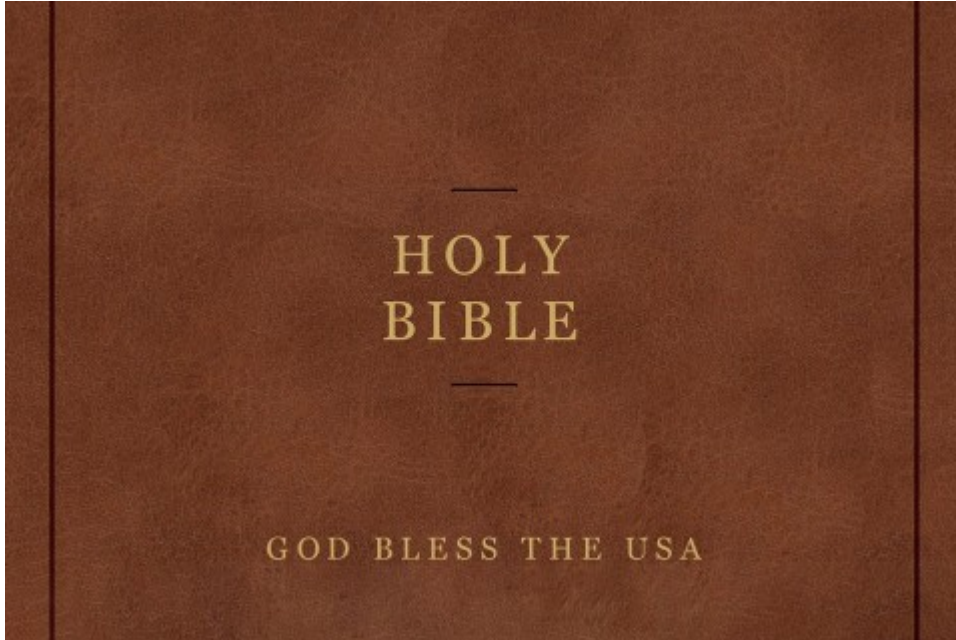


The distortions of the *God Bless the USA Bible*

The conflation of Christianity and American patriotism has never done either one any favors.

by [Peter W. Marty](#) in the [June 30, 2021](#) issue



When an ad recently announced that the *God Bless the USA Bible* would be available this September, the American flag emblazoned on the cover came as no surprise. Whenever the Bible gets wrapped in the American flag, we can pretty much assume that a misuse of our nation's history is at play. The conflation of Christianity and American patriotism has never done any favors either for the integrity of faith or for national character. The use of scripture to promote American exceptionalism always takes me back to Jerry Falwell Sr.'s claim that Isaiah's prophecy of a "nation tall and smooth, a people feared near and far, a nation mighty and conquering" is actually God championing the United States.

Elite Source Pro, led by Hugh Kirkpatrick, the Nashville-based marketer of this new Bible edition, describes it as "the ultimate American Bible . . . the perfect heirloom [for] anyone that loves America." When I saw that it includes a copy of the US Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, my first thought was, *How*

halfway American! If you're going to create a boutique Bible geared toward a love affair with America, why not go all in? What's the point of leaving out photos, annotations, and appendices that could be devoted to other quintessentially American things?

Baseball: the Bible opens with our national pastime. Eve stole first; Adam stole second. Hot dogs: Famous Nathan confronts David's sin (2 Sam. 12). (Famous Nathan's franks are iconic in the Northeast and mid-Atlantic states.) Cowboys: "The glory of [the horse's] nostrils is terrible" (Job 39:19). Barbecue: "Heap up the logs, kindle the fire; cook the meat well, mix in the spices, let the bones be burned" (Ezek. 24:10). Apple pie: shouldn't a recipe and photo of homemade pie be situated right next to the Tenth Commandment's word on coveting?

My second thought was, *How offensive!* To include documents that have to do with establishing a nation in a book that provides the textual record of God's word spoken over time is to intentionally feed the myth that America was founded as a Christian nation. Never mind that neither the Declaration of Independence, which announces political sovereignty, nor the US Constitution, which provides a framework for governing a country, is a theological treatise. The latter doesn't even mention God. The *God Bless the USA Bible*, like the *American Patriot's Bible* released a decade earlier, wants to give the impression that God's relationship with the United States is explicitly Christian.

Merging Christian and American identities distorts both the Christian faith and our nation's constitutional democracy. Even though we are a nation full of diverse religious people, efforts like this Bible edition give license to a particular group of Christians who believe they have a presumptive right to define what America is religiously and patriotically.

Although public pushback has caused HarperCollins and its publishing arms of Zondervan and Thomas Nelson to withdraw interest in supporting this NIV Bible product, the likelihood of it getting published elsewhere and in a different translation remains. If you're bound and determined to obtain a copy someday, you'll be glad to know that the Elite Source Pro people promise that this Bible is "100% satisfaction guaranteed." You may also want to know that "all sales are final," which means you have no right to a refund if it happens not to satisfy your soul.