



WASHINGTON AT PRAYER AT VALLEY FORGE
From a Lithograph Obtained from the Washington Family by
the Author

THE SOUL

OF

GEORGE WASHINGTON

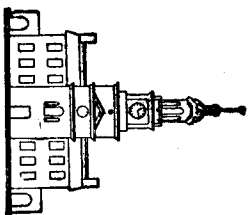
An Overlooked Side of His Character

BY

JOSEPH BUFFINGTON

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Third Circuit

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To
HER
who encouraged me to
re-write this book

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ments have been established, without some return of pious gratitude along with an humble anticipation of the future blessings which the past seems to presage. These reflections, arising out of the present crisis, *have forced themselves too strongly on my mind to be suppressed.* You will join with me, I trust, in thinking that there are none, under the influence of which the proceedings of a new and free government can more auspiciously commence." * * *

The taking of the oath of office by Washington was accompanied by an act which is perpetuated in the oath now taken by the leading federal officials. That oath, as prepared for Washington, had no mention of God in it, and read: "I do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States and will, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States." When the oath was administered, he took it in that form and he then bowed his head and kissed the Sacred Book and, with the deepest feeling, uttered the words "so help me God." These latter words, now accompanying the foregoing ones in official oaths, we owe to George Washington. Another notable and exceptional part of the ceremony was that after he was inaugurated he went at once to attend Divine Service at St. Paul's Church, on Broadway, where his pew may still be seen.

During Washington's administration, a flood of infidelity incident to the French Revolution, swept over our Country. Keenly alive to its danger, Washington, in his farewell address, dwelt strongly on the fact that

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it was on religion and morality our Government was founded.

We do well to hark back to what he then said was the bedrock and foundation of our Government: "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, *religion and morality* are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labour to subvert these great pillars of human happiness; these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked, where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths, which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition that *morality can be maintained without religion.* Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education, on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that *national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principles.* It is substantially true that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government. The rule, indeed, extends with more or less force to every species of government. Who that is a sincere friend to it, can look with indifference upon attempts to shake the *foundation of the fabric?*"

After his inauguration, Washington, in pursuance of a request of Congress, appointed a day of special prayer

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