

“In God We Trust”
Psalm 106:1-5 Luke 18:18-27
September 30, 2007

Tomorrow, Oct 1, marks the 50th anniversary of the use of the phrase “In God We Trust” on our nation’s paper currency.

The official use of “In God We Trust” dates back to the Civil War era. In 1861, the Rev. M.R. Watkinson, a Christian minister from Ridley Township, PA sent a letter to Secretary of Treasure Salmon P. Chase urging *“the recognition of the Almighty God in some form on our coins.”* Chase agreed and ordered the Director of the US Mint to prepare a motto for use on coins. The Director proposed **“God, Our Trust.”** Chase altered the phrase to **“In God We Trust,”** which first appeared on a two-cent coin in 1894. The next Congress authorized the mint to put the motto on all silver and gold coins. In 1956, Congress passed a joint resolution, signed by President Dwight Eisenhower, declaring “In God We Trust” to be the national motto. The following year, on Oct. 1, the motto appeared for the first time on paper currency – on the back of the dollar bill.

Like all things religious, this has not been without opposition and controversy.

A California doctor and attorney has sought to have it removed from the nation’s currency, the same gentleman who unsuccessfully tried to have ‘**under God**’ removed from the Pledge of Allegiance.

An overwhelming majority of Americans support **“In God We Trust”** on the country’s currency and as the national motto, and support the words **“under God”** in the pledge of Allegiance. (90% in 2003 Gallup poll)

We are winning the cultural war, right? Maybe?

Christopher Hitchens, a brilliant British polemist, now an American, has written **“god is NOT GREAT,”** a book about how religion poisons everything. He is also the author of the book attacking Mother Teresa.

Hitchens would be harmless, in a nation that trusts in God, if this book were not on the NY Times bestseller list.

Hitchens, to his credit, cares little for political correctness.

He equally states that all religions, Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, are stupid and dangerous.

Someone is buying his book and reading that Jesus probably did not exist, and that his sacrifice is appalling. *“I am told of a human sacrifice that took place two thousand years ago, without my wishing it and in circumstances so ghastly that, had I been present and in possession of any influence, I would have been duty-bound to try and stop it. In consequence of this murder, my own manifold sins are forgiven me, and I may hope to enjoy everlasting life.”*

From the days of Saul of Tarsus, there have been those who wish to discredit and destroy those who put their trust in God.

Hitchens does not come close to sighting any serious theological thinkers like Barth, Tillich, Niebuhr, or Rahner. When he wants to discuss modern interpretations of the Bible, he turns to Mel Gibson. For

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theology Pat Robertson, Billy Graham and Tim LaHaye are his sources. Hitchens is last on a long list of folks dusting off old theological questions, and getting their research from the ‘Christian Channel.’ In a time and world when many people are truly afraid of religion, of the authority of the Church, of self appointed prophets of health and wealth, how do we, who trust in God, articulate and translate our faith?

Many of us, and I may be at the top of the list, want to look at the world with the glasses given by parents and grandparents, teachers and preachers - glasses that have Enlightenment lens. These glasses show a predictability, understandability and definability to the world, and a trust in a God that is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.

There is another view of the world to which we must speak, if trust in God will be handed down to another generation on more than dollars bills.

We, who trust in God, must seek out and speak out about a God who does not live remote in the Heaven, who is not lost in some confusing Biblical text, who is beyond the stumbling and stammering of preachers, and speak of a God whose Word is among us and whose Word saves us from ourselves.

Edgell Franklin Pyles, Ph.D.