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The Faith That Built America—An Address by Dr. R. Richard Renner, of Cleveland, Ohio, During the Washington Pilgrimage of 1957

EXTENSION OF REMARKS
OF

HON. FRANCES P. BOLTON

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 24, 1957

Mrs. BOLTON. Mr. Speaker, each year the Washington Pilgrimage redirects our attention inward toward the rich more and spiritual heritage of our great Nation. In these days of personal, national, and international tensions, it is desirable to look again at the simple but unswerving faith of our forefathers in Almighty God.

In his address at the faith and freedom dinner, April 26, Dr. R. Richard Renner, president of the Washington Pilgrimage, and president of the staff of Cleveland's Doctors Hospital, eloquently reviewed this steadfast faith of early America. As his message is directed to all who would know more of their spiritual heritage, I ask permission, Mr. Speaker, that it be included in the Record at this time.

The address follows:

ADDRESS OF DR. R. RICHARD RENNER AT THE FAITH AND FREEDOM DINNER OF THE WASHINGTON PILGRIMAGE, APRIL 26, 1957

America was settled by men who fled to this country to escape the so-called divine right of kings and governments and churches. They believed that all men were created equal. With a firm reliance on the protection of divine providence, they look to God as their supreme judge. They believed the new Nation would succeed only if its citizens were moral and obedient to God. The Washington Pilgrimage believes our Government will continue to succeed only as long as our citizens continue to be moral and obedient to God.

Governments, like clocks, go from the motion men give them. As ignorant tinkers can ruin clocks, so can nearsighted, selfish statesmen ruin governments. As wrong clocks can upset the entire household, so can wrong governments upset God's entire household. The judgments of God came upon a people as their governments manage the trust which God has committed to them through His people.

Religion was the driving force which inspired Columbus to sail blindly west into the Atlantic. The first settlers came over believing that if men followed God, He would give them a new government of the people, by the people, for the people. God-directed self-government started in the Virginia

House of Burgesses where they all took their seats "till a prayer was said that it would please God to guide and sanctify all."

Following the Mayflower compact, every New England town drew up a covenant with God which was the town constitution. There were solemn agreements with God. They felt their migration to America was led by divine providence and they agreed to live together in teamwork under His direction.

The early settlers of America had all been persecuted at the hands of the church and the state. When minorities arose whose aim was to bring in democracy to church and state, or at least to purify religion and government, they were persecuted in every country. That persecution was not merely neighborly disapproval or newspaper condemnation. They were thrown into filthy jails where they died from starvation and disease. In 1662, more than 4,000 Quakers were to be found in English jails. The crimes committed by church and state were too horrible to mention.

These oppressions of the religious minorities by the church, and the greater cruelties by the state and the church in the name of the mother religion, caused the great migration to America. They were not free to practice their religion in Europe. As religious people they did not believe in any divine right of kings, and could not agree that the king could do no wrong when down deep in their spiritual hearts they knew the kings like Henry VIII and many others did nothing but wrong.

With these ideas in mind it is no wonder that in all our colonies the people made certain that the people were not there just for the rulers, but that the rulers were there for the people, to minister to their comfort and their welfare. According to Thomas Hooker of Connecticut, "The privilege of election belongs to the people according to the blessed will and law of God." Roger Williams said, "The sovereign, original foundation of civil power lies in the people. Governments have no more power than the people, consulting and agreeing, shall entrust them with; for the sovereign power of all civil authority is founded in the consent of the people."

In like manner they made certain they would preserve the liberty and purity of the Gospel. John Cotton had said, "To make the Lord God our Governor is the best form of government in a Christian Commonwealth." As they depended on God for protection, so they looked to God for direction. They were a people called by God and under a special covenant with Him. All these early pilgrims were a race of devout stalwart God-fearing men whose aim in life was to find their place in God's divine plan and to fulfill it.

The purpose of settling Virginia was to establish an English Christian outpost in the New World. The English Government perhaps wanted to get ahead of the government of Spain, but the religious people wanted the plantation of a church of English Christians. Sermons were preached in English churches and funds were raised there for these colonies. They wanted also to be missionaries

to the Indians. Reverend Alexander Whitacre, the son of a great Puritan minister, who converted Pocahontas, was one of the early leaders of the colony.

You remember the Virginia-London Co. offered the Pilgrims in Holland a free home as settlers in Virginia. Accepting that offer, they set sail for Virginia. That the Mayflower landed at Cape Cod was due to adverse winds, the Gulf Stream, no navigational ability and poor seamanship, rather than any lack of Christian hospitality in the Virginia colony.

When the House of Burgesses first met in Virginia, after prayer to God, their first law was one protecting the Indians; the second law encouraged the conversion of these Indians to Christianity. Other laws made church attendance compulsory and ruled against gambling at dice or cards. Half the laws during that early period had to do with religious observance. Articles, instructions, and orders did specially ordain, charge, and require with all diligence care and respect that the Christian faith be preached, planted and used, and to make yourselves all of one mind for the good of your country and your own, to serve and fear God, the Giver of all goodness, for every plantation which your Heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted out.

The Quakers settled Pennsylvania, but few of us realize that they also settled Delaware and western New Jersey. They stressed high ethical standards and the inner light. If you will only be still and know God, you can be guided by the spirit of God. Their plain manner of dress was their outward expression of their belief in the equality of man. Perhaps because Penn had suffered and had been in jail in England many times because of his religion, he granted a charter of liberties approved by the Colonial Assembly in 1701, guaranteeing that no person shall in any case be molested or prejudiced because of his or their conscientious persuasion or practice. This Quaker form of democracy was a foundation of our American heritage.

It was later that the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians arrived and settled in areas of western Pennsylvania, the Carolinas, New Hampshire, and Maine. In many areas their American plan of representative government was copied from the Presbyterian form of church organization. Out of these Scotch-Irish Presbyterians came the great group of Disciples of Christ, founded in America with the express purpose of uniting all Christians into one common group.

But to Maryland goes the honor of being the first colony to extend religious toleration to all Christian groups as early as 1634. As a Catholic minority in England they had been persecuted, so they decreed that "no person should in any way be troubled, molested, or discountenanced for or in respect to his or her religion, nor in the free exercise thereof, nor in any way compelled to the belief of any other religion against his or her consent." A government under God was the aim of Caecilius Lord Calvert, Baron of Baltimore.

There were wide differences between the broadbrimmed-hatted Quakers and the black-gowned Jesuits, yet each had in his heart the picture of a God-directed commonwealth. And the New Jersey settlement was directed by an impulse on the spirit of God's people not for themselves but for their posterity which should be after them. We owe a debt to our posterity. It is too bad that future generations cannot be here at this time to see the wonderful things we are doing with their money.

Perhaps Jonathan Edwards was the most influential man in colonial times. He was president of both Yale and Princeton. His chief interest was people, and he wanted in all America the highest personal standards with a sense of divine purpose. But the man who stirred colonial America to deeds of daring rectitude and scorn for miserable aims that end in self was none other than George Whitefield, the associate of John and Charles Wesley. Colonel Orlinorpe had brought over all three to make certain his settlers in Georgia remained true to their Christian ideals. Whitefield soon extended his endeavors to all the colonies, and there is hardly a small-town church from Georgia to Maine that is not obligated to him. He had trust in God. Nothing was too hard for God to do; nothing too great for America to hope for from God. This was our American heritage. This the Washington pilgrimage believes.

Disaster awaits the people or the nation that forsakes moral standards or ignores God's sovereignty. On this idea was born the principle of the American Revolution. On it was the foundation for the dream of a God-directed United States of America.

The true foundations of our early Government were on the unchangeable will of God. A good government must rest on a definite moral basis in the people. The people will be moral only if they are religious. They felt strongly that their Government would succeed if the mass of people were virtuous and in touch with God. And the rights of everyone are divine, yes, even more divine than the divine right of kings, because kings and rulers were constituted for the good of the people. These rights are written by the electronic beam from heaven, by the hand of God Himself, and will never be erased as long as the people believe in divinity and trust His power to lead them and their nation.

Our early leaders believed this. Washington violently rejected the idea of a monarchy. Adams demanded annual elections to keep the Government in touch with the people. Jefferson as wartime Governor of Virginia refused to assume dictatorial powers. Benjamin Franklin in Poor Richard's Almanac supported these views.

While Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence it was the ideal of the times. Franklin and Adams made many corrections and additions in their own handwriting.

Not only was the Government divided into legislative, judicial, and executive branches for proper balances, but to prevent too much authority concentrating at the top, they tried to further balance the power by State, county, city and town governments for they knew that concentrated power tends toward corruption and powerful rulers forget they are only agents of the people and their power is all derived from the people. Jefferson said, "No government can continue good but under the control of the people."

But a declaration of rights is also a declaration of duties. If "Liberty like life is the gift of God," (Jefferson), then religion and morality are indispensable supports. "Liberty can no more exist without virtue than the body can live and move without a soul" (Adams). Public virtue in government cannot exist without private virtue in the people, and public virtue is the only foundation of a republic. If our citizens fail to obey the inner police of their own virtuous conscience, sooner or later they will obey the police of a dictator state.

Washington spent much time on his knees in prayer. Probably nothing else could sustain him at Valley Forge. The first day after he became commander in chief at Cambridge he issued an order saying, "The general expects of all officers and soldiers not engaged in actual duty, a punctual attendance on divine service to implore the blessings of heaven upon the means used for our safety and defence." Washington also started and closed each day with a time of prayer alone in his room. Adams stated to his grandson, "The whole duty of man is summed up in obedience to God's will." Jefferson wrote a book on the teachings of Jesus and read from it every night. Franklin began each day with prayerful meditation, and insisted that the First Continental Congress and all our official meetings be opened with prayer. Is it any wonder we of the Washington Pilgrimage feel that America was founded on religion by moral men and that we want America to remain true to those spiritual principles that have made us a great nation under God?

Even on the reverse of our Great Seal, the Eye of God looks down on the uncapped pyramid of 13 layers. These 13 States operate under the all-seeing eye of God, who according to the Latin motto, "looks with favor on that which has been begun." The Continental Congress declared the statements on the Great Seal "allude to the many signal interpositions of providence in favor of the American cause."

On the other side of the Great Seal, the shield of 13 red and white stripes without support of the eagle indicates that we can rely on our own virtues. And in the American eagle's left claw are arrows for war, while in his right is clutched the olive branch for peace. Have we made of our eagle a south-

paw, or a lefty, because he does so much more with his arrows for war than with the olive branch for peace? Our Founding Fathers wanted to wage peace more than war.

The "E Pluribus Unum" on our Great Seal stands for teamwork under the supervision of God in our new Nation. Do you agree with the founders of the Washington pilgrimage that we need teamwork of all people without regard to race, color, or creed to keep America true to the spiritual ideals of our Founding Fathers, and forever a Nation under God?

Any kind of people can live under a dictator. It takes people with character to form a democracy and use their freedom wisely. We study the past to learn its lessons and prepare for the future. People with a great spiritual idea will learn to live together in democracy. Today we do not have Washington and Jefferson and Lincoln. The challenge is on you and on me. America's future and democracy's future and the world's future depends on our response. Will we do it?

Man has tried in vain to build society on science without love, education without wisdom, politics without justice, and economics without God. We must build on the bedrock of faith in God, the home, the family, and the state. We have had world leadership thrust upon us. Mankind is knocking at our gates for wisdom and leadership and the hope of peace. Let us not fail to fulfill our destiny and lead the world in peace and love because we lack the moral fiber in our own national life.

Information, direction, and stimulation can still come from the mind of God to the mind of men in our Nation. Everyone should be free under the direction of God to fight for America under the dictates of his own conscience. I wish this freedom for every man in every nation. The basic struggle is for the wills of men. It goes on in the hearts of men. Armies and navies and bombs, and pacts and economic assistance treaties may be necessary, but the final deciding factor is whether we as men and nations will be guided by the voice of materialism or the Voice of God.

Let us then as pilgrims find again that faith in God our colonial fathers knew. Let our homes and schools become again the Nation's strength. Let our statesmen learn again to listen to the Voice of God. Then we shall know once more the greatness of a nation whose strength is in the spirit of the people. Then America can give forth to all the peoples of the earth the only answer that can satisfy their longing for peace and their thirst for a sane and decent world. Then will inspired policies guide our Nation's lifeblood. Then will democracy be reborn. Then will America know the peace of God. Then and then only will the Washington pilgrimage have fulfilled the ideals its great founders have for all America.