

IF MY PEOPLE WILL HUMBLE THEMSELVES AND PRAY, I WILL HEAL THEIR LAND

A Tribute and a Challenge to President George W. Bush

Fr. Bill McCarthy, MSA

God's Promise

God has promised us in the Scriptures that "If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face, I will hear from Heaven. I will restore the nation and heal their land." (2Chron. 7:14) This is an amazing promise proven in all the Scriptures. Whenever God's people are faithful to him and obey his Commandments, God blessed them abundantly. One of the great blessings was that he restored them to peace and made their enemies to be at peace with them. Whenever they disobeyed, God allowed their enemies to overtake them.

Eight Unholy Years

The United States of America towards the end of the twentieth century went through 8 unholy years under a President and Vice President that were open to abortion, even partial birth abortion, going soft on pornography and stressing the separation of God from state. Federal prosecutions for hard core pornography plummeted from 42 in 1992 to just 6 in 1997. Even those numbers are misleading. Many of the people convicted during this sin filled administration actually made plea-bargaining agreements that kept them from ~~been~~ tried for more serious crimes, including child pornography. In 1993, pornography was at \$3.9 billion per year industry. It became more than \$10 billion a year industry. As one porn executive put it, "The President is a total supporter of the pornography industry. He's always been on our team." Our media are now filled with violence, vulgarity, pornography and promiscuity.

A Return to God

Presently under a God fearing President, we have seen a major turnaround. We have an administration that is pro-God, pro-family, and pro-life. His faith and integrity have shown even more since the tragedies of September 11th of this year. He has led the whole country back to prayer. From the White House to the Capitol, from the Senate floor to Ground Zero, from the Pentagon to Yankee Stadium, our country has been at prayer. God Bless America is boldly sung throughout our land. Two great things have happened in the soul of America. We are now a grieving nation at prayer and we are united in our resolve to rid the world of evil people who attack our way of life.

We Must Go Deeper

Most Americans realize that the solution lies deeper than diplomacy or military might. As Benjamin Franklin said long ago, "God governs in the affairs of men. Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain that build it." America is returning to God in her resolve to make this a nation under God once again.

God Bless America

God has indeed blessed America. Over the last 200 years—under His Providence—America has risen to levels and achievements attained by no other nations in the history of the world. Yet, ironically, in a nation once distinguished for its faith and made great by its people of faith, in recent years public expressions of that traditional faith are now viewed as a threat to government. This is nowhere more evident than in our courts.

No Cross

For example, in the case *Warsaw v. Tehachapi*,¹ a federal court ruled that it was unconstitutional for a public cemetery to have a planter in the shape of a cross, for—as the court explained—if someone were to view that cross, it could cause "emotional distress" and thus constitute "injury-in-fact."

No Bible

In the case *Roberts v. Madigan*,² a federal court first ruled that a teacher at school could not be seen publicly with his own personal copy of the Bible and then ruled that a classroom library containing 237 books must remove from the library the two books which dealt with Christianity.

No Christian Need Apply

In the case *Alexander v. Nacogdoches School District*,³ an anti-drug speaker on the policy board of the national drug czar's office was prohibited by a federal court from delivering his anti-drug message to students in the Nacogdoches, Texas, school district. The reason? The judge pointed out that the speaker was also known as a Christian minister and thus was disqualified from delivering a secular anti-drug message that he had already delivered to over 3,000,000 students at thousands of public schools.

On the Downward Swing

In the case *Commonwealth v. Chambers*,⁴ a man was convicted and sentenced by a jury for taking an axe handle and brutally clubbing to death a 71-year-old woman in order to steal her social security check. Yet that jury's sentence was overturned because the prosecuting attorney—in a statement which lasted less than five seconds—had mentioned a Bible verse in the courtroom. For mentioning seven words from the Bible in the courtroom, the jury sentence of a man convicted of a brutal murder was set aside!

Is this how government is to operate? Does the decision to overturn that jury sentence actually constitute good government? If one examines 1 Timothy 1, 1 Peter 2, Romans 13, or a number of other Scriptures, God makes it clear that the purpose of government is to reward the righteous and to punish the wicked. Yet in this case, the wicked was protected, and the righteous was punished. That decision violates every Biblical standard for good government.

An Outcry for Good Government

Such decisions as this fuel the outcry for good government. However, the means of securing good government has been debated in America for over three centuries—with differing conclusions on how to achieve that goal.

For example, in the 1660s, when the people of Carolina were drafting their first State constitution, they sought help from political philosopher John Locke. Locke subsequently authored their 1669 constitution⁵ in the believe that good government would be secured through the enactment of good laws. Locke reasoned that if righteous laws were in the constitution, then no matter who was placed into office, he would always be bound by those righteous laws.

Good People and Good Laws

William Penn applied a dramatically different philosophy at about the same time when he established the government of Pennsylvania. While Penn did believe that good laws were necessary, he did not believe that a long State constitution filled with righteous laws would be the means of securing good government.

Penn understood that something more than good laws was necessary. He explained:

Governments, like clocks, go from the motion men give them...
Wherefore governments rather depend upon men, than men upon governments. Let men be good, and the government cannot be bad.
...But if men be bad, the government [will] never [be] good.⁶

Penn understood that the quality of government depended not upon the goodness found in laws, but rather upon the goodness found in leaders. Penn continued:

I know some say, "Let us have good laws, and no matter for the men that execute them." But let them consider that though good laws do well, good men do better; for good laws may [lack] good men...
but good men will never [lack] good laws, nor [allow bad] ones.⁷

Indeed, wicked people simply do not obey righteous laws; it is not in their nature to do so, else America would have no murder or theft; for we have laws which prohibit both. Conversely, good people in office not only obey good laws but they will not allow bad ones.

Righteous People

Penn's approach is shown to be accurate not only by history but also by the Scriptures. For example, Proverbs 29:2 declares:

When the righteous rule, the people rejoice; when the wicked rule, the people groan.

The key to good government is found in the quality of the people who rule, not in the quality of the laws they pass. Our Founding Fathers understood this. Consequently, it is not surprising that their first governments reflected the Proverbs 29:2 approach.

The Declaration of Independence

On the day they signed the Declaration of Independence, the Founding Fathers underwent an immediate transformation. The day before, each of them had been a British citizen, living in a British colony, with thirteen crown-appointed British state governments. However, when they signed that document and separated from Great Britain, they lost all of their State governments.

New Godly State Constitution

Consequently, they returned home from Philadelphia to their own States and began to create new State constitutions. Samuel Adams and John Adams helped write the Massachusetts constitution; Benjamin Rush and James Wilson helped write Pennsylvania's constitution; George Read and Thomas McKean helped write Delaware's constitution; the same was true in other States as well. (By the way, the Supreme Court formerly pointed to these State constitutions as precedents to demonstrate the Founders' intent.⁸)

Delaware

Notice, for example, what Thomas McKean and George Read placed in the Delaware constitution:

Every person, who shall be chosen a member of either house, or appointed to any office or place of trust...shall...make and subscribe the following declaration, to wit: "I do profess faith in God the father, and in Jesus Christ, his only son, and in the Holy Ghost, one God, blessed forever more, and I do acknowledge the Holy scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by divine inspiration."⁹

While today we wish this were the requirement for seminary, it was their requirement for politics! Yet notice their emphasis: the focus is on the type of individuals placed into office, not on the type of laws.

Oklahoma

If you were placed in the position of writing a new constitution for your State, how long would be the document you created? Perhaps it might be similar to the original Oklahoma constitution. When Oklahoma came into the Union in 1906, its constitution was over 100 pages in length. However, the average constitution created by the Founding Fathers was a mere five pages in length, a very short document, because the emphasis was on the type of person placed in office rather than on the type of laws.

Pennsylvania

Notice some other State constitutions. The Pennsylvania constitution authored by Benjamin Rush and James Wilson declared:

And each member [of his legislature], before he takes his seat, shall make and subscribe the following declaration, viz: "I do believe in one God, the Creator and Governor of the universe, the rewarder of the good and the punisher of the wicked, and I do acknowledge the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by Divine Inspiration."¹⁰

Massachusetts

The Massachusetts constitution, authored by Samuel Adams—the Father of the American Revolution—and John Adams, stated:

[All persons elected must] make and subscribe the following declaration, viz. "I do declare that I believe the Christian religion and have firm persuasion of its truth."¹¹

North Carolina

North Carolina's constitution required that:

No person, who shall deny the being of God, or the truth of the [Christian] religion, or the divine authority either of the Old or New Testaments, or who shall hold religious principles incompatible with the freedom and safety of the State, shall be capable of holding any office, or place of trust or profit in the civil department, within this State.¹²

What a powerful declaration! You had to believe that God's principles applied to civil government or they wouldn't let you near public office!

Connecticut

Connecticut was founded by a minister. Our state motto is a prayer, "May God who put us here sustain us." We are the Constitution State and Connecticut was founded so that each Connecticut citizen who have the right to know, love and serve Jesus Christ.

This belief in the importance of God-fearing leaders was so well understood in America that in 1892, the Supreme Court pointed out that of the forty-four States that were then in the Union, each had some type of God-centered declaration in its constitution.¹³

From Government to Education

Our Founding Fathers went to great lengths to ensure that we never forgot the principles of sound government. As many of them grew older, they realized that when they died, America would also die with them—unless they were able to transmit to subsequent generations the principles upon which they had built America's government. For this reason, many Founding Fathers became intimately involved with education. In fact, so important was education to the Founding Fathers that in the ten years following the American Revolution, more colleges were established in America than in the 150 years preceding the Revolution!¹⁴

Noah Webster

Noah Webster was one of the many Founding Fathers who became an educator. Webster served not only as a soldier during the American Revolution but also as a legislator in two States after the Revolution. Additionally, he was one of the first Founding Fathers to call for a Constitutional Convention and he was personally responsible for Article 1, Section 8, of the Constitution. As an educator, Noah Webster helped establish Amherst College and became one of the most prolific textbook writers of any of the Founding Fathers.

History of the United States

One of his texts, used in American public school classrooms for generations, was his *History of the United States*. In it, he told students:

When you become entitled to exercise the right of voting for public officers, let it be impressed on your mind that God commands you to choose for rulers, "just men who will rule in the fear of God." The preservation of [our] government depends on the faithful discharge of this duty; if the citizens neglect their duty and place unprincipled men in office, the government will soon be corrupted; laws will be made, not for the public good so much as for selfish or local purposes; corrupt or incompetent men will be appointed to execute the laws; the public revenues will be squandered on unworthy men; and the rights of the citizens will be violated or disregarded.¹⁵

While his description of the ills of government sounds like an excerpt from yesterday's newspaper, this was not occurring in their day but was simply a warning of what would happen if ungodly men were placed into office. Webster then concluded:

If [our] government fails to secure public prosperity and happiness, it must be because the citizens neglect the divine commands, and elect bad men to make and administer the laws.¹⁶

Although Noah Webster taught students that our form of government could not survive unless we kept Godly, God-fearing people of faith in office, doesn't the security of our particular form of government really depend upon the people rather than upon their representatives? After all, in a democracy, aren't the people the most important element?

A Republic Under God

This is part of our problem today; we think we are a democracy; we are not. Recall: when we pledge allegiance to the flag, we pledge allegiance to the *republic* of the United States, not the democracy of the United States. While a few today can define the difference between the two, there is a difference—a major difference.

Not a Democracy

Our Founding Fathers had an opportunity to establish a democracy and chose not to; they specifically chose to establish a republic. In their minds, we were not—and were never to become—a democracy. Founding Father Fisher Ames declared:

A democracy is a volcano which conceals the fiery materials of its own destruction. These will produce an eruption, and carry desolation in their way.

Founding Father Benjamin Rush was equally pointed; he noted:

A simple democracy is the devil's own government.¹⁸

Found Father John Adams similarly stated:

Remember, democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts, and murders itself. There never was a democracy yet that did not commit suicide.¹⁹

So strongly did the Founders oppose a democracy that when they created the Constitution, they included a provision to keep America from becoming a democracy. Article 4, Section 4 of the Constitution requires that "each State maintain a **republican** form of government:--a "republican" form of government as opposed to a "democratic" one. That is, each was to function as a republic, not a democracy.

What, then, is the difference between a democracy and a republic? Noah Webster explained that difference. He told students:

{O}ur citizens should early understand that the genuine source of correct republican principles is the Bible, particularly the New Testament, or the Christian religion.²⁰

The difference between a republic and a democracy is the source of its authority.

In a democracy, whatever the people desire is what becomes policy. If a majority of the people decide that murder is no longer a crime, in a democracy, murder will no longer be a crime. However, not so in our republic: in our republic, murder will always be a crime, for murder is always a crime in the Word of God. It is this foundation which has given our republic such enduring stability; for since man does not change, he continues to need the same restraints he has always needed; it is the rights and wrongs revealed in the bible which has provided those guidelines for our republic.

God Has Our Attention

God, once again, has our attention. He still warns us that it is sheer folly to suppose that the strength and security of our country lies in our military might, our diplomatic skills, our industrial prowess, or our scientific ingenuity. Our real defense as a nation is in Him and in the Convictions, characters and commitments of those who are willing to follow Him.

As Long As The Lord is God

Our forefathers warn that our system of government was good only so long as the Lord is our God. The second verse of our national anthem, so proudly sung, still reads, "Blessed with victory and peace may this heaven-rescued land praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation. Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just, and this be our motto, 'In God Be Our Trust.' And the Star Spangled Banner, in triumph shall wave, o're the land of the free and the home of the brave."

God's Promise

God is promising us, "If my people were called by my name will humble themselves and pray, I will hear from heaven, I will restore their nation, and heal their land" (2 Chron 7:14). And, "I will make their enemies to be at peace with them."

Faith of Our Fathers

We are returning to the faith of our fathers and becoming, once again, a nation under God. Something marvelous and wonderful is happening in the soul of our nation. The choice is clearer than ever. It is repent or perish, revival or ruin, God or chaos. Thank God our President is leading the way.

The Choice is Clear

The real terrorists are not simply those of the Middle East, but those who have, for three generations, been destroying the twin towers of our country—religion and morality, as Washington said. The question of the hour is: Will we be, once again, a nation under God with our enemies at peace with us, or still under attack? From without, yes, but more fearfully, from within. Under God or under attack? The choice is clear. Which way America? Up or down?

