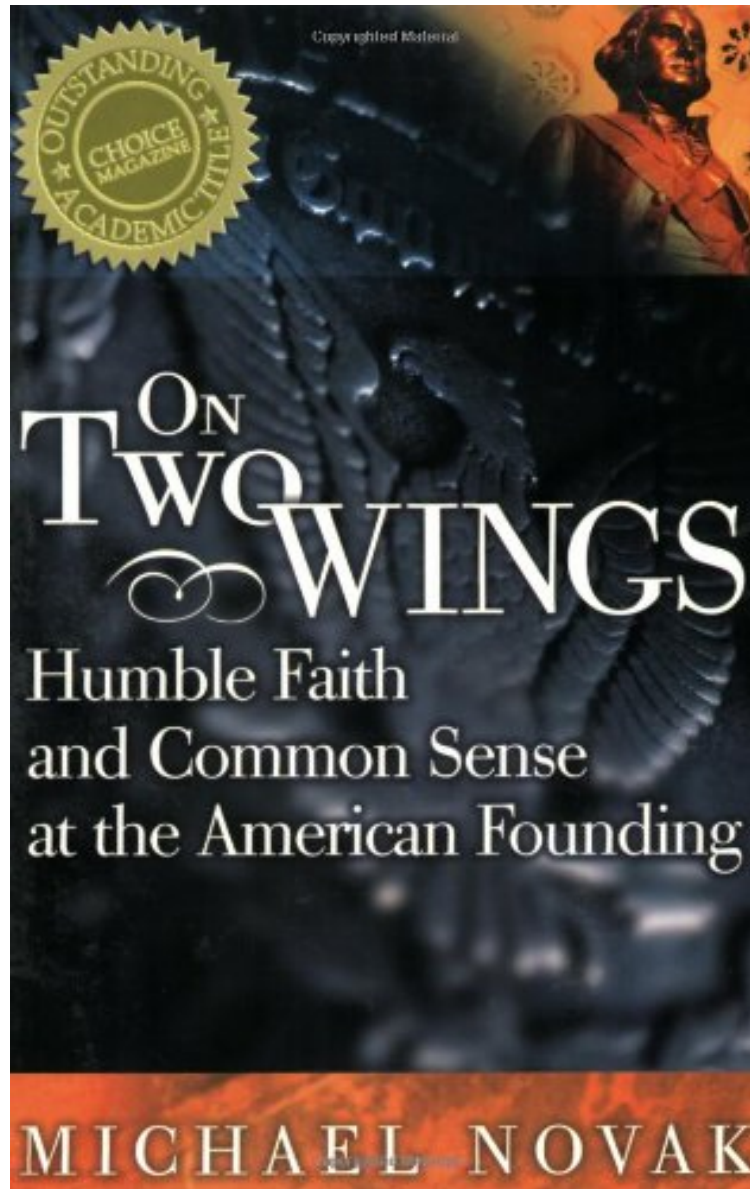


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# On Two Wings: Humble Faith and Common Sense at the American Founding

*Michael Novak*

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**Michael Novak : On Two Wings: Humble Faith and Common Sense at the American Founding** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised On Two Wings: Humble Faith and Common Sense at the American Founding:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. I would have liked to see more facts and context to support the ...By RuthieHmm..... a little too opinionated. A lot of it was interesting, and even true, but it was clearly biased. I would have liked to see more facts and context to support the claims, a lot of which I know to be true, however I think it could have been better presented. Some things I didn't know the facts on I was left wondering because I wasn't presented more than one side of the picture.4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Things You'll Never Learn in Public SchoolBy Monty RaineyIn a word, BRILLIANT!!!! We seem to be surrounded today by people who have wrongly interpreted the intentions of the nation's founders regarding religion. Novak decisively eradicates the false theories being pushed on our society, even by our own judicial system. Novak superbly presents the case that the founders intent was not to eradicate religious belief, but rather to avoid divisions of religious sentiment and find common ground among the Hebrew and Christian faiths. When examining the founders, many fail to recognize what life was like under the Anglican Establishment, which the founders sought to end. While being against the national establishment of a secular religion, the founder's went so far as to support the state establishment of such. While the first half of the book examines the intent of the founders, the second half takes a look at some of the founders who have been often overlooked by historians for their religious views. Overall, this book is clear and accurate. I was thoroughly impressed by the authors' research. The book reads extremely well. I only had two complaints about the book, I wished it were another thousand pages, as I absolutely did not want this book to end, and the font size was a little small, making it difficult for us old codgers. This is a book I will keep on the bookshelf by my desk, as I am sure I will reference this magnificent work often. I cannot recommend this book highly enough to anyone interested in learning the true intent behind the separation of church and state.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. informativeBy Irv BlankRecommended to me by former Senator Leiberman of CT and it is every bit as interesting and informative as he said. One gets a much clearer picture of the influence that organized religion played in the founding of our country when reading this very interesting book.

The leaders of the American Revolution, unlike the leaders of the French revolution, did not set out to erase religion. Indeed, the very first act of the Continental Congress was to pray to Divine Providence in the face of the British bombardment of Boston. In establishing a new model of self-government, the Founders believed that they were not only acting according to reason and common sense, but also obeying a religious duty. Benjamin Franklin proposed as their motto: Rebellion against tyrants is obedience to God. In telling the story of the forgotten if not deliberately ignored role of faith in America's beginnings, Michael Novak probes the innermost religious conviction of Washington, Jefferson, Madison and other of our Founders. He shows that while the American eagle could not have taken flight without the empirical turn of mind embodied in John Locke's teaching on the ends of government and the consent of the governed, the men who made America also believed that liberty depends as much on faith as on reason. In the course of his illustrious career, Michael Novak has written several prize-winning books on theology and philosophy. In *On Two Wings* he has created a profound meditation on American history, and on human nature and destiny as well.

.com "In one key respect, the way the story of the United States has been told for the past one hundred years is wrong," writes Michael Novak. "To read most philosophers and historians of the American polity today is to learn that America is an historical embodiment of secular philosophy, the Enlightenment." Nothing could be further from the truth, says Novak, who sets out to demonstrate just how important religious faith was to the founders. He makes a spirited case, noting, for example, that the very first act of the First Continental Congress, in 1774, was to make a public prayer. Of the 3,154 "citations in the writings of the founders," 34 percent are to the Bible. He provides dozens of similar examples. *On Two Wings* does not proceed as a traditional narrative; Novak favors extensive block quotations from his sources and conveys a whole chapter in question-and-answer format. In addition, a major part of the book is an appendix that provides brief sketches of the lesser-known founders. What the book lacks in narrative elegance it makes up for in forceful argument-- it pulls off the trick of being both brief and thorough. Readers who admire *Founding Brothers* by Joseph Ellis will appreciate this book, especially if they are religiously inclined. --John Miller  
From Library Journal  
Novak (religion and public policy, American Enterprise Inst.; *Belief and Disbelief*) argues that religion played a central role in the lives of, and the documents by, the founders of the American republic. He further attempts to show how Washington, Jefferson, Madison, and others had in common a "humble faith." He is most convincing when presenting evidence that biblical language and allusions permeated the writings of these leaders but is less successful in showing that the religion they thought useful for others also held personal importance for them. The book is weakened by a definition of religious faith so broad that "humble faith" becomes merely religious sensibility. Novak is clearly passionate about his topic, but he relies heavily on secondary works, so that at times this is more of a summary than an addition to the topic. Useful for collections seeking differing viewpoints on American history. Jan Blodgett, Davidson Coll., NC Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.  
From Booklist  
The U.S. isn't officially Christian, but Novak demonstrates that the men who created it rooted the country conceptually in the Bible. The characterizations of God in the Declaration of Independence derive from the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament), probably deliberately, because all Christian denominations accepted them. Faith in God was ubiquitous

among the founders, who regarded religion as necessary to maintain a just and equitable society. Only a moral (because religious) society would foster responsible citizens; pursuing freedom without religion, individuals would create a chaos of competing self-interests. Finally, the founders' conception of rights derived more from Aquinas than from Enlightenment philosophers. Quoting so often from the founders and their influences that this is practically a documentary history, Novak is compelling on those major propositions and others. He concludes by answering 10 common questions about religion and the founders, and he appends comments on some lesser-known important founders and the Revolution's great fellow traveler, Thomas Paine, who believed in God despite disapproving all the religions he knew. Hard but invaluable informative reading. Ray Olson Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved