

## The Inaugural Addresses of the Presidents Reveal Their Christian Faith

Compiled by Stephen McDowell (part II)

In the last Perspective we mentioned how all of America's Presidents have professed Christianity. Many were devout in their religious beliefs, adhering to their faith in word and deed. Others, while saying they were Christians, did not live in accordance with the moral teachings of the Bible. Some may have externally held to the faith (by attending church, professing they were Christians, etc.) while their hearts were far from Him; but nonetheless, they culturally embraced the Christian faith. Every President has at least acknowledged God and sought His aid in some way. This is certainly seen in their inaugural addresses. We examined excerpts from some of their addresses in the last Perspective. Here are the others.

### Grover Cleveland (Democrat, 1885-1889)

First Inaugural Address, Capitol Steps, Washington, D.C., March 4, 1885

And let us not trust to human effort alone, but humbly acknowledging the power and goodness of Almighty God, who presides over the destiny of nations, and who has at all times been revealed in our country's history, let us invoke His aid and His blessing upon our labors.

### Benjamin Harrison (Republican, 1889-1893)

Inaugural Address, Capitol Steps, Washington, D.C., March 4, 1889

Entering thus solemnly into covenant with each other, we may reverently invoke and confidently expect the favor and help of Almighty God — that He will give to me wisdom, strength, and fidelity, and to our people a spirit of fraternity and a love of righteousness and peace.

### Grover Cleveland (Democrat, 1893-1897)

Second Inaugural Address, Capitol Steps,

Washington, D.C., March 4, 1893

Above all, I know there is a Supreme Being who rules the affairs of men and whose goodness and mercy have always followed the American people, and I know He will not turn from us now if we humbly and reverently seek His powerful aid.

### William McKinley (Republican, 1897-1901)

First Inaugural Address, Capitol Steps, Washington, D.C., March 4, 1897

. . . relying upon the support of my countrymen and invoking the guidance of Almighty God. Our faith teaches that there is no safer reliance than upon the God of our fathers, who has so sin-



Grover Cleveland

ularly favored the American people in every national trial, and who will not forsake us so long as we obey His commandments and walk humbly in His footsteps. . . .

Let me again repeat the words of the oath administered by the Chief Justice which, in their respective spheres, so

far as applicable, I would have all my countrymen observe: "I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States." This is the obligation I have reverently taken before the Lord Most High.

Second Inaugural Address, Capitol Steps, Washington, D.C., March 4, 1901

Intrusted by the people for a second time with the office of President, I enter upon its administration . . . reverently invoking for my guidance the direction and favor of Almighty God.

### Theodore Roosevelt (Republican, 1901-1909)

[Roosevelt assumed office on September 14, 1901, when McKinley died from an assassin's bullet. After completing this term of office he was elected President in 1904.]

Inaugural Address, Capitol Steps, Washington, D.C., March 4, 1905

My fellow-citizens, no people on earth have more cause to be thankful than ours, and this is said reverently, in no spirit of boastfulness in our own strength, but with gratitude to the Giver of Good who has blessed us with the conditions which have enabled us to achieve so large a measure of well-being and of happiness.

### William Howard Taft (Republican, 1909-1913)

Inaugural Address, House of Representatives, Washington, D.C., March 4, 1909

. . . I invoke the considerate sympathy and support of my fellow-citizens and the aid of the Almighty God in the discharge of my responsible duties.

**Woodrow Wilson****(Democrat, 1913-1921)****First Inaugural Address, Capitol Steps, Washington, D.C., March 4, 1913**

I summon all honest men, all patriotic, all forward-looking men, to my side. God helping me, I will not fail them, if they will but counsel and sustain me!

**Second Inaugural Address, Capitol Steps, Washington, D.C., March 5, 1917**

I pray God I may be given the wisdom and the prudence to do my duty in the true spirit of this great people. I am their servant and can succeed only as they sustain and guide me by their confidence and their counsel.

**Warren G. Harding****(Republican, 1921-1923)****Inaugural Address, Capitol Steps, Washington, D.C., March 4, 1921**

. . . I must utter my belief in the divine inspiration of the founding fathers. Surely there must have been God's intent in the making of this new-world Republic. . . . America is ready to . . . promote that brotherhood of mankind which must be God's highest conception of human relationship. . . .

Service is the supreme commitment of life. I would rejoice to acclaim the era of the Golden Rule and crown it with the autocracy of service. I pledge an administration wherein all the agencies of Government are called to serve, and ever promote an understanding of Government purely as an expression of the popular will.

. . . The world upheaval has added heavily to our tasks. But with the realization comes the surge of high resolve, and there is reassurance in belief in the God-given destiny of our Republic. . . .

I accept my part with single-mindedness of purpose and humility of spirit, and implore the favor and guidance of God in His Heaven. With these I am unafraid, and confidently face the future.

I have taken the solemn oath of office on that passage of Holy Writ wherein it is asked: "What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" This I plight to God and country.

**Calvin Coolidge****(Republican, 1923-1929)**

[Coolidge became President on August 3, 1923, when Harding unexpectedly died while in office. He gave an inaugural address after he was elected in 1924.]

**Inaugural Address, Capitol Steps, Washington, D.C., March 4, 1925**

America seeks no earthly empire built on blood and force. No ambition, no temptation, lures her to thought of foreign dominions. The legions which she sends forth are armed, not with the sword, but with the cross. The higher state to which she seeks the allegiance of all mankind is not of human, but of divine origin. She cherishes no purpose save to merit the favor of Almighty God.

**Herbert Hoover****(Republican, 1929-1933)****Inaugural Address, Capitol Steps, Washington, D.C., March 4, 1929**

This occasion is not alone the administration of the most sacred oath which can be assumed by an American citizen. It is a dedication and consecration under God to the highest office in service of our people. I assume this trust in the humility of knowledge that only through the guidance of Almighty Providence can I hope to discharge its ever-increasing burdens. . . .

I ask the help of Almighty God in this service to my country to which you have called me.

**Franklin Delano Roosevelt****(Democrat, 1933-1945)****First Inaugural Address, Capitol Steps, Washington, D.C., March 4, 1933**

In this dedication of a Nation we

humbly ask the blessing of God. May He protect each and every one of us. May He guide me in the days to come.

**Second Inaugural Address, Capitol Steps, Washington, D.C., January 20, 1937**

While this duty rests upon me I will do my utmost to speak their purpose and to do their will, seeking Divine guidance to help us each and every one to give light to them that sit in darkness and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

**Third Inaugural Address, Capitol Steps, Washington, D.C., January 20, 1941**

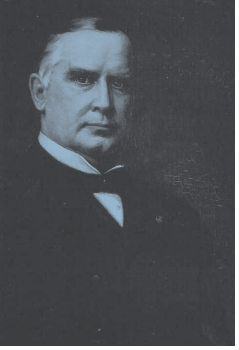
In the face of great perils never before encountered, our strong purpose is to protect and to perpetuate the integrity of democracy. For this we muster the spirit of America, and the faith of America. We do not retreat. We are not content to stand still. As Americans, we go forward, in the service of our country, by the will of God.

**Fourth Inaugural Address, White House, Washington, D.C., January 20, 1945**

As I stand here today, having taken the solemn oath of office in the presence of my fellow countrymen — in the presence of our God — I know that it is America's purpose that we shall not fail. . . .

The Almighty God has blessed our land in many ways. He has given our people stout hearts and strong arms with which to strike mighty blows for freedom and truth. He has given to our country a faith which has become the hope of all peoples in an anguished world.

So we pray to Him now for the vision to see our way clearly — to see the way that leads to a better life for ourselves and for all our fellow men — to the achievement of His will, to peace on earth.



*After “invoking the guidance of Almighty God,” William McKinley said, “Our faith teaches that there is no safer reliance than upon the God of our fathers, who has so singularly favored the American people in every national trial, and who will not forsake us so long as we obey His commandments and walk humbly in His footsteps.”*

### Harry S. Truman (Democrat, 1945-1953)

[Truman assumed office on April 12, 1945, upon the death of Roosevelt. After completing FDR’s term, Truman was elected in 1948.]

### Inaugural Address, Capitol Steps, Washington, D.C., January 20, 1949

The American people stand firm in the faith which has inspired this Nation from the beginning. We believe that all men have a right to equal justice under law and equal opportunity to share in the common good. We believe that all men have the right to freedom of thought and expression. We believe that all men are created equal because they are created in the image of God. . . .

Steadfast in our faith in the Almighty, we will advance toward a world where man’s freedom is secure. To that end we will devote our strength, our resources, and our firmness of resolve. With God’s help, the future of mankind will be assured in a world of justice, harmony, and peace.

### Dwight D. Eisenhower (Republican, 1953-1961) First Inaugural Address, Capitol Steps, Washington, D.C., January 20, 1953

My friends, before I begin the expression of those thoughts that I deem appropriate to this moment, would you permit me the privilege of uttering a little private prayer of my own. And I ask that you bow your heads.

Almighty God, as we stand here at this moment my future associates in the executive branch of government join me in beseeching that Thou will make full and complete our dedication to the service of the people in this throng, and their fellow citizens everywhere.

Give us, we pray, the power to discern clearly right from wrong, and allow all our words and actions to be governed thereby, and by the laws of this land.

Especially we pray that our concern shall be for all the people regardless of station, race, or calling.

May cooperation be permitted and be the mutual aim of those who, under the concepts of our Constitution, hold to differing political faiths; so that all may work for the good of our beloved country and Thy glory. Amen. . . .

In the swift rush of great events, we find ourselves groping to know the full sense and meaning of these times in which we live. In our quest of understanding, we beseech God’s guidance. . . .

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. . . .

This is the hope that beckons us onward in this century of trial. This is the work that awaits us all, to be done with bravery, with charity, and with prayer to Almighty God.

### Second Inaugural Address, Capitol Steps, Washington, D.C., January 20, 1957

Before all else, we seek, upon our common labor as a nation, the blessings of Almighty God. And the hopes in our hearts fashion the deepest prayers of our whole people. . . .

### John F. Kennedy (Democrat, 1961-1963) Inaugural Address, Capitol Steps, Washington, D.C., January 20, 1961

. . . I have sworn before you and Almighty God the same solemn oath our forefathers prescribed nearly a century and three-quarters ago.

The world is very different now. . . . And yet the same revolutionary beliefs for which our forebears 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. . . .

Let both sides unite to heed in all corners of the earth the command of Isaiah — to “undo the heavy burdens . . . [and] let the oppressed go free.” . . .

With a good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on earth God’s work must truly be our own.

### Lyndon Baines Johnson (Democrat, 1963-1969)

[Johnson assumed office when President Kennedy was shot and died November 22, 1963. After completing this term, Johnson was elected as President in 1964.]

### Inaugural Address, Capitol Steps, Washington, D.C., January 20, 1965

My fellow countrymen, on this occasion, the oath I have taken before you and before God is not mine alone, but ours together. . . .

Under this covenant—of justice, liberty, and union—we have become a nation — prosperous, great, and mighty. And we have kept our freedom. But we have no promise from God that our greatness will endure. We have been allowed by Him to seek greatness with the sweat of our hands and the strength of our spirit. . . .

For myself, I ask only, in the words of an ancient leader: “Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this, thy people, that is so great?”

### Richard M. Nixon (Republican, 1969-1974) First Inaugural Address, Capitol Steps, Washington, D.C., January 20, 1969

I have taken an oath today in the presence of God and my countrymen to

uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States. To that oath I now add this sacred commitment: I shall consecrate my office, my energies, and all the wisdom I can summon, to the cause of peace among nations.

Let this message be heard by strong and weak alike: The peace we seek to win is not victory over any other people, but the peace that comes “with healing in its wings”; . . .

Only a few short weeks ago, we shared the glory of man’s first sight of the world as God sees it, as a single sphere reflecting light in the darkness.

As the Apollo astronauts flew over the moon’s gray surface on Christmas Eve, they spoke to us of the beauty of earth — and in that voice so clear across the lunar distance, we heard them invoke God’s blessing on its goodness. . . .

. . . let us go forward, firm in our faith, steadfast in our purpose, cautious of the dangers; but sustained by our confidence in the will of God and the promise of man.

### **Second Inaugural Address, Capitol Steps, Washington, D.C., January 20, 1973**

We are embarking here today on an era that presents challenges great as those any nation, or any generation, has ever faced. We shall answer to God, to history, and to our conscience for the way in which we use these years.

As I stand in this place, so hallowed by history, I think of others who have stood here before me. I think of the dreams they had for America, and I think of how each recognized that he needed help far beyond himself in order to make those dreams come true.

Today, I ask your prayers that in the years ahead I may have God’s help in making decisions that are right for America, and I pray for your help so that together we may be worthy of our challenge.

Let us pledge together to make these next four years the best four years in

America’s history, so that on its 200th birthday America will be as young and as vital as when it began, and as bright a beacon of hope for all the world.

Let us go forward from here confident in hope, strong in our faith in one another, sustained by our faith in God who created us, and striving always to serve His purpose.

### **Gerald R. Ford (Republican, 1974-1977)**

[Ford became President when Nixon resigned the office on August 9, 1974. The year before Vice-President Agnew had resigned and Nixon had nominated Ford, then Speaker of the House, to fill his position. After taking the oath of office, Ford gave a short speech in the East Room of the White House, from which the following is taken.]

### **Remarks following his swearing in, White House, Washington, D.C., August 9, 1974**

I am acutely aware that you have not elected me as your President by your ballots, and so I ask you to confirm me as your President with your prayers. And I hope that such prayers will also be the first of many. . . .

In the beginning, I asked you to pray for me. Before closing, I ask again your prayers, for Richard Nixon and for his family. May our former President, who brought peace to millions, find it for himself. May God bless and comfort his wonderful wife and daughters. . . .

I now solemnly reaffirm my promise . . . to uphold the Constitution, to do what is right as God gives me to see the right, and to do the very best I can for America. God helping me, I will not let you down.

### **James E. Carter (Democrat, 1977-1981) Inaugural Address, Capitol Steps, Washington, D.C., January 20, 1977**

Here before me is the Bible used in

the inauguration of our first President, in 1789, and I have just taken the oath of office on the Bible my mother gave me a few years ago, opened to a timeless admonition from the ancient prophet Micah:

“He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.” (Micah 6:8)

### **Ronald W. Reagan (Republican, 1981-1989) First Inaugural Address, West Front of the Capitol, Washington, D.C., January 20, 1981**

I am told that tens of thousands of prayer meetings are being held on this day, and for that I am deeply grateful. We are a nation under God, and I believe God intended for us to be free. It would be fitting and good, I think, if on each Inauguration Day in future years it should be declared a day of prayer. . . .

The crisis we are facing today does not require of us the kind of sacrifice that Martin Treptow and so many thousands of others were called upon to make. It does require, however, our best effort, and our willingness to believe in ourselves and to believe in our capacity to perform great deeds; to believe that together, with God’s help, we can and will resolve the problems which now confront us. And, after all, why shouldn’t we believe that? We are Americans. God bless you, and thank you.

### **Second Inaugural Address, Capitol Rotunda, Washington, D.C., January 21, 1985**

Well, with heart and hand, let us stand as one today: One people under God determined that our future shall be worthy of our past. . . .

The time has come for a new American emancipation—a great national drive to tear down economic barriers and liberate the spirit of enterprise in the most distressed areas of our country. My friends,



*Warren G. Harding declared: "I have taken the solemn oath of office on that passage of Holy Writ wherein it is asked: 'What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?' This I plight to God and country."*

together we can do this, and do it we must, so help me God. . . .

It is the American sound. It is hopeful, big-hearted, idealistic, daring, decent, and fair. That's our heritage; that is our song. We sing it still. For all our problems, our differences, we are together as of old, as we raise our voices to the God who is the Author of this most tender music. And may He continue to hold us close as we fill the world with our sound—sound in unity, affection, and love—one people under God, dedicated to the dream of freedom that He has placed in the human heart, called upon now to pass that dream on to a waiting and hopeful world.

God bless you and may God bless America.

**George H.W. Bush**  
(Republican, 1989-1993)  
Inaugural Address, West Front of the Capitol, Washington, D.C., January 20, 1989

I have just repeated word for word the oath taken by George Washington 200 years ago, and the Bible on which I placed my hand is the Bible on which he placed his. It is right that the memory of Washington be with us today, not only because this is our Bicentennial Inauguration, but because Washington remains the Father of our Country. And he would, I think, be gladdened by this day; for today is the concrete expression of a stunning fact: our continuity these 200 years since our government began.

We meet on democracy's front porch, a good place to talk as neighbors and as friends. For this is a day when our nation is made whole, when our differences, for a moment, are suspended.

And my first act as President is a prayer. I ask you to bow your heads:

Heavenly Father, we bow our heads and thank You for Your love. Accept our thanks for the peace that yields this day and the shared faith that makes its continuance likely. Make us strong to do Your

work, willing to heed and hear Your will, and write on our hearts these words: "Use power to help people." For we are given power not to advance our own purposes, nor to make a great show in the world, nor a name. There is but one just use of power, and it is to serve people. Help us to remember it, Lord. Amen. . . .

And so, there is much to do; and tomorrow the work begins. I do not mistrust the future; I do not fear what is ahead. For our problems are large, but our heart is larger. Our challenges are great, but our will is greater. And if our flaws are endless, God's love is truly boundless.

Some see leadership as high drama, and the sound of trumpets calling, and sometimes it is that. But I see history as a book with many pages, and each day we fill a page with acts of hopefulness and meaning. The new breeze blows, a page turns, the story unfolds. And so today a chapter begins, a small and stately story of unity, diversity, and generosity—shared, and written, together.

Thank you. God bless you and God bless the United States of America.

**William J. Clinton**  
(Democrat, 1993-2001)  
First Inaugural Address, West Front of the Capitol, Washington, D.C., January 20, 1993

When our founders boldly declared America's independence to the world and our purposes to the Almighty, they knew that America, to endure, would have to change.

Not change for change's sake, but change to preserve America's ideals—life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness. Though we march to the music of our time, our mission is timeless. . . .

And so, my fellow Americans, at the edge of the 21st century, let us begin with energy and hope, with faith and discipline, and let us work until our work is done. The scripture says, "And let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season, we

shall reap, if we faint not."

From this joyful mountaintop of celebration, we hear a call to service in the valley. We have heard the trumpets. We have changed the guard. And now, each in our way, and with God's help, we must answer the call.

Thank you and God bless you all.

**Second Inaugural Address, West Front of the Capitol, Washington, D.C., January 20, 1997**

From the height of this place and the summit of this century, let us go forth. May God strengthen our hands for the good work ahead—and always, always bless our America.

**George W. Bush**  
(Republican, 2001- )  
First Inaugural Address, West Front of the Capitol, Washington, D.C., January 20, 2001

After the Declaration of Independence was signed, Virginia statesman John Page wrote to Thomas Jefferson: "We know the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong. Do you not think an angel rides in the whirlwind and directs this storm?"

Much time has passed since Jefferson arrived for his inauguration. The years and changes accumulate. But the themes of this day he would know: our nation's grand story of courage and its simple dream of dignity.

We are not this story's author, who fills time and eternity with his purpose. Yet his purpose is achieved in our duty, and our duty is fulfilled in service to one another.

Never tiring, never yielding, never finishing, we renew that purpose today, to make our country more just and generous, to affirm the dignity of our lives and every life.

This work continues. This story goes on. And an angel still rides in the whirlwind and directs this storm.

God bless you all, and God bless America. *(continued on page 6)*

## Providence Foundation Travels to Nigeria

In November, Providence Foundation directors Mark Beliles and Stephen McDowell spent one week in Nigeria teaching, consulting, and planning in regards to effecting Godly reformation in that central African nation. Of the trip McDowell said:

“Our visit was both challenging and encouraging. Challenging because the living conditions in Lagos are so different than anything seen in America, and many other nations, that being in that environment is a shock to the senses, even though in past travels I have been to cities that are similar.”

“On the first day we visited some of the poorest and most difficult areas of the city, the host church took us to a school they have started in a shanty town and to a drug rehabilitation center in the downtown area where they are providing needed support.



Mark and Stephen with the Attorney General of Lagos State and leading pastors in the city.

On Sunday afternoon we spoke at a church service held at the center for many people recovering from years of drug addiction.”

“We were very encouraged because the host church, This Present House, and its founder, medical doctor Tony Rapu, work at all levels of society, seeing the need to impact all spheres of life. Therefore, during our 8-day visit, we spoke to groups of pastors business leaders, and at various churches, plus we met with those serving in government, including the Attorney General of Lagos State.”

Nigeria has experienced great growth in the number of believers in recent decades, with tens of millions being saved. The largest church structure in the world is located in the nation—it stretches for over one mile in length; over one half million people have attended nightly prayer meetings here; after altar calls they have a bus to shuttle people from the back of the building to the stage. In Lagos, churches are everywhere, some with large buildings, others meeting in small homes. While Nigeria has experienced a great move of God, with many conversions, this has only minimally affected the society. “This has been the case,” McDowell says, “because many of these new churches have been about building their own empires, rather than seeing God’s Kingdom come

to all spheres of life.”

“To this point, many of these new churches have largely taught a ‘me-centered’ gospel, emphasizing how you can get healed, delivered, and blessed, but this is changing. God is raising up leaders who understand what it means to disciple the nation and how He wants to bring His kingdom to Nigeria. Our message was enthusiastically received.”

The Providence Foundation has been invited to return next year for more in-depth teaching, plus there are plans to print two of our books in Nigeria—*Liberating the Nations* and *Watchmen on the Walls*—to saw principles of Godly reformation. The desire of many Nigerian Christian leaders to permanently incorporate the transforming work of God in the entire nation is a sign that true Biblical revival is underway in the nation.

it is the urgent requirement of our nation’s security, and the calling of our time. . . .

We go forward with complete confidence in the eventual triumph of freedom. Not because history runs on the wheels of inevitability; it is human choices that move events. Not because we consider ourselves a chosen nation; God moves and chooses as He wills. We have confidence because freedom is the permanent hope of mankind, the hunger in dark places, the longing of the soul. When our Founders declared a new order of the ages; when soldiers died in wave upon wave for a union based on liberty; when citizens marched in peaceful outrage under the banner “Freedom Now”—they were acting on an



Stephen and Mark visit a school in a shanty town in Lagos.

ancient hope that is meant to be fulfilled. History has an ebb and flow of justice, but history also has a visible direction, set by liberty and the Author of Liberty.

When the Declaration of Independence was first read in public and the Liberty Bell was sounded in celebration, a witness said, “It rang as if it meant something.” In our time it means something still. America, in this young century, proclaims liberty throughout all the world, and to all the inhabitants thereof. Renewed in our strength—tested, but not weary—we are ready for the greatest achievements in the history of freedom.

May God bless you, and may He watch over the United States of America. PP

(continued from page 6)

### Second Inaugural Address, West Front of the Capitol, Washington, D.C., January 20, 2005

America’s vital interests and our deepest beliefs are now one. From the day of our Founding, we have proclaimed that every man and woman on this earth has rights, and dignity, and matchless value, because they bear the image of the Maker of Heaven and earth. Across the generations we have proclaimed the imperative of self-government, because no one is fit to be a master, and no one deserves to be a slave. Advancing these ideals is the mission that created our Nation. It is the honorable achievement of our fathers. Now