

# FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

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September 19, 2022

**SENT VIA FAX AND U.S. MAIL: 202-228-0526**

The Honorable Josh Hawley  
212 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington DC 20510

Re: Your erroneous and ignorant Christian nationalist remarks

Dear Senator Hawley:

We are writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) to correct the record on a number of serious misstatements you made about the historic founding of our secular republic. FFRF is a national nonprofit organization with more than 38,000 members across the country, including nearly 500 members in Missouri. FFRF protects the constitutional separation between state and church and educates about nontheism.

On September 12, 2022, you gave a speech at the National Conservatism conference in Miami, where you sought to portray the bible as the center of the United States' founding and culture and argued that modern politics hinges on its influence and impact:

We are a revolutionary nation precisely because we are the heirs of the revolution of the Bible...This was a revolution that began with the founding of the nation of Israel at Sinai and continued with the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth in the days of ancient Rome...

Without the Bible, there is no modernity. Without the Bible, there is no America... And now our biblical inheritance is again at the center of our politics...

What they particularly dislike about America is our dependence on biblical teaching and tradition...What they particularly dislike about our culture is the Bible. And now they want to break that influence for good...

Opposing them might cost us much, but the truth is worth any cost ... though the God of the universe could have accomplished his purposes

entirely on his own, he chose instead to call us to do his work with him  
... count the cost and take our stand, and we will turn the tide...

Your remarks were a capricious mixture of false history, dubious theology and extreme hypocrisy, which we're sure fit in well at a conference that included a talk entitled, "How I learned to Stop Worrying and Love Christian Nationalism."

But as a United States senator, you should know better. .

**America's secular government is what makes it America.**

Your remarks falsely equate patriotism with piety, and perpetuate The Big Lie that "America is a Christian nation."

In reality, the constitutional principle separating religion from government was the uniquely American vision of our revolutionary Founders. Aware of the centuries of bloody religious wars, inquisitions, crusades and pogroms in the Old World, and of the persecutions in the name of religion in most of the original colonies, the Framers understood the danger and folly of uniting state and church. They deliberately and purposefully adopted the first constitution in history excluding any mention of a deity. During four acrimonious months of debate over the Constitution, they never once prayed; a suggestion to do so by Benjamin Franklin wasn't seconded and ended with the meeting being adjourned.

Every reference to religion in the U.S. Constitution is exclusionary, including prohibitions on religious tests for public office, implicitly in the godless oath of office prescribed for the presidency and later, in the First Amendment's historic bar of any congressional establishment of religion (a bar extended to state governments under the 14th Amendment). The United States was first among nations to invest sovereignty not in a deity, but in "We the People." The proscription against religion in government has served our nation well, with the U.S. Constitution now the longest living constitution in history, and our nation spared the constant religious wars afflicting theocratic regions around the world. Keeping religion out of government has in fact allowed religion to flourish on our continent, because it protects freedom of conscience. Keeping divisive religion out of the government is a fundamental American ideal, is essential for true religious freedom, and has been a tremendous asset to our society. This is a principle to revere, not tarnish or destroy.

Senator Hawley, we realize you can't reason an unreasonable person out of their delusions. But surely it's not unreasonable to expect that a United States senator would have actually read the U.S. Constitution he took an oath "to support and

defend.” Had you ever sat down and read it, you would have noticed some omissions. To wit: no reference to a deity, Jesus of Nazareth, the bible or the nation of Israel. Spreading disinformation about the history and meaning of our godless Constitution and its Establishment Clause by someone who has literally sworn to “support and defend” it is irresponsible and nothing short of unAmerican.

It likewise appears that you’ve never read the bible, for if you had, you would realize that, thankfully, there are no biblical principles in the U.S. Constitution. The bible contains no democracy, no right by the people to vote, no “consent of the governed,” no individual liberties. The bible makes no acknowledgment that human beings should be treated with respect and equality. The First Commandment, warning “Thou shalt have no other gods before me,” is the antithesis of the First Amendment, which guarantees true religious liberty. Under our secular Constitution, Senator Hawley, citizens are free to have whatever gods they like, as many gods as they like — or none at all. The bible is a dangerous behavioral grab-bag, with a primitive Bronze Age morality and mentality that countenanced slavery, rape, capital punishment (often for the most minor “sins”), misogyny, racism, homophobia, child abuse, and brutality. As Founder Thomas Paine wrote in *The Age of Reason*, “Whenever we read the obscene stories, the voluptuous debaucheries, the cruel and torturous executions, the unrelenting vindictiveness, with which more than half the Bible is filled, it would be more consistent that we called it the word of a demon, than the word of God.”

Your lies and false public statements deriding this foundational principle encourage the advancement of Christian nationalism, a toxic ideology that is likewise unAmerican. The assertion that America is a Christian nation is anathema to America’s founding principles and at odds with reality. Many American Christians respect the diversity of our culture, and understand that their fellow Americans may not share their religious values, as evidenced by groups like Christians Against Christian Nationalism.<sup>1</sup> Anyone who respects American values *must* oppose Christian nationalism, as the two ideologies are fundamentally at odds.

Finally, your suggestion that America’s founding and development is based on the bible is not only at odds with our country’s history and laws, but stigmatizes and marginalizes many of your constituents. Non-religious Americans are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population by religious identification — 37 percent of Americans are non-Christians, and this includes the nearly one in three Americans

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<sup>1</sup> [www.christiansagainstchristiannationalism.org/statement](http://www.christiansagainstchristiannationalism.org/statement).

who now identify as religiously unaffiliated.<sup>2</sup> You represent *all* Missourians, including those who do not share your personal religious beliefs. Your remarks convey that you consider nonreligious and non-Christians second-class citizens. That too is unAmerican.

As a U.S. senator, your duty is to support the U.S. Constitution, which is godless and entirely secular, and to protect the rights of *all* citizens regardless of their religious or non-religious beliefs. Your support and advancement of Christian nationalism is insulting and demeaning to non-religious and non-Christian citizens, and a betrayal of your oath of office to the U.S. Constitution.

Very truly,

Handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Annie Laurie Gaylor Dan Barker".

Annie Laurie Gaylor & Dan Barker  
Co-presidents  
Freedom From Religion Foundation

ALG/DB:cal

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<sup>2</sup> Gregory A. Smith, About Three-in-Ten U.S. Adults Are Now Religiously Unaffiliated, Pew Research Center (Dec. 14, 2021), available at [www.pewforum.org/2021/12/14/about-three-in-ten-u-s-adults-are-now-religiously-unaffiliated/](http://www.pewforum.org/2021/12/14/about-three-in-ten-u-s-adults-are-now-religiously-unaffiliated/).