

Donald Trump, 'God Bless the USA' Bibles and Accusations of Christian Nationalism

President Donald Trump's endorsement of the "God Bless the USA" Bible has been met with a storm of criticism. Some are calling it "sacrilege" and "heresy," and others claim he is taking advantage of people's faith for the sake of money. Others claim that by associating America with the Bible he is promoting Christian nationalism, which they insist is dangerous and un-American.

I am not writing here to speculate about Trump's motives in partnering in the promotion of this Bible. My concern is the widespread ignorance concerning the major role of the Bible in the founding of America. My concern is the accusations of Christian nationalism by those who use it as a weapon to try and silence those like me who have documented and emphasize America's overt Christian origins.

That the Bible played a major role in the founding of America was highlighted in a 1982 article in Newsweek magazine, titled "How the Bible Made America." The authors showed the Bible's impact on the founding of America in vivid fashion and wrote: "For centuries, the Bible has exerted an unrivaled influence on American culture, politics, and social life. Now historians are discovering that the Bible, perhaps even more than the Constitution, is our founding document: the source of the powerful myth of the United States as a special, sacred nation, a people called by God to establish a model of society, a beacon to the world."

The following are just a few of the many evidences that the Bible played a major role in the founding of America.

The Continental Congress Opens With Bible Reading

The earliest immigrants to America were children of the Reformation, which means they held to the principle of *sola Scriptura*, or “Scripture alone.” This meant that they saw the Bible, not the pope or bishop, as their primary guide for faith and morality. The Bible was the book, more than any other, to be read and applied to all of life.

The Great Awakening (1726-70), which had a profound impact on the 13 Colonies, produced an even greater love and respect for the Bible. The Bible was, in fact, the most popular book in America at the time of its founding. Even the most nonreligious Founding Fathers regularly quoted from the Bible.

It is, therefore, not surprising that when the delegates to the First Continental Congress met on Sept. 5, 1774, they opened with an extended time of Bible reading and prayer. Rev. Jacob Dusche, who became their chaplain, began by reading the entire 35th psalm to the assembled delegates, which included George Washington, John Adams, Samuel Adams, Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee and others.

The reading of that psalm produced a powerful impact on all those present. John Adams described this impact in a letter to his wife, Abigail. In describing the reading of that psalm, he wrote,

“It was enough to melt a heart of stone. I never saw a greater effect upon an audience. It seems as if heaven had ordained that Psalm to be read that day. I saw tears gush into the eyes of the old, grave pacific Quakers of Philadelphia. I must beg you to read that Psalm” (Hyatt, “1726: The Year that Defined America,” 108).

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Dusche became their chaplain, and every subsequent session of

this Congress was opened with Bible reading and prayer.

Congress Endorses the First English Bible Printed in America

The founders' respect for the Bible was also highlighted by their endorsement of the first English Bible printed in America in 1782. The producer of the Bible, Robert Aitken, had written a letter to Congress in which he asked for that government body's sanction of his work. In the letter, Aitken called this Bible, "a neat Edition of the Scriptures for the use in schools."

Congress enthusiastically responded to his request and offered the following recommendation to be included in this first English Bible printed in America:

Resolved: That the United States in Congress assembled, highly approve the pious and laudable undertaking of Mr. Aitken, as subservient to the interest of religion as well as an instance of the progress of the arts in this country, and being satisfied from the above report, of his care and accuracy in the execution of the work they recommend this edition of the Bible to the inhabitants of the United States and hereby authorize him to publish this recommendation in the manner he shall think proper.

Washington Takes the Oath of Office with His Hand on a Bible

George Washington's great respect for the Bible was affirmed by his nephew, Robert Lewis, who served as his secretary and lived with him while he was president. Lewis said he had accidentally witnessed Washington's private devotions in his library and that on those occasions he had seen him in a kneeling posture with a Bible open before him, which he believed to have been his daily practice.

It is, therefore, not surprising that when it came time for Washington to be sworn in as America's first president, he insisted on taking the oath of office with his hand on a Bible. There was no precedent that he should do this. It was his own decision and a declaration that the Bible would be the ultimate source of wisdom and guidance for his administration.

After being sworn in, Washington delivered his first inaugural address. It was no surprise to his audience that his speech was filled with references to God and the Bible. At the close of the ceremony in New York City, he and Congress proceeded to St. Paul's Chapel, where they participated in a worship service with more quotes and readings from the Bible.

The Bible Helped Shape America

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The Founding Fathers' respect for the Bible was verified in a 10-year project to discover where they got their ideas for America's founding documents. This exhaustive study found that although they quoted ancient writers of Greece and Rome and contemporary writers of the Enlightenment, the single most cited authority in their writings was, by far, the Bible (Hyatt, "America's Revival Heritage, Second Edition," 69).

The Bible was the lens through which they interpreted everything they read and studied. The well-known Catholic scholar William Novak has said, "Everywhere that reason led, Americans found the Bible. If they read Francis Bacon, they found the Bible. If they read Isaac Newton or John Milton, they found the Bible. In Shakespeare, they found the Bible. In the world of the founders, the Bible was an unavoidable and useful rod of measurement, a stimulus to intellectual innovation (Hyatt, "5 Pillars of the American Republic," 16).

Andrew Jackson, America's seventh president, understood this.

He once gestured toward a Bible and declared, "That book, sir, is the rock on which our Republic rests." Teddy Roosevelt, America's 27th president, said, "No other book of any kind ever written in English has ever so affected the whole life of a people."

This is not to say that early Americans lived up to the biblical standard. Far from it! However, they all agreed that the Bible, particularly the teachings of Jesus, was the moral standard and goal toward which all should strive.

Keeping the Bible as the standard had far-reaching results. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., for example, who regularly quoted from the Bible, often pointed out that it was Jesus' Sermon on the Mount that inspired the dignified, nonviolent social action of the Civil Rights Movement.

Yes, it was the Bible that made America great and enabled her to overcome slavery, Jim Crow and so many other societal ills.

A Revival of Biblical Values

From the above brief overview, it is obvious that those who say associating the Bible with America is dangerous and un-American are grossly uninformed. My concern, therefore, is not that Donald Trump is promoting the "God Bless the USA" Bible. My concern is that so many in Washington, D.C., and throughout the nation no longer respect the Bible as a source of moral wisdom and guidance.

For example, in 2019, the Democrat National Committee unanimously passed a resolution affirming atheism and declaring that neither Christianity nor any religion is necessary for morality. In other words, "We don't need God or the Bible!"

This rejection of biblical values and truth has left the nation adrift on a sea of moral confusion. Our only salvation is a national spiritual awakening that will restore reason,

common sense and a respect for God's Word. Such an awakening will restore respect for the Bible as held by the founders and expressed by Abraham Lincoln, who in 1864 commented on the Bible, saying, "In regard to this Great Book, I have but to say, it is the best gift God has given to man. All the good the Savior gave to the world was communicated through this book. But for it we could not know right from wrong. All things most desirable for man's welfare, here and hereafter, are to be found portrayed in it."

So, in answer to all the secularist, anti-Christian critics, I loudly and unapologetically declare that I prefer the moral values of Jesus and the Bible over those of Biden, Buttigieg, Harris and Levine, and the secularist, woke ideology they have embraced. America's founders would obviously agree. {eo}

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Dr. Eddie Hyatt has over 50 years of ministry experience as a revivalist, pastor and professor of theology. He is on a mission, along with many others, to "save America" by pointing the nation back to her founding principles and praying for another Great Awakening to sweep across the land. This article was derived from his books "1726: The Year that Defined America" and "America's Revival Heritage, Second Edition," available from Amazon and his website at .