

What was God's Purpose in creating America?

God had kept North America unsettled until rather late in the history of the world.

To be sure, earlier on, there were travelers from Asia who did arrive on the west coast, and who eventually did spread across the continent. Yet, even after thousands of years, these aborigines were still few in number, and the continent remained, in effect, a wilderness.

Travelers then came from the opposite direction, that is, from the east, from Norway via Iceland and Greenland and settled on the east coast of Vinland hundreds of years before Columbus came. Nevertheless, as the settlements in Iceland and Greenland perished, so nothing permanent ever became of any Norse settlement that had been founded in North America.

What was God's purpose in keeping North America unsettled? It was what his providence has always been in regards to man: it was in view of man's afterlife: That the Lord of heaven and earth wants all those born in time to recognize their sins, to be sorry for them, and to receive from him his promised gift of salvation, obtaining it by an act of faith. After that the Lord will take all those who have believed in his promised salvation home to be with him. In this case God kept North America unsettled in order to provide a home, a nursery, if you will, for those followers of his recent Reformation in Europe. That is, he had reserved a promised land in which his

gospel could grow and spread, indeed, to become one more westward stepping stone from where the gospel could proceed full circle around the globe before the end.

It was in the spirit of such reverent acknowledgment of the providence of God that Columbus named the first land in the Western Hemisphere "San Salvador," that is, "holy Savior" and not a careless and flippant name such as "Devil's Lake" (North Dakota).

In fact, not only was it a precursor of things to come in North America that the Norse in Iceland had a republic in 925 A.D., but, more importantly, that fifty years before this, when the Norse first landed, they found orthodox Christians in Iceland, Irishmen, who had remained aloof from the great falling away (2nd Thessalonians 2:3) in the rest of the Western Christian church. Later in time North America would indeed become a home for orthodox Christianity, predominantly for the German and Scandinavian Lutheran immigrants.

After the handful of explorers of the 1500's and 1600's, settlers started to come to North America with the intent to establish a permanent home. Just the same, of these initial settlements some were disastrous failures; others barely survived. Of those that did survive, even these amounted to little more than tiny outposts which clung to the shores of the Atlantic. Hence it appeared that nothing much would ever become of these homesteads. At this time, 130 years after Columbus, immigrants came in only as a trickle as compared to the

waves of immigrants from northern Europe and Scandinavia in the latter third of the 1800's which poured into this country in the hundreds of thousands. Thus America was settled in the beginning in various places sparingly, in fact, in human estimate, randomly and haphazardly, with no unified intent or purpose with a view toward any future consolidation.

Yet, unknown to these settlers, God had a different plan in mind. In his providence he kept his sheltering arms over the infant years of our land, and supported it with his hand as it labored to take its first steps.

An eyewitness account of this unfolded blessing is given by none other than George Washington in the year 1783, who articulated it in these words: "The citizens of America, the sole lords and proprietors of a vast tract of continent, are now acknowledged to be possessed of absolute freedom and independency. Here Heaven has crowned all its other blessings by giving a fairer opportunity for political happiness than any other nation has ever been favored with. The rights of mankind are better understood and more clearly defined than at any former period. The collected wisdom acquired through a long succession of years is laid open for our use in the establishment of our forms of government. The free cultivation of letters, the unbounded extension of commerce, the progressive refinement of manners, the growing liberality of sentiment, and, above all, the pure and benign light of revelation, have had a meliorating influence on mankind. At this auspicious period, the United States came into existence as a nation" (George

Bancroft, *History of the United States of America* [New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888], VI, page 84).



A painting of George Washington based on an engraving made by John C. McRae which, in turn, was based on an original painting by Henry Brueckner.

In fact, Bancroft himself remarked about our country: "Our national organization... was essentially imbued with the spirit of the Reformation which rose up in Germany with Luther" ("Church News," *The Lutheran Witness*, Vol. 5, No. 6 [7 August, 1886], page 45

Thus “Woodrow Wilson expressed a great historical fact when he said: “‘However humiliating it may be to them or to us, America did not come out of New England’....The Swedes on the Delaware [River] had more to do with the genuine molding of American history than had the Pilgrim Fathers of New England. With these early colonists, liberty of conscience was a historical fact, and not a mockery or a myth, as with the Pilgrim Fathers of New England. They laid the foundation for the success of William Penn’s ‘Holy Experiment’ before this great man was born. At a later day the migration from Pennsylvania into the valleys of the Ohio and Mississippi and to the West spread the Delaware and Pennsylvania influence throughout these regions. Well for all of us that ‘America did not come out of New England’. Well for all of us that American did not take on the stamp of the bigotry and intolerance of the witch-hanging and Quaker-hanging Pilgrim Fathers. Let us be truly thankful that there were ‘other rocks’ than Plymouth Rock” (C. Hale Sipe quoted by Theodore Engelder, “What We Do Not Owe the Pilgrim Fathers,” *Theological Monthly*, Volume VIII, Number 5 [Saint Louis: Concordia, May, 1928], page 152).

To be sure, the very men on the spot in the year 1760 and later testified that one could unite “fire and water” sooner than unite the thirteen colonies (W. E. H. Lecky, *The American Revolution*, editor James A. Woodburn [New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1908], page 12 footnote). Yet God brought the colonies together as one nation.

As it is the will of God, according to his Ten Commandments, that men should live peacefully, and accomplish their goals and projects in like manner, for example, as when Canada became an independent nation in the 1800’s in a peaceful manner, so America could have done the same. Nevertheless, men refused to have it so, and plunged the land into desperate war in 1775. Just the same, God was neither frustrated nor defeated. In spite of the fact that things looked so hopeless for the American cause that in 1780 Alexander Hamilton admitted that if the colonies could not get still another loan from France “we must make terms with the Great Britain” (*Lecky*, page 424 footnote), the Lord listened to the cries of his believers to deliver them, kept his biblical pledge to do so, and, by his marvelous might raised up the American nation out of the ashes of war.

Therefore, realize that in his fathomless plan of mercy, the true and triune God of heaven had kept this continent as a trackless wilderness so that he could provide a home for his followers of the Reformation, which had restored the biblical gospel, to be guided by him from inception to form a Christian nation, and to be blessed by him with a golden age of gospel believers, who could and should be a soul-saving beacon to the rest of the world!

Yet our people soon fell away from a love of God’s truth, and, after a period of his patience and grace, had refused to hear his warning calls to repent and to return to the Lord. Keeping his threat to destroy any nation that would reject his gospel, our land is now subject to his

unrelenting anger. We deserve it. We have no excuse to offer.

Nevertheless, trust in the Lord's promise: "The Lord is with you while you are with him" (2nd Chronicles 15:2)! Humble yourself, admit your guilt, confess our country's sins, ask the Lord for his forgiveness of them, and plead, "Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of your name; and deliver us and purge away our sins, for your name's sake" (Psalm 79:9)!

Prayer/Hymn

Lord, while for all mankind we pray,
Of ev'ry clime and coast,
Oh, hear us for our native land,
The land we love the most.

Oh, guard our shores from ev'ry foe,
With peace our borders bless,
With prosp'rous time our cities crown,
Our fields with plenteousness.

Unite us in the sacred love
Of knowledge, truth and Thee;
And let our hills and valleys shout
The songs of liberty.

Here may religion, pure and mild,
Smile on our Sabbath hours;
And piety and virtue bless

The home of us and ours.

Lord of the nations, thus to Thee
Our country we commend:
Be Thou her Refuge and her Trust,
Her everlasting Friend!

John Reynell Wreford (1800-1881).