

1/2004

Re: Founding Fathers

Dear Editor,

Some citizens seem concerned that others might object to inclusion of the phrases "under God" in the Pledge and "In God We Trust" on our money (Robert Lambie, Register Guard, Letters to the Editor, 1/2/2004). However it should be pointed out that both phrases are relatively recent historical additions- our coins and bills were modified starting in 1864 under the controversial Coinage Act of April 22, 1864. The Pledge was modified by Presidential order on June 14 (Flag Day), 1954 when President Dwight D. Eisenhower approved adding the words "under God" during the perceived menace of "godless Communism". Neither phrase was endorsed by our founding fathers. In fact, the guiding lights, of the movement to gain independence and the founding of this country, had deep suspicions of religion in general and scorn for those that claimed to speak for God in particular. In their own words:

"The United States of America have exhibited, perhaps, the first example of governments erected on the simple principles of nature... it will never be pretended that any persons employed in that service had interviews with the gods, or were in any degree under the influence of heaven... These governments were contrived merely by the use of reason and the senses."- John Adams in "A Defense of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America, 1788

"During almost fifteen centuries has the legal establishment of Christianity been on trial. What has been it's fruits? More or less in all places, pride and indolence in the clergy; ignorance and servility in the laity; in both, superstition, bigotry and persecution."- James Madison in "A Memorial and Remonstrance", addressed to the Virginia General Assembly, 1785.

I don't mind so much that conservatives today are against many of the principles that this country was founded on (we can agree to disagree I hope); but I do object to their distortions of historical reality.

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