

Christ in Prophecy

Special 8: "Reagan on the Christian Heritage of America"

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: Today we often hear people say that our nation's society and its system of government were not based on Christian principles. That assertion is a lie, and I intend to prove it in this program. Stay tuned.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Blessed Hope and welcome to Christ in Prophecy. As we celebrate our nation's birthday this week, I thought it would be good for us to pause and consider our Christian heritage, for it is a very rich one for which we should be very grateful.

But tragically, it is a heritage that is now being denied by historical revisionists who wish to erase all vestiges of Christianity from our nation's memory. In this program I plan to prove to you that our nation was established on a very strong Christian foundation.

And you know I have a rather unusual perspective for a Christian minister. The reason is that in addition to having studied the Bible all my life, I was a university professor of American Government, American History and Constitutional Law for 20 years before I decided in 1980 to give up my academic career and commit the rest of my life to teaching and preaching God's Word.

I can say to you without qualification that our American constitutional system is a unique one because it was the first government ever devised by Man that was based upon biblical principles.

Its cornerstone was a belief in the biblical teaching about the inherently evil nature of Man, which produced a conviction that no person can be trusted with power. This belief that Man's nature is corrupted and irreparable apart from the power of the Holy Spirit represented a radical departure from history.

Until that time, most of Mankind had always been ruled by kings who were considered to have a divine right to rule and who usually ended up ruling like they thought they were gods. The American colonists rebelled against such a king, and they had no intention of replacing the British monarch with an American one. What is amazing is that they did not proceed to establish an oligarchical form of government since most of the leaders of the American Revolution were wealthy aristocrats. But the vast majority of them were also devout Christians, and they were fully aware of the biblical teaching about the fallen nature of Man. You can find one of the clearest expressions of it in Jeremiah 17. Jeremiah wrote: Thus says the Lord, "Cursed is the

man who trusts in mankind . . . “Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord . . . And then he explains why: “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick . . .” Because of truths like this revealed in the Scriptures, our Founding Fathers did not trust anyone with power, not even themselves. They therefore proceeded to construct a government that would limit the use of power.

Equally important was their conviction that the Word of God constitutes a higher law to which all men and governments are subject, that the fundamental rights of Mankind are derived from that law and not from government.

And thus, in the nation's Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson wrote: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”

To put it another way, the Founding Fathers of our nation expressly rejected the traditional philosophy of Humanism and its concept that Man is basically good and capable of perfection and that therefore those who are highly educated have a natural right to rule over those less fortunate.

They also rejected the radical form of Humanism that came to prevail in the French Revolution and which produced a reign of terror; namely, a belief in the essential goodness of the common man. Again, because of their world view, our Founding Fathers trusted no one. They refused to establish a monarchy or an oligarchy. But they also distrusted the common man, so they refused to establish a democracy because they feared it would quickly evolve into mobocracy.

Part 2

Welcome back to Christ in Prophecy and our consideration of the Christian heritage of our nation.

Because our Founding Fathers believed in the biblical principle that Man is inherently evil and that God alone should be trusted, they carefully constructed a representative republic with an ingenious set of checks and balances. For example, in the original government established by our constitution, there was only one, yes, just one national official directly elected by the people, and that was the local Congressman who was elected to serve for two years in the House of Representatives. Senators were not directly elected. They were appointed by state legislatures, and this continued to be the case until the adoption of the 17th Amendment in 1913 which requires the selection of Senators by direct popular vote.

Likewise, the President was not originally selected by direct election. Instead, he was selected by electors who, in turn, were appointed by the state legislatures. Over a period of time, the state legislatures began to allow voters to select the electors. But as late as 1824, more than a quarter of all the state legislatures were still appointing electors. Today, all electors are selected by popular vote. Even so, the system of selecting the President continues to be indirect since voters are voting directly for electors and it is the electors who directly select the President.

Thus, in the election of 2000, George W. Bush was selected as President by the Electoral College by a margin of 271-266 even though his opponent, Al Gore, garnered 500,000 more popular votes than Bush.

Our Founding Fathers also divided the powers of government between the federal government and the state governments. In the 10th Amendment they defined what was given to the central government, they prescribed what was denied to state governments, and they stated that all other powers were retained by the States. Within the federal government, power was further divided between three branches: legislative, executive, and judicial. And the basic rights of the people to be protected from all governmental intrusion were spelled out in the Constitution's Bill of Rights. That's the name given to the first ten amendments approved in 1791 and considered to be a part of the original Constitution since their adoption was essential to the ratification of the Constitution.

Part 3

In addition to establishing a representative republic with all sorts of checks and balances to protect against the biblically defined evil nature of Man, our Founding Fathers repeatedly expressed the belief that Christian morality was absolutely essential for both the preservation of liberty and the stability of law.

They emphasized this crucial point in their writings over and over again: Consider, for example, Samuel Adams who served as Governor of Massachusetts, was a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and was the organizer of the Boston Tea Party. He wrote: "A general dissolution of principles and manners will more surely overthrow the liberties of America than the whole force of the common enemy. While the people are virtuous they cannot be subdued; but when they lose their virtue they will be ready to surrender their liberties to the first external or internal invader. Religion and good morals are the only solid foundations of public liberty and happiness."

The first governor of Virginia was Patrick Henry. He also served as member of the Continental Congress. He explained the significance of religion in these words: "The great pillars of all government and of social life are virtue, morality, and religion. This is the armor . . . and this alone, that renders us invincible."

The most significant of all our Founding Fathers was, of course, George Washington. He served as Commander in Chief of the Continental Army, overseer of the Constitutional Convention, and first President of the United States. He wrote these words: "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports . . . in vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens."

Another member of the Continental Congress was John Adams. He was one of the drafters of the Declaration of Independence, and he served as the second President of the United States. Here are his strong and eloquent words concerning the necessity of religion. He wrote: "We have no government armed in power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion . . . Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

Thomas Jefferson was the renowned author of the Declaration of Independence. Additionally, he served as Governor of Virginia, he was our first Secretary of State, and he was our third President. He wrote: "No nation has ever yet existed or been governed without religion. Nor can be. The Christian religion is the best religion that has ever been given to man, and I as Chief Magistrate of this nation am bound to give it the sanction of my example."

James Madison was a political philosopher who is considered to be the "Father of the Constitution" and the "Father of the Bill of Rights." Madison served as a member of the House of Representatives and as our nation's fourth President. Here's what he had to say about the essentiality of religion to a government of freedom and liberty: "We have staked the whole future of American civilization, not upon the power of government, far from it. We have staked the future of all of our political institutions upon the capacity of mankind for self-government; upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves, to control ourselves, to sustain ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God."

Part 4

The concept of the inalienable interdependence of constitutional order and Christian virtue was not just a characteristic of our Founding Fathers, folks. It has continued to be emphasized throughout our history: Take Noah Webster for example, he is considered the "Father of American Education." He was the publisher of The American Dictionary of the English Language in 1828. And concerning the importance of Christianity, he wrote these words: "In my view, the Christian Religion is the most important and one of the first things in which all children, under a free government, ought to be instructed . . . no truth is more evident to my mind than that the Christian Religion must be the basis of any government intended to secure the rights and privileges of a free people."

John Quincy Adams was the sixth President of the United States. He also served as an American diplomat, and as a member of the House and Senate. On the occasion of the celebration of the 45th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, he declared: "The highest glory of the American Revolution was this: it connected in one indissoluble bond the principles of civil government with the principles of Christianity."

Daniel Webster served as a United States Senator from Massachusetts and as Secretary of State. Here are his words concerning Christianity and government: "No truth is more evident to my mind than that the Christian religion must be the basis of any government intended to secure the rights and privileges of a free people. To preserve the government we must also preserve morals. Morality rests on religion; if you destroy the foundation, the superstructure must fall. When the public mind becomes vitiated and corrupt, laws are a nullity and constitutions are waste paper."

William McGuffey was an American educator and author of the McGuffey's Reader, first published in 1836. He observed: "The Christian religion is the religion of our country. From it are derived our prevalent notions of the character of God, the great moral governor of the universe. On its doctrines are founded the peculiarities of our free institutions."

In 1838 the New York State Legislature declared: "This is a Christian nation. Ninety-nine hundredths, if not a larger proportion, of our whole population, believe in the general doctrines of the Christian religion. Our government depends . . . on that virtue that has its foundation in the morality of the Christian religion."

In 1892 in the case of *United States vs. Church of the Holy Trinity*, the Supreme Court of the United States expressed these words: "No purpose of action against religion can be imputed to any legislation, state or national, because this is a religious people. This is historically true. From the discovery of this continent to the present hour, there is a single voice making this affirmation. We are a Christian people, and the morality of the country is deeply engrafted upon Christianity."

Calvin Coolidge served as Governor of Massachusetts and Vice President of the United States before he was elected to serve as our 30th President. He was known as "Silent Cal" because he seldom expressed himself about anything. But he had some prophetic words about the importance of the Christian faith to the continuing existence of our nation, he wrote, "The foundations of our society and our government rest so much on the teachings of the Bible that it would be difficult to support them if faith in these teachings would cease to be practically universal in our country."

In 1931 The United States Supreme Court, in the case of *United States v. McIntosh*, made this proclamation: "We are a Christian people, according to one another the equal right of religious freedom, and acknowledging with reverence the duty of obedience to the will of God."

Peter Marshall was a Scottish-American, a preacher, who served as pastor of New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C., he is often referred to as "The church of the Presidents," Peter Marshall also served as Chaplain of the United States Senate. In a prayer offered before the Senate in 1947 he said: "May it be ever understood that our liberty is under God and can be found nowhere else . . . We were born that way, as the only nation on earth that came into being for the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith."

Earl Warren served as Governor of California and was the 14th Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court. In a *Time* magazine interview conducted in February of 1954, shortly after President Eisenhower had appointed him as Chief Justice, he made this observation about our Christian heritage, he said, "I believe no one can read the history of our country without realizing that the Good Book and the spirit of the Savior have from the beginning been our guiding geniuses . . . I believe the entire Bill of Rights came into being because of the knowledge our forefathers had of the Bible and their belief in it. I like to believe we are living today in the spirit of the Christian religion. I like also to believe that as long as we do so, no great harm can come to our country."

Dwight Eisenhower served as Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe during World War II. He also served two terms as our 34th President. He made this observation about the relationship between religion and government: "Without God there could be no American form of government, nor an American way of life. Recognition of the Supreme Being is the first and the most basic expression of Americanism."

Ronald Reagan, our 40th President, expressed a similar sentiment when he proclaimed: "America needs God more than God needs America. If we ever forget that we are "One Nation under God," then we will be a Nation gone under."

Well as you can see from the survey of expressions concerning our nation's Christian heritage, that heritage has been recognized and lauded by our leaders from the beginning until the latter part of the 20th Century. It has only been in recent years that this important heritage has been denied and disparaged.

Even foreigners who visited the country recognized the significance of our Christian heritage. Take, for example, the French historian, Alexis de Tocqueville who visited the United States in the early 1830's. In 1835 he published the first of a two volume study of this nation, titled, "Democracy in America." He revealed that the intertwining of Christianity with government was very surprising to him. He wrote these words, "Upon my arrival in the United States, the religious aspect of the country was the first thing that struck my attention; and the longer I stayed there, the more did I perceive the great political consequences resulting from this state of things, to which I was unaccustomed. In France I had almost always seen the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom pursuing courses diametrically opposed to each other; but in America I found that they were intimately united, and that they reigned in common over the same country. The Americans combine the notions of Christianity and of liberty so intimately in their minds, that it is impossible to make them conceive the one without the other."

Part 5

Welcome back to Christ in Prophecy and our survey of the Christian heritage of our nation.

We have thus far seen how that heritage was grounded in the views of our Founding Fathers, how it was maintained throughout our nation's history in pronouncements by our leaders and our courts, and how it was even recognized by foreigners who came to visit our nation.

It has also been affirmed in a monumental study by two University of Houston political science professors, Donald Lutz and Charles Hyneman. It is a study that took them ten years. It was published in 1983. They surveyed over 15,000 documents written by our Founding Fathers between 1760 and 1805 and discovered that the Bible was, by far, the most cited source, comprising 34 percent of all quotations. In fact, the Bible was quoted four times more than any other source.

And significantly, the next most commonly cited sources were Barron Montesquieu, William Blackstone, and John Locke. All of these men were strong adherents of natural law philosophy and encouraged the incorporation of biblical law into civil law.

Lutz and Hyneman affirmed that the Pilgrims, the Puritans and the constitutional framers all insisted on cementing the connection between law and morals by infusing biblical precepts into the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.

Even contemporary American Jewish leaders have asserted their belief that our nation is one that is based on Christian principles, and they have expressed their appreciation for the fact that this foundation has produced religious liberty for them.

Consider, for example, the viewpoint of Jeff Jacoby, a Jewish columnist at the *Boston Globe* he wrote, "This is a Christian country, it was founded by Christians and built on broad Christian principles. Threatening? Far from it. It is in precisely this Christian country that Jews have known the most peaceful, prosperous, and successful existence in their long history."

Don Feder, a Jewish columnist and longtime writer for the *Boston Herald*, expressed a similar viewpoint, he wrote, "Clearly this nation was established by Christians. As a Jew, I'm entirely comfortable with the concept of a Christian America. The choice isn't Christian America or nothing, but Christian America or a neo-pagan, hedonistic, rights- without- responsibilities, anti-family, culture-of-death America. As an American Jew I feel very much at home here."

Michael Medved, a Jewish radio talk show host and columnist, agrees that America is indeed a Christian nation. He wrote, "The framers may not have mentioned Christianity in the Constitution but they clearly intended that charter of liberty to govern a society of fervent faith, freely encouraged by government for the benefit of all. Their noble and unprecedented experiment never involved a religion-free or faithless state but did indeed presuppose America's unequivocal identity as a Christian nation."

President Barack Obama has repeatedly asserted that the United States is "no longer a Christian nation," but he has never defined what he means by that statement.

What about it? Are we still a Christian nation, or have we abandoned the faith our nation was based upon? You know folks, there is certainly a sense in which the President is correct. Although 85% of Americans identify themselves as Christians, only about 9% at the most would claim to be born-again, Evangelical Christians. This means that most Americans are simply professing Christians, or cultural Christians.

But this sad fact does not negate the historical evidence that our Founding Fathers established this nation on Christian principles and that those principles still serve as the basis of our constitutional structure and our laws.

The problem, of course, is that those with Obama's viewpoint are determined to cut America loose from its Judeo-Christian foundation. They have a classic European-style Humanist worldview that despises Christianity and Capitalism, and the result is that freedom is endangered.

We are speeding toward a secular, pagan society devoid of values that contribute to virtue and civility. And if this transition continues unabated, our system of government will not be able to survive, for it is based upon the assumption of a citizenry that is endowed with biblical truths.

We need to pray for our nation as never before. We need to pray that the schemes of the secularists will be frustrated, confused, and defeated. And we need to pray for a national spiritual revival. As we do so, let's remember the words of Revelation 2:5, "Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first."

Part 6

I'd like to conclude this program by sharing with you some interesting facts about our Christian heritage, many of which may surprise you.

For example, did you know that Christopher Columbus attributed his discovery of the New World to the guidance of the Holy Spirit? Here's how he described it: "It was the Lord who put into my mind, I could feel His hand upon me, the fact that it would be possible to sail from here to the Indies. There is no question that the inspiration was from the Holy Spirit because He comforted me with rays of marvelous inspiration from the Holy Scriptures. Our Lord Jesus Christ desired to perform a very obvious miracle in the voyage to the Indies, to confront me and the whole people of God."

Did you know that there were 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence and 24 of them were seminary graduates?

Did you know that 5 days after the Declaration was adopted, the Continental Congress approved the use of public funds to hire military chaplains? And the Congress also ordered the importation of 20,000 Bibles for the American troops.

Did you know that General George Washington sent out a letter to his regiments which stated: "The General hopes and trusts, that every officer and man, will endeavor so to live, and act, as becomes a Christian Soldier, defending the dearest Rights and Liberties of this country?"

Did you know that through all 50 state constitutions, without exception, there runs an appeal and reference to God as the Creator of our liberties and the preserver of our freedoms?

Did you know that the biblically based New England Primer, first published in 1690, remained the nation's most popular school textbook for more than 100 years, selling roughly 5 million copies in a nation that had only 6 million people? The 106 lessons it contained were saturated with Bible passages, and the lessons encouraged devotion to Jesus Christ.

Did you know that the biblically based McGuffey's Reader, which replaced The New England Primer in 1836 was filled with biblical principles and religious instruction? It ultimately sold more than 120 million copies and was officially recognized as a public school textbook in 37 states.

Did you know that almost every one of the first 123 colleges and universities established in the United States had Christian origins and purposes? For example, Harvard University, founded in 1636, had as its motto: "Truth for Christ and the Church."

Also its rules for students stated: "Let every student be plainly instructed, and earnestly pressed to consider well, that the main end of life and studies is to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life, and therefore Christ is the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning." Somewhere along the line, as the school secularized, the motto was changed from "Truth for Christ and the Church" to simply "Truth."

Did you know that the United States government issued Bibles to all its troops during World War II which contained the following statement from President Franklin Roosevelt, he wrote, "As Commander-in-Chief, I take pleasure in commending the reading of the Bible to all who serve in the armed forces of the United States. Throughout the centuries men of many faiths and diverse origins have found in the Sacred Book words of wisdom, counsel, and inspiration. It is a fountain of strength and now, as always, an aid in attaining the highest aspirations of the human soul."

Did you know that on the evening of D-Day, June 6, 1944, while Allied troops were landing on the coast of Normandy, France, President Roosevelt read a 6½ minute prayer over national radio, asking God to grant the troops a victory? Here is an excerpt from it: "Almighty God, our sons, pride of our Nation, this day have set upon a mighty endeavor, a struggle to preserve our Republic, our religion, and our civilization, and to set free a suffering humanity. Lead them straight and true; give strength to their arms, stoutness to their hearts."

Did you know that the words, "under God," were not added to the pledge of allegiance by Congress until 1954?

Did you know that "In God We Trust" was not adopted by Congress as our nation's national motto until 1956? It first appeared on a two-cent coin in 1864. And since 1938 all U.S. coins have featured the inscription. The motto did not start appearing on paper money until 1957.

Did you know that both chambers of the House and Senate at our national capitol building feature the inscription, "In God We Trust" on their walls?

Did you know that President Obama has consistently stated that our national motto is "E Pluribus Unum" and not "In God We Trust"?

Well, that's our program for this week in celebration of our nation's birthday. I hope it's been a blessing to you, and I hope you will be back with us next week. Until then, the Lord willing, this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb & Lion Ministries, saying, "Look up, be watchful, for our Redeemer is drawing near!!

End of Program