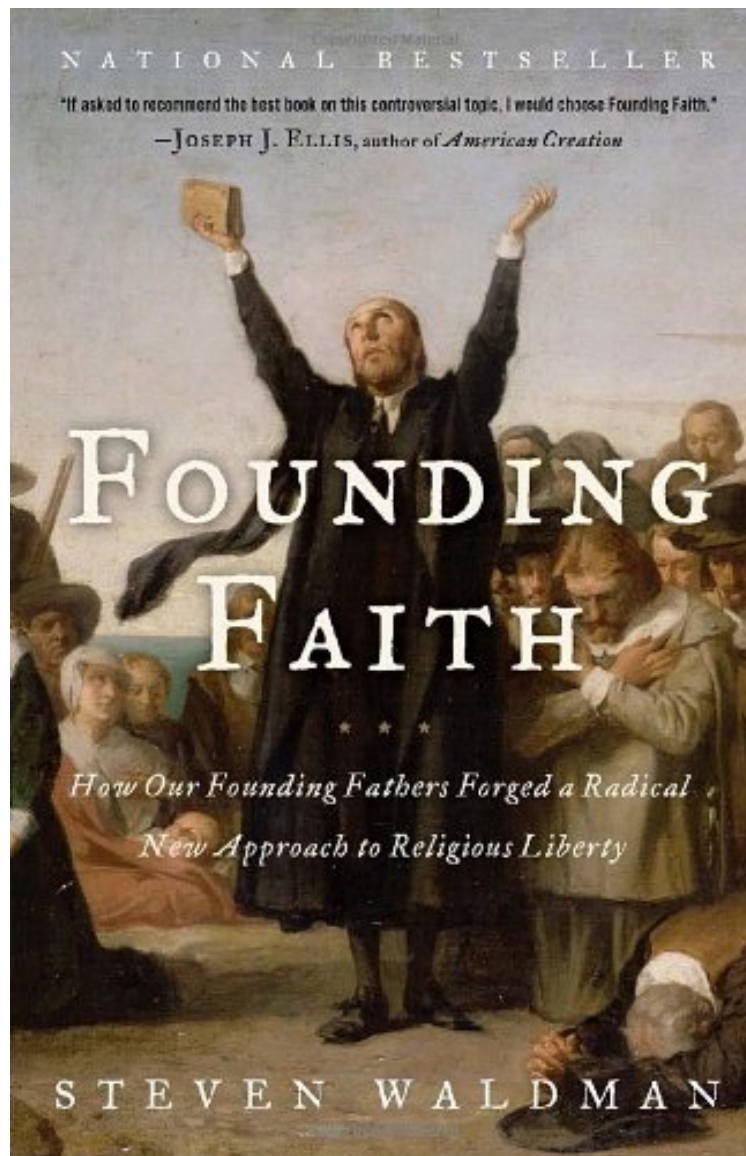


(Ebook free) Founding Faith: How Our Founding Fathers Forged a Radical New Approach to Religious Liberty

Founding Faith: How Our Founding Fathers Forged a Radical New Approach to Religious Liberty

Steven Waldman

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Steven Waldman : Founding Faith: How Our Founding Fathers Forged a Radical New Approach to Religious Liberty before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Founding Faith: How Our Founding Fathers Forged a Radical New Approach to Religious Liberty:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Great introduction to a complicated topic
By Rent-a-Dad
As a life-long student of history and a teacher of both history and political science for the last 25 years, I found Waldman's book very enlightening. There are no easy answers to the question "Was America founded as a Christian nation"? and Waldman points that out without beating you over the head or leading you to one answer or the other. The answer is complicated, which is exactly the point, and anyone who says that they know what the founders intended is either lying, a fool, or both since the term "founders" cannot be easily defined. These were men from varied backgrounds, religious backgrounds and political philosophies. Yes, there were over-arching similarities, but there were still enough differences that required compromise among them when it came to the phrasing of the First Amendment. This book is an easy read. If anything, it has whet my appetite to delve into a more intricate examination of the topic.
1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Extremely Important Book For People of Faith
By Customer
Any Religion that needs to be affirmed or endorsed by a particular worldly empire or nation's government in order to thrive is likely a weak religion using the government as a crutch. The laws of men forced upon the Kingdom of Christ is an intrusion the church can do without. If you don't believe that to be true then you might feel differently after reading this book. Religious liberty in the United States has thrived not in spite of the separation of church and state but rather because of it. In this book you will discover how that actually is the case and how our country went from being a Protestant Christian nation that was intolerant of all other faiths and denominations, to one of religious freedom where all faiths can thrive. This is an extremely important book for all people of every faith to read in order to understand why the Separation of Church and State is essential to healthy religion, free of Government encroachment.
1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Nice addition to the extant literature
By CP
Waldman makes excellent points in trying to discern what five founders--Franklin, Washington, Adams, Jefferson, and Madison--intended by religious freedom. Of course they did not agree on many points, but what is fascinating is to see the inanity of trying to foist modern-day matters on a First Amendment severely limited in scope. So even though Madison and Jefferson were strict separationists, they understood that states had the authority to regulate religion without federal interference. All that changed with ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment, which Waldman maintains supercedes the First Amendment as ratified in 1791. He makes a cogent argument for recognizing the validity of viewpoints from both sides of the "culture wars" debate. This is a well-balanced, insightful, and smartly written analysis. If a longer tome with all the major players, it would be one of the defining works on the topic.

The culture wars have distorted the dramatic story of how Americans came to worship freely. Many activists on the right maintain that the United States was founded as a Christian nation. Many on the left contend that the First Amendment was designed to boldly separate church and state. Neither of these claims is true, argues Beliefnet.com editor in chief Steven Waldman. With refreshing objectivity, Waldman narrates the real story of how our nation's Founders forged a new approach to religious liberty. *Founding Faith* vividly describes the religious development of five Founders. Benjamin Franklin melded the Puritan theology of his youth and the Enlightenment philosophy of his adulthood. John Adams's pungent views on religion stoked his revolutionary fervor and shaped his political strategy. George Washington came to view religious tolerance as a military necessity. Thomas Jefferson pursued a dramatic quest to rescue Jesus, in part by editing the Bible. Finally, it was James Madison who crafted an integrated vision of how to prevent tyranny while encouraging religious vibrancy. The spiritual custody battle over the Founding Fathers and the role of religion in America continues today. Waldman at last sets the record straight, revealing the real history of religious freedom to be dramatic, unexpected, paradoxical, and inspiring.

From Publishers Weekly
Starred . Various American evangelicals have claimed the founding fathers as believing and practicing Protestants who intended America to be a Christian nation. Secularists, on the other hand, see in the same historical record evidence that the founders were often Deists at best. Both views are grossly oversimplified, argues Waldman, cofounder and editor-in-chief of Beliefnet.com. In this engaging, well-researched study, Waldman focuses on the five founding fathers who had the most influence on religion's role in the state: Franklin, Jefferson, Washington, Adams and Madison and untangles their complex legacy. They were certainly diverse in religiosity, with Jefferson a self-diagnosed heretic, for instance, and Washington a churchgoing Anglican who was silent on points of doctrine and refrained from taking communion. All, however, were committed to the creation of religious freedom in the new nation. Waldman deserves kudos for systematically debunking popular myths: America was not primarily settled by people seeking religious freedom; the separation of church and state did not result from the activism of secularists, but, paradoxically, from the efforts of 18th-century evangelicals; and the American Revolution was as much a reaction against European theocracy as a struggle for economic or political freedom. Waldman produces a thoughtful and remarkably balanced account of religion in early America. (Mar. 18) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. Steven Waldman, a veteran journalist and co-founder of Beliefnet.com, a religious web site, surveys the convictions and legacy of the founders clearly and fairly, with a light touch but a careful eye. *New York Times Book Review* Waldman ends by encouraging us to be like the founders. We should understand their principles, learn from their experience, then have at it ourselves. "We must pick up the argument that they began and

do as they instructed use our reason to determine our views.' A good place to start is this entertaining, provocative book. New York Times Book "Steven Waldman's enlightening new book, *Founding Faith*, is wise and engaging on many levels, but Waldman has done a particular service in detailing Madison's role in creating a culture of religious freedom that has served America so well for so long. *Founding Faith* is an excellent book about an important subject: the inescapable but manageable intersection of religious belief and public life. With a grasp of history and an understanding of the exigencies of the moment, Waldman finds a middle ground between those who think of the Founders as apostles in powdered wigs and those who assert, equally inaccurately, that the Founders believed religion had no place in politics." *Newsweek* "Well-wrought, well-written and well-reasoned a welcome infusion of calm good sense into a perennially controversial and relevant subject." *Kirkus* s "*Founding Faith* takes up two central questions about religion in early America. First, what did such Founding Fathers as Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison usually believe? And second, how did it come about that the First Amendment to the Constitution guarantees that 'Congress shall make no laws respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof'? The answers to these questions carry implications for our lives today, since at stake is the flash-point principle of the separation of church and state." *Washington Post* There is a fierce custody battle going on out there for ownership of the Founding Fathers. *Founding Faith* strikes me as a major contribution to that debate, a sensible and sophisticated argument that the Founders religious convictions defy our current categories. Joseph Ellis, author of *American Creation* Steven Waldman does a great job describing the nuances of the Founders beliefs and the balances they struck, thus rescuing them from those on both sides who would oversimplify their ideas. Walter Isaacson, president of the Aspen Institute and author of *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life*. This is a history every American should know, and Waldman masterfully tells it. Jim Wallis, author of *The Great Awakening* Steven Waldman recovers the founders true beliefs with an insightful and truly original argument. It will change the way you think about the separation of church and state. George Stephanopoulos, chief Washington correspondent, ABC News, and anchor of *This Week* Steve Waldman makes the strong case that the culture wars have distorted how and why we have religious freedom in America. Americans can be inspired by this story the extraordinary birth story of freedom of religion. William J. Bennett, author of *America: The Last Best Hope* An unusually well-balanced book on an unusually controversial subject. Not every reader will agree with Waldman that, of the Founding Fathers, James Madison's conclusions about religion and society were best. But all should be grateful for the way Waldman replaces myths with facts, clarifies the complexity in making the Founders speak to present-day problems, and allows the Founders who differed with Madison a full and sympathetic hearing. An exceptionally fair, well-researched, and insightful book. Mark A. Noll, University of Notre Dame, author of *America's God* About the Author Steven Waldman is co-founder, CEO, and editor in chief of *Beliefnet.com*, the largest faith and spirituality website. Previously, Waldman was the national editor of *U.S. News World Report* and a national correspondent for *Newsweek*. His writings have also appeared in *The Atlantic*, *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *Slate*, *The Washington Monthly*, *National*, and elsewhere. He appears frequently on television and radio to discuss religion and politics. He is also the author of *The Bill*, a book about the creation of AmeriCorps. Waldman lives in New York with his wife, the writer Amy Cunningham, and their children, Joseph and Gordon. From the Hardcover edition.