



Of Freemasons: America was Founded as an Inclusive Nation

In the last thirty years of American history, our society has come under the sway of a powerful modern myth that would have us believe America's Founding Fathers were animated by a Christian fundamentalist worldview similar to that of today's religious right. In fact, just the opposite is the historical case.

Most of the Founding Fathers undoubtedly considered themselves Christians. Yet these pioneers of the American experience believed deeply in the separation of church and state. These were not just words to them. This was a fundamental principle. They also believed in learning from all sources of valuable knowledge and were generally well versed not only in the Old and New Testaments, but in Greek and Roman classics, and sixteenth- and seventeenth-century philosophical works today considered obscure and borderline "pagan", such as those of Francis Bacon.

Christianity is not in contradiction with Freemasonry. The reverse is true as well. However, there is a clear difference in emphasis between the open, tolerant, exploratory Freemason/deist worldview of the late eighteenth century, and the more fixed, specific, rigorous religious vision of Christianity some would like to project (incorrectly) backward on to the America of the Founding Fathers. It just won't work to picture the Founding Fathers as evangelical Christians in order to legitimize and justify attempts to superimpose such a worldview on American society today and in the future. It won't work because it isn't true. "In God we trust" was first used on coins in 1864; "under God" was not added to the Pledge of Allegiance until 1954. Jefferson, Washington, and Franklin tended to speak sparingly of "Providence," "Divine Providence," the "Creator," and other such euphemisms. They almost never invoked "God," or "Jesus."

"The real America" is the America of Washington, Franklin, and Jefferson, of Freemasons and deists. It is the America of the open mind and the insatiable desire for knowledge of every type. The America open to all comers and all ideas and all traditions. The America where church and state are separate, shades of belief or non belief are personal choices, and no religious dogma prevents innovative minds from freely expressing themselves or advancing themselves through life.

Another Take on Defining Freemasonry

Freemasonry is a cohesive body of philosophical thought that recognizes a generalized God concept but rejects a specific definition of God and faith. It emphasizes tolerance, respect for many religious traditions, and diversity of belief. It focuses on morality, progress, personal development, intellectual enlightenment, and communitarian values, but not on a specific religious belief. The Freemasons draw inspiration from the wisdom of the ages and from thinkers and writings from many cultures, both sacred and secular.

American Masonic Trivia

On the very day of Paul Revere's famous ride, he was taken into custody by a British police captain. When it was established that both men were brother Masons, the policeman released Revere, who went on to make his famous ride for freedom and against British tyranny.

Benjamin Franklin and the French philosopher Voltaire, two of the greatest minds of the transatlantic Enlightenment, met together in the Parisian Loge des Neufs Soeurs (the Lodge of the Nine Sisters). Indeed, Franklin helped initiate Voltaire into this storied French Masonic lodge.

As early as elementary school we learn about the great support the American Revolution received from the French general Lafayette. But what we aren't told in school is what may have helped Washington and Lafayette, despite language barriers and a huge difference in age, bond immediately and work in such close alignment for the success of the American cause. They were motivated, of course, by the common goal of opposing the British. But they were also brother Masons, able to understand and trust each other because they saw the world from similar viewpoints. Even today, a heroic statue of Lafayette stands directly in front of the White House, testament to Washington and Lafayette's shared belief in liberty, equality, and, perhaps especially notably, fraternity.

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