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Lyndon B. Johnson: The Religion of a Politician*

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Most biographers of Lyndon B. Johnson have been inclined to view that politician through sharply critical lenses.¹ These critics have contended that he was the most “political” of all of the nation’s Presidents; indeed, they have depicted him as being obsessed with politics. Collectively they have seen Johnson as a preeminently expedient politician without morals or scruples who practiced the art of the possible to such an extent that he neither embraced nor manifested any guiding principles. Some have painted a picture of a brutal man who ran roughshod over his opponents, while others have written of a wily man who deceitfully manipulated people for his own ends. They have seen him as a high-pressure politician, and extant cartoons caricaturing his arm-twisting tactics are legion. According to these writers, some of whom qualify as psychohistorians, Johnson hungered for power and success, yearned to be loved and appreciated, manifested a penchant for secrecy, possessed a massive ego, developed a paranoia about being surrounded by hostile forces, and sheltered an immense inner anger. The analysts have stressed Johnson’s psychological shortcomings so much that they have sometimes failed to acknowledge his positive political accomplishments.

Much of the criticism of Johnson is justified, but the contention that his character was somehow flawed or that his programs stemmed exclusively from selfish political motives probably does him an injustice. This essay focusing on Johnson’s religion is intended as a corrective to those interpretations which have overlooked an important dimension of both the private and public life of this national politician.

Lyndon B. Johnson was born and reared in a strongly religious environment in Blanco County, Texas. Two years before his birth, 34.7 per cent of all Texans were affiliated with a church. Of these 1,226,906 church members, 913,917 or 74.5 per cent were Protestants. The four most populous denominations which claimed 69.7 per cent of the Protestants in the Lone Star State were Baptists (32.7 per cent), Methodists (25.9 per cent), Disciples of Christ (6.0 per cent), and Presbyterians (5.1 per cent).² These statistics had not changed significantly when Johnson was born in 1908, and the central Texas counties where Johnson spent his youth were as overwhelmingly Protestant as the state as a whole.

In addition to growing up in this general religious milieu, Johnson was a member of a family that was religious. He was the descendant of a long line of Baptist preachers and leaders in Texas religious circles. His maternal great-grandfather, George Washington Baines, Sr., was a scholarly pioneer Baptist minister, missionary, editor, and educator.

For over ten years Baines was a member of the Board of Trustees of Baylor College in Independence, Texas (now Baylor University in Waco), and he served as President of that school from 1861 to 1863. Also, he was an early editor of *The Texas Baptist*, the first Baptist newspaper in the state. One son of this illustrious ancestor was George Washington Baines, Jr., a fourth generation Baptist minister and a great uncle of Lyndon Johnson. Another son, the grandfather of LBJ, was Joseph Wilson Baines, lawyer, editor, educator, lay preacher, and a leading member of the Baptist Church in Blanco, Texas. Grandfather Baines was “strict in doctrine, broad in charity, [and] large in enterprise” who took seriously his religious ideals, moral thought, and civic duty.³ Rebekah Baines Johnson, the daughter of Joseph Wilson Baines and the mother of Lyndon Johnson, was greatly influenced by her “baptist upbringing, sermons, prayer meeting[s], and Sunday School.”⁴ This devoutly religious woman, deeply committed to the Christian gospel, had the primary responsibility for shaping her son’s religious views. She read the Bible to him regularly, she presided over a home where daily prayers were “aloud, proud, and unapologetic,” and she took her children to worship services and other meetings as often as the church doors opened. She stoutly believed in the Scriptural promise: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”⁵ Having “learned his faith at his Mother’s knee,” Lyndon Johnson was “nurtured and strengthened in this faith throughout his life.”⁶

In later years Johnson recalled that “my earliest impressions of spiritual and moral forces carry a Baptist identification” and “Baptists have a special place in my affections,”⁷ most surely the result of his mother’s commitment and the early training of her son. But Johnson did not choose to join the Baptist denomination. While attending a revival meeting at the Johnson City First Christian Church, Johnson experienced a religious conversion common to youths of similar Protestant backgrounds. He not only “dedicated his life to Christ” but also he decided to join the Christian Church. In July 1923, when he was 14 years old, Johnson was baptized (totally immersed) in a tributary of the Pedernales River a few miles from his home.⁸ Johnson’s ardently Baptist mother was not wholly happy about her son’s choice to join the Christian Church (whose denominational name was Disciples of Christ), but she accepted the decision in good grace, “believing that some religion—whatever the denomination—should be a part of his life.”⁹

While Rebekah Johnson was inculcating in her son the tradition of Bible study, prayer, and church attendance as well as sowing the seeds for his mature religious views, Sam Ealy Johnson, Jr., who served five terms in the Texas legislature, was introducing his son to the fascinating world of politics. As a child, Lyndon listened for hours to his father’s and his friends’ political conversations. When he was a teenager, he accompanied his father on trips related to political matters (including campaign ventures). Traveling in the family Model-T Ford, father and son stumped the county fairs, picnic grounds, church ice-cream suppers, and main-street political rallies in the towns and rural communities of the 89th Representative District. Sam Johnson exhibited a brand of agrarian progressivism which was the primary characteristic of his career of public service. He was sympathetic to the needs of the poor and the unfortunate. He wrote a bill providing for the erection of a home for widows of Con-

federate veterans, and he supported legislation regulating corporations, including railroad, insurance, and telephone companies. He fought for good roads and a system of state highways, for bus transportation for school children, and for protection of small investors from the sale of worthless securities. In the vanguard of the Texas progressive movement, Sam Johnson fought the “interests” on behalf of the “common man.” Lyndon Johnson was impressed by his father’s activism and concern for people.¹⁰

In 1958 Johnson published an article detailing his political philosophy.¹¹ He made no specific references to his religious views; however, he indicated that his political philosophy was the sum of his life’s experience, and for him that included religion. Alexis de Tocqueville has written that an intimate relationship exists between political and religious philosophy. The two were so closely intertwined within Johnson that to separate them would do an injustice to both.

Lyndon Johnson held fairly typical religious views common to members of the large Protestant denominations in the United States. He believed in a God who created the Universe and its moral government, who had infinite charity, justice, and mercy, and who was the source of every human strength. This God was manifested in a trinitarian manner: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.¹² For Johnson, belief in a divine providence was not “an escape or a tranquilizer.” Rather it was a compelling challenge to him and others “to attain the ideals of liberty, justice, peace, and compassion.”¹³

Johnson believed that the Bible was the divinely inspired Word of God and that it was a strength and guide for the daily lives of all Christians.¹⁴ Although he never identified himself as a Biblical scholar, Johnson revealed an easy familiarity with the Bible when he quoted it in both public speeches¹⁵ and private conversations.¹⁶ The frequency of Johnson’s quotations and references, and his almost ministerial tone of voice when he recited a Bible verse all indicate Johnson’s internalizing of the Holy Word.

Johnson engaged in prayer and believed in its efficacy.¹⁷ Prayers were irregular after Johnson became a busy national politician, but when he suddenly became President, he and Mrs. Johnson, without spoken agreement, began regularly to pray before their private meals. When the burdens of high office increased, Johnson repeatedly turned to prayer for comfort and sustenance. The White House years deepened his spiritual life.¹⁸

Johnson believed in the brotherhood of all mankind, in racial and religious tolerance, and in the integrity and dignity of the individual.¹⁹ He once said that “man is not just an atom, a random piece of matter living in a mechanical, purposeless universe.” Rather each person has “as inner compass, a spark of divinity, which sets him apart from the rest of creation.”²⁰ He believed that man was born to overcome evil with good and that the Christian’s duty is to serve God, his fellow man, and his country.²¹

In regard to the role of religion in the life of the nation, Johnson believed that the United States had been founded upon religious convictions, that religious beliefs underlay Americans’ traditional devotion to individual liberty, and that the nation must continue to maintain a strong spiritual and moral climate.²² Equally important was “religion’s role as part of the mortar unifying one of the world’s most diverse populations into one of history’s most unified nations.” Furthermore, “our churches, along with our schools, have done far more than political beliefs and dogma to help

us hold to stable values and to keep both the faith and determination that tomorrow can be better. That quality of faith is indispensable to a progressive nation. . . .” Finally, he said, “If we are to continue with a strong sense of useful purpose, I believe religion must be a more significant part of our lives in the future than ever it has been in the past.”²³ Concerning national leaders, Johnson believed that if they were to be different from tyrants, “we must balance the powers in our hands with God in our hearts.”²⁴ He once said, “The highest morality of national leadership is to create and maintain the strength essential to the preservation of our beliefs.”²⁵ Again: “The private unity of public men and their God is an enduring source of strength for our country. . . .”²⁶

Like his Baptist forebears, Johnson was a strong believer in the separation of Church and State (“but this does not mean that men of Government should divorce themselves from religion”),²⁷ and like the many Methodists among whom he grew up, he had a strong sense of social justice and injustice.²⁸ He was a believer in religious ecumenism before that word gained popularity. The Disciples of Christ had a long tradition of religious tolerance and a commitment to Christian unity, and these characteristics of that denomination attracted Johnson from the beginning.²⁹ Another attraction was that the Disciples of Christ believed in a rational—rather than an overly emotional—religion. Johnson’s most oft-quoted Scriptural verse—Come let us reason together—was in the Disciples tradition, and that injunction from the Book of Isaiah had been the text of the preacher’s sermon on the night young Johnson experienced his religious conversion.³⁰

Johnson retained his membership in the First Christian Church of Johnson City throughout his life. His wife, who had been reared a Methodist, became an Episcopalian after attending a girls’ school of that denomination.³¹ They were married in St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in San Antonio. When they lived in Washington, they most often attended St. John’s Episcopal Church on Lafayette Square, St. Mark’s Episcopal Church on Capitol Hill, or the National City Christian Church on Thomas Circle. Johnson found much in Episcopalianism appealing, “although he sometimes regarded the long rituals with an amusement that did not verge on disrespect.”³² But Johnson did not limit his attendance to those houses of worship associated with his wife’s or his own denomination. In view of his religious ecumenism, he had no ambivalence about any creed, and he was tolerant of others’ beliefs. He was comfortable in any church, and he sometimes worshipped at two or three services a week. He attended church more regularly than any other President in the nation’s history.³³ He often privately related to friends and associates the satisfaction and strength he derived from attending worship services.³⁴

As time passed, Johnson was increasingly attracted to the Washington church of his own denomination. As Mrs. Johnson later said, “It was a warm harbor in troubled times.”³⁵ He came to appreciate its senior minister, Dr. George R. Davis. While Johnson developed and maintained a friendship with the evangelist Billy Graham (who has been called Johnson’s “unofficial chaplain” and “chief spiritual counselor”),³⁶ in fact his most intimate relationship was with Dr. Davis, who impressed Johnson with “his deep and practical sincerity,” and with whom Johnson felt very “in-tune.”³⁷

Most of the ministers who became acquainted with Johnson were impressed with the President as a man of faith. Dr. Davis wrote, "He is a man of great strength, endurance and faith,"³⁸ and Billy Graham described him as "a deeply religious man" whose faith "greatly influenced" his political decisions.³⁹ As his Christian consciousness grew and his faith matured, Johnson identified himself as a man of faith on numerous occasions as he spoke of his faith in God, Jesus Christ, the nation, and mankind. He came to believe that religious faith was the key to individuals retaining their identities in an increasingly urbanized and thus dehumanized culture,⁴⁰ and he once said, "One source of spiritual strength is faith . . . faith in the reality of ideals, faith which enables man to transcend the vanities of life for the sake of ends beyond himself."⁴¹

But Johnson's faith was neither theological nor theoretical. He strove to implement his faith by his actions. Good works were a necessary complement to his religious faith. His strong desire to help others was closely related to this religious concept. He believed that his religion could best be applied through trying to serve in the political realm, that he could best express God's will for his life by serving humankind. Indeed, he was driven by the desire to serve and to do good.⁴² He wanted to "translate Christianity into a work-day affair."⁴³ He adhered to the Biblical command "love thy neighbor as thyself,"⁴⁴ and he admitted to having a "very urgent stake in answering that old Biblical question, 'who is my neighbor.'"⁴⁵ He wrote, "I am sure our religious values will help motivate us to lives of useful service rather than lives of wasteful and self-serving idleness."⁴⁶

Johnson's religion undergirded his Great Society program, his civil rights legislation, and his stand on Vietnam. The Great Society, enacted with the passage of dozens of bills, was a broad-ranging social program addressing areas such as education, health care and health insurance, housing, poverty, jobs, Indian rights, drug control, help to youth and the aged, and rehabilitation services. However others viewed it, Johnson saw it in terms of the help it provided for individuals. Time and again as Johnson defended, explained, argued for, and praised this legislation, he couched his language in moral and religious terms.⁴⁷ Not by accident did he believe those in need who would profit from this legislation were his "neighbors." As he said, "This is not just a religious truth. I think it is a very urgent social fact."⁴⁸ Of his Great Society program Johnson wrote that "the fiber of tomorrow's society is woven with the thread of today's spiritual renewal" and "if we are going to have the kind of country and kind of society we want to have, we must be committed, we must care about what happens—not to ourselves but to our neighbors and our fellow man. This is the spirit of most of our religions—and it is a spirit essential to our success in building a greater society."⁴⁹ Also, he said, "Every one of these issues has its moral and spiritual dimensions. . . ."⁵⁰ Johnson's efforts to alter positively the American scene with his Great Society legislation was referred to as "the war of amazing Christlike compassionate service."⁵¹

In a sermon on the President's religion, one minister concluded that the Great Society program was specifically an outgrowth of Johnson's deeply embedded belief that man should love (and thus care for) his neighbor.⁵² Another minister preached a sermon entitled "The Great Society" in which he associated the Johnson program

with a phrase in the Lord's Prayer which Jesus prayed: "Thy Kingdom Come."⁵³ Johnson's own minister, who knew the President better than any other churchman, has written that Johnson's "deepest [religious] feelings & caring had everything to do with his effort toward 'Great Society' goals."⁵⁴ In March, 1981, the National City Christian Church dedicated to Johnson's memory a stained-glass window, the central theme of which emphasizes the social reforms of the Johnson administration in the context of Christian service. Medallions in the window symbolize the acts of mercy listed in the book of Matthew, chapter 25, reminiscent of Johnson's efforts toward a Great Society.⁵⁵ Some supportive ministers and churches may have exaggerated the relationship of Johnson's Christian ideals and his political programs, but the evidence indicates that his religious principles were an important part of the foundation upon which the Great Society was built.

History will award President Johnson a prominent role in the legal advancement of civil rights for blacks. Passed during his administration and receiving the President's efforts to secure their passage, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Acts of 1965, and the Civil Rights Act of 1968 together constituted significant steps forward in the battle against racial discrimination. In addition, President Johnson identified himself with the nation's largest racial minority by issuing Executive orders and making numerous public statements on its behalf. Detractors have argued that political expediency moved Johnson from anti-civil rights stands in the 1930's and 1940's to pro-civil rights stands in the late 1950's and 1960's. But these changing positions should be viewed in the perspective of Johnson's development as a public servant. Johnson's love for people, with him from his earliest years, compelled him to be concerned about minority groups—from the Mexican-American children whom he taught as a young man in Cotulla, Texas, in the 1920's to the bitter black rioters in the 1960's. When he was a young legislator voting against civil rights bills, he had told blacks that he would help them when he had the power and when the timing was right. When those two conditions were met he carried out his promises. The story of Johnson's public stance on civil rights is one of evolution, of maturation, and of growth,⁵⁶ and by the time Johnson became President, he was privately speaking favorably about black civil rights with "burning conviction" and "passion."⁵⁷

As with the Great Society program, to some extent Johnson's civil rights efforts were rooted in his religious beliefs.⁵⁸ He often referred to the moral implications of the civil rights proposals while they were being considered by the Congress,⁵⁹ and upon one occasion he reminded a group of religious leaders visiting the White House that civil rights was a "cause of human dignity, [a] cause of human rights [which] demands prophets in our time, men of compassion and truth, unafraid of the consequences of fulfilling their faith."⁶⁰ Upon passage of the omnibus bill in 1964, Johnson wrote: "Almighty God has blessed our nation with a new opportunity to redress the grievances of the past and to heal our regional and racial divisions," and he called upon all Americans "with charity and hope to join in the challenging task of building a society founded on mutual respect, justice, and good will among men."⁶¹ He recognized that legislation was but one step in the unending effort to correct the injustice

of racial discrimination and racial prejudice because “the battle must be fought also—and ultimately won—in the souls of men.”⁶² He said

I am not a theologian. I am not a philosopher. I am just a public servant that is doing the very best I know how. But in more than 3 decades of public life, I have seen first-hand how basic spiritual beliefs and deeds can shatter barriers of politics and bigotry. I have seen those barriers crumble in the presence of faith and hope, and from this experience I have drawn new hope that the seemingly insurmountable moral issues that we face at home and abroad today can be resolved by men of strong faith and men of brave deeds.⁶³

Why did President Johnson increase American military involvement in Vietnam and why did he keep this nation in the conflict long after it was clear that by any reasonable standard its presence there was in vain? Many factors contributed to Johnson's decisions, each with its own degree of validity: he did not want South Vietnam to fall into the hands of the Communists; he feared such a fall would inevitably lead to the spread of Communism in Southeast Asia; he wanted to win the war; he did not want to preside over a losing war for this country; he did not want to injure national pride; he did not want to injure his personal pride; he listened too singlemindedly to his military advisors; United States withdrawal would not bring peace to that troubled land; withdrawal would imperil the security of the United States; we had pledged to support South Vietnam and could not dishonor our pledge or abandon our commitment; South Vietnam should not have any government forced upon it; he wanted to resist “men who hate and destroy” so that “all of our dreams for freedom . . . will [not] be swept away on the flood of conquest.”⁶⁴

But Johnson's adherence to Christian principles may also have contributed to his stubborn stand in Vietnam. While editor of the *College Star* at Southwest State Teachers College, young Johnson in an editorial on “Sincerity” wrote what he could have written in the middle of the Vietnam conflict: “If you believe in a thing, stand up for it. If you support a principle, give all you have to give. If you think a thing is wrong [or right?], do not waiver [*sic*] if you find that sentiment is against you.”⁶⁵ Having been told repeatedly by his mother that the strong must care for the weak,⁶⁶ Johnson almost quoted his mother to justify the nation's involvement in Vietnam: “There is a great responsibility on the strong.” He went on to say, “Now it's not true that we've got to police all of the world . . . but the good Lord has smiled kindly upon us and we have an obligation as fellow human beings to help protect our neighbors against a bunch of desperadoes.”⁶⁷

Johnson considered his nation's stand in Vietnam to be a “cause of honor and ultimate hope for man, the only course that will assure him the free and peaceful life that God intended for the human family.”⁶⁸ As the war intensified, he wrote: “At times like these we need the strength to persist in doing what we think is right, and that inner strength can come only from a deep and abiding faith in God.”⁶⁹ He believed that moral force was as important as military power in the endeavor to resolve the conflict.⁷⁰ Johnson viewed his stand on Vietnam in such moral terms that he came to consider criticism of his position as immoral. He *cared* about his stand on Vietnam;

the issue became so highly moralized that it became a matter of principle.⁷¹ He prayed for “God-given vision and determination to make the sacrifices demanded by our responsibilities [in Vietnam].”⁷² He believed that “our struggle in Vietnam is just, because we believe that man is born to freedom and dignity and that peace is the House of all. Our ultimate purpose in denying aggression is to assure that man will find fulfillment as an instrument of God’s will. With God’s help, we will succeed.”⁷³ Despite the cruelty of the Vietnam struggle, he wrote that “if we believe that man is too noble a creature to serve anyone but God, the fate of the human family leaves us no escape from our convictions or our duty.”⁷⁴ Late in the conflict he wrote: “I am still certain in the light of my own faith that our commitment in Vietnam is vital—and that God will reward the justness and compassion of our cause with the blessing of peace. . . .”⁷⁵ Johnson could not admit mistakes in a situation like Vietnam where the effort was defined solely by a goal and where failure, therefore, was a challenge to the rightness of belief, to some integrity of self, which must be even more fiercely defended when under attack.⁷⁶

Can one trust Johnson’s remarks and letters in which he expressed religious opinions? Can one be sure that Johnson’s speech writers were accurately reflecting the President’s religious views? All American Presidents, including Johnson, have attempted to project favorable public images which have not always or necessarily coincided with their private thoughts. Johnson may have had his share of dissimulation, but this essay indicates that Johnson was not a latter-day Machiavellian who recognized that a leader or an aspirant to power should *seem* to be religious, sincere, faithful, and humane. Concepts of Christian duty, benevolence, morality, and principle were as inseparable from and as deeply rooted in his character as his legendary political skills and his inordinate pursuit of and use of power.⁷⁷ While many divergent and sometimes conflicting and subconscious forces impacted upon Johnson, the evidence strongly supports the assertion that the religious background, training, experiences, and beliefs of Lyndon Johnson were important factors influencing that President’s political philosophy and decisions.

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Notes

1. Lengthy works devoting major attention to Johnson and pointing up his less attractive characteristics include: Alfred Steinberg, *Sam Johnson’s Boy: A Close-up of the President from Texas* (New York: Macmillan, 1968); Eric F. Goldman, *The Tragedy of Lyndon Johnson* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968); Rowland Evans & Robert Novak, *Lyndon B. Johnson: The Exercise of Power* (New York: New American Library, 1966); Louis Heren, *No Hail, No Farewell* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970); Merle Miller, *Lyndon: An Oral Biography* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1980); Jack Bell, *The Johnson Treatment: How Lyndon B. Johnson Took Over the Presidency and Made It His Own* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965); Philip Geyelin, *Lyndon B. Johnson and the World* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966); J. Michael Quill, *Lyndon Johnson and the Southern Military Tradition* (Washington: University Press of America, 1977); Robert Sherrill, *The Accidental President* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1967); J. Evetts Haley, *A Texan Looks at Lyndon: A Study in Illegitimate Power* (Canyon, Texas: Palo Duro Press, 1964); Tom Wicker, *JFK and LBJ: The Influence of Person-*

- ality Upon Politics (New York: William Morrow, 1968); Evelyn Lincoln, *Kennedy and Johnson* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968); Robert A. Caro, *The Years of Lyndon Johnson: The Path to Power* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982); Ronnie Dugger, *The Politician: The Life and Times of Lyndon Johnson; The Drive for Power, from the Frontier to Master of the Senate* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982). For an excellent essay reviewing many of the above volumes as well as those more favorably disposed to Johnson, see Robert A. Divine, "The Johnson Literature," in Robert A. Divine (ed.), *Exploring the Johnson Years* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 3–23.
2. Bureau of the Census, E. Dana Durand (Dir.), Bulletin 103 (second edition, revised and enlarged), *Religious Bodies: 1906* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1910), pp. 42, 54.
 3. Doris Kearns, *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), p. 20; Dave Cheavens, "George Washington Baines," *Baptist Standard*, vol. 77 (Jan 20, 1965), pp. 6–7; Dave Cheavens, "Baines, Baptist, Baylor: The 'B' in Lyndon B. Johnson," *Baptist Program* (January, 1965), pp. 13–14; Letter, Horace Busby to John Bird, May 18, 1964, Executive File (Ex) PP 13–3, White House Central Files (WHCF), Lyndon B. Johnson Library, Austin, Texas. (Hereafter cited as LBJ Library).
 4. Rebekah Baines Johnson, *A Family Album* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), p. 28.
 5. Remarks at the 12th Annual Presidential Prayer Breakfast. February 5, 1964, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson; Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, 1963–64*, vol. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1965), p. 262. Hereafter cited as *Public Papers of President Johnson*.
 6. Letter, Ivan Sinclair to William M. McNeill, Oct. 6, 1964, General File, Religious Matters (Gen RM) 2, WHCF, LBJ Library.
 7. Statement, LBJ to James L. Monroe, June 22, 1965, Gen RM 3–3, *ibid.*; letter, LBJ to J. W. Storer, May 15, 1964, *ibid.* See also Remarks to the Christian Citizenship Seminar of Southern Baptist Leaders. March 26, 1968. *Public Papers of President Johnson, 1968–69*, vol. 1 (1970), pp. 441–42.
 8. Letter, George E. Reedy to Robert W. Burns, Apr. 21, 1964, Ex PP 13–3, WHCF, LBJ Library; personal letter from George W. Davis, June 9, 1981.
 9. Personal letter from Lady Bird Johnson, May 4, 1981.
 10. William C. Pool, Emmie Craddock, and David E. Conrad, *Lyndon Johnson: The Formative Years* (San Marcos, Texas: Southwest Texas State College Press, 1965), pp. 25–26, 28, 29, 42–43, 48, 57–59, 176; Johnson, *Family Album*, p. 24; Booth Mooney, *The Lyndon Johnson Story* (New York: Farrar, Straus, 1956, 1963), p. 9; Steinberg, *Sam Johnson's Boy*, p. 25. See also Lyndon Baines Johnson, *The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency, 1963–1969* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p. 71.
 11. Lyndon B. Johnson, "My Political Philosophy," *Texas Quarterly*, vol. 1 (Winter, 1958), pp. 17–22.
 12. Mooney, *Johnson Story*, p. 189; letter, LBJ to John H. Ryder, Oct. 5, 1967, Gen RM 3–3; letter, LBJ to George Jessel, Oct. 5, 1966, Gen RM 3–2; letter, LBJ to the Rt. Rev. Monsignor Frederick J. Stevenson, Apr. 28, 1966, Gen RM 3–1, WHCF, LBJ Library.
 13. Remarks at the Presidential Prayer Breakfast. February 1, 1968, *Public Papers of President Johnson, 1968–69*, vol. 1, p. 122.
 14. Remarks at a Ceremony Marking 1966 as the "Year of the Bible." January 19, 1966, *ibid.*, 1966, vol. 1 (1967), p. 34; letter, LBJ to Gerard N. McAllister, June 2, 1967, Gen RM 2; statement, LBJ to Spyros P. Skouras, July 28, 1966, Gen RM 1; letter, LBJ to J. Edward Smith, July 20, 1964, Gen RM 1; statement, LBJ to William F. Raborn, Oct. 4, 1967, Gen RM 1; letter, LBJ to Everett Smith, May 15, 1964, Gen RM 1; letter, Douglass Cater to Grace L. Shipman, Jan. 11, 1965, Gen RM, WHCF, LBJ Library.
 15. For a perceptive article on Johnson's and other Presidents' references to the Bible and other religious subjects in their inaugural addresses, see James H. Smylie, "Providence and Presidents: Types of American Piety in Presidential Inaugurals," *Religion in Life*, vol. 35 (Spring, 1966), pp. 270–82. See also House Document No. 9, *Inaugural Address of Lyndon Baines Johnson 1965* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1965).

16. Personal letter from Lady Bird Johnson, May 4, 1981.
17. George R. Davis Oral History Interview, p. 17, WHCF, LBJ Library; Remarks at the Presidential Prayer Breakfast. February 1, 1968, *Public Papers of President Johnson, 1968–69*, vol. 1, p. 121; Remarks at the Presidential Prayer Breakfast. February 4, 1965, *ibid.*, 1965, vol. 1 (1966), pp. 129–30; letter, Busby to Bird, May 18, 1964, Ex PP 13–3; letter, LBJ to George R. Davis, Mar. 29, 1965; Ex PP 13–3; letter, LBJ to John C. Harper, Sept. 24, 1965, Ex PP 13–3; letter, George E. Reedy to David E. Kucharsky, Sept. 1, 1964, Billy Graham Name File; letter, Whitney Shoemaker to Robert D. S. Condit, Dec. 9, 1967, Gen RM 3–3; letter, Whitney Shoemaker to Mrs. R. F. Jackson, Jr., Feb. 26, 1968, Gen RM 2; letter, Brooks Hays to Joe Persico, Mar. 4, 1965, Gen RM 2, WHCF, LBJ Library.
18. Remarks at the 12th Annual Presidential Prayer Breakfast. February 5, 1964, *Public Papers of President Johnson, 1963–64*, vol. 1, p. 261; personal letter from Lady Bird Johnson, May 4, 1981; letter, LBJ to His Eminence Patrick Cardinal O’Boyle, July 31, 1967, Gen RM 3–1; letter LBJ to C. Ray Akin, June 2, 1967, Gen RM 2; Davis Interview, p. 34, WHCF, LBJ Library. Billy Graham, who visited Johnson in the White House many times, recalled that the two men often prayed together, on occasion Johnson voluntarily getting on his knees for the prayers. Personal telephone interview with Billy Graham, Oct. 10, 1983. This interview has been transcribed and deposited in the Oral History Collection, WHCF, LBJ Library.
19. Letter, LBJ to the Very Rev. Monsignor Thomas J. Leonard, July 15, 1967, Gen RM; letter, LBJ to Rabbi Norman Gerstenfeld, Oct. 10, 1967, Gen RM 2; letter, LBJ to the Rt. Rev. Monsignor Frederick J. Stevenson, Aug. 26, 1966, Gen RM 3–1; letter LBJ to W. A. Walsh, Oct. 1, 1964, Gen RM 3–3; letter, LBJ to Rabbi Morris Pickholz and Rabbi Harold Goldfarb, Dec. 20, 1963, Gen RM 3–2; letter, Anthony J. Celebrezze to Owen B. Kiernan, Feb. 17, 1965, Gen RM 2, *ibid.*; Frank Cormier, *LBJ: The Way He Was* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1976), p. 165; William S. White, *The Professional: Lyndon B. Johnson* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1964), pp. 93, 104.
20. Remarks at the Presidential Prayer Breakfast. February 1, 1968, *Public Papers of President Johnson, 1968–69*, vol. 1, p. 122.
21. Letter, LBJ to Gerard N. McAllister, June 2, 1967, Gen RM 2; letter, LBJ to Dominic Le Blanc, May 28, 1968, Gen RM 3–1, WHCF, LBJ Library.
22. Letter, Ralph A. Dungan to Mrs. Thomas J. Hennessey, July 20, 1964, Gen RM 2; letter, LBJ to the Rt. Rev. Monsignor Frederick J. Stevenson, July 1, 1966, Gen RM 3–1; letter, LBJ to W. A. Welsh, Sept. 24, 1964, Ex PP 13–3; letter, LBJ to Bishop Reuben H. Mueller, May 18, 1964, Gen RM 3; letter, Ivan Sinclair to Mrs. R. G. Tyler, Sept. 22, 1964, Gen RM, *ibid.*
23. Quoted in memo, Horace Busby to John Bird, May 18, 1964, Ex PP 13–3, *ibid.*
24. Quoted in Mooney, *Johnson Story*, p. 188.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.*, p. 189.
27. Remarks in Austin at the Dedication of the Agudas Achim Synagogue. December 30, 1963, *Public Papers of President Johnson, 1963–64*, vol. 1, p. 102.
28. Remarks in Baltimore at the Celebration of the Bicentennial of American Methodism. April 22, 1966, *ibid.*, 1966, vol. 1, p. 447.
29. Jack Valenti, *A Very Human President* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975), p. 17; Davis Interview, pp. 25–26, WHCF, LBJ Library.
30. Personal letter from George R. Davis, June 9, 1981; Davis Interview, p. 17, WHCF, LBJ Library.
31. Goldman, *Tragedy of Lyndon Johnson*, p. 346.
32. Personal letter from Lady Bird Johnson, May 4, 1981.
33. Cormier, *LBJ*, p. 256; Valenti, *Human President*, pp. 17–18. Richard W. Pierard, “Billy Graham and the U.S. Presidency,” *Journal of Church and State*, vol. 22 (Winter, 1980), p. 122; White, *The Professional*, p. 92.
34. Letter, Busby to Bird, May 18, 1964, Ex PP 13–3, WHCF, LBJ Library.
35. Quoted in the *Washington Post*, Mar. 16, 1981.

36. Cormier, *LBJ*, p. 257; Pierard, "Billy Graham," p. 121–24. Graham believes that it is not appropriate for him to be designated as a special spiritual advisor to the President. Personal telephone interview with Billy Graham, Oct. 10, 1983.
37. Personal letter from Lady Bird Johnson, May 4, 1981; George R. Davis, "A Tribute to Lyndon Baines Johnson," January 25, 1973, The National City Christian Church, Washington, D.C. (1974). (pamphlet)
38. Quoted in *The National City Christian*, vol. 20, no. 25 (Feb. 25, 1963), p. 4.
39. Quoted in letter, Loyd Hackler to George Christian, Apr. 28, 1967, Billy Graham Name File, WHCF, LBJ Library; personal letter from Billy Graham, Oct. 14, 1981.
40. Memo, Busby to Bird, May 18, 1964, Ex PP 13–3, *ibid.*
41. Quoted in Mooney, *Johnson Story*, p. 189.
42. David, "Tribute to Johnson;" Davis Interview, pp. 18–19, WHCF, LBJ Library.
43. Letter, LBJ to Malcolm Watson, June 22, 1964, Gen RM, *ibid.*
44. Remarks to Members of the Bishops' Council, African Methodist Episcopal Church. September 27, 1966, *Public Papers of President Johnson, 1966*, vol. 2 (1967), pp. 1071–72; Robert Zinsmeister, Jr., "The Religion of Lyndon B. Johnson," General File (Gen) PP 13–3, WHCF, LBJ Library.
45. Quoted in letter, Whitney Shoemaker to Murray A. Carson, Apr. 9, 1968, Gen RM, *ibid.*
46. Quoted in memo, Busby to Bird, May 18, 1964, Ex PP 13–3, *ibid.*
47. Special Message to the Congress on Education: "The Fifth Freedom." February 5, 1968, *Public Papers of President Johnson, 1968–69*, vol. 1, pp. 165–72; Special Message to the Congress: "Health in America." March 4, 1968, *ibid.*, pp. 322–33; Text of the President's Prayer Read at Church Services Attended by the First Family. January 19, 1969, *ibid.*, vol. 2 (1970), pp. 1367–68; Remarks to Leaders of Organizations Concerned with the Problems of Senior Citizens. January 15, 1964, *ibid.*, 1963–64, vol. 1, pp. 132–34; Remarks Upon Accepting the Big Brother of the Year Award. March 25, 1964, *ibid.*, p. 422; letter, LBJ to Paul Moore, June 11, 1966, Gen RM 3–1; letter, LBJ to Rabbi Abraham D. Hecht, July 1, 1966, Gen RM 3–2; letter, LBJ to Brother Flavian Renaud, Sept. 21, 1966, Gen RM 3–1; letter, LBJ to Donald J. Irwin, Nov. 3, 1966, Gen RM 3–1; letter, LBJ to Mother Aloysius, Carmelite Sisters, Sept. 16, 1967, Gen RM 3–1; letter, LBJ to the Most Rev. Ernest J. Primeau, Mar. 28, 1968, Gen RM 3–1; letter, LBJ to C. D. Pettaway, Sept. 4, 1964, Gen RM, WHCF, LBJ Library.
48. Remarks to the Christian Citizenship Seminar of Southern Baptist Leaders. March 26, 1968, *Public Papers of President Johnson, 1968–69*, vol. 1, p. 442.
49. Letter, LBJ to John Wesley Lord, Feb. 15, 1966, Gen RM 3–3; second quote from memo, Busby to Bird, May 18, 1964, Ex PP 13–3, WHCF, LBJ Library.
50. Remarks to Members of the Bishops' Council, African Methodist Episcopal Church. September 27, 1966, *Public Papers of President Johnson, 1966*, vol. 2, p. 1073.
51. Letter, Frank C. Laubach to the President, Jan. 10, 1967, Gen RM, WHCF, LBJ Library.
52. Zinsmeister, "Religion of Johnson," Gen PP 13–3, *ibid.*
53. Copy attached to letter, James L. Sandlin to LBJ, Feb. 24, 1968; letter, Whitney Shoemaker to Sandlin, Mar. 12, 1968, Gen RM, *ibid.*
54. Personal letter from George R. Davis, June 9, 1981.
55. "The Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Window," The National City Christian Church, Service of Dedication, March 15, 1981 (pamphlet).
56. Details of this story are in Monroe Billington, "Lyndon B. Johnson and Blacks: The Early Years," *Journal of Negro History*, vol. 62 (January, 1977), pp. 26–42.
57. Joseph A. Califano, Jr., *Governing America: An Insider's Report from the White House and the Cabinet* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981), p.
58. Personal letter from Lady Bird Johnson, May 4, 1981; personal telephone interview with Billy Graham, Oct. 10, 1983; personal letter from Billy Graham, Oct. 14, 1981.
59. Letter, LBJ to J. W. Storer, May 15, 1964, Gen RM 3–3; letter, LBJ to the Rt. Rev. Monsignor Joseph P. O'Brien, Apr. 28, 1964, Gen RM, WHCF, LBJ Library; Doris Kearns Goodwin (intro.), *The Johnson Presidential Press Conferences*, vol. 1 (New York: Earl M. Coleman Enterprises, 1978),

- p. 272; Remarks to the Delegates to the White House Conference "To Fulfill These Rights." June 1, 1966, *Public Papers of President Johnson, 1966*, vol. 1, pp. 571-75.
60. Remarks to Members of the Southern Baptist Christian Leadership Seminar. March 25, 1964, *ibid.*, 1963-64, vol. 1, p. 421.
 61. Letter, LBJ to Reverend Canon Bayard Clark, July 10, 1964, Gen RM 3, WHCF, LBJ Library.
 62. Letter, LBJ to Felix Gear, Apr. 28, 1964, Gen RM 3-3, *ibid.*
 63. Remarks to Members of the Southern Baptist Christian Leadership Seminar. March 25, 1964, *Public Papers of President Johnson, 1963-64*, vol. 1, p. 420.
 64. J. Michael Quill, *Lyndon Johnson and the Southern Military Tradition* (Washington: University Press of America, 1977), p. 1; Louis Heren, *No Hail, No Farewell* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), pp. 80-82; Goodwin, *Johnson Press Conferences*, vol. 1, pp. 348-50; letter, LBJ to Cotesworth P. Lewis, Nov. 18, 1967, Ex PP 13-3, WHCF, LBJ Library.
 65. Quoted in Pool, *Lyndon Johnson*, p. 125.
 66. Kearns, *Lyndon Johnson*, p. 55.
 67. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
 68. Letter, LBJ to Rabbi Joseph S. Shubow, Mar. 28, 1968, Gen RM, WHCF, LBJ Library.
 69. Letter, LBJ to Jose Joaquin Trejos Fernandez, Sept. 6, 1966, *ibid.*
 70. Letter, LBJ to the Most Reverend Iakovos, July 13, 1966, Gen RM 3-1, *ibid.*
 71. James David Barber, *The Presidential Character: Predicting Performance in the White House* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972), pp. 42-43, 54-57, 94.
 72. Remarks Upon Signing Proclamation "National Day of Prayer, 1965." October 7, 1965, *Public Papers of President Johnson, 1965*, vol. 2 (1966), p. 1053.
 73. Letter, LBJ to C. Ray Akin, June 2, 1967, Gen RM 2, WHCF, LBJ Library.
 74. Letter, LBJ to Gerard N. McAllister, June 2, 1967, *ibid.*
 75. Letter, LBJ to M. H. Stryker, Nov. 15, 1967, Ex PP 13-3, *ibid.*
 76. Kearns, *Lyndon Johnson*, p. 257.
 77. *Ibid.*, p. 56.