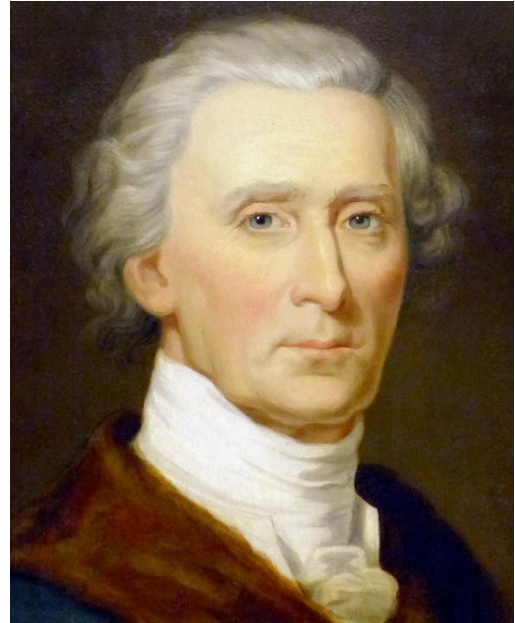


Redeeming the Fathers of America

Charles of Carrollton (1737-1832)

There were many men among our founding fathers that could be categorized as patriots, even gentlemen of some regard. However, what sets this man apart for me is how his life addresses so many of the lies presented by atheists and agnostics alike. It also touches on the issue of religious persecution in the colonies. In spite of the Puritan Separatists or Pilgrims fleeing from the religious persecution of England in the 1600's, a thorough study of their lifestyles reveals how they in fact restricted the rights of others based on religious affiliation.



Charles Carrollton was born in Annapolis, Maryland at the home of his parents, Charles Carroll and Elizabeth Brooke. As the only child of Maryland's wealthiest family it was not merely his fortune that set him apart, but the richness of the heritage, the legacy and traditions of defending family and faith that were passed to him through the Carroll generations.

Young Charles was originally homeschooled. At the age of 10, in 1747 Charles and his cousin John were sent to study at the Jesuit school at Bohemia Manor in Cecil County. Their education was executed with the utmost of secrecy and concealment in spite of Maryland embracing religious diversity it did not permit Catholics or Jews entering into politics or voting prior to 1776. It would appear hypocritical that the colony did not restrict them from becoming wealthy citizens or acquiring vast holdings of land, for this provided capital for new enterprises.

By 1749, John Carroll became the first American Catholic Bishop. Charles and John were then sent to study at St. Omers in French Flanders. Charles was schooled in classical studies in Paris and by 1760 he was studying English law at the Inner Temple in London. His

educational opportunities far exceeded that of other founding fathers. He continued to study in Europe until the untimely death of his mother brought him back to Maryland after 16 years abroad.

Upon his arrival in 1765, Charles was granted a 10,000 acre tract of land, which he called Carrollton. Even though he never lived there, Charles adopted “Carrollton” as his own signature to distinguish himself from so many other Charles Carrolls. In 1768, he married his cousin Mary “Molly” Darnall and brought seven children into the world, but sadly only three of their children reach adulthood.

The grand house and grounds at Carrollton afforded Charles the opportunity to host many dignitaries and government leaders such as George Washington and the Marquis de Lafayette. Even though he could not hold a political position Charles’ involvement in politics kept the family busy with many a social event through the period of the Revolutionary War and in 1783, the Annapolis house was the site of the Official State Celebration for Peace and Independence.

As a young man interested in literature, Charles was enamored with the humanities, especially the philosophical writings of Locke and Montesquieu. It was Montesquieu, and later Voltaire, whose writings ignited an early passion for the republican ideals which would be the foundation of his revolutionary beliefs.

I mentioned the word patriot at the onset of this article. Charles Carrollton’s position in regard to emerging revolutionary politics resulted in a series of letters published in the Maryland Gazette in 1773. It could be said that Charles practiced his own version of apologetics as he publicly debated “Antilon,” for which history describes as the powerful provincial official Daniel Dulaney. Charles signed himself in these debates as the “First Citizen” and deliberated on issues of freedom of conscience and the rights of the elected assembly versus the power of appointed government. Many of these topics we are familiar with, but few have taken up the charge of engaging in. It was Carrollton’s ability which gained him notoriety for embracing the principle that the people are the true foundation of government and emerged as the citizens “patriot.”

It was during this period of discourse that Charles was appointed to the Annapolis Committee of Correspondence and Council of Safety. Soon after he was elected to the Second

Maryland Convention in 1774, his first elected office. This officially ended the ban on Catholics serving in Maryland politics in November 1774.

In early 1776, Charles Carroll, Samuel Chase, and Benjamin Franklin were appointed as commissioners to Canada. It was the duty of Charles to enlist the support and alliance of Canadians in the growing conflict with Britain. Although his efforts failed, his efforts continued to gain him prestige among his peers and succeeded in persuading Maryland to instruct its delegates to vote in favor of independence. Charles was elected as Maryland's representative and joined the other delegates, which now numbered thirteen unified colonies, at the Second Continental Congress, at which time he signed the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia on August 2, 1776.

His experience with the Continental Congress proved advantageous in writing Maryland's first State Constitution and Declaration of Rights, which were adopted in November of 1776. Carrollton was then appointed a member of the first Maryland Senate and a delegate to Congress in 1777. He was elected President of the Senate in 1783, serving from 1776 to 1800. Charles' cousin Daniel Carroll was instrumental in the framing of the United States Constitution, specifically the 10th Amendment.

Historical Revisionists have misinformed the general public regarding the life of our founding fathers, labeling them as hypocrites especially in regard to owning slaves. It is documented that Charles of Carrollton had personally owned between 400-500 blacks, placing him as one of the largest slaveholders at the time of the Revolution. What they don't report is that he was also president of the American Colonization Society (1828-1831), which sought to solve America's slave problem by resettling them in Africa. He regarded slavery in this way, *"Why keep alive the question of slavery? It is admitted by all to be a great evil."* As a result of his belief in this great evil he committed great sums of his own finances to achieve the goal of setting them free and re-establishing them in their homeland.

Some historians also twist the Christian faith of our founders, especially when it comes to their misrepresentation of the "division of church and state." To clarify the position of religion and its potential positive impact upon government Charles Carroll is quoted in a letter to James

McHenry of November 4, 1800 as saying, *“Without morals a republic cannot subsist any length of time; they therefore who are decrying the Christian religion, whose morality is so sublime & pure, [and] which denounces against the wicked eternal misery, and [which] insured to the good eternal happiness, are undermining the solid foundation of morals, the best security for the duration of free governments.”*

It is with this measure of conviction that men like Charles of Carrollton stood in the halls of freedom and warned the Republic of the potential dangers if we as a nation were to withdraw from our morals. Yet just over 200 years of history has found us victims of such a society because so many of us have done so little in the fight to sustain those freedoms. It is men like Charles of Carrollton that give me the courage to sound the alarm in our day.

Charles also took aim at Jefferson and his chief partisan who sat in government. Much like the Apostle Paul who confronted Peter for saying one thing and doing another, Charles confronted the association with the political ideals of Thomas Paine with his book titled *The Age of Reason*. Charles feared that many would approve of what Paine wrote calling it *"blasphemous writings against the Christian religion."*

In closing I want to read how Charles of Carrollton responded to what he experienced and subsequently addressed during debates in Congress. It is obvious by his writings that he observed the possibility of America becoming a Christian nation from a governmental perspective. He believed like so many that the bible separates the responsibilities of the civil from the religious. This is not to say that the Church does not have a responsibility to provide direction when the civil government steps into the realm of the Church. However, there is potential for grave danger when the Church attempts to usurp its authority over civil government. As a Christian Charles wrote, *"To obtain religious as well as civil liberty I entered jealously into the Revolution, and observing the Christian religion divided into many sects, I founded the hope that no one would be so predominant as to become the religion of the State. That hope was thus early entertained, because all of them joined in the same cause, with few exceptions of individuals."*

This very delicate line has been crossed over the centuries by the Church as well as civil government. Either way the consequences can be serious. I believe Charles of Carrollton and other founders were wise enough to recognize the need for the balance to function as indicated in the bible and were therefore not willing to commit to a Church State. The more understanding I gain in this area of the bible the more I am in agreement with his principle.

Sources:

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