

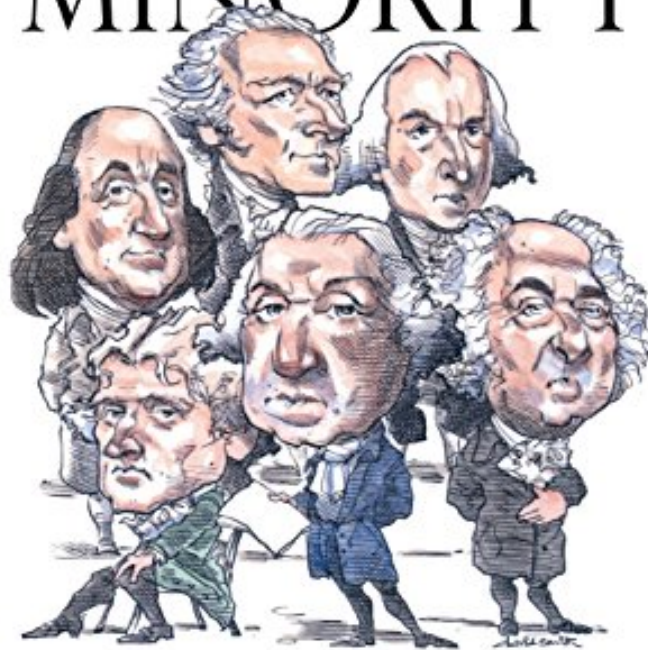
(Free download) Moral Minority: Our Skeptical Founding Fathers

## Moral Minority: Our Skeptical Founding Fathers

Brooke Allen

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# MORAL MINORITY



"Well documented, exuberantly argued, and quite persuasive."  
—George F. Will, *New York Times Book Review*

*Our Skeptical Founding Fathers*

BROOKE ALLEN

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**Brooke Allen : Moral Minority: Our Skeptical Founding Fathers** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Moral Minority: Our Skeptical Founding Fathers:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great historical narrative on the religious skepticism of our founding ...By DeanGreat historical narrative on the religious skepticism of our founding fathers. Too many evangelicals and political light-weights (Sarah Palin) have the incorrect belief our founding fathers were tied to Christian beliefs. Many of them were Deists and a couple eschewed religious belief altogether, such as Jefferson and Franklin. A good book for those who like history.2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Confirms my public school education.By

loraxWhen I went to school, it was so long ago that they still taught American history and Civics. We learned the Founders of our country were influenced by Locke, Paine, Hume, and the Enlightenment. That they knew first hand of the tyrannies and wars in Europe, the sectarian and religious conflicts that caused so much bloodshed. They were determined to not let that happen in the new country they were founding. That's the way I learned my American history. However, today there are right-wing elements that are trying to rewrite history. "He who controls the past, controls the future." These so-called "conservatives" are distorting the truth. This book, "The Moral Minority" goes in great detail, examining the writings and personal letters of the Founding Fathers and re-affirms the truth of this countries founding. It lays waste the lies of fundamentalist Christians that this nation was founded by fundamentalist Christians for fundamentalist Christians. This book gives me the ammunition to counter their arguments and completely destroy their lies. The religious beliefs and motives of six founding Fathers are explored in detail. Jefferson fought hard to keep the wall between Church and State. He founded the first non-religion based University - The University of Virginia. There are some interesting glimpses of the Founders personal lives. George Washington dropped Martha off at church and left her there in order to avoid the Eucharist. The Founding fathers were at most Deists - believers in a Creator, Providence, a higher power. Jesus was a teacher, and enlightened man. Deists do not accept the Trinity, doubt a miraculous virgin birth, or believe in the divinity of Jesus. Many born-again sects would not accept Deists as Christians. So how can they claim that the Founders were Christians bent on founding a Christian nation? The Founders were more influenced by the writers of the Enlightenment then by the Bible. This book will re-affirm what you should have learned in school if you were paying attention. 14 of 15 people found the following review helpful. Good, but...By Paul Broman The last chapter of the book, titled "The World that Produced the Founders," should probably have started the book. It is easily the best chapter of the book, laying out the history of religious freedom (or lack thereof) in England and the American Colonies from the time when King Henry VIII broke with catholicism up to the point when the American Revolution occurred. The other chapters are targeted each on one specific founder, and while the chapters did contain good (and shocking) information on the religious beliefs of each, I believe the author missed out by not dedicating a chapter to the beliefs of Thomas Paine and Ethan Allen (who were more radical than many of the other founders who were given their own chapters). They are covered briefly in another chapter, however. But overall, I'd say this book covers some very important overlooked history which we should definitely not forget in today's day and age.

In her lively refutation of modern claims about America's religious origins, Brooke Allen looks back at the late eighteenth century and shows decisively that the United States was founded not on Christian principles at all but on Enlightenment ideas. *Moral Minority* presents a powerful case that the unique legal framework the Founding Fathers created was designed according to the humanist ideals of Enlightenment thinkers: God entered the picture only as a very minor player, and Jesus Christ was conspicuous by his absence. The guiding spirit of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution, Ms. Allen explains, was not Jesus Christ but John Locke. In direct and accessible prose, she provides fascinating chapters on the religious lives of the six men she considers the key Founding Fathers: Franklin, Washington, John Adams, Jefferson, Madison, and Hamilton. Far from being the conventional pious Christians we too often imagine, these men were skeptical intellectuals, in some cases not even Christians at all. *Moral Minority* presents unforgettable images of our iconic founders: Jefferson taking a razor to the Bible and cutting out every miraculous and supernatural occurrence; Washington rewriting speeches others had crafted for him, so as to omit all references to Jesus Christ; Franklin and Adams confiding their doubts about Christ's divinity; Madison expressing deep disapproval over the appointment of chaplains to Congress and the armed forces, and of what we would now call "faith-based" initiatives. Enlivened by generous portions of the founders' own incomparable prose, *Moral Minority* makes an impassioned and scintillating contribution to the ongoing debate more heated now than ever before over the separation of church and state and the role (or lack thereof) of religion in government.

From Publishers Weekly In this study of the religious lives of six framers of the Constitution, which began as an article in *The Nation*, Allen (*Twentieth-Century Attitudes*) ably demonstrates the uncontroversial thesis that many of the founding fathers were not very devout. Franklin was a skeptic and a humanist who displayed outright "contempt for the niceties of Christian observance." Washington was, like other Virginia gentry, a vestryman in his local Episcopal church, but he was not especially pious. Adams's Puritan heritage left him with a commitment to hard work but not to Calvinism. Jefferson, unsurprisingly, appears as a devotee of reason and a champion of religious freedom, a cause in which Madison joined him. Hamilton's piety was mainly "opportunistic," and the religiosity he evinced on his deathbed had "no effect" on his participation in American politics. In the concluding chapter, Allen summarizes the history of the Enlightenment, that philosophical watershed that "produced the founders," and she ends by warning that Enlightenment values are now under threat. Allen's sparring partners are, of course, those representatives of the religious right who claim that America was founded as a Christian nation. Unfortunately, they are not likely to read this book, and those readers already generally inclined to agree with Allen-including most serious students of American history-won't learn anything new. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All

rights reserved. Meticulously researched and eminently readable. . . . Enthusiastically recommended for all collections. (D. L. Davey Library Journal)Ms. Allen succeeds perfectly. (Adam Kirsch New York Sun)Enlightening, infectiously enthusiastic scrutiny. (Ray Olson Booklist)Careful and provocative reading. . . . Allen's book is welcome counterweight. (Darryl Hart, Hillsdale College)Allen's clear and intelligent eye is a pleasure . . . a fine small book. (Peter Matthiessen, novelist and non-fiction writer, twice winner of the National Book Award)Allen lucidly demolishes the fundamentalists' revisionist history of the Constitution. . . . An elegant and riveting defense. (Heather MacDonald)Well documented, exuberantly argued and quite persuasive. (George Will, winner of the Pulitzer Prize The New York Times)Allen provides honest answers to the questions about the religious beliefs and practices of Washington and the other key founders. (Myron A. Marty St. Louis Post-Dispatch)If our right-wing adversaries insist on claiming that Washington and Franklin actually wanted the United States to be a Christian theocracy, Allen's book certainly can help to refute that outrageous lie. (Emile Schepers People's Weekly World)Her argument marks a salient starting point for an informed debate on a compelling topic. Those who call the U.S. a 'Christian Nation' when referring not only to the religious beliefs of its citizens but to the structure and intention of its government ought to welcome the contrarian challenge she poses. (Richmond Times-Dispatch)Allen delivers a rationalist polemic against those who would make of the American Founders observant, believing Christians in the modern sense. . . . Ms. Allen writes with facility. (Aram Bakshian Jr. The Wall Street Journal)This is an excellent book about the beliefs of the six founders and well worth a read. Highly recommended. (Marty Dodge Blogcritics)A mighty case for the religious questioning of America's Founding Fathers . . . thoughtful, diligently researched and often eyebrow-raising. (Blue Ridge Business Journal)[Written] in a brisk, highly readable style. (Village News)This is a thoughtful, well-written book. (Alvena Bieri Newspress)Examine[s] the . . . Founding Fathers to convincingly demonstrate that Christian belief did not guide their political thinking . . . an excellent concluding chapter. (Milton Berman Magill Book s)A small, and wildly underappreciated book. (Nicholas F. Benton Falls Church News-Press)Ablly demonstrates the uncontroversial thesis that many of the founding fathers were not very devout. (Old Durham Road)Allen's book . . . brings the substantial literary talents of a public intellectual to the dialogue on church and state in America. (Journal of Southern History)Informed by substantial research in their writings and provides numerous quotations. (Allen Gibson The Historian)About the AuthorBrooke Allen's Twentieth-Century Attitudes was a New York Times Notable Book of the Year. She has also written Artistic License. Her critical writing appears frequently in the Times Book , The Atlantic Monthly, The New Criterion, The Hudson , The Nation, and The New Leader. She lives with her husband and two children in Brooklyn, New York.