

Founding Forgery?

George Washington kneeling in prayer at Valley Forge



"The most sublime
picture in American
history."

~Ronald Reagan

- *The story first appeared in a book by Mason Weems, an Episcopal priest
- *Repeated in school textbooks by William McGuffey, a Presbyterian minister
- *Subject of famous paintings by Sachs, Brueckner, Leyendecker and Friberg
- *Appeared on stamps in 1928 and 1977
- *Chapel in Valley Forge founded to commemorate the image
- *Stained glass window in the Congressional Prayer Room (1955)
- *Nine foot bronze sculpture at Freedoms Foundation, Valley Forge (1967)

Except. . .

"For all its ubiquity, there is no historical evidence to support the tale."

~Andrew Seidel, *The Founding Myth*

"He would have shunned anything ... that might flaunt his religiosity. He never wanted to make a spectacle of his faith."

~Ron Chernow, *Washington: A Life*

"[These stories] simplified their morals and turned them into generic Sunday school lessons, putting Washington's piety on common display."

~Edward Lengel, *Inventing George Washington*