



Leftists, “Conservatives,” and the Founders

There is quite possibly no arena like that of politics to which this maxim more readily pertains. Neither, perhaps, is there anything quite as illustrative of both the maxim itself and its political application as the ubiquitous phenomenon of enlisting the Founders in the service of justifying every conceivable ideological cause.

However, once we go behind the scenes of political theater, what we discover is that this trans-partisan devotion to the Founding Fathers is not what it appears to be. More to the point, what we see is that either the devotion was deliberately contrived from the outset or, if not, it is something that immediately gives way under the pressure of just a little familiarity with basic logic. For the vast majority of political actors — i.e., our fellow countrymen and women — their reverence for the Founders is either insincere or groundless.



References to the Founders scarcely have anything at all to do with actual history. Rather, they are almost always all-purpose rhetorical instruments designed to further some partisan agenda or other. There is no shortage of considerations to establish the truth of this contention.

Notice that, first of all, for all of the talk of “the Founders,” it is just that: talk of some generic, monolithic collectivity called, simply, *the Founders*. Seldom indeed are there any references to names of *specific* Founders, and when such specificity is in the coming, it is as narrow in scope as it is impoverished in depth: No more than a small handful of names from the entire Founding generation receive mention, and when they do, it is one-dimensional caricatures who they reveal. Worst, men — like, say, Jefferson and Adams — whose political visions were not only mutually antagonistic, but rooted in a philosophical divide that ran much more deeply than that which separates Republicans and Democrats of today — are spoken of as if they were indistinguishable from one another.

In reality, of course, we don’t exaggerate in saying of the Founders that, though they were all clearly men of their time, they nevertheless were not a monolithic bunch. For proof of this, we need only juxtapose the oft-referenced *The Federalist Papers* with the less referenced, and even, perhaps, less known, *Anti-Federalist Papers*.

Secondly, leftists are particularly unbelievable when it comes to the subject of the Founders. If you want to know what the leftist really thinks about this (and every other) matter, then you must observe him in the wild, in his element, unencumbered by the reservations of disenchanting Americans outside of *academia*.

The most casual of strolls down the hallway of your average liberal arts/humanities department in no



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time discloses to all with eyes to see exactly what kind of esteem the leftist holds the Founders. To put it bluntly, for the latter the former has unmitigated contempt. This is the only conclusion that a remotely reasonable observer could draw.

Truly, though, how could the leftist have anything but revulsion toward those who gave birth to these United States of America? After all, if the *predominance* of whites in the Tea Party, the suburbs, the Republican Party, and virtually anywhere and everywhere else argues powerfully on behalf of the presence of “racism,” then the *exclusivity* of whites among, say, the framers of the Constitution, renders *their* “racism” self-evident! And since, for the leftist, there is nothing more horrible, more unpardonable, than “racism,” the Founders, by virtue of being “racist,” must be dreadful.

But the Founders are *especially* abominable, as far as the leftist is concerned, for many of the Founders *enslaved* blacks. Those who didn’t, however, weren’t any better, for they did nothing to abolish “the peculiar institution” and, in fact, proceeded to erect what would become the most prosperous nation in all of human history upon the sweat, blood, and labor of those who they regarded as “three-fifths of a person!”

For the academic leftist, we must bear in mind, there are certain moral failings — “racism,” “sexism,” “homophobia,” “imperialism,” etc. — that have become the equivalents of mortal sins. Now, the leftist has an uncanny ability to detect these offenses lurking within the most seemingly innocuous of circumstances. Just a few among a virtual infinity of examples will suffice to remind readers of what they already know: A white person who expresses concern about crime, moves to suburbia, or admits to being a conservative must be “racist”; a husband who believes that he should be the primary earner of his household must be a “sexist”; and anyone who thinks that marriage is an heterosexual institution and should be treated as such must be a “homophobe.”

If, in spite of our inexhaustible labors to avoid being stigmatized by his charges, *we* are nonetheless effortlessly convicted by the leftist of just those things that he regards as the most abominable of transgressions, then how much more guilty must our Founders be by his lights! And in addition to being incorrigible “racists,” “sexists,” and “homophobes,” the Founders were also proponents of “capitalism” and “limited government!” Bourgeoisie! Oppressors!

Leftists outside of academia obviously cannot speak so boldly. But to the extent that they share their academic counterparts’ vision of morality, they can only view the Founders in precisely the same light. Under no conceivable circumstances can either the rudiments of logic or those of morality reconcile the leftist’s political-morality with *respect*, much less *reverence*, for the Founders. The two are as mutually incompatible with one another as are a square and a circle.

This being said, it is also worth noting that neither can most of today’s self-declared “conservatives” — i.e., those affiliated with the Republican Party, either as office holders or media personalities — harmonize their professed devotion to the Founders with their positions on political matters.

Not only do our “conservatives” not infrequently pay homage to the very same politically correct conception of morality endorsed by leftists — criticisms of Clarence Thomas, Colin Powell, and Condoleeza Rice are “racist,” while criticisms of Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann are “sexist,” etc.; they also unapologetically advance causes that are radically antithetical to both the letter and the spirit of the Constitution and the vision of liberty that it was meant to embody.

Undeclared, non-defensive wars; nation-building abroad; and the continual growth of the federal government that such enterprises (among others that I will not here mention) inescapably entail are the



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most incontrovertible of such unconstitutional engagements that “conservatives” have undertaken. But if these activities are unconstitutional and, thus, liberty imperiling, they are, then, as inconsistent with the spirit of the Framers as anything can be.

There is one final consideration that reveals the “conservative’s” commitment to the Founders to be the proverbial house of straw.

Ron Paul is the *only* GOP presidential contender — the only mainstream politician of both national parties, truth be told — who has proven himself to be a tireless champion of the Constitution. The principles of the rule of law, divided government, procedural justice, and state sovereignty have never had a more ardent defender. He identifies himself, not as a conservative, nor even as a libertarian, but as a “*constitutionalist*” and “a lover of liberty.”

Yet his fellow Republicans, those “conservatives” who incessantly claim the mantle of the Founders, ridicule and insult him. Indeed, they seem incapable of resisting the temptation to attack him. Interestingly, however, even *they* do not deny his allegiance to the Constitution. Even his harshest critics do not dare to deny that he *is* “the constitutionalist” that he claims to be.

To Paul’s “conservative” objectors, we need pose one simple question: If Thomas Jefferson, George Mason, James Madison, and the rest of the Framers were to come alive again, in whom would they be more likely to discover a kindred spirit, yourselves or Congressman Ron Paul?

The question, of course, is rhetorical. Even Walter E. Williams, guest-host for “the King” of “‘conservative’ talk radio” and reliable Paul critic, Rush Limbaugh, had once remarked that Ron Paul would be among a tiny handful of our contemporaries in Washington with whom the Founders could identify.

No, given the forgoing considerations, it is hard indeed to resist the conclusion that could our Founders return today, they would be about as unpopular with leftists and “conservatives” alike as Ron Paul himself.



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