

Influences on the Founding Fathers

A study by Professors Donald S. Lutz and Charles S. Hynemum of 15,000 key writings between 1760-1805 revealed the most frequently referenced citations:

1. The Scriptures: a remarkable 34% of all the citations were from the Bible.
2. Enlightenment Thinkers comprise 22% : typically those sympathetic to Christianity
 - ◆ Baron Charles Montesquieu (1689-1755): The French professor and legal philosopher wrote *The Spirit of Laws* (1748). “The Christian religion, which orders men to love one another, no doubt wants the best political laws and the best civil laws for each people, because those laws are, after [the Christian religion], the greatest good that men can give and receive.” Elsewhere, “I have always respected religion, the morality of the Gospel is the noblest gift ever bestowed by God on man. We shall see that we owe to Christianity, in government, a certain political law, and in war a certain law of nations--- benefits which human nature can never sufficiently acknowledge.”
 - ◆ Sir William Blackstone (1723-1780): wrote the best respected works on law in England, including his *Commentaries on the Laws of England*. By 1775, it had sold more copies in the colonies than in England, and was the legal bible for the first Supreme Court. “The preservation of Christianity as a national religion is abstracted from its own intrinsic truth, of the utmost consequence to the civil state, which a single instance will sufficiently demonstrate.... Wherefore, all affronts to Christianity, or endeavors to depreciate its efficacy, in those who have once professed it, are highly deserving of censure.”
 - ◆ John Locke (1632-1704): wrote a major treatise in defense of the Christian Faith entitled *A Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695), and was a sincere Christian as well as a brilliant philosopher. Locke’s *Two Treatises on Civil Government* (1689) focused on Natural Law and Natural Rights of men. But all laws are subject to the Law of God and the Law

of Nature. “To one who is persuaded that Jesus Christ was sent by God to be a King and a Saviour to those who believe in Him, all His commands become principles; there needs no other proof for the truth of what He says, but that He said it; and then there needs no more but to read the inspired books to be instructed... Our Saviour’s great rule, that we should love our neighbors as ourselves, is such a fundamental truth for the regulating of human society, that, by that alone, one might without difficulty determine all the cases and doubts in social morality.” Locke also said, “The Bible is one of the greatest blessings bestowed by God on the children of men--- it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture for its matter----It is pure, all sincere; nothing too much; nothing wanting.”

Conclusions

Often has it been said that all the founding fathers were deists who were influenced by European deists. However, careful observation of primary source material quickly dispels such statements. In fact, a careful study of the signers of the Declaration of Independence uncovers only three of the 55 that had any Deists leanings at all. Hugh Williamson of North Carolina, James Wilson of Pennsylvania and Ben Franklin. However, Franklin will recant his Deists concepts, which he clearly indicates in his Journals. It is an argument from silence, and one with no proof whatsoever to say that the others were Deists though they were sworn members of mainline protestant denominations. Apparently 28 were Episcopalians, 8 were Presbyterians, 7 Congregationalists, 2 Lutherans, 2 Dutch Reformed Calvinists, 2 Methodists and 2 Roman Catholics.