

Silver Spring, MD 20906

March 15, 1999

O. Anna M. B.

Brian Lamb

C. Shan

400 N. Capitol St NW

Washington DC 20001

Dear Mr. Lamb

Re: Smith, G. Washington

3/15/99

Thomas Jefferson

Abraham Lincoln

The Mill Valley man who phoned could not be a George Washington descendant. George Washington had no children. "Washington descendants" are all descended from his other family members.

Perhaps the other man on the phone asking about Washington's bible was thinking of the famous 19th century print of G. Washington (and his horse) praying in the snow at Valley Forge.

Douglas S. Freeman in his multi-volume life of Washington gave this supposed incident half a footnote and said there was no credible evidence it happened. He referred readers to the Washington biography by Rupert Hughes who "debunked" the story.

I was senior historian in the History and Government Division of the Library of Congress 1953-57, and prepared a draft talk on the religion of Washington Jefferson and Lincoln, to be given in the Old Capitol Prayer Room, which had a stained glass depiction of Washington praying at Valley Forge. I mentioned Washington's

inaugural address, which included an invocation of the deity, seeking his blessing on the new government and a quote from this was placed in a pamphlet in the prayer room. (I also mentioned the windows depicted a fable that just goes on forever).

From 1957-58 I wrote 90 concert intermission radio scripts for Messrs. Evans, Clark and Mumford, Librarian and acting Librarian of Congress. One of the programs was on J. Washington, with Douglas S. Freeman, who died a year or two later.

The director of a musical ensemble at the National Gallery called me up and asked if we had recorded Freeman reciting some famous Rebel poem, which he was about to do at the least provocative. Alas, no. He wanted to include this in a recording of Confederate music. This recording later made "The Yellow Rose of Texas" a belated hit song.

Jefferson attended church services every week in the U.S. Capitol but probably belonged to no church. There was a different preacher every week, I believe.

Jefferson included the words "the laws of Nature and of Nature's God" in the Declaration, reflecting the "Natural Law" origin of U. Law, which is the basis for claiming the US is based on religious belief ("God-given rights").

I found a letter Jefferson wrote in which he said he did not believe in any of the traditional dogmas of Christianity. He put an asterisk beside this and enumerated about a dozen Christian beliefs, including the Divinity of Christ.

I showed this to Kenton (Elmer) (Joyce's son), who sat next to me and he said someone else added the foot notes. I called the Manuscript Division (which has the Jefferson papers) and they said the notes were in J-J's hand writing.

Kelmer usually handled the lighter questions. I guess they wanted to see what I would say

(I am ^{and then was} a bad sliding Unitarian).

Lincoln, of course, frequently mentioned God. He was a member of a Washington DC Presbyterian church. He had a theory that the Civil War was God's punishment for the sin of slavery, I gather. He put "this nation under God" in the Gettysburg Address and put "in God we trust on the coins."

Dr. Griffith the head of LRL, asked if I couldn't get more about Lincoln praying in the draft.

I asked Ray Basler, my former boss at LRL, if Lincoln prayed. He said "There is always somebody who will say Lincoln was a praying S.O.B." (Basler was the editor of the Lincoln papers - people would ask him Lincoln questions and I would draft his letters.) He was on the same level in the LRL hierarchy as Griffith.

I found some preacher who said he came on Lincoln on his knees praying in the White House and put it in.

I don't know if Richard Nixon went to the Prayer Room meetings but I wonder if I had helped encourage him to get Kissinger to pray with him.

Lincoln, of course, told his cabinet in an announcement the Emancipation Proclamation, that he had communed the night before with his Maker.

"Natural Law" - We had Chief Justice Warren on one of our radio programs, on Blackstone's "Commentaries" which are based on the "Natural Rights" theory -

He asked the library to let me keep him a speech on the Bill of Rights (Washington University, St. Louis, 1955). I mentioned the Natural Law theory and the Justice Holmes contrary theory that law is based on custom and the prevailing leading ideas of society at any time -

Warren said he had just attended a "Red Mass" at Catholic University, and "they really feel strongly about Natural Law -

I thought in ~~defending~~ the Bill of Rights
you should use any argument you can find -
Natural Law or US Law being based on long
experience with opposing the Royal Prerogative
in England

Warren said someone had put the Bill of
Rights on a bulletin board in a government building in
Los Angeles and someone had taken it down (as did Carson
report). He said if the Bill of Rights was proposed in
1955 it would not be adopted.

I said the people most opposed to free speech
for unpopular causes were all angry about US
soldiers being tried in foreign courts without due
process of law, etc.

One of our "Law" programs was on Holmes,
with Francis Biddle. I sent Warren the other law
scripts, at his request including the Biddle script,
which later turned up in Mr. Justice's book of
essays on Supreme Court justices (Based on Biddle's
responses to some questions I drafted).

I enjoy your programs a lot, a welcome
respite from the Monica and O J Simpson flather.
Scribner just published a sketch of John Bateman
Martin that I wrote in a new biographical encyclopedia.
Martin, who helped write speeches for Stevenson,
Kennedy, Johnson, Robert Kennedy, and Humphrey, drafted the
'great wasteland' speech for Newton Minow. ~~The~~ Martin
was my fraternity brother at de Pauw University -
(I am from Fort Wayne) -

Carson Stuart was legislative aid on
Capitol Hill and was with Radio Martin etc -
now has a service for federal institutions on
events on Capitol Hill.

Excuse scrawl - Trouble with Hewlett Packard laser jet.