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“SETTING BRUSH FIRES OF FREEDOM IN THE MINDS OF MEN”

Massive cultural divisions threaten to unravel America’s constitutional republic and freedoms. **The burning question is, can “One Nation Under God,” be restored? Can we ever share a common cultural unity again?**

The American colonists in the 1760s were deeply divided on many issues. Each of the colonies had separate colonial governments, different commercial interests and represented different denominations. Most of all there was deep division between the **Tories**, those loyal to the mother country, England, no matter how repressive they became, and the **Patriots**, who recognized that the king and parliament of England had become intoxicated with the power and wealth of the English Empire.

England had abandoned her own constitution of which Magna Carta was the central pillar, leaving the colonies with no choice but to stand and resist her tyranny. Much like the overreach of the national government in America today, **the freedoms of all the American colonists were now on the chopping block and in the hands of an out-of-control government** thousands of miles away. Without unity, how could these fledgling colonies defeat the most powerful army and empire since the Roman Empire?



At that time, when the disjointed colonies seemed destined to shrink back into the tyranny of European despotism, a leader rose up who brought them peacefully together. His name was Samuel Adams. Samuel had become a devout Christian as a student at Harvard in the 1730s during the Great Awakening. His love for God and for political liberty led him on a quest for a plan to unite the deeply divided colonies.

He discovered and applied a peaceful ancient strategy that had brought liberty and unity to nations through the centuries. This bottom-up strategy appealed to all people who desired freedom regardless of their class, financial status, political party or denomination. Adams explains the essence of this strategy: **“It does not take a majority to prevail...But rather an irate, tireless minority, keen on setting brush fires of freedom in the minds of men.”** For the next thirty years he set these “brush fires of freedom in the minds of men” teaching the “art of self-government” (see August 2016 Journal) and the “exalted virtues of the Christian religion” to all who would listen.

Adams spread his message of liberty and virtue by walking and teaching throughout his hometown. He became personally acquainted with all the peo-

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ple of Boston. His integrity and likable nature gained for him great respect and influence. He became a **personal educational engine** that united the people in the cause of liberty under God. He had learned to use home meetings from his dad, who taught principles of liberty in their living room when he was growing up. He began working with the local Caucus Club established by his godly father. When he was elected to the legislature in 1765 Adams drafted most of the brilliant state papers during the next decade of fierce conflict with England.

Then in 1773 he created the grassroots *Committees of Correspondence* which became the “**social media**” of his day. Within a few months, 80 towns through New England joined the Committees. Four hundred more towns joined by 1774. **Adams taught that submission to political tyranny always leads to the destruction of religious and economic freedoms.** He knew that people of different interests were all fighting the same battle. With this truth he and his friends united the various factions to resist tyranny.

Working with friends like Patrick Henry of Virginia, Adams brought all of the colonies together for the first Continental Congress in 1774. In 1776, this same Continental Congress, drafted and signed the Declaration of Independence. The last man to speak on July 4th was Samuel Adams, the Father of the Revolution. He said, “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.”

Over the next eight years the true Sovereign blessed the new American nation to prevail against an all-out invasion by the British army, as England was forced to grant America her independence. What united our ancestors in this desperate strug-

gle? It was a deep-seated agreement that “all men are created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” Samuel Adams taught these concepts of liberty for decades before they were memorialized by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence!

For centuries Americans knew that **all of our freedoms and rights come from the Creator not from the government.** This tie between biblical faith and liberty had become a “brush fire of freedom” that united the minds of our people.

We all know that the fire of freedom has dimmed. **But it has not been extinguished!** One individual, Samuel Adams, followed the biblical strategy for uniting a nation

and became known as the Father of the American Revolution. His example gives us great hope!

According to Professor James Christian, “The testimony of Scripture and history reveals that truth will transform a country only as it works through the conviction of the individual, not through notions of democratic consensus. Further, as the individual follows his conviction of truth, he will walk alone, and eventually, he will stand alone, and hold God’s ground alone. Nonetheless, **the well-placed force of conviction of an individual, or a handful of individuals, can constitute catalysis sufficient to transform a culture. Indeed, the testimony of history is that truth and the critical mass sufficient for cultural change resides in the minority, usually in a small minority, and often in only one individual.**”

As we stand for truth as a “tireless minority” and reach out to others, we can “set brushfires of freedom in the minds of men” and see America united again.

— Marshall Foster



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