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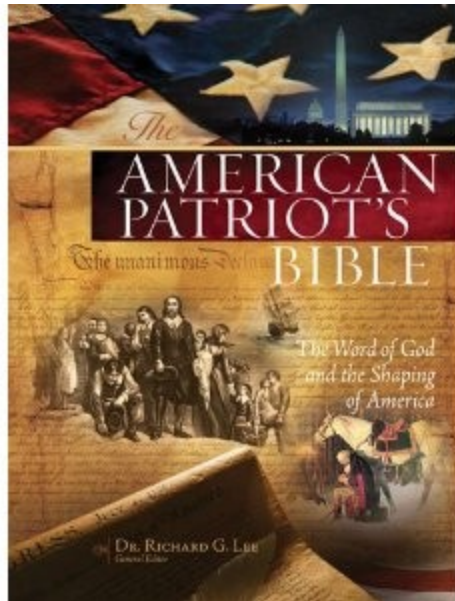


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The American Warmonger's Bible

By Laurence M. Vance

Two tools of government propaganda used to get young men to kill, maim, and destroy for the state are nationalism and religion. Put both together and you have a deadly combination.



Imperial Christians who equate patriotism with militarism and nationalism now have a book to guide them: *The American Patriot's Bible*.

The publisher of this new Bible is Thomas Nelson Publishers. Now, this publisher has recently published some excellent books (e.g., the works of Judge Napolitano), but *The American Patriot's Bible* is certainly not one of them.

The general editor of *The American Patriot's Bible* is Richard G. Lee, founding pastor of First Redeemer Church in Atlanta and frequent speaker at conferences and on television. Dr. Lee is the author of twelve books, a trustee of Liberty University, and a board member of the National Religious Broadcasters. He was named "Father of the Year" by the Southeastern Father's Day Council and received the Ronald Reagan Leadership Award for 2007. Lee hosted a "Restoring America" conference in 2009 with assorted Republican Party apologists.

The American Patriot's Bible is not a new translation of the Bible. It uses the *New King James Version* that was published by Thomas Nelson in 1982, but "joining with the sacred text are stories of American heroes, quotations from many of America's greatest thinkers, and beautiful illustrations that present the rich heritage and tremendous future of our nation." This is done via special introductions to each book of the Bible, twelve full-color, four-page sections inserted randomly throughout the Bible, and 254 brief articles on certain virtues and various patriotic and historical themes that appear near specific Bible verses in boxes within the text, on half pages, and sometimes on full pages. None of the articles actually comment on the biblical text. Certain words in the text are merely used as a springboard to launch into the subject of the article, which usually has nationalistic, militaristic, or political overtones. Other features of *The American Patriot's Bible* include an introduction, a subject index to the articles, a concordance to the Bible, maps, a list of the U.S. presidents, and a list of the fifty states with their dates of admission to the Union.

Before I even turned to the first book in the Bible, I realized that *The American Patriot's Bible* had a militaristic and nationalistic perspective that I was going to choke on. In addition to the usual pages in the front of some Bibles that are used to record births,

deaths, and other family records, *The American Patriot's Bible* has a page to record "Military and Public Service." There is also a four-page section on "The Seven Principles of the Judeo-Christian Ethic." Now, there is certainly nothing wrong with following Judeo-Christian ethics, but under principle one, "The Dignity of Human Life," the attempt is made to justify U.S. military interventions around the world:

In the Declaration of Independence our nation's Founding Fathers wrote that everyone has "unalienable rights," and that among these rights are "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." We Americans not only believe this for *our* land, but also we send our brave military men and women around the world to defend the rights of those who are threatened.

Principle four, "The Right to a God-Centered Education," is also problematic because it accepts the existence of a government school system as legitimate. Any parent can give a child a God-centered education, either at home or at a Christian school. The idea that we should expect the public schools to give children a God-centered education is ludicrous. Government schools don't need to be "taken back" by Christians, they need to be abandoned.

Another disturbing sign is the prominent place given in *The American Patriot's Bible* to Abraham Lincoln – a man who is neither a role model for a Christian nor an example of a president who upheld the Constitution. In addition to the image of the Lincoln Memorial appearing on pages I-2, I-36, and on the front of the dust jacket; Lincoln's picture appears on pages vi, 488, 832, 1058, 1401, 1456, I-30, and I-32 (twice). Lincoln appears in a montage that includes his Lincoln Memorial statue on pages 236, 266, 296, 302, 339, 371, 407, 442, 475, 516, 531, and 550; Lincoln appears in a montage that includes Mount Rushmore on pages 561, 600, 704, 743, 756, and the rear flap of the dust jacket; Lincoln is quoted on pages I-2, I-32, I-36, 302, 488, 718, 823, 832, 527, 528, 1037, 1058, and 1328; Lincoln is mentioned on pages 78, 808, 1035, 1099, 1114, 1448, 1456, and I-37; Lincoln is discussed on pages I-30, 518, and 1401.

Like most study Bibles, each biblical book in *The American Patriot's Bible* is preceded by a brief one-page introduction. But there are two things that are different about these introductions.

First of all, at the top of the page of the introduction and the first page of the biblical book there is a montage that includes images of soldiers and/or naval ships, military aircraft, flags, national monuments, or national symbols. On the introduction page to each of the New Testament Gospels there is an image of soldiers raising a flag underneath the banner of the national motto "In God We Trust." All of the other books in the New Testament open with a montage containing the Statue of Liberty on the left with troops marching on the right.

The second thing that is disturbing about the book introductions is their content. Each introduction contains a paragraph that tries to relate the theme of the biblical book to some patriotic or nationalistic theme or an event in American history. For an example in the Old Testament, we can turn to the book of Nehemiah. The theme of the book is said to be "godly leadership." But who is put forth as an example of a godly leader like Nehemiah? It is the wretched Franklin Roosevelt. In the introduction to 2 Thessalonians in the New Testament, we read about how the Apostle Paul "always moved quickly to deal with heresy before it could damage the churches." We are told that he used the authority of his apostleship and did not seek anyone's permission. This is applied to George W. Bush saying that "America will never seek a permission slip to defend the security of our country." Then we are told that after the 9/11 attacks Bush "immediately announced a Global War on Terrorism, which commenced with the invasion of Afghanistan and the overthrow of the Taliban regime and Al-Quada." It is nothing short of sacrilege to mention [George WMD Bush](#) in the same paragraph with the Apostle Paul.

The subjects of the twelve four-page color sections that appear throughout *The American Patriot's Bible* are: The Bible and American Presidents, Christianity in Colonial America, Faith of the

Founders, The American Revolution, The Great Awakening, The Bible and American Education, Christianity and the American Frontier, The Civil War, Monuments to American Patriotism, World War II, Christianity and Equal Rights, The Bible and Famous Americans.

In the section titled "The Bible and American Presidents" we are given quotes about the Bible from eleven presidents. This is all well and good, but no one should think for a minute that these eleven men put into practice the precepts of the book they spoke so highly of. In "Faith and the Founders" we are told that 93 percent of the delegates to the Constitutional Convention "were members of Christian churches." If this is true then the fact that the Constitution never mentions the Lord Jesus Christ other than a reference to "the year of our Lord" is even more disturbing. The section on World War II is especially disheartening with its picture of the loathsome FDR, its claim that Japan, Italy, and Germany wanted to rule the world, and its simplistic explanation of the coming of the war. The picture of a smiling President Obama in the section titled "Christianity and Equal Rights" is also disturbing. What is a man doing pictured in a Bible who was the most liberal member of the U.S. Senate, who has spent his life in the service of racial preference, who has had the most radical of associations, who practices an aberrant Christianity, who orders and jokes about Predator drone attacks, and who is an economic corporatist that believes in the redistribution of wealth?

The third major feature of *The American Patriot's Bible* is its 254 articles on certain virtues and various patriotic and historical themes. The articles are a mixed bag of virtues, principles, patriotism, nationalism, and militarism, with a heavy emphasis on U.S. presidents.

The small articles in boxes near specific biblical verses contain quotes from famous people about God, the Bible, religion in society, or some virtue, tell us where in the Bible a particular president placed his hand when he took the presidential oath of office, and reference certain events and documents in American

history. Seeing the first one, which appears on page 44, made me nauseous – it is a quote on freedom from the evil warmonger and torture master Dick Cheney. Even worse is the sight of a quote from Colin Powell on U.S. foreign military interventions that goes with John 3:16. It is implied to the reader that just as "God so loved the world that he gave" so the United States sends its "fine men and women into great peril to fight for freedom beyond our borders," asking nothing in return but enough land to bury our dead soldiers.

When these articles take up a page or half a page, it is more of the same, but with longer quotes and the addition of images. Presidential warmongers are prominently featured: FDR on page 217, George W. Bush on page 292, Woodrow Wilson on page 586, Abraham Lincoln on page 1058, and Theodore Roosevelt on page 1071. This is fitting since the focus of the articles is often times related to war. This time, however, it wasn't until the second one that I became nauseous. Appearing on page 6, it is the story behind and words of the blasphemous "patriotic" song *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*. The identification of the slave-owning George Washington as the "American Moses" (p. 64) is ludicrous as is the quote from the denier of Christ's deity and miracles, Thomas Jefferson, on the moral precepts of Jesus (p. 1096).

The last thing I want to read about in the notes of a Bible is something about a U.S. president. Although some of the historical information in *The American Patriot's Bible* is interesting and informative, it belongs in a separate book, not in the word of God. And the American history that is presented is highly selective.

Gregory Boyd, the author of the highly-recommended book [The Myth of a Christian Nation: How the Quest for Political Power Is Destroying the Church](#) (Zondervan, 2006), has written several times about *The American Patriot's Bible*. Because the conclusions he has reached are also my own, I will simply list some of them here:

- It unashamedly glorifies nationalistic violence

- Selective retelling of American history
- Overt celebration of America's violent victories over our national enemies
- The text of the Bible is used merely as an excuse to further the patriotic agenda of the commentators
- The glory of nationalistic violence permeates this Bible
- The commentators attempt to give their idealized version of American history divine authority by weaving it into the biblical narrative
- The biblical text has been reduced to nothing more than an artificial pretext to further a particular nationalistic and political agenda
- Saturated with this nationalistic, "fight-for-God-and-country," mindset
- A very high percentage of the commentaries sprinkled throughout this Bible exalt American wars and their heroes
- Offers no commentary on any passages related to our instruction to love and do good to our enemies
- A version of the Bible whose sole purpose is to reinforce the nationalism and celebrate the military victories of a particular country
- Virtually incarnates the nationalistic idolatry that has afflicted the Church for centuries
- It excludes from consideration almost every aspect of American history that could blemish the image of America or its heroes
- Especially in the Old Testament, an explicit parallel is drawn between Israel and America
- This intense glorification of national violence constitutes a central theme of this ill-conceived Bible

You can read Boyd's blog posts about *The American Patriot's Bible* [here](#) and [here](#) and his review [here](#).

"If you love America and the Scriptures, you will treasure this Bible," says the introduction to *The American Patriot's Bible*. I think it would be more accurate to say that if you love American exceptionalism, American nationalism, American imperialism, and American militarism, you will treasure this Bible. Many Christians who love America *and* the Scriptures know better than to equate patriotism with any of these things.

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Laurence M. Vance [send him mail] writes from Pensacola, FL. He is the author of [Christianity and War and Other Essays Against the Warfare State](#) and The Revolution that Wasn't. His newest book is Rethinking the Good War. Visit his website.

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