



# New York Faith & Freedom Coalition

## THE GOD ISSUE

Rev. Bill Banuchi

I've spent most of my adult life fighting to restore standards of biblical morality to our culture, echoing the sentiments of Black activist, Frederick Douglas who, speaking of biblical values said,

*"I feel it my duty to do all in my power to infuse this idea into the public mind, that it may speedily be recognized and practiced upon by our people."*

This has been my personal sense of assignment inspired by a vision to see a genuine revival in the nation.

Though I have spent these years fighting to preserve life, marriage and religious liberties as outlined in the "Manhattan Declaration," as foundational principles of justice for the common good, I have come to realize that there is a more foundational principle that must provide the proper paradigm, or any debate on these issues will go nowhere as godless forces of evil continue their march over this once blessed nation founded for "the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian religion," according to the Mayflower Compact.

I'm speaking of the God issue. That is answering the question, "Where does the acknowledgement of God fit into our national debate, if at all?"

In fact, whenever I'm afforded the opportunity to question an aspiring politician I ask this question,

*"What do you think of our national motto and how would that influence your governing philosophy, if at all?"*

On one occasion a congressional candidate responded to my question with that deer-caught-in-the-headlights look. He stared at me, totally puzzled, until I said "You know, our national motto, 'In God We Trust.'" Then he said, "Oh yes of course, and I do believe in God." Then he proudly asserted, "But when it comes to governing, there is a separation of Church and state, so my religion will play no part in the way I govern." Interpretation: The motto is a quaint meaningless platitude that means absolutely nothing in real life, especially when it comes to important issues like government.

Some believe our motto describes who we once were as a fledgling nation, but we have evolved, we have progressed, and we no longer need superstition or belief in God to advance as a nation.

Sadly, I've come to understand that this thinking describes the general public mindset. The idea of trusting in God has no practical impact when it comes to developing public policy in our "progressive" society. As long as this is the prevailing mindset the issues I have fought for all these years will never win the day, because there is a godless, humanistic sense of right and wrong that serves as the ultimate authority, not God and His wisdom as revealed in the Scriptures.

It therefore makes logical sense that we must redirect our energies "upstream." We must address the more fundamental issue undergirding the issues of life, marriage and religious liberty. We must first address the God issue.

What does our national motto mean? Is it really meaningful or is it just some empty platitude that bears absolutely no consideration in the day-to-day business of governing?

Question 1: Is it to be taken seriously?

Question 2: If it is, then what exactly does it mean?

Question 3: How are we to incorporate it into the day-to day job of governing?

Abraham Lincoln taught us that

*"... it is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God... and to recognize the sublime truth announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord."*

Are his words to be taken seriously and literally, or were they just important for a time when we were less educated, less sophisticated, less "evolved?"

Well then, let's hear from a more contemporary president, Dwight D. Eisenhower,

*"Without God there could be no American form of government, nor an American way of life. Recognition of the Supreme Being is the first –the most basic- expression of Americanism"*

In fact, it was President Eisenhower, who being inspired by a sermon in church encouraged the Congress to add the phrase "under God" to our pledge of allegiance at a time when godless communism was on the march worldwide. Two years later "In God We Trust" became our nation's official motto, though the phrase had been appearing on our coinage since 1864.

In fact, from the very birth of our nation the public acknowledgment of God has been central to American life. When Samuel Adams signed the Declaration, he said:

*"We have this day restored the Sovereign to whom all men ought to be obedient..."*

Public acknowledgement of our dependence upon God was a ubiquitous fact of American life as clearly expressed in the preambles of every one of our fifty state constitutions. One example is the preamble of the Constitution of my own state, New York:

*“We, the people of the State of New York, grateful to Almighty God for our freedom, in order to secure its blessings do establish this constitution.”*

Every one of the other forty nine states begins with a similar declaration.

It was clearly understood, and publicly asserted that liberty is a gift from God. Even Thomas Jefferson, the founding father who everyone quotes when it comes to the idea of separation of church and state said,

*“God who gave us life gave us liberty. And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with His wrath?...”*

--1781 Notes on The state of Virginia

The primacy of the sovereignty of God over our land is not just a sentiment for an era gone by, but rather an eternal truth that has provided peace and prosperity like no other nation has ever known. If we are to preserve the blessings of liberty it is imperative that we publicly acknowledge the supremacy of God and His order for civic life as revealed in the Bible.

.James Wilson, first Supreme Court Justice, taught us that civil law must always be consistent with divine law, as revealed in the Scriptures. It was a common occurrence to witness debates in Congress over the interpretation of Scripture and how Biblical truth is to be applied to our system of law.

With all the political rhetoric filling the airwaves this election season I wait to hear a clear clarion call to acknowledge that we are, in fact, “One Nation Under God,” and we must seek to continue to develop our “more perfect union” according to objective biblical standards to the degree that we can understand and implement them with the consent of the governed.

Our devotion to God and His laws is the reason for our exceptionalism. All of our civic dysfunction derives from our neglect of God’s revealed will, from relying on the supremacy of our own human wisdom. Noah Webster taught us that,

*“All the miseries and evils which men suffer from vice, crime, ambition, injustice, oppression, slavery, and war, proceed from their despising or neglecting the precepts contained in the Bible.”*

We must come back to the basic presupposition that we are “One Nation Under God,” and our challenge is to discover His will for our generation. The “Father” of our country, George Washington warned us,

*“The propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which Heaven itself has ordained”*

If we lose the “propitious smiles of Heaven” we will be left with nothing other than the curses of Hell. A cursory study of world affairs will illustrate my point. God help us to become once again, One Nation Under God. Let the debate begin there.