

John Tyler

President of the United States of America

To Jacob Ezekiel, April 19, 1847

SIR: I beg you to be perfectly assured, that in using the language in my recommendation to the people of the United States to observe the 4th day of May as a day for religious exercises, in consequence of the bereavement which the country has sustained in the death of the late President, I designed in nothing to exclude any portion of my fellow citizens from a cordial union in the solemnities of that occasion. In speaking in the first paragraph of the duties of Christian people, I meant in no way to imply that similar duties should not be performed by all mankind. The last paragraph is an invitation to all and excludes the idea of any special invocation. For the people of whom you are one, I can feel none other than profound respect.

The wisdom which flowed from the lips of your prophets has in times past, and will continue for all time to come, to be a refreshing fountain of moral instruction to mankind - which Holy records bear witness of Divine favors and protections of the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, God of the Christians and Israelites, to his chosen people - may I then hope, sir, that this explanation will remove all difficulties, and that your voice and the voices of all your brethren will ascend to our Common Father in supplication and prayer on the day I have suggested.

I tender you assurance of great respect,
JOHN TYLER

Editors' Notes: President William Henry Harrison, "Old Tippecanoe..." hero of the War of 1812 and famed Indian fighter, died after being in office for less than a month. He insisted on moving the inauguration outdoors for the first time, and he remained outside most of the day. He caught a cold that developed into pneumonia and became the first President to die in office. Vice President Tyler, "... and Tyler Too," became President, and, in announcing the death of Harrison and declaring a national day of mourning, described America as a "Christian People." Ezekiel wrote to the new President in protest and received this private reply from Tyler in April, 1847. Regarding the interesting life of Jacob Ezekiel, see <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/5955-ezekiel-jacob>