

THE FAITH OF OUR FOUNDING FATHERS

No one disputes the faith of our Founding Fathers. To speak of unalienable Rights being endowed by a Creator certainly shows a sensitivity to our spiritual selves. What is surprising is when fundamentalist Christians think the Founding Fathers' faith had anything to do with the Bible. Without exception, the faith of our Founding Fathers was deist, not theist. It was best expressed earlier in the Declaration of Independence, when they spoke of "the Laws of Nature" and of "Nature's God."

In a sermon of October 1831, Episcopalian minister Bird Wilson said,

"Among all of our Presidents, from Washington downward, not one was a professor of religion, at least not of more than Unitarianism."

Here is what our Founding Fathers wrote about Bible-based Christianity:

Thomas Jefferson:

"I have examined all the known superstitions of the world, and I do not find in our particular superstition of Christianity one redeeming feature. They are all alike founded on fables and mythology. Millions of innocent men, women and children, since the introduction of Christianity, have been burnt, tortured, fined and imprisoned. What has been the effect of this coercion? To make one half the world fools and the other half hypocrites; to support roguery and error all over the earth."

Jefferson again:

"Christianity...(has become) the most perverted system that ever shone on man. ...Rogueries, absurdities and untruths were perpetrated upon the teachings of Jesus by a large band of dupes and importers led by Paul, the first great corrupter of the teaching of Jesus."

More Jefferson:

"The clergy converted the simple teachings of Jesus into an engine for enslaving mankind and adulterated by artificial constructions into a contrivance to filch wealth and power to themselves...these clergy, in fact, constitute the real Anti-Christ.

Jefferson's word for the Bible? "Dunghill."

John Adams:

"Where do we find a precept in the Bible for Creeds, Confessions, Doctrines and Oaths, and whole carloads of other trumpery that we find religion encumbered with in these days?"

Also Adams:

"The doctrine of the divinity of Jesus is made a convenient cover for absurdity."

Adams signed the Treaty of Tripoli. Article 11 states:

"The Government of the United States is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion."

Here's Thomas Paine:

"I would not dare to so dishonor my Creator God by attaching His name to that book (the Bible)."

"Among the most detestable villains in history, you could not find one worse than Moses. Here is an order, attributed to 'God' to butcher the boys, to massacre the mothers and to debauch and rape the daughters. I would not dare so dishonor my Creator's name by (attaching) it to this filthy book (the

Bible)."

"It is the duty of every true Deist to vindicate the moral justice of God against the evils of the Bible."

"Accustom a people to believe that priests and clergy can forgive sins...and you will have sins in abundance."

And; "The Christian church has set up a religion of pomp and revenue in pretended imitation of a person (Jesus) who lived a life of poverty."

Finally let's hear from James Madison:

"What influence in fact have Christian ecclesiastical establishments had on civil society? In many instances they have been upholding the thrones of political tyranny. In no instance have they been seen as the guardians of the liberties of the people. Rulers who wished to subvert the public liberty have found in the clergy convenient auxiliaries. A just government, instituted to secure and perpetuate liberty, does not need the clergy."

Madison objected to state-supported chaplains in Congress and to the exemption of churches from taxation. He wrote:

"Religion and government will both exist in greater purity, the less they are mixed together."

These founding fathers were a reflection of the American population. Having escaped from the state-established religions of Europe, only 7% of the people in the 13 colonies belonged to a church when the Declaration of Independence was signed.

Among those who confuse Christianity with the founding of America, the rise of conservative Baptists is one of the more interesting developments. The Baptists believed God's authority came from the people, not the priesthood, and they had been persecuted for this belief. It was they - the Baptists - who were instrumental in securing the separation of church and state. They knew you can not have a "one-way wall" that lets religion into government but that does not let it out. They knew no religion is capable of handling political power without becoming corrupted by it. And, perhaps, they knew it was Christ himself who first proposed the separation of church and state: "Give unto Caesar that which is Caesar's and unto the Lord that which is the Lord's."

In the last five years the Baptists have been taken over by a fundamentalist faction that insists authority comes from the Bible and that the individual must accept the interpretation of the Bible from a higher authority. These usurpers of the Baptist faith are those who insist they should meddle in the affairs of the government and it is they who insist the government should meddle in the beliefs of individuals.

The price of Liberty is constant vigilance. Religious fundamentalism and zealous patriotism have always been the forces which require the greatest attention.

by Dean Worbois