

Modern Roots of the Invasive Tree of Christian Nationalism

1950's

(Due to post-war uncertainty, fears of nuclear war, anti-Communist sentiments and warnings by Billy Graham of an “anti-Christian movement”)

- Supreme Court rules children can go to religious instruction during public school time
- National Day of Prayer established after Billy Graham calls for it on Capitol steps
- National Prayer Breakfast begins (Eisenhower the first president to attend)
- “Under God” added to the Pledge
- “In God We Trust” printed on U.S. stamps
- “In God We Trust” added to paper currency
- “In God We Trust” officially adopted as the national motto
- Congressional Prayer Room installed in U.S. Capitol building
- Senate Judiciary Committee holds hearings on an amendment that would add “Jesus Christ, Savior and Ruler of Nations” to the Constitution (defeated)

- Brown v Board of Education ends segregation in public schools (resistance and backlash)
- Browder v. Gayle ends segregation on buses (Civil Rights movement grows)

1960's

(A secular government responds)

- SCOTUS rules:
 - Non-Christians, including non-religious citizens, cannot be barred from public office
 - Government-led prayers in public schools are unconstitutional
 - Government-led Bible reading in public schools is unconstitutional
 - Public schools can not prohibit the teaching of evolution
- Civil Rights Act
- Voting Rights Act

1970's

- Rise of Religious Right, Moral Majority, Opposition to ERA, anti-Abortion

 - Richard Nixon becomes the first president to close speeches with “God Bless America”
(Ronald Reagan chose to offer a prayer and “God Bless America” at the RNC in 1980)
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“When religion is used as a political weapon, it becomes weakened and tainted. And this is the flip side of the state-church separation coin. The separation of state and church is also meant to allow religion to remain free of the taint of this world, of [the] political power struggle. This is why Madison wrote that ‘religion and government will both exist in greater purity, the less they are mixed together’.”

—Andrew Seidel

“When a religion is good, I conceive that it will support itself; and when it cannot support itself, and God does not take care to support it, so that its professors are obliged to call for the help of the civil power, it is a sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad [religion].”

—Benjamin Franklin

{source: Andrew Seidel, *The Founding Myth*}