

GEORGE WASHINGTON, “THE MOSES OF AMERICA”

February 22, 1732–December 14, 1799

Strong Influence of A Godly Mother

Exodus 6:20

And Amram took him **Jochebed**, his father’s sister, to wife; and she bore him Aaron and Moses; and the years of the life of Amram were an hundred and thirty and seven years.

Exodus 2:1–3, 7–9, 10, 11

And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife **a daughter of Levi**. And the woman conceived, and bore a son; and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, **she hid him** three months. And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river’s brink.

Then said his sister to Pharaoh’s daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may **nurse the child for thee**? And Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child’s mother. And Pharaoh’s daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and **nurse it for me**, and I will give thee thy wages. And **the woman took the child, and nursed him. And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh’s daughter.** . . .

And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that **he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens; and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren.**

“. . . a few twentieth-century historians and writers have tried to paint her as something of a monster, unloved by George and her other children. Her slim surviving correspondence, however, indicates the warmth of her feeling for all her family. To her oldest son she wrote, ‘I am, my dear George, your loving and affectionate mother.’ He in turn publicly referred to her as ‘**my revered Mother; by whose maternal hand (early deprived of a Father) I was led from childhood.**’ . . . Her grandson Lawrence Lewis, when in his sixties, gratefully remembered his walks with her to see the beauties of the Rappahannock, while she urged him to express his love to the God who had given them to the world.”

“. . . she lived a longer life than her parents, children, or grandchildren. Her fifty-six year widowhood almost equalled her husband’s life span of forty-nine years. Her first born, George, the last of her children to die, clearly **inherited his robust constitution from her**, outliving his half-brothers and far preceding Washington forbears by nearly two to three and one-half decades. Mary Ball Washington added a needed vigor to the previously short-lived Washington stock.” (Harrison Clark, p. 9)

“The course of Mrs. Washington’s life exhibiting her qualities of mind and heart, proves her fitness for the high trust committed to her hands. She was remarkable for vigor of intellect, strength of resolution, and inflexible firmness wherever principle was concerned. Devoted to the education of her children, her parental government and guidance have been described by those who knew her as **admirably adapted to train the youthful mind to wisdom and virtue.** With her, affection was regulated by a calm and just judgment. . . .” (Elizabeth Ellet, 1849, *George Washington: The Character and Influence of One Man*)

“Endowed with plain, direct good sense, thorough conscientiousness and prompt decision, she governed her family strictly but kindly, executing deference while she inspired affection. . . . **He inherited from her a high temper and a spirit of command but her early precepts and example taught him to restrain and govern that temper and to square his conduct on the exact principle of equity and justice.**” (Washington

A Religious Home Education

Exodus 6:20

And Amram took him Jochebed, his father's sister, to wife; and she bore him Aaron and Moses; and the years of the life of Amram were an hundred and thirty and seven years.

Exodus 2:1

And there went **a man of the house of Levi**, and took to wife **a daughter of Levi**.

“The vows of those who devoted their offspring to God in holy baptism, as administered by the Church of England, were very solemn, and the age distinguished by a rigid punctuality respecting the duties enjoined by these vows.

“Forasmuch as this child hath promised, by you, his Sureties, to renounce the devil and all his works, to believe in God, and to serve him; ye must remember, that it is **your parts and duties to see that this infant be taught, as soon as he shall be able to learn, what a solemn vow, promise and profession, he hath here made by you.** And that he may know these things the better, **ye shall call upon him to hear Sermons; and chiefly ye shall provide, that he may learn the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, and all other things which a Christian ought to know, and believe to his soul's health;** that this Child may be virtuously brought up. to lead a godly and a Christian life—remembering always that Baptism doth represent unto us our profession; what is; to follow the example of our Savior Christ; and to be made like unto him, that as he died and rose again for us, so should we, who are baptized, die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness; continually mortifying all our evil, and corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living.” (*George Washington: The Character and Influence of One Man*, p. 161)

Worldly Advantages Through Adoption

Exodus 2:5–10

And **the daughter of Pharaoh** came down to wash herself at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river's side; and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it. Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, **Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages.** And the woman took the child, and nursed him. And the child grew, and **she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son.** And she called his name Moses; and she said, Because I drew him out of the water.

“The attachment of Lawrence to his brother George seems to have acquired additional strength and tenderness on their father's death. **He now took a truly a paternal interest in his concerns and had him as frequently as possible a guest at Mt. Vernon.** Lawrence had deservedly become a popular and leading personage in the county. **He was a member of the House of Burgesses and Adjutant-General of the district, with the rank of major and a regular salary.** A frequent sojourn with him brought George into familiar intercourse with the family of **his father-in-law, the Hon. William Fairfax, who resided at a beautiful seat called Belvoir,** a few miles below Mt. Vernon and on the same woody bridge bordering the Potomac.

“**William Fairfax was a man of liberal education and intrinsic worth. He had seen much of the world and his mind had been enriched and refined by varied and adventurous experience.** Of an ancient English family in Yorkshire, he had entered the army at the age of twenty-one, had served with honor both in the East and West Indies, and officiated as Governor of New Providence after having aided in rescuing it from pirates. For some years past he had resided in Virginia to manage the immense landed estates his cousin, Lord Fairfax, and lived at Belvoir **in the style of an English country gentleman, surrounded by an intelligent and cultivated family of sons and daughters.**

“An intimacy with a family like this, in which the frankness and **simplicity of rural and colonial life were united with European refinement, could not but have a beneficial effect in moulding the character and manners of a somewhat home-bred school-boy.**” (Washington Irving, p. 8)

“**From 1747 on, the influence of the Fairfaxes became progressively more and more significant.** In their order of importance we would note them as: first, Colonel William Fairfax, second, his son George William; and third, Lord Fairfax.” (William Wilbur, p. 163)

“... [George] had **full access to Lord Fairfax's unusually fine collection of books.** When he was at Mount Vernon, a short pleasant ride took him to Belvoir, where **Colonel William Fairfax made his excellent library completely available.**” (William Wilbur, p. 162)

Wilderness Experience

Exodus 2:14, 15

And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? Intendest thou to kill me, as thou didst kill the Egyptian? And Moses feared and said, Surely this thing is known. Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But **Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian.** . . .

Exodus 3:1

Now **Moses kept the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian.** . . .

“The merits of Washington were known and appreciated by the Fairfax family. Though **not quite sixteen years of age**, he no longer seemed a boy, nor was he treated as such. Tall, athletic and manly for his years, his early self-training and the code of conduct he had devised gave a gravity and decision to his conduct. His frankness and modesty inspired cordial regard.”

“It was in the month of March (1748) and just **after he had completed his sixteenth year that Washington set out on horseback on [his first] surveying expedition** in company with George William Fairfax.

(Washington Irving, p. 11)

“[Washington’s surveying]. . . **inspired a confidence in himself, kindled fresh hopes, and prepared the way for new successes.** He had moreover acquired **a knowledge of parts of the country hitherto little known, which were to be the scene of his first military operations;** and had witnessed modes of life, with which it was necessary for him to become familiar in fulfilling the **high trusts that awaited him.**” (Jared Sparks, *George Washington: The Character and Influence of One Man*, p. 27)

“George Washington **began** both his first extended trip westward and **a lifelong diary** on March 11 (O.S.), 1748, . . . From this date, **the previously unknown George Washington emerges with vigor. The wit and humor, which bubble through his writings, appear for the first time.** In echoing his mother’s love for natural beauty, he began to develop a theme which was to recur in his presidential diaries more than forty years later.”

“With the completion of **his apprenticeship**, George rode to William and Mary College at Williamsburg. There on July 20, 1749, he received his formal commission, **at seventeen**, as surveyor for Culpepper County.” (Harrison Clark, pp. 23, 25)

Deliverer

Exodus 3:10

Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, **that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.**

Exodus 14:31

And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord **and his servant Moses.**

“. . . It is not surprising that it has often been declared that **George Washington was the Revolution.**

“This claim is amply justified by Washington’s performance **as Commander-in-Chief of the American Revolutionary Forces.** Throughout the war he conducted himself with commendable modesty, wise caution, and consistent good judgment. This was true in matters of relative unimportance as well as in the great crises. We note, for example, the remarkable effect of **his decision to serve without pay. This seems to have had almost as much influence in winning the approval and loyalty of the people as did some of his major military successes.**

“When Washington took command at Boston he showed **capacity and courage** in that he immediately started to train the leaders at all levels, and tackled the task of bringing discipline to an army composed of men who were convinced that they had no need for it.”

“As the years of struggle rolled by, Washington showed **long-suffering patience in facing one trial after another.** His ordeals included such diverse crosses as the Conway Cabal, General Gates’ highly unorthodox efforts to advance his own ambitions, and Benedict Arnold’s treason. Added to these was the unnecessary load which resulted from action of the Congress in commissioning many foreigners as General Officers, men whose only ability was their glib capacity to describe their own supposed merit.

“Always with General Washington was the constant struggle to find food, medicine, equipment, transportation, weapons, and ammunition—a **never-ending, thankless task.**

“Yet, despite all these diverse harassments and monumental difficulties, Washington made an army. He did this so well that when the great opportunity was presented at Yorktown, he conducted the campaign in flawless fashion. This operation involved the intelligent use of sea power, the command of an interallied force, the execution of a march that is one of the most brilliant ones of military history, and a confrontation with seasoned, well-led British forces. **Washington accomplished all these things with intelligence, skill and faultless timing, thus concluding the War for our Independence.**

“Washington’s military capacity may be summarized in the statement that **he accomplished more with fewer resources than any other military leader has ever done before or since.**” (William Wilbur, pp. 198, 199)

Lawgiver of A Free Nation

Exodus 18:13–23

And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people; and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening. And when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What is this thing that thou doest to the people? Why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning unto evening? And Moses said unto his father-in-law, Because the people come unto me to inquire of God: When they have a matter, **they come unto me; and I judge between one and another, and I do make them know the statutes of God, and his laws.** And Moses' father-in-law said unto him, The thing that thou doest is not good. Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that are with thee; for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone. Hearken now unto my voice; I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to Godward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God. **And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt show them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.** Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundred, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. **And let them judge the people at all seasons; and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge; so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee.** If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace.

Exodus 24:4, 12

And Moses **wrote all the words of the Lord**, and rose up early in the morning, and built an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there; and **I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written, that thou mayest teach them.**

“. . . unity of action as was attained during the period of the fighting war, was entirely due to the compulsion of the situation.

“Despite all. . . one of the greatest achievements of the era was **the attainment of solid union.** The Revolution provided the background; George Washington saw the vital necessity and was **the unquestioned architect of our national unity.**”

“The American Revolution marked a change to government by consent of the governed; it resulted in the establishment of **a representative republic in which the power remained essentially in the hands of the people.** Here the leadership of George Washington was the decisive controlling factor. Many had written and talked; **he was the single individual who had the leadership, the prestige and the selflessness to support and implement such a monumental change. He was the only individual in whom the people had faith, the only leader with the following and the power to achieve the great change.**”

“. . . True freedom and independence had been achieved, but he urged that we not stop there. He told his countrymen that unless a **solid union** was formed all the costly efforts of eight painful years would be lost.”

“. . . The people had to experience the chaos and anarchy which Washington predicted before they were ready to accept is advice. With the remarkable judgment and sense of proper timing which characterized all his actions, Washington bided his time for three years.

“But he was not inactive; rather **he used the time to prepare the way for the change he hoped would, one day, be effected.**”

“Finally, spurred on by events like Shay's Rebellion, the Federal Congress called what it was pleased to consider a convention. . . , to meet in Philadelphia. . . .

“. . . the whole scheme was given great added impetus when it became known that Washington had been chosen as a delegate and had agreed to attend. The assurance that he would participate was important in securing the final approval of the Federal Congress and the agreement of many of the States to participate.”

“. . . This great figure—quiet, highly respected, at times even awesome—was at its best throughout the Constitutional Convention.

“Interestingly, after Washington had been unanimously elected to preside over the convention (no other candidates were considered), no steering committee appears to have been organized. **The guidance, the control, and the path to be followed in the development of the constitution, were all left in Washington's hands. The logical forward progress of the debates, the complete fairness of the chairman, and the constant adherence to proper objectives are themselves almost as worthy of study as the Constitution itself.**”

“After the state legislatures and the people had given their approval to the new Constitution Washington hoped that he could retire to private life. Both his farm at Mt. Vernon and his personal finances were in bad shape as a result of the lack of his attention for a period of almost twelve years.”

“But everyone—both his friends and those who opposed his views—agreed that **Washington was the only man qualified to hold the office of President during the initial years of the new republic.** . . . Publicly they pointed out that he people had faith in Washington, that he was the only man that all the states trusted, that he had the respect of all foreign governments.”

“Somehow, by dint of patience, selflessness, and firmness when needed, Washington remained above the petty quarrels and was able to guide the nation through its first eight years. **At the end of that time a solid structure had been built, precedents set and the economy of the nation turned from weakness and uncertainty to a situation of calm and thriving prosperity.**” (William Wilbur, pp. 218, 219, 221, 222, 223, 224, 235, 238)

A Farewell Address

Deuteronomy 31:1–6, 16–18, 30

And Moses went and spoke these words unto all Israel. And he said unto them, I am an hundred and twenty years old this day; **I can no more go out and come in. Also the Lord hath said unto me, Thou shalt not go over this Jordan.** The Lord thy God, he will go over before thee, and he will destroy these nations from before thee, and thou shalt possess them; and Joshua, he shall go over before thee, as the Lord hath said. And the Lord shall do unto them as he did to Sihon and to Og, kings of the Amorites, and unto the land of them, whom he destroyed. And the Lord shall give them up before your face, that ye may do unto them according unto all the commandments which I have commanded you. **Be strong and of good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them; for the Lord thy God, he it is who doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.**

“For I know that **after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you, and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands.**”

“With the publication of the **Farewell Address**, George Washington’s work was done.”

“With the experience of almost eight years in the Presidency uppermost in his mind, Washington then **cautioned** against the excesses of factions and parties, against passions and dominance of any particular group, especially against domination by a single individual. . . .

“He **gave some very wise counsel** to those who were entrusted with the administration of the country’s affairs. They should, he said, ‘confine themselves within their respective constitutional spheres; avoiding in the exercise of the powers of one department, to encroach upon another. The spirit of encroachment,’ he wrote, ‘tends to consolidate the powers of all the departments in one, and thus creates. . . a real despotism.’

“Washington was **not opposed to changes in the Constitution** or in the government itself. . . . **‘But let there be no usurpation.’**

“Usurpation, he stressed, ‘is the customary weapon by which free governments are destroyed.’

“He told the American people that ‘religion and morality are the indispensable supports’ ‘which lead to political prosperity;’ . . . ‘Morality,’ he wrote, ‘cannot be maintained without religion. **Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.**’ . . .

“In what is perhaps the **most prophetic and far reaching part of the address he told the people that we should ‘observe good faith and justice toward all nations.’** . . .

“Washington counseled against habitual hatred of or habitual fondness for any other nation. . .

“He **summarized his ideas in the field of foreign policy** with the statement, ‘The great rule of conduct for us, in regard to foreign nations, is, in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little Political connection as possible.

“He told us that **we should avoid** becoming entangled ‘in the toils of European ambition, rivalry, interest, humor or caprice,’ that we should ‘steer clear of **permanent alliances.**’ And he added, ‘Taking care **always to keep** ourselves, by suitable establishments, on a **respectable defensive posture**, we may safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies.’”

(William Wilbur, p. 254, 255, 256)

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