

MISCELLANEOUS BACKGROUND: FOUNDING FATHERS, DEISM, DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE ...

Some of our founding fathers were Christians; some were deists. To learn more of what it means to be a deist, you can reference the information across the page: "The Un-Official Tenets of Deism".

The verses below in Romans also help to explain the beliefs of the deist. The self-evident witness of God in creation makes it obvious that there is a God, a Creator. The deist would agree with the self-evident witness of something—a God or Creator, but he or she would believe that reason and not revelation—the Bible—is the way that we should understand this witness. Thus, a deist values reason above revelation. In fact, some deists would be very negative toward the Bible or any kind of revelation. One biographer put it this way speaking of Thomas Jefferson. He said that Jefferson gave reason the "pride of place" over revelation.

This becomes even more "revealing" as you study the Declaration of Independence and immediately observe the influence of Jefferson's deistic beliefs on the language of the document.

- When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

- (Romans 1:19-21 NLT) They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God. Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused.
- (Psalm 19:1-2 NLT) The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship. Day after day they continue to speak; night after night they make him known.

The Un-Official Tenets of Deism

1. Belief in God based on Reason, Experience and Nature (nature of the universe) rather than on the basis of holy texts and divine revelation. ...
2. Belief that the nature of God is abstract and generally incomprehensible which puts it beyond definition for humanity at this time. Furthermore, human language is limited and inadequate to define God; however, man can use Reason to theorize and speculate on what this possible nature is.
3. Belief that man's relationship with God is transpersonal. However, this does not create a feeling of a distant and cold deity but of one in which God has a profound and unfathomable relationship with all of creation (nature) rather than just one aspect of it.
4. Belief that humanity has the ability to use Reason to develop ethical/moral principles and through the application of Reason these principles can be used to implement moral behavior, which in turn creates a Utilitarian-Humanist morality. Essentially, humans can be guided by their conscience in matters of morality.
5. Belief that humans have the individual capability of experiencing God, which is defined as spirituality. These spiritual experiences are multi-faceted and can include awe, epiphany, fellowship and even the transcendental. Essentially, each human is capable of having a profound experience of God and nature.
6. Belief that God should be honored in a way that the individual believes is best and most appropriate for them. Individuals must determine for themselves how best to honor God and only they can develop how to accomplish this. ...
7. Belief in the principle of Natural Law that states that all men and women are created equal to each other with inherent freedom and liberty so that no human has more worth than another. ...
8. Belief that mankind's purpose is to use our God-given reason to understand what it means to be alive in every sense of the word (to live life to the fullest) and to act in such a way as to secure human happiness and contentment for all involved.
9. Belief that Reason and Respect are God-given traits to mankind and that we are to utilize them in all aspects of our daily lives thus creating a pragmatic approach to life. This includes respecting other alternative views and opinions of God (other religions) as long as they do not produce harm and/or infringe upon others.

[*Adapted from: <http://progressivedeism.blogspot.com/2008/06/un-official-tenets-of-deism.html>]