

Were the Founding Fathers "Tolerant" of Islam?

[Part I and Part II]

by Dave Miller, Ph.D.



[Editor's

Note: This article is the first installment of a two-part critique of an article written by James Hutson, Library of Congress Manuscript Division Chief, on the Founding Fathers' attitude toward Islam.]

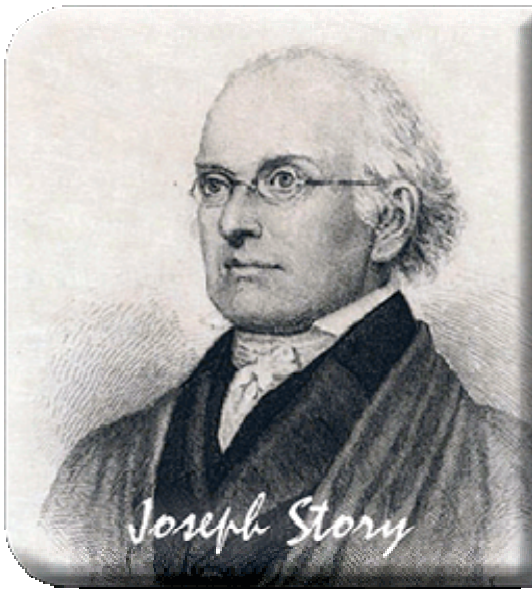
One prominent misconception pertaining to the liberty envisioned by the Founding Fathers of America concerns their intentions with regard to non-Christian religions. Case in point: Manuscript Division Chief of the Library of Congress, James Hutson, wrote an article, titled "The Founding Fathers and Islam" (which routinely receives sanction on Muslim Web sites and blogs [e.g., Amanullah, 2007; Shadia, 2012; "How Did the U.S...?" 2011; Pakistanis..., 2011; Nuha, 2012; The Islam Factor, 2008; Islamic News Updates, 2011]), in which he suggests that

it is clear that the Founding Fathers thought about the relationship of Islam to the new nation and were **prepared to make a place for it in the republic....** The Founders of this nation **explicitly included Islam** in their vision of the future of the republic...[and] **would have incorporated it into the fabric of American life** (2002, emp. added).

Such expressions as "prepared to make a place for it," "explicitly included," and "would have incorporated it" are ambiguous and vague at the least, and misleading at worst. They leave the impression that the Founders were pluralistic and welcomed Islam as a viable, authentic religion that ought to receive society's **equal encouragement and acceptance** along with Christianity, further implying that other non-Christian religions, and even the irreligious and atheist, should be given the same consideration. It is disconcerting that such a prominent person in a governmental organization as influential as the Library of Congress would propagate the myth of political correctness to the detriment of the nation and the disparagement of our nation's Founders. The pervasive propaganda of political correctness has so colored the average American's perspective that it is commonplace to superimpose current conceptions back onto

the Founding era. Nevertheless, the documentary evidence clearly demonstrates that the Founders did not share this “politically correct,” sanitized version of history.

The Founders would not have favored integrating Islam into our schools, government, and other civil institutions. Far from it. In his discussion of freedom of religion in his monumental *Commentaries on the Constitution of the United States*, Father of American Jurisprudence Joseph Story clarified the meaning of the First Amendment with regard to the priority of Christianity:



[I]t is impossible for those, who believe in the truth of Christianity, as a divine revelation, to doubt, that it is the especial duty of government to foster, and encourage it among all the citizens and subjects....

Indeed, in a republic, there would seem to be a peculiar propriety in viewing the Christian religion, as the great basis, on which it must rest for its support and permanence, if it be, what it has ever been deemed by its truest friends to be, the religion of liberty.

Probably at the time of the adoption of the constitution, and of the amendment to it, now under consideration, the general, if not the universal, sentiment in America was, that Christianity ought to receive encouragement from the state, so far as was not incompatible with the private rights of conscience, and the freedom of religious worship. An attempt to level all religions, and to make it a matter of state policy to hold all in utter indifference, would have created universal disapprobation, if not universal indignation (1833, 44.723-726.3.3.1865-1868, emp. added).

Indeed, the First Amendment was never intended to “level all religions” (and Islam can hardly be stylized “the religion of liberty”). Story further explained that

the real object of the [First] amendment was not to countenance, much less to advance Mahometanism, or Judaism, or infidelity by prostrating Christianity; but to exclude all rivalry

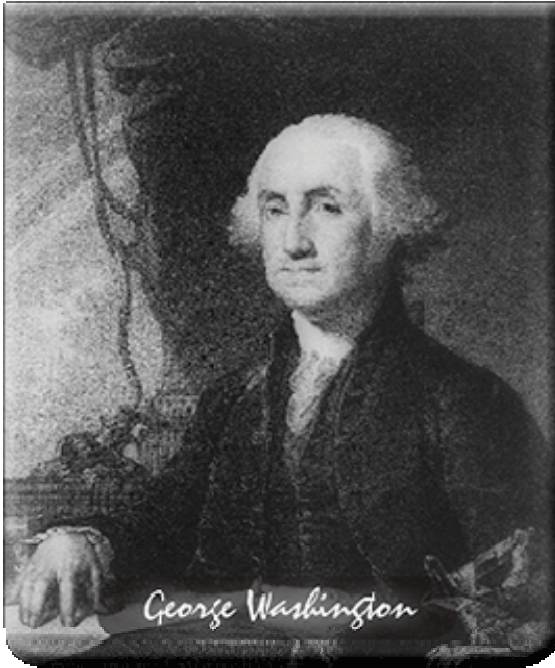
among Christian sects and to prevent any national ecclesiastical establishment which should give to a hierarchy the exclusive patronage of the national government(1833, 3:728, emp. added).

It is imperative that we not misconstrue the Founders' strong emphasis on religious freedom and tolerance as an indication that they viewed all religion as legitimate or conducive to the principles of the Republic. Their central concern was "disestablishment," i.e., preventing the federal government from establishing

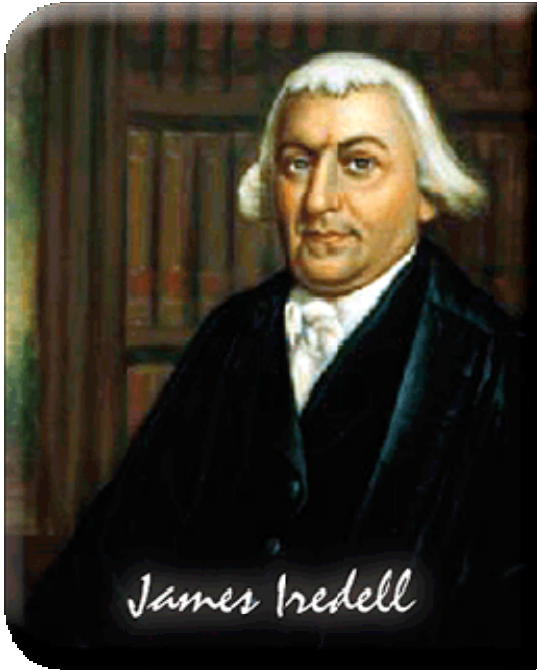


one Christian sect as the state religion. Their idea of "freedom of religion" was first and foremost freedom to pursue the Christian religion unhindered by the federal government, and only secondarily freedom to practice non-Christian religion. This truth is verified by the discussions surrounding the wording of the First Amendment. George Mason—who has gone down in American history as the Father of the Bill of Rights—proposed the following wording: "All men have an equal, natural and unalienable right to the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience; and that no particular sect or society of Christiansought to be favored or established by law in preference to others" (as quoted in Rowland, 1892, 1:244, emp. added). While Mason's proposal did not make the final cut, it nevertheless establishes the historical context of the Founders' discussion, demonstrating that their concern was first and foremost for the free exercise of the Christian religion. Using similar terminology, Mason had previously crafted *The Virginia Declaration of Rights*—the very document which influenced both Thomas Jefferson's wording of the *Declaration of Independence* as well as James Madison's draft of the Bill of Rights that was added to the federal *Constitution*. Article XVI reads:

That religion, or the duty which we owe to our Creator, and the manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence, and therefore all men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience; and that it is the mutual duty of all to practise Christian forbearance, love, and charity towards each other (Mason, 1776, emp. added).



To the Founders, “tolerance” was not to be equated with approval or agreement, let alone encouragement that would imply an equal place should be made for non-Christian religion in government, schools, etc. The Founders were no more willing to encourage Islam than they were interested in encouraging the spread of **atheism, paganism, or Native American religion**. [NOTE: Atheists, though few in number at the time in America, were not allowed to serve as witnesses in court—see Story, 1851, 2:8-9; Swift, 1796, 2:238.] For example, the Father of our country, George Washington, delivered a speech to the Delaware Indian chiefs on May 12, 1779: “You do well to wish to learn our arts and ways of life, and **above all, the religion of Jesus Christ**. These will make you a greater and happier people than you are. **Congress will do everything they can to assist you in this wise intention**” (15:55, emp. added). Far from encouraging the superstitious idolatry of much of Native American religion, the Founders (including the Congress!) urged Indians to convert to Christianity. The same may be said for all other non-Christian ideologies—including the inherently godless economic philosophies of socialism, Marxism, fascism, and atheistic communism. Indeed, their words and actions denigrate such thought systems. They believed that non-Christian philosophies and religions were **false** and ultimately detrimental to genuine liberty.



James Iredell, a U.S. Supreme Court judge appointed by George Washington, articulated this point succinctly in 1788 in the debates on the wording of the *Constitution*:

But it is objected that the people of America may perhaps choose representatives who have no religion at all, and that pagans and Mahometans may be admitted into offices.... **But it is never to be supposed that the people of America will trust their dearest rights to persons who have no religion at all, or a religion materially different from their own** (Elliot, 1836, 4:194, emp. added).

Samuel Johnston, governor of North Carolina and member of the *Constitution* ratifying convention in 1788, likewise felt confident that Muslims should not, and hopefully would not, be allowed to become mainstream in American politics and public institutions—except in only two cases:



It is apprehended that Jews, Mahometans, pagans, &c., may be elected to high offices under the government of the United States. Those who are Mahometans, or any others who are not professors of the Christian religion, can never be elected to the office of President or other high office, but in one of two cases. **First, if the people of America lay aside the Christian religion altogether**, it may happen. **Should this unfortunately take place**, the people will choose such men as think as they do themselves. Another case is, if any persons of such descriptions should, notwithstanding their religion, acquire the confidence and esteem of the people of America **by their good conduct and practice of virtue**, they may be chosen. I leave it to gentlemen's candor to judge what probability there is of the people's choosing men of different sentiments from themselves (Elliot, 4:198-199, emp. added).

Constitution signer Richard Dobbs Spaight echoed the same prevailing sentiment:



As to the subject of religion...[n]o power is given to the general government to interfere with it at all.... No [Christian—DM] sect is preferred to another. Every man has a right to worship the Supreme Being in the manner he thinks proper. No test is required. All men of equal capacity and integrity are equally eligible to offices.... I do not suppose an infidel, or any such person, will ever be chosen to any office unless the people themselves be of the same opinion (Elliot, 1836, 4:208, emp. added).

Implicit in all three of these Founders' observations is the fact that Christianity was the underlying belief system on which the Republic was poised. The Founders were unanimous in their desire that the *Constitution* provide no pretext for governmental interference in the free exercise of the Christian religion by the citizenry. So the only way that atheism or Islam could ever make headway in America's social and civil institutions is if the people themselves abandon their Christian values. Tragically, their words were prophetic.

WHAT THEY MEANT BY "RELIGIOUS FREEDOM"

The Founders' idea of religious freedom was actually quite simple and sensible—in contrast with the self-contradictory and inconsistent view of today's vacuous notions of tolerance and political correctness. The facts show that the mass of the Founders, with few exceptions, believed that the Christian worldview and Christian principles must be the foundation of the Republic (see, for example, the 15 proclamations issued by the Continental Congress from 1775 to 1783 in Miller, 2009). Consequently, their view of religious freedom and tolerance amounted essentially to the prevention of religious persecution. Those who practiced no religion or a non-Christian religion could come to America and not be persecuted for the simple reason that the bulk of the Founders and the mass of American citizens

embraced **Christian** principles that forbid persecuting one's fellowman (e.g., Matthew 5:38-47; Luke 6:27-36).

The Founders had felt the sting of persecution in their disagreement with the state religion (i.e., the Church of England). They were well familiar with their mother country's long history of religious oppression, depending on whether a Catholic or a Protestant monarch was on the throne. The Founders' "forefathers" were the pilgrims who fled England specifically on account of religious persecution. Hence, the Founders and Framers wanted the new Republic to dispense with such coercion—in complete harmony with the nature of God Himself, who created humans to be freewill agents who make their own decisions with regard to their eternal destiny. Further, because the Founders had grown up in an environment that promulgated Christian principles, they understood and embraced Jesus' admonition to treat others the way they themselves wished to be treated (Matthew 7:12). Thomas Jefferson's query posed to the ambassador of Tripoli reflects this principle: "We took the liberty to make some inquiries concerning the grounds of their pretensions to make war upon nations **who had done them no injury**, and observed that **we considered all mankind as our Friends who had done us no wrong**, nor had given us any provocation" ("Letter from the...", 1786, emp. added). To the Founders, permitting non-Christian peoples to live in our country without persecution was not tantamount to "celebrating diversity" or endorsing what they considered to be false religion. Rather, doing so was first and foremost an affirmation of their desire that all peoples be allowed to pursue happiness without governmental intrusion or coercion.

TWO CRITICAL EXCEPTIONS

However, we must hasten to emphasize that the Founders placed two important qualifications on religious tolerance. First, religious toleration extended only so far as the religion in question did not engage in a practice that is **deemed by Christian standards to be immoral**. For example, in a case that went all the way to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court in 1815, *The Commonwealth v. Sharpless*, the defendant was convicted for displaying in his home an obscene painting of a man and woman in an "indecent posture"—an offense against Christian morality (1815). Likewise, in a number of Supreme Court cases, instances of Mormon polygamy were prosecuted as violations of Christian morality—though the defense argued that the practice was justifiable on the grounds of freedom of religion (e.g., *Reynolds v. United States*, 1879; *Murphy v. Ramsey*, 1885; *Davis v. Beason*, 1890). The Founders never envisioned the First Amendment providing sanction for any behavior that is deemed by Christian standards to be immoral or "licentious." Yet, now that Islam is making significant encroachments into American society, with its brazen advocacy of polygamy (*Surah* 4:3; cf. 4:24-25, 129; 23:6; 30:21; 70:30), the erosion of Christian morality and the appalling ignorance of the founding principles among the population will inevitably sanction such immorality under the guise of tolerance and "religious freedom."

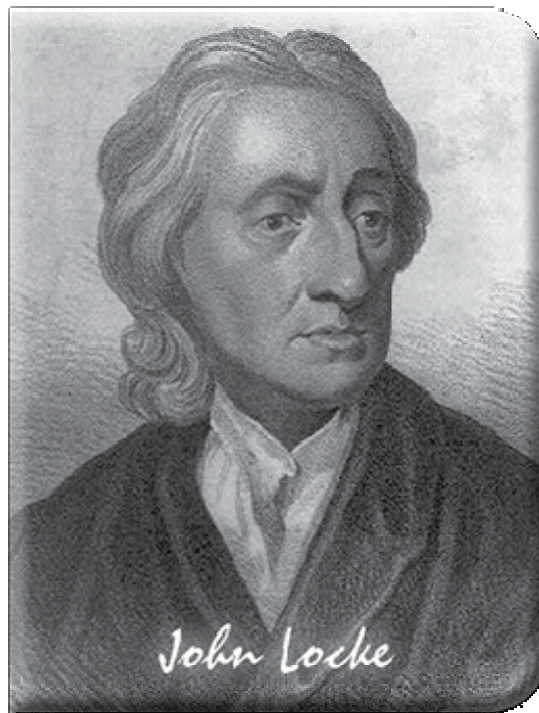
A second exception that clarifies the notion of religious freedom is seen in the Founders' insistence that religious freedom did not extend to any action that would **bring physical harm to self or other citizens**. Actions like Buddhist priests setting themselves on fire in the street, or temple priestesses providing sexual services to devotees, or brothels, or businesses that peddle pornography would not have been tolerated by the Founders under the guise of "freedom of religion" (*Commonwealth v. Nesbit*, 1859). That means that Islam's fifteen hundred yearlong historical propensity for engaging in street violence, suicide bombing, and the execution of those who refuse to submit to Allah—actions that are endemic to Islam and the Quran (e.g., *Surah* 47:4)—are not to be tolerated as protected religious practice. The number of incidents in America of Islamic "honor killings" is mounting ("Missouri Couple...", 1991; Schoetz, 2008; Thompson,

2011; Tang, 2011; Myers, 2011; *Daily Mail...*, 2012)—a natural by-product of political correctness, a misunderstanding of the principle of religious freedom, and the loss of the average American’s commitment to Christian morality. Religious freedom notwithstanding, the Founders were wary of any infiltration of the nation’s institutions by “Mahometans” in light of their religious inclinations toward physical violence (cf. Miller, 2005).

TOLERANCE?

With these observations in mind, what is one to make of Hutson’s allusions to incidents in which the Founders seemingly manifested “inclusive” sentiments? Consider the following point-by-point examination of each document cited by Hutson as proof of his claim regarding the Founders. First, the importation of Muslim slaves into the colonies offers no support whatsoever to the idea that the Founders were “prepared to make a place” for Islam in the Republic—any more than they sought to accommodate the pagan animism of African slaves or the polytheism of Native Americans. Hutson admits as much when he concedes that “there is no evidence that the Founders were aware of the religious convictions of their bondsmen.”

Second, the toleration proposed by John Locke in his *A Letter Concerning Toleration* has, as its context, first and foremost, the toleration that ought to be extended by Christian sects to each other. While he



certainly advocates that the same civil rights be extended to Jews, pagans, and “Mahometans”—he articulates several very clearly defined exceptions. Specifically, in a section dealing with those whom the civil magistrate cannot tolerate, he pinpoints:

1. Those whose religious opinions are contrary to “those moral rules which are necessary to the preservation of civil society” (1796, p. 53);

2. The religion that "teaches expressly and openly, that men are not obliged to keep their promise" (p. 54);
3. "[T]hose that will not own and teach the duty of tolerating all men in matters of mere religion...and that they only ask leave to be tolerated by the magistrate so long, until they find themselves strong enough to [seize the government]" (p. 55);
4. All those who see themselves as having allegiance to another civil authority (p. 56). Specifically, Locke gives the example of the Muslim who lives among Christians and would have difficulty submitting to the government of a "Christian nation" when he comes from a Muslim country where the civil magistrate was also the religious authority. Locke notes that such a person would have grave difficulty serving as a soldier in his adopted nation (cf. the 2009 Fort Hood shooting spree by a Muslim soldier who shouted, "Allahu Akbar" as he opened fire, killing 13 and wounding 32; see Stewart, 2010).
5. "[T]hose are not at all to be tolerated who deny the being of a God" (p. 56).

Four of these five exceptions inarguably describe Muslim behavior across the world since the inception of Islam. Indeed, what Hutson fails to divulge is that much of Locke's discussion of religious intolerance (manifested primarily by Catholicism during periods of English history) resembles the very intolerance that typically characterizes Islamic countries around the world.

Hutson further alleges that Thomas Jefferson adopted Locke's view of toleration (which, as just noted, was not an endorsement or encouragement of Islam), "in demanding recognition of the religious rights of the 'Mahamdan.'" While it is true that Jefferson championed religious rights for all men, he did so with the same reservations and exceptions set forth by Locke. Evidence of his



view

of Islamic aggression is seen in his revulsion of

the Muslim terrorism that characterized the Barbary States leading up to and during his presidency. His “intolerant” response was to send the U.S. Marines against them (Miller, 1997). It is true that, in his autobiography, Jefferson stated that the Virginia *Act for Establishing Religious Freedom* was “meant to comprehend, within the mantle of its protection, the Jew and the Gentile, the Christian and Mahometan, the Hindoo, and infidel of every denomination” (1821, p. 40). Yet, even that document verifies the clearly **Christian** orientation of the assemblage of Founders who passed it, and the distinction they made between religious toleration versus incorporating non-Christian religion into the fabric of America’s civil institutions. The statute begins:

An Act for establishing religious Freedom.

Whereas, **Almighty God** hath created the mind free; That all attempts to influence it by temporal punishments or burthens, or by civil incapacitations tend only to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness, and therefore are a departure from the plan of **the holy author of our religion**, who **being Lord**, both of body and mind yet chose not to propagate it by coercions on either, as was in **his Almighty power** to do... (Jefferson, 1786, emp. added).

Pray tell, to whom was Jefferson and his colleagues referring when they referred to “the holy author of our religion”? Unquestionably, they were referring to Jesus Christ, the Author of the Christian religion (see Miller, 2008). This statute once again simply underscores the fact that, while the Founders advocated toleration of non-Christian religions, they themselves recognized the reality and priority of the Christian religion and would not have endorsed any statute that would have relegated Christianity to a position of equal validity with other ideologies. They would not have wanted their pronouncements to be misconstrued to promote the inculcation of false religious systems or “infidelity” into the civil institutions of the United States—including all levels of government, our courts, and our schools.

Hutson’s citation of Richard Henry Lee as corroboration of pluralism or political correctness is contextually dispelled by the fact that, though opposed to the establishment of a state religion, he, along with Patrick Henry, “were advocates of a proposition to make every man



contributed something to the support of the Christian religion, as **the only sure basis of private and public morality**" (Lee, 1825, 1:237, emp. added). The very letter from whence Hutson drew his quotation, written by Lee to James Madison on November 26, 1784, articulates the point that Lee favored citizen support of the Christian religion by means of a tax, noting that religion is "the guardian of morals" (Lee, 1914, 2:304-305; Nelson, 2001, p. 297). Further, throughout his life he avowed belief in the divine origin of the Christian religion and considered its morality to be the necessary foundation of the Republic (Lee, 1914, 1:248).

Appointed by Congress to a committee (along with Samuel Adams and Daniel Roberdeau) to prepare a proclamation to thank God for America's military victories, Lee is believed to be the penman of the proclamation that was issued by the Continental Congress on November 1, 1777. The proclamation requested that God forgive Americans of their sins "through the merits of Jesus Christ" and that He would "prosper the Means of Religion, for the promotion and enlargement of that Kingdom, which consisteth 'in Righteousness, Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghost'" (*Journals of...*, 9:854-851). The quotation within the proclamation is taken from Romans 14:17. This is also the man who, in a letter to Continental Congress president Henry Laurens on October 15, 1779, noted that "our holy religion teaches us to pray 'Lead us not into temptation'" —a reference to Christianity and Matthew 6:13 (Lee, 1914, 2:162). Such organic utterances serve to clarify, define, and limit the Founders' view of liberty and "tolerance."

Look, once again, at the Virginia Act (p. 33). Extending religious tolerance to non-Christian religions is juxtaposed with "temporal punishments," "civil incapacitations," and "coercions." This fact, again, proves



Continental Congress proclamation November 1, 1777

that "religious freedom"—as envisioned by the Founders—referred to freedom from interference and persecution by human government. And, again, ironically, Islam's history verifies its intolerance of non-Islamic religions. The only rational conclusion to be drawn from these facts is that the Founders, if they were living today, would see the encroachments of Islam into America as a fundamental and insidious danger to the religious liberty they championed.

Hutson points to George Washington's suggestion that Muslims be exempted from a Virginia bill that provided for taxes for Christian worship—a move that certainly indicates toleration, but hardly implies "inclusion" or "incorporation" into the fabric of American life. Likewise, Washington's welcoming "Mahometans" as workers on his Mount Vernon estate says nothing about his views regarding whether Islam should be encouraged or promoted in tandem with Christianity. In fact, in the letter Hutson cites, in which Washington was looking to hire a "House Joiner and Bricklayer" for his estate from a group of Palatine (German) tradesmen, in addition to "Mahometans," he specifically included "Jews or Christians of any Sect, or they may be Atheists" (Washington, 1784). His inclusion of Jews, Muslims, and atheists proves he did not intend to make a statement about "tolerance" or who are fit citizens in a Republic. A more accurate assessment of Washington's sentiments in that regard is seen in the General Orders he

issued to the Continental Army from Headquarters at Valley Forge on Saturday, May 2, 1778:

162 March - 1784. —
 To Teach Tighman Esquire —
 Dear Sir,
 I am informed that a ship
 with Blatinas is gone up to Boston carrying
 among others a number of Negroes —
 I am a good deal in want of a few from
 V. Dutch Lager who really understand their
 profession. You would do me a great service
 purchasing one of each for me, if to be had —
 I would not condemn you to Blatinas — if
 they are good workmen, they may be from Sen-
 tugal or Europe — They may be Mahomet-
 ans, Jews, or Christians of any sect, or they
 may be Atheists — I would however pre-
 fer a mixed race to young men — A wife who
 have good countenance & good character
 on ship board, to others who have neither —
 I hope to recommend them — all the after-
 etc. I wish to know, the proof of the pudding must
 be in the eating — I do not limit you to a
 price but will pay the purchase money in demand —
 This request will be in force till some
 reply with or without an answer, but as you
 may not succeed at this moment, I am of a
 worse able now here after — My Compliments
 in which I wish Mr. Washington joins, are af-
 fected to Mr. Tighman and Mr. Carver —
 I am Sir
 With great truth
 Yours
 Mount Vernon } N. H. H. H. H.
 24. March 1784 } J. Washington

Washington's March 24, 1784 letter to Teach Tighman seeking workers of "good characters"

While we are zealously performing the duties of good Citizens and soldiers we certainly ought not to be inattentive to the higher duties of Religion. To the distinguished Character of Patriot, it should be our highest Glory to add the more distinguished Character of Christian (1778, emp. added).

[to be continued]

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Were the Founding Fathers "Tolerant" of Islam?

[Part II]

by Dave Miller, Ph.D.

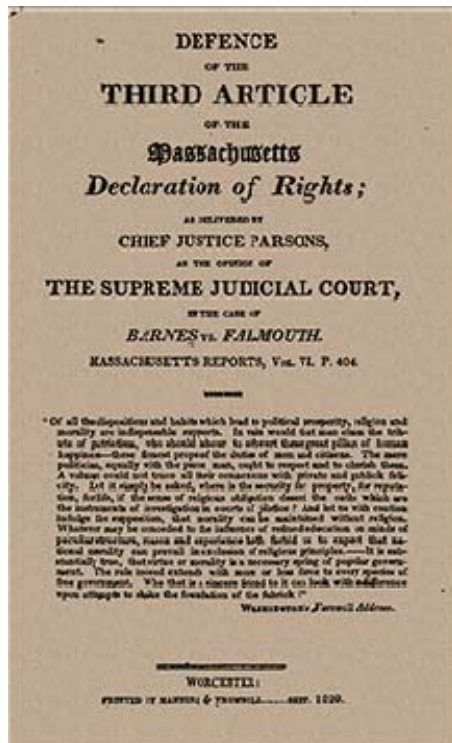


[Editor's

Note: This article is the second installment of a two-part critique of an article written by James Hutson, Library of Congress Manuscript Division Chief, on the Founding Fathers' attitudes toward Islam. Part I appeared in the March issue. Part II follows below and continues, without introductory comments, where the first article ended.]

Hutson observes that in their 1780 state constitution, "[o]fficials in Massachusetts afforded the most ample liberty of conscience...to Deists, Mahometans, Jews and Christians" (2002)—an allusion to Samuel West's discussion of tax assessments for the support of the public teaching of religion and morality. This observation is accurate as long as one clearly understands that "liberty of conscience" specifically meant no governmental intrusion, but did not extend to the **encouragement or promotion** of Islam in public life. Proof of this contention is seen in the Third Article of the 1780 constitution itself, in which the legislature was authorized "to make suitable provision...for the institution of the public worship of God and for the support and maintenance of **public Protestant teachers** of piety, religion, and morality in all cases where such provision shall not be made voluntarily." The constitution also stated that "every denomination of **Christians**, demeaning themselves peaceably and as good subjects of the commonwealth, shall be equally under the protection of the law; and no subordination of any sect or denomination to another shall ever be established by law" (*Constitution of...*, 1780, I.III, emp. added). Hutson fails to divulge that the constitution stipulated that the governor was required to "declare himself to be of **the Christian religion**" (*Constitution of...*, II.II.I.II, emp. added), and that any who wished to serve as governor, lieutenant governor, counselor, senator, or representative were required to take an oath of office which included: "I...do declare that **I believe the Christian religion**, and have a firm persuasion of its truth" (*Constitution of...*, II.II.V.I, emp. added). Notice that these stipulations inherently excluded Muslims holding office in

that state—proof that the Founders’ definition of “tolerance” differs significantly from Hutson’s characterization.

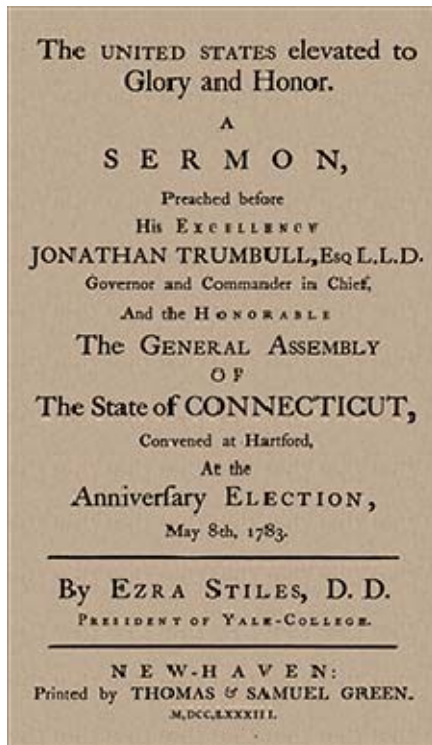


Samuel West, himself, was a strong advocate of the teaching of Christian morality and virtue by the state. He believed that the promotion of Christianity by the state did not interfere with the right of a Muslim to worship as he chooses—"till he disturbs the public or bothers others in their religious worship" (as quoted in Green, 2010, p. 50). But he most certainly did not countenance, and would not have countenanced, equal promotion of Islam in society. Hutson’s allusion to Massachusetts Supreme Court Chief Justice Parsons’ “resounding” affirmation of religious liberty in 1810 is equally misleading. The reference is to the opinion of the court in *Barnes vs. Falmouth*, penned by Parsons, which centered on the constitutionality of the Third Article of the *Constitution of Massachusetts* quoted above. Parsons clarified the meaning of “liberty of conscience” as the right of the “Protestant or Catholic [sic], Jew, Mahometan, or Pagan” to have his own “religious opinion and worship,” free from governmental persecution or coercion. Yet the Massachusetts constitution made provision for the “public [sic] teaching of the precepts and maxims of the religion of **protestant christians to all the people**”—the very thing Parsons and the court defended and insisted was not antithetical to religious liberty for those who do not profess Christianity. What’s more, Parsons brought his masterful opinion to a grand conclusion that further verifies that the essentiality and priority of Christianity was assumed:

[T]he people are to be applauded, as well for their benevolence as for their wisdom, that in selecting a religion [Christianity—DM], whose precepts and sanctions might supply the defects in civil government, necessarily limited in its power, and supported only by temporal penalties, they adopted a religion founded in truth; which in its tendency will protect our property here, and

may secure to us an inheritance in another and a better country ("Defence of the...", 1820, p. 7, emp. added).

Once again, the sanitized version of America's history confuses religious tolerance with endorsement, promotion, and accommodation, and fails to discern the distinction made by the Founders between religious tolerance on the one hand, and their firm belief in the **priority** of the Christian religion on the other.

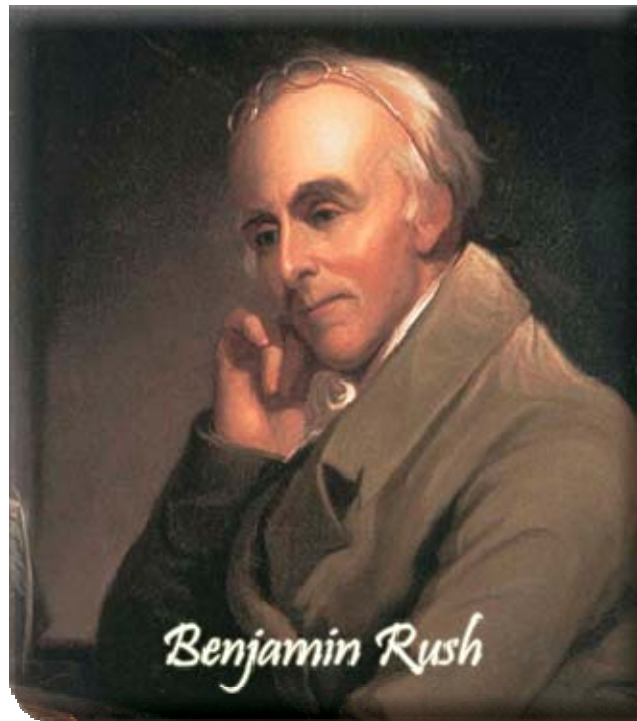


Hutson cites Ezra Stiles (Yale College president from 1778-1795) as supporting the notion that Muslim morals are "far superior to the Christian." This claim is a preposterous misrepresentation of the facts. Stiles' comments came in a sermon preached before the governor and legislature of Connecticut in 1783. In extolling the glory of America with its purest form of Christianity in the world, Stiles alluded to the fact that "Sir William Temple, Sale, and other learned deists, fond of depreciating Christian virtue by comparisons, have extolled and celebrated the Mohammedan, Chinese, and other Oriental morals, as far superior to the Christian" (1783). **But Stiles disagreed with their assessment.** He insisted that, in contrast to all other religions, "the more Christianity prevails in a country, civil society will be more advanced, ferocious manners will give way to the more mild, liberal, just, and amiable manners of the gospel." He stated his belief that "[a] time will come when six hundred millions of the human race shall be ready to drop their idolatry and all false religion, **when Christianity shall triumph** over superstition, as well as Deism, and Gentilism, and Mohammedanism." Ezra Stiles provides no support for the encouragement of Islam in America. He believed it to be "false religion," along with superstition, deism, and paganism.

In discussing the religious beliefs of people as those beliefs relate to citizenship in a republic, the Founders clearly believed that Christianity is the one religion that most fully coincides with the republican principles

they espoused. They considered Christianity the “one true religion.” [NOTE: The Continental Congress repeatedly referred to Christianity as “true religion” in their proclamations to the American public; see the June 1775, March 1779, and October 1782 proclamations in Miller, 2009 and Miller, 2012.] Benjamin Franklin stated pointedly: “History will also afford frequent Opportunities of showing the **Necessity of a Public Religion**, from its Usefulness to the Public; the Advantage of a Religious Character among private Persons; the Mischiefs of Superstition, &c. and the **Excellency of the Christian Religion above all others** ancient or modern” (1840, 1:573, emp. added). Since adherents of other religions would wish to be included in the grand American experiment, the Founders naturally gave some consideration to the ability of professors of non-Christian religion to fit into the American political and social framework. It is in this context that the Founders acknowledged Islam’s belief in afterlife. Due to their conviction that no one was a fit citizen in a Republic if he did not believe in a future state of rewards and punishments, i.e., heaven and hell, as sufficient motivation to tell the truth and refrain from licentious behavior, as noted earlier, they banned atheists from serving as witnesses in court. They recognized, however, that though Islam contained many objectionable and absurd beliefs (including the notion that the faithful Muslim will be rewarded with virgins in paradise—a point noted by Hutson from the Boston newspaper), at least it indoctrinated its adherents with a firm belief in punishment and reward in the afterlife.

But observe that such an acknowledgement hardly constitutes proof of their approval of the bulk of Islam’s tenets, or their desire to leave the impression that Islam ought to be welcomed with open arms and held



up in America as a credible religion on a par with Christianity. Even Hutson’s allusion to the comment made by *Declaration* signer Dr. Benjamin Rush is taken wholly out of context when he notes that Rush stated he had “rather see the opinions of Confucius or Mohammed inculcated upon our youth than see them grow up wholly devoid of a system of religious principles.” Rush obviously considered “the opinions of Confucius or Mohammed” as merely the lesser of two evils, i.e., better **some** religion than **no** religion. He would be shocked to think that anyone

today would take his remark as supportive or even friendly toward either Confucius or Mohammed. Examine the statement in its original context in the essay Dr. Rush penned titled, "Of the Mode of Education Proper in a Republic," in which he described the mode of education that should be adopted "so as to secure to the state all the advantages to be derived from the proper instruction of youth." He specifically stressed the importance of instruction in the Christian religion:

[T]he only foundation for a useful education in a republic is to be laid in Religion. Without this there can be no virtue, and without virtue there can be no liberty, and liberty is the object and life of all republican governments.

Such is my veneration for every religion that reveals the attributes of the Deity, or a future state of rewards and punishments, that I had rather see the opinions of Confucius or Mahomed inculcated upon our youth, than see them grow up wholly devoid of a system of religious principles. **But the religion I mean to recommend in this place, is that of the New Testament**(1798, p. 8, emp. added).

Dr. Rush then proceeded to declare the superiority and priority of Christianity in a republic, even clarifying, "I wish to be excused for repeating here, that if the bible did not convey a single direction for the attainment of future happiness, **it should be read in our schools in preference to all other books**" (p. 100, emp. added). No provision whatsoever was made by him or any other Founder for the use of the Quran in our schools or courts.

Hutson's mention of the petition from the group of citizens from Chesterfield County, Virginia calling for religious liberty for "Jews, Mehomatans and Christians" must also be understood in its historical setting. Patrick Henry had proposed a bill "establishing a provision for the teachers of the Christian religion" in which the teachers would receive financial remuneration from the state (1784). The fact is that the citizens behind the Chesterfield County petition were concerned that the bill was detrimental to "the true interests of Christianity" (Virginia General Assembly, 1828, p. 36, emp. added). Their concern was that government support of religion tends to corrupt it by showing partiality to one Christian sect over others and interfering with the rights of Christian conscience, thereby violating civil and natural rights. Neither side in the debate intended to leave the impression that Islam is a true religion, nor did they intend to promote Islam in Virginia as equally authentic or deserving of a place of equal status with Christianity.

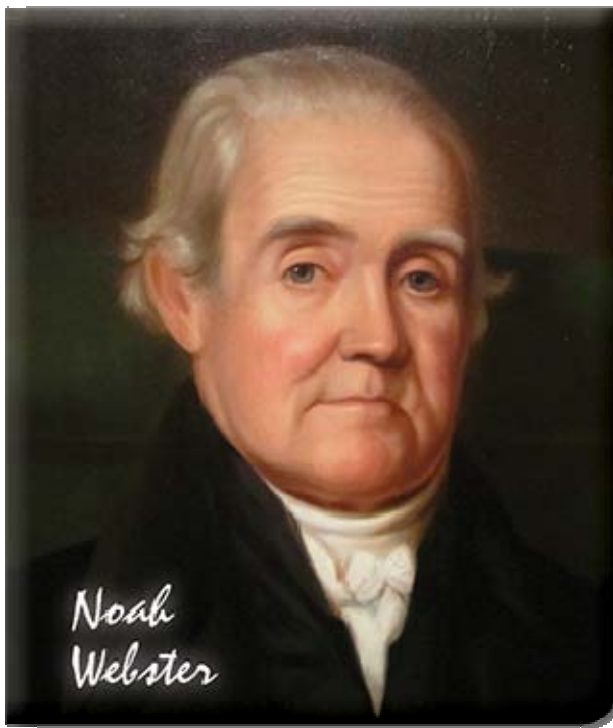
James Madison's rebuttal to Henry's bill, *Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments*, demonstrates that **all parties** concerned were not interested in offering sanction to Islam. Notice Madison's 12th reason for opposing the bill:

Because the policy of the Bill is adverse to **the diffusion of the light of Christianity**. The first wish of those who enjoy this precious gift ought to be that it may be **imparted to the whole race of mankind**. Compare the number of those who have as yet received it with the number still remaining under the dominion of **false Religions** (1785, emp. added).

According to Madison, all religions except Christianity are "false Religions" that need the enlightenment that Christianity provides. He believed that Henry's bill would interfere with imparting **Christianity** to the whole world. The Chesterfield petition may be juxtaposed with the one presented by the citizens of Surrey County, which insisted that the bill was, in fact, "consistent with the principles of equal liberty, tending to

promote the great interests of religion, and founded on the experience and practice of **all Christian nations**" (Virginia..., p. 36, emp. added). So those who opposed the bill were concerned that, by intruding into the realm of religion, the government might eventually usurp its role, overstep its power, and interfere with the free exercise of the Christian religion by the varying sects.

To repeat, it is imperative that the discussion of religious freedom in America in the 21st century be framed and shaped by the Founders' insistence that (1) all non-Christian religions are to be **tolerated**—as long as they do not advocate violence or immorality, and (2) the existence of the Republic, and all the features of the American way of life that are the envy of the world, depend on a majority of Americans maintaining their belief in and practice of the general principles of the **Christian** religion. In the words of prominent Founder, Noah Webster, regarding the indispensable nature of Christianity to the existence of our Republic:



[O]ur citizens should early understand that **the genuine source of correct republican principles is the Bible, particularly the New Testament or the Christian religion....** [T]he religion which has introduced civil liberty, is **the religion of Christ** and his apostles, which enjoins humility, piety, and benevolence; which acknowledged in every person a brother, or a sister, and a citizen with equal rights. This is genuine Christianity, and **to this we owe our free constitutions of government....** [T]he Christian religion ought to be received, and maintained with firm and cordial support. **It is the real source of all genuine republican principles....** The religion of Christ and his apostles, in its primitive simplicity and purity, unencumbered with the trappings of power and the pomp of ceremonies, is **the surest basis of a republican government....** [T]hose who destroy the influence and authority of the Christian religion, sap the foundations of public order, of liberty, and of republican government... (1832, pp. v,247,310-311, emp. added).

The United States commenced their existence under circumstances wholly novel and unexampled in the history of nations. They commenced with civilization, with learning, with science, with constitutions of free government, and with **that best gift of God to man, the Christian religion**(as quoted in Scudder, 1881, p. 242, emp. added).

Conclusion

Let it be repeated once again that, having a Christian mindset, the vast majority of the Founders were for religious tolerance, meaning that they were willing for those who embraced non-Christian religions to come to the country and not be persecuted. However, under no circumstances should such tolerance be misconstrued to mean that the Founders intended to convey credibility to such religions, implying that those beliefs would be beneficial to America's way of life if incorporated into its public institutions. Even the Founders' consistent depiction of Muslims as "Mahometans" (a term offensive to Muslims) demonstrates their antipathy towards Islam, since they regarded the religion as the concocted invention of Muhammad—not the God of the Bible.

Indeed, a number of the Founders went on record explicitly denigrating the religion of Islam. One "Father of American Jurisprudence," the brilliant New York State Supreme Court Chief Justice James Kent, labeled "Mahomet" as an "impostor" (*The People v...*, 1811). Son of John Adams and 6th President John Quincy Adams insisted that Muhammad possessed "the fraudulent spirit of an impostor," and the notion that he was a prophet and apostle of God was an "audacious falsehood" (Blunt, 1830, 29:269). In his masterful refutation of Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason*, one time president of the Continental Congress, Elias Boudinot, also labeled Muhammad an "impostor" (1801, p. 37) and insightfully observed that

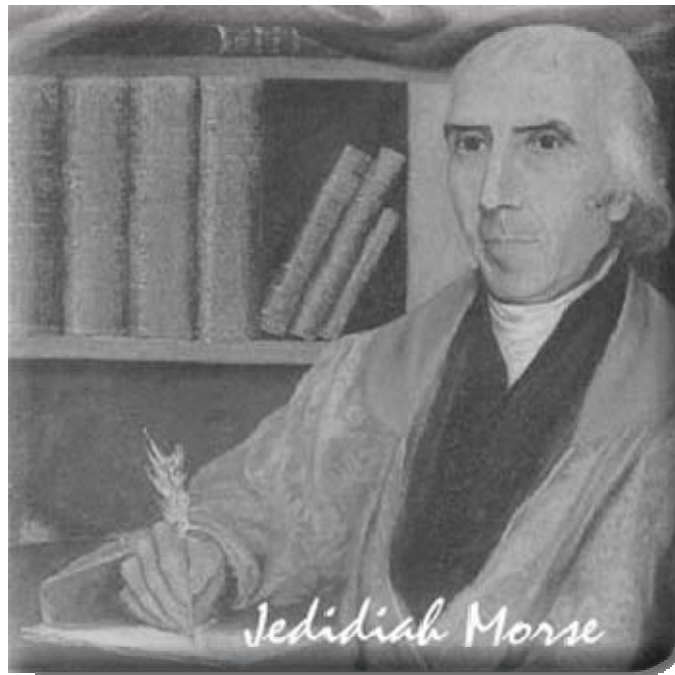
Mahomet aimed to establish his **pretensions to divine authority**, by the power of the sword and the terrors of his government; while he carefully avoided any attempts at miracles in the presence of his followers, and all pretences to foretell things to come. **His acknowledging the divine mission of Moses and Christ confirms their authority** as far as his influence will go **while their doctrines entirely destroy all his pretensions to the like authority....** And now, where is the comparison between the supposed prophet of Mecca, and the Son of God; or with what propriety ought they to be named together?...The difference between these characters is so great, that the facts need not be further applied (pp. 36,39, emp. added).

This premiere Founder merely expressed the sentiments of the bulk of the Founders as well as the rank and file of American citizens.

American Revolutionary War patriot and hero, best known for the capture of Fort Ticonderoga, Ethan Allen, likewise considered "Mahomet" an "impostor." In his *Reason, The Only Oracle of Man*, Allen stated:

Mahomet taught his army that the "term of every man's life was fixed by God, and that none could shorten it, by any hazard that he might seem to be exposed to in battle or otherwise," **but that it should be introduced into peacable [sic] and civil life, and be patronized by any teachers of religion, is quite strange, as it subverts religion in general, and renders the teaching of it unnecessary....** [We] are liable to be imposed upon by impostors, or by ignorant and insidious teachers, whose interest it may be to obtrude their own systems on the world for infallible truth, **as in the instance of Mahomet** (1854, pp. 17,35-36, emp. added).

[NOTE: Sadly, in later life, Allen broke with the majority of the country and Founders in his published rejection of Christianity and the Bible.] The Father of American Geography, Jedidiah Morse, cogently



articulated the
Founders and most early Americans when he explained:

rationale of the

The foundations which support the interest of Christianity, are also necessary to support a free and equal government like our own. In all those countries where there is little or no religion, or a very gross and corrupt one, as in Mahometan and Pagan countries, there you will find, with scarcely a single exception, arbitrary and tyrannical governments, gross ignorance and wickedness, and deplorable wretchedness among the people. To the kindly influence of Christianity we owe that degree of civil freedom, and political and social happiness which mankind now enjoy. In proportion as the genuine effects of Christianity are diminished in any nation, either through unbelief, or the corruption of its doctrines, or the neglect of its institutions; in the same proportion will the people of that nation recede from the blessings of genuine freedom, and approximate the miseries of complete despotism (1799, emp. added).

One final thought: Due to the widespread expulsion of God, the Bible, and Christianity from America's social and political life, fomented by the liberal forces of "political correctness, diversity, and tolerance," the encroachments of anti-Christian ideologies (like Islam) must inevitably hasten the demise of the American Republic as she has existed for over two centuries. To suggest that America can assimilate Islam



and Sharia law into its national life and remain free and prosperous is naiveté in the extreme (cf. "McDonald's Settles...", 2013). As General George S. Patton observed, having witnessed the impact of Islam on the countries of North Africa,

"One cannot but ponder the question: What if the Arabs had been Christians? To me it seems certain that the fatalistic teachings of Mohammed and the utter degradation of women is the outstanding cause for **the arrested development of the Arab. He is exactly as he was around the year 700, while we have kept on developing.** Here, I think, is a text for some eloquent sermon on the virtues of Christianity" (1947, p. 43, emp. added).

To echo the words of Jedidiah Morse, the "tyrannical governments" and "deplorable wretchedness" that continues to characterize Islamic countries around the world will necessarily characterize America if and when Islam is allowed to permeate the nation's institutions.

[NOTE: For a discussion of the legitimacy of Islam and the Quran, see Miller, 2005.]

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