

Gene Robinson Rejects Bible

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Bishop Gene Robinson, recently added to the list of inaugural prayer-sayers, has promised that he will neither bring nor read from the Bible when he addresses Sunday's crowds at the Lincoln Memorial. His choice is as regrettable as his inclusion is worthy of celebration.

Commenting on his choice to leave his Bible at home, [Bishop Robinson said](#), "While that is a holy and sacred text to me, it is not for many Americans. I will be careful not to be especially Christian in my prayer. This is a prayer for the whole nation." How sad. And for so many reasons.

Does this man not appreciate that something can be "especially Christian" without being exclusively or hurtfully Christian? If he does not, and he seems not to, then his praiseworthy intention to honor all those in attendance, is no better than his most bitter theological and political enemies on the right. Like them, he sees things as all or nothing. And while nothing is the less immediately damaging option, the long-term results are at least as dangerous.

Why cede the use of scripture to those who only use it to stoke the spirits of those with whom they already agree? In fact, doing so is a very bad idea. It sets the stage for a public culture in which only two religious options exist.

One would use religion as the leading edge of a campaign to convert all Americans to one view, because "God wills it". And the other would consign religion to window dressing at personal moments and life-cycle events. Gone would be the greatness of religious visionaries ranging from Dr. King to Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel who reminded us that faith was an important vehicle for creating a more inclusive and humane world as much as it was there to make us feel better.

Why not develop an ethic of public prayer and Bible reading that allows each of us to be who we most deeply are, without raining down shame and disapproval of those who are different? Isn't that a fundamental (no pun intended) spiritual belief, especially for people like Robinson, who fought so long for all of who they are to be publically recognized and honored?

His fear that many Americans do not hold the Bible to be sacred is not the issue. On that basis, why does Robinson take the podium as a Bishop? We are not all Christian, let alone Episcopalian, either. To be fair to his own principles, he would need to decline the invitation altogether, or speak as one private citizen, rooted in no tradition at all. Were that the case however, he would not have been invited to begin with.

In fact, Bishop Robinson seems to hold a view of inclusivity that is as aggressively homogenizing as Rick Warren's theology. And while his speaking at the inauguration is certainly worthy of celebration, that view is certainly not.

<http://blog.beliefnet.com/windowsanddoors/2009/01/gene-robinson-rejects-bible.html>