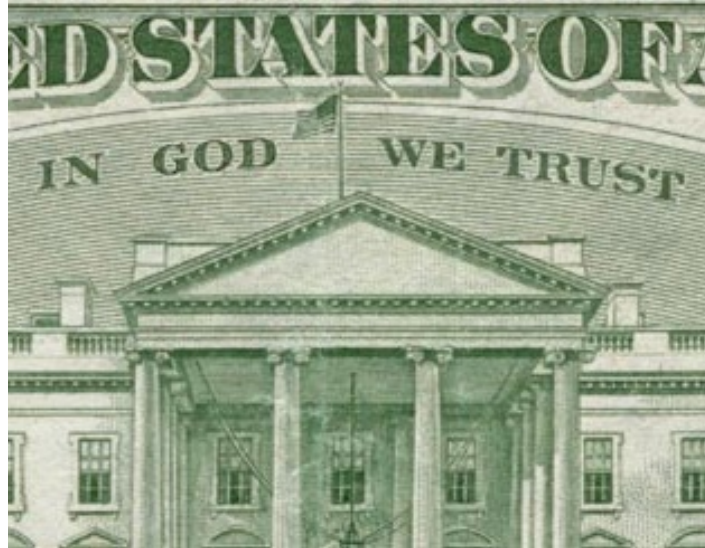
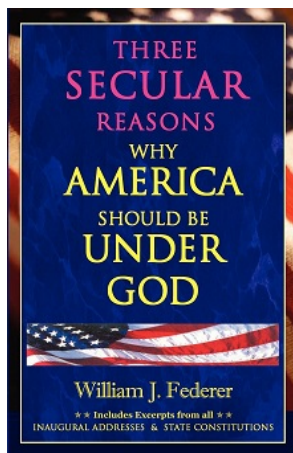


American Minute with Bill Federer IN GOD WE TRUST National Motto: Francis Scott Key's anthem & his fight to free slaves

In 1820, a U.S. revenue cutter captured the slave ship *Antelope* off the coast of Florida with nearly 300 African slaves ... [continued reading American Minute here ...](#)



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Francis Scott Key was the defense counsel for the Africans, many of whom were just young teenagers.

Key had come from a wealthy slave holding family in Maryland, but as with many leaders after the Revolution, his views evolved to advocating against slavery.

He became a vocal opponent of the slave trade, and fought to free the slaves of the *Antelope*, spending his own time and money in an expensive legal battle which dragged on for seven years.

Arguing their case before the Supreme Court in 1825, **Francis Scott Key**, as recorded by Henry S. Foote:

"... greatly surpassed the expectations of his most admiring friends ... **Key** closed with ... an electrifying picture of the horrors connected with the African slave trade."

Jonathan M. Bryant wrote in *Dark Places of the Earth: The Voyage of the Slave Ship Antelope* (2015):

"Most startling of all, **Key** argued ... that **all men were created equal** ...

If the United States had captured a ship full of white captives, **Key** asked, would not our courts assume them to be free? How could it be any different simply because the captives were black? ...

Slavery was a dangerously hot subject, but **Francis Scott Key** stepped deliberately into the fire."

Bryant continued:

"**Key** had unleashed all of his rhetorical weapons ... This was a case he believed in and had worked personally to bring before the Supreme Court.

The *Antelope* was a Spanish slave ship that had been captured by privateers and then seized by a United States Revenue Marine cutter off the coast of Florida ..."

Jonathan M. Bryant continued:

"Using clear precedent, poetic language, and appeals to morality, **Francis Scott Key** argued that the hundreds of African captives found aboard the *Antelope* should be returned to Africa and freedom. United States law demanded it, he said.

The law of nations demanded it, he said. Even the law of nature demanded it.

Key looked into the eyes of the six justices sitting for the case, four of whom were slave owners, and announced that **'by the law of nature, all men are free.'**

Considered one of its many shameful decisions, the **Supreme Court** sadly chose to define slaves as property.

Only a portion of the slaves were returned to Africa where they founded the **colony of New Georgia** in **Liberia**.

For a brief time, the **American Colonization Society** to settle West Africa was considered as a solution to the race problem.

Key raised \$11,000 to help those Africans who wanted to attempt this.

In 1833, **Francis Scott Key** was executor of the Will of Senator John Randolph, cousin of Thomas Jefferson.

John Randolph, in his Will written in 1819, arranged for all his 400 slaves to be freed, writing: "I give and bequeath to all my slaves their freedom, heartily regretting that I have ever been the owner of one." Randolph's Will of 1822 provided money for the transportation, supplies and land for his freed slaves to settle in the free State of Ohio. Each slave above the age of 40 was to receive 10 acres of land. Family members challenged the Will in court, but after Key fought a decade long legal battle, the Will was successfully upheld.

The former **"Randolph Slaves"** arrived in Cincinnati in 1846, and eventually settled Rossville, Ohio, near the town of Piqua.

They established Cyrene African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1853; Second Baptist Church, 1857; African Baptist Church, 1869; and a Jackson African Cemetery, 1866, which had a gravestone engraved with: **"Born A Slave -- Died Free."**

During the Civil War, some from this settlement were the first African Americans to serve in the U.S. military.

In Washington, D.C., in early June, 1842, a respected free black, **William "Billy" Costin**, died.

Costin had been an activist **fighting to remove the District of Columbia slave codes.**

There was a long procession of men on horseback following the casket to the cemetery, all were African-American **except for one white man, Francis Scott Key.**

Key, who had been U.S. Attorney in Washington, D.C., was described by an abolitionist newspaper:

"It must be admitted that for a distinguished citizen of Washington to ride alone among a large number of colored men in doing honor to the memory of a deceased citizen of color evinces an elevation of soul above the meanness of popular prejudice, highly honorable to **Mr. Key's profession** as a friend of men of color. He road alone."

Contrary to those who simplistically categorize and condemn historical figures, the reality is more complicated.

Just as today, many are evolving in their views to realize that **abortion is wrong--killing an unborn human**, back then, many were evolving in their views to realize that **slavery was wrong--the enslaving of another human.**

Key was a **Democrat** who exhibited this conflicting

behavior. He owned several slaves, which by all accounts were treated humanely, yet he also freed several slaves.

Key represented slave owners in some cases, yet he had a reputation for providing free legal advice to slaves and free blacks in Washington, defending them in court.

Writing for *The Baltimore Sun*, July 26, 2014, Mary Carole McCauley wrote:

"What raised eyebrows was that **Key** also donated his legal services to some African-Americans who were fighting for their freedom under a 1783 law that prohibited slaveholders from other states from bringing their human chattle into Maryland to live. **Key** won several of those cases."

Marc Leepson admitted in *What So Proudly We Hailed: Francis Scott Key, A Life* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014):

"It was rare for a white lawyer to do that. That was a gutsy thing for him to do ... He was an early and ardent **opponent of slave trafficking.**"

Key stood in front of the jail and **drove away a mob intending to lynch Arthur Bowne**, who on the night of August 4, 1835, had entered the bedroom of his master's widow and her mother with an axe under his arm, having been drinking with an abolitionist friend.

Bowne was found guilty, but President Andrew Jackson pardoned him.

A former Baltimore school teacher and author Karsonya Wise Whitehead wrote of **Key**:

"Risking his life to defend black people was not something that he had to do. It was something that he chose to do. So was his decision to own slaves. His

contradictions were America's contradictions."

Annette Palmer, chair of Morgan State University's history department, stated:

"You have to put **Key's** views in context. You can't look at the 19th century through the eyes of the 21st century. In 1814, slavery was everywhere in society."

Rev. John T. Brooke wrote:

"If ever man was a **true friend of the African race**, that man was **Francis Scott Key**. Throughout his own region of the country, he was proverbially the **colored man's friend**.

He was their standing gratuitous advocate in courts of justice, pressing their rights to the extend of the law, and ready to brave odium or even personal even personal danger in their behalf."

In 1841, two years before his death, **Francis Scott Key** helped **John Quincy Adams** free 53 African slaves in the *Amistad* case.

Adams shook hands with **Africans Cinque and Grabeau**, saying: "God willing, we will make you free."

Adams argued before the Supreme Court:

"The moment you come to the **Declaration of Independence**, that **every man has a right to life and liberty**, an inalienable right, this case is decided.

I ask nothing more in behalf of these unfortunate men than **this Declaration.**"

During the War of 1812, **Francis Scott Key** wrote "**The Star-Spangled Banner.**"

Though many are familiar with the first verse, the **FOURTH VERSE** had an enduring effect:

"O thus be it ever when free men shall stand,

Between their loved home and the war's desolation;

Blest with victory and peace, may the Heaven-rescued
land,

Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a
nation!

Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just;

And **this be our motto 'IN GOD IS OUR TRUST'!**

And the **Star Spangled Banner** in triumph shall wave,

Over the land of the free and the home of the brave!"

Nine years earlier, **Francis Scott Key** had written a song to the same tune with similar words to celebrate the victory over Muslim **Barbary Pirates**, titled "**When the Warrior Returns from the Battle Afar**" (*Boston's Independent Chronicle*, Dec. 30, 1805):

In conflict resistless each toil they endur'd

Till their foes shrunk dismay'd from the war's desolation:

And pale beamed the Crescent, its splendor obscur'd

By the light of the Star-Spangled Flag of our nation.

Where each flaming star gleamed a meteor of war,

And the turban'd head bowed to the terrible glare.

Then mixt with the olive the laurel shall wave

And form a bright wreath for the brow of the brave.

His misunderstood line "**the hireling and slave**" is thought to be a reference to the notorious British crime of **forcible seizure and impressment** of thousands of **American sailors** into service of the **British Royal Navy**.

This was considered the **primary cause** of the **War of 1812**, stocking outrage throughout the land.

Key's "Star-Spangled Banner" stirred patriotism across America for centuries.

In an interview prior to singing the anthem "**Star-Spangled Banner**" on the world's largest stage of the **2019 Super Bowl**, **Gladys Knight**, the Empress of Soul, stated (*TMZ Sports; TheBlaze, 1/19/19*):

"I am here today and on Sunday, Feb. 3, **to give the anthem back its voice**, to stand for that **historic choice of words**, the way it unites us when we hear it and to free it from the same prejudices and struggles I have fought long and hard for all my life, from walking back hallways, from marching with our social leaders, from using my voice for good ...

I have been in the forefront of this battle longer than most of those voicing their opinions to **win the right to sing our country's anthem** on a stage as large as the Super Bowl LIII ...

I pray that **this national anthem will bring us all together** in a way never before witnessed and we can move forward and untangle these truths which mean so much to all of us."

Seth Jahn is a Native-American U.S. soldier who served for 11 years in the military, including tours in Iraq and

Afghanistan where he sustained serious injuries in defense of his country.

In 2021, he was **removed** from the **U.S. Soccer Federation's Athlete Council** because **he defended the National Anthem.**

Seth Jahn told the committee (*Human Events*, 3/4/21):

“In all of history, **only one country has fought to abolish slavery**, the United States of America, where nearly **400,000 men died** to fight for the **abolishment of slavery** underneath **the same stars and bars that our athletes take a knee for.**

Their sacrifice is tainted with every knee that touches the ground.”

During the Civil War, the 4th verse of the **Star-Spangled Banner** inspired the 125th **Pennsylvania Infantry** to use **"IN GOD WE TRUST"** as its battle cry at the **Battle of Antietam.**

Rev. M.R. Watkinson wrote to the Treasury Department, November 13, 1861, suggesting the **recognition** of **"Almighty God** in some form in our **coins."**

Another proposal was to amend the **Preamble of the U.S. Constitution** to include the mention of **"Almighty God"** and **"the Lord Jesus Christ."**

This proposal was supported by:
Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts,
Senator B. Gratz Brown of Missouri, and
Senator John Sherman of Ohio, along with Director of the U.S. Mint, **James Pollock.**

Their proposal was to amend the **Preamble of the U.S. Constitution** to have the new wording:

"We, the people of the United States, humbly **acknowledging Almighty God** as the source of all authority and power in civil government, **the Lord Jesus Christ as the Ruler among the nations, His revealed will as the supreme law of the land,**

in order to constitute a **Christian government**, and in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the inalienable rights and the **blessings of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness** to ourselves and our **posterity**, and all the people,

do ordain and establish this **Constitution for the United States of America."**

Lincoln's pastor, **Rev. Phineas Gurley**, arranged for proponents to meet with the President, February 11, 1864, after which **Lincoln** responded:

"The general aspect of your movement I **cordially approve**. In regard to particulars I must ask time to deliberate, as the work of amending the Constitution should not be done hastily."

Treasury Secretary Salmon P. Chase, who **Lincoln** later appointed **Chief Justice**, assigned **James Pollock**, **Director of the U.S. Mint**, with the task of adding the phrase "**In God We Trust**" to the two cent coin.

James Pollock was the former Governor of Pennsylvania and a former U.S. Congressman.

Pollock complied with **Secretary Chase's** request.

The Report of the Secretary of the Treasury on the State of the Finances (U.S. Dept. of the Treasury, 1863, page 190-191), printed James Pollock's reply:

"We claim to be a Christian nation -- why should we not vindicate our character by honoring the God of Nations ...

Our national coinage should do this. Its legends and devices should declare **our trust in God - in Him who is 'King of Kings and Lord of Lords.'**"

James Pollock continued:

"The **motto** suggested, '**God our Trust,**' is taken from our **National Hymn, the 'Star-Spangled Banner.'**"

The sentiment is familiar to every citizen of our country -- it has thrilled the hearts and fallen in song from the lips of millions of American Freemen ...

The time for the introduction of this ... is propitious and appropriate. 'Tis an hour of National peril and danger -- an hour when man's strength is weakness -- when our strength and our nation's strength and salvation, must be in the **God of Battles and of Nations.**

Let us reverently acknowledge his sovereignty, and let our coinage declare **our trust in God.**"

Treasury Secretary Salmon P. Chase wrote to **James Pollock**, December 9, 1863:

"I approve your **mottos**, only suggesting that on that with the Washington obverse, the **motto** should begin with the word '**Our,**' so as to read: '**Our God and our Country.**'

And on that with the shield, it should be changed so as to read: '**IN GOD WE TRUST.**'"

Salmon P. Chase's proposal was passed by Congress on April 22, 1864, allowing the **motto** on one-cent and two-cent coins.

On MARCH 3, 1865, Congress voted to approve the motto **"IN GOD WE TRUST"** for all U.S. coins.

House Speaker Schuyler Colfax noted:

"The last act of Congress ever signed by President Lincoln was one requiring that the motto . . . **'IN GOD WE TRUST'** should hereafter be inscribed upon all our national coin."

"IN GOD WE TRUST" was inscribed in the U.S. House Chamber above the Speaker's rostrum;

- above the Senate's main southern door;
- on a tribute block inside the Washington Monument;
- on a stained-glass window in the U.S. Capitol's Chapel; and
- Capitol Visitors Center, due to the efforts of Congressman Randy Forbes.

President Harry S Truman stated October 30, 1949:

"When the U.S. was established ... the motto was **'IN GOD WE TRUST.'** That is still our motto and we still place **our firm trust in God.**"

President Eisenhower remarked at a ceremony issuing the first stamp bearing the motto **"IN GOD WE TRUST,"** April 8, 1954:

"America's greatness has been based upon a **spiritual quality** ... symbolized by the stamp that will be issued today ...

Regardless of any eloquence of the words that may be inside the letter, on the outside he places a message:

'Here is ... the land that lives in respect for **the**

Almighty's mercy to us' ...

Each of us, hereafter, fastening such a stamp on a letter, cannot fail to feel something of the inspiration that we do whenever we ... read **"IN GOD WE TRUST."**

The same day, **President Eisenhower** stated to a Women's Conference:

"I have just come from assisting in the dedication of a new stamp ...

The stamp has on it a picture of the Statue of Liberty, and on it also is stated **'IN GOD WE TRUST'** ...

All of us mere mortals are dependent upon the mercy of a Superior Being ...

The reason this seems so thrilling is ... the opportunity it gives to every single individual who buys the stamp to send a message -- regardless of the content of a letter ... that this is the land of the free and **'IN GOD WE TRUST.'**"

President Eisenhower remarked at the 75th Anniversary of the Incandescent Lamp, October 24, 1954:

"'IN GOD WE TRUST.' Often have we heard the words of this wonderful American **motto**. Let us make sure that familiarity has not made them meaningless for us.

We carry the torch of freedom as a sacred trust for all mankind. We do not believe that **God** intended the light that He created to be put out by men ..."

Eisenhower continued:

"Atheism substitutes men for the **Supreme Creator** and this leads inevitably to domination and dictatorship.

But we believe -- and it is because we believe that **God** intends all men to be free and equal that we demand free government.

Our Government is servant, not master, our chosen representatives are our equals, not our czars or commissars ..."

Eisenhower concluded:

"We must jealously guard **our foundation in faith.**

For on it rests the ability of the American individual to live and thrive in this blessed land -and to be able to help other less fortunate people to achieve **freedom and individual opportunity.**

These we take for granted, but to others they are often only a wistful dream."

One Sunday in 1953, **Matt H. Rothert**, president of the American Numismatic Association, was at church and noticed on the collection plate only coins bore the **motto "IN GOD WE TRUST."**

Realizing that paper currency had a larger global circulation, **Rothert** wrote letters and gave speeches promoting the **motto** be added to **paper currency.**

World War II veteran Congressman **Charles E. Bennett** of Florida, with other senators and representatives, helped pass H.R. 619, signed by President Eisenhower on July 11, 1955, to include **"IN GOD WE TRUST"** on all **U.S. currency.**

Congressman Bennett stated on the House Floor:

"Nothing can be more certain than that our country was founded in a spiritual atmosphere and with **a firm trust in**

God ...

While the sentiment of trust in **God** is universal and timeless, these particular four words '**IN GOD WE TRUST**' are indigenous to our country ...

In these days when imperialistic and **materialistic communism seeks to attack and destroy freedom**, we should continually look for ways to **strengthen the foundations of our freedom.**"

In 1956, "**IN GOD WE TRUST**" was legally adopted by Congress and the President as the **official United States National Motto**. (Public Law 84-140; United States Code at 36 U.S.C. § 302).

On October 1, 1957, the first paper currency bearing the phrase "**IN GOD WE TRUST**" entered circulation -- the one dollar silver certificate.

John F. Kennedy stated February 9, 1961:

"The guiding principle of this Nation has been, is now, and ever shall be '**IN GOD WE TRUST.**'"

President Reagan stated in his National Day of Prayer Proclamation, March 19, 1981:

"Our Nation's motto 'IN GOD WE TRUST' -- was not chosen lightly. It reflects a basic recognition that there is a divine authority in the universe to which this Nation owes homage."

Reagan stated at a White House observance of National Day of Prayer, May 6, 1982:

"Our faith in God is a mighty source of strength.

Our Pledge of Allegiance states that we are '**one nation under God,**' and our currency bears the **motto, 'IN GOD**

WE TRUST."

Reagan said following a meeting with Pope John Paul II in Vatican City, June 7, 1982:

"Ours is a nation grounded on faith, faith in man's ability through **God-given freedom** to live in tolerance and peace and faith that a **Supreme Being** guides our daily striving in this world.

Our **national motto**, '**IN GOD WE TRUST**,' reflects that faith."

President George H.W. Bush met with Amish and Mennonites at Penn Johns Elementary School in Lancaster, PA, March 22, 1989. When a Mennonite leader stated:

"We want to keep that theme, '**IN GOD WE TRUST**,' which is stamped on our money,"

President Bush replied: "It's staying there. Nobody can knock that off."

President George H.W. Bush remarked on the National Day of Prayer, May 4, 1989:

"We are **one nation under God**. And we were placed here on Earth to do His work.

And our work has gone on now for more than 200 years in the Nation -- a work best embodied in four simple words: '**IN GOD WE TRUST**.'"

On February 8, 2018, at the National Prayer Breakfast, **President Donald J. Trump** stated:

"America is a nation of believers ...

Each year this event reminds us that faith is central to

American life ...

Our currency declares, **'In God we trust.'** We place our hands on our hearts as we recite the Pledge of Allegiance and proclaim we are **one nation under God.**"

In a 2003 joint poll by USA Today, CNN, and Gallup reported that 90% of Americans support **"IN GOD WE TRUST"** on U.S. coins.

In 2006, on the 50th anniversary of its adoption, the Senate reaffirmed **"IN GOD WE TRUST"** as the **official national motto.**

In July 2010, a Federal Appeals Court in the District of Columbia ruled 3-0 the **National Motto** was constitutional under the First Amendment, quoting the 1970 decision, *Aronow v. United States*:

"It is quite obvious that the **national motto** and slogan on coinage and currency **'IN GOD WE TRUST'** has nothing whatsoever to do with the establishment of religion."

On March 7, 2011, the Supreme Court denied a challenge by an atheist who was intolerant of the **National Motto**, by letting the decision of the Federal Appeals Court stand.

On November 1, 2011, the House of Representatives passed an additional resolution in a 396-9 vote reaffirming **"IN GOD WE TRUST"** as the **official motto** of the United States.

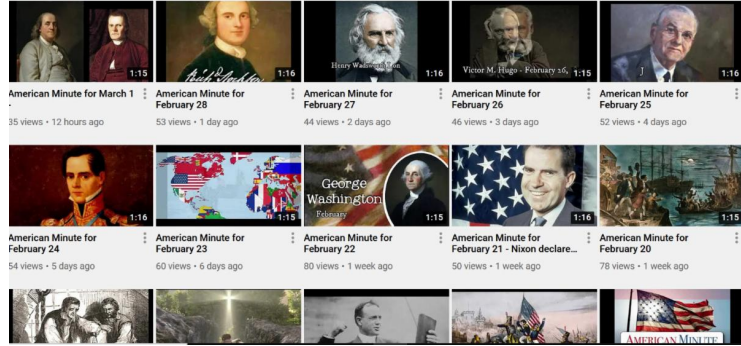
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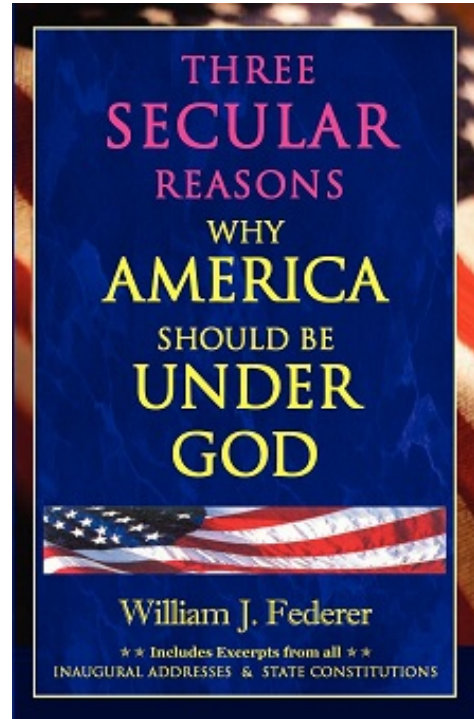
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