

Membership Matters

Alexander Hamilton and the Beauty of Belonging

Church November 7, 2021

Hebrews 13:7

Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.

To the Glory of God

Now the verse that Brother Reese just read to you is where the writer of **Hebrews** instructs the people of the Christian Church to “**remember**”. And we are to “remember” people who have two characteristics:

1. Those who led you
2. Those who spoke the Word of God to you

And then the writer goes on to say that we are to “do” two things with those who led us and who spoke the Word of God to us:

1. Consider the result of their conduct
2. Imitate their faith

Now the way this is written in the original Greek tells me that the people we are to “remember” are dead- because the writer doesn’t say that we are to merely “*consider their Conduct*”- but we are to “consider the *result* of their Conduct” and you simply *can’t* do that- until the Life of that individual is over; and there is no more Conduct to consider. Sadly, because we are fallen creatures- as long as somebody is alive- they are able to destroy a lifetime of Service and Faithfulness. But after a person is dead and with the Lord- the *result* of his entire Life can be considered; and his Faith imitated.

So, the Holy Bible teaches us that we are to have “*Heroes of the Faith*”, who are now dead; men who led the Church; and men who preached and taught the Word of God during their lives. And we are told to “consider the end result of their Conduct”; and we are also told to “imitate” or “copy” or “emulate” their Faith. In fact, the writer of **Hebrews** thought this was *so* important- that he

included in his Epistle- his own brief biographical sketch of several of the OT heroes of the faith- which is what we call today the 11th Chapter of **Hebrews**.

And so, a few years ago- I began something that I pray will not only be a Blessing to you today- but will be something that we will engage in from now on: that, around the *end* of October or the *first* of November¹- we will celebrate the many people who came before us; and who lived lives of godliness and faithfulness to Jesus Christ. And we will *obey* this portion of Scripture and we will “remember” some of the Heroes of the Christian Faith.

Now anytime you do something like this- there is a Danger. And the Danger is *NOT* that we might get some historical facts wrong; or get some dates mixed up- but that we will- even slightly- *replace* inerrant and infallible Scripture with the weak and frail personal Experiences of other human beings- no matter how important those people might be.

And yet we see that the writer of **Hebrews** tells us right here to risk that Danger and to go ahead and remember these people. And so, in my effort to be Biblical- let us obey this verse and remember these people.

Now the man I want to bring to your attention this morning is *NOT* a good Example. He is a *bad* Example. A *very* bad Example. “*Okay, Brother Blair, the writer of Hebrews just told us to examine good Examples- so we may learn from them and imitate their Faith. So, why are you bringing us a bad Example?*”

Because I know that it is just as important to know what *NOT* to do as it is to know what to do. And bad Examples serve the Purpose of warning us- to *NOT* be like this. This is why Failure is so important in this Life, my brothers and sisters. When we speak of “Freedom” we need to always have the “Freedom to Fail”- so that we may learn from our Mistakes and our Failures- so we may change our ways.

This is why I am against the current trend of our own Government to use tax dollars to “bail out” Automobile Corporations and Airlines and other Corporations. Most of the time, these Businesses got into terrible financial straits by *NOT* using proper management tools. And so, even though it will result in many people being laid off; and will result in great economic hardship for many people- we need to *learn* from their Mistakes- so that other Businesses will *NOT* make the very *same* Mistakes.

So, in that way- us examining the very “troubled” Christianity of Alexander Hamilton- we will learn what *NOT* to do- in at least two areas:

1. How we are *NOT* to think about our Relationship with Jesus

¹ The reason I picked this time frame is because on October 31, 1517, Martin Luther posted his 95 Thesis on the door of the Church at Whittenburg- which ignited the Protestant Reformation.

2. How we are NOT to think about our Place in Christ's Church

But positively, by looking at Alexander Hamilton's spiritual Life (or lack of one)- we may also see the "*Beauty of Belonging*". For that is truly a Gift worth valuing. You see, as people, who have experienced the Miracle of the New Birth- the God, Who sovereignly chose us; the God, Who sovereignly "set His Love upon us"; the God, Who powerfully and effectually *dragged* us to Jesus- so that we might be washed; and forgiven; and made Righteous- that very same God has also *put* us; He has sovereignly "*placed us*" into a Body; an Assembly; a Group. And that Body is called, "*The Church*".

And as part of the One; Holy; Universal; and Apostolic Church that Jesus is building; and over which Jesus is Head; and as part of the Church that Jesus will *assure* that the very Gates of Hades itself shall NOT overpower- we are no longer alone.

Through Salvation, we are not only forgiven and made Righteous, but we are now "*joined with Jesus*" to the degree that now we have what the Puritans called, "*Union with Christ*". And the Apostle Paul was "moved" by God the Holy Spirit to teach us that this "*Union with Christ*" is so powerful- that it is likened to the "*Union*" that a Husband has with his Wife within the Marriage Covenant when he said this in **Ephesians 5:28-30**:

So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body.

And that is both amazing and breathtaking. But in *addition* to all of us having "*Union with Christ*"- the Bible also teaches that every single genuine believer also has a "*Union*" WITH every other genuine believer. And that Union is also "TO each other"; and "FOR each other". Truly there is nothing like the Church of Jesus!

Now I would guess that the majority of you know very little about Alexander Hamilton other than that he was famous for being part of the early Government of this Country; and that he and Aaron Burr had a dispute that ended with Burr killing Hamilton in a Duel on July 11, 1804.

But what you may not know is that, among many, many other accomplishments- Alexander Hamilton was a brilliant legal scholar; a military Commander; a Lawyer; a Banker; and an Economist. Hamilton was also one of the "Founding Fathers" of the United States; a promoter of the US Constitution; the Founder of the Nation's financial System (he designed it); a Founder of the

City of New York (he designed it); the Founder of the Federalist political Party; the Founder of the US Coast Guard; and the Founder, Editor, and Publisher of the *New York Post* newspaper.

You also may not know that Hamilton was born on the Leeward Islands² around 1755. He and his older brother (James Jr.) were the illegitimate sons of Rachel Faucette and James A. Hamilton. And one of the first snubs that Hamilton experienced in his brief Life was when he and his brother were denied Membership in the Church of England (and education in the Church School)- because their parents were not legally married.

Now this may sound harsh to some of you- but records show that Rachel Faucette had been legally married to a German merchant (Johann Michael Lavien) on St. Croix (Virgin Islands) and had birthed a child named, “Peter”. But in 1750, Faucette *abandoned* both her Husband and infant son and moved in with James Hamilton. The couple settled in Nevis³, into a seaside lot that she had inherited from her Father. And around five years later- the first Treasury Secretary of the United States was born.

Now to their credit- the Leaders of the Church of England went to Hamilton’s Parents- *repeatedly*- to encourage them to repent; and be saved; and to get married (they weren’t aware she was already married); and become active Members- but they *repeatedly* refused. So, Hamilton learned, from his Parents, at a young age, how to *supposedly* believe in God; and *supposedly* be saved; and to *supposedly* be in right standing with God- and yet be completely *isolated* from Christ’s Church. So, in light of that- I ask you a few Questions this morning:

- What are your Children learning from you about Salvation?
- What are your Children learning from you about the Church of Jesus; and about their Role in it?
- Is the Lord’s Day just another Day to your Children?
- Are your Children learning from you that Church Attendance matters?
- What are your Children learning from you about the importance of Church Membership?

Jesus said in **Matthew 16:18b**,

... upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

² A group of islands situated where the northwestern Caribbean Sea meets the western Atlantic Ocean.

³ A small island in the Caribbean Sea that forms part of the inner arc of the Leeward Island chain

... and you simply CANNOT read the New Testament (with any degree of honesty) and NOT understand that the infinitely superior New Covenant- that God established through the sinless Life; the flawless Ministry; the substitutionary Death; the bodily Resurrection; and the physical Ascension of Jesus- is wrapped up in the Christian Church. The New Covenant does NOT give any special significance to the geographical Nation of Israel. The New Testament Scriptures give all attention to the Church.

So, everything done to the Glory of God the Father (Yahweh); in the Name of God the Son (Jesus); through the Power of the Holy Spirit- *under the auspices of the New Covenant-* is done *in, by, and through* the Church. So, under the New Covenant- there are no more *individual* people acting *individually-* according to God's Will. Nobody today is an island unto himself. All who are truly saved- are a part of the invisible and eternal Church of the First Born; and every one of those saved people are commanded by God's Word to be a vibrant part of a local Body or Assembly. And each genuine believer is commanded to submit themselves to the Authority of the Elders of that local Body and to submit to each member; and to regularly attend. The writer said in **Hebrews 13:17:**

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

... and again in **Hebrews 10:23-25:**

23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;

24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,

25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

... and yet, in spite of the clear Teachings of infallible and sacred Writ- we have, today, a wide Gap; a sinful Distance; and selfish Separation between far too many people, who lay claim to be saved and the effort to actually obey these (and many other) verses.

It is common today for people to, *say* they are saved, and yet put forth little or no effort to actually "BELONG" to any local Church- where they can enjoy the Beauty of standing shoulder to shoulder with other blood washed saints against the Evils of our day; and to encourage and strengthen them; and to be encouraged and strengthened by them.

The Bible that talks about Jesus is the same Bible that *commands* those who have been saved by Jesus- to NOT walk on this straight and narrow Path alone. But Alexander Hamilton, like many today, who lay claim to be saved- didn't believe that. He may have been an amazing Patriot and a Founding Father of our Nation- but according to the Standard laid out clearly throughout the entirety of the New Testament- Alexander Hamilton was a rebel and a *terrible* spiritual Example for us today.

Now when the Truth about their Adultery became known- Hamilton's Father responded by quickly deserting his Mother and Hamilton never saw his Father again. Rachel Faucette then moved to St. Croix where she supported her children by keeping a small store in the town of Christiansted.

And sadly, Faucette contracted yellow fever and died on February 19, 1768- leaving 12- year- old Hamilton as an orphan. And to add Insult to Injury- James Hamilton then went to court and legally seized all of Faucette's assets- leaving the two young boys destitute as well as orphaned.

Hamilton and his brother then went to live with a cousin (Peter Lytton)- who soon committed suicide- causing the boys to be split up and cast out on the street again. After this- Hamilton never saw his brother (who died in 1769) again.

Hamilton thrived as a merchant/trader and continued to self-educate himself. And before he was 20 years old- Hamilton was proficient in both the French language and in eloquent writing. His letter to his father about a hurricane that had devastated Christiansted on August 30, 1772, was so amazing that a Presbyterian minister (Hugh Knox) sought to have it published. By this time, his own personal Library had grown to contain 34 volumes.⁴

Now to his credit- in spite of perceived snubs, Hamilton was no stranger to the Bible or the Church. So, as a child on the Caribbean island of Nevis, where he was born across the street from St. Paul's Anglican Church, he was "homeschooled" and taught by a Jewish Mistress, who taught Hamilton to recite the Decalogue⁵ in its original language. And when he finally arrived in America- Hamilton was allowed to attend Elizabethtown Academy in New Jersey, where he wrote commentaries on the Books of **Genesis** and **The Revelation**. And at King's College in New York, he sometimes attended Chapel- where he began "*the habit of praying quietly upon his knees both night and morning.*"⁶; a habit he continued to his death.

So, while several of America's Founding Fathers either questioned or outright rejected the fundamental Beliefs of Christianity, Hamilton (the grandson

⁴ A book in the 18th Century cost approximately a normal year's salary.

⁵ The Ten Commandments

⁶ John C. Hamilton, *The Life of Alexander Hamilton* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1840), 1:10.

of a French Huguenot), had periodic glimmers of a man, who had experienced the Miracle of the New Birth. And during his life- Hamilton seemed to basically remain within the Bounds of historic Protestant Christianity.

The “homeschool” in which Hamilton was instructed left him with a lifelong affection for the Jewish people. And “*Reformed Protestantism*” was the very reason that Hamilton’s family had arrived in the West Indies in the first place. In a letter to William Jackson in 1800, in which he fumed over criticisms of his humble birth, Hamilton wrote,

“My Grandfather by the mother’s side of the name of Faucette was a French Huguenot who emigrated to the West Indies in consequence of the Edict of Nantz and settled in the Island of Nevis and there acquired a pretty fortune. I have been assured by persons who knew him that he was a man of letters and much of a gentleman.”⁷

Now the “*Huguenots*” were Protestants in France back in the 16th and 17th Centuries, who held to the Teachings of John Calvin, a French-born theologian in Geneva. And while the “*Edict of Nantz*” in 1598 granted “*Religious Toleration*” to Protestants for the sake of “*Civil Unity*”, the French Reformed Church would endure severe Persecution when the Edict was revoked in 1685 by Louis XIV.⁸

The result was a “*Huguenot Realignment*” throughout the Western World, including the West Indies. John Faucette had arrived at the shores of Nevis as a French immigrant seeking Religious Freedom from the tyranny of the Roman religious System. Not surprisingly, his grandson would carry an aversion to “Popery” all of his life.

So, Hamilton may very well have thought of his grandfather when he denounced the “Quebec Act of 1774”, a Measure that extended the border of Quebec to the Ohio River and guaranteed full “Religious Liberty” to French-Canadian Catholics.

In his Writing, “*A Full Vindication of the Measures of the Congress*”, Hamilton opined,

“The affair of Canada, if possible, is still worse. The English laws have been superseded by the French laws. The Romish faith is made the established religion of the land, and his Majesty is placed at the head of it. The free exercise of the Protestant Faith depends upon the pleasure of the Governor and Council.”

⁷ Hamilton, “*To William Jackson, August 26, 1800*,” in *Writings*, 930.

⁸ As Carter Lindberg notes, “*The first evangelical congregations in France were called Huguenot, but the French Calvinists preferred the term ‘Reformes’ [the Reformed.]*” Lindberg, *The European Reformations*, 2nd ed. (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 267.

He then asked,

“Does not your blood run cold, to think an English Parliament should pass an Act for the establishment of arbitrary Power and Popery in such an extensive country?”⁹

Shown by his friendship with Marquis de Lafayette and his proficiency in the French language, Hamilton never lost touch with his French Heritage. But an abiding hostility toward Catholicism and French “infidelity” always remained. In a letter to Edward Carrington in 1792, Hamilton warned that Thomas Jefferson had “*drank deeply of the French philosophy, in Religion, in Science, in politics.*”¹⁰ Although the supposed rationality of Deism appealed greatly to Hamilton, he never strayed from a Protestant World View.

But despite his rich family Heritage, there was also a darker side to the religious world Hamilton inhabited. As the illegitimate son of a bankrupt merchant, Hamilton was barred from being instructed at an Anglican school and these losses and rejections that he and his brother James suffered at a young age, influenced his religious consciousness.¹¹

Alexander Hamilton was, in some sense, *disinherited* by his own family and by the Church. As his biographer, Ron Chernow observes,

“As a divorced woman with two children conceived out of wedlock, Rachel was likely denied a burial at nearby St. John’s Anglican Church. This may help to explain a mystifying ambivalence that Hamilton always felt about regular church attendance, despite a pronounced religious bent.”¹²

Hamilton’s affiliation with the Church thus became not unlike his own American Citizenship, being at the same time- an “insider” and an “outsider”. The hierarchical West Indian System that encouraged his abject Hatred of Slavery along with a powerful Ambition- may also have fostered a rather conflicted view of the Church. Hamilton, the Architect of the U.S. Constitution and the nation’s first banking system, was a firm believer in Institutions. Yet as demonstrated in his last moments, he also had difficulty submitting himself to that very Authority.

So, despite his seemingly authentic, *personal* Faith- Hamilton was a man “between two Churches” (Anglican and Presbyterian)- shaped by both but finding

⁹ Alexander Hamilton, *A Full Vindication of the Measures of the Congress*, in *Alexander Hamilton: Writings* (New York: The Library of America, 2001), 33–34.

¹⁰ Hamilton, “To Edwards Carrington, May 26, 1792,” in *Writings*, 746.

¹¹ Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton*, 17.

¹² Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton*, 25.

fellowship in neither. So, this amazing man never became a member of either Church. So, if his Salvation existed at all- it was a very “troubled” one.

Now those of you, who know me, understand how I struggled with the Concept of Church Membership- for many years. And my struggle centered on one Issue: I didn’t (and still don’t) want it to be *harder* to become a Member of this Church than it is to go to Heaven. Also, there isn’t a specific Command for formal Membership anywhere in the Bible. But after studying all that the Scriptures teach that the Church; and the Leaders of the Christian Church; and the saved are supposed to do- it became clear to me that the ONLY way to actually obey these Commands was to have *some* form of formal Church Membership.

Now as an orphaned and destitute young man- Hamilton owed his passage to America largely to the patronage of one man- the Rev. Hugh Knox, who inspired the teenager to record his thoughts about God and who likely sponsored the “*Subscription Fund*” that financed his journey to America so he could be formally educated.

Hamilton went by ship to Boston in October 1772 and immediately came under the influence of William Livingston, a local intellectual and revolutionary. He entered King’s College in the autumn of 1773 as a “private student” and quickly advanced into higher grades with honors in May of 1774. Hamilton was now able to speak passionately and eloquently about the “*Patriot’s Cause*” against the English.

During the British occupation of Boston- Hamilton was forced to suspend graduation until after the Revolutionary War. In 1775, Hamilton volunteered for the New York Militia- which was called, the “Corsicans”. He drilled with the Company before classes in the graveyard of St. Paul’s Chapel. And in his spare time- he taught himself Military History and Tactics. It was then that he met other “Patriots” such as Alexander McDougal and John Jay. Hamilton raised 60 men to fight against the British and was elected as their Captain. He fought in the Battles of White Plains; Trenton; and Princeton.

Hamilton was now convinced that his path to Fame was in the Military. So, he accepted a position as George Washington’s Aid with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel- in which he served four years. Hamilton also served in heavy combat at the battle of Yorktown- which finally ended the War.

In 1782, Hamilton was able to pass the Bar Exam and argue cases before the Supreme Court of New York. In July, Hamilton was appointed to the *Congress of the Consideration* (an early precursor to the US Congress) as a Representative from New York. He resigned in 1783.

In 1784, Hamilton founded the Bank of New York- which is still in existence today (*NYMellon Bank*). In 1787, Hamilton served as an “Assemblyman” from New York County and as a Delegate to the *Constitutional*

Convention- which drafted what we know today as the *Constitution of the United States*. The Constitution was ratified by New York solely because Hamilton persuaded other Delegates to sign it.

It was Alexander Hamilton that recruited John Jay and James Madison to help him write a series of Essays that we know today as, the “*Federalist Papers*”. Hamilton wrote 51 of the 85 Essays himself.

George Washington appointed Alexander Hamilton to be the first Secretary of the Treasury on September 11, 1789. He left Office on January 31, 1795. It cannot be overstated that much of the entire Structure of the Federal Government was created and worked out during that time- *largely* by Hamilton- and many times- *solely* by Hamilton. He literally created, from scratch, the entire financial System of the United States during that time- along with creating the United States Mint.

Even though he left the Federal Government in 1795- Hamilton did NOT leave public life. George Washington leaned on Hamilton very heavily for the remainder of his life- and it was Hamilton who wrote most of George Washington’s “*Farewell Address*.”

But then in 1797- Hamilton also had the dubious distinction of becoming the very *first* American Politician to be embroiled in a sex-Scandal- where he was actually blackmailed by the woman’s husband, with whom he had *repeatedly* committed Adultery. However, this Scandal didn’t stop him from becoming the Inspector General of the United States from 1795-1800.

Aaron Burr was born in 1756- as the son of great Wealth and Prestige. His grandfather was Jonathan Edwards (one of my heroes), who is perhaps, America’s *greatest* Theologian. Burr’s Mother was Esther Edwards Burr- the daughter of Edwards.

But like Hamilton, Burr became an orphan at a young age. His Father died in 1757 and Jonathan Edwards moved into the home to care for Burr. But in March of 1758 Edwards died of a smallpox vaccination. Soon after Burr’s Mother and Grandmother also died- leaving Burr as an orphan at the age of 2. Burr then went to live with an Uncle- Timothy Edwards, who routinely beat him.

But also like Hamilton- Burr was a naturally brilliant Man. And so, at age 13- Burr enrolled in what is today, Princeton University where he received a Bachelor of Arts degree at the age of 16. He remained there to continue studying Theology until he changed course and at 19 began studying Law.

In 1775, when Burr heard that the British had killed many people in Lexington and Concord- he put his studies on hold and joined the Continental Army. During the Revolutionary War- Burr worked under both Benedict Arnold

and George Washington. It was under General Israel Putnam that Burr saved an entire brigade from capture which elevated Burr to the status of a national hero.

Due to failing health, Burr resigned the Army- yet was still used by George Washington in intelligence operations. After the war, Burr graduated and was admitted to the New York Bar in 1782. He then served as an Assemblyman in New York from 1794-85. In 1789, Burr was appointed as Attorney General of New York. In 1791 Burr was elected as a Senator from New York, where he served until 1797.

In 1796- Aaron Burr ran for President and received 30 electoral votes- coming in 4th behind John Adams. After being rejected by Adams for a brigadier general position- Burr went back to New York and served in the New York Legislature from 1798-1799.

In 1799 Burr founded the *Bank of Manhattan*¹³- which brought him into fierce competition with Alexander Hamilton. Burr used his bank to promote his political agenda in both city and national areas- many times in opposition to Hamilton.

In the Presidential election of 1800- Burr and Thomas Jefferson both received 73 electoral votes. So, the House of Representatives voted and gave the Presidency to Jefferson- who Hamilton had supported- which alienated Burr even further. But because Burr had the 2nd largest vote count- he assumed the Office of Vice President.

Thomas Jefferson never trusted Burr and purposefully kept him ignorant of what he was doing. He never met with Burr the entire time he was President. But as the President of the Senate- Burr received high honors. His farewell speech in 1805 even brought his political opponents to tears.

In 1804, when it became clear that Jefferson would drop him from the ticket- Burr ran for Governor of New York. He lost to little known Morgan Lewis. It was during this race that Hamilton supposedly said that Aaron Burr was, "*a dangerous man and one who ought not to be trusted with the reins of government.*" Hamilton denied that he said this and was misquoted.

But the tension between Burr and Hamilton continued to rise until Burr challenged Hamilton to a duel. So, the sitting Vice President had challenged the former Secretary of the Treasury to a duel to the death in order to defend his honor.

Now dueling had been outlawed in New York for several years. And the Punishment for a Conviction of dueling in New York was Death. Dueling was also illegal in New Jersey as well, but the consequences were less severe (imprisonment).

¹³ Merged with Chase bank in 1955 to become the *Chase Manhattan Bank*. Today this bank is known as the *JPMorgan Chase Bank*

So, on July 11, 1804, the two men met just outside Weehawken New Jersey at the very spot where Hamilton's oldest son had died in a duel just three years prior. Both men fired- and Hamilton was mortally wounded by a shot just above the hip.

Aaron Burr was officially charged with Murder but was never tried. He fled to his daughter in South Carolina for a while but then returned to Washington DC to serve out his term as Vice President.

Hamilton however clung to Life for another grueling 31 hours after the duel. Although his amazing Life and sad Death have not typically been remembered for their Piety and Devotion, Hamilton's Beliefs about God; Jesus; Sin; and Salvation came full center during his last excruciating moments.

But we need to remember that back then- Dueling was look at by most of the people of the Church as Murder. And even though it had been legal for many years- and in spite of the strange "nobility" that was associated with it- Dueling was a purposeful and measured and thoughtful Act of Murder. And so, those who participated in Dueling were looked at as Murderers.

Burr's bullet had torn through Hamilton's liver and his vertebra and had left him completely paralyzed- while slowly bleeding to death. Yet he was fully conscious. And his family took him to a second-floor Manhattan bedroom to slowly and agonizingly die. And it was there that Hamilton's *non-relationship* to the Church became a very serious Issue. Because Alexander Hamilton, the West Indian immigrant who became the principal Architect of the new American Government, was still without a Church home. And as a result of his repeated refusal to ever submit himself to the Authority of Scripture during his Life concerning Christ's Church (along with the fact that he had participated in a Duel)- Hamilton was denied Communion on his deathbed- twice!

Shortly after crossing the Hudson River wounded and being transported to the home of his friend William Bayard, Hamilton called for Rev. Benjamin Moore, the rector of Trinity Church, the Episcopal bishop of New York, and the president of Columbia College. In 1788, the Hamiltons had their three eldest children baptized *simultaneously* at Trinity Church. Since 1790, when the church was rebuilt after the great fire of 1776, they had rented pew 92. Therefore, to ask Moore to perform last rites was not totally unexpected. On one hand, Hamilton appeared to ascribe some efficacy to the sacraments and wished to be buried at Trinity Church. But on the other hand, Hamilton was only *nominally* a Christian.

No amount of legal work he supplied for the Church or religious fervor on the part of his wife, Eliza (who was unaware of the duel), could atone for the fact that Hamilton had never actually been baptized. Hamilton had neither attended Trinity Church regularly nor had he personally ever taken Communion.

Therefore, despite a dying plea from one of the nation's Founding Fathers, Hamilton was, to Bishop Moore, nothing more than a lawless rebel- without access to the Lord's Table. And Moore's refusal to administer the Lord's Supper to an unbeliever would only foreshadow the high Church Theology of the next Bishop of New York, John Henry Hobart, whose *Apology for Apostolic Order and Its Advocates* (1807) was aimed at the second clergyman who visited Hamilton that day: Rev. John Mitchell Mason.

And although Mason was less exclusivist than the Episcopalians, he likewise was bound by his own theological Convictions in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. When Hamilton pleaded with his dear friend to administer Communion to him, Mason replied that, even though it gave him "unutterable pain" to decline such a request, "*it is a principle in our churches never to administer the Lord's Supper privately to any person under any circumstances.*" After Mason explained that the Supper was only a Sign of the Mercy of Christ that was "*accessible to him by Faith,*" Hamilton responded softly,

"I am aware of that. It was only as a Sign that I wanted it."

So, here is a man who is dying. A very famous and influential man. A Founding Father of the Country- no less. And a Patriot of the highest order. And this man is begging people to give him Communion. And I would suppose that, today- 9 out of 10 Pastors would have relented and would have given this dying man a final moment at the Table of the Lord. And I would also suppose that 9 out of 10 Pastors today would condemn those men for NOT giving Hamilton his time.

Yet those men were right. They were correct. Because they refused Hamilton- NOT because they were evil men, who had no Compassion. They were refusing to allow Alexander Hamilton to eat at the Lord's Table because they were concerned that he was not genuinely born again. And lost people have no business at the Table of the Lord! So, it was precisely because they valued the Sacrament of the Lord's Table so much that they refused to allow a man of this stature to eat unless he showed proper fruit that God had washed his Sins away!

Would to God we would value the Lord's Table like this ourselves! Would to God we would so appreciate the Scriptures- the very Word of God- that we would not dare to rebel against it and call ourselves "God's people"!

And so, instead of condemning the Pastors, who refused him Communion- we need to ask some Questions:

1. Why didn't Hamilton obey the Bible and formally and publicly become a Member of Christ's Church?
2. Did he consider himself to be outside of the Grace of God?

3. Was he concerned about being held accountable?
4. Was it because he had no love for the other members that he remained separated from them?

... and as we seek to understand this amazing and strange man's relationship with God- we also need to ask ourselves some Questions as well- such as:

1. How do *we* view Church Membership? With Joy or Dread?
2. Do we believe that faithful Attendance is a Commandment or an Option?
3. Are *we* concerned about being held Accountable?
4. Do we love the other Members of this local Church enough to participate in their Sanctification?

Alexander Hamilton held to a basic understanding of the Gospel, to be sure. Nevertheless, in the face of Hamilton's shameful and imminent Death- Pastor Mason discarded every notion of how important this man was and proceeded to quote from a barrage of scriptural Texts, including:

Romans 3:23

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

The Acts 4:10-12

let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this name this man stands here before you in good health. He is the STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED by you, THE BUILDERS, but WHICH BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone. And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

Hebrews 7:25

Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

Ephesians 1:7

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace

1Timothy 1:15

It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.

Isaiah 43:25

“I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake, And I will not remember your sins.

So, when it came down to it- in the mind of Pastor Mason- Alexander Hamilton was really no different than any other human being. He was a sinner in need of a Savior. And even though Hamilton was gifted to be able to design the entire financial system of the United States- he failed to see how important it was to live his Life in connection with his brothers and sisters IN the Church and NOT be separated from it and them.

So, when the Preacher reminded him that *“in the Sight of God all men are on a level, as all have sinned, and come short of His Glory,”* and must take refuge in the righteousness of Christ, Hamilton answered,

“I perceive it to be so. I am a sinner: I look to His Mercy.”

... and upon Mason’s insistence that the Grace of God was Rich, Hamilton interrupted,

“Yes, it is very rich Grace.”

Few presentations of the Gospel have ever been clearer than the one delivered to Alexander Hamilton on his deathbed. Still, perhaps the most compelling testimony from Rev. Mason is his account of Hamilton’s reaction to **Ephesians 1:7**. After hearing of the **“forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace,”** Alexander Hamilton finally let go of Mason’s hand, clasped his own hands together, looked up to Heaven, and cried,

“I have a tender Reliance on the Mercy of the Almighty, through the Merits of the Lord Jesus Christ.”¹⁴

Wow! This sounds great! So, were these the words of a true believer? At first glance, Hamilton’s Confessions appear as if they were uttered in genuine Faith. In his final hours, the Major General claimed that the promises of Scripture were his *“Support.”* Years earlier, in a renowned legal case, Hamilton had referred

¹⁴ J.M. Mason, *An Oration, Commemorative of the Late Major-General Alexander Hamilton* (London: R. Edwards, 1804), 33–36.

to the Jews in the Old Testament as the “*witnesses of [God’s] miracles*” who were “*charged with the spirit of prophecy.*”¹⁵

Now even though Hamilton was influenced by Deism during his lifetime, he was never suspicious of biblical Revelation to the degree that Franklin, Jefferson, or Madison were.¹⁶ Hamilton once confessed that he could prove the Truth of the Christian Religion “*as clearly as any proposition ever submitted to the mind of man.*”¹⁷ His Abolitionism (against Slavery) and his capacity for lasting friendship set him apart from many of the other Founders. And his view of human Nature, demonstrated best in the *Federalist Papers*, often bordered on the Puritanical.

However, like George Washington (who formally joined the Church), Hamilton was reluctant to discuss his Christian Faith. Ironically, the man who, to rescue his own financial integrity, printed an entire account of his own Affair in the first major Sex Scandal in American history had seemingly less to say about his Relationship with Jesus Christ. Episcopal Bishop William White refused to publicly drink a toast to Hamilton due to his indiscretions with Maria Reynolds, and, until recently, Evangelicals have been reluctant to honor a Politician, who was a flagrant and unrepentant Adulterer.¹⁸

Although he had once opposed Dueling “*on the principles of religion*” and seemed not to intend to actually kill Burr, a duelist he was nonetheless.¹⁹

As many scholars have noted, Hamilton was a very *strange* man, whose Sins were just as public as his Successes. And when we examine the complexity of Hamilton’s Faith, we are confronted with the Conflict that inevitably arises when:

- ✓ The Authority that the Bible gives to the local Church is *subordinated* by people with great Ambition
- ✓ The holy Fire of Christian Zeal is slowly *cooled* by professional Aspirations
- ✓ The clear Commands of the Bible are *ignored* because of the carnal Lusts that dominate this fallen World.

... so, in that sense- we need to look at Hamilton so we know what NOT to do and so we may know how NOT to live our lives.

¹⁵ John C. Hamilton, *Life of Alexander Hamilton* (Boston: Houghton, Osgood and Company, 1879), 7:710.

¹⁶ Ron Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 205.

¹⁷ Hamilton, *Life of Alexander Hamilton*, 7:790.

¹⁸ Willard Sterne Randall, *Alexander Hamilton: A Life* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003), 421.

¹⁹ Alexander Hamilton, “To William Gordon, September 5, 1779,” in *Alexander Hamilton: Writings* (New York: The Library of America, 2001), 63.

Because in analyzing the relatively brief Life of Alexander Hamilton- we encounter both Grace and Temptation that *exemplify* what we might face in our *own* lives such as:

- The Danger of building earthly kingdoms without seeking first the Kingdom of God
- The Grace and Encouragement of a believing Spouse
- The fleeting Nature of even the most astonishing Career

... or as the wisest man in all the world at that time discussed what this Life actually is- without Jesus,

Ecclesiastes 1:2

“Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher, “Vanity of vanities! All is vanity.”

I honestly believe that God used Alexander Hamilton to help fashion this Nation. And we all owe a great Debt to this man for all that he did to help us become the greatest Nation in all of human History. So, if your desire is to study American History- you could not do any better than to examine the Life of the man named Alexander Hamilton.

But as a Christian; as a man, who was supposedly washed and forgiven and made Righteous by Jesus- Hamilton failed us badly. His reluctance to publicly Praise his Savior (even though publicly discussing his sexual scandals) and his repeated refusal to ever join a local Church are Sins that we must make sure we are not guilty of.

So, in that sense- God can use Alexander Hamilton to help us- certainly NOT for us to emulate his walk with God- but to warn us about what NOT to do; and how NOT to live our Lives.

O, if I could convince you all today of the pristine “Beauty of Belonging”- *really* Belonging to Christ’s Church! I cannot even begin to tell you how much I value being a part of a Body that genuinely loves me; and a Church that weeps when I weep; and that rejoices when I rejoice! And a Church that earnestly pays for me! But I know that they can only do that- when I resist the Temptation that Pride whispers to me to keep to myself; and to not let anyone to get that close- and I go ahead and open my chest and allow my Brothers and Sisters to see my beating heart!

Because only when people see me with all my warts and failures and weaknesses- do they really know me. Because that is who I really am. And when, by God’s Grace- we can actually do that TOGETHER- when we can really come to really know each other; and to love each other- then and only then will we

actually obey the Bible and be able to confess our sins and faults and weaknesses to each other- so we may pray for each other.

And I can't even begin to tell you how I value being held accountable by godly Elders, who genuinely love me; and who guard my soul; and who pray for me; and teach me God's Word.

As much as he experienced- Alexander Hamilton never knew the Beauty of Belonging. And so, he robbed himself of one of the greatest Gifts; one of the most important Means of Grace a human being can ever have in this Life- NOT merely belonging to Jesus (which is the very BEST)- but Belonging- really Belonging- to other saints of God in the Church!

So, may we all yield to the Truth of Scripture and to the unmistakable Leading of God the Holy Spirit- that in our lives- we will celebrate the Beauty of Belonging to Christ's Church. That we will rejoice that the New Covenant allows us to not only have a "Union" with Jesus Christ- but a wondrous "Union" with other "like- minded- believers"- so that we are never alone but part of something *much bigger*; and *much more important*; and *much more glorious* than ourselves. Because this is what the Apostle Paul saw when he wrote this in **Ephesians 5:25-27**:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.

