

**The original documents are located in Box 35, “6/21/76 - Filmed Message for the 20th Anniversary of the Thomas Road Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Virginia” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.**

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THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN....

THOMAS ROAD BAPTIST CHURCH

BICENTENNIAL TAPING

MONDAY, JUNE 21, 1976

I AM HONORED TO JOIN YOUR SPECIAL BICENTENNIAL  
CELEBRATION, AND I CONGRATULATE YOU ON THE OBSERVANCE OF THE  
20th ANNIVERSARY OF THE THOMAS ROAD BAPTIST CHURCH.

IT IS MOST APPROPRIATE THAT THIS BE A JOINT CELEBRATION  
TODAY, BECAUSE BAPTISTS HAVE PLAYED A VERY FUNDAMENTAL PART  
IN THE BIRTH AND GROWTH OF AMERICA.

THE PRINCIPLE OF DEMOCRACY ITSELF WAS ROOTED DEEPLY  
IN THE BAPTIST CHURCH LONG BEFORE THERE WAS A UNITED STATES  
OF AMERICA. THOMAS JEFFERSON SO ADMIRED THE BAPTIST FORM  
OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT THAT HE CALLED IT "THE PUREST DEMOCRACY  
IN THE WORLD."

THE LAWS OF GOD WERE OF VERY SPECIAL IMPORTANCE  
TO OUR FOUNDING FATHERS AND TO THE NATION THEY CREATED●

THE EARLY HISTORY OF OUR COUNTRY WAS WRITTEN BY MEN  
WHO VALUED THE FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND HAD IN COMMON A DEEP FAITH  
IN GOD●

I BELIEVE IT IS NO ACCIDENT OF HISTORY, NO COINCIDENCE  
THAT THIS NATION, WHICH DECLARED ITS DEPENDENCE ON GOD EVEN  
WHILE DECLARING ITS INDEPENDENCE FROM FOREIGN DOMINATION,  
HAS BECOME THE MOST RICHLY BLESSED NATION IN THE HISTORY OF  
THE WORLD●

FOR IT IS AS TRUE TODAY AS IT WAS IN OLD TESTAMENT  
TIMES THAT "BLESSED IS THE NATION WHOSE GOD IS THE LORD."

I SEE IN AMERICA TODAY A REKINDLING OF RELIGIOUS  
CONVICTION AND A NEW APPRECIATION FOR BIBLICAL TEACHING,  
AND THIS IS AN ENCOURAGING DEVELOPMENT AS WE MOVE INTO OUR  
THIRD CENTURY AS A NATION.

IT MEANS THAT WE WILL RESOLVE TO MAKE OUR SOCIETY  
NOT ONLY PROSPEROUS BUT NOBLE, NOT ONLY PROGRESSIVE BUT  
CONSTRUCTIVE. WE MAY COME TO KNOW PEACE NOT AS THE MERE  
ABSENCE OF WAR BUT AS A CLIMATE IN WHICH UNDERSTANDING CAN GROW  
AND HUMAN DIGNITY CAN FLOURISH.

AS AMERICA ENTERS ITS THIRD CENTURY -- AND THE  
THOMAS ROAD BAPTIST CHURCH ITS THIRD DECADE -- WE COULD ASK  
NO BETTER INSPIRATION FOR THE FUTURE THAN THESE WORDS OF  
A FAVORITE PASSAGE OF MINE FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS:

'TRUST IN THE LORD WITH ALL THINE HEART AND LEAN NOT  
UNTO THINE OWN UNDERSTANDING. IN ALL THY WAYS ACKNOWLEDGE  
HIM, AND HE SHALL DIRECT THY PATHS.'

END OF TEXT