

**O God of Bethel***Philip Doddridge (1702–1751)*

O God of Bethel, by Whose hand  
Thy people still are fed,  
Who through this weary pilgrimage  
hast all our fathers led;

Our vows, our prayers, we now present  
before Thy throne of grace;  
God of our fathers, be the God  
of their succeeding race.

Through each perplexing path of life  
our wandering footsteps guide;  
give us each day our daily bread,  
and raiment fit provide.

O spread Thy covering wings around  
till all our wanderings cease,  
and at our Father's loved abode  
our souls arrive in peace.

Such blessings from Thy gracious hand  
Our humble prayers implore;  
And Thou shalt be our chosen God,  
Our portion evermore.

**ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ***In the Nick of Time***A Letter to Donald Trump***Kevin T. Bauder*

Mr. President, congratulations upon becoming the 47<sup>th</sup> president of the United States. As a minister of the gospel, I don't typically comment on political matters. But listening to your inaugural address was like opening presents on Christmas morning. Each one got better and better. I want to cheer you on as you begin to work on your goals. I rejoice that you've begun to keep your promises.

On January 21, you attended a "prayer" service at Washington National Cathedral. The Rev. Mariann Budde aimed several implicit criticisms at you during her remarks. She pled with you for "gay, lesbian and transgender children" who "fear for their lives." She advocated on behalf of immigrants who do not "have the proper documentation." She meant immigrants who have broken laws to enter the United States. She also mentioned those who are "fleeing war zones and persecution," or refugees. The Rev. Budde offered these rebukes "in the name of God" and under the roof of a church that claims to be Christian.

Before I respond to Rev. Budde's remarks, I have a broader observation. The United States Constitution denies Congress the right to establish a religion. We must not call any church a "national" cathedral. I am a Baptist. Baptists insist upon the separation of church and state. The First Amendment is our amendment. The Rev. Budde's congregation is the "Cathedral Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul in the City and Diocese of Washington." Calling it the National Cathedral is false, pretentious, and rude. No president or vice president should endorse this affectation by attending events there.

This church's religion no longer preaches the gospel. What is the gospel? It is the declaration that "Christ died for our sins" and that he "rose from the dead" (1 Cor 15:1–4). The death of Jesus on the cross and His bodily resurrection from the dead are historical events. To deny the historicity of either event is to deny the gospel itself. The phrase "for our sins" explains the meaning of Christ's death. Jesus died as a substitute for sinners. He took their guilt upon Himself and suffered God's wrath in their place (1 Pet 2:24). He satisfied the demands of God's justice. When God raised Jesus, He gave Him exclusive authority to forgive sins. He forgives us when we trust Him as Savior (Acts 16:23). The gospel is not about moral improvement or social



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reformation. It is about personal forgiveness. This is the only biblical gospel. God saves people only through trust in Jesus (Acts 4:12). The Rev. Budde substitutes a bad moral philosophy for the good message of the gospel. Such preaching is no longer Christian. Her religion has become a different religion. It even belongs to a different class of religions from Christianity.

What about Rev. Budde's specific claims? She says that gay, lesbian, and transgender children fear for their lives. They have no good reason to fear. Americans are not trying to kill them (though Muslim countries might). If Rev. Budde wants them to be less afraid, then she should stop scaring them with stories of danger. Mr. President, we crave modesty and safety for our women and children. Please protect them from predators who hide behind trans identity.

The Rev. Budde asks you to "have mercy" upon these people. True mercy never affirms people in a delusion. You have rightly said that there are only two genders. Some people are not comfortable in their gender. Some want to pretend to be the other gender. Some want to make up a gender that doesn't exist. Some of them, even children, want to alter their bodies to resemble a gender that is not theirs. Often, they want to force the rest of us to pretend along with them. Good counsel can help these people to become comfortable in their natural gender. True mercy means getting them the counsel that they need. Genuine compassion means protecting children from mutilation. Just law never forces citizens to pretend that a delusion is true.

The Rev. Budde also wishes you to "have mercy" upon people who break the law to enter our country. She pretends compassion for immigrants, but all true Americans welcome immigrants. We only ask that they obey the laws when they enter our country and that we have enough time to assimilate them. Your job, as you know, is to enforce immigration laws. May God bless you for doing it.

The Rev. Budde appeals to biblical teaching to be "merciful to the stranger." The Bible does teach compassion for aliens (Lev 19:34; 24:22). The Bible also requires resident aliens to keep the laws of their host country (Lev 18:26). We must not cite one principle without recognizing the other.

When the Rev. Budde pleads for refugees, I agree. The United States has often sheltered people fleeing political and religious persecution. America should still welcome its share of genuine refugees. Every civilized nation should. But we should make sure that they are genuine refugees. And we are not obligated to shelter all the refugees in the world.

Mr. President, I would be presumptuous to invite you to attend the church I pastor. I doubt that we could even seat your security detail in our auditorium. But I make you a promise. If you ever visit, you will hear the true gospel. You will hear the Word of God. And you will not hear woke moralizing.

You do not have to travel to Minnesota to hear our message. Capitol Hill Baptist Church is in your own back yard. Its pastor is a man of God. He can offer you sound spiritual counsel. He can help you to understand the Bible. He can also help you to navigate some of those church-state difficulties.

People like the Rev. Budde are the exact reason that some of us voted for you. Their message is wrong, and it has devastated our country. We need a dose of reality, and you are administering it now. Please, Mr. President, stay strong.



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This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.

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