

# AOK! ATHÉE OKIE

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## ONE NATION UNDER GOD?

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It seems more than a bit odd that the terror struck by religious fanatics would serve to bring about greater public endorsement for religion in general, rather than recognition of how persuasive, controlling, foolish and even downright immoral religion may be.

The post 9/11 "God Bless America" mentality has shown us how very strongly religion is tied with patriotism in this country; our national tragedy has merely brought such sentiments to the fore.

American religious fanatics are more than eager to attach themselves and their faith to all things considered good, including love of freedom and love of country. They proclaim boldly that our nation was founded on Christian principles; some even go so far as to claim that one must be a Christian to be a true and patriotic American.

Such folk seem to sincerely believe that our country's founders were devout Christians and that America itself was built upon sound Biblical values, but what did the founders themselves actually have to say on such matters? Do we find in their writings support for the notion that they were orthodox Christian believers? That they intended to found this nation upon a religious ideology?

Let us consider some of their own words in answer to these vital questions.

"[T]he government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion." *Treaty of Peace and Friendship between The United States and the Bey and Subjects of Tripoli of Barbary*, ratified by the Senate and signed by John Adams in June of 1797.

"[N]o religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States." Article VI, Section 3, *Constitution of the United States*.

"In the Enlightened Age and in this Land of equal Liberty it is our boast, that a man's religious tenets will not forfeit the protection of the Laws, nor deprive him of the right of attaining and holding the highest Offices that are known in the United States." – George Washington, letter to the New Church in Baltimore, January 27, 1793.

"Let the human mind loose. It must be loose. It will be loose. Superstition and Dogmatism cannot confine it." – John Adams, letter to John Quincy Adams, November 13, 1816.

"Religious bondage shackles and debilitates the mind and unfits it for every noble enterprise, every expanded prospect." – James Madison, letter to William Bradford, April 1, 1774.

"And the day will come when the mystical generation of Jesus, by the supreme being as his father in the womb of a Virgin Mary, will be classed with the fable of the generation of Minerva in the brain of Jupiter.... But we may hope that the dawn of reason and freedom of thought in these United States will do away all this artificial scaffolding." – Thomas Jefferson, letter to John Adams dated April 11<sup>th</sup>, 1823.

## ONE NATION UNDER GOD? (continued)

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“When a Religion is good, I conceive it will support itself; and when it does not support itself, and God does not take care to support it so that its Professors are obliged to call for help of the Civil Power, it is a sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad one.” – Benjamin Franklin, letter to Richard Price, October 9, 1780.

“Thirteen governments thus founded on the natural authority of the people alone, without a pretence of miracle or mystery, and which are destined to spread over the northern part of that whole quarter of the globe, are a great point gained in favor of the rights of mankind.” – John Adams, *A Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America*.

“The legitimate powers of government extend to such acts only as are injurious to others. But it does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods, or no God. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg.” -- Thomas Jefferson, notes on the State of Virginia.

“As to religion, I hold it to be the indispensable duty of government to protect all conscientious protesters thereof, and I know of no other business government has to do therewith.” – Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, 1776.

“Whenever we read the obscene stories, the voluptuous debaucheries, the cruel and torturous executions, the unrelenting vindictiveness, with which more than half the Bible is filled, it would be more consistent that we called it the word of a demon, than the word of God. It is a history of wickedness, that has served to corrupt and brutalize mankind.” – Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason*.

Many more such quotations may be multiplied from reliable historical sources, but these should suffice to answer the question at hand. Did Christian men create our constitution and laws based upon religious dogma? Clearly not.

## U.S. “BORN RIGHT THE FIRST TIME”

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“Let freedom ring...”

“...liberty and justice for all.”

“Land of the free, home of the brave...”

With pride and appreciation, such patriotic catchphrases as these will be recited and contemplated by American citizens this coming Independence Day. Yet few will stop to consider that our liberty and freedom depend upon our government taking a neutral stance toward religious belief. Quite the contrary, since the time of the founders the popular myth has arisen that this country was founded a Christian nation.

As usual, there is a wide gap here between history and myth. Fewer than half of the sojourners on the Mayflower were seeking religious freedom. The first colony was established in Jamestown in 1609 to further trade, but some colonial settlements to follow were based upon religious precepts which excluded and persecuted those who happened to have the “wrong faith,” sometimes to the point of torturing and murdering religious dissenters.

The framers of the Constitution were well aware of the religious plurality and tension throughout the colonies, and they wisely foresaw that the only sure way to prevent further abuses of official power by the church was to eliminate the possibility. Consequently, they established the first government in human history to sever the bonds between civil and religious authority.

This “separation of church and state” was explained to the Danbury Baptists by Jefferson, “...the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions.” In other words, personal religious views should remain personal and our government should neither promote religion nor interfere with religious belief – an idea worthy of emulation then as it is now.

# **The Fathers And Saviors Of Our Republic – Freethinkers**

**by John E. Remsburg**

Were the American people asked to name the five great historic figures of the first century of our national existence -- the illustrious men who contributed most to build and glorify the United States of America -- the answer would be, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Ulysses S. Grant.

To this list of immortal posterity will add another -- Thomas Paine. For nearly a century this noble man -- the real founder of our Republic -- has been buried beneath the stones of obloquy. But slowly the angels of Justice are rolling back these stones from his sepulcher, and the resurrection of Thomas Paine is at hand.

While the orthodox clergy, to their everlasting shame, are responsible for the cruel treatment accorded this patriot, the liberal Christian ministers, to their eternal honor, have been candid and courageous enough to do him justice. These are but a few of their many tributes to him:

Rev. John Snyder: -- "Paine did more than any other single man to create this nation. I simply speak what will some day be the sober judgment of history."

Rev. Minot J. Savage, D.D.: -- "No man rendered grander service to this country; no man ought to be more cherished or remembered."

Rev. Theodore Parker: -- "He did more to promote piety and morality among men than a hundred ministers of that age in America."

Rev. Dr. David Swing: -- "Paine was one of the best and grandest men that ever trod the planet."

The Church claims all great men. But the truth is the great men of all nations have, for the most part, rejected Christianity. Of these six historic Americans -- the six greatest men that have lived on this Continent -- not one was a Christian. All were unbelievers -- all Infidels -- all Freethinkers.

It is popularly supposed that Paine was a very irreligious man, while Washington, Franklin, Jefferson, Lincoln and Grant were very religious. The reverse of this is more nearly true. Paine, although not a Christian, was a deeply religious man; while the others, though practicing the loftiest morals, cared little for religion. Paine was a firm believer in the religion of Deism, and a zealous advocate of it; the others, while nominally Deists, and using the conventional language of Deism, were probably more nearly Agnostics in belief.

Washington and Grant, while unbelievers, attended church and retained the good will of the clergy. Franklin avowed his disbelief, but in a friendly spirit which provoked few censures. Jefferson and Lincoln both talked and wrote against Christianity, but Lincoln's criticisms were never published, while Jefferson's, scattered through several volumes, are little read. The rejection of Christianity by these men has been, to a great extent, forgotten or forgiven.

Paine not only opposed Christianity, but he opposed it in a book which was read by thousands, and which the defenders of Christianity could not answer. For this he was persecuted while living and calumniated when dead.

More: [infidels.org/library/historical/john\\_remsburg](http://infidels.org/library/historical/john_remsburg)

## Brahma

Ralph Waldo Emerson

If the red slayer think he slays,  
Or if the slain think he is slain,  
They know not well the subtle ways  
I keep, and pass, and turn again.

Far or forgot to me is near;  
Shadow and sunlight are the same;  
The vanished gods to me appear;  
And one to me are shame and fame.

They reckon ill who leave me out;  
When me they fly, I am the wings;  
I am the doubter and the doubt;  
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.

The strong gods pine for my abode,  
And pine in vain the sacred Seven,  
But thou, meek lover of the good!  
Find me, and turn thy back on heaven.

## Ozymandias

Percy Bysshe Shelley

I met a traveller from an antique land

Who said: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone

Stand in the desert . . . Near them, on the sand,

Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,

And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,

Tell that its sculptor well those passions read

Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,

The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed:

And on the pedestal these words appear:

'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:

Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!'

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay

Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare

The lone and level sands stretch far away."

## Events Calendar, June 2002

**July 4<sup>th</sup> – Freedom and Freethought celebration – TBA**

Check the message board on our website (OklahomaAtheists.org) for more info.

**July 10<sup>th</sup> – Movie night @ Terg's**  
***The Life of Brian* will be playing.**

**July 26<sup>th</sup> – Galileo's in the Paseo district**  
Monthly chill-out time. Be there or miss out!

## Oklahoma Atheists t-shirts!



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