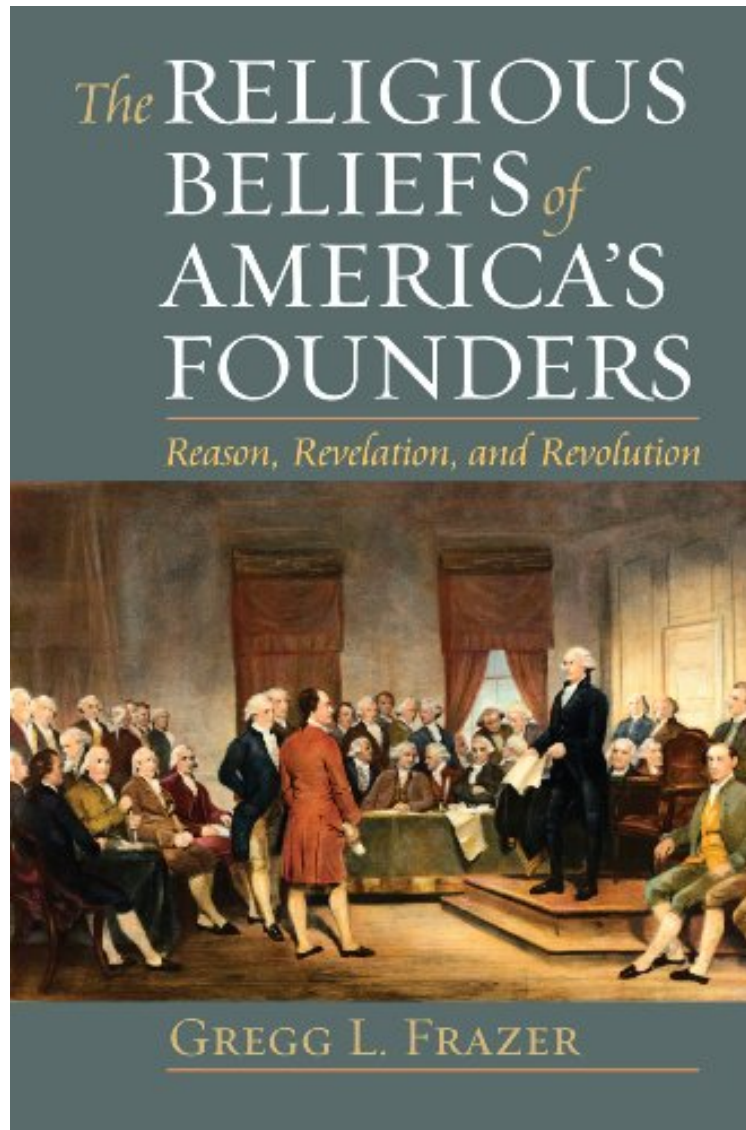


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The Religious Beliefs of America's Founders: Reason, Revelation, and Revolution (American Political Thought (University Press of Kansas))

Gregg L. Frazer

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Gregg L. Frazer : The Religious Beliefs of America's Founders: Reason, Revelation, and Revolution (American Political Thought (University Press of Kansas)) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Religious Beliefs of America's Founders: Reason, Revelation, and Revolution

(American Political Thought (University Press of Kansas)):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Extensive research on an important topic
By Stephan Schell
Extensively researched methodical treatment of the Founders' religious beliefs, I think this is a must-read book for anyone interested in our country's founding and the contentious question of "was this country founded as a (Judeo-)Christian nation?" To the extent that the Constitution answers that question, the book lays out a strong case for the answer being "no". However, the book falls a bit short in 2 areas: (1) due probably to the sheer number of quotations of the Founders' own words included in the book and consequent space limitations, the author frequently includes only snippets and does not always summarize the larger context surrounding each quotation, and this in turn leaves the reader with a less-than-airtight conclusion (or worse, a potentially wrong conclusion); and (2) although the top-level structure of the book is solid, each individual chapter would have benefitted from more structure such as subsections -- as it is, some of the sections are rather long and meander through enough different ideas that the reader becomes unmoored. Sometimes I wondered if the author was becoming unmoored, too, since he seems to frequently repeat the conclusion that so-and-so was a theistic rationalist. But the topic is sufficiently important, and the research sufficiently extensive, that I think the book merits the 4 stars in spite of these shortcomings.
1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. ... has shown what real scholarship in this subject looks like. He has restored the Christian historian through a ...
By Steve ham
Frazer has shown what real scholarship in this subject looks like. He has restored the Christian historian through a resolute acceptance of the words of the very men he has studied. In a time when there are major faults on both sides of this debate, Dr Frazer has shown that the diversity of beliefs at America's founding can only be ascertained by assessing the philosophical climate of the time, the words that the founders wrote to each other, and by defining the terms according to the original author's intent. This book is an important book for every Christian who desires to have a healthy balanced perspective about America as they witness the good news of Jesus Christ. Anyone who has ever used the words "Christian" and "America" in the same sentence should read this book.
1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Excellent investigation of what our founders really believed
By Debbie R.
Excellent investigation of what our founders really believed, as described in their own, personal, writings. I am a home educator and have been told for years about the Christian founding of America. This book has revealed the truth of how our founders were 'religious' but not specifically evangelically Christian, not committed to the Lord Jesus Christ. Very interesting read and thoroughly footnoted.

Were America's Founders Christians or deists? Conservatives and secularists have taken each position respectively, mustering evidence to insist just how tall the wall separating church and state should be. Now Gregg Frazer puts their arguments to rest in the first comprehensive analysis of the Founders' beliefs as they themselves expressed them showing that today's political right and left are both wrong. Going beyond church attendance or public pronouncements made for political ends, Frazer scrutinizes the Founders' candid declarations regarding religion found in their private writings. Distilling decades of research, he contends that these men were neither Christian nor deist but rather adherents of a system he labels "theistic rationalism," a hybrid belief system that combined elements of natural religion, Protestantism, and reason with reason the decisive element. Frazer explains how this theological middle ground developed, what its core beliefs were, and how they were reflected in the thought of eight Founders: John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, James Wilson, Gouverneur Morris, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and George Washington. He argues convincingly that Congregationalist Adams is the clearest example of theistic rationalism; that presumed deists Jefferson and Franklin are less secular than supposed; and that even the famously taciturn Washington adheres to this theology. He also shows that the Founders held genuinely religious beliefs that aligned with morality, republican government, natural rights, science, and progress. Frazer's careful explication helps readers better understand the case for revolutionary recruitment, the religious references in the Declaration of Independence, and the religious elements-and lack thereof-in the Constitution. He also reveals how influential clergymen, backing their theology of theistic rationalism with reinterpreted Scripture, preached and published liberal democratic theory to justify rebellion. Deftly blending history, religion, and political thought, Frazer succeeds in showing that the American experiment was neither a wholly secular venture nor an attempt to create a Christian nation founded on biblical principles. By showcasing the actual approach taken by these key Founders, he suggests a viable solution to the twenty-first-century standoff over the relationship between church and state and challenges partisans on both sides to articulate their visions for America on their own merits without holding the Founders hostage to positions they never held.

Sophisticated, well-documented, and forcefully argued. Extreme partisans who champion Christian America or complete secularism will not like this book, but all other readers should come away much better informed about the past and also much better situated to adjudicate religious-political debates today. Mark Noll, author of *God and Race in American Politics: A Short History Slices through prevailing understandings of the founders religious beliefs by showing that they are neither what contemporary secularists nor what contemporary Christians often wish they*

were. Russell Muirhead, author of *Just Work* Lucidly written and suffused with great honesty. Thomas L. Pangle, author of *Political Philosophy and the God of Abraham* About the Author Gregg L. Frazer is professor of history and political studies at The Master's College in Santa Clarita, California. His writing has appeared in the volumes *The Forgotten Founders on Religion and Public Life* and *Faith and the Founders of the American Republic*.