

I bought Trump's Bible – a blasphemous, sticky nightmare

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Trump Steaks, Trump Vodka, and various Trump casinos have all failed – but has the ex-president finally found himself a winning product?

There was a time, not so long ago, that Donald Trump did not seem to be very familiar with the Bible. When he first ran for the nomination of the very Christian Republican party, Trump was unable to name a single Bible verse. Early in his 2016 presidential campaign he referred to the Eucharist as a “little cracker”. In a subsequent church visit, as he attempted to prove his religious credentials, he put cash in a plate that was meant to hold the communion. How times have changed.

“All Americans need a Bible in their home, and I have many. It’s my favorite book,” Trump declared in March, in a video posted on Truth Social. “I’m proud to endorse and encourage you to get this Bible. We must make America pray again.” In the video, Trump, who has a long history of endorsing and selling things, is clutching the God Bless the USA Bible – a “patriotic” take on the holy text that Trump is now hawking for \$59.99. “I want to have a lot of people have it,” Trump continued. “You have to have it for your heart and for your soul.”

Well, who am I to defy a one-term, twice-impeached, former president who is currently on trial over hush-money payments to a porn star. I bought it. Buying something from Donald Trump is fraught with danger. Trump is known for not following through on business agreements: in the run-up to the 2016 election, literally hundreds of people, including lawyers, carpenters and painters, came forward to accuse Trump of not paying them for their work. Happily the Bible, which cost \$83.37 after tax and shipping, eventually arrived.

I eagerly tore open the packaging, held the bag upside down, and out plopped what is essentially a Christian nationalist’s fantasy: a Bible that is all American flags and bald eagles, with founding documents and lyrics to a patriotic anthem slotted in alongside the holy text. The front of the Bible has an embossed USA flag. In the back are glossy pages bearing some of America’s most sacred documents: the Declaration of Independence; the Pledge of Allegiance; and the lyrics to Lee Greenwood’s God Bless the USA, a song which is played on repeat at Trump’s political rallies. These pages are illustrated with the American flag and some of the country’s best-regarded things: the bald eagle, yes, but also the Statue of Liberty, what appears to be a musket, and the Capitol building, which somewhat ironically was attacked by supporters of Trump three years ago.

One of the more intriguing questions in the FAQ section of the Trump Bible website asks: “What if my Bible has sticky pages?” My Bible did indeed have sticky pages. But no bother: the FAQ guidance explains that sticky pages are a common problem with new Bibles, and directs the reader to “a YouTube video that does a wonderful job of explaining how to break your new Bible in”. That video is six minutes long. It shows a man unboxing what is objectively a better-looking Bible than the God Bless the USA version, then flipping through the entire book, page by page. “Separating the pages is a somewhat tedious process,” the man says. He was right.

The Trump Bible, which uses public domain text from the King James version, has 1,350 thin-to-the-point-of-translucent pages, and I wasn’t about to go through the entire thing. But all the good stuff appears to be in here: there’s Noah desperately bundling animals on to a big boat, Job having his life ruined because of what amounts to a wager between God and the devil, and the book of Leviticus – much of which is given over to the correct way to sacrifice animals. (For a bullock, sprinkle its blood round the altar and wash its innards before setting it on fire; if you’re offering up a pigeon, be sure to wring off its head before plucking.)

You don’t have to pay \$59.99 for that kind of content. Search “free Bible” online and there are hundreds of places that are literally giving it away. But this Trump-endorsed Bible represents something special to his supporters, said Kristin Du Mez, a professor at Calvin University whose research focuses on the intersection of gender, religion and politics. “My sense is, most people aren’t buying this Bible to read it,” Du Mez said. “They’re buying the Bible to have it, and to participate in this kind of shared identity. To put \$60 down to

say: ‘Yes, this is my guy and and I’m committed to this, and this is my faith.’” The shared identity is one of embracing the “myth of Christian America”, Du Mez said: “The idea that America was founded as a distinctly Christian nation: a proto-conservative, white evangelical version of the country, which never really existed. It’s that shared vision of a mythical past, and commitment to restoring some semblance of that kind of mythical order in the present.”

After those early fumbles as he attempted to appeal to Christians, Trump was ultimately embraced by the evangelicals who make up much of the GOP – the same GOP taking a hatchet to church-state separation. In fact, the former president’s relationship with the religious right has now deepened to the extent that Trump is comfortable with comparing himself to their messiah. Further cementing that bond goes some way towards explaining Trump’s decision to promote the God Bless the USA Bible.

But there’s also the financial aspect. Trump owes more than \$500m as a result of civil court convictions. He is facing 88 felony charges, in five different jurisdictions, and lawyers cost money (unless you don’t pay them). While the God Bless the USA Bible website says that the Bible is “not owned, managed or controlled by Donald J Trump”, it adds that the venture “uses Donald J Trump’s name, likeness and image under paid license from CIC Ventures LLC”. Trump, according to a financial disclosure report filed last year, is the manager, president, secretary and treasurer of CIC Ventures LLC. Happy days for Trump then. Although this Bible wheeze has not gone down well with everyone.

“Blasphemous” and “disgusting”, was the verdict of pastor Loran Livingston, a conservative evangelical who leads the Central church in North Carolina. A pastor in South Carolina said the Bible was a “commandment violation”, while Raphael Warnock, the Democratic Georgia senator and a pastor himself, also wasn’t happy. “The Bible does not need Donald Trump’s endorsement,” Warnock told CNN. “And Jesus in the very last week of his life chased the money changers out of the temple, those who would take sacred things and use them as cheap relics to be sold in the marketplace.”

It is unclear how many of these “cheap relics” have been sold. As of early May, God Bless the USA Bibles were still available for sale online – unlike the Trump-licensed sneakers that he was hawking earlier this year. After the failure of Trump Steaks, Trump Vodka, Trump Mortgage, Trump Magazine, various Trump casinos and the Trump board game, perhaps the former president has finally given his name to a winning product. At \$59.99 a pop for what is, objectively, quite a poorly printed, rather sticky book, the God Bless the USA Bible looks like a fairly safe bet. Maybe those lawyers will get paid after all.

1/ Highlight the passages or phrases conveying the journalist’s irony or criticism toward Trump.

2/ Fill in the following grid with references from the text. Look them up on the Internet for next week.

US emblems and defining texts	Biblical references

3/ What do the following acronyms stand for?

FAQ =
 GOP =
 CIC =
 LLC =
 CNN =