

Religious Tenets of the Presidents

[From the Washington Star.]

George Washington was an active member of the Protestant Episcopal church. His first inaugural address gives his belief:

"It would be peculiarly improper to omit in this first official act my fervent supplications to that Almighty Being who rules over the universe, who presides over the counsels of nations, and whose providential aids can supply every human defect."

John Adams was a Unitarian who believed in the guiding providence of God. He so states: "And may that Being who is supreme over all, the Patron of Order, the Fountain of Justice and the Protector in all ages of the world of virtuous liberty, continue His blessings upon this nation and its government, and give it all possible success and duration consistent with the ends of His providence."

Thomas Jefferson was claimed by some as an agnostic. Let him speak for himself. Closing one of his

messages he said: "And may that Divine Power which rules the destinies of the universe lead our counsels to what is best and give them a favorable issue for your peace and prosperity."

James Madison's tenets were more uncertain. He made mention in one of his messages "to the guidance of that Almighty Being whose power regulates the destiny of nations."

James Monroe's closing words in his first inaugural address are conclusive as to his belief: "I enter on the trust to which I have been called by the suffrages of my fellow citizens with my fervent prayers to the Almighty God that He will be graciously pleased to continue to us that protection which He has already so conspicuously displayed in our favor."

John Quincy Adams was a Unitarian, and his inaugural address was full of Christian sentiment in these words: "And may He who searches the hearts of the children of men prosper your exertions to secure the blessings of peace and promote the highest welfare of our country."

Andrew Jackson was a character that never could be mistaken: positive in everything he did. He was just as much so in religion as he was in politics. He was out and out a Presbyterian. In his inaugural address he said: "I now commend you, fellow citizens, to the guidance of Almighty God, with a full reliance on his merciful providence for the maintenance of our free institutions."

Martin Van Buren worshiped with the Dutch Reformed church. His expressed belief is clear: "Beyond that, I only look to the gracious protection of that Divine Being,

whose strengthening support I humbly solicit, and whom I fervently pray to look down upon us. May it be among the dispensations of His Providences to bless our beloved country with honors and with length of days; may her ways be ways of pleasantness and all her paths be peace."

William Henry Harrison was an Episcopalian. There was no uncertain sound in his theology: "And to that good Being who has placed us by the gifts of civil and religious freedom, who watched over and prospered the labors of our fathers, and has hitherto preserved to us institutions far exceeding in excellence those of any other people, let us unite in fervently commending every interest of our beloved country in all after time."

John Tyler attended the Protestant Episcopal church. At one time he said: "Confiding in the protecting care of an ever-watchful and over ruling Providence, it shall be my first and highest duty to preserve unimpaired the free institutions under which we live and transmit them to those who shall succeed me in their full force and vigor."

James K. Polk, during his last sickness, but a short time before his death, received the rite of baptism at the hands of a Methodist clergyman, who was an old neighbor and friend. In his inaugural address he said: "Again humbly supplicating that Divine Being who has watched over and protected our beloved country from its infancy to the present hour, to continue His gracious benedictions upon us that we may continue to be a prosperous and happy people."

Zachary Taylor was not a communicant in any Christian church, and it is not known that he ever expressed any preference for any particular denomination. Closing his inaugural he said: "In conclusion I congratulate you, my fellow citizens, upon the high state of prosperity to which the goodness of Divine Providence has conducted our common country. Let us invoke a continuance of the same protecting care."

Millard Fillmore's biographer said of him: "He was a sound, practical Christian without knowing it." In closing his first message to congress he used the following beautiful sentence: "I rely upon Him, who holds in His hands the destinies of nations, to endow me with the requisite strength for the task, and to avert from our country the evils apprehended from the heavy calamity which has befallen us."

Franklin Pierce attended the Congregational church, but was not a communicant. In closing his inaugural address he said: "Standing as I do almost within view of the green slopes of Monticello, and, as it were, within reach of the tomb of Washington, we all cherish memories of the past, the gathering round me, like so many eloquent voices of exhortation from Heaven, I can express no better hope for my country than that the kind Providence which smiled upon our fathers may enable their children to preserve the blessings which they have inherited."

James Buchanan was unmistakably a believer, as shown by the opening sentence of his inaugural, in which he said: "In entering upon this great office I most humbly invoke the God of my fathers for wisdom and firmness to execute these high and responsible duties."

Abraham Lincoln was an attendant at one of the Presbyterian

churches, but not a communicant. His faith he has outlined thus: "The Almighty has His own purposes. 'Woe unto the world because of offenses! For it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh.'" Andrew Johnson. But little has

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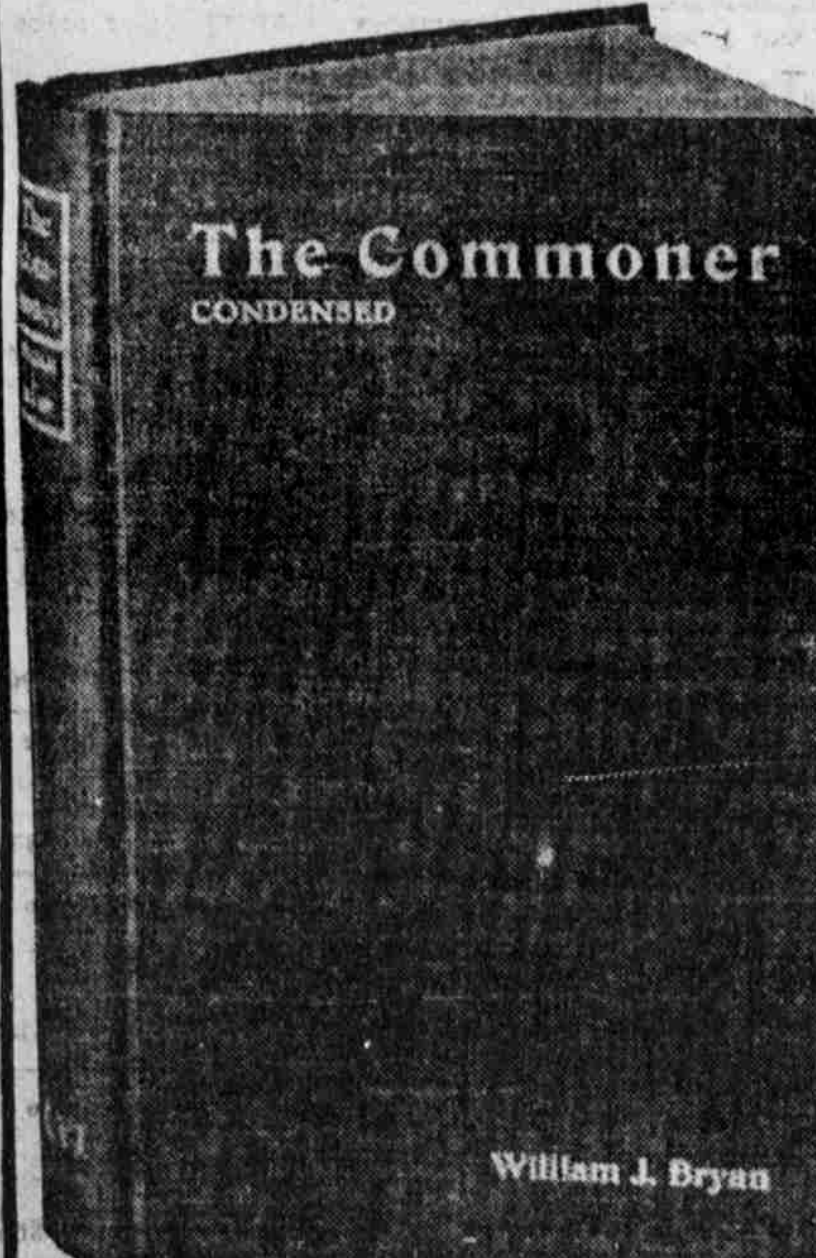
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