

# founding fathers beliefs

**founding fathers beliefs** played a crucial role in shaping the early United States of America. These beliefs reflected the philosophical, political, and social ideas that guided the architects of the nation as they crafted a new government and society. Understanding the founding fathers beliefs provides insight into the principles of liberty, democracy, and constitutionalism that underpin American governance. This article explores the core values held by prominent figures such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, and John Adams. It examines their perspectives on government, religion, individual rights, and economic policy. By analyzing these beliefs, one gains a clearer picture of the ideological foundations that influenced the American Revolution and the establishment of the United States. The following sections will delve into various aspects of founding fathers beliefs, including their views on republicanism, federalism, religion, and economic philosophy.

- Core Political Beliefs of the Founding Fathers
- Religious Views and Their Influence on Governance
- Economic Philosophies of the Founding Fathers
- Views on Individual Rights and Liberties
- Federalism and the Structure of Government

## Core Political Beliefs of the Founding Fathers

The founding fathers beliefs about politics centered on creating a government that balanced power, protected liberty, and promoted the common good. They were deeply influenced by Enlightenment thinkers such as John Locke and Montesquieu, who advocated for natural rights and separation of powers. The founding fathers sought to design a republic that avoided the tyranny of monarchy and unchecked majority rule.

## Republicanism and Popular Sovereignty

Republicanism was a fundamental belief among the founding fathers. They emphasized a government in which authority derives from the people rather than a monarch or aristocracy. Popular sovereignty meant that citizens held ultimate political power through their elected representatives. This principle was essential in the drafting of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.

## **Separation of Powers and Checks and Balances**

The founding fathers believed that dividing governmental powers among different branches would prevent any single entity from becoming too powerful. This system of checks and balances was designed to maintain political stability and protect individual freedoms. Legislative, executive, and judicial branches each had distinct roles to ensure mutual oversight.

## **Limited Government**

A key founding fathers belief was that government should be limited in scope and authority to safeguard individual freedoms. They distrusted centralized power, having experienced British colonial rule. The Constitution reflected this belief by enumerating specific powers and reserving others to the states and the people.

## **Religious Views and Their Influence on Governance**

Religion played a complex role in the founding fathers beliefs. While many of the founders were Christians, their views on the relationship between religion and government varied significantly. They shared a commitment to religious freedom but also debated the extent to which religion should influence public policy.

## **Religious Freedom and the First Amendment**

The founding fathers strongly supported religious freedom as a natural right. The First Amendment explicitly prohibited the establishment of a national religion and guaranteed free exercise of religion. This was a direct response to the religious persecution many colonists faced under British rule and reflected a broader Enlightenment commitment to individual conscience.

## **Deism and Rational Religion**

Several founding fathers, including Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, were influenced by Deism. This belief system emphasized reason and natural law over traditional religious dogma. Deists generally believed in a creator but rejected supernatural aspects of organized religion, advocating for morality based on reason.

## **Religion's Role in Moral Governance**

Despite advocating for separation of church and state, the founding fathers believed that religion and morality were important foundations for a just society. They thought religious principles helped promote civic virtue, personal responsibility, and social order, which were essential for the success of the republic.

## **Economic Philosophies of the Founding Fathers**

The founding fathers held diverse economic beliefs but generally agreed on the importance of free enterprise, property rights, and sound fiscal management. Their economic philosophy was influenced by classical liberalism and practical concerns about the young nation's prosperity.

## **Support for Free Markets and Property Rights**

Most founding fathers believed that private property was a natural right and essential for economic freedom. They supported free markets as mechanisms to encourage innovation, wealth creation, and individual independence. Secure property rights were seen as fundamental to protecting liberty.

## **Debates over Federal Economic Policy**

The founding fathers debated the appropriate role of the federal government in economic affairs. Alexander Hamilton advocated for a strong central government to promote industry, establish a national bank, and manage debt. In contrast, Thomas Jefferson favored agrarianism, limited government intervention, and states' rights in economic matters.

## **Fiscal Responsibility and National Debt**

Concerns about national debt and fiscal responsibility were central to the founding fathers' beliefs. They emphasized the need for balanced budgets and prudent management of public finances to maintain national stability and creditworthiness.

## **Views on Individual Rights and Liberties**

A core element of founding fathers' beliefs was the protection of individual rights and liberties against governmental infringement. They sought to enshrine fundamental freedoms within the new constitutional framework.

## **Natural Rights Philosophy**

The founding fathers embraced the concept of natural rights, which held that individuals possess inherent rights simply by virtue of being human. Life, liberty, and property were seen as inalienable rights that governments must protect. This philosophy underpinned the Declaration of Independence.

## **Bill of Rights and Civil Liberties**

The Bill of Rights was adopted to guarantee essential civil liberties, including freedom of speech, religion, assembly, and the right to a fair trial. These amendments reflected the founding fathers' commitment to limiting government power and safeguarding personal freedoms.

## **Balancing Security and Freedom**

The founding fathers recognized the tension between ensuring national security and preserving individual liberties. They sought to create a government capable of protecting the nation while respecting personal rights, a balance that continues to influence American political discourse.

## **Federalism and the Structure of Government**

Federalism was a defining characteristic of the American political system shaped by the founding fathers' beliefs. It involved dividing power between the national government and state governments to prevent tyranny and accommodate regional diversity.

## **Division of Powers Between Federal and State Governments**

The Constitution delineated specific powers to the federal government while reserving others for the states. This division was intended to create a system of dual sovereignty, allowing states to maintain autonomy in many areas while ensuring national cohesion.

## **Compromises at the Constitutional Convention**

The founding fathers engaged in significant compromises, such as the Great Compromise and the Three-Fifths Compromise, to balance interests of large and small states and to address contentious issues. These agreements were vital in establishing the federal structure.

## Checks on Federal Power

Federalism also served as a check on potential abuses of power by the national government. By dispersing authority, the founding fathers aimed to protect liberty and encourage political participation at multiple levels of government.

- Republicanism and popular sovereignty
- Separation of powers and checks and balances
- Religious freedom and the First Amendment
- Support for free markets and property rights
- Natural rights philosophy and Bill of Rights
- Federalism and division of powers

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What were the Founding Fathers' views on democracy?

The Founding Fathers favored a representative democracy where elected officials govern on behalf of the people, balancing majority rule with protections for minority rights.

### How did the Founding Fathers perceive the role of government?

They believed government should protect individual liberties, maintain order, and provide justice while limiting its powers to prevent tyranny.

### What was the Founding Fathers' stance on religion and government?

Many supported the separation of church and state, advocating for religious freedom and preventing government interference in religious practices.

### Did the Founding Fathers support slavery?

Views varied; some owned slaves and supported the institution, while others opposed it. The Constitution initially tolerated slavery but laid groundwork for future abolition.

## **What economic beliefs did the Founding Fathers hold?**

They favored free-market principles, property rights, and limited government intervention in the economy to promote prosperity and innovation.

## **How did the Founding Fathers view individual rights?**

They strongly emphasized natural rights such as life, liberty, and property, asserting that governments exist to protect these rights.

## **What was the Founding Fathers' perspective on federalism?**

They advocated for a federal system balancing power between the national government and the states to prevent centralization and protect local interests.

## **How did the Founding Fathers approach the concept of liberty?**

They saw liberty as fundamental, encompassing political freedom, personal autonomy, and protection from oppressive rule.

## **What were the Founding Fathers' beliefs about the Constitution?**

They viewed the Constitution as a living framework designed to establish a strong yet limited government that safeguards freedoms and ensures stability.

## **How did the Founding Fathers view the balance of power?**

They promoted a system of checks and balances among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches to prevent any one branch from becoming too powerful.

## **Additional Resources**

### *1. Founding Faith: How Our Founding Fathers Forged a Nation*

This book explores the religious beliefs of the American Founding Fathers and how their faith influenced the creation of the United States. It delves into the personal writings and speeches of key figures like George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams. The author examines the interplay between faith and politics in the early republic, highlighting the diverse religious views that shaped the nation's foundational principles.

## 2. *The Political Philosophy of the Founding Fathers*

A comprehensive analysis of the political ideologies that guided the Founding Fathers in establishing American government. The book discusses concepts like republicanism, liberty, and natural rights as understood by leaders such as James Madison and Alexander Hamilton. It also considers how Enlightenment thought influenced their vision for a democratic society.

## 3. *Letters of the Founding Fathers: Beliefs and Convictions*

This collection features personal letters and correspondences among the Founding Fathers, offering insight into their beliefs on governance, religion, and society. Readers gain a firsthand look at their debates and discussions during the revolutionary era. The book provides context to their convictions and the challenges they faced in uniting a diverse population.

## 4. *The Founders and the Idea of America: Beliefs that Shaped a Nation*

Focusing on the core beliefs that inspired the American Revolution, this book examines themes such as liberty, equality, and justice as envisioned by the Founding Fathers. It highlights how these ideals were codified in foundational documents like the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. The author also reflects on the enduring influence of these beliefs in modern America.

## 5. *Faith and Freedom: Religion in the Thought of the Founding Fathers*

This work investigates the complex relationship between religion and politics among the Founding Fathers. It addresses questions about the separation of church and state and how religious tolerance was promoted in the new nation. The book draws from sermons, speeches, and writings to illustrate how faith informed their commitment to freedom.

## 6. *Wisdom of the Founders: Principles and Beliefs for a New Nation*

A detailed study of the guiding principles held by the Founding Fathers, including republicanism, individual rights, and the rule of law. The book analyzes how these beliefs were implemented in the structure of the American government. It also discusses the challenges of balancing power and protecting liberties in a fledgling democracy.

## 7. *The Founding Fathers on Liberty and Government*

This book explores the Founding Fathers' perspectives on the balance between governmental authority and personal freedom. Through essays and speeches, it reveals their concerns about tyranny and the importance of checks and balances. The text also examines their efforts to create a system that would safeguard liberty while ensuring effective governance.

## 8. *Revolutionary Ideas: The Beliefs That Fueled America's Founding*

An examination of the radical political and philosophical ideas that motivated the American Revolution. The book traces how Enlightenment thinkers influenced the Founding Fathers' views on democracy, rights, and sovereignty. It provides a narrative of how these revolutionary beliefs were translated into action during the birth of the United States.

## 9. *Conscience and Constitution: The Moral Beliefs of America's Founders*

This title delves into the ethical and moral frameworks that underpinned the Founding Fathers' vision for the nation. It explores their views on justice, virtue, and civic responsibility. By connecting their personal beliefs to the crafting of the Constitution, the book offers a nuanced understanding of the moral foundation of American democracy.

## **Founding Fathers Beliefs**

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**founding fathers beliefs: The Faiths of the Founding Fathers** David L. Holmes, 2006-05-01

It is not uncommon to hear Christians argue that America was founded as a Christian nation. But how true is this claim? In this compact book, David L. Holmes offers a clear, concise and illuminating look at the spiritual beliefs of our founding fathers. He begins with an informative account of the religious culture of the late colonial era, surveying the religious groups in each colony. In particular, he sheds light on the various forms of Deism that flourished in America, highlighting the profound influence this intellectual movement had on the founding generation. Holmes then examines the individual beliefs of a variety of men and women who loom large in our national history. He finds that some, like Martha Washington, Samuel Adams, John Jay, Patrick Henry, and Thomas Jefferson's daughters, held orthodox Christian views. But many of the most influential figures, including Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, John and Abigail Adams, Jefferson, James and Dolley Madison, and James Monroe, were believers of a different stripe. Respectful of Christianity, they admired the ethics of Jesus, and believed that religion could play a beneficial role in society. But they tended to deny the divinity of Christ, and a few seem to have been agnostic about the very existence of God. Although the founding fathers were religious men, Holmes shows that it was a faith quite unlike the Christianity of today's evangelicals. Holmes concludes by examining the role of religion in the lives of the presidents since World War II and by reflecting on the evangelical resurgence that helped fuel the reelection of George W. Bush. An intriguing look at a neglected aspect of our history, the book will appeal to American history buffs as well as to anyone concerned about the role of religion in American culture.

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**founding fathers beliefs: In God We Trust the Religious Beliefs and Ideas of the American Founding Fathers** Norman Cousins, 2015-08-08 This work has been selected by scholars as being culturally important, and is part of the knowledge base of civilization as we know it. This work was reproduced from the original artifact, and remains as true to the original work as possible. Therefore, you will see the original copyright references, library stamps (as most of these works



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**founding fathers beliefs: Faith and Freedom** Robert D. Gingrich, 2012-09-01 So, what did America's founders really believe about God, the Bible, and Christianity? Find out in *Faith and Freedom—The Founding Fathers in Their Own Words*. This brand-new survey of the founders' beliefs provides easy-to-read biographical and historical details along with relevant quotations from the speeches and writings of Patrick Henry, John Adams, George Washington, James Madison, Noah Webster, Benjamin Franklin, and a half-dozen others. Often portrayed as either hostile to faith or unbelieving in a personal God, the Founding Fathers of Faith and Freedom just might surprise you!

**founding fathers beliefs: The Faiths of Our Fathers** Alf Johnson Mapp (Jr.), 2005-07-07 In this book, the author cuts through historical uncertainty to accurately portray the religious beliefs of 11 of America's founding fathers. (Motivation)

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**founding fathers beliefs:** *The Religious Beliefs of America's Founders* Gregg L. Frazer, 2014-08-15 Were America's Founders Christians or deists? Conservatives and secularists have taken each position respectively, mustering evidence to insist just how tall the wall separating church and state should be. Now Gregg Frazer puts their arguments to rest in the first comprehensive analysis of the Founders' beliefs as they themselves expressed them-showing that today's political right and left are both wrong. Going beyond church attendance or public pronouncements made for political ends, Frazer scrutinizes the Founders' candid declarations regarding religion found in their private writings. Distilling decades of research, he contends that these men were neither Christian nor deist but rather adherents of a system he labels theistic rationalism, a hybrid belief system that combined elements of natural religion, Protestantism, and reason-with reason the decisive element. Frazer explains how this theological middle ground developed, what its core beliefs were, and how they were reflected in the thought of eight Founders: John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, James Wilson, Gouverneur Morris, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and George Washington. He argues convincingly that Congregationalist Adams is the clearest example of theistic rationalism; that presumed deists Jefferson and Franklin are less secular than supposed; and that even the famously taciturn Washington adheres to this theology. He also shows that the Founders held genuinely religious beliefs that aligned with morality, republican government, natural rights, science, and progress. Frazer's careful explication helps readers better understand the case for revolutionary recruitment, the religious references in the Declaration of Independence, and the religious elements-and lack thereof-in the Constitution. He also reveals how influential clergymen, backing their theology of theistic rationalism with reinterpreted Scripture, preached and published liberal democratic theory to justify rebellion. Deftly blending history, religion, and political thought, Frazer succeeds in showing that the American experiment was neither a wholly secular venture nor an attempt to create a Christian nation founded on biblical principles. By showcasing the actual approach taken by these key Founders, he suggests a viable solution to the twenty-first-century standoff over the relationship between church and state-and challenges partisans on both sides to articulate their visions for America on their own merits without holding the Founders hostage to positions they never held.

**founding fathers beliefs: Our Christian Founding Fathers** William Beckman, 2015-06-26 The American public has been told what recent historians wanted them to believe: the United States is not a Christian nation. This is true in only one respect. You don't have to be a Christian following a specific denomination to be an American citizen. However, the ideological foundation this country is based on Christian principles, developed by Christian Founding Fathers. Modern historians have distorted these facts. To correct these distortions, the biographies of the Founding Fathers, their actual statements and Christian beliefs, are presented in this work. The catalyst for the birth of our nation was the moment when Benjamin Franklin, incorrectly considered a Deist by many, suggested that the quarrelsome Continental Convention recognize how the Creator had listened to and answered their prayers in the past. He suggested daily prayer be instituted, asking henceforth, prayers imploring the assistance of heaven, and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this assembly every morning. The quarreling continued, but the emphasis became how to successfully unite the newly independent colonies. The colonies united under Christian principles; however, over

the years those principles and their original intent have been diluted. Recognizing the condition of the world today, isn't it a good time to renew those principles?

**founding fathers beliefs: Ten Tortured Words** Stephen Mansfield, 2007-06-10 In the steamy summer of 1787, as America's founding fathers fashioned their Constitution, they told the most powerful institution in their new nation what it must not do: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion. Few Americans understand the miracle in world history these ten words represent. For the first time in human experience, the legislative power of a nation was forbidden from legislating the conscience of man. And for over one hundred and fifty years, religion flourished, institutions of faith multiplied, and revivals transformed whole communities. The elected representatives of the people often called for days of prayer, recognizing that religion is essential to national character. So what happened? Why is it that today a cross-shaped memorial or a religious symbol in a city seal is considered a violation of the Constitution? Why are pastors threatened if they speak out about politics and children kept from even asking about religion in the public schools? Ten Tortured Words separates historical fact from fiction, illuminating the events and personalities that shaped the writing of the Establishment Clause. In his straightforward, award-winning style, cultural historian Stephen Mansfield interprets the societal shifts that have led to the current rift between religion and politics, and takes a surprising look at what lies ahead for freedom of religion in America.

**founding fathers beliefs: The Founders on God and Government** Daniel L. Dreisbach, Mark D. Hall, Jeffrey H. Morrison, 2004-10-08 In God We Trust? The separation of church and state is a widely contested topic in the American political arena. Whether for or against, debaters frequently base their arguments in the Constitution and the principles of the American founding. However, Americans' perception of the founding has narrowed greatly over the years, focusing on a handful of eminent statesmen. By exploring the work of nine founding fathers, including often overlooked figures like John Carroll and George Mason, The Founders on God and Government provides a more complete picture of America's origins. The contributors, all noted scholars, examine the lives of individual founders and investigate the relationship between their religious beliefs and political thought. Bringing together original documents and analytical essays, this book is an excellent addition to the library of literature on the founding, and sheds new light on religion's contributions to American civic culture.

**founding fathers beliefs: The Founders and the Bible** Carl J. Richard, 2016-03-25 The religious beliefs of America's founding fathers have been a popular and contentious subject for recent generations of American readers. In The Founders and the Bible, historian Carl J. Richard carefully examines the framers' relationship with the Bible to assess the conflicting claims of those who argue that they were Christians founding a Christian nation against those who see them as Deists or modern secularists. Richard argues that it is impossible to understand the Founders without understanding the Biblically infused society that produced them. They were steeped in a biblical culture that pervaded their schools, homes, churches, and society. To show the fundamental role of religious beliefs during the Founding and early years of the republic, Richard carefully reconstructs the beliefs of 30 Founders; their lifelong engagements with Scripture; their biblically-infused political rhetoric; their powerful beliefs in a divine Providence that protected them and guided the young nation; their beliefs in the superiority of Christian ethics and in the necessity of religion to republican government; their beliefs in spiritual equality, free will, and the afterlife; their religious differences; the influence of their biblical conception of human nature on their formulation of state and federal constitutions; and their use of biblical precedent to advance religious freedom.

**founding fathers beliefs: Faith of the Founders** Edwin Scott Gaustad, 2004 Explores the religious beliefs of America's founding fathers and their influence on American history and politics. Specifically addresses the philosophies of Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, and John Adams.

**founding fathers beliefs: Hidden Facts of the Founding Era** Bill Fortenberry, 2013-07-06

Have you ever wondered how some authors can claim that the founding fathers of America were Christians while other authors claim that those very same founders were atheists, deists or even theistic rationalists? In this artfully written volume, Christian apologist Bill Fortenberry examines several of the quotes from our founding fathers that are frequently used to argue against the Christian heritage of America. In doing so, Mr. Fortenberry opens up to us a treasury of facts about our nation's founding that have been hidden by modern scholarship. Did you know that Benjamin Franklin only experimented with deism as a teenager and that he soon rejected it entirely? Did you know that at the age of twenty-nine he wrote three bold defenses of his Christian faith? Did you know that John Adams called the French Enlightenment thinkers cowards and atheists who were destitute of common sense? Did you know that he frequently referred to Jesus Christ as his Savior? Did you know that George Washington recorded a prayer expressing his acceptance of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for his sins? Did you know that he left the Masonic Lodge as a young man, that he denied being a member of any lodge during the founding era of our nation and that he referred to masonry as being mere child's play? With abundant references to the original writings of the founding era, Mr. Fortenberry provides American Christians with an invaluable defense of our nation's Christian heritage. Topics covered in *Hidden Facts of the Founding Era* include: - A detailed explanation of the importance of studying the founding fathers. - A chapter on the forgotten founder, Charles Thomson - An expose of the founding fathers' contempt for the writings of Thomas Paine - A study of the beliefs of Thomas Jefferson - A never before published analysis of Benjamin Franklin's conversion to Christianity - Documented proof of George Washington's prayer at Valley Forge - The most complete analysis of the Treaty of Tripoli ever written - A list of forty-nine correlations between the Bible and the Constitution - And much, much more...

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It is not uncommon to hear Christians argue that America was founded as a Christian nation. But how true is this claim? In this compact book, David L. Holmes offers a clear, concise and illuminating look at the spiritual beliefs of our founding fathers. He begins with an informative account of the religious culture of the late colonial era, surveying the religious groups in each colony. In particular, he sheds light on the various forms of Deism that flourished in America, highlighting the profound influence this intellectual movement had on the founding generation. Holmes then examines the individual beliefs of a variety of men and women who loom large in our national history. He finds that some, like Martha Washington, Samuel Adams, John Jay, Patrick Henry, and Thomas Jefferson's daughters, held orthodox Christian views. But many of the most influential figures, including Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, John and Abigail Adams, Jefferson, James and Dolley Madison, and James Monroe, were believers of a different stripe. Respectful of Christianity, they admired the ethics of Jesus, and believed that religion could play a beneficial role in society. But they tended to deny the divinity of Christ, and a few seem to have been agnostic about the very existence of God. Although the founding fathers were religious men, Holmes shows that it was a faith quite unlike the Christianity of today's evangelicals. Holmes concludes by examining the role of religion in the lives of the presidents since World War II and by reflecting on the evangelical resurgence that helped fuel the reelection of George W. Bush. An intriguing look at a neglected aspect of our history, the book will appeal to American history buffs as well as to anyone concerned about the role of religion in American culture.

**founding fathers beliefs: The Religious Beliefs of the Founding Fathers** Dallin F. Hardy, Weber State University. Department of History, 2005

**founding fathers beliefs: Faith and the Founders of the American Republic** Daniel L. Dreisbach, Mark David Hall, 2014 The role of religion in the founding of America has long been a hotly debated question. Some historians have regarded the views of a few famous founders, such as Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and Thomas Paine, as evidence that the founders were deists who advocated the strict separation of church and state. Popular Christian polemicists, on the other hand, have attempted to show that virtually all of the founders were pious Christians in favor of public support for religion. As the essays in this volume demonstrate, a diverse

array of religious traditions informed the political culture of the American founding. Faith and the Founders of the American Republic includes studies both of minority faiths, such as Islam and Judaism, and of major traditions like Calvinism. It also includes nuanced analysis of specific founders-Quaker fellow-traveler John Dickinson, prominent Baptists Isaac Backus and John Leland, and Theistic Rationalist Gouverneur Morris, among others-with attention to their personal histories, faiths, constitutional philosophies, and views on the relationship between religion and the state. This volume will be a crucial resource for anyone interested in the place of faith in the founding of the American constitutional republic, from political, religious, historical, and legal perspectives.

**founding fathers beliefs: The Founding Fathers** Emilie Colondres, 2021-04-27 The book tells a historical story about the founders of the United States. The first, Ideas give insights into their ideas and beliefs regarding the founding of the United States. The second book is about the role of God and religion in both the founding of the United States and also the government. The third book is about the battle between Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton.

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