

Presidents and the Bible

By Robert C. Veil, Jr.

For each of the last 30 consecutive weeks I have published in the Bulletin a quotation from one of our nation's presidents. These quotations have all been supportive of the Bible as God's word and Christianity as the preferred way of life. They have shown what our highest leaders have generally said on this matter, from the very first presidents until some of the most recent. Our purpose has not been to prove that the United States is a "Christian" nation in the strict biblical sense of that word. Rather, these quotations show the deep respect our leaders have had for the Bible and its principles. They demonstrate that our nation was not founded upon or guided by secular or atheistic philosophy, but has unapologetically professed a belief in the Bible as God's word, and publicly acknowledged Christianity as the way of life which fosters and promotes our national interests.

Not every president has professed a belief in the Bible and Christianity. There are a very few of our early leaders, and several of our more recent presidents, who did not proclaim their belief in Christ, at least not so that we could discern it. That is not to say they did not believe in God or advance the principles of Christianity privately. But the great volume of these quotations clearly shows that the vast majority of our national leaders respected and advocated publicly the teaching of the Bible. In fact, for most of our history, it would have been considered strange had any of our presidents not professed a belief in God and Christianity.

The presidents we have quoted in this series are as follows: Andrew Jackson, Theodore Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan, George Washington, John Adams, Grover Cleveland, James Madison, Calvin Coolidge, Benjamin Harrison, Harry Truman, James Monroe, Herbert Hoover, Woodrow Wilson, William Henry Harrison, John Quincy Adams, Martin Van Buren, Zachary Taylor, Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson, John F. Kennedy, Ulysses S. Grant, James A. Garfield, Rutherford B. Hayes, Dwight D. Eisenhower, William McKinley, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Andrew Johnson, Warren G. Harding, Grover Cleveland, and George W. Bush. Additional presidents might have been named, especially among the 8 more recent ones, but I deliberately omitted most of the recent presidents to avoid partisan objections until their legacies are more fully settled.

I hope you will remember some of these quotations the next time a secular humanist argues that "religion has no place in American politics" or that Christians should "keep their religious views to themselves." This nation did not become great by avoiding Christian principles or being ashamed of Jesus Christ. In fact, it is quite the contrary. In the words of our first president, George Washington: "I now make it my earnest prayer, that God would have you...in his holy protection...that he would most graciously be pleased to dispose us all to do Justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that Charity, humility and pacific temper of mind, which were the characteristics of the Divine Author of our blessed Religion, and without an humble imitation of whose example in these things, we can never hope to be a happy nation." *That is our first president saying our country's happiness depends upon following Christ.*

As citizens of the kingdom of God, we honor Jesus Christ in all that we say and do, whether we are citizens of the United States or any other earthly nation. We honor and practice the principles of Christianity in our daily lives, and this practice advances any nation. Christians are the best citizens of any country. They contribute to the success and

furtherance of whatever nation they inhabit. And to the extent that the principles of Christianity are implemented in national policy, God tends to bless and advance that nation proportionately.

We are remarkably fortunate and blessed by God to live in this nation. We stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before who humbly recognized the value of God's word and spoke respectfully of his directions for a proper way of life. We should not surrender this blessed heritage to those who would rob us of our own history—those secular newcomers who would trample upon the work and accomplishments of nearly all who have gone before.

I am thankful that our founding fathers set our country on a path characterized by respect for God and his word. Though not all of them have consistently followed that path in every decision, they have not hesitated to announce its virtues publicly, and to proclaim that it is the only honorable way to proceed. I believe this is the greatest nation on earth, and that's because our leaders have spoken out in favor of the greatest Cause, and the greatest Lord of all!