anthem; Cultural Development and Biblical Worldview Analysis

Lesson 14 America’s Era of Good Feelings and the Jacksonian Period 191
The Era of Good Feeling; John Quincy Adams’ Presidency; Jacksonian America; Focus Biography—Andrew Jackson; Cultural Development and Biblical Worldview Analysis

Lesson 15 The Years Between 1814–1848: Growing Pains and Steam Trains 205
Travel, Communication, and Industry of Growing America; Industry, Labor Unions, and Trade of Growing America; Immigration and Reform Movements Before the Civil War; Focus—Life in New York City in the Early 1800s; Cultural Development and Biblical Worldview Analysis

Lesson 16 The Eve of The American Civil War 219
Westward Movement; Texas, Oregon, Utah, and California Join the Union; The Realities of Slavery and Abolition in Antebellum America; Focus Biography—Harriet Beecher Stowe; Cultural Development and Biblical Worldview Analysis

UNIT 5: THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR 233

Lesson 17 Rumblings of War 236
The New Republican Party; The Election of 1860 and the Secession of the South; An Overview of War Strategies, Weaknesses, and Strengths; Geography’s Role in the Civil War; Cultural Development and Biblical Worldview Analysis

Lesson 18 The American Civil War (Part 1): The First Two Years 250
Bull Run to Gettysburg; Generals and Bandits of the Civil War; The Influence of Art—Photography of the Civil War; Cultural Development and Biblical Worldview Analysis

Lesson 19 The American Civil War (Part 2) 264
The Emancipation Proclamation Through Appomattox; The Cost of the War and Lincoln’s Assassination; Focus—Children and Women Who Served in the Civil War; Cultural Development and Biblical Worldview Analysis

Lesson 20 Reconstruction. 277
The Argument Over Reconstruction; The Radical Republican Legislation; The End of Reconstruction; American Architecture—The Brooklyn Bridge; Cultural Development and Biblical Worldview Analysis

UNIT 6: GROWING AMERICA 291

Lesson 21 The Age of Industrialism 292
A Time of Transition—An Overview of the “Era of Great Growth”; Welcome to America, Capitalism, Industry, and Labor Unions; Focus—Giants of Industry; Cultural Development and Biblical Worldview Analysis

Lesson 22 American Frontier Life 306
The West Is Settled; Cowboys and the Cattle Industry; Outlaws and the “Indian Wars”; Charles Russell—Cowboy Artist; Cultural Development and Biblical Worldview Analysis

Lesson 23 America’s Relationship With The World 321
The Late 19th Century—the Rise of Imperialism; The Spanish-American War; U.S. Foreign Policy & Influence in Early 20th Century; The Story of the Statue of Liberty; Cultural Development and Biblical Worldview Analysis

Lesson 24 America’s Progressive Era. 335
Changes and Growth in American Life; Changes in America’s Religious View; Progressivism; African Americans in the Progressive Era; Cultural Development and Biblical Worldview Analysis

UNIT 7: AMERICA AND THE WORLD WARS 349

Lesson 25 World War I—The Great War 350
The War “Over There”; America Helps Win the War; The War’s Conclusion; Geography of World War I; Cultural Development and Biblical Worldview Analysis

Lesson 26 The Roaring Twenties and the Great Depression 364
Post-World War I America; The Stock Market Crash; Opposition to the New Deal; American Gangsters and the FBI; Cultural Development and Biblical Worldview Analysis

Lesson 27 World War II (Part 1) 378
The World at War Again and America’s Position; The War Expands; America Joins the War and Prepares to Fight; The Manhattan Project; Cultural Development and Biblical Worldview Analysis

Lesson 28 World War II (Part 2) 393
Winning the War in Europe; Americans Behind the Scenes; Winning the War in the Pacific; America Helps Japan to Rebuild; Cultural Development and Biblical Worldview Analysis

UNIT 8: POSTWAR AMERICAN CULTURE 407

Lesson 29 Postwar America 409
America Comes Home in a Postwar World; Cold War Crisis; Eisenhower’s Administration; American Entertainment—Rapid Change!; Cultural Development and Biblical Worldview Analysis

Lesson 30 The 1960s—America in Crisis 422
The Kennedy Administration; The Johnson Administration; The Nixon Administration; The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s; Cultural Development and Biblical Worldview Analysis

Lesson 31 Conservative America. 437
The Ford and Carter Administrations; The Reagan Years; The Influence of Reagan and the Bush Administration; Excerpt of President Reagan’s Speech Concerning the Sanctity of Life; Cultural Development and Biblical Worldview Analysis

Lesson 32 Closing Out the 20th Century 450
Mr. Clinton Comes to Washington; The 1990s Culture Wars of America; The Challenges at the End of an Era—Post-Cold War; The Y2K Bug; Cultural Development and Biblical Worldview Analysis

UNIT 9: ENTERING THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY. 465

Lesson 33 The First Fifteen Years of the Millennium 466
The 2000 Election and George W. Bush’s First Term in Office; America in the New Millennium; Obama’s Administration; “Let’s Roll”: The Story of the Passengers of United Flight 93; Cultural Development and Biblical Worldview Analysis

Lesson 34 America: 2015–2025 481
The 2016 Election and the (First) Trump Administration; COVID-19 and the Biden Administration; The Red Wave of 2024; The Young Conservatives and the Reset Generation; Cultural Development and Biblical Worldview Analysis

Additional Resources 493



WELCOME TO ONE NATION UNDER GOD



Writing this course has been one of the great privileges of my life. The journey of researching and assembling it has been far more than an academic pursuit; it has been a personal pilgrimage through the remarkable story of our nation and the unmistakable evidence of God's hand upon it. To study American history is to walk in the footprints of ordinary men and women whose courage, faith, and perseverance shaped a land that would become a refuge for liberty and a light to the world.

As I have dug deeply into the sources of our history—letters, journals, official records, and the writings of those who lived the events we now study—I have discovered a hidden treasury of adventure, hardship, and triumph. Beneath the broad sweep of events and dates lies a much more personal story: one of faith, sacrifice, and divine providence. Every event, every turning point, every decision by an individual or a group of citizens adds another thread to the intricate tapestry of America's story.



True history is never cold or detached; it is alive with the heartbeat of those who lived it. Their stories remind us that freedom is never free, and that liberty and justice, when separated from truth, quickly lose their true meaning. The people who founded this nation understood that principle deeply. In the last century, secular voices have repainted the portraits of our Founding Fathers by redefining the very words they used.

To the modern ear, the word *Providence* may sound like a vague philosophical concept from the Enlightenment, but that is not what the founders meant. As George Washington and his contemporaries used it, *Providence* referred directly to the personal, sovereign God who guides the affairs of humankind. Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary defined it plainly as God's "superintending care and direction." To the men and women of the founding generation, Providence was not distant nor abstract; it was present, active, and essential. That understanding of God's involvement is what gave them courage. They faced uncertainty, loss, and enormous odds, yet they believed the same God who parted the Red Sea and guided David's stone would also guide their cause for freedom. The founders did not see liberty as an invention of man but as a gift of God, entrusted to be stewarded with gratitude and humility.

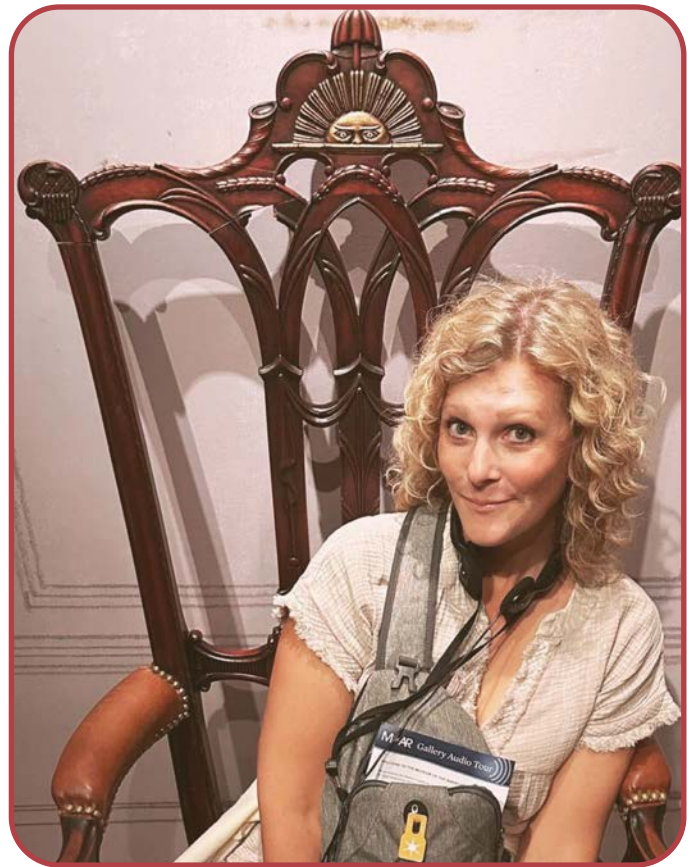
It is impossible to tell America's story without acknowledging the fingerprints of God upon it. This is not to claim that America has been perfect (our past includes failures, injustices, and painful contradictions), but even those moments serve as reminders of humanity's need for grace and redemption. In every season, God has raised up individuals to call the nation back to truth and to remind her that freedom untethered from righteousness becomes only another form of bondage.

The author as she views the Declaration of Independence

When we look honestly at history through a biblical lens, we find that God's sovereignty and man's responsibility are intertwined. Empires rise and fall, cultures flourish and decay, yet the purposes of God stand firm. Studying American history through this perspective helps us see beyond political debate or revisionist interpretation. It allows us to trace the steady thread of divine involvement woven through every era—from the Pilgrims seeking a place to worship freely, to the reformers who fought slavery, to the countless unnamed citizens who quietly lived out their faith and love of country.

This course invites you to join that story. As you read, reflect, and analyze, you will see how the ideas of liberty, equality, and justice grew from seeds planted long before 1776—seeds found in Scripture and nourished by the faith of ordinary believers. You will also see how language, education, and civic virtue were viewed as sacred trusts, shaping the way early Americans taught their children, governed their communities, and spoke of God's blessings on their land.

Each lesson will guide you to look for the evidence of God's hand in the details of our national story. As we study these lives and events, my hope is that you will not only gain knowledge but also a renewed appreciation for what it means to be One Nation Under God. To love our country rightly is to see her honestly, to celebrate her virtues, and to learn from her failures. May we study not to glorify men but to honor God, recognizing that the story of America—like every chapter in human history—is ultimately His story being written through ours.



As I sat in George Washington's chair with the rising sun carved into its back, I reflected on God's guiding hand in my life.

UNIT 1: THE ROAD TO EXPLORATION AND COLONIZATION

UNIT 1 TIMELINE OF EVENTS

- 4000 B.C.:** Creation and Fall
- 2349 B.C.:** Great Flood
- c. 2242 B.C.:** Tower of Babel/dispersion of people
- A.D. 5:** Christ
- A.D. 500–1500:** Middle Ages
- c. A.D. 1000:** Exploration of the Vikings
- 1300–1500s:** Renaissance (cultural backdrop) (eclipsed by Reformation)
- 1347–1352:** The (height of the) Plague
- 1492:** Christopher Columbus opens the door
- 1517–1648:** Reformation
- 1607:** Jamestown
- 1620:** Plymouth
- 1623/1624:** Dutch settle New Netherlands/New Amsterdam
- 1630:** Puritans settle Massachusetts Bay Colony
- 1636:** Founding of Harvard
- 1664:** British take New Netherlands/New York and proprietary colonies
- 1675:** King Philip's War (Indian War)
- 1689–1697:** King William's War ([American] English/French War #1)
- February 1692–May 1693:** Salem Witch Trials
- 1702–1713:** Queen Anne's War ([American] English/French/Spanish War #2)
- 1730s–1740s:** The Great Awakening
- 1733:** Georgia is established
- 1744–1748:** King George's War ([American] English/French War #3)

01

LESSON

TRACING OUR ROOTS

The settlement of America had its origins in the unsettlement of Europe.

Historian Lewis Mumford²

PREPARE TO STUDY



Almost every telling of history begins in the middle of things. Consider yourself. Where did you begin? You did not show up out of nowhere, invent all the elements that make up your life, and teach yourself how to walk, talk, or get dressed. Those came from others before you. Acknowledging these truths gives context. Understanding where we came from, how we got here, and whose sweat made it possible establishes connections between our story and the world around us and helps us value our lives. Any study of American history needs to begin with an overview of how our roots are planted in Europe's history.

WHY SHOULD WE STUDY OUR NATION'S HISTORY?



As I began preparing to write this course, I revisited the questions I often hear from my history students. Many ask how we can call ourselves “one nation under God” when unity sometimes seems out of reach. Others wonder why learning history matters. These are the questions I want to explore from the very beginning.

Throughout human history, both division and unity have existed side by side, and they will continue until Jesus returns. But this does not change the core truth that makes history worth studying: God is sovereign and actively working out His plans for humankind. Even moments of discord can lead us to a deeper understanding of our shared past and what it means to be one nation under God.

I hope you enjoy our journey, because the story of our country is both **nuanced** and fascinating. A vast array of people came from all over the world to form a powerful nation crafted from courage, ingenuity, and plain stubbornness. As we investigate the choices of early Americans, we can learn valuable lessons from their mistakes and triumphs.

We study history to know God. We know from Scripture that God has a plan and is moving the history of the world forward by His will. As you study, look for ways God has used our nation in His overarching providential plan. Discovering these truths about God's character gives us hope for our futures. Whether we see unity in the world around us or not, knowing God is in control and continuing the work He has always been doing helps us refocus on the truth of our current situation and society. It can also give us courage to be the light of Jesus in our national and world culture.

We study history for personal reasons. Individuals must know the events of the past to be effective in the present and future. For the United States to function, her citizens need to know the reason for her existence. Thus, every American citizen has the responsibility to learn the story of our past—of the good and the bad, of obstacles overcome, and the blood and tears spilled in the building of our nation.

We study history to learn what it means to be an American. Our nation was founded and established by people from all over the world; therefore, the technical definition of an “American” is someone who lives in and is a citizen, whether by birth or immigration, of the United States of America. This is the basic requirement of citizenship, and the same could be said about any nation of the world. A better question might be, “What makes us unique?” This is the question we will be answering throughout our study.

We will find clues in the personalities and values of those who settled this country: love of freedom, fierce independence, and a sense of individuality that has been the glue of the culture from the beginning. These characteristics have historically led to a perseverance through difficulty—a grit and determination which is found deposited in abundant measure in American individuals throughout our history.

The United States was founded on principles of freedom and liberty unlike any other nation. We often forget the value of these liberties granting the right to worship the way we choose, to work in an occupation of our choice, and to own property. However, with freedom comes great responsibility. Part of that responsibility is understanding the origins of liberty. Many with a worldview founded in **humanism** discredit God’s role in the ideas that fueled the founding of our nation. Liberty is not man-made, and contrary to what has been taught for decades, it did not originate in the Enlightenment Era. Liberty and freedom originate in the character of God.

Scripture has many references to freedom and liberty. God gives humans freedom with a command to honor Him. Adam and Eve brought sin with the first disobedience. Humankind began placing themselves in the center of their lives and declaring freedom from obedience to God. This humanist worldview argues that freedom is more important than honoring God. Although our study will be rich in accounts of those who honored God and brought blessing to our country, the storyline will sometimes point to devastating

results that came about from not honoring biblical truth. In this way, history will reiterate the importance of honoring God with our liberty and freedom. These are important lessons to learn.

As Christians, it is our responsibility to live by what the Word of God says and to be a light in this way in our culture. Philippians 2:3 says, “*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves.*” And James 3:16 outlines the negative consequences of selfish ambition by stating, “*For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.*”

Individuality is also created by God but has been hijacked by sin and the lie that we can determine our own identity. From the beginning, God created each human as a unique being, designing and determining everything about them. From personality to gender, God is the One who holds the power to create each of us. Individuality and equality walk hand in hand in Scripture. In God’s eyes, each life is valuable. In the United States, equality means equal standing before the law. The words “all men are created equal” are more than eloquent **utterances** from the lofty mind of Thomas Jefferson, penned at the beginning of the Declaration of Independence. They are the lifeblood of our nation and originated in the character of God.

By thinking through these reasons for studying our nation’s history, we see liberty, justice, equality, individuality, courage, and unity found in the character of God. Liberty and freedom originate in God. Freedom gives responsibility, and history gives lessons for life by telling about the failures and accomplishments of those who lived before us.



Waving the American Flag

OUR ROOTS IN THE MIDDLE AGES OF EUROPE



In our quest to uncover the details of our own history, we will need to flip the pages of our story to the prologue—the section in which helpful background information is supplied for context. I want you to think of today’s reading as the prologue to the beginning of our nation’s story, because the events we cover here will give us a glimpse of what set the wheels of history in motion down the path of events leading to the birth of the United States.

History is one long narrative, and because we cannot start at the very beginning, we must choose somewhere along the path as our starting point for this study. Like I mentioned in the last lesson, America’s history is rooted in that of Europe’s. In fact, both America’s founding and Europe’s history during that time cannot be told separately. They are two sides to one equation. So, it is in a summary of the Middle Ages that we will begin our journey.

The centuries between the fall of the Western Roman Empire and the Renaissance are traditionally classified as the Middle Ages. Once considered to be the Dark Ages in Europe, the Middle Ages had a bad reputation in the whole scheme of history. However, if we look at the overall achievements of Europe in this time period, these centuries are marked by major cumulative achievements.

One achievement of the Church of the Middle Ages was protecting the written Word of God. Throughout centuries of upheaval, Benedictine monks and nuns hand copied the Scriptures, and in so doing, helped preserve the written language as well as the ancient writings. Another achievement especially important to our study is the way the events of the Middle Ages brought about the concept of Europe as a distinct cultural unit.

These years between the 5th and 16th centuries are divided into three main periods. The centuries between the late ancient times and the early Middle Ages (up to about A.D. 1000) are considered by most historians to be marked by political, social, economic, and cultural

restructuring. Roman rule, which had been in place for about 1,000 years, gave way to Germanic peoples who established kingdoms in western Europe. The High Middle Ages (about A.D. 1000 through 1300) were marked by tremendous growth in terms of culture, economics, and population. Urban development also had a growth spurt as education grew and the arts were more widely embraced.

Although these were the years in which the Crusades were fought, these were relatively stable years for Europe. The Crusades were wars sanctioned by the Catholic Church to restore the lands conquered by the Muslims in the centuries since the death of Mohammed. In those years, the Islamic raiders had conquered two-thirds of the Christian world. We will not focus on the Crusades in this book except to point out that it was this struggle for religious dominance that served to lay the foundation for future cultural disturbances. Through the Crusades, Europe was introduced to the riches of the East, and trade opened a door to further cultural connections and influence.

By the late Middle Ages (between 1300–1500), Europe was advancing quickly toward the modern age. The convergence of a variety of powerful disruptions to the settled culture of Europe set the stage for the perfect storm. These were the “un-settlements” of Europe.



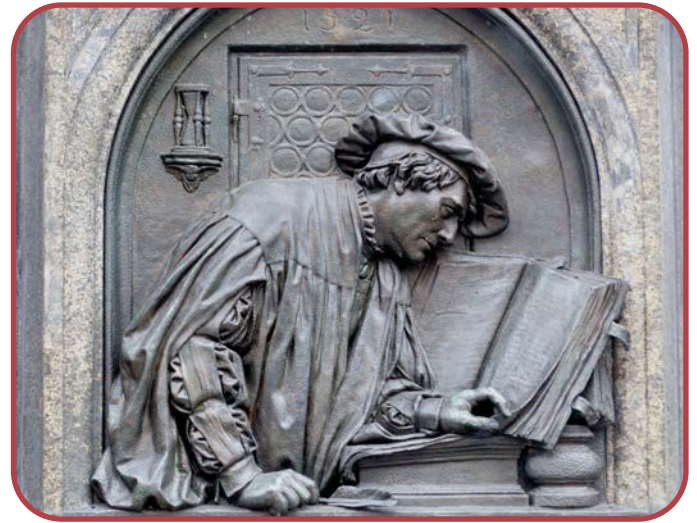
14th-century miniature of the Battle of Dorylaeum (1147), a Second Crusade battle, from the *Estoire d'Eracles*

THE FIRST MAJOR UNSETTLING DISRUPTION

The Black Death, which began in China in the early 1300s, spread along trade routes westward to the Mediterranean and northern Africa. Caused by bacteria carried by the fleas of rats, the plague spread like wildfire throughout Europe, leaving devastation in its wake. Although no one knows for sure how many people died during the worst part of this epidemic, most historians place that number between 75 million and 200 million, or between 30 and 50 percent of the population of Europe. Not included in that number are the millions who died in Asia. The Black Death served to aid in the reshuffling of the class cards of Europe, where the **Feudal System** had been in place for centuries. Because people of all classes died, the survivors had the opportunity to fill roles they would not have had access to otherwise.

Within the next two centuries, the major disruption to Europe's economic and social structures combined with other events—some of which were positive **innovations**, discoveries, and inventions—to bring forth further change and an unsettling that would continue to rumble throughout the following centuries. If any one of these changes and innovations had come on its own, it would have caused great waves, but the combination of them breaking on the shore of European culture all at once caused a tidal wave destined to change the world forever. By the time Christopher Columbus set sail in 1492, the European transformation, caused by the unsettling events of the two prior centuries, was well underway. The exploration and settling of America were some of the most consequential outcomes of these great economic, social, religious, technological, and cultural upheavals.³

The High Middle Ages, which reached their high point around 1300, was largely centered around religion. At this time in history, the Roman Catholic Church was the one Christian church, and its power and influence were felt in every aspect of life. Church leaders crowned kings and chose rulers on which they bestowed special privileges. Towns built huge churches called cathedrals to prove their loyalty and faithfulness to the Church. These beautiful buildings served as the main gathering places for these towns, and many of them still dot the landscape of Europe. These were the Church's high tide years, but this power was not to last. The second major unsettling was on the horizon.



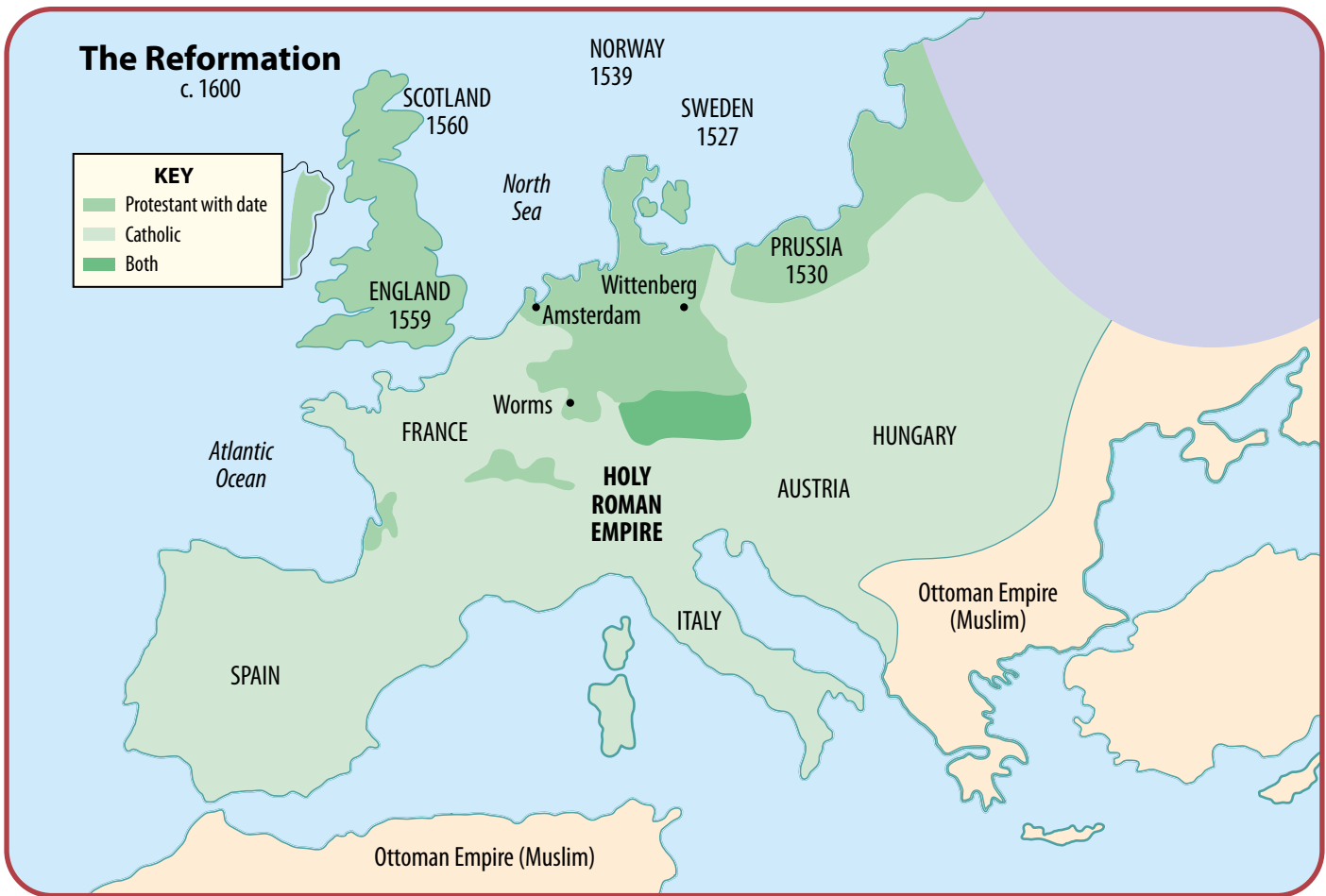
Bronze Relief of Luther translating the Bible. Lutherdenkmal statue in Eisleben, his birth and death place, Germany. Monument by Rudolf Siemering, 1883.

THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

The Protestant Reformation began as a murmur of concern and grew into a louder call for reform within the Catholic Church. Reformers St. Francis of Assisi, Jan Hus, John Wycliffe, and others voiced concerns over specific moral corruption issues. On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther famously nailed his Ninety-five Theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. This date has become known as Reformation Day, falling on the eve of All Saints' Day.

Instead of attacking corruption issues in the Church, Martin Luther dug down to the theological root of the problem: the Church's stance on redemption and grace. Luther had experienced a personal revelation where God showed him his own **fallacious** thinking on this topic, so it was a topic of passion for him. He despised the way the Church had turned salvation into something people could earn or buy. It was this system of indulgences and good works that he attacked in his Ninety-five Theses. It was never intended to cause a rift in the Church, but Martin Luther was excommunicated in 1521. What had started as a reform ended in a fracture—and a fire.

Over the course of the 16th century, the fire of Reformation spread to many other European countries, and by the middle of the century, Lutheranism dominated northern Europe. Spain and Italy remained the centers of the Catholic Church's Counter-Reformation. The Protestant Reformation never gained



a foothold there. Disagreement over theology was not the only cause of turmoil in the Church. In England, Henry VIII became enraged that the Catholic Pope refused to give him an annulment in his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, the daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain. Henry VIII had been married to Catherine for 18 years and had not been able to produce a surviving boy child. The angry monarch declared himself separate from the Catholic Church and established the Anglican Church as the new Church of England, of which he was the head.

The Reformation brought about a matching division in the culture and political climate of Europe. Catholics and Protestants fought amongst themselves and with each other. Both churches sought to gain control and spread their religious preferences. Each believed fervently they were doing God's work. Each doled out harsh punishment on those who did not agree with their beliefs. Each believed themselves to be favored by God. While the various groups vied for dominance and control, each trying to use religion to gain power, God was moving by inspiring creative wisdom in certain individuals to whom He had given the natural inclination toward invention and innovation.

The cultural backdrop of the Reformation was the Renaissance, and in many ways, the changes it caused in the world's culture was the third unsettling of Europe. The term Renaissance means "rebirth." This is the era that traditionally marks the end of the Middle Ages and is characterized by a new interest in Classical scholarship and art. The Renaissance saw a massive shift in worldview as Europe moved toward the Enlightenment. Scientific discovery, the continued decline of the feudal system, and world-changing inventions of the printing press, paper, and mariner's tools, such as the compass, filled the years of the Renaissance with a revival of thought and helped move Europe in a more unsettled direction. It was this culture of innovation, discovery, and invention that led the European leaders to begin their quest for expansion and power.

THE QUEST FOR GLORY, GOD, AND GOLD



By the year 1492, four major national entities had emerged as the European leaders. England, Spain, France, and Portugal all had the wealth, the technology, and the motivation to launch the Exploration Period. These nations were solidifying their borders, consolidating their lands, and bringing unification to their territories throughout the 15th century. They had gained the ability to garner wealth from the taxation of their lands. Their militaries were now providing a level of protection that had been lacking in preceding centuries. These political and military changes greatly increased their ability to fund and organize exploration.

As the Renaissance brought needed advancements in shipbuilding technology and navigational tools, merchants gained new ways to establish and travel sea routes. Interestingly, it was Portugal, one of the smallest European monarchical states, who had taken the lead in navigational exploration in the 15th century. One of the most famous of these explorers was Prince Henry, often called the Navigator. He was proficient in **cartography** and was an **intrepid** explorer. His cutting-edge ideas made him a much-sought-after teacher of navigation.

As we lead up to the beginning of our nation's history, we will discover how the motivation for the various European countries' explorations varied from the desire to spread the Christian faith to unreached peoples, to gathering riches and gaining access to much-needed land and natural resources. It was England who would become the mother country of the fledgling colonies destined to become the United States, but the other major European powers who claimed portions of the newly discovered continents would also influence the establishment of our nation. We will look more in depth at this influence in our next lesson. Before we do, though, it is important to understand how the relationships between these powers determined the events leading up to the American Colonial Period.



Portrait commemorating the defeat of the Spanish Armada depicted in the background. Elizabeth's hand rests on the globe, symbolizing her international power.

During the 1500s, the long-prevailing tension between England and Spain mounted until it erupted into a famous battle between England's Queen Elizabeth I and Spain's King Philip II.

Queen Elizabeth I of England was a Protestant. The Reformation had spread throughout Europe, and England had fought its way through the Middle Ages, finding the queen in an era of new hope and freedom. The citizens of England rightly acknowledged that it was their "Good Queen Bess" who had worked hard to bring them to this point. Spain, along with its king, Philip II, was strongly Roman Catholic. He saw all Protestant nations as a threat to his dream of a Catholic Europe, and his attention was specifically drawn to England for an exceptionally personal reason: Philip had, at one time, been the king of England.

Before Queen Elizabeth I had come to the throne in 1558, her sister, known as "Bloody Mary" for her extreme persecution of the English Protestants, had been queen of England. Mary chose a husband to rule by her side and, hopefully, produce an heir to the throne. This husband was none other than Philip II of

Spain, who was a prince at that time. When Mary died of cancer at the age of 42, she did not leave an heir, and Philip lost his English royal position. When Elizabeth was crowned queen, Philip offered to marry her, but she staunchly refused. Philip returned home to his royal position in Spain.

When Elizabeth had her Catholic cousin, Mary, Queen of Scots, executed, Philip declared war. He garnered the support of the pope who **excommunicated** Elizabeth and offered the British kingdom as a reward for any Catholic prince who could overthrow her.

Philip prepared to attack England by sea. He gathered a huge armada (a floating army) to invade England and overthrow Elizabeth and restore Catholic rule. Pirating English privateers attacked the Spanish ships, and Queen Elizabeth aided a Dutch revolt against Spanish rule. The queen gave her favorite privateer, Sir Francis Drake, orders to interrupt Philip's plans, which he gleefully obeyed. Drake led the English fleet in an attack on Cadiz, Spain. The plucky English did enough damage to the Spanish ships and supplies that they did not have enough food and water with them when they retaliated.

England's smaller, faster, and more maneuverable warships, commanded by the famous Sea Dogs, inflicted major damage on Spain's armada of veritable floating fortresses. The English repelled the attack, sending the Spaniards home in embarrassing defeat.

After the English Sea Dogs tromped all over his Spanish warships, Philip knew his nation's navy was no longer considered master of the sea. England's victory had placed them at the top, and more importantly, opened the New World for Protestant settlements.



English Ships and the Spanish Armada, August 1588



La Salle Taking Possession of Louisiana

These Protestant English claims in America cleared the way for Protestant religious pilgrims to come to the New World.

The New World also caught the eye of the French but for a different reason. Because the Spanish had a stronghold on the Caribbean area and Central America, the French sent explorers to focus more on major sections of North America. Like Spain, France was interested in finding a route through the continents to the Far East. Jacques Cartier (*CAR-tee-ay*) was a French explorer who searched for such a passageway, and in the process, found the St. Lawrence River. This exciting discovery led to France's claim of a large portion of northern America.

Another French explorer, Robert de La Salle, claimed the Mississippi River. At first, he thought he was on a westwardly flowing river that would lead him to the coast of the continent and, ultimately, to the Pacific Ocean. Eventually, he realized that he was heading south instead of west, and by the time he reached the delta region, where the Mississippi River exits into the Gulf of Mexico, he knew that he had discovered one of the wonderful treasures of this new continent.

Unlike those of the English and Spanish, the French settlements in the New World were not well organized. Throughout the 17th century, the French established trade with the Native tribes. Their lasting settlements were predominantly trading posts and forts deep in the wilderness. The rivers and lakes of the northlands proved to be useful as roads for them to travel from one settlement to another and to transport their furs. Some of these settlements, including Quebec, Montreal, and Detroit in the north, and New Orleans

in the south, became key locations for trading with the Native tribes, and for housing the French soldiers stationed in America to protect France's interests. Because of the nature of the French settlements in America, peaceful settlers were not especially drawn to them. Added to the uninviting prospect of living with a rough trapper population was the fact that the French settlements were only open to French Roman Catholics. The only non-Catholic settlers allowed to live in the French settlements were the Huguenots, an industrious and highly skilled group of rogue Protestants who had been forced to flee France for religious reasons.

The Dutch had an interest in the New World only when they realized they could not sail through it. They hired an English explorer named Henry Hudson to find a faster way to Indonesia. Instead, he found a river which flows between what is now New York and New Jersey. Because they had a powerful navy and controlled the trade with some of the Indonesian islands, they had some clout when it came time to begin claiming land in North America. The Dutch purchased the island of Manhattan from the Native Americans in 1626.

Although there were other European countries who sent explorers to the New World, it was the English, Spanish, and French who had the major holdings in the Americas by the end of the 16th century. The Spanish concentrated mostly on mining the natural resources of

the New World, while the French cornered the market in the fur trading industry, but as we will learn in the next chapter, the English gained a leading position with a completely different approach in developing their claims to America.

The British Empire began its quest of spreading its control through colonization for several major reasons. The need for more space and natural resources was a real issue for England, and this motivation merged with the desire to have freedom of faith. This is one of the instances where we can clearly see God's guiding hand on the establishment of our country.

The first two permanent English colonies in North America were Jamestown in 1607 and Plymouth in 1620. Jamestown, with its all-male population, was mostly focused on financial gain. Conversely, Plymouth included entire families seeking freedom to worship and raise their children in a new land.

As we study the European colonization of the New World, it is important to understand that these endeavors did not occur neatly or in a greatly organized manner. For example, English settlers approached creating their colonies as if they were still in England. They desired to extend their native culture and all it implied to the new location. As we will learn in a coming lesson, much of their struggle to survive came from their endeavor to adapt to their new surroundings.



Watching Henry Hudson enter New York Harbor, September 11, 1609

GEOGRAPHY'S ROLE IN HISTORY

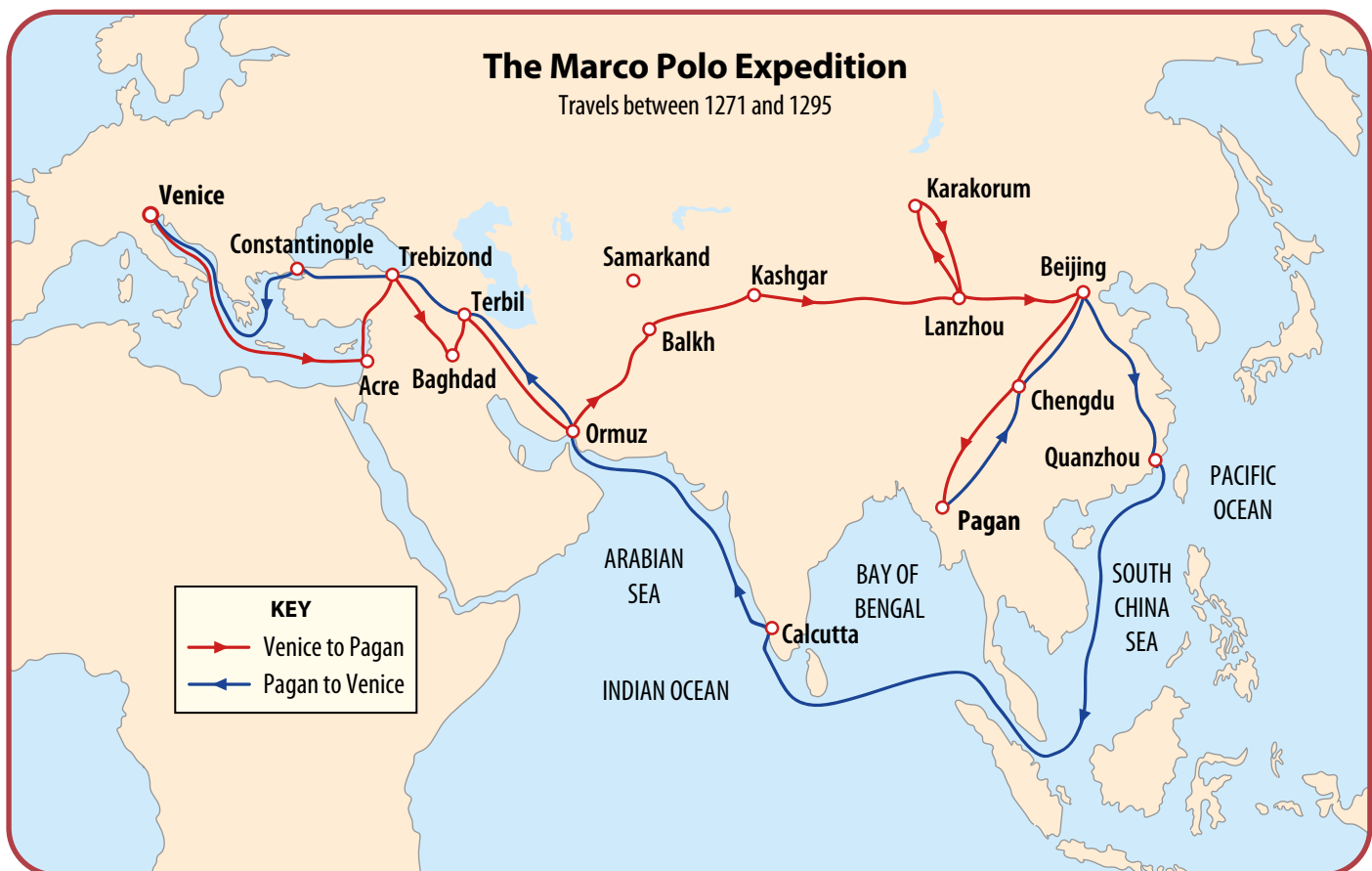


Geography often plays an important role in the events of history. What happens and what does not happen is often determined by the lay of the land. Along with governments, economies, religions, and languages, geography helps guide military decisions and often determines who will be in power. Throughout history, Earth's physical forms have either aided or thwarted the plans of humans.

For centuries, peoples of eastern Asia and southern Africa were isolated and protected by the vast physical barrier of desert separating them from other civilizations. It would take centuries of invention and innovation to make these cultures more accessible to the rest of the world. In the colonization, settling, and growth of the North American continent, geography also played an important role.

As we unfold the story of our nation, we will see how major events were affected by the physical formation of our continent. Right from the beginning, the need to navigate the earth's lands and seas guided the decisions of those who would open the door for the East to meet the West. One of the most significant reasons for the drive to explore the western routes to the East was the geography of the land through which the land routes had been established. From vast, scorching deserts to the **impregnable** Himalayas, the geographical barriers of these routes that must be traveled on foot or on the back of an animal struck fear and hesitation in the hearts of the most adventurous and ambitious medieval merchants.

It is also important to remember that the true size and scope of our planet were, at this time, a vague speculation for most geographers, cartographers, and



explorers. At this point no one had accurately mapped the entire planet. It would be several decades after Columbus landed on a Caribbean Island that Diogo Ribeiro, a Portuguese cartographer, would make the first scientific world map—the 1527 Padrón Real. This was the first world map based on observations of empiric latitude.

Marco Polo, a Renaissance explorer, merchant, and writer, traveled and worked extensively in the part of Asia that was the Mongol Empire at that time. Polo's book, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, was thought to be fiction by many of his contemporaries. In the centuries since, however, his detailed accounts of the lands his travels encompassed and the cultures he experienced have been found to be mostly accurate. If he did not experience the adventures himself, he knew someone who did. Indeed, Polo is now considered to be one of the earliest anthropologists.

Study the map and photographs carefully. This is the route which Marco Polo purportedly traveled on his way to Asia. He would have traveled by foot, on an animal's back, or by ship sailing down around the tip of the Southeast Asian peninsula and India. He would have faced not only unfriendly geography but hostile people groups as well.



Illustration from *The Travels of Marco Polo* by Robert Frescher 1475–1525

Consider carefully how God, the Creator, used the impact this geography played in the dawning of the Age of Exploration. The Scriptures tell us how God created the elements of the heavens and earth by bringing order to the chaos (Genesis 1:1–19). Later, He used a Flood to wipe out almost everything He had created. When He did this, the “fountains of the deep” broke open, causing the water to come from heaven and from the ground. Many of the geographic land formations we see now were caused by the Great Flood. God never does anything by accident; He knew the future when He used the Flood to create mountains and areas that would be deserts after the water receded.



Marco Polo caravan on the Silk Road, 1375

CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW ANALYSIS

CHAIN-LINKS OF CULTURE

As we study history, we notice specific aspects of cultures and societies that contain the most evidence of time marching forward through the changes of history. I like to call these the chain-links of **culture**. In this course, we are going to summarize, analyze, and synthesize the lessons we have learned about the cultural advances in the chapter we are studying by looking at the movements in religion, language, and government.

In this chapter, we discussed cultural shifts in all of these areas. In government, we learned that through the Middle Ages, Europe emerged as a cohesive unit, although it was made up of individual powers and kingdoms. Those kingdoms eventually consolidated their powers, strengthened their borders, and built up their militaries.

We also learned that the Catholic Church was a major influence in each chain-link of culture. It was a powerful influence on the government. In many cases, it *was* the government, and it maintained the cultural



West front of Wells Cathedral in England (1225–1240)

treasure of language by protecting the Scriptures throughout the centuries, and it was the center of religion throughout the Middle Ages.

FROM A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW PERSPECTIVE

God has always worked through history. 1 Corinthians 15:28 and Ephesians 1:10–11 tell us that God has the ultimate plan of establishing Christ's Kingdom here on Earth. The Scriptures also tell us that this plan includes using His people to further that cause. As we study history, we should always ask ourselves how God used (or is using) it to further His Kingdom plan. America is not the only place God is working, but it is *one* of the places He is working. Likewise, Americans are not the only people He has used (or is using) to do His Kingdom work, but we are *some* of the people He uses.

God does not choose to use humans based on their goodness. When God uses someone to affect change in history it is because of what *He* did. There have been those in history who know they have been put in a place for such a time as this. How did they know this? Through the Holy Spirit at work in the situation.

As we study our nation's history together, we will encounter many heroic individuals, but instead of turning humans into our ultimate heroes, we will view God as *the* hero—the One who is able to do anything He wills. There have been many honorable people in history who lived to the glory of God. These people are worthy of our respect and admiration but only with the understanding that they were simply vessels used by God to fulfill His plan.

In this chapter, we learned about how the settlement of America came from the unsettlement of Europe. Think through some of the ways God worked through these centuries. The Catholic Church was used mightily by God to protect His written Word throughout the Middle Ages. This is an obvious hand-of-God moment, but what about the Renaissance and

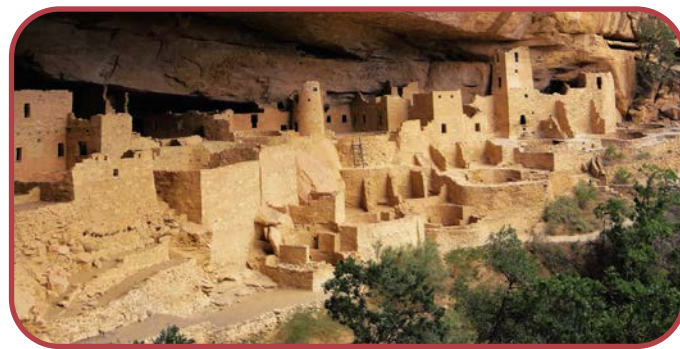
the Reformation? The Renaissance brought about a rebirth or reawakening to the classical arts and philosophy. It was during this time that inventions like the printing press came about. The printing press made it possible for more people to have access to the Bible, thus creating an opportunity for the gospel to reach their hearts and lives.

It was also during this period that scientific study experienced an awakening. Many discoveries brought an end to the power of superstitions which had proliferated in the fog of ignorance for centuries. People were shocked to find they were not truly the center of the universe when the invention of the telescope brought the truth into perspective. Of course, with discovery comes questioning of the old authority and a quest to reform the broken system—in this case, the Church—but God used this too. The Reformation brought a revival to the hearts of many as they heard for the first time that they were saved through God’s grace alone.

*Individuals were told that they were responsible for their relationship with God, and that His will for them is most clearly revealed in the Holy Scriptures. These ... two beliefs led to a heavy emphasis on literacy and a commitment to translating and printing the Bible in the **vernacular** (i.e., the common language, as opposed to Latin). Without widespread literacy, how could everyone read and interpret the Bible for themselves?⁴*



William Farel, John Calvin, Theodore Beza, and John Knox—four leaders of the Reformed tradition of Protestantism



Ancestral Puebloans' Cliff Palace, Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado

THE MELTING POT

In this course, we will occasionally pause to focus on our nation’s diverse ethnic background. Throughout our history, there has been a vast array of individuals who have made up our country. Historically, America has been a land of refuge and hope for millions of people from all over the world. Even at this stage of American history, we are setting the stage for people from a variety of backgrounds, ethnicities, and religions to become the inhabitants of what would become our nation. In our next chapter, we will take a quick look at the pre-Columbian peoples of America and the early European explorers. In our current age, these pre-Columbian Americans’ culturally accurate descriptions range from Indigenous Peoples to Native Americans, but as you will discover, they too are transplants from other places around the world. All the people referred to as Americans have at least one thing in common. They all have a part in making this country what it is: the **Melting Pot** of the World.

GREATEST TAKEAWAYS IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Could you live a normal life if you didn’t know who you were, where you came from, or anything about the world around you? Of course not. Understanding the truth about these personal concepts is foundational to who you are and what kind of life you live. The same can be said for us as Americans. To understand who we are as a nation, we must understand our roots. In this chapter, we discovered that the settling of our nation began with the unsettling of Europe. We discussed several major events that led to the opening of the Age of Exploration, and we learned about the motivation that drove Europe to reach further than previous generations had before them.

DID YOU KNOW?

There are accounts of Norse (Viking) sailors reaching the shores of what is now Nova Scotia, Canada, but, because they did not establish lasting colonies, their impact remained minimal. It was 500 years after these early European explorers when the post-Renaissance Europeans were driven to explore and colonize the lands of the New World. The idea that they could spread the gospel along with their power is a common thread we see throughout this period of history. I find it wonderfully consistent with God's character to be able to use flawed human motives and reasoning to accomplish His will and plan.

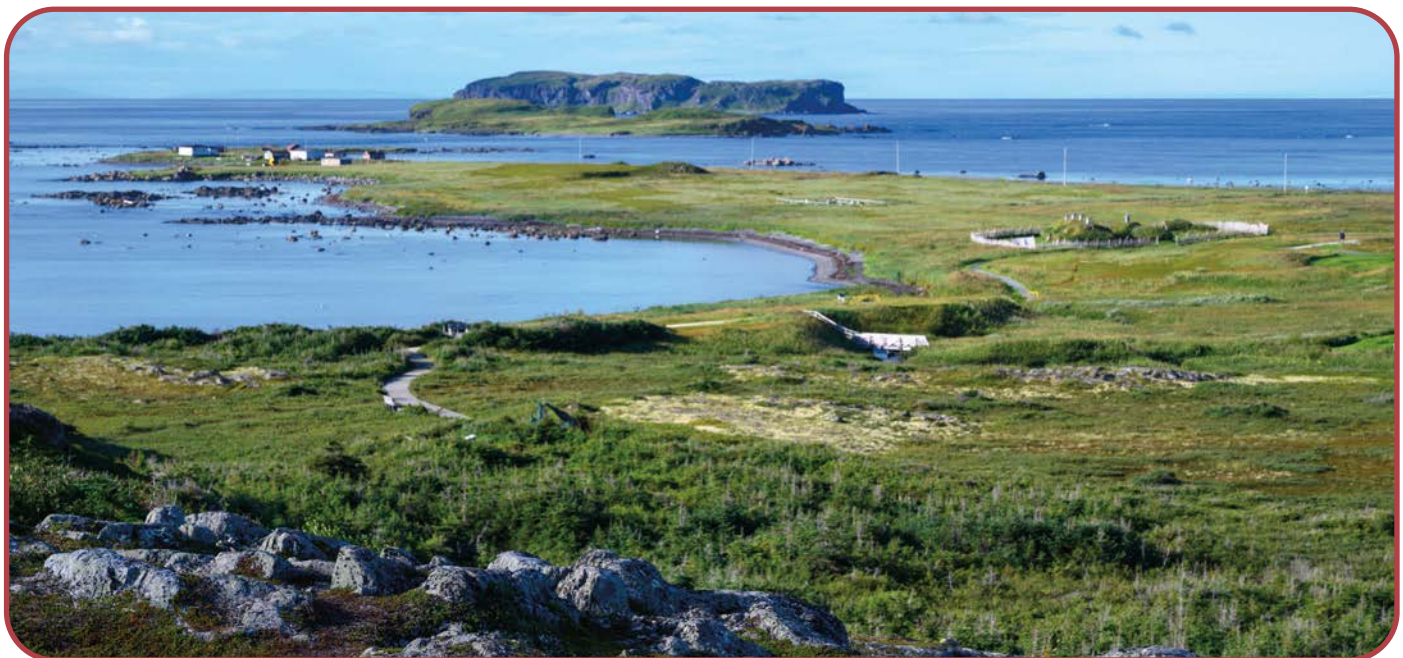
Interestingly, the original quest for riches that drove European explorers to the *West* did not begin with a desire to explore a new continent but rather a desire to partake in the riches of the *East*. In the late 1200s, the Venetian merchant, Marco Polo, brought home exciting accounts of the Orient, along with exotic and unusual spices, pottery, silks, and other goods. During this period, only the bravest merchants dared to traverse the land routes through dangerous territories, rough mountains, and vast deserts of the Middle East in order to reach the riches of the Far East. Because of the natural geographical barriers, unscrupulous bandits, and ridiculously high taxes, it was apparent that a better route would be needed if Europe were to have an effective connection with the East and her riches.

God's Word Lives On

It is important to understand the reason we have access to the Scriptures today is because these men made it their lives' work to preserve many of the original scrolls and to create many copies of it for future generations. Without their Holy Spirit-inspired dedication to this work, the Word of God as we know it would not exist.



A portion of the Esther Scroll



View of L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic and UNESCO World Heritage site, Newfoundland, Canada on August 27, 2022, with Hay Cove (L) and Norstead (R) at a distance. The first Norsemen arrived here in approximately 1021.

09

LESSON

E PLURIBUS UNUM: OUT OF MANY, ONE

If to please the people, we offer what we ourselves disapprove, how can we afterward defend our work? Let us raise a standard to which the wise and the honest can repair; the event is in the Hand of God.

—George Washington’s opening remarks to Congress as the President of the Constitutional Convention, May 25, 1787.¹⁰⁹

PREPARE TO STUDY

The War for Independence had ended, and with British rule gone, the American people were responsible for forming a government to protect their hard-won freedom. Before exploring how that government developed, it’s important to consider why a government is needed.

Since sin entered the world in the Garden of Eden, humans have required structure. When God gave the Ten Commandments, He provided a moral framework for self-government and societal order. The first four focus on humanity’s relationship with God; the remaining six guide relationships with others, addressing issues like honoring parents, protecting life, and respecting property. These principles, already written on human hearts, support both individual liberty and a just society.

THE ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION— OUR FIRST “CONSTITUTION”



During the War for Independence, the colonies were governed by the First and Second Continental Congress. Although the colonies were hesitant to submit to a central authority, the war revealed the necessity of unified leadership. In 1776, a committee was formed to draft a new government plan. The result was a loose confederation of states. In 1777, the Articles of Confederation, primarily written by John Dickinson of Delaware, were introduced. Under the Articles, members of Congress were elected yearly. However, cooperation among states

was slow, and ratification took four years. The major delay stemmed from disputes over western lands gained through the Treaty of Paris. Smaller coastal states feared that neighboring large states would gain too much land and power.

The issue was resolved by land **ordinances** passed in 1784, 1785, and 1787. These ordinances governed how western lands were divided into territories and outlined the process for achieving statehood. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 established that each territory would have a governor appointed by Congress. Once

a territory had 5,000 voting-age white males, it could elect its own legislature. At 60,000 settlers, it could draft a constitution and apply for statehood.

These ordinances governed how land was divided into territories and what those territories had to do to become a state. Under the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, territory had a governor assigned by Congress. When a territory had 5,000 white males of voting age, they could elect their own governor. When the territory's population reached 60,000 settlers, the people could write a constitution for their state and submit it to Congress.

If their constitution followed the principles in the Declaration of Independence and guaranteed a republic form of government, they were accepted into the Union as a state. After they became a state, they had the same rights as the other original states. Interestingly, the Northwest Ordinance made the Ohio River the dividing line between slave states and territories and free, non-slave states. This ordinance was key to the healthy growth of the country in the future. It guaranteed equal rights to all states—old and new, big and small.

The Confederation Congress, though short-lived, set important precedents. It began publishing its proceedings, laying the foundation for today's Congressional Record, and introduced the first American money system based on decimals. Despite lasting only eight years, the Confederation accomplished some lasting good. However, it also had serious limitations. Though it held more power than the Continental Congress, it lacked the authority to levy taxes. Congress could issue money but so could individual states. There was no unified federal currency.

The Articles of Confederation required compromise among the states, even in recognizing documents like birth, death, and marriage certificates. Still, the Articles failed in key ways. They did not clearly assign power to any one branch or individual, nor did they create separate branches of government. These weaknesses were intentional, designed by leaders cautious of centralized authority. But without the power to levy taxes or enforce laws, Congress struggled to secure the funds necessary to run the government or pay off national debts. While the Confederation



General George Washington Resigning His Commission. This action was of great significance in establishing civilian, rather than military rule, leading to a republic, rather than a dictatorship.

Congress achieved some notable successes, its lack of enforcement power and structure revealed the need for a stronger federal system.

The currency issue was also disastrous. Many of the states were still using their own coins, which tangled up the money value the Confederation Congress tried to set into place. In some locations, creditors gained control of state legislatures and piled on illegal taxes to pay off state debt. When small farmers and their families could not pay these taxes, the court came in and confiscated their property. Poor foreign relations also escalated, and a general lack of respect for the new government fueled many disagreements.

The United States was in the precarious position of defending its autonomy while sharing the continent with the three most powerful European nations. Britain still had some of their troops in the western forts they had controlled before the war, and British ships were harassing American ships. American sailors were being bullied by pirates and forced to pay tribute. This was an insulting insinuation that the country was too weak to take care of itself.

England was not the only country causing trouble for our new nation. France was also quickly becoming impatient as the years passed and America was unable to repay the war loans. Spain was an issue because they had substantial holdings of land in North America, and Americans were becoming nervous as the Spanish refused to allow them to use the lower Mississippi ports for trade.

By 1786, the Confederation Congress faced unrest as farmers, burdened by heavy taxes, began protesting. Daniel Shays, a Continental Army veteran, led a mob toward a federal arsenal. Though no one was killed, the uprising highlighted public frustration. George Washington was deeply disturbed, believing the rebellion made the nation appear “more contemptible” than ever. In response, Congress voted to call a convention to address the government’s weaknesses. This meeting, later known as the Philadelphia Convention, aimed to decide what kind of government the United States should establish to meet the young country’s pressing needs.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS: GEORGE WASHINGTON’S CONCERN FOR OUR INFANT NATION

In a letter to James Madison, George Washington expressed his deep concern: “*We are fast verging to anarchy and confusion!*”¹⁰⁶

In August 1786, Washington wrote to John Jay who agreed with him on the state of the nation:

*Your sentiments, that our affairs are drawing rapidly to a crisis, accord with my own. What the event will be, is also beyond the reach of my foresight. We have errors to correct. We have probably had too good an opinion of human nature in forming our confederation. Experience has taught us, that men will not adopt and carry into execution measures the best calculated for their own good, without the intervention of a coercive power. I do not conceive we can exist long as a nation without having lodged some where a power, which will pervade the whole Union in as energetic a manner, as the authority of the State Governments extends over the several states.*¹⁰⁷

Although the new nation was facing a difficult adjustment, I do not want you to imagine that it was in total chaos. As Gary Wills describes in his book, *Inventing America: Jefferson’s Declaration of Independence*, the American Revolutionaries were working toward the monumental achievement of “inventing America.” We must not overlook the facts and details of how this band of Patriots succeeded in this invention. As we move forward in our study of the establishment of our government, I challenge you to look at it through the lens of John Adams as he described how he and his fellow patriots had been “*thrown into existence at a period when the greatest philosophers and lawgivers of antiquity would have wished to live. A period when a coincidence of circumstances ... has afforded the thirteen Colonies ... an opportunity of beginning government anew from the foundation.*”¹⁰⁸

THE WRITING OF THE CONSTITUTION (PART 1)



The Philadelphia Convention was one of the most important events in our history up to this time. God knew who needed to be there, and the men gathered were some of the most intelligent, talented men in American history. This convention was **unprecedented**; never before had men assembled to design this kind of government for the people, by the people. It was time to build on the principles set forth in the Declaration of Independence more than a decade before.

It is currently popular to downplay the importance of the Declaration of Independence's connection to the Constitution. There are too many references to God in the Declaration of Independence for those who insist that the Constitution is a purely God-less document. Right from the beginning, the Declaration of Independence was meant to be the "key" to the Constitution.

According to historian David Barton, there are four reasons we cannot separate these two documents.¹¹⁰

First, the Constitutional Acts and even the Constitution itself are dated back to the signing of the Declaration of Independence, not to the ratification of the Constitution.

Second, the Enabling Acts, which have to do with the way the territories became states, are directly linked to both documents. The process dictates they had to follow the principles of the Declaration to create a constitution following the wording of the Constitution.

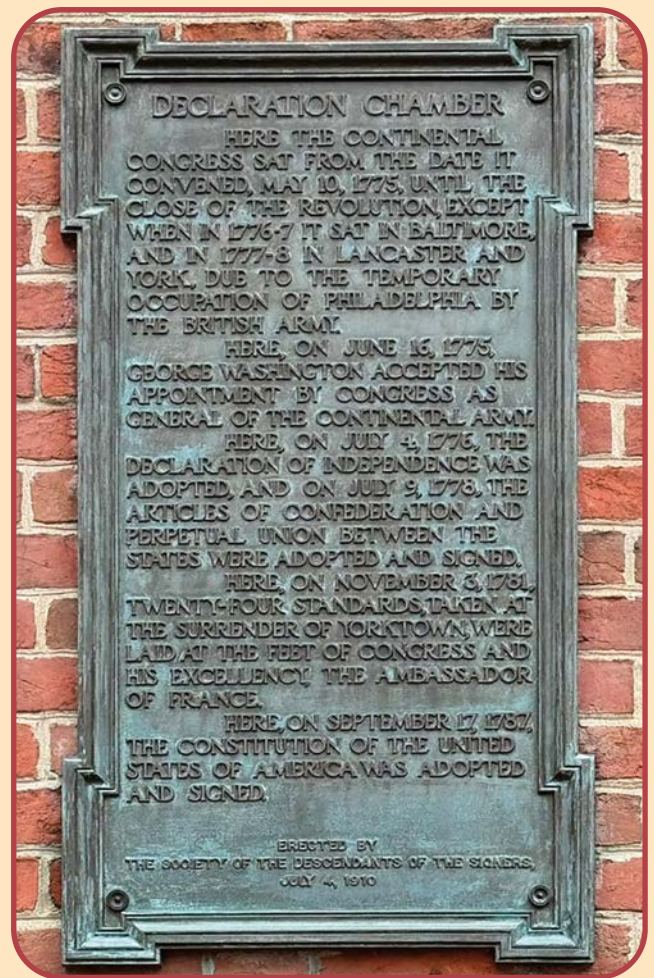
Third, the U.S. Code's four Organic Laws (listed as number one under the Federal law) lists the Declaration and Constitution as two of the organic laws nobody can violate.

Fourth, the Grievances Correlation simply means the Declaration listed 27 grievances (reasons America split with England), and the Constitution was written to fix those issues.

The two documents were written to work together and must be viewed together.

Although the Constitutional Convention was called to meet on May 14, 1787, on the appointed day, only a dozen men arrived. It was 11 uneasy days later, on May 25, that enough of the delegates were present for the Convention to finally convene. Eventually, 55 men attended the Convention held in Independence Hall.

Independence Hall, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



A plaque posted on the outside wall of Independence Hall. The inscription outlines the details of the important events which happened there.

Wisely, the delegates met in secret to discuss their ideas for the new government. The summer of 1787 was one of the warmest in Philadelphia's memory, and the closed windows and doors did nothing to add comfort to the stuffy hall.

George Washington was elected as the president of the convention; his quiet strength was reassuring. Some have said that it was Washington's presence at the Constitutional Convention that made it a success, because he provided crucial balance and control. Respect for this man ran deep throughout the country; his position as a leader was not questioned by anyone. His presence among the men chosen to create a governing document calmed the hearts of the American people as they waited to hear the outcome of the Constitutional Convention.

At the Constitutional Convention, 37-year-old James Madison, often called the "Father of the Constitution," brought deep knowledge of law and government. Benjamin Franklin, the oldest delegate at 82, had participated in every major founding event and was the only Founding Father to sign the Declaration of

Independence (1776), the Treaty with France (1778), the Treaty of Paris (1782), and the Constitution (1787). Alexander Hamilton, New York's leading delegate and a Revolutionary War veteran, strongly supported a stalwart central government. Many prominent Revolutionary figures were absent: Thomas Jefferson was in France, John Adams in Britain, and Samuel Adams, John Hancock, and Patrick Henry were not selected as delegates. A new generation of leaders had stepped forward to shape the nation's future.

As the delegates began discussing the shortfalls of the Articles of Confederation, it became increasingly clear that they needed to go back to the drawing board. The task of crafting an all-new government was a **daunting** one. How could they start from scratch and design a long-lasting constitution, a living document capable of governing now and in the future, outlining the control and responsibilities of the new government? Considering the fact that states were not accustomed to being forced to work together on anything, the results of the convention are nothing short of a miracle.

As the delegates rolled up their sleeves and set to work, they discovered there were several fundamental issues they could agree upon. One of the most important of these issues was the need for a stronger central government. Although the representatives did not agree how strong was strong enough, they had learned from experience that a weak central government, which gave no one in particular any control, was not a viable option. The new central government needed to have the power to effectively handle any problems that would eventually arise. They also knew there needed to be a division of powers to supply a check and balance within the government. The delegates agreed that there should never be a situation where one person could take all the control over the country. They had learned this from their experience under the monarchy rule of England.

The delegates also agreed on a second crucially important issue. They decided that the new government needed to be a representative government—a democratic republic ruled by a written constitution. So, why did they choose a republic instead of a democracy? The leaders of our nation had learned several hard lessons through the period of taxation and rule of Britain, the Revolutionary period, and the difficult years of the Articles of the Confederation. First, they had learned that the voice of the minority is often outshouted when there are large masses deciding

George Washington's Chair



As I focused my camera on George Washington's chair and the rising sun carved into its back, I reflected on God's guiding hand in his life and the transformation that shaped him into a great leader.

the rule. This is why they specified in the Constitution a representative form of government and the purpose of each branch of government and what their responsibilities were to the people. They made it clear what the branches could and could not do.

Second, in a democracy, the rules for governing could be changed whenever the wishes of the majority changed. They wanted to create a government that could not change unless the people voted on a change to the Constitution. Little did the delegates know but the government that they were Providentially guided to devise would become the gold standard of liberty and freedom worldwide.

The men gathered in Independence Hall were familiar with a book written by French philosopher Charles de Montesquieu (MON-tuh-SKYOO) which outlined the three branches of government: executive, legislative, and judicial. The delegates at the convention desired a balance of power. It would not help to have a government designed with three branches if each one did not have a purpose, but they needed to be **interdependent**.

The delegates wanted Americans as individuals to have rights and privileges. These men knew they would have to compromise to reach the balance they needed. By the time the Constitution was finished, it was a whole bundle of compromises. The Constitution was deemed

“the most wonderful work ever struck off at a given time by the brain and purpose of man” (William Gladstone, a prime minister of Britain in the 19th century).¹¹¹

So what were some of the compromises? During the Philadelphia Convention, the disagreements involved two groups. The first disagreement was centered around how many votes each state in Congress would have. The second disagreement concerned the issue of slavery. James Madison’s Virginia Plan, also called the Large State Plan, stated that the new government would have two legislative houses made up of representatives based on a state’s population. This plan did not bode well with the smaller states. New Jersey representative William Paterson proposed another plan called the New Jersey Plan, or the Small State Plan. This plan advocated one legislative house composed of the same number of representatives from each state.

During the ensuing debate, Roger Sherman of Connecticut proposed the Great Compromise. This provided for two legislative assemblies. In the Senate, the states would be equally represented with two senators each; the House of Representatives would be based on population. This compromise would preserve the power of the smaller states, while allowing the larger states to represent their people. The population of the states would be decided every 10 years by a federal census.



Signing of the Constitution. At desk sits George Washington watching Gouverneur Morris sign; behind Morris are Roger Sherman, Benjamin Franklin, Robert Morris, James Madison, and others. On the right are Alexander Hamilton and Edmund Jennings Randolph.

THE WRITING OF THE CONSTITUTION (PART 2)



The argument over how the South would determine their number of government representatives was intense. Northern states argued that if enslaved people were counted as population, they should receive equal rights. Southern states wanted them counted without granting freedoms. The issue was resolved with the Three-fifths Compromise, allowing each enslaved person to count as three-fifths of a person for representation.

Under this compromise, an enslaved person would be counted as three-fifths of a free person in the figuring of both taxes and representatives in that state. In this way, those who wanted to see slavery end in the country wrote into our governing document a consequence for having enslaved people that could not be reversed unless slavery was ended. If the slave states wanted equal footing (per person), they would have to make their Black population equal their White. Without this equality, the slave states were forced to have less representation in congress and fewer bonuses of having a federal government. The discussion of ending slavery was left at this compromise with the decision to revisit the topic in two decades. This would allow time for the new government and economy to get on their feet.

The Commerce Compromise was also more in favor of the northern states, who wanted Congress to pass laws protecting them from foreign competition. The North disagreed with the South over Congress' rights to pass navigation and **tariff** laws. The southern states were worried these types of laws would lead to higher prices on goods they could not produce and, therefore, needed to buy. The Commerce Compromise favored the North by allowing the laws to be passed by a simple majority instead of a two-thirds vote like the South requested.

MEN CHOSEN FOR THEIR TIME

Why did these men lock themselves away while they hammered out the Constitution? Were they trying to fool the American people? In 1860, Frederick Douglass, a former slave and abolitionist, addressed this in a speech. He reminded listeners that the men met in secret so they would not be forever tied to the Constitution's content. Douglass said they wanted the document to stand on its own—as the fulfillment of the Declaration's principles—apart from the human flaws of those who had written it.

Douglass also said this about the anti-slavery nature of the Constitution:

(I)t has been said that Negroes are not included within the benefits sought under this declaration. This is said by the slaveholders in America—it is said by the City Hall orator—but it is not said by the Constitution itself. Its language is “we the people;” not we the white people, not even we the (white) citizens, not we the privileged class, not we the high, not we the low, but we the people ... we the human inhabitants; and, if Negroes are people, they are included in the benefits for which the Constitution of America was ordained and established.¹¹²

Have you ever wondered what kind of people our Founding Fathers truly were? The best way to understand them is by reading their own words. The principles of our new government were rooted in colonial culture, beginning with the Pilgrims and the Mayflower Compact. The men who founded our country were shaped by this heritage. Through their writings and speeches, we discover the character and convictions of the leaders who built our nation.

We have already become acquainted with John Adams, signer of the Declaration of Independence, a lawyer, a diplomat, one of two signers of the Bill of Rights, and

the second President of the United States. He was also the father of John Quincy Adams, the sixth President of the United States of America. John and his wife, Abigail, were two heroes of the Revolutionary period.

The general principles on which the fathers achieved independence were the general principles of Christianity that are as eternal and immutable as the existence and attributes of God.

Without religion, this world would be something not fit to be mentioned in polite company: I mean hell.

I always consider the settlement of America with reverence and wonder, as the opening of a grand scene and design in providence, for the illumination of the ignorant and the emancipation of the slavish part of mankind all over the earth.¹¹³

Samuel Adams, cousin of John Adams, was a signer of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, served as governor of Massachusetts, and was known as the “Father of the American Revolution.”

The right to freedom being the gift of God Almighty, it is not in the power of man to alienate this gift and voluntarily become a slave. ... These may be best understood by reading and carefully studying the institutes of the great Law Giver and Head of the Christian Church, which

*are to be found clearly written and **promulgated** in the New Testament.*

We have this day restored the Sovereign to Whom all men ought to be obedient. He reigns in heaven and from the rising to the setting of the sun, let His kingdom come.

Religion in a Family is at once its brightest Ornament and its best Security.¹¹⁴

Alexander Hamilton was a Revolutionary War general, a signer of the Constitution, an author of *The Federalist Papers*, and Secretary of the Treasury.

The sacred rights of mankind are not to be rummaged for among old parchments or musty records. They are written, as with a sunbeam, in the whole volume of human nature, by the Hand of Divinity itself, and can never be erased or obscured by mortal power.

*The fundamental source of all your errors, **sophisms** and false reasonings is a total ignorance of the natural rights of mankind. Were you once to become acquainted with these, you could never entertain a thought that all men are not, by nature, entitled to a parity of privileges. You would be convinced, that natural liberty is a gift of the beneficent Creator to the whole human race, and that civil liberty is founded in that; and cannot be wrested from any people, without the most manifest violation of justice.¹¹⁵*



Signing of the United States Constitution with George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and Alexander Hamilton (left to right in the foreground).

Thomas Jefferson wrote and signed the Declaration of Independence, served as a diplomat, governor of Virginia, Secretary of State, and became the third President of the United States.

*It is every American's right and obligation to read and interpret the Constitution for himself.*¹¹⁶

*The practice of morality being necessary for the well being of society, [God] has taken care to impress its precepts so indelibly on our hearts that they shall not be effaced by the subtleties of our brain. We all agree in the obligation of the moral precepts of Jesus and nowhere will they be found delivered in greater purity than in his discourses.*¹¹⁷

*[I]f we can but prevent the government from wasting the labours of the people, under the pretence of taking care of them, they must become happy.*¹¹⁸

James Madison, known as the “Father of the Bill of Rights,” was a *Federalist Papers* author, a Virginia representative, Secretary of State, and the fourth President of the United States.

We have staked the whole future of American civilization, not upon the power of the government, far from it. We have staked the future of all of our political institutions upon the capacity of mankind for self-government; upon the capacity

of each and all of us to govern ourselves, to control ourselves, to sustain ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God.

The civil rights of none shall be abridged on account of religious belief or worship, nor shall any national religion be established.

*A watchful eye must be kept on ourselves lest while we are building ideal monuments of Renown and Bliss here we neglect to have our names enrolled in the Annals of Heaven.*¹¹⁹

George Washington is often called the “Father of Our Country.” He was a member of the Continental Congress, commander in chief of the Continental Army, the president of the Constitutional Convention, and the first President of the United States.

*[I]t would be peculiarly improper to omit in this first official Act, my fervent supplications to that Almighty Being who rules over the universe, who presides in the Councils of Nations, and whose providential aids can supply every human defect, that his benediction may consecrate to the liberties and happiness of the People of the United States, a Government instituted by themselves for these essential purposes.*¹²⁰

In the coming lesson, we will be studying the structure of the Constitution and the government it was meant to outline for Americans of all generations.



Detail of Preamble to Constitution of the United States

GEOGRAPHY'S ROLE IN HISTORY

TIMELINE OF THE LAND ORDINANCES: A PROGRESSION OF CHANGE

ORDINANCE OF 1784 SUMMARY

Drafted by Thomas Jefferson, this ordinance introduced the idea of dividing western lands into self-governing districts. It allowed these territories to send a representative to Congress once they reached a population of 20,000, and to apply for statehood when they reached the population of the smallest existing state. This ordinance was the first formal step in treating new western territories not as colonies but as future equals within the Union.

The Ordinance of 1784 established the foundational idea that new western lands should eventually become fully equal states, not permanent colonies. However, it lacked detailed procedures for land distribution or territorial governance, which left practical issues unresolved. Its emphasis on equality among future states laid the groundwork for a national policy of orderly expansion.

ORDINANCE OF 1785 SUMMARY

This ordinance provided a method for surveying and selling public lands in the western territory. It introduced a rectangular grid system that divided land into six-mile-square townships, each containing 36 one-mile-square sections. The land was sold at public auction to help raise revenue for the new government. This system not only enabled organized settlement but also marked the federal government's first significant assertion of control over western land.

While the 1784 ordinance addressed governance, the 1785 ordinance addressed the need for organized land distribution. It set in place the Public Land Survey System and made it possible for land sales to support national income and local schools (with one section in each township reserved for public education). However, it did not establish a process for political development or the transition to statehood. By generating income and supporting education, it helped transform wilderness into sustainable communities.

NORTHWEST ORDINANCE OF 1787 SUMMARY

This ordinance replaced the 1784 measure and established a clear structure for territorial governance and eventual statehood. Territories would first be governed by officials appointed by Congress. Once they had 5,000 free male inhabitants, they could elect a legislature. When it reached 60,000 free inhabitants, the territory could draft a constitution and apply for admission as a state on equal footing with the original 13. Its three-stage system ensured a gradual, stable shift from federal oversight to self-rule.

The ordinance also:

- Guaranteed civil liberties such as religious freedom, trial by jury, and due process.
- Prohibited slavery in the Northwest Territory.
- Stated that education was essential to good government and the happiness of mankind, encouraging schools and public instruction.
- Promised that Native Americans would be treated with “good faith” (though this principle was often violated in practice).

By embedding these rights and values into law, the ordinance helped define what it meant to be part of the United States.

The Ordinance of 1785 adopted the land survey structure of 1785 and combined it with a detailed plan for political development, statehood, and civil rights protections, setting a lasting precedent for future territorial expansion. Its balance of land policy and human rights became the model for how America would grow and govern new lands.

GEOGRAPHIC CONTEXT AND LEGACY SUMMARY

- The Northwest Ordinances applied to lands north of the Ohio River, east of the Mississippi River, and south of the Great Lakes—territory that would later become Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and part of Minnesota. This vast and fertile region became the proving ground for America’s expansion policies.
- By outlawing slavery in this region, the Northwest Ordinance established the Ohio River as a symbolic boundary between free and slave territories—foreshadowing future sectional conflicts. This decision would have lasting political consequences leading up to the Civil War.

- The ordinances, especially the 1787 version, reflected Enlightenment-era ideas about natural rights, civic virtue, and the role of education in sustaining republican government. They demonstrated a belief that liberty, law, and learning must accompany national growth.

WHAT TO REMEMBER

Each ordinance built upon the last:

- 1784 outlined the concept of self-government and equality among states.
- 1785 implemented a practical land system to support settlement and raise national revenue.
- 1787 added political structure, civil liberties, and anti-slavery provisions, laying the foundation for America’s model of expansion and governance.
- Together, they formed a vision for building a just and orderly republic—one town, one school, one state at a time.



States and Territories of the United States of America, 1789

CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW ANALYSIS

CHAIN-LINKS OF CULTURE GOVERNMENT AND RELIGION

The fear of abusive power was almost as much an influence on establishing a new American government as the desire to make something good and functional.

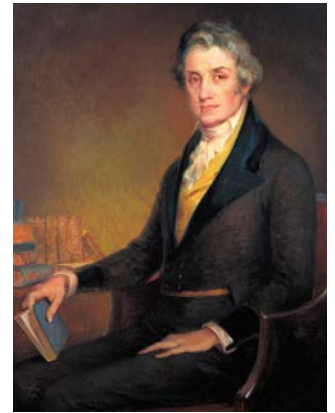
Having declared the American colonies independent of Great Britain, the patriot Whigs (the Americans still used that label) immediately set about the task of creating new governments as sovereign states. ... Americans, Jefferson observed, “shed monarchy” like an old suit of clothes.¹²¹

There was no precedent for the exact type of government—one in which leaders were elected by the people. Though influenced by Enlightenment ideas, the founders had 150 years of self-government experience to draw from. Unlike Enlightenment thinkers who viewed government as a man-made construct, they aligned more with the belief that government was a God-given tool for order. Inspired by this and Jefferson’s claim that the people had the right to replace tyrants, they aimed to create a government for the people, by the people, and accountable to the people.

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.
(Romans 13:1, NKJV)

FROM A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW PERSPECTIVE

Many of the representatives who were part of the Constitutional Congress were religious men. Abraham Baldwin graduated and tutored at Yale University until he enlisted in the Continental Army as a chaplain during the Revolutionary War. His experience interacting with men from every walk of life during the war convinced him that education was going to be key in the development of the frontier. After the war, he moved from Connecticut to Georgia, where he practiced law and worked to establish the University of Georgia. He was also elected to be a representative in the Georgia legislature. It was in this position that he attended the Constitutional Convention.



Abraham Baldwin

As Abraham Baldwin watched tensions rise over the small state versus large state debate, he knew what he needed to do.

Despite being from a larger state, when the final vote was made, Baldwin sided with the smaller states in favor of equal representation. By doing so, he split the vote and ended the contest for the time being so a real compromise could be worked out.¹²²

After Abraham split the vote, the delegates were forced to discuss the compromise which would eventually lead to the ratification of the Constitution. A committee was formed with one representative from each state working together to come up with a solution. Abraham was chosen to represent Georgia on that committee. Later he was chosen to be part of the committee tasked

with transferring the government from the Articles of Confederation to the new government under the Constitution.

Abraham Baldwin worked alongside most of the famous Founding Fathers, yet many people have never heard of him. He is best known in Georgia because of his work as their representative and his influence on the educational system. Abraham greatly admired George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison. His belief in education carried into his politics. He believed that knowledge would lead to good citizenship and without such knowledge, the government was doomed to failure. To this end, he was instrumental in working to create an informed American public.

God's hand in history is evident in how He guided Abraham Baldwin's life, eventually bringing him to the Constitutional Convention. This humble man counted the cost to do what was necessary to bring the stalemate disagreement to an end, therefore bringing the entire assembly back to the point where they could find a compromise.

When biblical standards and morals are at stake, compromise is not a good option. In these situations where obedience to God's standards of righteousness is being challenged, compromise with evil is sin. However, there are times when being willing to work with others to come to an agreeable compromise (which is protected within biblical guidelines) is absolutely the right path. The Bible is full of instances where we are urged to try to find common ground for the sake of unity. **Belligerent dogma** in government has led our country down a road far from the incredible compromises reached by the Constitutional Congress. Perhaps that ability to compromise has a considerable connection to how those men in that stuffy room in Philadelphia viewed God's involvement in human existence.

Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. (2 Corinthians 13:11; NIV)

On June 28, 1787, the hostile feelings between the small state and large state representatives had reached a boiling point. Benjamin Franklin, a man not known for having an outstanding Christian faith, yet more gripped with reverence for God than many modern-day preachers, stood to his feet and spoke to the assembly. Here are the last three paragraphs of Dr. Franklin's rebuke.

*In the beginning of the Contest with Great Britain, when we were sensible of danger we had daily prayer in this room for the Divine protection. Our prayers, Sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a **superintending** providence in our favor. To that kind Providence we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future national felicity. And have we now forgotten the powerful Friend? Or do we imagine we no longer need His assistance?*



Jean-Antoine Houdon French Bust of Benjamin Franklin

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? We have been assured, Sir, in the Sacred Writings, that “except the Lord build the House, they labor in vain that build it.” I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without His concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the Builders of Babel: We shall be divided by our partial local interests; our projects will be confounded, and we ourselves shall become a reproach and bye word down to future ages. And what is worse, mankind may hereafter from this unfortunate instance, despair of establishing Governments by Human wisdom and leave it to chance, war and conquest.

I therefore beg leave to move—that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessing on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed to business, and that one or more of the clergy of this city be requested to officiate in that service.¹²³

A delegate from New Jersey wrote this about the reaction to Franklin’s rebuke.

The Doctor sat down; and never did I behold a countenance at once so dignified and delighted as was that of Washington at the close of the address; nor were the members of convention generally less affected.¹²⁴

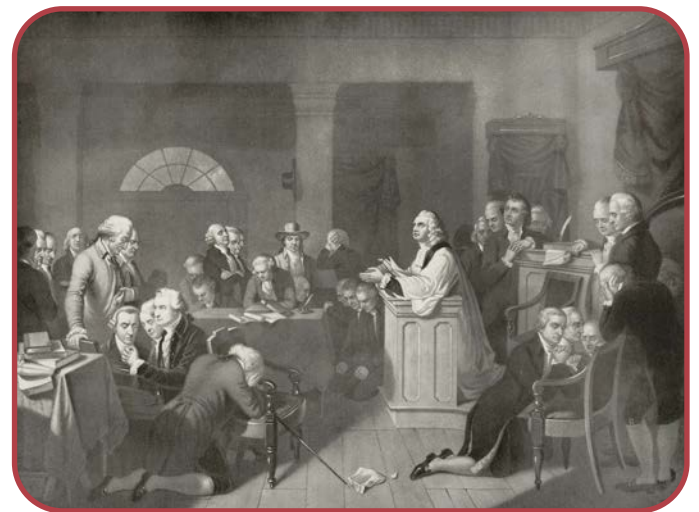
The motion was carried and furthered with the request for a minister to come deliver a sermon to the assembly on July 4 in honor of Independence Day. On July 2, the Convention assembled again. Delegate Edmund Jennings Randolph noted, “Every unfriendly feeling had been expelled, and a spirit of conciliation had been cultivated.”¹²⁵

How do you think our country would be right now if our government had stayed true to Benjamin Franklin’s words about God governing the affairs of man?

GREATEST TAKEAWAYS IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Unity through compromise is a theme in history we see carried throughout the story of how the founders and Framers worked together to create a government for the people, by the people. This ability to rise above their personal opinions, interests, and proclivities in order to focus on the big picture of creating something that would outlast all of them and stand on its own for centuries to come, was granted only after they prayed. These men, each from a different background and walk of life, truly represented the people who sent them there.

The Constitution of the United States was crafted by a diverse group of men sent to represent the new United States of America. The states were united in name only at this point, and many Americans did not have much faith in a central government. Why should they? There had never been a government established for the people and by the people. Through debate, prayer, and compromise, the founders were able to put down on paper a framework of just such a government. Remember the three main reasons the Constitution was successful. First, it was written using biblical principles. Second, the Framers’ effort, patience, and compromise set the foundation for a government based on unity through diversity. Third, the Constitution was crafted to be a living document which established the adaptability of the government to grow with the nation.



The First Prayer in Congress, September, 1774; in Carpenter’s Hall, Philadelphia

18

LESSON

THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR (PART 1): THE FIRST TWO YEARS

In every battle, there comes a time when both sides consider themselves beaten; then he who continues the attack wins.

—Union General Ulysses S. Grant, 1863¹⁸⁴

PREPARE TO STUDY

After the firing on Fort Sumter, both the Union and the Confederacy moved quickly to prepare for war. Volunteers rushed to enlist, believing the conflict would be brief. President Abraham Lincoln called for troops, while southern states mobilized their own forces. Early training was limited, expectations were high, and civilians eagerly followed events as the two sides moved toward their first major clash at First Battle of Bull Run.

BULL RUN TO GETTYSBURG (PART 1)



In July 1861, the Union army under General Irvin McDowell advanced toward Confederate forces near Manassas, Virginia.

The Confederates, led by General Beauregard and reinforced by Joseph E. Johnston, were ready. The armies clashed along Bull Run. Rolling terrain and dense forest gave the Confederates natural defensive advantages, and they used these features to build strong positions and resist the Union advance. Local civilians supported the southern cause by providing intelligence on Union troop movements.

During this battle, Confederate General Thomas Jackson earned the nickname “Stonewall” for refusing to back down under pressure. His unwavering stance became a rallying point for the Confederate troops, inspiring them to hold their position against the advancing Union army. Jackson’s leadership

strengthened morale and helped secure his reputation as one of the South’s most respected and courageous commanders. The image of Jackson standing firm in the midst of chaos pushed the soldiers around him to fight even harder and played a key role in the Confederate victory at Bull Run. The battle ended with a panicked Union retreat, shocking the North and destroying the belief that the war would be short-lived.

The Battle of Bull Run proved the lack of preparedness on both sides. The soldiers were poorly trained, and the need for better organization and strategy was glaringly evident. President Abraham Lincoln appointed General George B. McClellan to train the Union army, and soon the northern forces had been transformed into a **formidable** fighting machine. Meanwhile, Confederate forces under General Robert E. Lee began to establish themselves as a resilient and resourceful opponent.

In the spring of 1862, McClellan launched the Peninsula Campaign, an ambitious plan to capture the Confederate capital city, Richmond. This effort involved a massive Union force of over 120,000 men transported by water to the Virginia Peninsula. Union General George McClellan hesitated often, convinced he needed more men. His caution slowed the northern campaign to a crawl. Meanwhile, Confederate General Robert E. Lee took command of the northern Virginia army.

General Lee's strategic skill showed in coordinated counterattacks—like the Seven Days Battles—that eventually pushed McClellan into retreat. This boosted southern confidence and secured Lee's reputation as a bold and capable military commander. The Union army advanced up the Virginia Peninsula between the James and York Rivers, and although McClellan initially gained the advantage, his hesitancy to press forward again allowed the Confederates to regroup under General Lee.

Recognizing the importance of cutting off the South's supply lines, the Union established a naval blockade along the Confederate coastline. Although Confederate blockade runners occasionally slipped through, their

operations were fraught with peril and could not meet the South's growing demands. By using fast, low-profile ships known as "blockade runners," the Confederacy attempted to **circumvent** the Union's naval roadblocks to bring in weapons, ammunition, and medical supplies.

The Union also tried its hand at submarine warfare by building the *Alligator*—a strange, paddle-powered vessel designed to destroy underwater obstacles and enemy defenses. The submarine could carry divers who exited through airlocks to attach charges beneath the waterline. It was powered by hand-turned paddles and later by a crank-driven propeller, allowing limited underwater movement. Although the *Alligator* saw little direct action and was ultimately lost at sea, it represented an early experiment in naval innovation. Union forces continued to refine their ability to spot and intercept Confederate vessels as the war progressed. By choking off key ports like Charleston, Savannah, and Mobile, the Union navy slowly crushed the South's ability to supply its armies. As shortages and inflation worsened, the blockade became one of the most decisive blows to the Confederacy's crumbling war machine.

The Story of the Hunley

As the North tightened its grip on the South by establishing blockades, Mr. Hunley and fellow engineers designed submarines to aid the Confederate cause. Mr. Hunley, a wealthy benefactor, financed James McClintock's creation of three submarines. The first, the *Pioneer*, built in 1862, featured a hand-cranked motor. This sub was destroyed to prevent its capture when Union forces approached New Orleans.

The team relocated to Mobile, Alabama, where they built the *American Diver*, a 36-foot-long submarine with various experimental motors. Eventually, they reverted to the hand-cranked design. On its second mission, the *American Diver* was lost in stormy seas, though the crew survived.

Despite setbacks, the engineers secured new funding and constructed their final submarine, the *Hunley*. They designed it to tow a torpedo on a 200-foot rope to sink enemy ships. After testing successfully on an old barge, the *Hunley* was transported across land to Charleston, South Carolina.

The *Hunley* endured two sinkings, claiming the lives of twelve crew members, including Horace Hunley. Nonetheless, in February 1864, it successfully sank the USS *Housatonic*, becoming the first submarine to destroy an enemy vessel. Shortly after, the *Hunley* disappeared and remained lost for over 136 years.

Rediscovered in 1995 and raised in 2000, the *Hunley* revealed its dark, airless interior—an eerie time capsule of early submarine warfare. The crew's remains were laid to rest with honor. The *Hunley* is now on display at the Warren Lasch Conservation Center on the Cooper River in North Charleston, South Carolina.



Submarine Torpedo Boat *H.L. Hunley*, Dec. 6, 1863

IN THE WESTERN THEATER

In addition to the blockade, control of the Mississippi River became a crucial objective for the Union. The river was a vital transportation route and a strategic dividing line. It also served as a water highway, essential for moving troops and supplies efficiently. Union forces, led by General Ulysses S. Grant, strategically targeted key Confederate forts, including Fort Henry and Fort Donelson, both of which fell in early 1862 after fierce fighting. These victories not only opened the Upper Mississippi to Union control but also marked a turning point by boosting northern morale and weakening Confederate defenses.

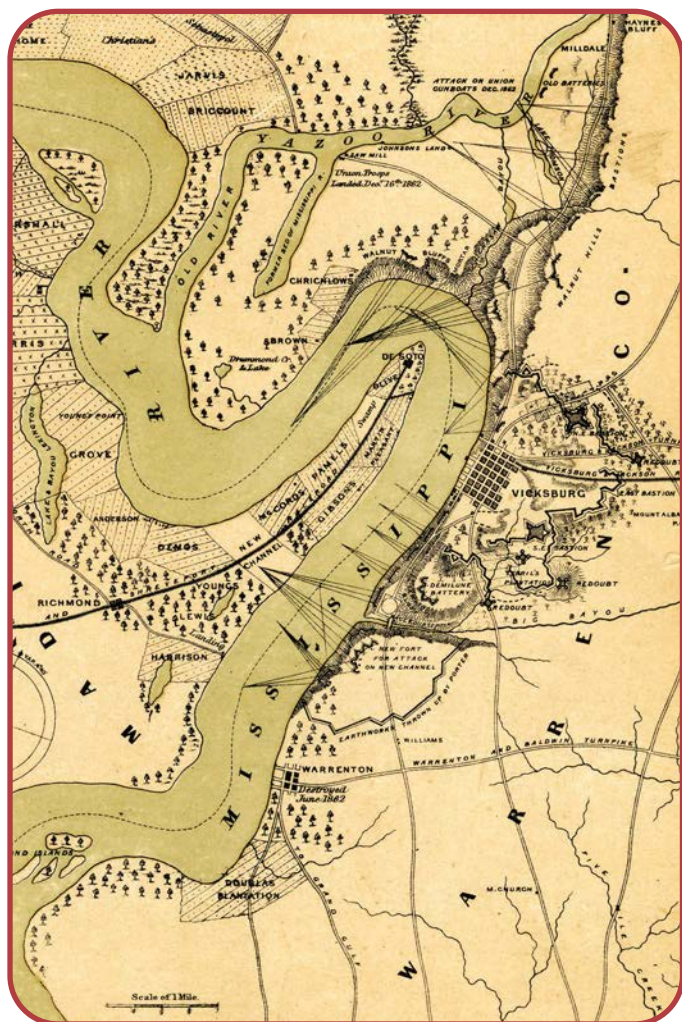
In his communications, Grant declared, *“In every battle, there comes a time when both sides consider themselves beaten; then he who continues the attack wins.”*¹⁸² The Union’s strategy also focused on isolating the western Confederate states of Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas, thereby disrupting their contributions to the southern war effort. Grant’s methodical advances set the stage for further campaigns such as the siege of Vicksburg.

One of the most important campaigns in this theater was the capture of New Orleans in April 1862. Admiral David Glasgow Farragut led a daring naval assault that bypassed Confederate forts guarding the city by navigating the treacherous waters of the Mississippi River under heavy fire. Farragut’s fleet, including ironclad ships, showed the North’s superior naval tactics. Once New Orleans fell, the Union gained control of a major southern port and severely disrupted Confederate supply lines. This victory provided the Union with a foothold in the South. The capture of New Orleans was instrumental in tightening the Union’s grip on the Mississippi River and advancing their Anaconda Plan to strangle the Confederacy’s resources and mobility.

Despite these successes, one major Confederate stronghold remained: Vicksburg, perched on high bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River. Vicksburg was a critical link in the defenses and a focal point for both Union and Confederate strategies. The city’s formidable natural defenses and fortifications made it a “Gibraltar of the Confederacy.” General Ulysses S. Grant (who was made general of the Union army after a frustrating search for competent leadership) recognized that capturing Vicksburg would be critical in securing the Mississippi River and cutting off the Confederate states west of the river. His campaign to seize the city involved extensive coordination of land and naval forces, as well as daring logistical maneuvers, such as digging canals to bypass Confederate artillery positions along the river. General Grant’s efforts to capture the city began in 1862 but faced major challenges. After several failed assaults, Grant devised a strategy to successfully cut off Vicksburg’s supply lines and encircle the city.

In May 1863, Union forces began a six-week siege of Vicksburg, bombarding the city and starving its defenders into submission. On July 4, 1863, Confederate General John C. Pemberton finally surrendered Vicksburg to Grant. This victory gave the Union complete control of the Mississippi River, effectively splitting the Confederacy in two. Historian James M. McPherson emphasized the importance of Vicksburg’s fall, noting that *“the capture of Vicksburg gave the Union control of the Mississippi River and cut the Confederacy in half, severing its most important line of communication and supply.”*¹⁸³

An 1863 topographical map of Vicksburg and its vicinity showing all batteries that were in existence at the time of its fall, with the names of the owners of plantations



BULL RUN TO GETTYSBURG (PART 2)

IN THE EASTERN THEATER

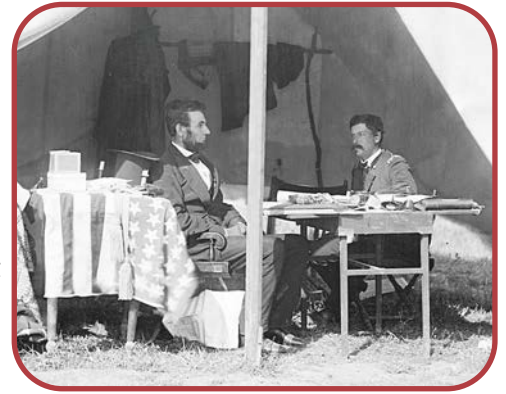


While the Union achieved important victories in the Western Theater, the Eastern Theater presented far greater challenges and uncertainties. This theater encompassed key battles and campaigns in states such as Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania, and witnessed some of the war's most dramatic and consequential events. Among these were the Battle of Antietam, the Battle of Chancellorsville, and the Battle of Gettysburg. Each of these major battles shaped the trajectory of the war.

In September 1862, the Civil War reached a turning point with General Robert E. Lee's daring invasion of Maryland. Lee's objective was twofold: to relieve pressure on war-weary Virginia and to gain foreign recognition for the Confederacy. By bringing the fight into Union territory, Lee hoped to prove the Confederacy's strength and independence, thus encouraging European powers to offer support. His plan culminated in the Battle of Antietam, fought near Sharpsburg, Maryland, on September 17, 1862. This battle became the bloodiest single day in American history, with over 22,000 soldiers killed, wounded, or reported missing.

The Battle of Antietam unfolded in three distinct phases. In the morning engagement at the Cornfield, dense fog and chaotic fighting led to heavy casualties on both sides. Next, the combat was brutal and relentless at the Sunken Road, later known as "Bloody Lane" for the thousands of soldiers who fell there. Finally, there was a desperate Union assault on Burnside's Bridge, where Confederate sharpshooters delayed the Union advance for hours. Despite General George McClellan's cautious and often-criticized approach, which allowed Lee to maintain his defensive position longer than anticipated, the Confederate forces faced overwhelming pressure.

The Confederate losses were devastating with heavy casualties. General Lee was forced to retreat across



Abraham Lincoln and George B. McClellan in the general's tent at Antietam, Maryland, October 3, 1862

the Potomac River. This defeat marked the end of the South's attempted invasion of the North and also lost any hope in gaining the desired foreign recognition for the Confederacy.

Although the battle ended inconclusively, President Abraham Lincoln declared it to be a strategic victory for the Union and took the opportunity to replace General McClellan with General Ambrose Burnside. The Confederate retreat bolstered northern morale and provided Lincoln with the political capital to issue the Emancipation Proclamation. (We will look more closely at this in our next lesson.)

GENERAL LEE'S LOST ORDERS

In the **annals** of the American Civil War, few tales are as **serendipitous** as the Union's acquisition of Confederate General Robert E. Lee's Special Order No. 191¹⁸⁵ during the Maryland Campaign of 1862. This episode, often referred to as the "Lost Order," played an important role in shaping the events leading up to the Battle of Antietam.

Lee issued Special Order No. 191 on September 9, detailing the planned maneuvers of the army of Northern Virginia. However, a copy of this crucial document was inadvertently misplaced.

On September 13, soldiers of the 27th Indiana Infantry chanced upon the lost order near Frederick, Maryland. The document was rolled up and had probably fallen from the pocket or satchel of the Confederate

messenger. Recognizing the importance of their discovery, the Union soldiers promptly forwarded it up the chain of command, eventually reaching Major General McClellan.

Upon reading the order, McClellan reportedly exclaimed, “*Here is a paper with which, if I cannot whip Bobby Lee, I will be willing to go home.*”¹⁸⁶ The intelligence provided McClellan with unprecedented insight into Lee’s thoughts and plans, revealing that the Confederate forces were divided and thus vulnerable to concentrated attack.

Despite this windfall of incredible intelligence, McClellan’s characteristic caution led to a delay of approximately 18 hours before he acted on the information. This hesitation allowed Lee to partially adjust his plans. Nevertheless, the Union army’s engagement with Confederate forces culminated in the Battle of Antietam on September 17, 1862. The incident of the Lost Orders emphasizes the profound impact that human error can have in the theater of war. A simple misplacement of orders, coupled with the keen eyes of Union soldiers, altered the course of the Civil War, proving even the most meticulous plans are subject to human error and divine intervention.

The next major battle was at Fredericksburg, fought December 11–15, 1862. Union General Ambrose Burnside led the Army of the Potomac against Confederate General Robert E. Lee’s Army of Northern

Virginia in Fredericksburg, Virginia. The battle is noted for the Union’s futile frontal assaults on well-entrenched Confederate positions along Marye’s Heights. These attacks resulted in substantial Union casualties. This encounter featured the first instance of combat within a city itself, and it served to bolster southern morale.

General Lee’s tactical brilliance continued to dominate the Eastern Theater. In May 1863, Lee achieved one of his most significant victories at the Battle of Chancellorsville in Virginia. Facing a Union force twice the size of his own, Lee executed a daring strategy that involved dividing his army in the face of the enemy. With the help of General Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson, Lee orchestrated a successful flanking maneuver that routed Union General Joseph Hooker’s forces.

The triumph at Chancellorsville came at a heavy cost, however. During the battle, Stonewall Jackson was wounded by friendly fire. He lost an arm, and lingered for eight days before he died. His death was a devastating blow to the Confederate cause and to Lee personally. Reflecting on Jackson’s loss, Lee reportedly lamented, “*He has lost his left arm, but I have lost my right.*”¹⁸⁷ Jackson’s absence would later prove critical as the Confederate Army faced mounting challenges in subsequent campaigns.

Encouraged by his success at Chancellorsville, Lee launched a second invasion of the North in the

Gen. “Stonewall” Jackson mortally wounded at the Battle of Chancellorsville, painted in 1889



On the morning of July 2, 1863, the First Minnesota Infantry advanced at double time on Cemetery Ridge, Gettysburg. Of the 262 members of the regiment present for duty that morning, only 47 answered the roll that evening.



summer of 1863. This ambitious campaign was designed to draw Union forces away from the critical Western Theater, secure much-needed supplies for Confederate troops, and deliver a decisive blow that might force the Union to seek peace. Lee's army advanced into Pennsylvania. What followed was the Battle of Gettysburg, a three-day engagement fought July 1–3, 1863. This battle would become one of the most defining moments of the Civil War.

The Battle of Gettysburg began with a fierce clash between Union and Confederate forces on the outskirts of the town. On July 1, 1863, Confederate troops under General A.P. Hill and General Richard Ewell initially gained ground, pushing Union forces back through the streets of Gettysburg. Despite the early Confederate advantage, Union forces, now commanded by General George Meade, regrouped and established a strong defensive line. These positions, strategically placed along Cemetery Hill, Cemetery Ridge, and Culp's Hill, provided the Union army with significant tactical leverage.

Gettysburg's geography played a critical role in the way the battle was fought. The Union's position on the high ground forced the Confederates to attempt costly assaults over open terrain. Confederate General Robert E. Lee's decision to pursue an offensive strategy rather than flank the Union positions would later prove a major miscalculation. These high-ground positions became the backbone of the Union defense and set the stage for the fighting that followed.

The second day saw intense fighting at key locations such as Little Round Top, the Wheatfield, and Devil's

Den, as Confederate forces attempted to break through the Union lines. Despite heavy losses on both sides, the Union army successfully held its ground, **thwarting** repeated assaults. The culmination of the battle occurred on July 3 with Pickett's Charge, a bold, devastating assault ordered by General Robert E. Lee. About 15,000 Confederate soldiers advanced across open fields under relentless artillery and rifle fire, trying to breach the Union center on Cemetery Ridge. The attack, led by General George Pickett and other commanders, resulted in catastrophic losses for the Confederates, with more than half the soldiers killed, wounded, or captured. This ill-fated charge marked the turning point of the battle and forced Lee to retreat to Virginia, marking the end of his ambitious invasion of the North.

The Rebel Yell

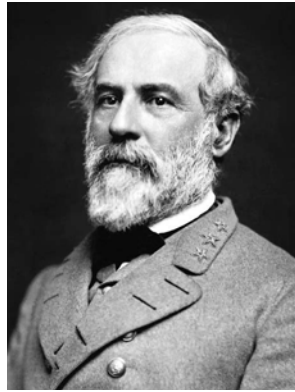
The Rebel Yell, a unique battle cry used by Confederate soldiers, was a high-pitched, shrill yell intended to intimidate Union forces and boost the morale of Confederate troops during charges. The exact sound varied among units, but it was often described as a "yee-aay-eee" or "wa-woo-woohoo." Its origins are debated, with theories suggesting influences from Native American war cries or Scottish battle calls. There are recordings of Confederate veterans recreating the yell in the 1930s to provide insight into the actual sound of the Rebel Yell.

GENERALS AND BANDITS OF THE CIVIL WAR



The American Civil War served as a training ground for leadership, testing the courage, moral fortitude, and strategic acumen of those who led armies on both sides of the conflict.

Robert E. Lee, the Confederate general whose leadership and Christian moral convictions earned him admiration even among his adversaries, was born in Virginia and graduated second in his class at West Point. He commanded the northern Virginia army and achieved notable victories early in the Civil War. Despite his military successes, Lee's decision to fight for the Confederacy came from loyalty to his home state rather than a belief in the institution of slavery. He viewed secession as rebellion but felt he could not turn against Virginia. Lee's leadership was marked by courage, humility, and respect for his troops. After the war, he advocated for reconciliation and grace. Notably, Lee and Union generals like Ulysses S. Grant and George McClellan had served together during the Mexican-American War, creating a shared understanding of military tactics that influenced their Civil War strategies.



Robert E. Lee

Ulysses S. Grant rose from relative obscurity to become the Union's most effective general and later the 18th President of the United States. A graduate of West Point, Grant struggled professionally before the war but found his calling in military leadership. His victories at Fort Donelson, Vicksburg, and Chattanooga were pivotal to Union success. Grant's ability to remain steadfast under pressure earned him the nickname "Unconditional Surrender"



Ulysses S. Grant

Grant. His leadership was defined by his moral courage and determination. His clear vision of the Union's cause and his willingness to endure public criticism to achieve his objectives teach us the importance of perseverance. After the war, Grant worked to protect the rights of freedmen during Reconstruction. Grant's previous service alongside Lee and William Tecumseh Sherman in the Mexican-American War built professional respect that transcended the divide of the Civil War.

Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson was a Confederate general renowned for his tactical brilliance and devout faith. Born in Clarksburg, Virginia (now West Virginia), Jackson graduated from West Point and served in the Mexican-American War. During the Civil War, his steadfast leadership earned him the nickname "Stonewall" at the First Battle of Bull Run. Jackson's courage and innovative strategies were exemplified during the Shenandoah Valley Campaign, where he outmaneuvered larger Union forces. His strong moral convictions and deep religious faith guided his decisions, making him a revered figure among Confederate troops. His ability to innovate and inspire reminds us of the power of conviction and dedication in leadership. Jackson's death in 1863, from complications following a friendly fire incident, was a significant blow to the Confederate war effort. Interestingly, Jackson's contemporaries, such as Union generals George H. Thomas and Winfield Scott Hancock, also served in the Mexican-American War.



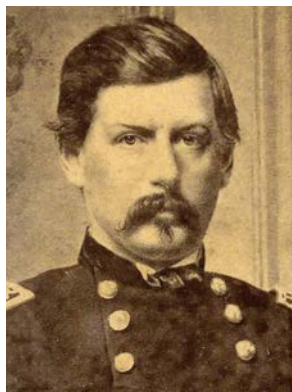
Thomas
"Stonewall"
Jackson

William Tecumseh Sherman, a Union general, is best known for his total war campaign, the March to the Sea. Born in Ohio, Sherman attended West Point and served with distinction in the Mexican-American War. During the Civil War, his leadership in the capture of Atlanta and his subsequent march through Georgia significantly weakened the Confederacy's ability to sustain the war effort. Sherman's leadership was marked by **pragmatism** and an unflinching commitment to the Union cause. While many of his tactics were controversial, targeting southern towns and homes, they were effective in helping to bring an end to the war. Sherman had the uncanny ability to inspire loyalty among his troops, and his familiarity with Grant and other West Point classmates helped forge the strategic cohesion necessary for Union victory.



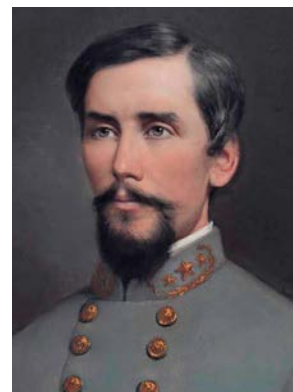
William Tecumseh Sherman

George B. McClellan, born in Pennsylvania and a West Point graduate, had a promising start, gaining recognition in the Mexican-American War. However, his Civil War **tenure** exposed flaws in leadership and personality. Despite commanding a well-prepared Army of the Potomac, McClellan's hesitance allowed Confederate forces to regroup. His cautious nature showed during the Peninsula Campaign and Antietam, where he missed key chances to crush the enemy. He also struggled to collaborate with President Lincoln and Union leaders. Though skilled in training troops, McClellan's failure to act decisively reveals the risks of overestimating opponents and delaying when action is needed.

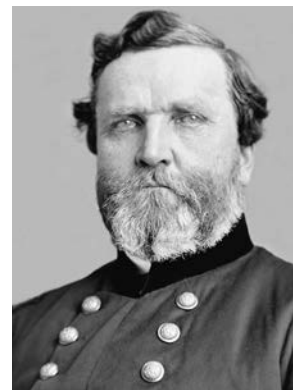


George B. McClellan

Lesser-known generals also played important roles in shaping the Civil War. For the Confederacy, **Patrick Cleburne**, often referred to as the "Stonewall of the West," exhibited remarkable tactical skill and courage. An Irish immigrant, Cleburne fought valiantly in battles such as Chickamauga and Franklin. His controversial proposal to emancipate and arm enslaved people demonstrated both courage and a willingness to think outside the box in the face of mounting Confederate losses. For the Union, **General George H. Thomas**, known as the "Rock of Chickamauga," provided a steadfast defense that saved the Union army during critical moments. Thomas was loyal to the Union despite being a Virginian by birth.



Patrick Cleburne



George H. Thomas

The relationships among Civil War generals were built by their shared experiences in the Mexican-American War and their education at West Point. These commonalities created a network of camaraderie and rivalry that influenced their strategies and decisions during the Civil War. For instance, Lee's and Grant's mutual respect stemmed from their shared military background, even as they fought on opposing sides.



Seven Civil War major generals. Seated: John Alexander Logan, William Tecumseh Sherman, Henry Warner Slocum. Standing: Oliver Otis Howard, William Babcock Hazen, Jefferson Columbus Davis, Joseph Anthony Mower, 1865.

BANDITS AND GUERRILLA FIGHTERS OF THE CIVIL WAR

During the American Civil War, guerrilla fighters employed unconventional and often brutal tactics to achieve their goals. These fighters, sometimes known as bushwhackers, operated outside traditional military authority and norms, engaging in ambushes, sabotage, and raids to harass and wear down their enemies. While both the Union and Confederate sides had guerrilla fighters, the Confederates were particularly infamous for their bushwhacking tactics, which were designed to cause maximum disruption to Union forces.

One of the most notorious Confederate guerrilla leaders was William Quantrill. Before the war, Quantrill led an unassuming life as a schoolteacher. However, the onset of the Civil War exposed his darker ambitions. Quantrill assembled a band of irregular fighters and launched a campaign of terror against Union forces and their sympathizers. Recognizing his potential, the Confederate army awarded him the rank of captain though his methods were far from conventional. The Union, however, viewed him and his men as outlaws for their terroristic and murderous tactics.

Quantrill's gang included future Wild West outlaws Jesse and Frank James and the Younger brothers, whose criminal exploits would later cement their infamy. These men got their first taste of violence and lawlessness under Quantrill's command, engaging in raids, robberies, and attacks that devastated Union troops and communities. One of the most infamous was the raid on Lawrence, Kansas, on August 21, 1863. This attack was motivated by the conflict between proslavery and antislavery factions in the region. Quantrill's gang murdered nearly 200 men and destroyed much of the town, an act so **heinous** that it led the Confederate army to sever ties with him. After losing Confederate support, Quantrill's band disbanded, and he continued his activities in smaller groups until his death in 1865.

Another infamous Confederate guerrilla, William T. Anderson, known as "Bloody Bill," hated the Union because his sister was captured by Union soldiers. This personal vendetta fueled his brutality, and he became a prominent leader among Quantrill's raiders. Anderson was killed in 1864 by a Union militia formed to hunt him down.

In contrast to the unrestrained violence of Quantrill and Anderson, John Mosby, nicknamed "The Gray Ghost," operated as an official Confederate officer. Mosby excelled in espionage and guerrilla tactics, leading a group of rangers who disrupted Union supply lines, destroyed infrastructure, and captured soldiers with minimal losses. Mosby's most famous raid involved capturing 30 Union soldiers and 50 horses—all without firing a shot. After the war, Mosby disbanded his unit and pursued a quiet civilian life, later joining the Republican Party and serving in Ulysses S. Grant's administration.

Union guerrilla fighters, or Jayhawkers, also contributed to the chaotic violence of the Civil War. James H. Lane, a career politician, became a prominent Jayhawker to counter Quantrill's attacks along the Missouri-Kansas border. Lane organized the 1st Kansas Volunteer Infantry, the first African American combat unit of the war. Another notable Jayhawker was Charles Jennison, who led ruthless raids against Confederate guerrillas. Jennison's actions were so destructive that the Union army had to impose martial law in Kansas. Despite his abolitionist beliefs, Jennison's conduct undermined the cause of liberty and equality.

The guerrilla warfare of the Civil War left a lasting legacy of violence and chaos. For many, it was a proving ground for later lawlessness in the Wild West. Figures like Jesse James and the Younger brothers transitioned seamlessly from guerrilla fighting to outlaw careers, while others, like John Mosby, chose to reintegrate into society.



Confederate Cavalry Colonel John S. Mosby (seated center with hat) and some of his men, c. 1865

THE INFLUENCE OF ART— PHOTOGRAPHY OF THE CIVIL WAR



Art has always played a significant role in shaping how we perceive history, and one of the most powerful forms of art that emerged during the 19th century was photography. The Civil War, fought between 1861 and 1865, marked the first major conflict to be extensively documented through this medium. Unlike paintings or written accounts, photography brought the harsh realities of war to the forefront, allowing people to witness the battlefield in unprecedented ways. Let's dive into how photography during the Civil War influenced society and transformed the way we view both art and history.

Photography was invented in the early 19th century, but it quickly evolved by the time of the Civil War. Photographers like Mathew Brady and his team utilized **glass plate negatives** and **portable darkrooms** to capture moments from the battlefield. While the process was labor-intensive, the results were groundbreaking.



Mathew Brady, 1861

Before photography, most people relied on paintings, sketches, or newspaper descriptions to understand events happening far from home. While these mediums often carried artistic flair, they were also prone to romanticizing or distorting reality. Photography changed this entirely as for the first time, people could see accurate representations. Photos of soldiers, camp life, and battle aftermath brought authenticity to



Dead Confederate soldiers from General William Starke's Louisiana infantry along the Hagerstown Pike, 1862

stories previously left to the imagination. These images blurred the line between art and documentation, creating a new genre of visual storytelling.

One of the most striking aspects of Civil War photography was its ability to bridge the gap between the frontlines and the home front. Mathew Brady's famous exhibition, *The Dead of Antietam*, shocked viewers with its raw and unfiltered portrayal of war. These photographs showed fallen soldiers lying on the battlefield, a stark contrast to the heroic and noble imagery many expected. Imagine walking into a gallery expecting grandiose depictions of victory and instead being confronted with images of death and devastation. It was both jarring and eye-opening. For the first time, Americans saw the grim cost of war up close—a reality that could not be ignored.

Newspapers also played a role in publicizing these photographs, though the technology of the time limited them to reproducing engravings based on the photos. Still, the visual impact was profound.



Union company of infantry on march, c. 1860–1865

The rawness of Civil War photography did not just shock people; it also changed opinions. For many, these images fueled debates about the war itself. Were the sacrifices worth it? What did victory mean when the cost was so high? Photographs of the wounded, the dead, and the destruction of towns humanized the conflict, making it harder to view the war as an abstract or distant event.

The photography of the Civil War also served as a sobering reminder of the human cost of division. It forced viewers to confront the consequences of their political and ideological differences. By capturing real people—not just faceless soldiers or abstract causes—photography helped frame the Civil War as a deeply personal and national tragedy.

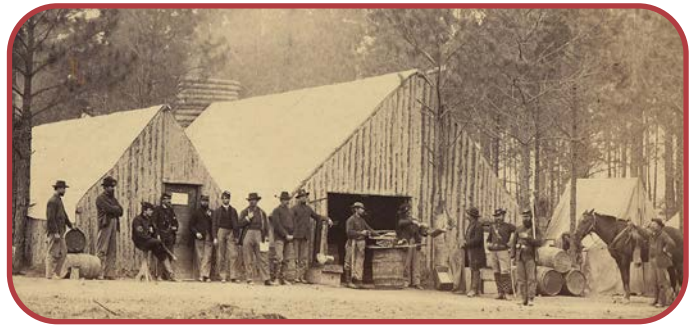
While Mathew Brady is the name most associated with Civil War photography, he was not alone in his efforts. Photographers Alexander Gardner, Timothy H. O’Sullivan, and George Barnard were also instrumental in capturing the conflict. These men faced numerous challenges, from the physical dangers of working near active battlefields to the technical limitations of early photography.



Alexander Gardner, self-portrait, c. 1860s

Unlike today, where taking a photo is as easy as pointing a smartphone and clicking a “button,” Civil War photographers had to work with heavy equipment, prepare fragile glass plates, and process their images on-site using portable darkrooms. Each photograph required careful planning and execution. Despite these hurdles, their work endures as a testament to their dedication and skill.

The influence of Civil War photography extends far beyond the 19th century. It set the stage for **photojournalism**, a field that continues to shape how we understand current events. It also changed the way wars are documented, showing that art and technology could come together to create powerful historical records.



Timothy H. O’Sullivan’s Headquarters of the Army of the Potomac, Commissary Department, Brandy Station, Virginia 1864

Today, the photographs from the Civil War are more than just historical artifacts; they are windows into the past. They remind us of the sacrifices made, the lives lost, and the resilience of those who lived through one of the most tumultuous periods in American history. For those of us studying this era, these images provide a way to connect with history on a personal level, bridging the gap between dates and events in a textbook and the human experiences behind them.

The photography of the Civil War exemplifies the profound influence art has on history and society. It reminds us that art is not just about beauty or creativity; it is a powerful tool for truth and reflection. As you scroll through your social media feed or capture moments on your phone, think about how photography has evolved since the 1860s. What stories will your photos tell future generations?

By examining the Civil War through the lens of photography, we gain a deeper understanding of the conflict and its impact. More importantly, we see how art can shape, challenge, and preserve our collective memory. That is the enduring power of photography—and of art itself.



George N. Barnard’s/Sherman’s men destroying railroad in Atlanta, Georgia, 1864

CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW ANALYSIS

CHAIN-LINKS OF CULTURE GOVERNMENT: AN ELECTION IN THE MIDDLE OF THE WAR

The 1864 election stands as one of the most pivotal moments in American history. President Abraham Lincoln faced significant challenges, including a deeply divided nation, fierce political opposition, and public uncertainty about the war's outcome. His ability to navigate these complexities was instrumental not only to his re-election but also to preserving the Union.

By 1864, the United States was **embroiled** in the fourth year of the Civil War, with no clear end in sight. The conflict had claimed hundreds of thousands of lives, leaving many Americans war weary and uncertain about the future. Lincoln's administration faced criticism from both the Democratic Party and factions within his own Republican Party. The Democrats, led by former Union General George B. McClellan, sought to capitalize on public dissatisfaction with the war. Their platform called for an immediate cessation of hostilities and negotiations with the Confederacy, a position that appealed to those disillusioned by the long, bloody war.

Within the Republican Party, radical members criticized Lincoln for what they perceived as his cautious approach to ending slavery. These radicals advocated for more aggressive policies, including universal emancipation and harsher measures against the Confederacy. Despite these internal divisions and pressures, Lincoln's leadership managed to unify enough of the party to support his re-election.

Public opinion of Lincoln in 1864 was deeply divided. He believed strongly in the people and trusted that, when presented with the truth, they could be relied upon to face any national crisis. What mattered most, in his view, was bringing the real facts before them. While many northerners admired his steadfast commitment to preserving the Union, others viewed him as ineffective or overly conciliatory. Many civil libertarians did not appreciate how Lincoln suspended *habeas corpus* and the use of military tribunals to suppress dissent. Additionally, the Emancipation Proclamation, issued in 1863, alienated some northern voters who were indifferent or hostile to the abolition of slavery.

Despite these challenges, Lincoln's reputation was bolstered by his moral clarity and dedication to the principles of liberty and equality. His ability



Abraham Lincoln (at arrow) at the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Photo by David Bachrach, 1863.

to articulate the war's importance—framing it as a struggle for the survival of democracy—resonated with many Americans. Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, delivered in 1863, had already redefined the war as a fight not just for the Union but for a “*new birth of freedom*.”¹⁸⁸ This vision inspired both soldiers and civilians, even as the war's toll mounted.

Lincoln employed several key strategies to secure his re-election in 1864. First, he sought to unite the Republican Party by forming the National Union Party, a coalition of Republicans and War Democrats. This strategy broadened his base of support and **marginalized** the more radical factions within his party. To further solidify this coalition, Lincoln selected Andrew Johnson, a Democrat from Tennessee, as his running mate. Johnson's presence on the ticket showed Lincoln's commitment to national unity and appealed to moderate voters.

Second, Lincoln prioritized military success as a means of boosting public confidence in his leadership. The summer of 1864 had been marked by grim developments on the battlefield, leading many to doubt the Union's prospects. However, a series of decisive victories in the Fall, including General William T. Sherman's capture of Atlanta in September, revitalized northern morale and strengthened Lincoln's position. Sherman's success proved the effectiveness of Lincoln's military leadership and discredited Democratic claims that the war was unwinnable.

Lincoln also insisted on following the electoral process despite the ongoing war. He stated, “*The election was a necessity. We cannot have free government without elections.*”¹⁸⁹ His insistence on maintaining democratic principles, even under the most challenging circumstances, earned Lincoln the respect of many Americans.

Lincoln won the election decisively, securing 212 of the 233 electoral votes and 55% of the popular vote. His victory was aided by the overwhelming support of Union soldiers, who voted in large numbers for the president they believed best represented their cause. The election reaffirmed the North's commitment to the war effort and dealt a blow to Confederate hopes of a negotiated peace.

The 1864 election perfectly demonstrated Lincoln's extraordinary ability to lead a nation in crisis. By balancing moral conviction with practical politics, he not only preserved the Union but also laid the groundwork for the abolition of slavery.

THE NORTH'S LEADERSHIP ISSUES

In the early phases of the war, the Union army struggled to find good leadership. Generals came and went, each failing to counter the strategic brilliance of Confederate leaders like Robert E. Lee. George McClellan, known for his meticulous organization, gained the reputation of a coward because of his hesitancy on the battlefield, repeatedly missing opportunities to strike decisive blows. Others, such as Ambrose Burnside and Joseph Hooker, were unable to maintain the trust of their troops or achieve consistent success. Lincoln faced immense pressure as the war dragged on without a clear path to victory.



General Ambrose Burnside, 1862



Major General Joe Hooker

Then came Ulysses S. Grant, a relatively unknown officer whose victories in the Western Theater began to turn heads. His successes at Fort Donelson and Vicksburg revealed a **tenacious**, courageous leader with a keen understanding of war. Unlike his predecessors, Grant was not afraid to take risks or endure heavy casualties to accomplish his goals. President Lincoln recognized Grant's potential and, in 1864, appointed him general-in-chief of the Union armies. Grant's leadership brought a unified strategy to the war effort, wearing down the Confederacy with relentless campaigns. His courage and determination passed down to his soldiers. It was largely due to General Grant's determination and strategic vision that the Union finally secured the victory.

FROM A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW PERSPECTIVE: THE FAITH OF STONEWALL JACKSON

Stonewall Jackson was born Thomas Jonathan Jackson on January 21, 1824, in Clarksburg, Virginia. He would not earn the name “Stonewall” until much later. His early years were marked by tragedy as his father died when Thomas was young. Soon after, his mother passed away, and he was sent to live with relatives.

In 1842, Jackson was appointed to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. He struggled at first but eventually graduated 17th in his class. Commissioned as a second lieutenant, he served in the Mexican-American War, where he proved himself strong under fire. This is also when he met Robert E. Lee. In 1851, Jackson resigned and took a teaching position at the Virginia Military Institute. Though respected, he was not well liked as a professor.

When the Civil War began, Jackson remained loyal to Virginia and was quickly promoted. His bravery at the Battle of First Manassas earned him the nickname “Stonewall.” Soldiers admired his steadfast courage.

Jackson’s faith influenced every aspect of his life. This gave him quiet confidence in battle. He once said, *“God has fixed the time for my death. I do not concern myself about that.”*¹⁹⁰

Jackson’s leadership was key to Confederate victories. He was loved by his troops and trusted by Lee, who called him his “right hand.” On May 2, 1863, Jackson was wounded by his own men at Chancellorsville. He died eight days later at age 39—a devastating loss to the Confederacy.



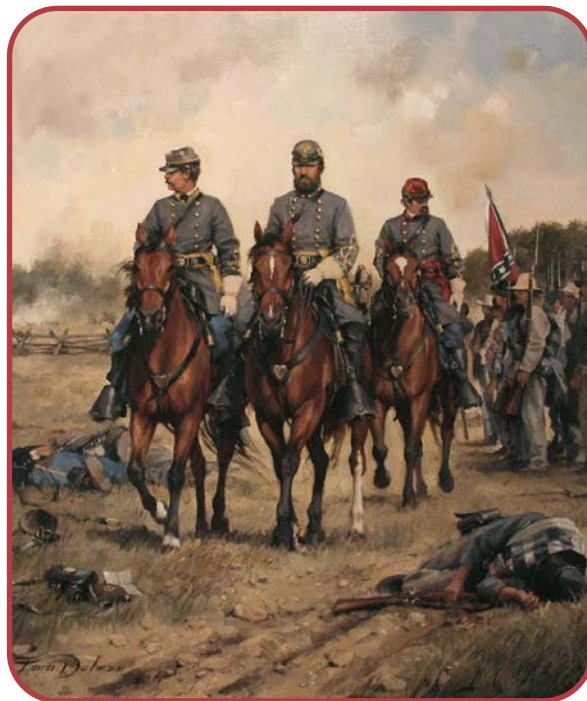
Stonewall Jackson’s “Chancellorsville” Portrait, taken at a Spotsylvania County farm on April 26, 1863, seven days before his mortal wounding at the Battle of Chancellorsville



Death of “Stonewall” Jackson, 1872

GREATEST TAKEAWAYS IN AMERICAN HISTORY

The Civil War, beginning with the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter in April 1861, marked the start of a prolonged and devastating conflict between the Union and Confederacy. Early enthusiasm for a swift resolution faded as the war grew increasingly bloody and complex. Confederate General Robert E. Lee and Union General Ulysses S. Grant emerged, showcasing contrasting strategies and determination. Key moments of this part of the war include Lee’s bold campaigns and Grant’s decisive victories at Vicksburg and Gettysburg. Battles like these shaped the war’s outcome.



General Jackson