

Thomas Jefferson's Qur'an: Islam and the Founders	
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Purchase of Qur'an	<p>Jefferson purchased a Qur'an eleven years before he wrote the Declaration of Independence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Survives still in the Library of Congress (largest library in the world)</li> <li>- Translated into English by George Sale <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Most informative and accurate translation then available</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Being a law student at the time, he would have wanted to learn about Islamic law</li> </ul>
John Locke	<p>"Neither Pagan nor Mahamedan [Muslim] nor Jew ought to be excluded from the civil rights of the Commonwealth because of his religion"</p> <p>Refused toleration to atheists, considering their oaths untrustworthy, since they recognized no otherworldly consequences for lying</p>
American Catholics	At the time of Independence, Catholics had few legal protections in any state and had no right to hold political office in New York
George Washington's mention of Muslims	<p>"If they are good workmen, they may be of Asia, Africa, or Europe. They may be Mahometans, Jews or Christian of any Sect, or they may be Atheists."</p> <p>Listed 2 slavewomen from West Africa among his property: Fatimer and Little Fatimer</p>
Jefferson's meeting with Muslims	<p>Knowingly met with only 2 Muslims: North African ambassadors of Turkish descent</p> <p>First president to entertain a Muslim ambassador in the nation's new capital</p>
Early Muslim Americans	<p>Transported from West Africa in the thousands, the first American Muslims would have outnumbered the Jews and possibly the Catholics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Of the estimated 481,000 West Africans imported into British North America, nearly 255,000 came from areas influenced by Islam</li> </ul>
Jefferson's religious beliefs	<p>Held Deist and Unitarian beliefs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A Deist believes in a God, but does not believe in divine intervention</li> <li>- A Unitarian believes in one God (as opposed to the Trinity)</li> </ul>

	<p>“No historical fact is better established, than that the doctrine of one God, pure and uncompounded, was that of the early ages of Christianity”</p> <p>In correspondence with Muslim rulers, he would invoke a shared belief in one God</p> <p>First American holder of high office accused by political opponents of being a Muslim</p>
<p>American Protestants' view of Islam</p> <p>Martin Luther (d. 1546) John Calvin (d. 1564)</p>	<p>Believed Islam to be the invention of Muhammad, a false prophet and an impostor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Muslim rule was identified with tyranny, the antithesis of Anglo-American political ideals</li> </ul> <p>Hostile, distorted views were inherited from their European predecessors who equated the Ottomans with the Antichrist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “The person of the Antichrist is at the same time the pope and the Turk”</li> <li>- Envisioned the Prophet along with the pope as the “two horns of the Antichrist” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Calvinist theology was the most influential on North American Protestants</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Benjamin Franklin	<p>“Even if the Mufti of Constantinople were to send a missionary to preach Mahometanism to us, he would find a pulpit in his service”</p>
Moor	<p>Someone from Mauretania, who had conquered and ruled the Iberian Peninsula until the Reconquista</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Also used for a person of black or dark skin</li> <li>- Also used for Muslim</li> </ul>
Voltaire (d. 1778)	<p>Wrote the first play about Islam performed in America, <i>Le Fanatisme, ou Mahomet le Prophète</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Caricatured the Prophet as a religious impostor and a political fanatic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “The sword and the Alcoran in my bloody hands, will impose silence on the rest of humanity”</li> <li>- Depicted the Meccan pagans as honest, heroic martyrs</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Intended for audiences to perceive the evils of religious persecution and intolerance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Used to indirectly address ongoing Catholic persecution of Protestants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Church authorities banned the play</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Views on Islam influenced Jefferson</p>
<i>The Algerine Captive</i>	<p>Novel published in 1797 of a New Hampshire native taken captive by Algerian pirates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Protagonist meets a Muslim cleric who makes arguments for</li> </ul>

	<p>the religion of Islam saying: “A wise man adheres not to his religion because it was that of his ancestors. He will examine the creeds of other nations, compare them to his own, and hold fast that which is right”</p>
Infidel	<p>Used by Christians synonymously with Muslim, also applied somewhat less frequently to Jews</p>
Sebastian Franck (d. 1542)	<p>Protestant, former Catholic priest, praised Muslims, writing: “one of the marks of their superiority was their refusal to force anyone to the faith”</p>
Roger Williams (d. 1683)	<p>Founded Providence, Rhode Island</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “And I aske whether or no such as may hold forth other Worships or Religions (Jews, Turkes, or Antichristians) may not be peaceable and quiet Subjects, loving and helpful neighbours, faire and just dealers, true and loyall to the civill government? It is cleare they may from all Reason and Experience”</li> </ul>
George Sale (d. 1736)	<p>Learned Arabic from two Arab Christians in London</p> <p>His translation was commissioned by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, a British Anglican Protestant group</p> <p>His treatment of the Prophet and Islam was more sympathetic than those of previous European translators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “I have not, in speaking of Mohammed or his Koran, allowed myself to use those opprobrious appellations, and unmannerly expressions, which seem to be the strongest arguments of several who have written against them”</li> </ul> <p>Mentions Islamic legal debates concerning two recent products: tobacco and coffee</p>
Jefferson Bible	<p>Jefferson created two edited volumes of Gospel selections that he accepted as true</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Omitted all miracles, the virgin birth of Jesus, his divinity, and his resurrection</li> </ul>
Jefferson’s interaction with the Qur’an	<p>There is no indication that he scrutinized the text verse by verse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Left no other notes in his copy besides his initials (JI)</li> </ul> <p>Did not tend to make numerous, detailed, or systematic references to the Qur’an</p>
<i>Reports of Cases Adjudg’d in the Court of King’s Bench</i>	<p>Book of British legal precedents from 1717 that Jefferson studied, mentions: “Turks and Infidels are not perpetui inimici (lifelong enemies), nor is there a particular Enmity between them and us; but this is a common Error founded on a groundless Opinion of Justice Brooke; for tho’ there be a difference between our Religion and theirs,</p>

	that does not oblige us to be Enemies to their Persons”
Jefferson on religious toleration	<p>“Is uniformity attainable? Millions of innocent men, women, and children, since the introduction of Christianity, have been burnt, tortured, fined, imprisoned; yet we have not advanced one inch towards uniformity”</p> <p>Believed it was not for the state but the individual to be concerned about his own salvation</p> <p>“Powers of government extend to such acts only as are injurious to others. But it does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods or no God. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg”</p>
Jefferson’s views on Islam	<p>Described Islam as a religion that repressed free inquiry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “Mahometanism supported by stifling free enquiry ”</li> </ul> <p>Used the examples of Islam and Catholicism to discredit the coercion of a state religion</p> <p>His low opinion of Islam as a religion and a political system had no bearing on his support for the rights of future American Muslims</p> <p>Jefferson’s letters suggest that he believed that North Africans and Americans worshipped the same deity</p>
Jefferson’s idols	John Locke, Isaac Newton, and Francis Bacon
Jefferson’s 3 greatest achievements	Drafting a bill for establishing religious freedom called “the Statute of Virginia for religious freedom”, the authorship of the Declaration of Independence, and the founding of the University of Virginia
Jefferson’s drafting of the Statute of Virginia for religious freedom	“The insertion of ‘Jesus Christ’ was rejected by a great majority, in proof that they 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”
Jefferson’s argument against compulsion in religion	“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, but to extend it by its influence on reason alone”
Jefferson’s slaves	<p>By 1774, Jefferson owned 187 slaves</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is no evidence that he ever met a Muslim on his plantations</li> <li>- He kept detailed inventories of his slaves in his <i>Farm Book</i></li> </ul>
Morocco	First country to recognize American independence in 1778
No religious test to	Constitution: “No religious Test shall ever be required as a

hold office	<p>Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prior, almost all the thirteen states promoted Protestantism as the sole religion acceptable for political officeholders</li> </ul>
Distrust of Catholics	<p>It was feared that their political allegiance was to a foreign power, the pope</p> <p>Muslims, Jews, and Catholics collectively embodied all that was alien and menacing to the American status quo</p>
Ibrahima Abd al-Rahman (d. 1829)	Both Ibrahim and Umar were from West Africa, knew Arabic, had studied the Qur'an, and despite appearing to profess Christianity neither truly abandoned Islam
Omar ibn Said (d. 1863)	<p>Ibrahima's owner named him "Prince" because of his still proud ways and Ibrahima's references to his elite position in Africa</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ibrahima would meet Dr. Cox after 20 years of slavery, whom Ibrahima's father had saved when the white traveler was ill and lost in West Africa, and he would attempt but fail to buy Ibrahima's freedom</li> <li>- It was claimed that he was the most famous African in America</li> <li>- Met with President John Quincy Adams</li> <li>- Ibrahima and his wife would be able to leave for Liberia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Most of his progeny would remain in slavery in Mississippi</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Omar wrote his autobiography in Arabic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Omar praised the family with whom he would live more than fifty years <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "Whatever they eat, I eat; and whatever they wear they give me to wear"</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Sent a copy of the Bible in Arabic by Francis Scott Key, who wrote the words to "The Star-Spangled Banner"</li> </ul>
U.S. peace treaty with Tripoli in 1797	"As the government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion,—as it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion or tranquility of Mussulmen"
Jefferson disagrees with John Adams	"That you and I differ in our ideas of the best form of government is well known to us both: but we have differed as friends do, respecting the purity of each other's motives"
John Quincy Adams on the Qur'an	"The precept of the Koran is, perpetual war against all who deny, that Mahomet is the prophet of God"
<i>An History of the Corruptions of Christianity</i>	<p>Written by a British Unitarian, Joseph Priestley (d. 1804);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Denied the Trinity and emphasized the humanity of Jesus</li> <li>- Jefferson: "Priestley's learned writings on Unitarianism are, or should be, in every hand"</li> </ul>

President Dwight Eisenhower	“And I should like to assure you, my Islamic friends, that under the American Constitution, under American tradition, and in American hearts, this Center, this place of worship, is just as welcome as could be a similar edifice of any other religion ... The concept is indeed part of America, and without that concept we would be something else than what we are”
“Judeo-Christian”  Arthur Cohen	Not a phrase used by any 18th-century Founder  Jewish author of <i>The Myth of the Judeo-Christian Tradition</i> : “We can learn much from the history of Jewish-Christian relations, but one thing we cannot make of it is a discourse of community, fellowship, and understanding”
Is Islam compatible with democracy?	The legitimate question is not whether Islam or Sharia is compatible with democracy, but whether American democratic institutions truly support the religious and legal equality of Muslim citizens, as they claim to do

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