

# Ashbel Green

by Ian Murray

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*The sermon explores the life and legacy of Ashbel Green, a Christian leader who played a significant role in the Revolutionary War and whose conversion experience had a profound impact on his life and faith.*

**Duration:** 53:17

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, John 1:16

**Topics:** "Christian Biography", "Personal Sanctification"

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## Description

The video is a summary of the life and ministry of Ashbel Green, a preacher and pastor in the 19th century. It describes how Green engaged in exercises where children were given portions of scripture to read and were examined by their parents. The video emphasizes the importance of prayer and effort in resisting vice and promoting reformation. It also highlights Green's last moments, where he burst into an ecstasy of joy and thanksgiving while a friend was reading from the Gospel of John. Overall, the video portrays Green as a dedicated preacher and influential figure in promoting the Gospel.

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## Transcript

I did it because a few weeks ago when I was at home seeking to prepare for this visit it seemed to me that having prepared one address on Spurgeon I couldn't really bring myself to prepare another particularly in this bicentennial year. Even in England and Scotland you know we are very conscious of the date and it seemed to me we even have postage stamps which I haven't seen here yet but it seemed to me to come all the way to Harvey Cedars and to speak only about an Englishman at this time wasn't really appropriate and then I must admit I have been looking for some while for an opportunity to speak on Asheville Green when we were last here at Harvey Cedars in 1973. One of the memorable blessings of that visit was the possibility of borrowing the life of Asheville Green.

It took me I suppose two to three months to read it. It's over 600 pages but I shall never forget the joy of first reading it and in addition Jim Adams whose name has been mentioned a few moments ago a missionary in Columbia Jim was then preparing to leave for Latin America and I was greatly moved when he pressed into my hands an old rather tattered and infinitely precious volume called Discourses by Asheville Green. I read both those books for the first time in 1973 and ever since then it seemed to me that here is a Christian leader of a past generation who we really ought to know and a man who has a great deal to say to us.

Asheville Green started to write his life when he was 79 years old. You can picture him in the year 1840 in a room in Philadelphia wearing a clerical wig and silk stockings dressed in the 18th century style starting to write his life at the age of 79. And he went on writing until he was 85 and I have to tell you in case you think he was just seeking to recapture memories that he had his diaries which he had kept all his days and from those diaries he built this most valuable record of his life.

He says at the beginning that as he looked back he had lived to see a new race succeed his own contemporaries and that the whole face of the nation and society had changed in his lifetime. The America of his youth was a land of dense forests and few and small cities. He says there were no turnpike roads there were no banks there were no canals no railroads no steamboats indeed no United States but only 13 colonies under King George III.

Well this life of Asheville Green was at length published after his death in 1849. There's one statement in the book which is certainly wrong. Towards the conclusion certain other prominent Christians finished the volume off because Green died before his completion and one of these men wrote that Asheville Green would be remembered 100 years hence.

Well that is a statement which as you've already seen a few moments ago is incorrect. Now why then Asheville Green and what relevance has he to the year 1976? Well a great deal. He spent his most impressionable years at the time of the Revolutionary War on that night of April the 19th in 1775 when Paul Revere rode from Boston Asheville Green was 12 years old and when the war concluded he was 20 and he was closely involved in a great deal of what took place in those intervening years.

He actually knew he says personally 15 or 16 of the signers of the Declaration of Independence and what is more remarkable at the age of 21 he had to address Congress and the ministers of France and Holland and finish his address with a particular oration to George Washington. Well we talked about splurging yesterday at 22 in the Crystal Palace but I think I would rather have been splurging in that position than Asheville Green at the age of 21 addressing Congress. So you see he was very closely involved in that period and not only so but this is my second reason why he is a worthy subject of attention he not only participated in a number of those events but he has left very full records and information and in particular he writes on the extent of the Christian influence in the transformation of the 13 colonies into the United States.

Now as you know modern writers have been prone to give very little place to religion in the Revolutionary War. Everybody is told of the religious disbelief of Thomas Jefferson everybody is told of the latitudinarian views of Benjamin Franklin but the impression is given that French atheistic philosophy was the dominant influence or at any rate an equal influence with the influence of the Christian faith in that period. And in the very decided judgment of Asheville Green that is an altogether erroneous interpretation of 200 years ago.

To me that makes him interesting I know this is a wide subject and you will find other views you will find them in the book room there but in the ongoing discussion of this I think that men like Asheville Green ought to be heard. How strong was the influence of the Christian faith in the Revolutionary War? My third reason then for turning to him is that he is a fine example of the spirit of the Christians of 200 years ago. As patriots you remember political events and as Christians we ought to remember the church of that day.

We are still one with them they in glory and we upon earth. We are united with them in the body of Christ. We shall meet them by God's grace in the future and we are in debt to them now for their labors.

We have entered into their heritage and therefore at a time when people are simply commemorating national events, surely as Christians we ought to remember the church and the saints of that period which is now so much a subject of attention. Asheville Green then was born at Hanover in Morris County, New Jersey in the year 1762. 1762.

His father was Jacob Green In the year 1745 Jacob Green had been a student at Harvard and George Whitfield had been visiting and preaching in New England and Jacob Green rode with Whitfield from New England down into the middle colonies and there Jacob Green remained. He became pastor at Hanover and he stayed there for 45 years until his death in 1790. He was twice married and Asheville Green was the a son, one of the sons of his second marriage.

His wife was of Scots, Irish descent. Both my parents, says Green, were eminently pious. My mother always praying with the family when my father was from home.

In no other family have I known the Lord's day to be observed with equal strictness and solemnity. My father, after preaching to the people of his pastoral charge twice on each Sabbath in the summer and once in the winter and after resting for a short time had his whole family collected together for instruction and devotion. It is at least 70 years ago and yet in my mind's eye I see him sitting in his armchair and without book and commonly with his eyes shut asking in regular order every question in the Westminster shorter catechism helping or correcting those who could not repeat it perfectly.

And then Green goes on to describe very beautifully the exercises in which they engaged how the children were given portions of scripture examined them on their reading. The whole was concluded with a short address from my father and all was by an impressive prayer. No secular business no conversation on secular subjects was allowed in the family except that which related to milking the cows and relieving the necessities of animals of which my father had a considerable number.

Well, Jacob Green was the pastor as I've told you. He was also a good deal besides. He was the local school teacher.

He was the local doctor. He had real interest in farming though he didn't do much of that. He made sure that Ashbel Green was taught farming by one of the congregation.

He taught his son a good deal of medicine. As a youth Ashbel Green was trained to let blood and to remove teeth and to inoculate for smallpox and one gets the impression of a family life which was very varied and very rich and full of interest. And one of the points of interest was the political agitation of the day.

Every week Ashbel Green would have to go about half a mile to a tavern where he waited the arrival of the mail from New York and expected in the mail was John Holt's newspaper. Now in New York in those days though it may be to believe it there were only two real newspapers certainly that boasted any influence. One was published by John Holt and the other by James Rivington and these two papers were as opposite as could be on political matters.

Rivington's paper was a high Tory paper supporting the high handed government of George III and John Holt's paper was a paper which stood vigorously for the interests of the colonies and the antagonism between these papers was an antagonism which was reflected through society. But Ashbel Green tells us that when this paper came to the tavern Holt's paper he would be off home with it. It would immediately be

the subject of attention and discussion and every member of the congregation was a supporter of Holt's paper.

That's an interesting point. It is of course a matter of fact that certainly in New Jersey and in many other parts of the colonies the Christians were solidly behind the interests of the colonies over against the politics of the English Tories. There was only one man who Ashbel Green knew in his childhood who was a supporter of the other view.

It has sometimes been wondered why when the war broke out at last in April 1775 why it was that Christians in the colonies were so commonly found on the American side. What was their justification for seeking independence by means of revolution? But that question misunderstands the circumstances in which the struggle began. By and large the Christians of New England and the Scots-Irish of New Jersey of course and both were so prominent in the war by and large they were not for independence in 1775.

All that they wanted was to safeguard a degree of self-government along with loyalty to the British Crown. And on this point there is a recorded conversation of an old farmer of Massachusetts which seems to me to get very near to the spirit of the outlook I've just mentioned. He was a man who fought at Concord the first engagement.

He lived to be 91. And when he was an old man a young man of 21 asked him why he had faced the redcoats at Concord in 1775. Did you take up arms against intolerable oppressions? He was asked.

Oppressions? replied the old man. I didn't feel them. What? Were you not oppressed by the Stamp Act? I never saw one of those stamps.

I certainly never paid a penny for one of them. Well, what about the tea tax? I never drank a drop of the stuff. I sympathize with that point.

Something wrong with American tea. Then the young man went on. Then I suppose you had been reading Harrington or Sidney or Locke about the eternal principles of liberty.

Never heard of them. We read only the Bible, the Catechism, Watts' Psalms and Hymns and the Almanac. Well then.

Well then, said the young man. What was the matter? And what did you mean in going to the fight? Young man, what we meant in going for those redcoats was this. We always had governed ourselves.

And we always meant to. And they didn't mean that we should. Now, that was certainly the whole feeling in which Ashbell Green grew up.

And when the war began, it wasn't, in their view, a war for separation and for independence. As you well know, I trust the Declaration of Independence was a good fourteen months after the outbreak of war. And even in 1777, as late as 1777, the continental flag carried the Union Jack in one of its cantons.

Admittedly, in that year it came off. But it's illustrating the point that when the war began, separation wasn't the immediate object. But, like the text in the book of Proverbs, in the letting out of water, who can say what will be the consequence, once the war began, the violence and insult that was offered on occasions by the British troops, and particularly the introduction of foreign German mercenaries, so inflamed the public opinion that the point of no return was reached and the motto liberty or death became the

watchword of the colonies and certainly of the Christians along with others in the colonies.

Now, as I say, Ashbelgrine in his youth was caught up in the midst of this. At the age of ten, in Hanover, the boys were drafted into this youth militia. They were given their wooden rifles.

They drilled, they marched until the age of sixteen, the age that every boy longed for, when they would actually take up arms and fight in the militia. As you know, the war was conducted by a professional army on the American side, which was a comparatively small army, the Continental Army, and backed up by the militia, which did a great deal of havoc to the British side. And even at fourteen, Ashbelgrine could be found at night standing with a bayonet guarding a bridge over one of the rivers.

He was, of course, in Hanover County, at Hanover in Morris County. He was very much in the center of a lot of the military activity. At sixteen, he fought with the militia.

He was in several of the engagements near New York and elsewhere. Writing of this in later life, he speaks of two memories, two memories in particular, as being the most dreadful that he recalled. They weren't actually battles.

One was in December 1777, when prisoners on both sides were released. And a number of men of the colonies were released in New York in that month. And there being no hospitals, they were distributed through the homes of the patriots.

And twelve of these men arrived at the door of the manse. And this is what Ashbelgrine says, Such another company of miserable human beings, pallid and emaciated, begrimed with dirt and smoke, and in every way squalid in the extreme, my eyes never beheld. Twelve of these pitiable objects were brought in a wagon and laid down at my father's door, the most of them so helpless that they could not get into the house without assistance.

I cannot pretend to state how many of those who were brought in carriages and left in my father's parish never recovered. I can only say that a number of them died. One of these men caught fever.

I think this man lived, so perhaps I can mention this. It has its humorous side to it. Ashbelgrine on Sabbath morning was detailed to remain at home and to look after these sufferers.

But this Irishman, big hefty Irishman, suffering from a measure of delirium, suddenly sprang from his bed with threats that he would kill anyone who stopped him. And he proceeded to rush out of the house and to run through the cornfields in his nightcoat or whatever he was. Well, happily, he ran in the direction of the church or close to it where the congregation were then assembled.

So Ashbelgrine, though he couldn't tackle the Irishman, could get to the church and somehow got one or two of the elders out of the service and together they managed to hold this great strapping man and bring him back to the house. That incident made a deep impression on him and so did the second one, the outbreak of smallpox which affected not only the army but the civilian population in 1777. His father's church was then turned into a hospital and those who suffered from smallpox were taken there and very few indeed, if any, of these people recovered.

It was this smallpox outbreak that led, in the providence of God, you might say, to Ashbelgrine's conversion. And it happened in a way that you would never imagine. George Washington proposed that the only way to check the outbreak was to inoculate the entire army and the entire civilian population.

Now, Jacob Green, Ashbel's father, as I told you, was something of a doctor and he went to Washington in Morristown and pleaded with Washington that this was a mistaken policy, it was far too risky. But, at length, Jacob Green was convinced and he heartily entered into the plan. And so troops were billeted out in civilian homes, they were inoculated and the family was inoculated at the same time.

And ten Virginian officers were billeted in the manse at Hanover. And this is what led to Green's conversion. In the militia, he says, his captain, his officer, was a godly man and he found nothing in the militia that was injurious to his Christian beliefs.

But for the first time when he met these Virginian officers, he met men who, quite evidently, had no Christian faith. He was amazed that these men could be in a home that was rich with Christian books, with his father's library, and never once, he says, in two months, did they take down a single book from the shelves. They spent their time in cards and in other such things.

And Asheville Green says that this had a degree of influence in leading me to question the truth and authority of divine revelation with which my domestic education had been deeply imbued. In a word, I became skeptical in regard to the Holy Scriptures. This led to a period of doubt and conflict.

He says he began to read books on Christian apologetics. He says that as he read them, they often impressed him, and yet, I found that my doubts were not ended, and that my mind was far from being in a settled and quiet state. At length, in all his perplexity, he came to this conclusion.

The thought struck me forcibly that if the Bible did contain a revelation from God, which we must believe on the peril of our soul's salvation, it would then certainly carry on the face of it the evidence of the justness of its claims, provided it were carefully and candidly examined. And with a sincere and earnest desire to know the truth, the goodness of God, I thought, guaranteed this. If he had indeed spoken to us in the Bible, to the Bible itself, I determined, therefore, to make my final appeal.

My Christian education had already rendered me in a degree familiar with a large portion of its contents. But on this, I resolved to place no dependence. I took up the New Testament as if I had never opened it before, and with the single object of looking out for the signatures of divinely inspired truth.

And I prayed, as well as half an infidel might pray, that God, in whose existence I believed, would help me to form a just opinion of the truth or the fallacy of the Bible. Proceeding in this way, I have not gone through the four Gospels till all my scepticism left me. And to this hour, it has never returned.

He goes on in his book to speak of the place of apologetics and the place of the Bible in apologetics. I commend that very much to the ministers present. Then, at this point, having been convinced of the truth of the Bible, he began to think of his own condition.

If the Bible was true, then he was lost. Conviction of sin deepened, and ultimately he came to the joy of assurance of the forgiveness of sins in Christ. So when the Revolutionary War was in its early stages, Ashbell Green's motto was liberty or death.

But these few years later, his great watchword became the words holiness to the Lord. He went out to the house where he was staying then, and he wrote deep in the bark of one of the trees the words holiness to the Lord. Now, he was one of four brothers, one of the middle brothers.

The first, the eldest, and the youngest, the father intended to be students, and the two middle brothers, the father wanted to be farmers or mechanics. But Ashbell Green was so interested in books that the father couldn't deter his studies. So Ashbell Green, in between serving in the militia, he also tutored at school, and then at last, in the spring of 1782, he went to Princeton College as a student.

Well, it must have been an interesting sight to go to Princeton College in 1782. A number of you will know that Princeton College, or Nassau Hall, as it was sometimes called, was built in 1756. It came directly out of the Great Awakening.

And before the Revolutionary War, it had done great work in sending men into the ministry, and also sending men into positions of influence in government and state. But then in the war, the college figured largely, it was occupied by American troops, it was occupied by British troops who plundered the library. And at last, in the Battle of Princeton, in, was it January 1777? In the Battle of Princeton, British troops used Nassau Hall, the main building, as a defensive work.

And in the old prayer hall, where Jonathan Edwards and Samuel Davies had gathered with the students, American cannon fire wrecked the building. You know the story of how the portrait of George III that was hanging on the wall was torn in two by one of these cannon shot that came through the window. Well, when Ashbel Green got to Princeton in 1782, the building was still bearing all the marks of that war, which was just coming to its conclusion.

And there were about 40 students. And one of the effects of the war was that the president of the college was absent. The president was the famous John Witherspoon.

I say famous, I'm afraid again his name is little remembered. The only minister to sign the Declaration of Independence. A very great Christian leader.

And he was so needed in the leadership of Congress at that time that he alternated between Princeton and Philadelphia, where Congress met. So Ashbel Green then, and I must hasten on, Ashbel Green studied at Princeton. He was the leading student of his year.

That is how at 21 he had to address Congress. Congress in 1783 met at Princeton. And when the commencement day services were being held, Congress suspended its meetings and gathered with all the students.

And Ashbel Green had to stand and to address them and Congress. And then, as I said, a special address to George Washington. The next day, Washington asked Green to come and to dine with him.

And that was the beginning of Ashbel Green's friendship with George Washington, who, of course, was a much older man. Green stayed at Princeton until he was, well, I should say, until 1787. He became a tutor in the college and taught there.

At last, he was convinced that his duty was to enter the Christian ministry. It wasn't easy for him. He was engaged to be married and his fiancée was not enthusiastic about him preparing for the ministry.

And the crisis came one evening when he had been visiting the house of Witherspoon and coming home with a man called Samuel Stanhope Smith, who was one of the tutors. Green asked Smith what he thought about this question of his entering the ministry. And Smith answered that the real question was not what his duty was, but whether he would follow his inclination or his duty.

Green says, this roused me. For although I now believe that Smith's suspicion was right, I did not so view it then. And therefore, I answered promptly and earnestly, no sir, I think not.

That is to say, it wasn't between his duty and his inclination. He went on to say, I simply want to know my duty. Theology, Smith went on, is not the road either to fame or wealth.

The law in this country leads to both these objects. But if you wish to do good and prefer an approving conscience before all other considerations, I have no hesitation in saying that you ought to preach the gospel. And so Green reached the decision which he never lived to regret, that he entered the ministry of the church.

Now, the rest of his life one can divide into three portions. This will make it simple. From 1787, for twenty-five and a half years, he preached in Philadelphia, the second Presbyterian church of Philadelphia.

That was the first period. The second period of his life was the period when he became president of Princeton College, from 1812 for ten years. Then the third period began when he was 60, and he lived to be 89.

He began a new period of life at the age of 60. He returned to Philadelphia. He became the editor of a new paper called The Christian Advocate, and in many ways was as influential at the age of 70 as he had been at 35.

Samuel Miller of Princeton, a very able Christian leader, he says, with regard to Green, for more than 40 years together, he set an example of diligence and tireless labor in the service of the church. In all the great movements of his church during the period in question, whether in the cause of domestic or foreign missions, he might be said, without exaggeration, to be the master spirit to whom the whole church was accustomed to look more than to any other individual. You see why at the beginning that man believed that Green would be remembered a hundred years hence.

He was, says Miller, the master spirit. In his 85th year, he was still studying and writing with a hand as clear, bold and steady as a man of 40. He made his last appearance in the General Assembly in 1846, supported on both sides by friends, and two years later he died in 1848.

Now had there been time, what I would have done would have been to try to sketch to you the leading features of these three periods. The years in Philadelphia, the years at Princeton, and the final years. I'll have to hasten over this with just touching on a few things.

In his years in Philadelphia, he was without question the leading evangelical preacher in the city. He was, says one who was there, eminently popular. No minister in the city approached him in this respect.

Crowds flocked to hear him more than the place of worship could contain. His evening service was especially attended by all denominations so that not only once or a few times only, but from one year's end to another and for a course of years his ministry was attended with unabating interest. One example of his influence, it comes from a little later.

In Philadelphia at this period, the Sunday school lessons taught were the same in all the churches. That's what I read, I presume in all the churches, all the Protestant churches. Possibly there must have been at least one Catholic church there.

Of course the Catholics were very few in number at this period. All the Sabbath school teachers taught the same lesson. And in the week before they taught the lesson, one of the ministers of the city would address the Sabbath school teachers on the lesson.

And this would happen on a Friday night. And Ash Beltrve was the minister who for a considerable time preached and lectured the Sabbath school teachers on the Friday night before the Sunday. He lectured about a thousand Sabbath school teachers.

And then on the Sunday morning they went and spoke to ten thousand children. Seems to me a very good system. And if you want to know the kind of thing that he gave those Sabbath school teachers, you can read it if you're happy enough to find the precious volumes.

Ash Beltrve has two volumes on the Shorter Catechism. And in many ways I think they're the best things ever written on the Shorter Catechism. They're not only theological but they're popular and interesting.

Ash Beltrve on the Shorter Catechism. Well I must pass over but you can see his influence as a preacher. Then about 1800 he began to have a number of trials.

There was some opposition in his congregation. There was difficulty over his health. He began to suffer from dizziness.

To stand on the edge of a platform would worry him. So much so that in the end he had to stop using a pulpit. And then his wife's health began to break down.

So as well as being a preacher and a pastor he says how he was a nurse and a father. And the care of the home fell very largely upon his shoulders. He passed through a very difficult period.

And it's a very valuable period written in his biography. He says how in the midst of these difficulties and trials he never knew more spiritual help and blessing in his ministry. Well preaching was his first love.

There is no employment in this world that I love. And when he was called to Princeton in 1812 he had great struggles. In the end one of the things that convinced him it was his duty to go to Princeton was the saying of George Whitefield.

George Whitefield had said once to John Witherspoon every gownsman every student is legion. Meaning if you touch one student you touch a thousand others. And this is what brought Green to Princeton for ten very valuable years of his life.

And that volume that Jim Adams gave me was a volume of addresses that Ashbel Green gave to the students at Princeton in those ten years. I mustn't start to speak about that. It's a whole subject in itself.

He has a tremendous emphasis on learning and piety. And his discourses to me are fascinating in their value in that respect. He pressed for greater piety alongside with learning.

I must pass over then. The last period of his life as I said was back in Philadelphia. And in this period more and more he was a man of deep prayer.

Indeed from his early years he used to give one day a month to prayer and fasting. But in his last years he seemed to be continually praying. This is what Samuel Miller says.

In the most casual and unreserved intercourse of society he appeared the deepest. As he advanced in life this spirit seemed and with respect to the later years of his life exercises of devotion occupied of his soul. Now you'll find much of that in his diary.

The absorbing element of his soul. A lady was once very anxious to meet him and discuss a certain thing with him. And she came to his house I don't know how often but she always got the same reply that Dr. Green was at his devotions and couldn't see her.

At last the poor woman in exasperation said, Dr. Green is always at his devotions. There was truth in that. One minister who saw him near the end of his life he says, My very last interview with him impressed me with the depth of the spirit of devotion which had characterized his life.

He was feeble and forgetful and in a mood to talk very little to anybody. But hearing I was in the city he sent for me that I might attend to a matter of business with him connected with the New Jersey Historical Society. I entered his study on a May morning about nine o'clock.

His Greek testament was open before him. He requested me to be seated. The business ended he waved his hand saying, My devotional meeting is not yet concluded and I shall be happy to see you at another time.

And as I closed the door of his study the prayer God bless you fell upon my ear the last words I ever heard him utter. In the last few months of his life he lost the ability to speak altogether. He could scarcely communicate except by a note or a whisper to those around him.

And so he continued until the very week before his death when a Christian friend was reading in his presence the first chapter of the Gospel of John and came to the text and of his fullness of all we received. And to the amazement of all that were present Ashbell Green in a voice as loud as was loosed and he burst into ecstasy blessing God for the gift of his son and the Gospel. That he had been permitted to preach this Gospel and had been honoured with any measure of success in his ministry.

He goes on describing the praise and the exaltation of Green. The scene was indescribably impressive. No person that did not see it can imagine the majesty of the preacher and the power of his word.

Scarcely more unexpected than if he had spoken from his coffin. These were the last words and praises of Ashbell Green. Now I conclude with two general comments which are by far the most important matter I think that we have to draw from this.

First returning to the point I made in the Revolutionary War. As I say Green's biography is full of first hand evidence on this point. Take for example the city of Philadelphia as he knew it in the 1790s.

He says that in that city such was the strength of Christian influence and commitment that there was only one newspaper that had any sympathy with disbelief in the Bible. And such was the public recognition of the Ten Commandments that legislation required that on the Lord's Day chains would be placed across every places of worship to prevent any traffic. And then I have not yet mentioned this that the Congress meeting in Philadelphia his acquaintance with George Washington was renewed and for eight years Ashbell Green with one other man was chaplain to Congress and that meant something in those days.

Every week alternately with William White the other chaplain he would be in Congress he would take prayers every morning. And he said that in eight years he never once saw any trace of irreverence in the

Congress. And he says Ashbell Green that he believed the reason why the leaders of the new nation obtained such common support at the time of the war was that they were recognized as men of character upholding moral and the instances quote the sacred regard to truth of the Continental Congress and its carefulness quote never to deceive the people and this he says was due to the influence of the gospel.

And he mentions in particular the name of Charles Thompson there were several presidents to the Continental Congress there was only one secretary and this secretary throughout the whole period of its existence was Charles Thompson. Charles Thompson was so well known and so regarded for his integrity that it was a common proverb that Thompson's name used to be put on all statements of Congress all public statements and it was a proverb people would say it's as true as if Charles Thompson's name was on it. Now Charles Thompson says Green was a pious Christian he spent his free time in the translation of the Bible translated the whole Bible for his own profit.

It was his custom says Green when national events appeared gloomy to soothe his painful feelings and await the developments of divine providence in the study of the holy scriptures. And then Green says a great deal about George Washington. He speaks of Washington's open acknowledgement of God both in public and in private.

He speaks of how Washington rebuked blasphemy in the army how carefully he supported the public worship of God and how in Congress Washington declared quote the propitious smiles of heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which heaven ordains. And again says Washington religion and morality are the essential pillars of civil society. Now Green of course was well aware that on the part of some men respect for religion was only apparent.

He knew Thomas Jefferson he was chaplain under Jefferson for a period. But he points out certain interesting facts about Jefferson and not least the degree of deception which Jefferson was capable of using. He says for example how in 1774 when Jefferson was wanting to rouse the people the old Puritan sentences and Green says that it wasn't until many years later that Jefferson's unbelief became known.

I'm not quoting Green at that point I must be careful. That's not exactly what he says. What he says is this that in time Jefferson's infidelity became generally known but he says quote it was not openly avowed till after his death.

He charged his grandson in his will to publish certain papers which he left. And this material says Green contained a mass of infidelity of the most malignant and abusive kind. And Ashcroft Green himself answered that.

Jefferson's views were those of course of the philosophy of the French Enlightenment. And on the face of it the slogans of the French Revolution liberty, equality and fraternity were the same as the sentiments declared in the American Revolution. The French abolished any religious idea in government.

They proclaimed the sole design of government to be the advantage and happiness of man. The American Revolution on the other hand was supported by many who held that the first duty of state is to seek the glory of God. And they believed with Washington that civil society cannot be held together without morality.

And that morality in turn depends upon the religious recognition of God. The French Revolution inspired the kind of ultra-democracy which is ultimately the... It deified the voice of the people by making the people

the seat of authority. So that the chief concern of politicians necessarily became pleasing the voters.

No duty was owed to God. No authority was to be considered as coming from Him. The great question which politicians had to settle in deciding between one of several possibilities was simply the question will it be popular? Now the prevailing spirit of the American Revolution was not of this kind.

And Asheville Green writes comparing the American and the French Revolutions What may be called the materials of these two revolutions were as different as can well be imagined. The leaders in our revolution were good as well as great men. If there were a few infidels among them as no doubt there were they were obliged to conceal their infidelity because it was unpopular.

Our people speaking comparatively were an intelligent, moral... In the most of these provinces days of fasting and prayer were no novelty. They had been a frequent occurrence. The influence of the clergy both in and out of the pulpit was great and commanding.

It was also well known that the Continental Congress recommended days of religious observance. Our army too had chaplains to whom the commemorations would permit. Of all this there was not only nothing in the origin and progress of the French Revolution.

There was the absence of all good and the presence of much evil. An eruption took place of the most ferocious and infernal passions that human nature had. Now that leads to a question which we have no time to examine.

We will all have to do more reading ourselves. And in that concern they sometimes it seems to me reacted in the other direction as a great deal that would need to be said and which cannot be said here. My last point with which I close is that this strength of Christian influence in the Revolutionary War owed its source to one thing only and that is to the great awakening of the 1740s.

You know it seems a long time from 1740 to 1776 but that's not long. The men who were converted in the 1740s in so many instances were the men who were leading in the 1770s. And almost every character who influenced Ashbell Green was a man who had been touched by the spirit of God in the great awakening.

John Witherspoon, friend of Whitefield, his own father Jacob Green, his tutor Samuel Smith at Princeton, all the way along. Then when Green went to Philadelphia the second Presbyterian church in Philadelphia was a church built by the converts of Whitefield in the aisle in front of the pew the body of Gilbert Tennant the great leader in the great awakening or one of them was buried. The country was permeated especially New Jersey and parts of New England with the power of the Christian faith experimentally known.

And Ashbell Green's life brings out very clearly how this influence penetrated the nation. And that is the reason why Green in his latter years gave himself to prayer. He was interested in government.

He was interested in arts and literature. But he believed that the future of the United States depended upon such effusions of the spirit as had visited the country in the 1740s. And as far as he was concerned there was nothing greater that he could do than to pray for such revivals and such works of God.

In the year 1842 he closes a letter to his son with words with which we will also close. Let us not despair of our country for there are still indications that she is destined to a great agency in the enlightening and reforming of the world. But let the religious community awake to its situation.

Let there be among all denominations of evangelical Christians a combination of prayer and effort in the pressingly needful work of resisting vice and promoting reformation. This is our duty and if we duly perform it we may trust in God that he will yet make the United States the glory of all lands. Affectionately, Adieu.

Thank you very much.

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