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AN ORATION

DELIVERED IN THE

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

John Adams
IN THE

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On the 4th day of July, 1816

BY JAMES FISHBACK.

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To the Christian Republicans in these United States, the *real* friends of American Independence, this Oration is respectfully inscribed by

The Author.

AN ORATION, &c.

FOREVER hallowed be this desk, whether occupied in delivering messages of grace and truth through Jesus Christ, to a guilty world; or in tracing the will and ways of God to man, touching those principles which he has established, and which he approves of, for the construction and administration of civil government, in order to the freedom and happiness of the human race!

Fellow-Citizens!

IN rising on this occasion, I feel that I am about to address a christian audience, and in the anticipation of that fact, have arranged the observations I am about to make.

It has been usual amongst all the nations with whom we are acquainted, to memorialize the most important events with which their history stands connected.

The Jews had their Sabbath, their Passover, their Jubilee, &c. The heathen nations have their remarkable epochs, and celebrate them in various ways; and the christian world has its events and periods, which are preserved by its institutions and ordinances. The birth day of man's immortality, the day on which the Saviour of the world broke the iron sceptre of death and arose from the dead, is memorialized by the christian Sabbath.

The Fourth day of July is memorable in these United States, in having been the day on which the Independence of the American People was formally and solemnly declared forty years ago; and since its establishment, it has been usual for the people in the different sections of the union, to meet together to celebrate it—for this purpose we are convened.

But little advantage, it is apprehended, can arise from our exercises on this occasion, unless our minds are employed in forming correct ideas of the nature and source of those principles, which form the foundation of enlightened civil liberty, and by the operation of which alone it

can be preserved—indeed, our deliberations and reflections in relation to this government ought to be, to acquire a knowledge of those principles which are vital to its existence, and to cultivate those sentiments and dispositions which answer to their practical demands. These will be better effected, as far as the present occasion is concerned, by taking a short review of the history of former Republics, than by an exclusive survey of the means employed, the dangers encountered, the toils and sufferings endured, or the blood spilt in the establishment of our freedom. These to be sure are topics of great interest. We cannot admire too much the extraordinary achievements which rescued these United States from British oppression. We dwell with delight and transport on the illustrious men by whom they were accomplished—no praise bestowed upon them can be exaggerated; no tribute which a free and grateful people can offer, can adequately recompense the patriotic officers and soldiers by whose valorous deeds American liberty was established. These have been the themes of the historian, the orator, and the poet, and all that I could say, would be little more than repetition—an hour ago, in this place,* we heard an address of much splendour upon them.

It may not be improper to premise a few general observations, for the sake of perspicuity, before we enter upon the proposed review.

It is a first principle with all christian philosophers and politicians, that Deity is the original and legitimate source of all power. In scripture language, “there is no power but of God:” and “the powers that be are ordained of God.” Not only is the power of the people in a Republican form of government, but the power of kings and all other modifications of governmental authority among men on earth, are derived from God. The power of devils is conferred upon them by the same universal sovereign, and hell itself is the depository of his power for the punishment of apostate spirits, and finally impenitent men.

**Captain Percival Butler delivered an Oration at nine o'clock.*

This is true, because deity is the only *necessarily* existent being in the universe, and because all other beings are derivative; and it is also true, by reason of the fact, that it is in him they live, and move, and have their being. A different sentiment involves the atheistical absurdity, that man is self-existent, or if there be a God, he so slumbers on his throne, as to take no notice of him, nor exercise any controul over him or his conduct. I will not presume this to be the sentiment of any portion of this enlightened audience. The existence and operation of such a principle has ever disqualified nations for freedom.

Upon inanimate matter the creator has impressed certain laws, from which it can never depart, but by his appointment. Man, considered as a creature, is of necessity subject to the laws of his creator, for he is dependent. A being independent of any other has no rule for his conduct, but such as he prescribes to himself—his own will is his law, and his happiness is secured by regarding none other. A state of dependance will inevitably oblige the inferior, to take the will of him on whom he depends as the rule of his conduct in those points wherein his dependance consists. As man depends *absolutely* on his Maker for every thing which conduces to his perfection and happiness as an intellectual and moral being, it is necessary that he conform to his Maker's will—for a righteous sovereign cannot bestow those blessings, which are the rewards of obedience, upon subjects engaged in a course of rebellion against him.

When God created man, he gave him the *capacity* of reason and free agency, and thereby formed him for moral government—he also gave him the necessary information for his proper regulation. This Being, who is infinite in wisdom, power, and goodness, has so contrived and formed the constitution and frame of humanity, that the rule of right, justice, self-love, and happiness, are inseparably interwoven together, and are all in subordination to the divine will. Hence, the rule of obedience in relation to both individuals and nations, is reduced to this one paternal precept, “that man should pursue

his own true and substantial happiness." In order to this, however, it is necessary that he recognize the sovereignty of the Supreme Being, agreeably to the character he has communicated of himself, and bow to his revealed will as the supreme law of his conduct. There is to be sure a difference of opinion on this subject: from thence has arisen the different parties which have divided mankind, from the government first established in Eden, down to the present day. I may go even farther, and say, that this was the ground of difference in heaven, when a part of the angels revolted against the throne of God, and were on that account precipitated down to hell, while others by their obedience, kept their first estate in glory and blessedness.

The happiness or misery of intelligent beings, including *all* the subjects of the *King Universal* in the visible and the invisible world, have been, still are, and ever must continue to be correspondent with this diversity of sentiment and conduct. This must of necessity be true. To obedience was and is connected protection, security, and happiness; and against disobedience the denunciation is, dying thou shalt die; under which sentence is included all the pains and sorrows incident to a state of transgression. These evils, in consequence of transgression, have been rolling down the long current of time in some form or other, from the expulsion of the first parents of our race from the bowers of paradise, to the present period.

Man has naturally a desire for freedom, and was formed in a qualified and limited sense for it, not however, for *absolute independence*, for the reasons before assigned. He must of necessity be subordinate to his creator and preserver. The highest felicity and greatest freedom of which he is capable, in an individual or social relation, are secured by obedience—disobedience disqualifies him for, and deprives him of both. Transgression renders him incapable either of enjoying, or preserving a tranquil and happy state of liberty, in any way reconcilable with the integrity of the government of God, or in a consistency with his subordination to his laws. By

transgression against the authority of deity, the principles of human nature, sensuality, avarice, and ambition, which were designed to be kept in subordination to that authority, became the ruling ones—they obtained the mastery, and all that misrule, violence, and blood, consequent thereto, followed: “For know ye not” (said the Apostle) “that to whom you yield yourselves to obey his servants ye are whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness and peace?”

I know that it is not usual to hear men indulge in observations like these, upon occasions such as the present: they are, however, no less true on that account. The blending of religious principles with political disquisitions, has been for a long time almost proscribed. The advancement however, of religious, moral, and political science, and the growing conviction of the connection that exists between earth and heaven, will, I trust, fully justify me in departing from former custom. It can no longer be thought, under the blaze of light which at this time illuminates the christian world, that it is derogatory to a man's good sense or sound judgment, to assert the truth and importance of Bible intelligence, of Bible morality, and of Bible motives, in order to qualify a people for the preservation and enjoyment of civil liberty. It is believed that God governs, as well the inhabitants and kingdoms of the earth, as the hosts of heaven, and that the Bible is the book in which is published his will, and the interests and duties of men and nations, with illustrations and proofs of both. We not only see these things there proven, but the history of all past times, correctly observed, establishes them. In the acknowledgement of these truths and in a conduct correspondent, consist our security and happiness as a nation of freemen.

Deity delights not in the misery or slavery of man, and it is only as his licentiousness and crimes disqualify him for happiness and freedom, that the sovereign of the universe inflicts punishments, and imposes restraints. It is hence true, that he may will the same nation free at one time, and to be in a state of bondage at another. The mildest form of government is the Republican—more

general and correct intelligence, and a greater purity of morals are necessary for its preservation, than for any other. The different degrees of increased depravity at which nations arrive, render different modes of government necessary, corresponding in increased restraint and severity. By attending to the history of past times, we shall see the truth of these remarks established, and be enabled to draw much information therefrom, as to the necessary means for preserving our free institutions.

We have already observed, that it was the disobedience to God's commands, which occasioned the degradation of our first parents in Eden—it was that which imposed upon them the toils and sorrows to which they were subjected. After they were placed upon a new and gracious state of probation, their posterity became extremely corrupt and wicked: “and God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil, and that continually.” It was by reason of this wickedness that the flood came, which the righteous Noah and family only survived.

Some time after this great catastrophe, an association was formed, with Nimrod at their head, for establishing a religion and government of their own devising, and to get themselves a name in the world. These self-willed philosophers and politicians, no doubt, judged that their plans and inventions of religion and government, would far surpass those which God had established for the patriarchal state. They however disagreed, as men have done since who departed from the divine order of things, and they were scattered abroad on the face of the earth. In their migrations they carried the spirit with them which first induced a revolt against the government of God, and as a legitimate consequence of it, they soon after made themselves kings, who quarrelled and made war upon each other, as they have done since. The occasion of this *earthly king-making business* was, that the people did not like to retain God, the king of heaven and earth, in their knowledge, or to observe and keep his statutes, and he gave them up to a reprobate mind, to punish

one another for their wickedness, by the very institutions which they themselves formed in consequence of rejecting the institutions of heaven.

The first Republican government of which we have any account, was the commonwealth of Israel. Moses informs us, that it was a new thing in the earth. The form of the government and the laws, were prescribed by God himself—he appointed the offices, but the officers, who were Judges, were appointed by the people. The character of those who were to administer the government God designated. They were to be *able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness*. One of the most important features in a true Republic is the *reign of law*, not of parties or factions. Accordingly, the divine command to the people of Israel was, “Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, through all thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment.” The charge to the judges was, “Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift, for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous. That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live and inherit the land which thy God giveth thee.” David the son of Jesse, the man who was raised on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet-singer of Israel said, “The spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue, the God of Israel said, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.” David had the practical importance of these truths more deeply impressed upon his own heart, by the effects of some of his own errors, and by the sad consequences of the corruption and electioneering hypocrisy of his son Absalom, which he practised upon the credulity, the ignorance, and the vanity of the people. He seems to stand at the head of the electioneering list—it may not be amiss to repeat the description of him recorded by Samuel: “And Absalom rose up early, and stood by the way of the gate; and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, that

Absalom called to him, and said, of what city art thou? and he said, thy servant is of one of the tribes of Israel. And Absalom said unto him, see thy matters are good and right; and there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee. Absalom said moreover, O that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice! And it was so that when any man came nigh unto him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand and took him and kissed him—and on this manner did Absalom to all Israel, that came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.”

The Republic of Israel continued in the land of Canaan about four hundred and fifty years, when the Judges and the people became corrupt—ceasing to reverence the authority of deity, or to regard the principles which he had established among them, they were not sufficiently virtuous either to preserve their own personal integrity, or to bring delinquents to justice. Through the influence of irreligion, party spirit, and bribes, they lost their capacity for freedom—their immorality and corruption made a government of more energy and one more penal necessary to restrain them. We are accordingly informed, that “In those days there was no King in Israel, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” The sons of Eli and Samuel wrought wickedly—“They walked not in the way of their fathers, nor according to their law, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment. Then all the elders of Israel said unto Samuel, Thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways, now make us a King to judge us, like all the nations.” It became necessary they should come under the operation of a more severe course of discipline, to punish their wickedness and repress their licentiousness. When they desired a King, the Lord commanded Samuel to hearken to their voice. He informed him that their desire for a King was not an unexpected thing, but suggested that it was the necessary consequence of that progressive depravity, whereby they had corrupted themselves from the time he had brought them

out of the land of Egypt. Before a King was granted them however, to leave them without excuse, Samuel was directed to expostulate with them, and to shew them the way of the King. "And the Lord said unto Samuel, Harken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee, for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them." This was the reason of their feeling the want of, and of their desiring an earthly King. The same cause has produced the same effect ever since. And the Lord said, "According to all the works they have done, since the day that I brought them out of Egypt, even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me and served other gods, so do they also unto thee. Now, therefore, hearken unto their voice: howbeit, yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the King that shall reign over them. And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked of him a King: and he said, This will be the manner of the King that shall reign over you. He will take your sons and appoint them for himself, for chariots, and to be his horsemen, and some shall run before his chariots; and he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties, and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots—and he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers; and he will take your fields and your vineyards, and your olive yards, even the best of them, and will give them unto his servants; and he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyard, and give to his officers and to his servants; and he will take your servants and goodliest young men, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your sheep. And ye shall cry out in that day, because of your King which ye shall have chosen you, and the Lord will not hear you in that day. Nevertheless, the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel: and they said, Nay; but we will have a King over us, that he may judge for us, and go out before us, and fight our battles."

The necessary consequence of a nation throwing off its allegiance to God, is the extinction of all the tender sympathies and better feelings of the heart, and even the destruction of the first principles of nature, those of self-preservation. In this case the Israelites, having rejected God that he should not reign over them, preferred cursing to blessing, slavery before liberty, and even a cruel and ignominious death to a life of felicity. To that state of society which, by reason of its corruptions and depravity, a kingly government becomes necessary, the Republican form would be one of the greatest evils that could befall a people. It could not last but for a very short time, and a state of anarchy, violence and blood, would necessarily succeed. Hence, under a superintending providence, a regal government is never imposed upon a free people, but when they have arrived at an extreme degree of wickedness, and stand in need of extraordinary restraint and punishment. A desire for *offensive* war is one of the necessary consequences of licentiousness in a free people, which often eventuates in the subversion of their liberty.

In the history of the Jewish œconomy, an extraordinary train of stupendous and minute events is exhibited. Every transaction is so minutely marked, as every where to display the superintendance of God in the disposition of civil power. When the people were religious and virtuous, the power of self-government was delegated to them—they were then qualified for freedom: when they became irreligious, by renouncing their allegiance and declining their obedience to God, the power was vested in the hands of a King as a rod for the correction of their disobedience.

The same providential direction and superintendance would be as clearly seen in all the concerns of life, in the preservation of individuals, the rise and fall of Republics, Kingdoms and Empires, and in all the mighty revolutions in this world, as in the Jewish administrations, were deity to give us as minute and explicit a verbal account of them as he has of these; and as to prin-

ciple, there would be nothing contradictory between them.

The particular information given of the changes in the Israelitish government, embracing great as well as small things, and the causes which produced them are intended to shew us that God does govern—that the very hairs of our heads are numbered, and that a Sparrow does not fall to the ground without his notice. It is also designed to teach us that against *Him*, whose determinations and laws are published and explained in his book, no *might*, no *council*, no *cunning*, no *craft* can prevail: and that the individual or nation who walketh uprightly, walketh safely.

The history of the times that are past, is the prophet of the future.

The principles developed, and the truths established in the history of the Republic of Israel, are equally applicable to the Republics of Greece and Rome, and to those of a more modern date.

The Romans, who derived from tradition some knowledge of God and his superintendance over the concerns of nations, founded their system of policy at the very origin of their state upon that best and wisest principle, *the fear of the gods, and a firm belief in a divine overruling providence*. Their children were trained up in this belief from tender infancy, which took root and grew up with them, by the influence of an excellent education, where they had the benefit of example as well as precept. Hence, we read of no heathen nation in the world where both the public and the private duties of religion were so strictly adhered to, and so scrupulously observed, as amongst the Romans. They imputed their good or bad success to the observance or neglect of these duties, and they received public prosperities or public calamities, as blessings conferred, or punishments inflicted by their gods. Their historians hardly ever give us an account of any defeat received by that people, which they do not ascribe to the omission of some religious duty. For though the ceremonies there mentioned justly appear to us instances of absurd and extravagant super-

dition, yet as they were esteemed essential acts of religion by the Romans, they must consequently carry all the force of religious principle. *Having received but little, little was required of them.*

‘We neither exceed,’ said Cicero, ‘speaking of his countrymen, the Spaniards in number, nor did we excel the Gauls in strength of body, nor the Carthagenians in craft, nor the Greeks in arts or science. But we have indisputably surpassed all the nations in piety and attachment to religion, and in the only point which can be called true wisdom, a thorough conviction that all things here below are directed and governed by divine providence.’ To this principle alone Cicero attributes the grandeur and good fortune of his country. ‘For what man is there,’ says he, ‘who is convinced of the existence of the gods, but must own at the same time, that our mighty Empire owes its origin, its increase, and its preservation to the protecting care of their divine providence.’ From this principle proceeded that respect for and submission to the laws, and that temperance and moderation, which are the best defence against the encroachments of injustice and oppression. Hence, too, arose their unextinguishable love for their country, which next to the gods, they looked upon as the chief object of veneration.

As long as the morals of the Romans were formed and regulated by the *virtuous* requisitions of their religion, they were free and invincible. But the atheistical doctrine of Epicurus, which insinuated itself at Rome, under the respectable name of philosophy, after their acquaintance with the Greeks, undermined and destroyed this ruling principle. When the introduction of atheism had annihilated the reverence for religion, founded upon the apprehension of a superintending providence, the great bar to corruption was moved, and the passions of sensuality and ambition let loose, to run their full career without check or controul. The introduction, therefore, of the atheistical tenets attributed to Epicurus, was the real cause of that rapid depravity of the Roman manners, which led directly to the destruction of Roman libe-

erty. It might, in this state of Roman licentiousness, be said as it was in Israel, when that nation unfitted itself for liberty, by its irreligion and consequent depravity of morals: "There was no King in Rome, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

Julius Cæsar, who subverted the constitution of his country, was an atheist both in principle and practice. He asserted man's total extinction at death.

The Republics of Greece were destroyed by the same atheistical principles, which were the occasion of entombing the liberties of Rome.

The first principles of human nature, which are the same in all, prove from their necessary tendencies, as does the history of the world, that the mind of man must be under the controuling influence of a sense of Deity, and the binding obligation of his will, to preserve a sound morality, and to prevent that licentiousness which makes the strong arm of civil government necessary. They both prove that a nation possessing civil liberty, can only preserve and rationally enjoy it, by their influence. It by no means follows that a nation of people, who are willing and prepared to dethrone their King, and to release themselves from the yoke which a tyrant may have fastened upon them, are therefore qualified for freedom. Such an emancipation is often, by reason of the want of correct principle, and by the operation of a correspondent conduct in them, no better than unchaining the Hyena or the Tiger.

The events of the last twenty-five years in France, and the principles which gave motion and direction to that nation, afford conclusive evidence upon this subject. They are of the same character with those already noticed.

The politicians and philosophers in France were not the *original causes*, as some have alledged, but only the *main movers* of the state of violence and blood which marked the revolution, and aided in the military despotism of the nation. These causes were laid broad and deep in the pre-existing state of society on the continent of Europe, and more particularly in Germany and France.

of which these two orders of men availed themselves, for the purpose of promoting their respective designs. This *predisposing* state of society was brought about by the decay and almost entire extinction of the christian religion, which had been progressively and rapidly declining for a full century previous to the French Revolution, almost all over the European continent. The heart of man is prone to infidelity, and all those institutions which encourage this propensity, of necessity lay the axe to the root of public prosperity, by destroying the basis of moral obligation. The degeneracy of the christian religion, and the substitution of men's devices, explanations, and systems, for the truths and precepts exhibited in the gospel, naturally and necessarily conduct a nation into speculative deism, and practical atheism. Men of discernment, attending only to the deformities and contradictions of a system thus produced, after detecting their numberless mummeries, frauds, and absurdities, and taking them for a true account of christianity, reject it altogether; and being ignorant of any purer religion, plunge themselves into atheism, and as a necessary consequence, free themselves from all moral restraint. They then feel at full liberty to do *any thing* that does not endanger their own personal safety. Thus the whole system of morals is reduced to a mere calculation of *individual expediency*; there is no longer any general rule of morality, but every different individual has a different moral code, which he is perpetually fitting as circumstances arise to his own convenience, caprice, and inclination.

The greatest iniquity and corruption are not to be sought for, neither will they be found among the *heathens*, whether of a savage, or of comparatively civilized life. These idolatrous nations are kept within some bounds of wickedness, by their ignorance, and the few ideas of right which they have obtained through an obscure tradition. But the greatest corruption and iniquity, the most horrible blasphemy, the most atrocious crimes, are to be found in the thoughts, words, and actions of *infidels*, in those countries where the blessings of

revelation have been bestowed upon, and rejected by man. The reason for the greater wickedness in christian than in pagan countries is that with the rejection of the greater light of revelation, there is an entire disruption of morals, with the passions of sensuality, avarice and ambition, augmented with ten-fold strength and fury.

The whole continent of Europe, for many years previous to the French Revolution, had by corruption in religion naturally gravitated into atheism; and profligacy and intelligence being more universally diffused over France than any other nation of continental Europe, the explosion necessarily took place there in the first instance. It was a *state of society* in which infidelity had untied all the ligaments of moral obligation, and let loose all the depravity of the human heart to find uncontrolled vent in the commission of every enormity, that made an *effectual demand* for the labours and writings of Voltaire, Rousseau, D'Alembert, Condorcet, Diderot, and many others of the same character.

It was the corruption of religion, or rather its destruction, with a correspondent profligacy of manners, which caused the sanguinary scenes of the French revolution, and incapacitated that nation for civil liberty—yes, it was the total abandonment of the religion of heaven, and the moral obligation arising from it throughout France, that rendered the people of that country fully ripe for the explosion which was for a while to shatter into fragments all the principles of religion, and institutions of government. Mr. Jefferson, it is said, declared that when he was in Paris, *atheism* was the common table talk of the French Bishops.

The following are some of the sentiments which were publicly proclaimed by the leading politicians and philosophers, who gave character and direction to revolutionary France—they are extracted from a discourse composed by one of the orators of that nation, and printed and circulated by order of the national convention. “Man, when free, wants no other divinity than himself. Reason dethrones both the Kings of the earth and the

King of heaven. No monarchy above, if we wish to preserve our Republic below. Volumes have been written to determine whether a Republic of atheists could exist: I maintain that any other Republic is a chimera. If you admit the existence of an heavenly sovereign, you introduce the wooden horse within your walls—what you adore by day, will be your destruction by night.” It has been well remarked by an orator of the present age, that “the spirit of infidelity has the heart of a Wolf, the fangs of a Tyger, and the talons of a Vulture. Blood is its proper nourishment, and it scents its prey with the nerves of a hound, and covers over a field of death, on the sooty pinions of a fiend. Unlike other animals of prey, it feeds upon its own kind, and when glutted with the blood of others turns back upon those who have been its coadjutors, who if either its disposition or its measures could admit of friendship, would have been its friends.” Between ninety and an hundred of these atheistical philosophers and politicians, leaders in the mighty work of destruction in France, fell by the hand of violence. Emancipated from all religious obligation and correct moral sentiment, their only objects were individual and party aggrandizement. Enemies to all men, they were enemies to one another. Butchers of the human race, they soon whetted the knife for each others throats, and the tremendous being who rules the Universe, whose existence they have denied, whose Son they had pronounced the offspring of pollution, and whose word they had burnt by the hands of the common hangman, swept them away by the hand of violence, in an untimely grave.

To have preserved their freedom in peace and happiness in this state of atheism, was impossible. It had been a conclusive proof that God does not exist or rule agreeably to his word: The fact would have been established, that man when free, wants no other divinity than himself—that *human reason* annihilates the **King of heaven**, and that any other than a Republic of atheists is a chimera—Yes, these facts would have been established, in direct opposition to the order of God’s throne,

and in contradiction to the experience of the world. The French nation became, instead of a nation of rational freemen, a kind of suburb to the world of perdition. As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, he gave them over to reprobate minds, being filled with all wickedness, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, haters of God, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, without natural affection—denying the Lord God, and like brute beasts corrupting themselves, they became worthy of death by his judgments.

The people of these United States, after having achieved their freedom by the favour of heaven, and with a reliance on a superintending providence, looked on the agitations of France with much interest and solicitude, because they thought they discerned through her convulsive and bloody spasms the French people redeemed from monarchical oppression. The Americans looked forward to the period, but a little way off, as they erroneously supposed, when a sister Republic would arise in beauty and majesty, to make happy, and enlighten the people of the old world. Vain expectation! France had waged war against the God of armies, who was America's safety and protection, and in whose name she not only engaged in hostilities, but established her freedom. It was on this account that France, instead of being a nation of freemen, was a stall of death, and after having shed oceans of blood, and destroyed and been destroyed to the number of millions and millions, returned like the exhausted Tyger, fainting by the loss of blood, to her cage again.

Deity seems to have permitted the trial of the principles of atheism, and of that ecclesiastical and religious corruption which lead to them, to be made in the centre of christendom, where revelation underwent a total eclipse, while atheism, performing on a dark theatre its strange and fearful tragedy, confounded the first elements of society in indiscriminate ruin, and convulsed all Europe to its centre, that the imperishable memorials of these events might teach the world, as it had been taught by the sad history of the Israelitish Republic, to the last

generations of mankind, to consider allegiance to the God of heaven, and the truth and cultivation of the religion of Jesus Christ and its moral influence, as forming the pillars of a free government, the safeguards of society and of nations, and the parent of social order, which alone have power to curb the fury of the passions, to secure to every individual his rights, and to free institutions their perpetuity—Yes, the trial has been made, and the lesson has been learnt. Even the crowned heads of Europe, the Emperors of Russia and Austria, and the King of Prussia, have, in what they call the *Holy League*, explicitly acknowledged its truths. “We have, (say they) seen from experience, and from the unhappy consequences that have resulted for the whole world, that the course of the political relations in Europe between the powers, has not been founded on those true principles, upon which the wisdom of God, in his revelations, has founded the peace and prosperity of all nations. We reciprocally engage between ourselves, and in respect to our subjects, to adopt, as the sole means to attain this end, the principles drawn from the word and doctrine of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who preaches not to live in enmity and hatred, but in peace and love.” As an explicit avowal of their design in publishing their manifesto they say—“In consequence of the great events which have distinguished in Europe the course of the last three years, and especially the blessings which it has pleased Divine Providence to shed upon these States, whose governments have placed their confidence and hope in it alone, having acquired the *thorough conviction*, that it is necessary for ensuring the continuance of these blessings, that the several powers in their mutual relations, adopt the sublime truths which are pointed out to us by the eternal religion of the Saviour God, declare solemnly, that the present act has no other object than to shew in the face of the Universe, their unwavering determination to adopt for the only rule of their conduct, both in the administration of their respective States, and in their political relation with every other government, the precepts of this holy religion, the pre-

cepts of justice, of charity, and of peace, which, far from being solely applicable to private life, ought on the contrary *directly* to influence the resolutions of Princes, and to guide all their undertakings, as being the only means of giving stability to human institutions, and of remedying their imperfections." They therefore solemnly declare, that "the only ruling principle between the above-mentioned governments and their subjects, shall be that of rendering reciprocal services—of considering all as members of one christian nation, the three allied Princes looking on themselves as delegated by Providence, to govern these branches of the same family confessing that the christian nation of which they and their people form a part *have really no other sovereign than Him, to whom alone power belongs of right, because in him alone are found all the treasures of love, and science, and of wisdom; that is to say, God our divine Saviour Jesus Christ.*"

Yes, the lesson is learnt, and the truths are confessed, that there is really no other sovereign than God the Saviour, to whom alone power belongs of right, who is universal ruler, and unto whom every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess! May the inhabitants of the whole earth recognize these truths, and yield obedience to their holy requisitions!

The practical consequences to be drawn from the cursory review taken of the history of former Republics, and the lessons of wisdom to be derived therefrom, in relation to the interests and policy of our own country, are very obvious:

Do we desire our free institutions to be preserved—our liberty and equality of rights to be maintained, with tranquility at home, and peace abroad? We must improve our qualifications and capacities for freedom. To avoid an earthly King, that he shall not reign over us, we must become well acquainted with the will of the *King of Heaven*, and with the utmost integrity preserve our allegiance to him. It was the neglect and violation of these, that unfitted the children of Israel, and the people of other Republics, for freedom, and produced the

necessity of kings, whom God gave them in displeasure. We must understand and foster the great vital republican principles taught us by Jesus Christ, who commands us to "be called of no man, Lord," for, said he, "one is your master, even Christ, all ye are brethren"—"He that would be chief among you, let him be your servant." God is our sovereign King, and we are brethren and fellow-citizens. So long as these sentiments prevail, no orders of nobility can exist among us. These sentiments, however, cannot prevail, but by the operative influence of the gospel. It is that which inspires with a fraternal and republican spirit, the citizens of the commonwealth, which infuses mutual benevolence, and subdues that pride, party spirit, sensuality and ambition, which have been the efficient causes of that usurpation, violence, and oppression, whereby our unhappy race has been afflicted. The want of this divine *equalizing* influence predisposes a free people to be practised upon, and led astray by the flatteries, the falsehoods, and the frauds of ambitious and unprincipled men, and leaves the passions without controul, to take their full sweep in tumult and riot. In such a state of things, the national tendency is to war; and through ideas of false honour, &c. which are its attendants, the blessings of peace and prosperity cease to be prized, and are made to give way to the miseries of the opposite state.

The truths of the gospel teach men to place a high value on human life, and to regard with affecting concern whatever tends to its destruction, as it is by these truths that life and immortality are brought to light, and those eternal interests are made known, the possession and enjoyment of which depend upon the improvement of time, upon gospel principles. Hence, the appropriate policy and disposition of a christian Republic, are the cultivation of peace upon earth, and good will towards men. To secure these as far as possible, and the other blessings connected with our liberties and rights, we are taught to elect for ourselves, "*able men, such as fear God, men of truth.*"

The necessity of having such men in authority, in order to the peaceful and prosperous administration of the government, is great. God governs; and it is only those public functionaries who live with his fear before their eyes, that feel his laws binding, and regard the happiness of a nation as depending in any practical degree, upon obedience to, and reliance upon him. Men, who by their conduct evince the sentiment that there is no God, or if there be one, that he takes no concern nor exercises any control over the interests of a nation—can it be expected that such men will rule in righteousness, or conduct according to the morality of the christian faith? Can any thing be more preposterous than to expect from men who are licentious and wicked, more virtue in public, than private stations? Men who would hazard their own lives and seek the lives of their fellow-men, in violation of the laws of God and of their country, in affairs of *false honour*,—can it be supposed that the blood and lives of their fellow-countrymen, and the true honor and peace of a nation, are safe in their hands? It is impossible. Their ideas of honour and propriety are in hostility to the laws and government of God, and a course of conduct prompted and regulated by them, whether of a private or of a public nature, he has pledged himself to punish. Such notions of honour and propriety are as deleterious in their tendencies to the real interests of a free people, as was the breath that blasted man's peace in Eden.

Again. Can the monied interest, or the public treasury, be regarded as safe, in the hands of men whose want of virtuous principle, and whose debauched and profligate habits tempt and lead them to jeopardize the support, yea, the bread of their families, upon the cast of a die, or the turn of a card? Men who would expose their wives and children, who are bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh, to beggary and ruin at a gambling table, must indeed be considered unsafe guardians of public property, and a nation's rights.

I might indeed, go on and enumerate in detail, all these immoralities of character which unfit men for devising systems of policy, and for the administration

of the affairs of a free people. They are all comprehended under the general description of those who do not live with the fear of God before their eyes.

The judgments of heaven are visited upon a nation, whose ideas of interest and honour, and plans of policy, are formed and directed by licentious and profligate men. Bloody and fruitless wars, and oppressive taxes, with all the grinding and complicated forms of misery incident thereto, follow in the regular order of cause and effect, and often end in the subversion of the government.

It was under a clear and strong conviction of the truth of these sentiments, that our great Washington, when about to take leave of public life, in his valedictory address to the people of these United States, expressed himself in the following manner:—"Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness—these first props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connexions with private and with public felicity. Let it simply be asked, where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths, which are the instruments of investigation in Courts of Justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition, that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail, in exclusion of religious principles.

"It is substantially true, that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government. Who that is a sincere friend to it can look with indifference upon attempts to shake the foundation of the fabrick."

These were the sentiments of our Washington. These are the sentiments of wisdom and of practical

truth, both in relation to men and governments. A direct connexion as well exists between the moral principles of public men and their measures, as in private life. Hence, Solomon says, "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: and when the wicked bear rule, the people mourn." And as an indication of the immorality and licentiousness of the people on the one hand, and their virtue on the other, he says; "They that forsake the law praise the wicked," they encourage and support them: but "They that keep the law contend with them;" they will not countenance them.

In respect to filling public offices by election, there is one view of the subject that ought to impress every christian republican with serious concern, in the exercise of his elective franchise—it is this, that the men whom he elects to public stations in this government, not only represent him in the councils and offices, in which they are placed, according to the social compact, but they represent him in the view of the God of the Universe.

Their irreligion, false honour, and profligacy, become his by representation; they are imputed to him by reason of his choice, and the evil consequences which are the causes of a nation's mourning, are visited upon him, and those who elect them, as their constituents.

As we would desire the smiles, the blessings, and the protection of the Supreme governor of the world, and long to possess the land and government he has given us, we ought conscientiously and religiously, to bestow our suffrages upon those men whose principles, and characters are formed upon his will.

It is in vain to expect a long continuance of national peace and prosperity, should his will and truth be not the ruling principles. Make the tree good, that his fruit may be good—for men do not gather grapes from thorns, nor figs from thistles.

It ought also to be considered, that christian and moral men, by electing anti-christian and immoral characters, confer upon them a *deadly* influence against the reputation, and interests of the christian religion.—Yes, a weight and extent of influence is thus conferred, far;

very far beyond what they could possibly possess as private men.

Nothing is more natural than for men to desire the success and prevalence of their opinions and sentiments, and to pursue a conduct calculated to promote them: and upon no subject is this more *practically* true than in *irreligion*.

The leading, and *essentially* distinguishing principle of character and action in our world, are identified with *Christ* and *Anti-Christ*.

Public opinion, and the morals of a nation, are very much formed and regulated by the principles and conduct of men in authority. No method could be devised; more effectually to produce national profligacy, and the subversion of this government by corruption and usurpation, than by filling all the public offices with impious characters.

I blame not the enemies of christianity—the licentious and the profane, for advocating different sentiments from these, nor for supporting immoral and dissolute men as public functionaries. They have a natural and constitutional right to do so, and they act agreeably to their own principles, when they do—but I do think that the friends of christianity and of good morals—the *enlightened* friends of our free government are extremely censurable, for uniting with them—they violate their duty, dishonour their Saviour, and injure their country.

Let me not be misunderstood. I am opposed to uniting Church and State together by law, so as in *any* manner to establish the *legal* tests, disabilities, or discriminations incident to religious establishments. At the same time, however, that I am opposed to this, I desire not to see the christian religion *banished* from the State by an act of legislation, or by the influence of erroneous opinions, or if permitted to remain, that its principles be allowed no influence upon the sentiments and conduct of men, except within the walls of the meeting houses, and there only for sectarian and controversial purposes, while its enemies exert all their efforts to destroy this salt of the earth, and to extinguish *this light of the world, and light of life*; and while, in

fact, it would not be more impracticable for the human body to live without the breath of life, than it would be for this free government to last without the morality and motives of revealed religion. It is desirable that they exert their divine influence over the consciences and conduct of men, in giving them moral rectitude in the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial departments of our government, as well as in the private conduct and social relations of men. In short, that they make public as well as private men, moral and wise.

A religion which cannot sustain itself in the good sense of a nation by its own evidence and intrinsic excellence, deserves not the support or regard of a rational people.

The plan of *establishing* the christian religion by human laws, and of placing its existance, or relying for its continuance upon their support, was of *infidel* origin, and was first devised for purposes of ambition, by those who neither apprehended the divinity of its character, understood its evidence, felt its force, nor comprehended its design in our world. It was not less absurd than would have been the notion of the necessity of establishing the earth on which we tread, by an act of human legislation, in order to its existence and duration. God has established them both, and they are supported by his power and providence in ways consistent with their nature, for important practical purposes to our race. In order however that advantages be derived from them, they must be cultivated. All that human laws can or ought to do in respect to them, is to protect men in their use and enjoyment, agreeably to the principles of justice and truth.

It is disingenuous and a violation of the truth to assert that any of the sentiments offered are in favor of establishing by law the christian religion, or any of those tests, or disabilities, incident to religious establishments. It would be more just in me to say that those who make the assertion desire the extinction of that religion, and either by an act of legislation or the force of public opinion to establish atheism as true, and to legalize every grade of profligacy and crime of which men are capable.

All that is desired of religion is that it regulate the dispositions and conduct of men *as moral agents*, by instructing their understandings and prompting them to their duties. In order to produce these effects it must be free.

From the history of past times and the principles established by the review taken, we readily perceive how easy it is, and how apt we are, to form erroneous ideas of the fitness of other nations for freedom, and to foster misconceived and misplaced sympathies for them. Upon no subject were the American people more mistaken than they were in regard to France during her revolutionary turmoils. It seems to have been the prevailing opinion that all that was necessary for the establishment and preservation of her freedom, was to dethrone her king, than which nothing was more erroneous. That people required and still require, as an indispensable pre-requisite to *self-government*, the moral sentiment and influence which alone can be produced by the christian religion. Do we therefore feel a tender solicitude, chastened by correct principles, that that or any other nation enjoy the blessings of civil freedom? we are inspired with anxious concern that they cultivate the knowledge and morality of the Gospel, which can alone give liberty and peace to our troubled world. Feeling the force of this sentiment we are in an especial manner urged to send the Gospel, the only means of civilization and peace, to our Indian neighbors; and as an auxiliary to it, to establish schools among them. We should thereby more effectually secure our frontiers against their depredations, and prevent the necessity of another war, and upon *much* cheaper terms than by relying exclusively upon standing armies, fortifications, &c.

Before concluding this address I cannot refrain from indulging in a few observations relative to the prospect before us, of the growing interests of civil freedom.

Upon this part of my subject I might detain you to enumerate the many discoveries, made in a few years past, in arts and in sciences for the amelioration and happiness of our race, for the preservation of life and

its security against the attacks of disease, for the mitigation of labor, and above all for the advancement and elevation of the human mind in solid moral improvement; all of which are indications, and conduce to the advancement of civil freedom, but it would consume too much time.

We have seen that sound operative morality and wisdom formed by the influences of the religion of heaven, are as the principle of life to a free government. These are the influences which enable a free people to assign to men their proper characters and stations in life, and to form just ideas of their worth, to distinguish between *principle* and *party*, and to discern in whom confidence may with safety be reposed. They are a sure antidote against the machinations of wicked men, because they refuse that influence and power which render projects of ambition ruinous to the prosperity and liberty of a country. The christian religion creates a tenderness for the lives of men, as it clothes them with unutterable importance on account of their relation to eternity, and discovers the qualifications necessary to be attained in time, for a happy immortality. It of course forbids the policy of going to war by which the lives and happiness of men are destroyed, except in cases of *absolute* not of constructive necessity. It dictates such a modification and mitigation of the penal laws, with the use of divine and moral instruction and discipline, as tend to reform the culprit, and to extinguish the principle of crime without destroying a fellow being. In short the whole plan of civil policy formed upon the truths of the Gospel, which teach reverence to God and the certainty of future rewards and punishments, is in subserviency to the beneficial designs of a gracious Creator, to promote the happiness and perfection of the human race, and his own glory.

The prospect of the growing interests of civil freedom thus explained, I think auspicious. It is identified with the efforts which are making for the universal dissemination of the religion of the Bible, and the success which crowns them.

Within the last twenty-five years more has been done for this purpose than since the age of the Apostles, with perhaps the exception of a few years, in the time of the reformation. When we cast our eyes back upon the last quarter of a century, "We view a vast immeasurable abyss, Outrageous as a sea, dark wasteful wild." It was in the midst of scenes like these, amidst storms and tempests, amidst calumny and invective, amidst alarming predictions and presages of ill success, that the Missionary and Bible Societies took their rise. They have sprung up with a solidity and strength which ensure their duration. They have advanced with a rapidity of growth which mixes somewhat of awe with our surprise and satisfaction. The thunders of war amidst which they originated are hushed into silence—the clouds are broken and the moral darkness is fast clearing away—the prospect is widening and extending.—The confused noise of battle, the groans of the dying and garments rolled in blood, sacrifices of false honour and ambition, have given place to a state of universal peace, in which the harps of Zion fling to the passing breeze their sweet and varied melody.

The influences of the gospel are rushing with renovated vigor in the fulness of their blessings from one extremity of the world to the other, kindling in their course all the elements of moral action, elevating the depressed, consoling the wretched, transforming vice into purity and folly into wisdom, dissipating the night of ignorance and idolatry, trampling on the necks of wickedness and oppression, binding the human family together in the unity of spirit and in the bonds of peace, and every where renewing on the face of desolated nature some image of primeval paradise. Nations appear in a great measure to be touched with a new principle of life. The potentates of Europe as we have seen declare that experience has taught them that the only mean of a universal pacification is the gospel of God the Saviour, who is the only sovereign of nations and to whom alone power belongs of right.

This state of things and these sentiments, fellow-cit-

izens form a new epoch in the world, and the time is not far distant when they must become universal. Nor is this to be wondered at; for it was by God the Saviour that "all things were created that are in heaven and that are in the earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities, all things were created by him and for him," that at his name every knee should bow and every tongue confess. He has marched down the track of ages, holding the north in his right hand and the south in his left, with his eye fixed upon the consummation of his mediatorial reign, forcing all nations and events to pay tribute to it. We can now view his administrations under a column of light, which leaves nothing for sophistry to carp at or for scepticism to doubt about. Looking through prophecy and marking attentively the signs of the times as explained by the words of truth, we discern that throne which Ezekiel saw in prophetic vision rolling on the wheels of providence down the descent of time, prostrating every interest raised against it, and overturning every obstruction which lies in its way for the complete establishment of its universal sway. We also see firmly united to its triumphant car the ark of civil liberty, diffusing light, happiness and joy in its splendid course. As it progresses truth will resume her empire over the tongue, the pen and the press; slander will wound no man's good name; sophistry will cheat no man out of his salvation; falsehood abuse no man's faith, and perjury destroy no man's property, reputation or life; and the name of glory and of honor will be no longer written in blood nor obtained by cruelty or violence: statesmen will cease to plunder, and the politician to sell his soul to buy a place or support a party. Throughout the haunts of men there will not be an electioneering falsehood, a trick, a cabal, or a demagogue—and public men will cease to feel power and forget right, and the interests of the people.

That Republicanism which derives its moral life and impulse from the gospel—the *perfect law of liberty*, involves no opposition or competition of interest or pur-

suit. By its influences it enlightens and purifies the mass of mankind, and fortifies them with lofty motives and celestial hopes. Its temple is seated on an eminence and is ever open, illuminated with the light that beams from the throne of God, for the free entrance and communion of every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. When its principles shall have done their perfect work, then shall the whole earth be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah; peace will run down like a river, and righteousness like the waves of the sea. Then shall the seventh apocalyptic angel sound, and there shall be heard great voices in heaven, saying "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever."