

May 19, 2004

### **Presidents, Faith, and America's Heritage**

Dear Colleague:

Recently George W. Bush has been ridiculed by some of his critics for talking too much about the importance of his faith to his role as President. For example, when he says that the “right to life cannot be granted or denied by government, because it does not come from government, it comes from the Creator of life,” some assert that he is indulging in the dangerous rhetoric of a nascent theocracy.

To the contrary: Faith in God underlies the founding principles of our country. In his affirmation of this conviction, the President is only the latest in a long line of his predecessors. As commentator Joe Loconte wrote recently in *The Wall Street Journal*, “By historical standards ... Mr. Bush's political ideals are in the mainstream of presidential rhetoric. Every U.S. president, Democrat and Republican, has upheld the sacred dignity of the individual as an essential tenet of the nation's political creed” (May 14, 2004).

Please take a moment and consider the quotes given below, from FDR to Bill Clinton. Grounding our rights in anything other than what the Declaration of Independence calls “the Supreme Judge of the world” places us on an eroding foundation. President Bush understands this, and deserves our thanks for affirming this historic and still vital proposition.

Sincerely,

W. Todd Akin

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#### **Franklin D. Roosevelt**

No greater thing could come to our land today than a revival of the spirit of religion—a revival that would sweep through the homes of the Nation and stir the hearts of men and women of all faiths to a reassertion of their belief in God and their dedication to His will for themselves and for their world. I doubt if there is any problem- social, political or economic—that would not melt away before the fire of such a spiritual awakening.

#### **Harry S Truman**

If we ignore the spiritual foundations of our birth as a nation, we do so at our peril. It took a faith in God to win our freedoms. We will need that same faith today if we are to keep those freedoms in the face of the terrible menace of totalitarianism and war. If we do not hold to our faith in God, we cannot prevail against the dangers from abroad and the fears and distrust that those dangers create among us here at home.

**Dwight D. Eisenhower**

At such a time in history, we who are free must proclaim anew our faith. This faith is the abiding creed of our fathers. It is our faith in the deathless dignity of man, governed by eternal moral and natural laws. This faith defines our full view of life. It establishes, beyond debate, those gifts of the Creator that are man's inalienable rights, and that make all men equal in His sight.

**John F. Kennedy**

The same revolutionary beliefs for which our forbears fought are still at issue around the globe. . .the belief that the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state but from the hand of God. We dare not forget today that we are the heirs of that first revolution.

**Lyndon B. Johnson**

Democracy rests on faith ... For myself, I ask only in the words of an ancient leader (Solomon), "give me now wisdom and knowledge that I may go out and come in before this people."

**Richard M. Nixon**

Many of the Europeans who came to the New World were fleeing repressive religious authority, so it is no surprise that the Founders called for a strict separation of church and state. It was not that they were irreligious but rather that memories of a tyrannical church made them see the wisdom of a separate civil authority. Hundreds of years later, many in our intellectual elite mistakenly interpret the Constitution as requiring our society to be totally secular.

**Gerald R. Ford**

Without God there could be no American form of government, nor an American way of life. Recognition of the Supreme Being is the first – the most basic – expression of Americanism. Thus the founding fathers of America saw it, and thus with God's help, it will continue to be.

**Jimmy Carter**

Upon learning of the American victory at Saratoga in 1777, Samuel Adams composed the first National Thanksgiving proclamation, and the Continental Congress called upon the governors of every state to designate a day when all Americans could join together and express their gratitude for God's providence "with united hearts." By their actions they extended a revered regional custom into a national tradition.

### **Ronald Reagan**

Without God there is no virtue because there is no prompting of the conscience ... without God there is a coarsening of the society; without God democracy will not and cannot long endure ... If we ever forget that we are one nation under God, then we will be a nation gone under.

### **George H.W. Bush**

We also do well to remember that, in many ways, the poorest nations are those who neither recognize nor revere what our Founders called "the laws of Nature and of Nature's God." Indeed, we have seen totalitarian regimes impoverish entire peoples, not just economically, but spiritually, by denigrating religion and by denying the inherent dignity and worth of individuals.

### **William J. Clinton**

With vision and courage, our Founders stated unequivocally to the world: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." These were literally revolutionary concepts, and they fundamentally changed the course of human history ... But the truths set down in our Declaration of Independence are immutable, and they continue to light our path into the challenges and possibilities of the future.