

The Reformation's Impact on Independence Day – July 4th

July 3, 2011 • By Tim Taylor

(Excerpts for this article were heavily drawn from Peter Kershaw's *In Caesar's Grip* pages 34 & 35– [click here](#))

Americans in the founding of the USA were voracious readers. Their reading material had a profound impact on their worldview. There were two prominent books found in the colonial's household; the Bible (the *Geneva Bible* was usually preferred over the *Authorized King James Version*) and John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*. None dared call himself a Christian and a Protestant who did not own copies of these two books. The Bible is full of examples of what the faithful are to do when confronted with tyranny. These examples fall into one of three categories.

1. Fleeing, escaping and hiding, etc.
2. Passive resistance, verbal protestation, etc.
3. Physical self-defense, violent force, war, etc.

Foxe's Book of Martyrs deals with the first two categories. It was highly esteemed but provided little consolation to the thousands of spiritual and political leaders who called for American independence. Many, such as William Penn (persecuted spiritual leader in England, fled to America and became a political leader founding Pennsylvania) had tried the first two options. It became clear to many that American independence would not come without resorting to option three.

Records show they had exhausted all peaceable options. For close to 20 years preachers from the pulpit followed Matthew 18's exhortation about how to deal with a sinning brother. The preachers would preach a message dealing with an issue displaying the King of England's tyranny, and then they would send a letter to the king with the sermon.

Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos and Lex, Rex.

There were two books which greatly influenced the worldviews of those who sought independence; *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos* (*In Defense of Liberty against Tyrants* – a Huguenot tract) and *Lex, Rex*. (authored by a Jesuit priest).

Peter Kershaw from *In Caesar's Grip* page 35 says; "No publication was as significant in lending the prerequisite theological support to the cause of American independency, as did *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos* – a "vindication against tyrants. *Vindiciae* forms the legal and theological foundation upon which Christians are biblically permitted to rise up against wicked despotic rulers. Furthermore, *Vindiciae* theologically demonstrates that, if the righteous do not challenge and oppose tyrants, their nation will be judged by God."

The Church – A Moral Compass

These two books were the product of the Protestant Reformation. They played a powerful role in shaping the thoughts of those preachers who were part of the Black Robed Regiment and leaders who became the founding fathers of this nation. The Church used to serve as the moral compass in this nation. As we celebrate this 4th of July, America's day of independence let's remember the moral conviction that led to the sacrifice such that great love was demonstrated like we find in John 15:13. Jesus said;

“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.”

