

## George Washington, Excerpt: Son of the Republic

For winter quarters, Valley Forge was a secure location for the Army. With the British encamped in Philadelphia, there were times however, when the distance was a little too close for comfort. Enemy scouts had been spotted numerous times not far from their location. “The British marched out to surprise the American camp. The camp was a temporary station, with hardly a breastwork thrown up to defend it, but for reasons known only to himself, Howe hastily retreated, though he afterward claimed in a letter to Lord Germain that the camp had been ‘a strongly fortification place.’”<sup>177</sup> It was fortunate for Washington and the army that an attack never did occur. If General Howe’s troops had attacked, likely they would have been successful in extinguishing the rebellion. Many of the Continental soldiers were too weak from lack of food and sickness to defend themselves. Howe estimated Washington’s troop strength to be double what he actually had, which may have prevented any attack. Starvation caused some soldiers to pilfer and plunder from local farmers who would sell food to the British for hard cash but not to the Continental Army for Continental money. Such was strictly prohibited, by order of Washington with the in general severest penalties, and punishments inflicted. Lack of food and living conditions were causing a dangerous mutiny condition among some of the troops.

To make matters worse for George Washington, he was made aware of a plot by army officers [Conway Cabal] and some members of Congress to remove him from command. For Washington, the army’s condition and the war effort had finally hit rock bottom. Their condition as Washington wrote was a “little less than a famine.” The reality of the situation had finally set in, deeply concerned he wrote, “If the army does not get help soon, in all likelihood it will disband.”<sup>178</sup> As the light of day grew shorter at Valley Forge, it has been said that Washington may have contemplated terms of surrender to the British.

“On God rests my deliverance and my honor; my mighty rock, my refuge is God.”  
— Psalm 62:7 RSV

The future of the new Republic was hanging on by not much more than a prayer, its future prospects appeared bleak. A story has been handed down of Isaac Potts, a Quaker who found Washington in the woods on his knees in prayer one day. Isaac exclaimed after his encounter, “If there is anyone on this earth whom the Lord will listen to, it is George Washington.” It would appear that God did listen to his petitions, “he was shown great favor by God. As Daniel of old was shown the destiny of the planet Earth, so was Washington shown the destiny of our country.”<sup>179</sup>

It was a Continental Army Soldier by the name of Anthony Sherman, who recorded for posterity Washington’s own words after an encounter with an angelic visitor at Valley Forge. Sherman’s account would prove to be a prophetic look into the destiny of the United States. The first two Perils have now come to pass, with the most fearful, being the “third Peril.” For the Republic, it will be its “greatest conflict” with the whole world united against her. If this prophecy holds true, it will be our generation that will have to fight for the survival of the United States. And as Anthony Sherman prophetically predicted before the Civil War, “If you live, you will before long, see it verified.”

*Washington’s Vision* made national prominence when it was published in the National Review, Vol. 4, No. 12, December 1880 and Stars and Stripes, December 21, 1950. Boston historian, J.L. Bell found an earlier publication in the Philadelphia Inquirer, June 24, 1861 and Pittsfield Gazette December 1861. Below is the text of *Washington’s Vision*, by Edward Everett published in 1864:

# WASHINGTON'S VISION

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BY WESLEY BRADSHAW.

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“The last time I ever saw Anthony Sherman was on July 4, 1859, in Independence Square. He was then ninety-nine, and becoming very feeble; but though so old, his dimming eyes rekindled as he gazed upon Independence Hall, which he said he had come to gaze upon once more before he was gathered home.

“What time is it?” said he, raising his trembling eyes to the clock in the steeple, and endeavouring to shade the former with a shaking hand; “what time is it? I can’t see so well now as I used to.” “Half past three.”

“Come, then,” he continued, “let us go into the Hall—I want to tell you an incident of Washington’s life, one which no one alive knows of except myself; and if you live, you will before long, see it verified. Mark me, I am not superstitious; but you will see it verified.”

Reaching the visitors’ room, in which the sacred relics of our early days are preserved, we sat down upon one of the old-fashioned wooden benches, and my venerable companion related to be following singular narrative, which, from the peculiarity of our national affairs at the present times, I have been induced to give the world. I give it as nearly possible in his words.

“When the bold actions of our Congress, in asserting independence of the colonies, became known to the old world, we laughed and scoffed at as silly, presumptuous rebels, whom British grenadiers would very soon tame into submission; but undauntedly we prepared to make good what we had said. The keen encounter came, and the world knows the results. It is easy and pleasant for those of the present generation to talk and write of the days of Seventy-Six, but they little know, neither can they imagine, the trials and sufferings of those fearful days. And there is one thing that I much fear, and that is, that the American people do not properly appreciate the boon of freedom. Party spirit is yearly becoming stronger and stronger, and, without it checked, will, at no distant day, undermine and tumble into ruins the noble structure of the Republic. But let me hasten to my narrative.

“From the opening of the Revolution, we experienced all phases of fortune—now good, and now ill, one time victorious, and another conquered. The darkest period we had, however, was I think, when Washington, after several reverses, retreated to Valley Forge, where he resolved to pass the winter of ‘77. Ah! I have often seen his tears coursing down our dear old commander’s care-worn cheeks, as he would be conversing with a confidential officer about the condition of his poor soldiers. You have doubtless heard the story of Washington going to the thicket to pray in secret, well, it is not only true, but he used to pray in secret, for aid and comfort from that God, the interposition of whose divine providence alone brought us safely through those dark days of tribulation.

“One day—I remember it well—the chilly wind whistled and howled through the leafless trees, though the sky was cloudless, and the sun shining brightly, he remained in his quarters nearly the whole afternoon alone. When he came out, I noticed that his face was a shade paler than his usual, and that there seemed to be something upon his mind of more than ordinary importance. Returning just after dusk, he dispatched an orderly to the quarters of the officer I mentioned, who was presently

in attendance. After a preliminary conversation, which lasted some half an hour, Washington, gazing upon his companion with a strange look of dignity which he alone could command said the latter:

### **George Washington's own words as recorded by Anthony Sherman**

I do not know whether it was owing to the anxiety of my mind, or what, but this afternoon, as I was sitting at this table engaged in preparing a dispatch, something in the apartment seemed to disturb me. Looking up, I beheld standing opposite me a singularly beautiful female [Virgin Mary]. So astonished was I—for I had given strict orders not to be disturbed—that it was some moments before I found language to inquire the cause of her presence. A second, third and even a fourth time did I repeat the question, but received no other answer from my mysterious visitor than a slight raising of her eyes. By this time I felt strange sensations spreading through me. I would have risen but the riveted gaze of the being before me rendered volition impossible. I essayed once more to address her, but my tongue had become powerless. Even thought itself presently became paralyzed. A new influence, mysterious, potent, irresistible, took possession of me. All I could do was gaze, gaze steadily, vacantly at my unknown visitant. Gradually the surrounding atmosphere seemed as though become filled with sensations, and luminous. Everything about me seemed to rarify—the mysterious visitor herself becoming more airy, and yet more distinct to my sight than before. I now began to feel as one dying, or, rather to experience the sensations which I have sometimes imagined accompany dissolution. I did not think, I did not reason, I did not move; all were alike impossible. I was only conscious of gazing fixedly, vacantly, at my companion.

Presently I heard a voice saying, “Son of the Republic, look and learn,” while at the same time my visitor extended her arm and fore-finger eastwardly. I now beheld a heavy, white vapor at some distance, rising, fold upon fold. This gradually disappeared, and I looked upon a strange scene. Before me lay spread out in one vast plain all the countries of the world, Europe, Asia, Africa and America. I saw rolling and tossing between Europe and America the billows of the Atlantic, and between Asia and America lay the Pacific.

### **The First Peril, The American Revolution, 1775-1783:**

“Son of the Republic,” said the same mysterious voice, as before, “look and learn,”

At that moment I beheld a dark, shadowy being, like an angel, standing, or rather floating in mid-air, between Europe and America. Dipping water out of the ocean in the hollow of each hand, he sprinkled some upon America with his right, while he cast some on Europe some with his left. Immediately a cloud arose from these countries, and joined in mid-ocean. For a while it remained stationary, and then moved slowly westward, until it enveloped America in its murky folds. Sharp flashes of lightning now gleamed through it at intervals, and I heard the smothered groans and cries of the American people.

A second time the angel dipped water from the ocean, and sprinkled it out as before. The dark cloud was then drawn back to the ocean, in whose heaving billows it sank from view. A third time I heard the mysterious voice saying:



## **The Second Peril, The Civil War, 1861-1865:**

“Son of the Republic, look and learn.”

I cast my eyes upon America, and beheld villages and towns and cities springing up one after another, until the whole land from the Atlantic to the Pacific, was dotted with them. Again, I heard the mysterious voice say:

“Son of the Republic, the end of the century cometh; look and learn.”

At this, the dark, shadowy angel turned his face southward, and from Africa I saw an ill-omened spectre approach our land. It flitted slowly over every town and city of the latter; the inhabitants of which presently set themselves in battle array, against each other. As I continued looking, I saw a bright angel, on whose brow rested a crown of light, on which was traced the word Union, bearing the American flag, which he placed between the divided nation, and said:

“Remember ye are brethren.”

Instantly the inhabitants, casting from them their weapons became friends once more, and united around the National Standard. And again I heard the mysterious voice saying:

“Son of the Republic, the second peril is passed; look and learn.”

And I beheld the villages, towns, and cities of America increase in size and number, until at last they covered all the land from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and their inhabitants became as countless as the stars in the heaven, or the sand on the sea-shore. And again I heard the mysterious voice, saying:

## **The Third Peril, The Last Great War, 200?-20??:**

“Son of the Republic, the end of a century cometh; look and learn.”

At this the dark, shadowy angel placed a trumpet to his mouth, and blew three distinct blasts; and taking water from the ocean, he sprinkled it upon Europe [Russia], Asia [China] and Africa [Middle East & Muslim countries].

Then my eyes beheld a fearful scene. From each of these countries arose thick, black clouds that were soon joined into one. Throughout this mass there gleamed a dark-red light, by which I saw hordes of armed men, who, moving with the cloud, marched by land and sailed by sea, to America, which country was enveloped in this volume of cloud. And I dimly saw these vast armies devastate the whole country, and pillage and burn the villages, towns and cities that I beheld springing up. As my ears listened to the thundering of the cannon, clashing of swords, and the shouts and cries of millions in mortal combat, I heard again the mysterious voice saying:

“Son of the Republic, look and learn.”

When the voice had ceased, the dark, shadowy angel placed his trumpet once more to his mouth, and blew a long, fearful blast.

Instantly a light, as of a thousand suns shone down from above me, and pierced and broke into fragments the dark cloud which enveloped America. At the same moment, I saw the angel upon whose forehead still shone the word Union, and who bore our national flag in one hand, and a sword in the other, descended from the heavens attended by legions of bright spirits. These immediately joined the inhabitants of America, who I perceived were well nigh overcome, but who immediately

taking courage again, closed up their broken ranks and renewed the battle. Again, amid the fearful noise of the conflict, I heard the mysterious voice saying:

“Son of the Republic, look and learn.”

As the voice ceased, the shadowy angel for the last time dipped water from the ocean, and sprinkled it upon America. Instantly the dark cloud rolled back, together with the armies it had brought, leaving the inhabitants of the land victorious. Then once more I beheld the villages, towns and cities springing up where I had seen them before, while the bright angel, planting the azure standard he had brought in the midst of them, cried with a loud voice to the inhabitants:

“While the stars remain, and the heavens send down dew upon the earth, so long shall the Union last!”

And taking from his brow the crown on which blazoned the word Union, he placed it upon the standard while the people, kneeling down, said, “Amen.”

The scene instantly began to fade and dissolve, and I at last saw nothing but the rising, curling white vapor I at first beheld. This also disappearing, I found myself once more gazing upon my mysterious visitor, who, in the same mysterious voice I had heard before, said:

“Son of the Republic, what you have seen is thus interpreted: three great perils will come upon the Republic. The most fearful is the second, passing [third war] which, the whole world united shall never be able to prevail against her. Let every child of the Republic learn to live [and pray] for his God, his land, and the Union.”

With these words the figure vanished. I started from my seat, and felt that I had seen a vision, wherein had been shown to me the birth, progress and destiny of the United States.

**Anthony Sherman concluded:**

In Union she will have strength, in Disunion her destruction.

Such, my friend,” concluded the venerable narrator, “were the words I heard from Washington’s own lips, and America will do well to profit by them. Let her forever remember, that in Union she has her strength, in Disunion her destruction.<sup>180</sup>

For Washington, his trust in God and God’s plan for himself and the country had been stretched to a breaking point. It may have been the bloody footprints in the snow left by bootless men or the near naked soldiers wrapped in thin blankets huddled around a smoky fire of green wood. Many battles had been lost; many good men had been killed and wounded. His troops were now starving and there appeared to be no end in sight. The likely reason God bestowed upon George Washington, the grace of being shown the destiny of the United States was to reassure him, that if he persisted, the colonies would be successful in their struggles with Britain. While he knew that he had been protected by God for a reason, now he [Son of the Republic] through his angelic visitor’s words and vision had a glimpse into the why of God’s plan for the United States of America.

“Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.”  
— Amos 3:7 RSV

While Washington did not know fully what God expected from him, he now had confirmation that he was doing God’s work, and still on God’s side. And if he pushed forward against what seemed to be impossible odds, he knew that with divine assistance in their struggles for survival, they would be victorious. Perhaps

taken back by the unexpected nature of his vision, he may have missed the Biblical symbology of water and the number three. Three represents the Holy Trinity; it is a mark of divine completeness and perfection. The theme of the number three, three trumpets, three Perils and three times living water was poured out upon the land to wash away sin in atonement through the shedding of blood. “He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.’” John 7:38 RSV Washington must have understood that water is a powerful symbol of God’s grace.

“The cup [blood] that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized. Mark 10:39 RSV “... All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.”

— Matthew 28:18-20 RSV

Closely tied to Washington’s vision and touched on by Thomas Paine in *Common Sense* was that the old world had gotten too corrupt, too evil, for the blessings of Gods gift of Liberty and Freedom. Paine had written that “Freedom has been hunted around the globe. Asia and Africa has expelled her and England has given her warning to depart. O receive the fugitive and prepare, in time, an asylum for mankind.” The New World was the last alter of human freedom possible left on the surface of the globe. It was the land [North & South America], prepared by God in the wilderness. And as such, She [new Republic] too [Liberty & Freedom] would be soon hunted down for extermination by the evils of the Old World. What God was birthing in North America was now the last best hope for mankind, against the evils of the world; to bring forth Gods Word and for His people to honor Him in prayer, their God and country. God's blessing was upon the nation and He would sustain Her through Her first “Great Struggle” for existence.

With renewed enthusiasm for His mission, Washington wrote from Valley Forge, “even if the rest of the world continues to ignore us, we will fight on. For we are fighting not only for ourselves, but for all mankind. We are fighting for freedom and human dignity and the right to worship the God of our choice.”<sup>181</sup> Washington, now reassured of God’s plan for the new Republic, however bleak it appeared at the time, and it did look bleak. Once again, he put his trust in God, and Gods plan for himself and the country. Washington did as he promised the troops he would do, “I will share in your hardship and partake of every inconvenience.” It was through sheer moral courage and self-sacrifice for God and country, which kept the army together through those long dark cold days at Valley Forge. The troops were so much in awe and respect for this man, that they were willing to stand by him, even to the point of almost starvation and freezing to death. The control of events, and survival of the nation, was, as it had always been which was in the hands of God. Assistance for Son of the Republic and the new struggling nation was on the way.

The first assistance came by way of an Indian woman, by the name of Polly Cooper [Polly Cobus] from the Oneida Tribe. Lost to the pages of history was the timing of George Washington’s Angelic visitation at Valley Forge and arrival of food from the Oneida Tribe.

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When a people lose their history, they lose a part of who they are.  
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