

In God We Trust: Why Do We Refer to God So Much?

Shôn Ellerton, June 12, 2024

I often wonder why we cite God so often in our political sphere and day-to-day lives.



I thought about this for quite some time.

Should the words “God” be used in government, political speeches, or denoted on national currencies, or employed throughout the judicial structure including the swearing in those about to have their say in court?

In the United States, a country I was raised, the word “God” is used frequently in everyday life, the most famous phrase I can think of being, “In God We Trust”. This phrase came in to effect to adorn the currency of the United States since 1955 and has since been the official motto of the United States replacing *E pluribus unum* signifying “out of many, one”.

However, that change always felt to be paradoxical, at least to me, insofar that so much importance should be attributed to running a state separate from the church, and yet, there is ample reference to God throughout the political establishment in general.

Why is that?

I’ve had my history lessons of those living in terror out of religious zealotry, notable examples being Spain under the eyes of the Spanish Inquisition, the theocracies of the Middle East in which sneaking in a Bible will incur terrible penalties if caught, and, of course, the general nastiness between the Protestants and Catholics in Middle Ages England.

So, is it a question of God in general, or a question of *which* God in particular?

The question of which God or which religion is another discussion because disagreements arise as to the interpretation of God, perhaps, the most catalytic of all reasons as to why religious wars are started. For example, in some of our most brutal theocracies, religious despots misuse their power in the name of a higher power to control their people through amplification, subservience, and terror.

It is no wonder that the practice of mixing God and the political establishment has been challenged by so many. Indeed, why bring God into the picture at all? Should there be no mention of God at all?

I thought that way, and for the reason above, the demise of a free state to a religiously controlled state, much like that of the fictitious state of Gilead in Margaret Atwood's famous and terrifying novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*.

But then, the United States has its Constitution, possibly the single most important foundational document ever created in *relatively* recent history. The Founding Fathers created a nation like no other in the world. A nation not suppressed by religious ideology, a nation with the most freedoms, and a nation in which the People, rather than a cohort of elitists, make up the laws and regulations.

Of course, no nation is perfect, and the United States certainly is not. Freedom and equality, both important tenets of the Constitution, were not adhered to by many during the dark days of slavery and segregation. The tenets of blind and impartial justice as enshrined in the judicial branch of the government has been tampered with by each party that comes to power, Democrat, Republican, or otherwise. And of course, the right to bear arms is so vague that it fails to distinguish the right to carry a rifle or a shotgun from a battery of missile launchers perched in one's backyard. I assume they weren't accounted for back in the day of the Founding Fathers!

The Constitution still stands, although it has been challenged many times throughout the history of the United States by those in power wishing to seek even more power, essentially attempting to take away those decisions which are made by the People. The part of the Constitution containing the Bill of Rights has been repeatedly attacked and contested as of late, especially that of promoting the right to free speech and the right to bear arms. Margaret Atwood famously alluded in her novel, that there is a substantial difference between the freedom *to* rather than the freedom *from*, the latter requiring the State to issue mandates against various freedoms *to* so that others are free *from*. However, this is *not* good.

Straying down the path of the latter, namely being free *from*, is how we morph free states into despotic police-like states, in which freedoms are revoked for the sake of the common good.

By and large, the Constitution protects its citizens from devolving into a tyrant-run nation state whether it be through ideological or religious reasons. Unfortunately, the Constitution has not held up too well in protecting its citizenry against unchecked plutocracy, or in short, the widening gap of the 'haves' and the 'have-nots', but again, a topic for another occasion.

As I've grown older, my views started to change on whether God should be openly referenced in the running of a government. I've become far more accepting than I have in the past once taking the view that absolutely no reference to God should be made at all. What I had not considered is that God does not necessarily mean the same for all. God is not a religion. God may not be Jesus for everyone. God may not be Allah for everyone. God may not be the Buddha for everyone. However, God *is* a higher power for everyone, except atheists.

What does this mean?

The belief in a higher power fundamentally shares one very important tenet across those practicing any number of religions or faiths.

No mortal or group of mortals can be elevated to the position of God.

Ask yourself the following question.

If you wanted supreme power in running a nation state, what would be one of the first things you would do to obtain that power?

It's quite simple.

Abolish the practice of worshipping God of course!

And how to do this?

Destroy churches, dissolve religious societies, and make every effort to destroy the family unit. Maintaining strong families is one of the core principles enshrined in most religions, certainly Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

In my youth, I became interested in reading works of fiction depicting future dystopias. Works that spring to mind are *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, *Brave New World*, *We*, *Walden Two* and *Erewhon*.

What is so utterly frightening about them is that they all depict heavily controlled societies in which the family unit is either destroyed or suppressed and all faith and obedience is given to either a collective body, for example, the fictitious group *INGSOC (English Socialism)* in *Nineteen-Eighty Four* or to a dictator like Hitler or Stalin in our own real history.

Church and family are serious threats to the formation of a totalitarian or heavily-controlled and compliant society.

During the last few years, we have witnessed the development of organisational bodies destined to establish themselves as the sole controllers of the Western world guising themselves to be the benefactors of promoting good intentions and imploring that everyone make radical changes to their own lifestyles to make changes for the greater good. Look no further than the rich and elite jetsetters forming the World Economic Forum who preach these ideologies and yet, somehow, ignore their own excessive lifestyles as a necessary exception. These very powerful collective bodies formed by power-seeking plutocrats tend to view those who have faith to a higher power a genuine threat to obtaining the total control and obedience of the people.

Those holding the vast wealth and power tend to have enormous influence on the media, which they can use at their will to spread defamation and misinformation to the masses against those who have faith in a higher power. A prime example being that of equating a church-goer to a right-wing extremist. How often does one come across that phrase, ‘the Religious Right’? Many forget that the Far Left preach ideologies which resemble a religion of sorts, except, rather than worshipping a higher power, it is of worship to a cult-like collective or tyrant eager to gain power and wealth from its people.

From a historical perspective, the spreading of mass misinformation is nothing new, of course.

The Knights Templar of the Middle Ages were founded on the principles of Western Christianity, each of their members strongly following the tenets of ascetism, loyalty, and faith to a higher power. They gained much influence and wealth across the continent and were said to be the first to form the basis of international banking. The Catholic papacy during the final days of the Templar Knights became so corrupt that the Knights Templar were seen as a threat to its near-totalitarian control across Europe. The papacy instigated a massive misinformation campaign against the Knights Templar spreading rumours of

devil worship and other bestial practices. The campaign succeeded and the papal authorities had no resistance from the people when they burned the last Grand Master, Jacques de Molay, at the stake on Friday the 13th, 1307.

Modern day equivalents, although on a less grand scale, have taken place over the last few years from the COVID years onwards. Notably Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's efforts to quash dissent from those willing to challenge the draconian measures to instigate unparalleled emergency powers during the pandemic. And similarly, Victoria's Premier Dan Andrew's draconian initiatives sparking off a series of six lockdowns which lasted over a total of over 260 days. And, of course, the current United States Democratic Party establishment which espouses to be everything but being democratic veering towards becoming a power fixated on the reduction of free speech, removal of all arms, and the rise of centralised control, all in the name of so-called safety or being free *from*.

Each one of these modern day equivalents has something in common. They all fear those who practice their faith to a higher power. One of the first institutions to close during the pandemic were places of worship, but yet, protests were allowed during the BLM movement.

Finally, on the subject of atheism.

I will make a case in point that many are lost without faith to a higher power. After all, as mentioned earlier, many of the tenets and precepts enshrined in most religions promote values of morality, virtue, and goodwill to others. However, atheism is an interesting case.

I came across an arresting phrase in one of the ancient charges of Freemasonry dating back to the 1700s mentioning the so-called 'stupid atheist'. In Freemasonry, in order to join, one must have a belief in a higher power, but this is often taken in a loose and liberal sense. One could ordain that that higher power be Mother Nature, the Cosmos or some other Higher Being. However, the atheist *denies* the existence of a higher power which dangerously crosses into nihilist territory, a tenet not compatible with the morals and virtues of Freemasonry.

It is not that an atheist is stupid, but it is far more likely that someone who is stupid *and* is an atheist being prone to nihilism, which can be said to be one of the jigsaw pieces that fit nicely in the running of a dystopian totalitarian society. However, the more intelligent and smart atheist who is grounded on sound

philosophical principles espousing strong moral and virtuous values is far more likely to push back on the development of such tyrannical and dystopian societies.

Ultimately, I am trying to piece these complicated thoughts together, and I first took an interest in exploring this through my journey into Freemasonry, much like my English grandfather did. He was never a God-fearing man, at least, not to my knowledge. He certainly never tried to persuade others to go to church nor did he ever discuss his Masonic affiliation. In those days, Freemasonry was extremely discreet but now as numbers have diminished, Freemasonry is trying to attract more members. However, he attended and supported his local church in his small village professing the importance of something that instills virtue and morality in people.

Finally, recalling back to the history of the birth of the United States, a great proportion of its Founding Fathers were, in fact, Freemasons. Fifteen presidents were Freemasons as well, from George Washington to Gerald Ford. Sadly, today's running of the United States Government resembles anything but being Masonic in character and nature but more like the cast from Looney Tunes!

My quandary on deciding whether God should be referenced in the day-to-day running of a country might have been solved by the fact that mankind needs something to latch onto to maintain some level of morality and virtue. Not through direct worship or to the praying of God, but rather, an understanding of wisdom and knowledge passed down through generations from those paying due deference to a higher power.

It is quite difficult to explain but the essence of it follows that without a form of guidance or belief by a higher power, whatever that higher power is, we are far more prone to veering off the paths of virtue and morality.