

Under God

Oct. 25, 2013

Every year there are lawsuits attempting to remove the phrase “under God” from the Pledge of Allegiance or to remove “One Nation Under God” from our coins. But where did the phrase originate? Anyone who was supposed to memorize Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address could probably answer that question.

When Lincoln traveled to that Pennsylvania town in November 1863 to dedicate a national cemetery, he used the opportunity to define (we might even say, to redefine) the nature and purpose of this “great Civil War.” He concluded his speech by saying “that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

There is some indication that Lincoln added the words “under God” while sitting on the stage since they are not found in the copy of the speech he carried to the ceremony. All who heard the speech agree that he used the words “under God” and it is found in subsequent copies of the speech that he wrote out in longhand.

It is possible that Lincoln adopted those words from George Washington (either indirectly or directly). One of Lincoln’s favorite books as a child was Parson Ween’s biography *The Life of George Washington*. The phrase is used in a description of Washington’s death.

It is also possible that Lincoln also knew of George Washington’s orders to the Continental Army. Washington’s written orders said “The fate of unborn millions will now depend, under God, on the courage and conduct of this army.” On July 9, 1776 he directed that Declaration of Independence be read aloud to the troops so that they would know “that now

the peace and safety of the Country depends, under God, solely on the success of our arms.”

Today we often use the phrase “under God” and it worth knowing about its rich history. Let us pray that the anti-God forces never remove it from our country. I’m Kerby Anderson and that’s my point of view.

“Should Christians Give the Pledge of Allegiance?”

Should Christians give the pledge of allegiance?

Your question is an old one. First century Christians struggled with how much allegiance (if any) they were to give to Rome. The founders of this country struggled with it as well.

At one extreme you have the Jehovah’s Witnesses (who do not pledge because they believe it is idolatry). At the other extreme you have Christians with a mindset of “my country right or wrong.” A proper biblical response is somewhere in the middle.

Romans 13 tells us to obey those in authority. Other passages allow for civil disobedience (Acts 5:29, Daniel, etc.). Christians who live in a country with a godly government shouldn’t have much concern about a pledge of allegiance. However, Christians who lived in, say Nazi Germany, might legitimately have reservations about a pledge of allegiance in that country.

I believe that if a Christian feels that it would be wrong for him or her to pledge allegiance, then I believe he or she

should refrain. But if Christians then concludes it is wrong for every other Christian to do so, they are mandating a standard of behavior that I do not believe can be found in Scripture. Obviously Jesus Christ deserves our total allegiance, but I don't believe that a pledge of allegiance to a country undermines that.

Even though this issue doesn't necessarily involve the issue of civil disobedience, you might want to look at [Civil Disobedience, my transcript on the topic](#), at the Probe web page (www.probe.org) as well as some of my other writings on Christians and government.

Thanks for writing. I hope this helps.

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