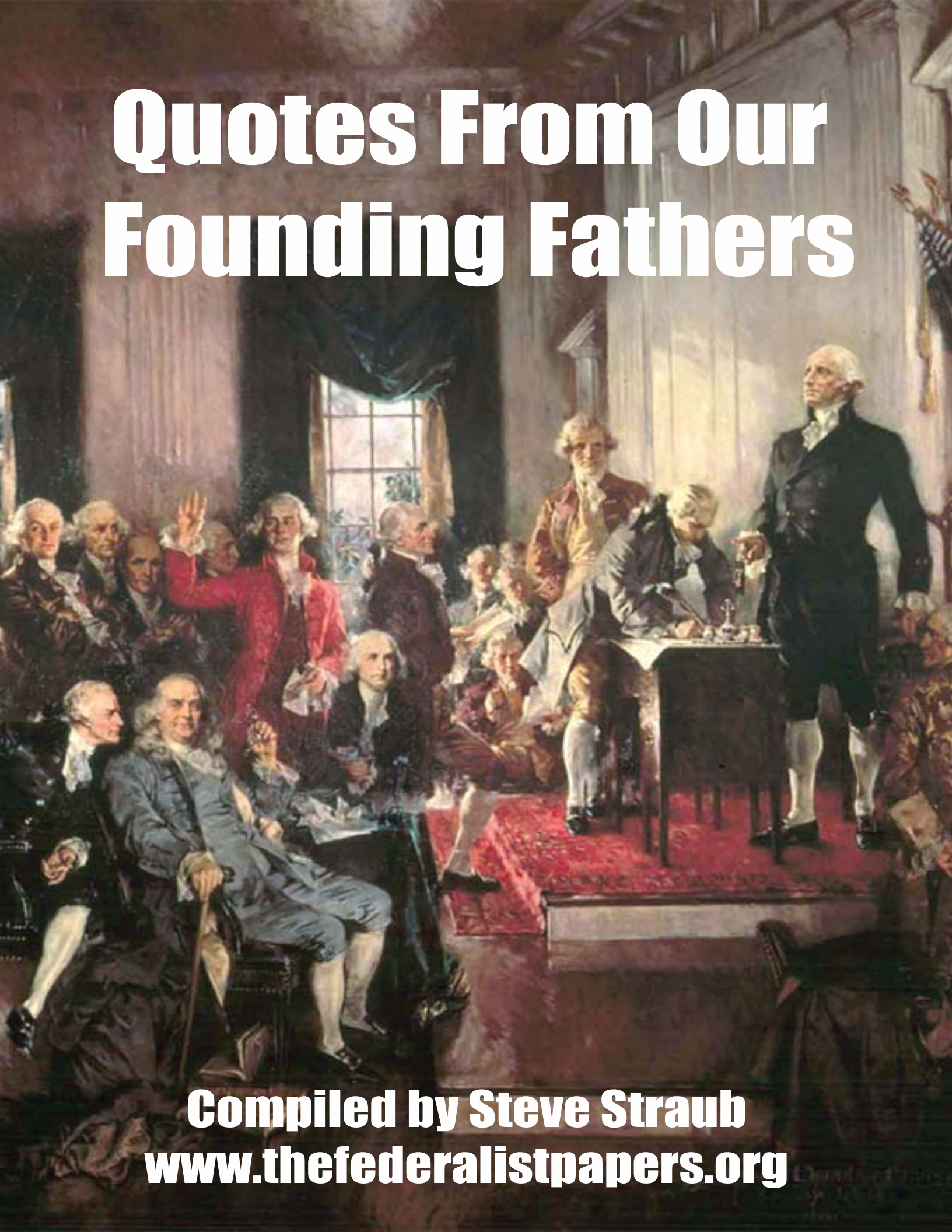


Quotes From Our Founding Fathers



Compiled by Steve Straub
www.thefederalistpapers.org

QUOTES FROM OUR FOUNDING FATHERS

George Washington
James Madison
Alexander Hamilton
Thomas Jefferson
Benjamin Franklin
John Adams
Thomas Paine

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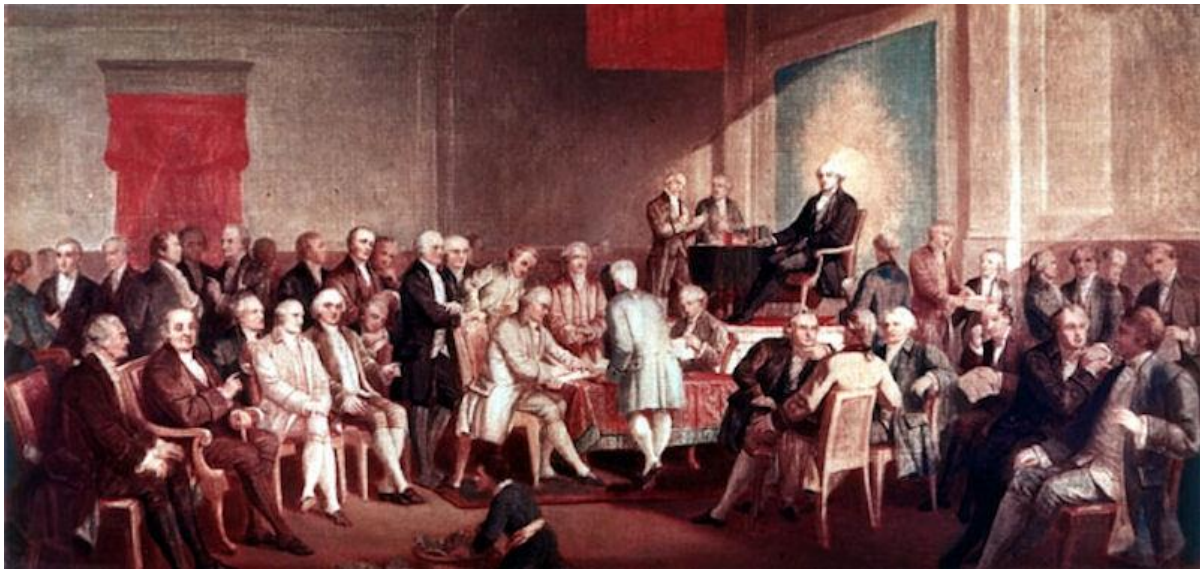


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GEORGE WASHINGTON QUOTES

Discipline is the soul of an army. It makes small numbers formidable; procures success to the weak, and esteem to all. – Letter of Instructions to the Captains of the Virginia Regiments (29 July 1759)

The General is sorry to be informed —, that the foolish and wicked practice of profane cursing and swearing, a vice heretofore little known in an American army, is growing into a fashion; — he hopes the officers will, by example as well as influence, endeavor to check it, and that both they and the men will reflect that we can have little hope of the blessing of Heaven on our arms, if we insult it by impiety and folly; added to this, it is a vice so mean and low, without any temptation, that every man of sense and character detests and despises it. – Extract from the Orderly Book of the army under command of Washington, dated at Head Quarters, in the city of New York (3 August 1770)

Unhappy it is though to reflect, that a Brother's Sword has been sheathed in a Brother's breast, and that, the once happy and peaceful plains of America are either to be drenched with Blood, or Inhabited by Slaves. Sad alternative! But can a virtuous Man hesitate in his choice? – Letter to Mr. George William Fairfax (31 May 1775)

But lest some unlucky event should happen unfavorable to my reputation, I beg it may be remembered by every gentleman in the room that I this day declare with the utmost sincerity, I do not think myself equal to the command I am honored with. – Washington's formal acceptance of command of the Army (16 June 1775)

Every post is honorable in which a man can serve his country. – letter to Benedict Arnold (14 September 1775)



Discipline is the soul of an army. It makes small numbers formidable; procures success to the weak, and esteem to all. To expect ... the same service from raw and undisciplined recruits, as from veteran soldiers, is to expect what never did and perhaps never will happen. Men, who are familiarized to danger, meet it without shrinking; whereas troops unused to service often apprehend danger where no danger is. – Letter to the President of Congress (9 February 1776)

Let us therefore animate and encourage each other, and show the whole world that a Freeman, contending for liberty on his own ground, is superior to any slavish mercenary on earth. – General Orders, Headquarters, New York (2 July 1776)

The General hopes and trusts that every officer and man will endeavor to live and act as becomes a Christian soldier defending the dearest rights and liberties of his country. – General Order, (9 July 1776)

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The time is now near at hand which must probably determine whether Americans are to be freemen or slaves; whether they are to have any property they can call their own; whether their houses and farms are to be pillaged and destroyed, and themselves consigned to a state of wretchedness from which no human efforts will deliver them. The fate of unborn millions will now depend, under God, on the courage and conduct of this army. Our cruel and unrelenting enemy leaves us only the choice of brave resistance, or the most abject submission. We have, therefore, to resolve to conquer or die. – Address to the Continental Army before the Battle of Long Island (27 August 1776)

The fate of unborn millions will now depend, under God, on the courage and conduct of this army...There is nothing that gives a man consequence, and renders him fit for command, like a support that renders him independent of everybody but the State he serves. - Letter to the president of Congress, Heights of Harlem (24 September 1776)

To place any dependence upon militia, is, assuredly, resting upon a broken staff. Men just dragged from the tender scenes of domestic life – unaccustomed to the din of arms – totally unacquainted with every kind of military skill, which being followed by a want of confidence in themselves when opposed to troops regularly trained, disciplined, and appointed, superior in knowledge, and superior in arms, makes them timid and ready to fly from their own shadows. – Letter to the president of Congress, Heights of Harlem (24 September 1776)



If men are to be precluded from offering their sentiments on a matter which may involve the most serious and alarming consequences that can invite the consideration of mankind, reason is of no use to us...My brave fellows, you have done all I asked you to do, and more than can be reasonably expected; but your country is at stake, your wives, your houses and all that you hold dear. You have worn yourselves out with fatigues and hardships, but we know not how to spare you. If you will consent to stay one month longer, you will render that service to the cause of liberty, and to your country, which you probably can never do under any other circumstances. – Encouraging his men to re-enlist in the army (31 December 1776)

Parade with me my brave fellows, we will have them soon! – Rallying his troops at the Battle of Princeton (3 January 1777)

While we are zealously performing the duties of good citizens and soldiers, we certainly ought not to be inattentive to the higher duties of religion. To the distinguished character of Patriot, it should be our highest glory to add the more distinguished character of Christian. - General Orders (2 May 1778)

A slender acquaintance with the world must convince every man, that actions, not words, are the true criterion of the attachment of his friends, and that the most liberal professions of good will are very far

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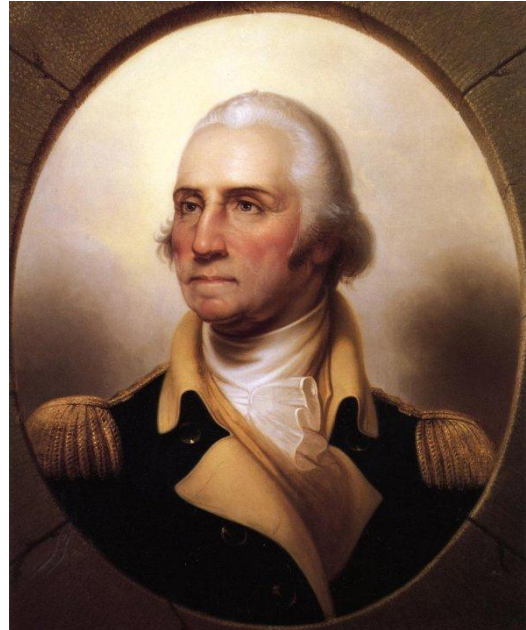
from being the surest marks of it. I should be happy that my own experience had afforded fewer examples of the little dependence to be placed upon them. – Letter to Major-General John Sullivan (15 December 1779)

Example, whether it be good or bad, has a powerful influence. – Letter to Lord Stirling (5 March 1780)

If men are to be precluded from offering their sentiments on a matter which may involve the most serious and alarming consequences that can invite the consideration of mankind, reason is of no use to us; the freedom of speech may be taken away, and dumb and silent we may be led, like sheep to the slaughter. – Address to officers of the Army (15 March 1783)

Gentlemen, you will permit me to put on my spectacles, for, I have grown not only gray, but almost blind in the service of my country. – Statement as he put on his glasses before delivering his response to the first Newburgh Address (15 March 1783)

Had this day been wanting, the World had never seen the last stage of perfection to which human nature is capable of attaining...You will, by the dignity of your Conduct, afford occasion for Posterity to say, when speaking of the glorious example you have exhibited to Mankind, had this day been wanting, the World had never seen the last stage of perfection to which human nature is capable of attaining. – Response to the first Newburgh Address (15 March 1783)



Happy, thrice happy shall they be pronounced hereafter, who have contributed any thing, who have performed the meanest office in erecting this stupendous fabrick of Freedom and Empire on the broad basis of Independency; who have assisted in protecting the rights of humane nature and establishing an Asylum for the poor and oppressed of all nations and religions. – General Orders (18 April 1783)

It may be laid down, as a primary position, and the basis of our system, that every citizen who enjoys the protection of a free government, owes not only a proportion of his property, but even of his personal services to the defence of it, and consequently that the Citizens of America (with a few legal and official exceptions) from 18 to 50 Years of Age should be borne on the Militia Rolls, provided with uniform Arms, and so far accustomed to the use of them, that the Total strength of the Country might be called forth at Short Notice on any very interesting Emergency. - “Sentiments on a Peace Establishment” in a letter to Alexander Hamilton (2 May 1783)

Arbitrary power is most easily established on the ruins of liberty abused to licentiousness. - “Circular to the States” (8 June 1783)

Founding Father Quotes

I now make it my earnest prayer, that God would have you, and the State over which you preside, in his holy protection; that he would incline the hearts of the citizens to cultivate a spirit of subordination and obedience to Government; to entertain a brotherly affection and love for one another, for their fellow citizens of the United States at large; and, particularly, for their brethren who have served in the Field; and finally, that he would most graciously be pleased to dispose us all to do justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that charity, humility, and pacifick temper of the mind, which were the characteristicks of the divine Author of our blessed religion ; without an humble imitation of whose example, in these things, we can never hope to be a happy Nation. – Circular Letter to the Governours of the several States (18 June 1783).

Having now finished the work assigned me, I retire from the great theatre of Action; and bidding an Affectionate farewell to this August body under whose orders I have so long acted, I here offer my commission, and take my leave of all the employments of public life. – Address to Congress resigning his commission (23 December 1783)

A people... who are possessed of the spirit of commerce, who see and who will pursue their advantages may achieve almost anything. – Letter to Benjamin Harrison (10 October 1784)

Democratical States must always feel before they can see: it is this that makes their Governments slow, but the people will be right at last...Democratical States must always feel before they can see: it is this that makes their Governments slow, but the people will be right at last. – Letter to Marquis de Lafayette (25 July 1785)

My first wish is, to see this plague of mankind banished from the earth, and the sons and daughters of this world employed in more pleasing and innocent amusements, than in preparing implements, and exercising them, for the destruction of mankind. – On war, in a statement of 1785

It was not my intention to doubt that, the Doctrines of the Illuminati had not spread in the United States... no one is more truly satisfied of this fact than I am. My manner of living is plain. I do not mean to be put out of it. A glass of wine and a bit of mutton are always ready; and such as will be content to partake of them are always welcome. Those, who expect more, will be disappointed, but no change will be effected by it. – Letter to George William Fairfax (25 June 1786)

If they have real grievances redress them, if possible; or acknowledge the justice of them, and your inability to do it at the moment. If they have not, employ the force of government against them at once. – Letter to Henry Lee (31 October 1786)

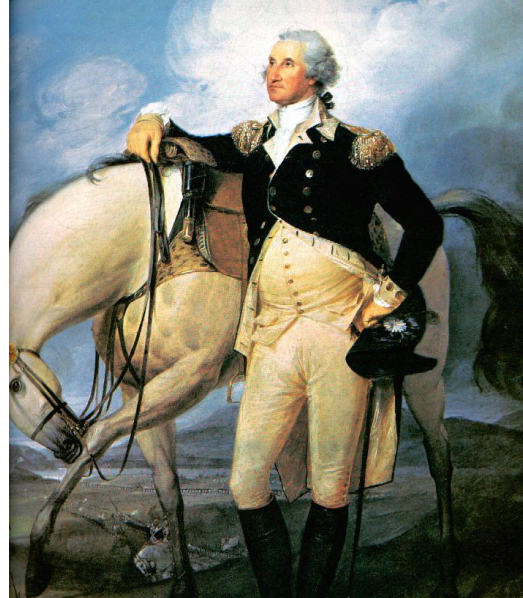


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The only stipulations I shall contend for are, that in all things you shall do as you please. I will do the same; and that no ceremony may be used or any restraint be imposed on any one. – Letter to David Humphreys, inviting him to an indefinite stay at Mt. Vernon (10 October 1787)

Unwilling am I, in the evening of a life nearly consumed in public cares, to quit a peaceful abode for an Ocean of difficulties. The preservation of the sacred fire of liberty, and the destiny of the republican model of government, are justly considered as deeply, perhaps as finally staked, on the experiment entrusted to the hands of the American people. – First Inaugural Address (30 April 1789)

For myself the delay may be compared with a reprieve; for in confidence I assure you, with the world it would obtain little credit that my movements to the chair of Government will be accompanied by feelings not unlike those of a culprit who is going to the place of his execution: so unwilling am I, in the evening of a life nearly consumed in public cares, to quit a peaceful abode for an Ocean of difficulties, without that competency of political skill, abilities and inclination which is necessary to manage the helm. - Comment to General Henry Knox on the delay in assuming office (March 1789)



In executing the duties of my present important station, I can promise nothing but purity of intentions, and, in carrying these into effect, fidelity and diligence. – Message to the US Congress (9 July 1789)

The Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens in giving it on all occasions their effectual support. Impressed with a conviction that the due administration of justice is the firmest pillar of good Government, I have considered the first arrangement of the Judicial department as essential to the happiness of our Country, and to the stability of its political system; hence the selection of the fittest characters to expound the law, and dispense justice, has been an invariable object of my anxious concern. – Letter to U.S. Attorney General Edmund Randolph (1789)

May the Children of the Stock of Abraham, who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other Inhabitants; while every one shall sit under his own vine and fig tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid. – Letter to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport, Rhode Island (1790)

To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace. – First Annual Address, to both Houses of Congress (8 January 1790).

All see, and most admire, the glare which hovers round the external trappings of elevated office. To me there is nothing in it, beyond the lustre which may be reflected from its connection with a power of

Founding Father Quotes

promoting human felicity. All see, and most admire, the glare which hovers round the external trappings of elevated office. To me there is nothing in it, beyond the lustre which may be reflected from its connection with a power of promoting human felicity. – Letter to Catherine Macaulay Graham (9 January 1790)

It is better to offer no excuse than a bad one. – Letter to his niece, Harriet Washington (30 October 1791)

Of all the animosities which have existed among mankind, those which are caused by difference of sentiments in religion appear to be the most inveterate and distressing, and ought most to be deprecated. I was in hopes that the enlightened and liberal policy, which has marked the present age, would at least have reconciled Christians of every denomination so far that we should never again see the religious disputes carried to such a pitch as to endanger the peace of society. – Letter to Edward Newenham (20 October 1792)

To enlarge the sphere of social happiness is worthy of the benevolent design of a Masonic institution; and it is most fervently to be wished, that the conduct of every member of the fraternity, as well as those publications, that discover the principles which actuate them, may tend to convince mankind that the grand object of Masonry is to promote the happiness of the human race. – Letter to the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (January 1793)



We have abundant reason to rejoice, that, in this land, the light of truth and reason has triumphed over the power of bigotry and superstition, and that every person may here worship God according to the dictates of his own heart. In this enlightened age, & in this land of equal liberty, it is our boast, that a man's religious tenets will not forfeit the protection of the laws, nor deprive him of the right of attaining & holding the highest offices that are known in the United States. Your prayers for my present and future felicity are received with gratitude; and I sincerely wish, Gentlemen, that you may in your social and individual capacities taste those blessings, which a gracious God bestows upon the righteous. – Letter to the the members of The New Church in Baltimore (22 January 1793)

The friends of humanity will deprecate War, wheresoever it may appear; and we have experience enough of its evils, in this country, to know, that it should not be wantonly or unnecessarily entered upon. I trust, that the good citizens of the United States will show to the world, that they have as much wisdom in preserving peace at this critical juncture, as they have hitherto displayed valor in defending their just rights. – Address to the merchants of Philadelphia (16 May 1793)

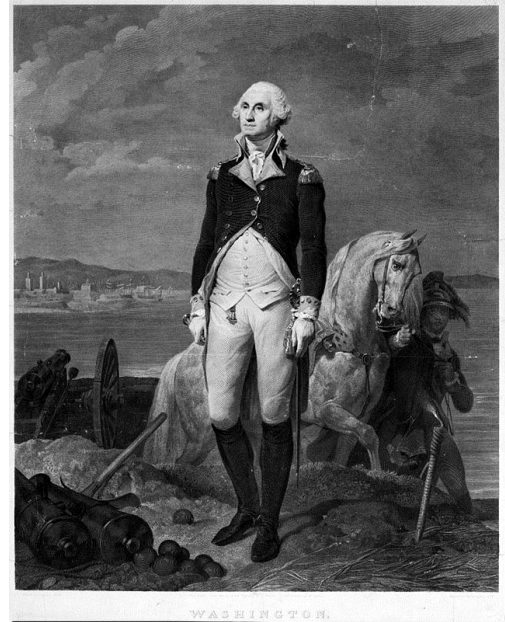
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When one side only of a story is heard and often repeated, the human mind becomes impressed with it insensibly. – Letter to Edmund Pendleton (22 January 1795)

Rise early, that by habit it may become familiar, agreeable, healthy, and profitable. It may, for a while, be irksome to do this, but that will wear off; and the practice will produce a rich harvest forever thereafter; whether in public or private walks of life. – Letter to George Washington Parke Custis (7 January 1798)

I had rather be on my farm than be emperor of the world...It is infinitely better to have a few good men than many indifferent ones. – Letter to James McHenry (10 August 1798)

Tis well. – Washington's last words, as recorded by Tobias Lear, in his journal (14 December 1799) Washington said this after being satisfied that precautions would be taken against his being buried prematurely: About ten o'clock he made several attempts to speak to me before he could effect it, at length he said, — "I am just going. Have me decently buried; and do not let my body be put into the Vault in less than three days after I am dead." I bowed assent, for I could not speak. He then looked at me again and said,



I had rather be in my grave than in my present situation, I had rather be on my farm than be emperor of the world; and yet they charge me with wanting to be a king. – Response to newspaper criticisms of his presidency

Washington's Farewell Address (17 September 1796)

Every day the increasing weight of years admonishes me more and more, that the shade of retirement is as necessary to me as it will be welcome. Satisfied, that, if any circumstances have given peculiar value to my services, they were temporary, I have the consolation to believe, that, while choice and prudence invite me to quit the political scene, patriotism does not forbid it.

Interwoven as is the love of liberty with every ligament of your hearts, no recommendation of mine is necessary to fortify or confirm the attachment.

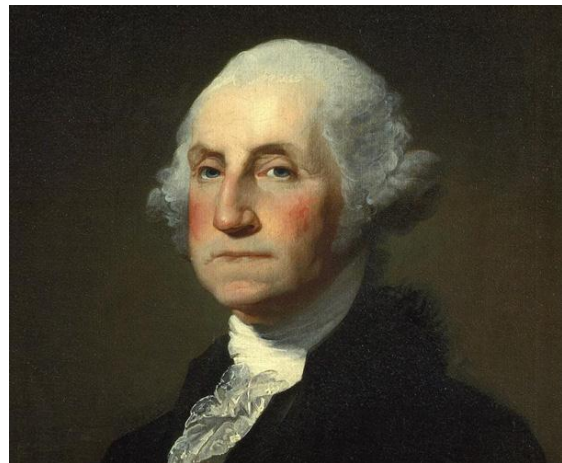
The unity of Government, which constitutes you one people, is also now dear to you. It is justly so; for it is a main pillar in the edifice of your real independence, the support of your tranquillity at home, your peace abroad; of your safety; of your prosperity; of that very Liberty, which you so highly prize.

It is of infinite moment, that you should properly estimate the immense value of your national Union to your collective and individual happiness; that you should cherish a cordial, habitual, and immovable attachment to it; accustoming yourselves to think and speak of it as of the Palladium of your political

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safety and prosperity; watching for its preservation with jealous anxiety; discountenancing whatever may suggest even a suspicion, that it can in any event be abandoned; and indignantly frowning upon the first dawning of every attempt to alienate any portion of our country from the rest, or to enfeeble the sacred ties which now link together the various parts.

Interwoven as is the love of liberty with every ligament of your hearts, no recommendation of mine is necessary to fortify or confirm the attachment. While, then, every part of our country thus feels an immediate and particular interest in Union, all the parts combined cannot fail to find in the united mass of means and efforts greater strength, greater resource, proportionably greater security from external danger, a less frequent interruption of their peace by foreign nations; and, what is of inestimable value, they must derive from Union an exemption from those broils and wars between themselves, which so frequently afflict neighbouring countries not tied together by the same governments, which their own rivalships alone would be sufficient to produce, but which opposite foreign alliances, attachments, and intrigues would stimulate and embitter. Hence, likewise, they will avoid the necessity of those overgrown military establishments, which, under any form of government, are inauspicious to liberty, and which are to be regarded as particularly hostile to Republican Liberty. In this sense it is, that your Union ought to be considered as a main prop of your liberty, and that the love of the one ought to endear to you the preservation of the other.



One of the expedients of party to acquire influence, within particular districts, is to misrepresent the opinions and aims of other districts. You cannot shield yourselves too much against the jealousies and heart-burnings, which spring from these misrepresentations; they tend to render alien to each other those, who ought to be bound together by fraternal affection.

To the efficacy and permanency of your Union, a Government for the whole is indispensable. No alliances, however strict, between the parts can be an adequate substitute; they must inevitably experience the infractions and interruptions, which all alliances in all times have experienced. Sensible of this momentous truth, you have improved upon your first essay, by the adoption of a Constitution of Government better calculated than your former for an intimate Union, and for the efficacious management of your common concerns.

The basis of our political systems is the right of the people to make and to alter their Constitutions of Government. But the Constitution which at any time exists, till changed by an explicit and authentic act of the whole people, is sacredly obligatory upon all. The very idea of the power and the right of the people to establish

Government presupposes the duty of every individual to obey the established Government.

Founding Father Quotes

It is of infinite moment, that you should properly estimate the immense value of your national Union to your collective and individual happiness. I have already intimated to you the danger of parties in the state, with particular reference to the founding of them on geographical discriminations. Let me now take a more comprehensive view, and warn you in the most solemn manner against the baneful effects of the spirit of party, generally.

The alternate domination of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge, natural to party dissension, which in different ages and countries has perpetrated the most horrid enormities, is itself a frightful despotism. But this leads at length to a more formal and permanent despotism. The disorders and miseries, which result, gradually incline the minds of men to seek security and repose in the absolute power of an individual; and sooner or later the chief of some prevailing faction, more able or more fortunate than his competitors, turns this disposition to the purposes of his own elevation, on the ruins of Public Liberty.



The common and continual mischiefs of the spirit of party are sufficient to make it the interest and duty of a wise people to discourage and restrain it.

It serves always to distract the Public Councils, and enfeeble the Public Administration. It agitates the Community with ill-founded jealousies and false alarms; kindles the animosity of one part against another, foment occasionally riot and insurrection.

Let me now take a more comprehensive view, and warn you in the most solemn manner against the baneful effects of the spirit of party, generally. 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 firmest 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 public felicity.

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 principle.

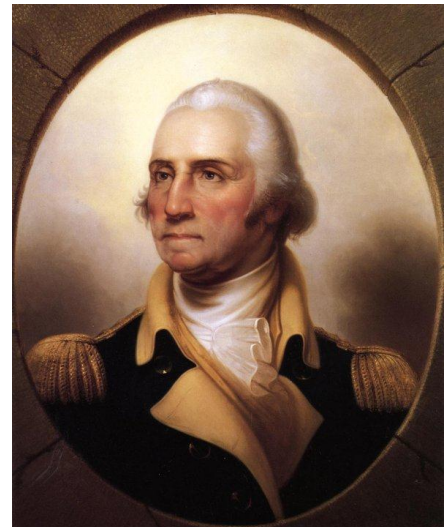
It is substantially true, that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government. The rule, indeed, extends with more or less force to every species of free government.

Founding Father Quotes

Promote, then, as an object of primary importance, institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened.

As a very important source of strength and security, cherish public credit. One method of preserving it is, to use it as sparingly as possible; avoiding occasions of expense by cultivating peace, but remembering also that timely disbursements to prepare for danger frequently prevent much greater disbursements to repel it; avoiding likewise the accumulation of debt, not only by shunning occasions of expense, but by vigorous exertions in time of peace to discharge the debts, which unavoidable wars may have occasioned, not ungenerously throwing upon posterity the burthen, which we ourselves ought to bear.

Of all the dispositions and habits, which lead to political prosperity, Religion and Morality are indispensable supports. Observe good faith and justice towards all Nations; cultivate peace and harmony with all. Religion and Morality enjoin this conduct; and can it be, that good policy does not equally enjoin it? It will be worthy of a free, enlightened, and, at no distant period, a great Nation, to give to mankind the magnanimous and too novel example of a people always guided by an exalted justice and benevolence. Who can doubt, that, in the course of time and things, the fruits of such a plan would richly repay any temporary advantages, which might be lost by a steady adherence to it? Can it be, that Providence has not connected the permanent felicity of a Nation with its Virtue?



Nothing is more essential, than that permanent, inveterate antipathies against particular Nations, and passionate attachments for others, should be excluded; and that, in place of them, just and amicable feelings towards all should be cultivated. The Nation, which indulges towards another an habitual hatred, or an habitual fondness, is in some degree a slave. It is a slave to its animosity or to its affection, either of which is sufficient to lead it astray from its duty and its interest. Antipathy in one nation against another disposes each more readily to offer insult and injury, to lay hold of slight causes of umbrage, and to be haughty and intractable, when accidental or trifling occasions of dispute occur. Hence frequent collisions, obstinate, envenomed, and bloody contests.

In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened...Real Patriots, who may resist the intrigues of the favourite, are liable to become suspected and odious; while its tools and dupes usurp the applause and confidence of the people, to surrender their interests.

Founding Father Quotes

The great rule of conduct for us, in regard to foreign nations, is, in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connexion as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements, let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith. Here let us stop.

'Tis our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world; so far, I mean, as we are now at liberty to do it; for let me not be understood as capable of patronizing infidelity to existing engagements. I hold the maxim no less applicable to public than to private affairs, that honesty is always the best policy. I repeat it, therefore, let those engagements be observed in their genuine sense. But, in my opinion, it is unnecessary and would be unwise to extend them.

There can be no greater error than to expect or calculate upon real favors from nation to nation.

Observe good faith and justice towards all Nations; cultivate peace and harmony with all. Harmony, liberal intercourse with all nations, are recommended by policy, humanity, and interest.

In offering to you, my countrymen, these counsels of an old and affectionate friend, I dare not hope they will make the strong and lasting impression I could wish; that they will control the usual current of the passions, or prevent our nation from running the course, which has hitherto marked the destiny of nations. But, if I may even flatter myself, that they may be productive of some partial benefit, some occasional good; that they may now and then recur to moderate the fury of party spirit, to warn against the mischiefs of foreign intrigue, to guard against the impostures of pretended patriotism; this hope will be a full recompense for the solicitude for your welfare, by which they have been dictated.

The duty of holding a neutral conduct may be inferred, without any thing more, from the obligation which justice and humanity impose on every nation, in cases in which it is free to act, to maintain inviolate the relations of peace and amity towards other nations.

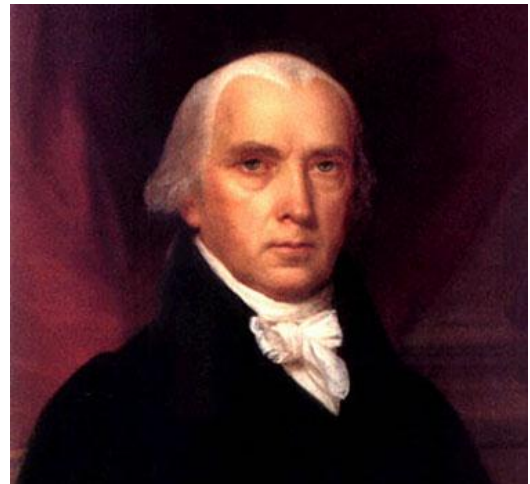
Though, in reviewing the incidents of my administration, I am unconscious of intentional error, I am nevertheless too sensible of my defects not to think it probable that I may have committed many errors. Whatever they may be, I fervently beseech the Almighty to avert or mitigate the evils to which they may tend. I shall also carry with me the hope, that my Country will never cease to view them with indulgence; and that, after forty-five years of my life dedicated to its service with an upright zeal, the faults of incompetent abilities will be consigned to oblivion, as myself must soon be to the mansions of rest.

JAMES MADISON QUOTES

A watchful eye must be kept on ourselves lest while we are building ideal monuments of Renown and Bliss here we neglect to have our names enrolled in the Annals of Heaven. – Letter to William Bradford (9 November 1772)

I have sometimes thought there could be no stronger testimony in favor of Religion or against temporal Enjoyments even the most rational and manly than for men who occupy the most honorable and gainful departments and are rising in reputation and wealth, publicly to declare their unsatisfactoriness by becoming fervent Advocates in the cause of Christ, & I wish you may give in your Evidence in this way. Such instances have seldom occurred, therefore they would be more striking and would be instead of a “Cloud of Witnesses.” – Letter to William Bradford (September 1773)

In time of actual war, great discretionary powers are constantly given to the Executive Magistrate. Constant apprehension of War, has the same tendency to render the head too large for the body. A standing military force, with an overgrown Executive will not long be safe companions to liberty. The means of defence agst. foreign danger, have been always the instruments of tyranny at home. Among the Romans it was a standing maxim to excite a war, whenever a revolt was apprehended. Throughout all Europe, the armies kept up under the pretext of defending, have enslaved the people. – Speech, Constitutional Convention (1787-06-29)



Since the general civilization of mankind, I believe there are more instances of the abridgment of the freedom of the people by gradual and silent encroachments of those in power, than by violent and sudden usurpations; but, on a candid examination of history, we shall find that turbulence, violence, and abuse of power, by the majority trampling on the rights of the minority, have produced factions and commotions, which, in republics, have, more frequently than any other cause, produced despotism. If we go over the whole history of ancient and modern republics, we shall find their destruction to have generally resulted from those causes. – Speech at the Virginia Convention to ratify the Federal Constitution (1788-06-06)

Wherever the real power in a Government lies, there is the danger of oppression. In our Governments, the real power lies in the majority of the Community, and the invasion of private rights is chiefly to be apprehended, not from the acts of Government contrary to the sense of its constituents, but from acts in which the Government is the mere instrument of the major number of the constituents. – Letter to Thomas Jefferson (1788-10-17)

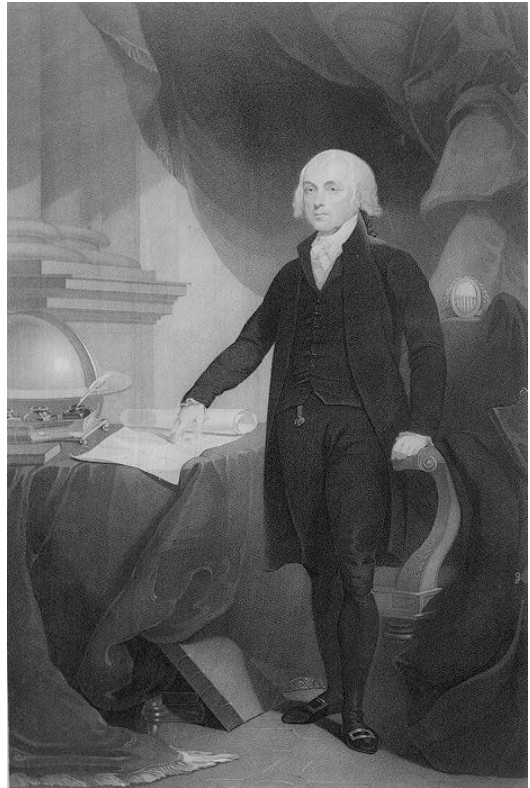
Man who preys both on the vegetable and animal species, is himself a prey to neither. He too possesses the reproductive principle far beyond the degree requisite for the bare continuance of his species. What

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becomes of the surplus of human life to which this principle is competent? It is either, 1st. destroyed by infanticide, as among the Chinese and Lacedemonians; or 2d. it is stifled or starved, as among other nations whose population is commensurate to its food; or 3d. it is consumed by wars and endemic diseases; or 4th. it overflows, by emigration, to places where a surplus of food is attainable. – “Population and Emigration” in National Gazette (1791-11-21)

If Congress can do whatever in their discretion can be done by money, and will promote the general welfare, the Government is no longer a limited one possessing enumerated powers, but an indefinite one subject to particular exceptions. It is to be remarked that the phrase out of which this doctrine is elaborated, is copied from the old articles of Confederation, where it was always understood as nothing more than a general caption to the specified powers, and it is a fact that it was preferred in the new instrument for that very reason as less liable than any other to misconstruction. – Letter to Edmund Pendleton (1792-01-21)

Conscience is the most sacred of all property; other property depending in part on positive law, the exercise of that being a natural and unalienable right. To guard a man’s house as his castle, to pay public and enforce private debts with the most exact faith, can give no title to invade a man’s conscience, which is more sacred than his castle, or to withhold from it that debt of protection for which the public faith is pledged by the very nature and original conditions of the social pact. – “Property” in The National Gazette (29 March 1792)



I cannot undertake to lay my finger on that article of the Constitution which granted a right to Congress of expending, on objects of benevolence, the money of their constituents. – Annals of Congress (1794-01-10)

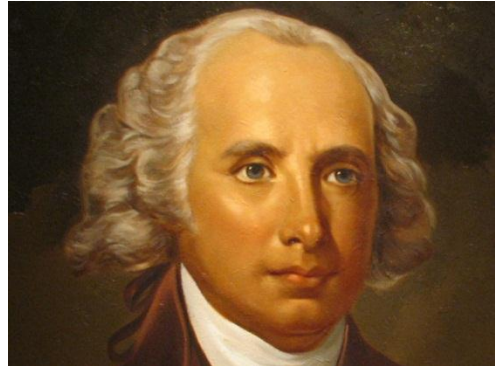
Of all the enemies to public liberty war is, perhaps, the most to be dreaded, because it comprises and develops the germ of every other. War is the parent of armies; from these proceed debts and taxes; and armies, and debts, and taxes are the known instruments for bringing the many under the domination of the few. In war, too, the discretionary power of the Executive is extended; its influence in dealing out offices, honors, and emoluments is multiplied; and all the means of seducing the minds, are added to those of subduing the force, of the people. The same malignant aspect in republicanism may be traced in the inequality of fortunes, and the opportunities of fraud, growing out of a state of war, and in the degeneracy of manners and of morals engendered by both. No nation could preserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare. – “Political Observations” (1795-04-20)

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Perhaps it is a universal truth that the loss of liberty at home is to be charged against provisions against danger, real or pretended from abroad. – Letter to Thomas Jefferson (1798-05-13)

Resolved, That the General Assembly of Virginia, doth unequivocally express a firm resolution to maintain and defend the Constitution of the United States, and the Constitution of this State, against every aggression either foreign or domestic, and that they will support the Government of the United States in all measures warranted by the former. – Resolutions proposed to the Legislature of Virginia on 1798-12-21

This Assembly doth explicitly and peremptorily declare, that it views the powers of the federal government, as resulting from the compact, to which the states are parties, as limited by the plain sense and intention of the instrument constituting the compact; as no further valid than they are authorized by the grants enumerated in that compact; and that in case of deliberate, palpable, and dangerous exercise of other powers, not granted by the said compact, the states who are parties thereto, have the right, and are in duty bound, to interpose, for arresting the progress of the evil, and for maintaining within their respective limits, the authorities, rights and liberties appertaining to them. – Virginia Resolution of 1798” (December 1798)



Some degree of abuse is inseparable from the proper use of everything; and in no instance is this more true than in that of the press. It has accordingly been decided, by the practice of the states, that it is better to leave a few of its noxious branches to their luxuriant growth, than, by pruning them away, to injure the vigor of those yielding the proper fruits. And can the wisdom of this policy be doubted by anyone who reflects that to the press alone, checkered as it is with abuses, the world is indebted for all the triumphs which have been gained by reason and humanity over error and oppression? – Report on the Virginia Resolutions, (1800-01-20)

Religion & Govt. will both exist in greater purity, the less they are mixed together. – Letter to Edward Livingston (1822-07-10)

I entirely concur in the propriety of resorting to the sense in which the Constitution was accepted and ratified by the nation. In that sense alone it is the legitimate Constitution. And if that be not the guide in expounding it, there can be no security for a consistent and stable, more than for a faithful exercise of its powers. If the meaning of the text be sought in the changeable meaning of the words composing it, it is evident that the shape and attributes of the Government must partake of the changes to which the words and phrases of all living languages are constantly subject. What a metamorphosis would be produced in the code of law if all its ancient phraseology were to be taken in its modern sense! – Letter to Henry Lee (25 June 1824)

A popular Government without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a Prologue to a Farce or a Tragedy, or perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance: And a people who mean

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to be their own Governors, must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives. – Letter to W.T. Barry (1822-08-04)

The belief in a God All Powerful wise and good, is so essential to the moral order of the world and to the happiness of man, that arguments which enforce it cannot be drawn from too many sources nor adapted with too much solicitude to the different characters and capacities to be impressed with it. – Letter to Rev. Frederick Beasley (1825-11-20)

With respect to the words “general welfare,” I have always regarded them as qualified by the detail of powers connected with them. To take them in a literal and unlimited sense would be a metamorphosis of the Constitution into a character which there is a host of proofs was not contemplated by its creators. – Letter to James Robertson (1831-04-20)



Besides the danger of a direct mixture of religion and civil government, there is an evil which ought to be guarded against in the indefinite accumulation of property from the capacity of holding it in perpetuity by ecclesiastical corporations. The establishment of the chaplainship in Congress is a palpable violation of equal rights as well as of Constitutional principles. The danger of silent accumulations and encroachments by ecclesiastical bodies has not sufficiently engaged attention in the U.S. – “Monopolies, Perpetuities, Corporations, Ecclesiastical Endowments”

James Madison – Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments (1785)

We hold it for a fundamental and undeniable truth, “that Religion or the duty which we owe to our Creator and the Manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence.” The Religion then of every man must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man; and it is the right of every man to exercise it as these may dictate. This right is in its nature an unalienable right. It is unalienable; because the opinions of men, depending only on the evidence contemplated by their own minds, cannot follow the dictates of other men: It is unalienable also; because what is here a right towards men, is a duty towards the Creator. It is the duty of every man to render to the Creator such homage, and such only, as he believes to be acceptable to him. This duty is precedent both in order of time and degree of obligation, to the claims of Civil Society. Before any man can be considered as a member of Civil Society, he must be considered as a subject of the Governor of the Universe: And if a member of Civil Society, who enters into any subordinate Association, must always do it with a reservation of his duty to the general authority; much more must every man who becomes a member of any particular Civil Society, do it with a saving of his allegiance to the Universal Sovereign. We maintain therefore that in matters of Religion, no man’s right is abridged by the institution of Civil Society, and that Religion is wholly exempt from its cognizance. True it is, that no

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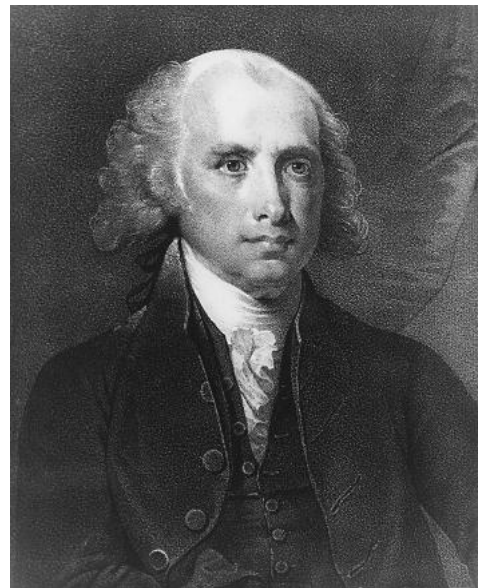
other rule exists, by which any question which may divide a Society, can be ultimately determined, but the will of the majority; but it is also true, that the majority may trespass on the rights of the minority.

The free men of America did not wait till usurped power had strengthened itself by exercise, and entangled the question in precedents. They saw all the consequences in the principle, and they avoided the consequences by denying the principle. We revere this lesson too much soon to forget it. Who does not see that the same authority which can establish Christianity, in exclusion of all other Religions, may establish with the same ease any particular sect of Christians, in exclusion of all other Sects? that the same authority which can force a citizen to contribute three pence only of his property for the support of any one establishment, may force him to conform to any other establishment in all cases whatsoever?

It is moreover to weaken in those who profess this Religion a pious confidence in its innate excellence and the patronage of its Author; and to foster in those who still reject it, a suspicion that its friends are too conscious of its fallacies to trust it to its own merits.

During almost fifteen centuries has the legal establishment of Christianity been on trial. What have been its fruits? More or less in all places, pride and indolence in the Clergy, ignorance and servility in the laity, in both, superstition, bigotry and persecution.

What influence in fact have ecclesiastical establishments had on Civil Society? In some instances they have been seen to erect a spiritual tyranny on the ruins of the Civil authority; in many instances they have been seen upholding the thrones of political tyranny: in no instance have they been seen the guardians of the liberties of the people. Rulers who wished to subvert the public liberty, may have found an established Clergy convenient auxiliaries. A just Government instituted to secure & perpetuate it needs them not.



Because finally, “the equal right of every citizen to the free exercise of his religion according to the dictates of conscience” is held by the same tenure with all his other rights. If we recur to its origin, it is equally the gift of nature; if we weigh its importance, it cannot be less dear to us; if we consider the “Declaration of those rights which pertain to the good people of Virginia, as the basis and foundation of government,” it is enumerated with equal solemnity, or rather studied emphasis.

We the Subscribers say, that the General Assembly of this Commonwealth have no such authority: And that no effort may be omitted on our part against so dangerous an usurpation, we oppose to it, this remonstrance; earnestly praying, as we are in duty bound, that the Supreme Lawgiver of the Universe, by illuminating those to whom it is addressed, may on the one hand, turn their Councils from every act which would affront his holy prerogative, or violate the trust committed to them: and on the other,

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guide them into every measure which may be worthy of his [blessing, may re]dound to their own praise, and may establish more firmly the liberties, the prosperity and the happiness of the Commonwealth.

James Madison – The Federalist Papers

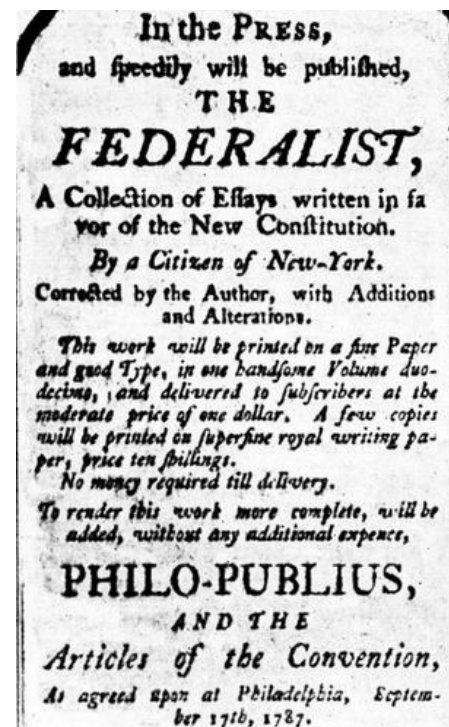
By a faction, I understand a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or a minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community. – Federalist Paper No. 10 (1787-11-22)

A zeal for different opinions concerning religion, concerning government, and many other points, as well of speculation as of practice; an attachment to different leaders ambitiously contending for pre-eminence and power; or to persons of other descriptions whose fortunes have been interesting to the human passions, have, in turn, divided mankind into parties, inflamed them with mutual animosity, and rendered them much more disposed to vex and oppress each other than to co-operate for their common good. So strong is this propensity of mankind to fall into mutual animosities, that where no substantial occasion presents itself, the most frivolous and fanciful distinctions have been sufficient to kindle their unfriendly passions and excite their most violent conflicts. But the most common and durable source of factions has been the various and unequal distribution of property. – Federalist No. 10

To secure the public good and private rights against the danger of such a faction, and at the same time to preserve the spirit and the form of popular government, is then the great object to which our inquiries are directed. – Federalist Paper No. 10

Hence it is that such democracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention; have ever been found incompatible with personal security or the rights of property; and have in general been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths. Theoretic politicians, who have patronized this species of government, have erroneously supposed that by reducing mankind to a perfect equality in their political rights, they would, at the same time, be perfectly equalized and assimilated in their possessions, their opinions, and their passions. – Federalist Paper No. 10

Besides the advantage of being armed, which the Americans possess over the people of almost every other nation, the existence of subordinate governments, to which the people are attached, and by which the militia officers are appointed, forms a barrier against the enterprises of ambition, more insurmountable than any which a simple government of any form can admit of. Notwithstanding the military establishments in the several kingdoms of Europe, which are carried as far as the public



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resources will bear, the governments are afraid to trust the people with arms. – Federalist Paper No. 46 (1788-01-29)

The legislative department is everywhere extending the sphere of its activity and drawing all power into its impetuous vortex. – Federalist Paper No. 48

If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself. – Federalist Paper No. 51 (1788-02-06)

ALEXANDER HAMILTON QUOTES

A national debt, if it is not excessive, will be to us a national blessing. – Letter to Robert Morris (1781-04-30)

For my own part, I sincerely esteem it a system which without the finger of God, never could have been suggested and agreed upon by such a diversity of interests. –Statement after the Constitutional Convention (1787)

It has been observed that a pure democracy if it were practicable would be the most perfect government. Experience has proved that no position is more false than this. The ancient democracies in which the people themselves deliberated never possessed one good feature of government. Their very character was tyranny; their figure deformity. – Speech in New York, urging ratification of the U.S. Constitution (1788-06-21)

Here, sir, the people govern; here they act by their immediate representatives. – Remarks on the U.S. House of Representatives, at the New York state convention on the adoption of the Federal Constitution, Poughkeepsie, New York (1788-07-27)

Every power vested in a government is in its nature sovereign, and includes by force of the term a right to employ all the means requisite...to the attainment of the ends of such power. – Opinion on the Constitutionality of the Bank (1791-02-23)



If the end be clearly comprehended within any of the specified powers, and if the measure have an obvious relation to that end, and is not forbidden by any particular provision of the Constitution, it may safely be deemed to come within the compass of the national authority. – Opinion on the Constitutionality of the Bank (1791-02-23)

If it be asked, What is the most sacred duty and the greatest source of our security in a Republic? The answer would be, An inviolable respect for the Constitution and Laws — the first growing out of the last... A sacred respect for the constitutional law is the vital principle, the sustaining energy of a free government. – Essay in the American Daily Advertiser (1794-08-28)

The passions of a revolution are apt to hurry even good men into excesses. – Essay (1795-08-12)

I have thought it my duty to exhibit things as they are, not as they ought to be. – Letter (1802-04-16)

Men are rather reasoning than reasonable animals, for the most part governed by the impulse of passion. – Letter (1802-04-16)

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A garden, you know, is a very usual refuge of a disappointed politician. Accordingly, I have purchased a few acres about nine miles from town, have built a house, and am cultivating a garden. – Letter to Charles Cotesworth Pinckney (1802-12-29)

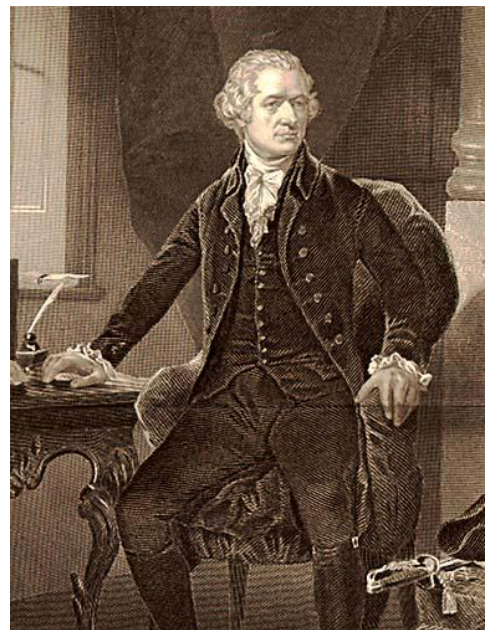
I have resolved, if our interview is conducted in the usual manner, and it pleases God to give me the opportunity, to reserve and throw away my first fire, and I have thoughts even of reserving my second fire. – Letter written the night before his duel with Aaron Burr (1804-07-10)

The Farmer Refuted (1775)

The origin of all civil government, justly established, must be a voluntary compact, between the rulers and the ruled; and must be liable to such limitations, as are necessary for the security of the absolute rights of the latter; for what original title can any man or set of men have, to govern others, except their own consent? To usurp dominion over a people, in their own despite, or to grasp at a more extensive power than they are willing to entrust, is to violate that law of nature, which gives every man a right to his personal liberty; and can, therefore, confer no obligation to obedience.

The right of parliament to legislate for us cannot be accounted for upon any reasonable grounds. The constitution of Great Britain is very properly called a limited monarchy, the people having reserved to themselves a share in the legislature, as a check upon the regal authority, to prevent its degenerating into despotism and tyranny. The very aim and intention of the democratical part, or the house of commons, is to secure the rights of the people. Its very being depends upon those rights. Its whole power is derived from them, and must be terminated by them.

The fundamental source of all your errors, sophisms, and false reasonings, is a total ignorance of the natural rights of mankind. Were you once to become acquainted with these, you could never entertain a thought, that all men are not, by nature, entitled to a parity of privileges. You would be convinced, that natural liberty is a gift of the beneficent Creator, to the whole human race; and that civil liberty is founded in that; and cannot be wrested from any people, without the most manifest violation of justice. Civil liberty is only natural liberty, modified and secured by the sanctions of civil society. It is not a thing, in its own nature, precarious and dependent on human will and caprice; but it is conformable to the constitution of man, as well as necessary to the well-being of society.



The sacred rights of mankind are not to be rummaged for among old parchments or musty records. They are written, as with a sunbeam, in the whole volume of human nature, by the hand of the divinity itself; and can never be erased or obscured by mortal power.

Debates of the Federal Convention (1787)

I believe the British government forms the best model the world has ever produced...This government has for its object public strength and individual security.

All communities divide themselves into the few and the many. The first are the rich and wellborn, the other the mass of the people...The people are turbulent and changing; they seldom judge or determine right. Give therefore to the first class a distinct, permanent share in the government. They will check the unsteadiness of the second, and as they cannot receive any advantage by a change, they therefore will ever maintain good government.

We are now forming a republican government. Real liberty is neither found in despotism or the extremes of democracy, but in moderate governments.

The Federalist Papers (1787-1788)

It has been frequently remarked that it seems to have been reserved to the people of this country, by their conduct and example, to decide the important question, whether societies of men are really capable or not of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend for their political constitutions on accident and force. - Federalist Paper No. 1

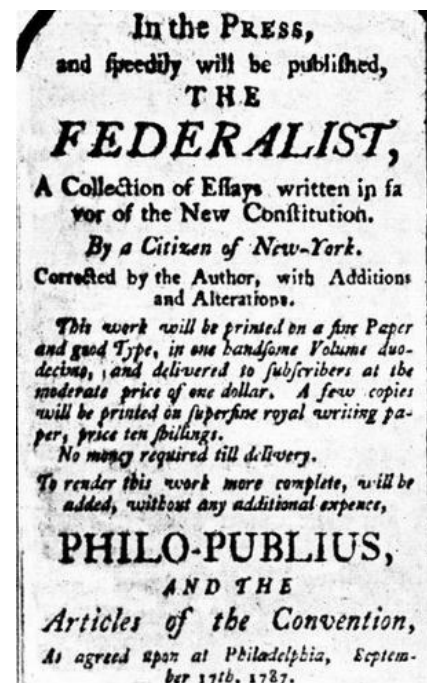
In politics, as in religion, it is equally absurd to aim at making proselytes by fire and sword. Heresies in either can rarely be cured by persecution. - Federalist Paper No. 1

The rights of neutrality will only be respected, when they are defended by an adequate power. A nation, despicable by its weakness, forfeits even the privilege of being neutral. - Federalist Paper No. 11

Let Americans disdain to be the instruments of European greatness! Let the thirteen States, bound together in a strict and indissoluble Union, concur in erecting one great American system, superior to the control of all transatlantic force or influence, and able to dictate the terms of the connection between the old and the new world! - Federalist Paper No. 11

Government implies the power of making laws. It is essential to the idea of a law, that it be attended with a sanction; or, in other words, a penalty or punishment for disobedience. - Federalist Paper 15

Why has government been instituted at all? Because the passions of men will not conform to the dictates of reason and justice, without constraint. - Federalist Paper No. 15



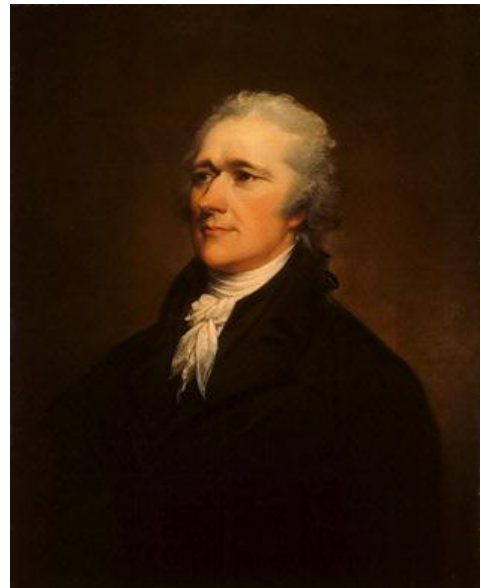
Founding Father Quotes

Has it been found that bodies of men act with more rectitude or greater disinterestedness than individuals? The contrary of this has been inferred by all accurate observers of the conduct of mankind; and the inference is founded upon obvious reasons. Regard to reputation has a less active influence, when the infamy of a bad action is to be divided among a number than when it is to fall singly upon one. A spirit of faction, which is apt to mingle its poison in the deliberations of all bodies of men, will often hurry the persons of whom they are composed into improprieties and excesses, for which they would blush in a private capacity. — Federalist Paper No. 15

The militia is a voluntary force not associated or under the control of the States except when called out; a permanent or long standing force would be entirely different in make-up and call. — Federalist Paper No. 28

A tolerable expertness in military movements is a business that requires time and practice. It is not a day, or even a week, that will suffice for the attainment of it.

To oblige the great body of the yeomanry, and of the other classes of the citizens, to be under arms for the purpose of going through military exercises and evolutions, as often as might be necessary to acquire the degree of perfection which would entitle them to the character of a well-regulated militia, would be a real grievance to the people, and a serious public inconvenience and loss. It would form an annual deduction from the productive labor of the country, to an amount which, calculating upon the present numbers of the people, would not fall far short of the whole expense of the civil establishments of all the States. To attempt a thing which would abridge the mass of labor and industry to so considerable an extent, would be unwise: and the experiment, if made, could not succeed, because it would not long be endured. Little more can reasonably be aimed at, with respect to the people at large, than to have them properly armed and equipped; and in order to see that this be not neglected, it will be necessary to assemble them once or twice in the course of a year. — Federalist Paper No. 29



If circumstances should at any time oblige the government to form an army of any magnitude that army can never be formidable to the liberties of the people while there is a large body of citizens, little, if at all, inferior to them in discipline and the use of arms, who stand ready to defend their own rights and those of their fellow-citizens. This appears to me the only substitute that can be devised for a standing army, and the best possible security against it, if it should exist. — Federalist Paper No. 29

If the representatives of the people betray their constituents, there is then no recourse left but in the exertion of that original right of self-defense which is paramount to all positive forms of government, and which against the usurpations of the national rulers may be exerted with infinitely better prospect of success than against those of the rulers of an individual State. In a single State, if the persons entrusted with supreme power become usurpers, the different parcels, subdivisions, or districts of

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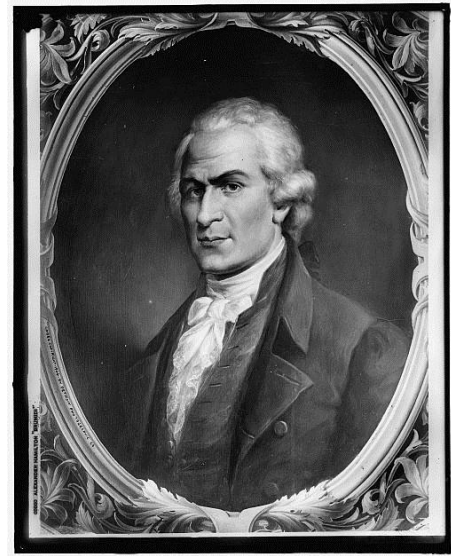
which it consists, having no distinct government in each, can take no regular measures for defense. The citizens must rush tumultuously to arms, without concert, without system, without resource; except in their courage and despair. – Federalist Paper No. 29

In the usual progress of things, the necessities of a nation in every stage of its existence will be found at least equal to its resources. – Federalist Paper No. 30

Let us recollect that peace or war will not always be left to our option; that however moderate or unambitious we may be, we cannot count upon the moderation, or hope to extinguish the ambition of others. – Federalist Paper No. 34

The mode of appointment of the Chief Magistrate of the United States is almost the only part of the system, of any consequence, which has escaped without severe censure, or which has received the slightest mark of approbation from its opponents. The most plausible of these, who has appeared in print, has even deigned to admit that the election of the President is pretty well guarded.¹ I venture somewhat further, and hesitate not to affirm, that if the manner of it be not perfect, it is at least excellent. It unites in an eminent degree all the advantages, the union of which was to be wished for. – Federalist Paper No. 68

The President, and government, will only control the militia when a part of them is in the actual service of the federal government, else, they are independent and not under the command of the president or the government. The states would control the militia, only when called out into the service of the state, and then the governor would be commander in chief where enumerated in the respective state constitution. – Federalist Paper No. 69



When occasions present themselves, in which the interests of the people are at variance with their inclinations, it is the duty of the persons whom they have appointed to be the guardians of those interests, to withstand the temporary delusion, in order to give them time and opportunity for more cool and sedate reflection. – Federalist Paper No. 71

The Courts must declare the sense of the law; and if they should be disposed to exercise will instead of judgement; the consequences would be the substitution of their pleasure for that of the legislative body. – Federalist Paper No. 72

There are men who could neither be distressed nor won into a sacrifice of their duty; but this stern virtue is the growth of few soils; and in the main it will be found that a power over a man's support is a power over his will. If it were necessary to confirm so plain a truth by facts, examples would not be wanting, even in this country, of the intimidation or seduction of the Executive by the terrors or allurements of the pecuniary arrangements of the legislative body. – Federalist Paper No. 73

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The history of human conduct does not warrant that exalted opinion of human virtue which would make it wise in a nation to commit interests of so delicate and momentous a kind as those which concern its intercourse with the rest of the world to the sole disposal of a magistrate, created and circumstanced, as would be a President of the United States. – Federalist Paper No. 75

I go further, and affirm that bills of rights, in the sense and to the extent in which they are contended for, are not only unnecessary in the proposed Constitution, but would even be dangerous. They would contain various exceptions to powers not granted; and, on this very account, would afford a colorable pretext to claim more than were granted. For why declare that things shall not be done which there is no power to do? – Federalist Paper No. 84

The system, though it may not be perfect in every part, is, upon the whole, a good one; is the best that the present views and circumstances of the country will permit; and is such an one as promises every species of security which a reasonable people can desire. - Federalist Paper No. 85

I should esteem it the extreme of imprudence to prolong the precarious state of our national affairs, and to expose the Union to the jeopardy of successive experiments, in the chimerical pursuit of a perfect plan. I never expect to see a perfect work from imperfect man. The result of the deliberations of all collective bodies must necessarily be a compound, as well of the errors and prejudices, as of the good sense and wisdom, of the individuals of whom they are composed. - Federalist Paper No. 85

THOMAS JEFFERSON QUOTES

If I am to succeed, the sooner I know it, the less uneasiness I shall have to go through. If I am to meet with a disappointment, the sooner I know it, the more of life I shall have to wear it off: and if I do meet with one, I hope in God, and verily believe; it will be the last. - Letter to John Page (15 July 1763)

The most fortunate of us, in our journey through life, frequently meet with calamities and misfortunes which may greatly afflict us; and, to fortify our minds against the attacks of these calamities and misfortunes, should be one of the principal studies and endeavours of our lives.

The only method of doing this is to assume a perfect resignation to the Divine will, to consider that whatever does happen, must happen; and that by our uneasiness, we cannot prevent the blow before it does fall, but we may add to its force after it has fallen.

These considerations, and others such as these, may enable us in some measure to surmount the difficulties thrown in our way; to bear up with a tolerable degree of patience under this burthen of life; and to proceed with a pious and unshaken resignation, till we arrive at our journey's end, when we may deliver up our trust into the hands of him who gave it, and receive such reward as to him shall seem proportioned to our merit. - Letter to John Page (15 July 1763)



Christianity neither is, nor ever was, a part of the common law. - Vol. 1 Whether Christianity is Part of the Common Law (1764)

A lively and lasting sense of filial duty is more effectually impressed on the mind of a son or daughter by reading King Lear, than by all the dry volumes of ethics, and divinity, that ever were written. - Letter to Robert Skipwith (3 August 1771)

The God who gave us life, gave us liberty at the same time; the hand of force may destroy, but cannot disjoin them. - Summary View of the Rights of British America (1774)

Let those flatter, who fear: it is not an American art. - Summary View of the Rights of British America (1774)

All persons shall have full and free liberty of religious opinion; nor shall any be compelled to frequent or maintain any religious institution. - Draft Constitution for Virginia (June 1776).

No freeman shall be debarred the use of arms [within his own lands]. - Draft Constitution for Virginia (June 1776)

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Truth will do well enough if left to shift for herself. She seldom has received much aid from the power of great men to whom she is rarely known & seldom welcome. She has no need of force to procure entrance into the minds of men. Error indeed has often prevailed by the assistance of power or force. Truth is the proper & sufficient antagonist to error. - Notes on Religion (October 1776)

In the middle ages of Christianity opposition to the State opinions was hushed. The consequence was, Christianity became loaded with all the Romish follies. Nothing but free argument, raillery & even ridicule will preserve the purity of religion. - Notes on Religion (October 1776)

Compulsion in religion is distinguished peculiarly from compulsion in every other thing. I may grow rich by art I am compelled to follow, I may recover health by medicines I am compelled to take against my own judgment, but I cannot be saved by a worship I disbelieve & abhor. - Notes on Religion (October 1776)

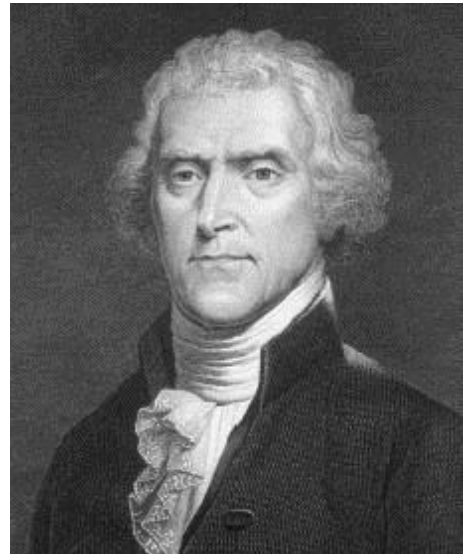
He who permits himself to tell a lie once, finds it much easier to do it a second and third time, till at length it becomes habitual; he tells lies without attending to it, and truths without the world's believing him. This falsehood of tongue leads to that of the heart, and in time depraves all its good dispositions. - Letter to Peter Carr (19 August 1785)

What a stupendous, what an incomprehensible machine is man! Who can endure toil, famine, stripes, imprisonment and death itself in vindication of his own liberty, and the next moment . . . inflict on his fellow men a bondage, one hour of which is fraught with more misery than ages of that which he rose in rebellion to oppose. - Letter to Jean Nicholas Demeunier (24 January 1786)

Our liberty depends on the freedom of the press, and that cannot be limited without being lost. - Letter to Dr. James Currie (28 January 1786)

We took the liberty to make some enquiries concerning the ground of their pretensions to make war upon nations who had done them no injury, and observed that we considered all mankind as our friends who had done us no wrong, nor had given us any provocation. The Ambassador [of Tripoli] answered us that it was founded on the Laws of their Prophet, that it was written in their Koran, that all nations who should not have acknowledged their authority were sinners, that it was their right and duty to make war upon them wherever they could be found, and to make slaves of all they could take as Prisoners, and that every Musselman who should be slain in battle was sure to go to Paradise. - Letter from the commissioners (John Adams, Thomas Jefferson) to John Jay, 28 March 1786

The basis of our government being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right; and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter. - Letter to Colonel Edward Carrington (16 January 1787)



Founding Father Quotes

Experience declares that man is the only animal which devours his own kind; for I can apply no milder term to the governments of Europe, and to the general prey of the rich on the poor. - Letter to Colonel Edward Carrington (16 January 1787)

I hold it, that a little rebellion, now and then, is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms in the physical. - Letter to James Madison (30 January 1787)

The spirit of resistance to government is so valuable on certain occasions, that I wish it to be always kept alive. It will often be exercised when wrong, but better so than not to be exercised at all. I like a little rebellion now and then. It is like a storm in the atmosphere. - Letter to Abigail Smith Adams (22 February 1787)

When we get piled upon one another in large cities, as in Europe, we shall become corrupt as in Europe. - Letter to James Madison (20 December 1787)

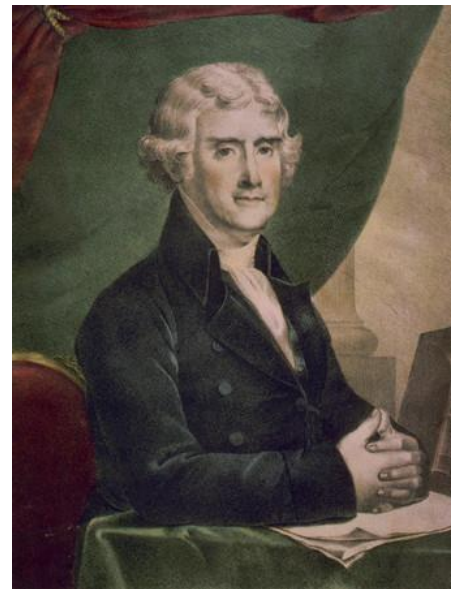
I had rather be shut up in a very modest cottage with my books, my family and a few old friends, dining on simple bacon, and letting the world roll on as it liked, than to occupy the most splendid post, which any human power can give. - Letter to Alexander Donald (7 February 1788)

Paper is poverty,... it is only the ghost of money, and not money itself. - Letter to Colonel Edward Carrington (27 May 1788) ME 7:36

Whenever the people are well informed, they can be trusted with their own government; that whenever things get so far wrong as to attract their notice, they may be relied on to set them to rights. - Letter to Richard Price (8 January 1789)

You say that I have been dished up to you as an antifederalist, and ask me if it be just. My opinion was never worthy enough of notice to merit citing; but since you ask it I will tell it you. I am not a Federalist, because I never submitted the whole system of my opinions to the creed of any party of men whatever in religion, in philosophy, in politics, or in anything else where I was capable of thinking for myself. Such an addiction is the last degradation of a free and moral agent. If I could not go to heaven but with a party, I would not go there at all. Therefore I protest to you I am not of the party of federalists. But I am much farther from that than of the Antifederalists. - Letter to Francis Hopkinson (13 March 1789)

I say, the earth belongs to each of these generations during its course, fully and in its own right. The second generation receives it clear of the debts and incumbrances of the first, the third of the second, and so on. For if the first could charge it with a debt, then the earth would belong to the dead and not to the living generation. Then, no generation can contract debts greater than may be paid during the course of its own existence. - Letter to James Madison (6 September 1789)

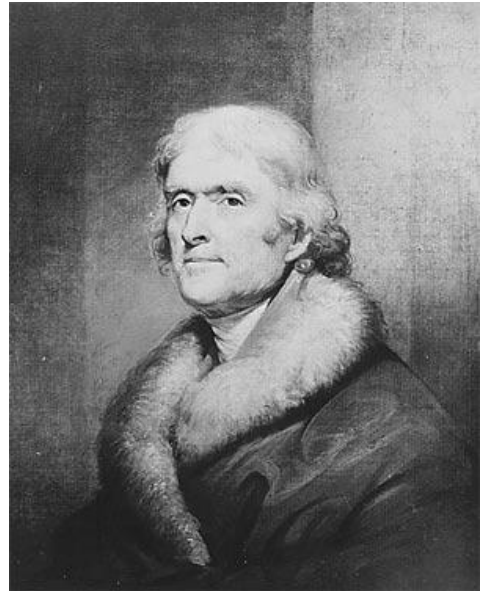


Founding Father Quotes

I would rather be exposed to the inconveniences attending too much liberty, than those attending too small a degree of it. The republican is the only form of government which is not eternally at open or secret war with the rights of mankind. - Letter to William Hunter (11 March 1790)

We are not to expect to be translated from despotism to liberty in a featherbed. - Letter to Lafayette (2 April 1790)

I learn with great satisfaction that you are about committing to the press the valuable historical and State papers you have been so long collecting. Time and accident are committing daily havoc on the originals deposited in our public offices. The late war has done the work of centuries in this business. The last cannot be recovered, but let us save what remains; not by vaults and locks which fence them from the public eye and use in consigning them to the waste of time, but by such a multiplication of copies, as shall place them beyond the reach of accident. - Letter to a Mr. Hazard (18 February 1791)



I consider the foundation of the Constitution as laid on this ground: That "all powers not delegated to the United States, by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States or to the people." To take a single step beyond the boundaries thus specially drawn around the powers of Congress, is to take possession of a boundless field of power, no longer susceptible of any definition.

The incorporation of a bank, and the powers assumed by this bill, have not, in my opinion, been delegated to the United States, by the Constitution. They are not among the powers specially enumerated. - Opinion against the constitutionality of a National Bank (1791)

I would rather be exposed to the inconveniences attending too much liberty, than those attending too small a degree of it. - Letter to Archibald Stuart (23 December 1791)

Let what will be said or done, preserve your sang-froid immovably, and to every obstacle, oppose patience, perseverance, and soothing language. - Letter to William Short (18 March 1792) Delay is preferable to error. - Letter to George Washington (16 May 1792)

We confide in our strength, without boasting of it; we respect that of others, without fearing it. - Letter to William Carmichael and William Short (1793)

The second office of the government is honorable and easy, the first is but a splendid misery. - Letter to Elbridge Gerry (13 May 1797)

Founding Father Quotes

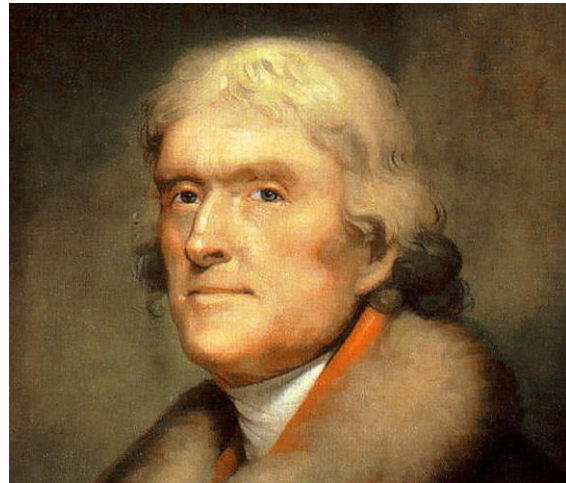
It was by the sober sense of our citizens that we were safely and steadily conducted from monarchy to republicanism, and it is by the same agency alone we can be kept from falling back. - Letter to Arthur Campbell (1797)

A little patience, and we shall see the reign of witches pass over, their spells dissolve, and the people, recovering their true sight, restore their government to its true principles. It is true that in the meantime we are suffering deeply in spirit, and incurring the horrors of a war and long oppressions of enormous public debt. If the game runs sometimes against us at home we must have patience till luck turns, and then we shall have an opportunity of winning back the principles we have lost, for this is a game where principles are at stake. - From a letter to John Taylor (June 1798), after the passage of the Alien and Sedition Acts.

In questions of power, then, let no more be said of confidence in man, but bind him down from mischief by the chains of the Constitution. - The Kentucky Resolutions of 1798 (16 November 1798)

War is an instrument entirely inefficient toward redressing wrong; and multiplies, instead of indemnifying losses. - Letter to John Sinclair (1798)

As pure a son of liberty as I have ever known. - About Tadeusz Kościuszko, in a letter to Horatio Gates (1798)



I am for freedom of religion, & against all manoeuvres to bring about a legal ascendancy of one sect over another. - Letter to Elbridge Gerry (1799)

Commerce with all nations, alliance with none, should be our motto. - Letter to Thomas Lomax (12 March 1799)

To preserve the freedom of the human mind then and freedom of the press, every spirit should be ready to devote itself to martyrdom; for as long as we may think as we will, and speak as we think, the condition of man will proceed in improvement. - Letter to William Green Mumford (18 June 1799)

Of the various executive abilities, no one excited more anxious concern than that of placing the interests of our fellow-citizens in the hands of honest men, with understanding sufficient for their stations. No duty is at the same time more difficult to fulfil. The knowledge of character possessed by a single individual is of necessity limited. To seek out the best through the whole Union, we must resort to the information which from the best of men, acting disinterestedly and with the purest motives, is sometimes incorrect. - Letter to Elias Shipman and others of New Haven (12 July 1801)

If a due participation of office is a matter of right, how are vacancies to be obtained? Those by death are few; by resignation, none. - Letter to Elias Shipman and others of New Haven (12 July 1801)

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Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between man and his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legislative powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should "make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," thus building a wall of separation between church and State. - Letter to Danbury Baptist Association, CT. (1 January 1802)

If we can prevent the government from wasting the labors of the people, under the pretense of taking care of them, they must become happy. - Letter to Thomas Cooper (29 November 1802)

To the corruptions of Christianity I am indeed opposed; but not to the genuine precepts of Jesus himself. To the corruptions of Christianity I am indeed opposed; but not to the genuine precepts of Jesus himself. I am a Christian, in the only sense he wished any one to be; sincerely attached to his doctrines, in preference to all others; ascribing to himself every human excellence; & believing he never claimed any other. - Letter to Benjamin Rush (12 April 1803)

His parentage was obscure; his condition poor; his education null; his natural endowments great; his life correct and innocent: he was meek, benevolent, patient, firm, disinterested, & of the sublimest eloquence.

The disadvantages under which his doctrines appear are remarkable.



1. Like Socrates & Epictetus, he wrote nothing himself.
2. But he had not, like them, a Xenophon or an Arrian to write for him. On the contrary, all the learned of his country, entrenched in its power and riches, were opposed to him, lest his labors should undermine their advantages; and the committing to writing his life & doctrines fell on the most unlettered & ignorant men; who wrote, too, from memory, & not till long after the transactions had passed.
3. According to the ordinary fate of those who attempt to enlighten and reform mankind, he fell an early victim to the jealousy & combination of the altar and the throne, at about 33. years of age, his reason having not yet attained the maximum of its energy, nor the course of his preaching, which was but of 3. years at most, presented occasions for developing a complete system of morals.
4. Hence the doctrines which he really delivered were defective as a whole, and fragments only of what he did deliver have come to us mutilated, misstated, & often unintelligible.
5. They have been still more disfigured by the corruptions of schismatising followers, who have found an interest in sophisticating & perverting the simple doctrines he taught by engrafting on them the

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mysticisms of a Grecian sophist, frittering them into subtleties, & obscuring them with jargon, until they have caused good men to reject the whole in disgust, & to view Jesus himself as an impostor.

Notwithstanding these disadvantages, a system of morals is presented to us, which, if filled up in the true style and spirit of the rich fragments he left us, would be the most perfect and sublime that has ever been taught by man.

The question of his being a member of the Godhead, or in direct communication with it, claimed for him by some of his followers, and denied by others, is foreign to the present view, which is merely an estimate of the intrinsic merit of his doctrines.

1. He corrected the Deism of the Jews, confirming them in their belief of one only God, and giving them juster notions of his attributes and government.

2. His moral doctrines, relating to kindred & friends, were more pure & perfect than those of the most correct of the philosophers, and greatly more so than those of the Jews; and they went far beyond both in inculcating universal philanthropy, not only to kindred and friends, to neighbors and countrymen, but to all mankind, gathering all into one family, under the bonds of love, charity, peace, common wants and common aids. A development of this head will evince the peculiar superiority of the system of Jesus over all others.

3. The precepts of philosophy, & of the Hebrew code, laid hold of actions only. He pushed his scrutinies into the heart of man; erected his tribunal in the region of his thoughts, and purified the waters at the fountain head.

4. He taught, emphatically, the doctrines of a future state, which was either doubted, or disbelieved by the Jews; and wielded it with efficacy, as an important incentive, supplementary to the other motives to moral conduct.

"Syllabus of an Estimate of the Merit of the Doctrines of Jesus, Compared with Those of Others" in a letter to Benjamin Rush (12 April 1803).

I never will, by any word or act, bow to the shrine of intolerance, or admit a right of inquiry into the religious opinions of others. - Letter to Edward Dowse (19 April 1803)

There is no act, however virtuous, for which ingenuity may not find some bad motive. - Letter to Edward Dowse (19 April 1803)

The Constitution . . . meant that its coordinate branches should be checks on each other. But the opinion which gives to the judges the right to decide what laws are constitutional and what not, not only for



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themselves in their own sphere of action but for the Legislature and Executive also in their spheres, would make the Judiciary a despotic branch. - Letter to Abigail Adams (1804)

Whensoever hostile aggressions...require a resort to war, we must meet our duty and convince the world that we are just friends and brave enemies. - Letter to Andrew Jackson (3 December 1806)

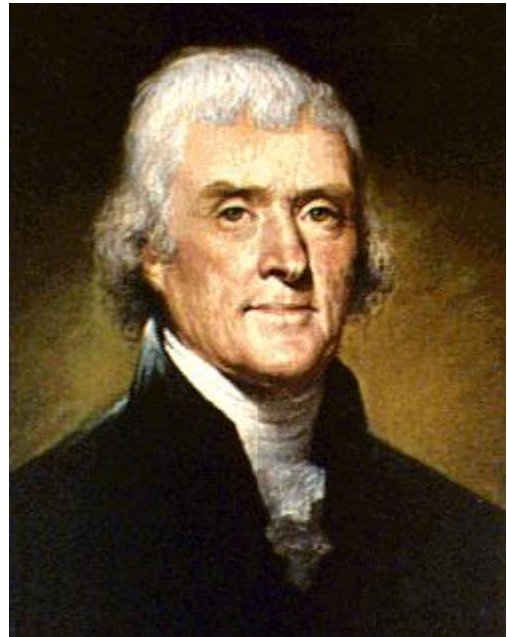
Blest is that nation whose silent course of happiness furnishes nothing for history to say. - Letter to Count Diodati (29 March 1807)

My religious reading has long been confined to the moral branch of religion, which is the same in all religions; while in that branch which consists of dogmas, all differ. - Letter to Thomas Leiper (11 January 1809)

The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only legitimate object of good government. - "To the Republican Citizens of Washington County, Maryland" (March 31, 1809).

I have often thought that nothing would do more extensive good at small expense than the establishment of a small circulating library in every county, to consist of a few well-chosen books, to be lent to the people of the country under regulations as would secure their safe return in due time. - Letter to John Wyche (19 May 1809).

Nothing was or is farther from my intentions, than to enlist myself as the champion of a fixed opinion, where I have only expressed doubt. - Letter to Joel Barlow (8 October 1809)



It has always been denied by the republican party in this country, that the Constitution had given the power of incorporation to Congress. On the establishment of the Bank of the United States, this was the great ground on which that establishment was combated; and the party prevailing supported it only on the argument of its being an incident to the power given them for raising money. - Letter to Dr. Maese (1809)

The selfish spirit of commerce knows no country, and feels no passion or principle but that of gain. - Letter to Larkin Smith (1809).

I consider the genuine (not the imputed) doctrines of Epicurus as containing everything rational in moral philosophy which Greece and Rome have left us. That we are overdone with banking institutions which have banished the precious metals and substituted a more fluctuating and unsafe medium, that these have withdrawn capital from useful improvements and employments to nourish idleness, that the wars of the world have swollen our commerce beyond the wholesome limits of exchanging our own productions for our own wants, and that, for the emolument of a small proportion of our society who prefer these demoralizing pursuits to labors useful to the whole, the peace of the whole is endangered

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and all our present difficulties produced, are evils more easily to be deplored than remedied. - Letter to Abbe Salimankis (1810)

Knowing that religion does not furnish grosser bigots than law, I expect little from old judges. - Letter to Thomas Cooper (1810)

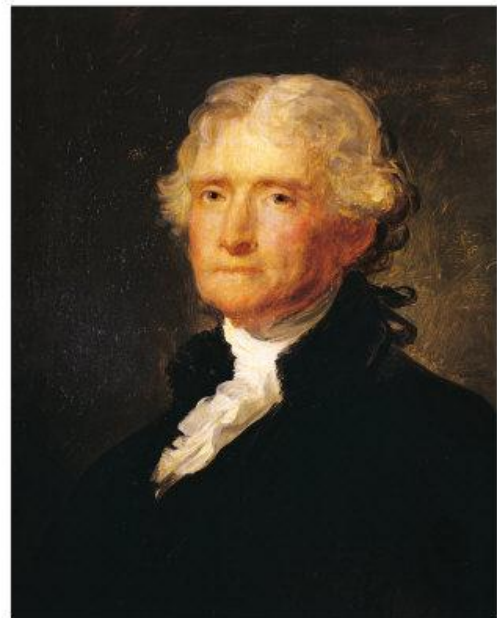
Politics, like religion, hold up the torches of martyrdom to the reformers of error. - Letter to James Ogilvie (4 August 1811)

But though an old man, I am but a young gardener. - Letter to Charles Willson Peale (20 August 1811)

The acquisition of Canada this year, as far as the neighborhood of Quebec, will be a mere matter of marching, and will give us experience for the attack of Halifax the next, and the final expulsion of England from the American continent. - in a letter to William Duane (4 August 1812)

England was, until we copied her, the only country on earth which ever, by a general law, gave a legal right to the exclusive use of an idea. In some other countries it is sometimes done, in a great case, and by a special and personal act, but, generally speaking, other nations have thought that these monopolies produce more embarrassment than advantage to society; and it may be observed that the nations which refuse monopolies of invention, are as fruitful as England in new and useful devices. - Letter to Isaac McPherson (13 August 1813).

He who steadily observes the moral precepts in which all religions concur, will never be questioned at the gates of heaven as to the dogmas in which they all differ. - Letter to William Canby (18 September 1813).



Of all the systems of morality, ancient or modern, which have come under my observation, none appear to me so pure as that of Jesus. He who follows this steadily need not, I think, be uneasy, although he cannot comprehend the subtleties and mysteries erected on his doctrines by those who, calling themselves his special followers and favorites, would make him come into the world to lay snares for all understandings but theirs. These metaphysical heads, usurping the judgment seat of God, denounce as his enemies all who cannot perceive the Geometrical logic of Euclid in the demonstrations of St. Athanasius., that three are one, and one is three; and yet that the one is not three nor the three one. - Letter to William Canby (18 September 1813).

I agree with you that there is a natural aristocracy among men. The grounds of this are virtue and talents. - Letter to John Adams (28 October 1813).

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[I]f ever there was a holy war, it was that which saved our liberties and gave us independence. - Letter to John W. Eppes (6 November 1813)

History, I believe, furnishes no example of a priest-ridden people maintaining a free civil government. This marks the lowest grade of ignorance of which their civil as well as religious leaders will always avail themselves for their own purposes. - Letter to Alexander von Humboldt (6 December 1813)

Religion is a subject on which I have ever been most scrupulously reserved. I have considered it as a matter between every man and his Maker in which no other, and far less the public, had a right to intermeddle. - Letter to Richard Rush (1813).

The whole history of these books is so defective and doubtful that it seems vain to attempt minute enquiry into it: and such tricks have been played with their text, and with the texts of other books relating to them, that we have a right, from that cause, to entertain much doubt what parts of them are genuine. In the New Testament there is internal evidence that parts of it have proceeded from an extraordinary man; and that other parts are of the fabric of very inferior minds. It is as easy to separate those parts, as to pick out diamonds from dunghills. - Letter to John Adams, (24 January 1814)

Merchants have no country. The mere spot they stand on does not constitute so strong an attachment as that from which they draw their gains. In every country and in every age, the priest has been hostile to liberty. He is always in alliance with the despot, abetting his abuses in return for protection to his own. It is easier to acquire them, and to effect this, they have perverted the best religion ever preached to man into mystery and jargon, unintelligible to all mankind, and therefore the safer engine for their purposes. With the lawyers it is a new thing. They have, in the mother country, been generally the primest supporters of the free principles of their constitution. But there, too, they have changed. - Letter to Horatio G. Spafford (17 March 1814)



If we did a good act merely from love of God and a belief that it is pleasing to Him, whence arises the morality of the Atheist? ...Their virtue, then, must have had some other foundation than the love of God. - Letter to Thomas Law (13 June 1814).

The Christian priesthood, finding the doctrines of Christ levelled to every understanding, and too plain to need explanation, saw in the mysticism of Plato, materials with which they might build up an artificial system, which might, from its indistinctness, admit everlasting controversy, give employment for their order, and introduce it to profit, power and pre-eminence. The doctrines which flowed from the lips of Jesus himself are within the comprehension of a child ; but thousands of volumes have not yet explained the Platonisms engrafted on them; and for this obvious reason, that nonsense can never be explained. - Letter to John Adams (5 July 1814)

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I like well your idea of issuing treasury notes bearing interest, because I am persuaded they would soon be withdrawn from circulation and locked up in vaults & private hoards. It would put it in the power of every man to lend his 100. or 1000 d. tho' not able to go forward on the great scale, and be the most advantageous way of obtaining a loan. The other idea of creating a National bank, I do not concur in, because it seems now decided that Congress has not that power, (altho' I sincerely wish they had it exclusively) and because I think there is already a vast redundancy, rather than a scarcity of paper medium. - Letter to Thomas Law (6 November 1813)

A man has a right to use a saw, an axe, a plane, separately; may he not combine their uses on the same piece of wood? He has a right to use his knife to cut his meat, a fork to hold it; may a patentee take from him the right to combine their use on the same subject? Such a law, instead of enlarging our conveniences, as was intended, would most fearfully abridge them, and crowd us by monopolies out of the use of the things we have. - Letter to Oliver Evans, (16 January 1814)



Merchants have no country. The mere spot they stand on does not constitute so strong an attachment as that from which they draw their gains. - Letter to Horatio G. Spafford (17 March 1814)

The hour of emancipation is advancing. . . this enterprise is for the young; for those who can follow it up, and bear it through to its consummation. It shall have all my prayers, and these are the only weapons of an old man. - Letter to Edward Coles (25 August 1814)

Our particular principles of religion are a subject of accountability to our god alone. I enquire after no man's and trouble none with mine; nor is it given to us in this life to know whether yours or mine, our friend's or our foe's, are exactly the right. - Letter to Miles King (26 September 1814).

I agree ... that a professorship of Theology should have no place in our institution. But we cannot always do what is absolutely best. Those with whom we act, entertaining different views, have the power and the right of carrying them into practice. Truth advances, and error recedes step by step only; and to do to our fellow men the most good in our power, we must lead where we can, follow where we cannot, and still go with them, watching always the favorable moment for helping them to another step. - letter to Thomas Cooper (7 October 1814)

I am really mortified to be told that, in the United States of America, a fact like this can become a subject of inquiry, and of criminal inquiry too, as an offence against religion; that a question about the sale of a book can be carried before the civil magistrate. Is this then our freedom of religion? and are we to have a censor whose imprimatur shall say what books may be sold, and what we may buy? And who is thus to dogmatize religious opinions for our citizens? Whose foot is to be the measure to which ours are all to be cut or stretched? Is a priest to be our inquisitor, or shall a layman, simple as ourselves, set up his reason as the rule for what we are to read, and what we must believe? It is an insult to our

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citizens to question whether they are rational beings or not, and blasphemy against religion to suppose it cannot stand the test of truth and reason. - Letter to Nicolas Gouin Dufief, (1814)

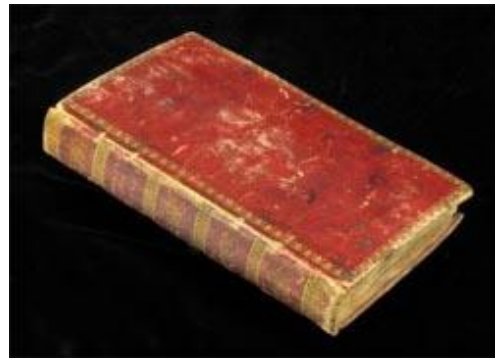
Self-interest, or rather self-love, or egoism, has been more plausibly substituted as the basis of morality. But I consider our relations with others as constituting the boundaries of morality. With ourselves, we stand on the ground of identity, not of relation, which last, requiring two subjects, excludes self-love confined to a single one. To ourselves, in strict language, we can owe no duties, obligation requiring also two parties. Self-love, therefore, is no part of morality. Indeed, it is exactly its counterpart. - Letter to Thomas Law (1814)

The priests have so disfigured the simple religion of Jesus that no one who reads the sophistications they have engrafted on it, from the jargon of Plato, of Aristotle & other mystics, would conceive these could have been fathered on the sublime preacher of the sermon on the mount. - Letter to Benjamin Waterhouse (13 October 1815)

If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be. - Letter to Colonel Charles Yancey (6 January 1816) ME 14:384

Where the press is free, and every man able to read, all is safe. - Letter to Charles Yancey, (6 January 1816)

I, too, have made a wee-little book from the same materials, which I call the Philosophy of Jesus; it is a paradigma of his doctrines, made by cutting the texts out of the book, and arranging them on the pages of a blank book, in a certain order of time or subject. A more beautiful or precious morsel of ethics I have never seen; it is a document in proof that I am a real Christian, that is to say, a disciple of the doctrines of Jesus, very different from the Platonists, who call me infidel and themselves Christians and preachers of the gospel, while they draw all their characteristic dogmas from what its author never said nor saw. They have compounded from the heathen mysteries a system beyond the comprehension of man, of which the great reformer of the vicious ethics and deism of the Jews, were he to return on earth, would not recognize one feature. - Letter to Charles Thomson (9 January 1816) ,



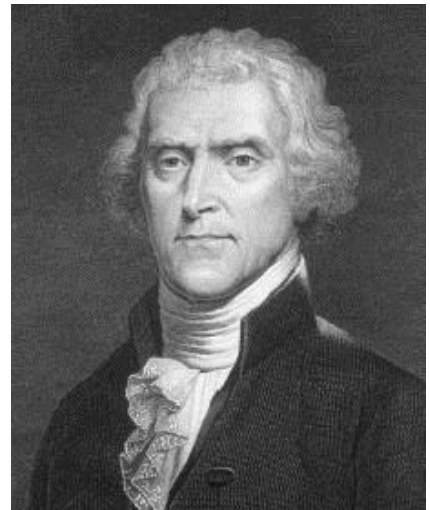
Enlighten the people generally, and tyranny and oppressions of body and mind will vanish like evil spirits at the dawn of day. - Letter to Éleuthère Irénée du Pont de Nemours (24 April 1816)

The system of banking we have both equally and ever reprobated. I contemplate it as a blot left in all our Constitutions, which, if not covered, will end in their destruction, which is already hit by the gamblers in corruption, and is sweeping away in its progress the fortunes and morals of our citizens. Funding I consider as limited, rightfully, to a redemption of the debt within the lives of a majority of the generation contracting it; every generation coming equally, by the laws of the Creator of the world, to the free possession of the earth he made for their subsistence, unincumbered by their predecessors, who, like them, were but tenants for life. - Letter to John Taylor (28 May 1816)

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We may say with truth and meaning that governments are more or less republican, as they have more or less of the element of popular election and control in their composition; and believing, as I do, that the mass of the citizens is the safest depository of their own rights, and especially, that the evils flowing from the duperies of the people are less injurious than those from the egoism of their agents, I am a friend to that composition of government which has in it the most of this ingredient. And I sincerely believe, with you, that banking establishments are more dangerous than standing armies; and that the principle of spending money to be paid by posterity, under the name of funding, is but swindling futurity on a large scale. - Letter to John Taylor (28 May 1816) ME 15:23.

Our legislators are not sufficiently apprized of the rightful limits of their power; that their true office is to declare and enforce only our natural rights and duties, and to take none of them from us. No man has a natural right to commit aggression on the equal rights of another; and this is all from which the laws ought to restrain him; every man is under the natural duty of contributing to the necessities of the society; and this is all the laws should enforce on him; and, no man having a natural right to be the judge between himself and another, it is his natural duty to submit to the umpirage of an impartial third. When the laws have declared and enforced all this, they have fulfilled their functions, and the idea is quite unfounded, that on entering into society we give up any natural right. - Letter to Francis W. Gilmer (27 June 1816)



Some men look at constitutions with sanctimonious reverence and deem them like the ark of the covenant, too sacred to be touched. They ascribe to the men of the preceding age a wisdom more than human and suppose what they did to be beyond amendment. I knew that age well; I belonged to it and labored with it. It deserved well of its country. It was very like the present but without the experience of the present; and forty years of experience in government is worth a century of book-reading; and this they would say themselves were they to rise from the dead. - Letter to H. Tompkinson , 12 July 1816

I am certainly not an advocate for frequent and untried changes in laws and constitutions. I think moderate imperfections had better be borne with; because, when once known, we accommodate ourselves to them, and find practical means of correcting their ill effects. But I know also, that laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more developed, more enlightened, as new discoveries are made, new truths disclosed, and manners and opinions change with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance also, and keep pace with the times. We might as well require a man to wear still the coat which fitted him when a boy, as civilized society to remain ever under the regimen of their barbarous ancestors. - Letter to H. Tompkinson , 12 July 1816 (image at Library of Congress)

I, however, place economy among the first and most important republican virtues, and public debt as the greatest of the dangers to be feared. - Letter to William Plumer (21 July 1816)

Founding Father Quotes

Ridicule is the only weapon which can be used against unintelligible propositions. Ideas must be distinct before reason can act upon them; and no man ever had a distinct idea of the trinity. It is the mere Abracadabra of the mountebanks calling themselves the priests of Jesus. - Letter to Francis Adrian Van der Kemp (30 July 1816)

Bigotry is the disease of ignorance, of morbid minds; enthusiasm of the free and buoyant. Education & free discussion are the antidotes of both. - Letter to John Adams (1 August 1816)

I like the dreams of the future better than the history of the past, — so good night! - Letter to John Adams (1 August 1816)

It is in our lives, and not from our words, that our religion must be read. By the same test the world must judge me. But this does not satisfy the priesthood. They must have a positive, a declared assent to all their interested absurdities. My opinion is that there would never have been an infidel, if there had never been a priest. - Letter to Mrs. Harrison Smith (6 August 1816).

You ask if I mean to publish anything on the subject of a letter of mine to my friend Charles Thompson? Certainly not. I write nothing for publication, and last of all things should it be on the subject of religion. On the dogmas of religion as distinguished from moral principles, all mankind, from the beginning of the world to this day, have been quarrelling, fighting, burning and torturing one another, for abstractions unintelligible to themselves and to all others, and absolutely beyond the comprehension of the human mind. Were I to enter on that arena, I should only add an unit to the number of Bedlamites. - Letter to Mathew Carey (11 November 1816)



I may say Christianity itself divided into its thousands also, who are disputing, anathematizing and where the laws permit burning and torturing one another for abstractions which no one of them understand, and which are indeed beyond the comprehension of the human mind. - Letter to George Logan (12 November 1816)

I hope we shall take warning from the example [of England] and crush in its birth the aristocracy of our monied corporations which dare already to challenge our government to a trial of strength and bid defiance to the laws our country. - Letter to George Logan (12 November 1816)

There is an error into which most of the speculators on government have fallen, and which the well-known state of society of our Indians ought, before now, to have corrected. In their hypothesis of the origin of government, they suppose it to have commenced in the patriarchal or monarchical form. Our Indians are evidently in that state of nature which has passed the association of a single family... The Cherokees, the only tribe I know to be contemplating the establishment of regular laws, magistrates, and government, propose a government of representatives, elected from every town. But of all things, they least think of subjecting themselves to the will of one man. - Letter to Francis W. Gilmer (1816)

Founding Father Quotes

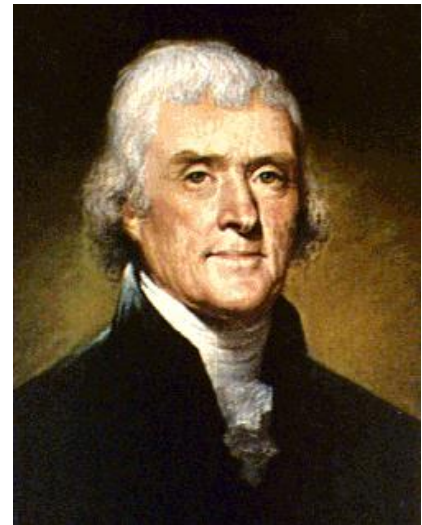
Lay down true principles and adhere to them inflexibly. Do not be frightened into their surrender by the alarms of the timid, or the croakings of wealth against the ascendancy of the people. - Letter to Samuel Kercheval (1816)

I believe... that every human mind feels pleasure in doing good to another. - Letter to John Adams (1816)

The result of your fifty or sixty years of religious reading in the four words: 'Be just and good,' is that in which all our enquiries must end. - Letter to John Adams (11 January 1817)

What all agree upon is probably right; what no two agree in most probably is wrong. - Letter to John Adams (11 January 1817)

One of our fan-coloring biographers, who paints small men as very great, inquired of me lately with real affection too, whether he might consider as authentic, the change of my religion much spoken of in some circles. Now this supposed that they knew what had been my religion before, taking for it the word of their priests, whom I certainly never made the confidants of my creed. My answer was "say nothing of my religion. It is known to my God and myself alone. Its evidence before the world is to be sought in my life; if that has been honest and dutiful to society, the religion which has regulated it cannot be a bad one." - Letter to John Adams (11 January 1817)



The Pennsylvania legislature, who, on a proposition to make the belief in God a necessary qualification for office, rejected it by a great majority, although assuredly there was not a single atheist in their body. And you remember to have heard, that when the act for religious freedom was before the Virginia Assembly, a motion to insert the name of Jesus Christ before the phrase, "the author of our holy religion," which stood in the bill, was rejected, although that was the creed of a great majority of them. - Letter to Albert Gallatin (16 June 1817)

I have the consolation to reflect that during the period of my administration not a drop of the blood of a single fellow citizen was shed by the sword of war or of the law. - Letter to papal nuncio Count Dugnani (14 February 1818)

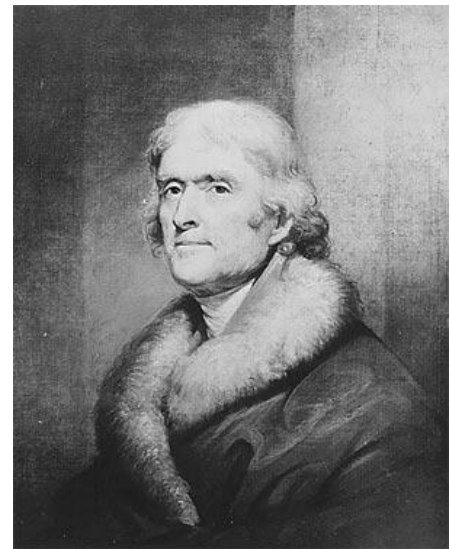
Tried myself in the school of affliction, by the loss of every form of connection which can rive the human heart, I know well, and feel what you have lost, what you have suffered, are suffering, and have yet to endure. The same trials have taught me that for ills so immeasurable, time and silence are the only medicines. I will not, therefore, by useless condolences, open afresh the sluices of your grief, nor, although mingling sincerely my tears with yours, will I say a word more where words are vain. - Letter to John Adams (13 November 1818) regarding the death of Abigail Adams

Founding Father Quotes

You say you are a Calvinist. I am not. I am of a sect by myself, as far as I know. - Letter to Ezra Stiles Ely (25 June 1819)

It should be remembered, as an axiom of eternal truth in politics, that whatever power in any government is independent, is absolute also; in theory only, at first, while the spirit of the people is up, but in practice, as fast as that relaxes. Independence can be trusted nowhere but with the people in mass. They are inherently independent of all but moral law. - Letter to Judge Spencer Roane (6 September 1819)

The greatest of all the reformers of the depraved religion of his own country, was Jesus of Nazareth. Abstracting what is really his from the rubbish in which it is buried, easily distinguished by its lustre from the dross of his biographers, and as separable from that as the diamond from the dunghill. ... The establishment of the innocent and genuine character of this benevolent moralist, and the rescuing it from the imputation of imposture, which has resulted from artificial systems, [footnote: e.g. The immaculate conception of Jesus, his deification, the creation of the world by him, his miraculous powers, his resurrection and visible ascension, his corporeal presence in the Eucharist, the Trinity; original sin, atonement, regeneration, election, orders of Hierarchy, etc. — T.J.] invented by ultra-Christian sects, unauthorized by a single word ever uttered by him, is a most desirable object, and one to which Priestley has successfully devoted his labors and learning. It would in time, it is to be hoped, effect a quiet euthanasia of the heresies of bigotry and fanaticism which have so long triumphed over human reason, and so generally and deeply afflicted mankind; but this work is to be begun by winnowing the grain from the chaff of the historians of his life. - Letter to William Short (31 October 1819)



As you say of yourself, I too am an Epicurian. I consider the genuine (not the imputed) doctrines of Epicurus as containing everything rational in moral philosophy which Greece and Rome have left us. - Letter to William Short (31 October 1819)

We were laboring under a dropsical fulness of circulating medium. Nearly all of it is now called in by the banks, who have the regulation of the safety-valves of our fortunes, and who condense and explode them at their will. Lands in this State cannot now be sold for a year's rent; and unless our Legislature have wisdom enough to effect a remedy by a gradual diminution only of the medium, there will be a general revolution of property in this state. - Letter to John Adams (7 November 1819)

Of liberty I would say that, in the whole plenitude of its extent, it is unobstructed action according to our will. But rightful liberty is unobstructed action according to our will within limits drawn around us by the equal rights of others. I do not add "within the limits of the law" because law is often but the tyrant's will, and always so when it violates the rights of the individual. - Letter to Isaac H. Tiffany (1819)

Founding Father Quotes

The priests of the different religious sects, who dread the advance of science as witches do the approach of day-light; and scowl on it the fatal harbinger announcing the subversion of the duperies on which they live. In this the Presbyterian clergy take the lead. the tocsin is sounded in all their pulpits, and the first alarm denounced is against the particular creed of Doctr. Cooper; and as impudently denounced as if they really knew what it is. - Letter to José Correia da Serra (11 April 1820).

Among the sayings and discourses imputed to him [Jesus] by his biographers, I find many passages of fine imagination, correct morality, and of the most lovely benevolence; and others again of so much ignorance, so much absurdity, so much untruth, charlatanism, and imposture, as to pronounce it impossible that such contradictions should have proceeded from the same being. I separate, therefore, the gold from the dross; restore to Him the former, and leave the latter to the stupidity of some, and roguery of others of His disciples. Of this band of dupes and impostors, Paul was the great Coryphaeus, and first corruptor of the doctrines of Jesus. These palpable interpolations and falsifications of His doctrines, led me to try to sift them apart. - Letter to William Short (13 April 1820)



We have the wolf by the ears, and we can neither hold him nor safely let him go. Justice is in one scale, self-preservation in the other. - On slavery, in a letter to John Holmes (22 April 1820)

I regret that I am now to die in the belief, that the useless sacrifice of themselves by the generation of 1776, to acquire self- government and happiness to their country, is to be thrown away by the unwise and unworthy passions of their sons, and that my only consolation is to be, that I live not to weep over it. If they would but dispassionately weigh the blessings they will throw away, against an abstract principle more likely to be effected by union than by scission, they would pause before they would perpetrate this act of suicide on themselves, and of treason against the hopes of the world. To yourself, as the faithful advocate of the Union, I tender the offering of my high esteem and respect. - Letter to John Holmes (22 April 1820)

To talk of immaterial existences is to talk of nothings. To say that the human soul, angels, god, are immaterial, is to say they are nothings, or that there is no god, no angels, no soul. I cannot reason otherwise: but I believe I am supported in my creed of materialism by Locke, Tracy, and Stewart. At what age of the Christian church this heresy of immaterialism, this masked atheism, crept in, I do not know. But heresy it certainly is. - Letter to John Adams (15 August 1820)

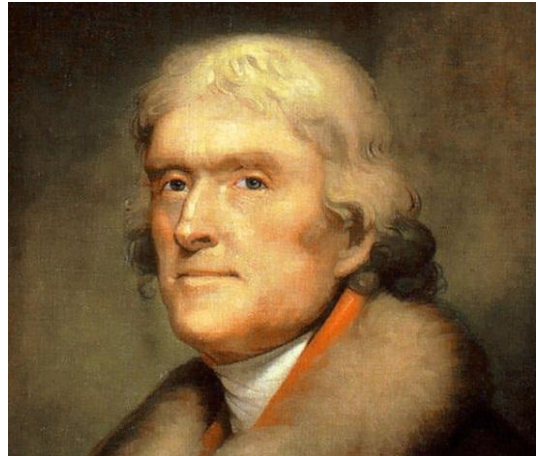
I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with wholesome discretion, the remedy is

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not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education. This is the true corrective of abuses of constitutional power. - Letter to William Charles Jarvis, (28 September 1820).

We are not afraid to follow truth wherever it may lead, nor to tolerate any error so long as reason is left free to combat it. - Letter to William Roscoe (December 27, 1820).

You seem to consider the federal judges as the ultimate arbiters of all constitutional questions, a very dangerous doctrine, indeed, and one which would place us under the despotism of an oligarchy. Our judges are as honest as other men, and not more so. They have with others the same passions for the party, for power and the privilege of the corps. Their power is the more dangerous, as they are in office for life and not responsible, as the other functionaries are, to the elective control. The Constitution has erected no such single tribunal, knowing that to whatever hands confided, with the corruptions of time and party, its members would become despots. It has more wisely made all departments co-equal and co-sovereign within themselves. - Letter to William Charles Jarvis (1820).



That one hundred and fifty lawyers should do business together ought not to be expected. - On the U.S. Congress, in his Autobiography (6 January 1821)

And even should the cloud of barbarism and despotism again obscure the science and libraries of Europe, this country remains to preserve and restore light and liberty to them. In short, the flames kindled on the fourth of July, 1776, have spread over too much of the globe to be extinguished by the feeble engines of despotism; on the contrary, they will consume these engines and all who work them. - Letter to John Adams (12 September 1821)

Where the preamble declares, that coercion is a departure from the plan of the holy author of our religion, an amendment was proposed by inserting "Jesus Christ," so that it would read "A departure from the plan of Jesus Christ, the holy author of our religion;" the insertion was rejected by the great majority, in proof that they meant to comprehend, within the mantle of its protection, the Jew and the Gentile, the Christian and Mohammedan, the Hindoo and Infidel of every denomination. - Autobiography (1821)

Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate, than that these people are to be free; nor is it less certain that the two races, equally free, cannot live in the same government. Nature, habit, opinion have drawn indelible lines of distinction between them. - Autobiography (1821)

The doctrines of Jesus are simple, and tend all to the happiness of man.

1. That there is one only God, and he all perfect.

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2, That there is a future state of rewards and punishments.

3. That to love God with all thy heart and thy neighbor as thyself, is the sum of religion.

These are the great points on which he endeavored to reform the religion of the Jews. But compare with these the demoralizing dogmas of Calvin.

1. That there are three Gods.

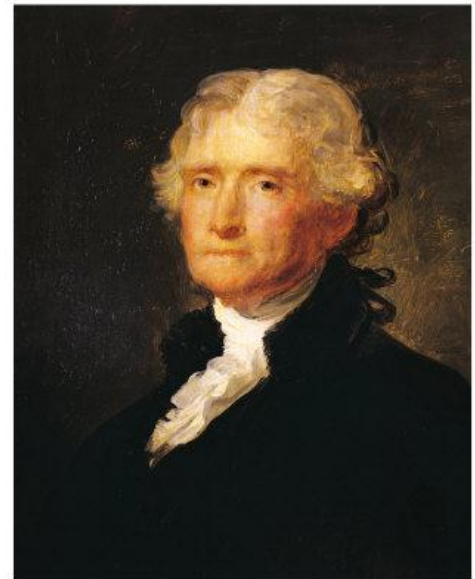
2. That good works, or the love of our neighbor, are nothing.

3. That faith is every thing, and the more incomprehensible the proposition, the more merit in its faith.

4. That reason in religion is of unlawful use.

5. That God, from the beginning, elected certain individuals to be saved, and certain others to be damned; and that no crimes of the former can damn them; no virtues of the latter save.

Now, which of these is the true and charitable Christian? He who believes and acts on the simple doctrines of Jesus? Or the impious dogmatists, as Athanasius and Calvin? Verily I say these are the false shepherds foretold as to enter not by the door into the sheepfold, but to climb up some other way. They are mere usurpers of the Christian name, teaching a counter-religion made up of the deliria of crazy imaginations, as foreign from Christianity as is that of Mahomet. Their blasphemies have driven thinking men into infidelity, who have too hastily rejected the supposed author himself, with the horrors so falsely imputed to him. Had the doctrines of Jesus been preached always as pure as they came from his lips, the whole civilized world would now have been Christian. I rejoice that in this blessed country of free inquiry and belief, which has surrendered its creed and conscience to neither kings nor priests, the genuine doctrine of one only God is reviving, and I trust that there is not a young man now living in the United States who will not die an Unitarian. - Thomas Jefferson, letter to Benjamin Waterhouse, (26 June 1822)



They might need a preparatory discourse on the text of 'prove all things, hold fast that which is good,' in order to unlearn the lesson that reason is an unlawful guide in religion. They might startle on being first awaked from the dreams of the night, but they would rub their eyes at once, and look the spectres boldly in the face. - Letter to Benjamin Waterhouse (19 July 1822)

In our university [of Virginia] you know there is no Professorship of Divinity. A handle has been made of this, to disseminate an idea that this is an institution, not merely of no religion, but against all religion. Occasion was taken at the last meeting of the Visitors, to bring forward an idea that might silence this

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calumny, which weighed on the minds of some honest friends to the institution. - Letter to Thomas Cooper (3 November 1822)

No historical fact is better established, than that the doctrine of one God, pure and uncompounded, was that of the early ages of Christianity ... Nor was the unity of the Supreme Being ousted from the Christian creed by the force of reason, but by the sword of civil government, wielded at the will of the fanatic Athanasius. The hocus-pocus phantasm of a God like another Cerberus, with one body and three heads, had its birth and growth in the blood of thousands of martyrs ... The Athanasian paradox that one is three, and three but one, is so incomprehensible to the human mind, that no candid man can say he has any idea of it, and how can he believe what presents no idea? He who thinks he does, only deceives himself. He proves, also, that man, once surrendering his reason, has no remaining guard against absurdities the most monstrous, and like a ship without rudder, is the sport of every wind. With such person, gullibility which they call faith, takes the helm from the hand of reason, and the mind becomes a wreck. - Letter to James Smith (1822)

I can never join Calvin in addressing his god. He was indeed an Atheist, which I can never be; or rather his religion was Daemonism. If ever man worshipped a false god, he did. The being described in his 5 points is not the God whom you and I acknowledge and adore, the Creator and benevolent governor of the world; but a daemon of malignant spirit. It would be more pardonable to believe in no god at all, than to blaspheme him by the atrocious attributes of Calvin. Indeed I think that every Christian sect gives a great handle to Atheism by their general dogma that, without a revelation, there would not be sufficient proof of the being of a god. - Letter to John Adams (11 April 1823)



The truth is, that the greatest enemies of the doctrine of Jesus are those, calling themselves the expositors of them, who have perverted them to the structure of a system of fancy absolutely incomprehensible, and without any foundation in his genuine words. And the day will come when the mystical generation of Jesus, by the supreme being as his father in the womb of a virgin will be classed with the fable of the generation of Minerva in the brain of Jupiter ... But may we hope that the dawn of reason and freedom of thought in these United States will do away with this artificial scaffolding, and restore to us the primitive and genuine doctrines of this most venerated reformer of human errors. - Letter to John Adams (11 April 1823)

I agree with you that it is the duty of every good citizen to use all the opportunities, which occur to him, for preserving documents relating to the history of our country. - Letter to Hugh P. Taylor (4 October 1823)

Founding Father Quotes

I thank you, Sir, for the copy you were so kind as to send me of the revd. Mr. Bancroft's Unitarian sermons. I have read them with great satisfaction, and always rejoice in efforts to restore us to primitive Christianity, in all the simplicity in which it came from the lips of Jesus. Had it never been sophisticated by the subtleties of Commentators, nor paraphrased into meanings totally foreign to its character, it would at this day have been the religion of the whole civilized world. But the metaphysical abstractions of Athanasius, and the maniac ravings of Calvin, tintured plentifully with the foggy dreams of Plato, have so loaded it with absurdities and incomprehensibilities, as to drive into infidelity men who had not time, patience, or opportunity to strip it of its meretricious trappings. - Letter to John Davis (18 January 1824).

Men by their constitutions are naturally divided into two parties: 1. Those who fear and distrust the people, and wish to draw all powers from them into the hands of the higher classes. 2. Those who identify themselves with the people, have confidence in them, cherish and consider them as the most honest and safe, although not the most wise depositary of the public interests. In every country these two parties exist, and in every one where they are free to think, speak, and write, they will declare themselves. Call them, therefore, liberals and serviles, Jacobins and Ultras, whigs and tories, republicans and federalists, aristocrats and democrats, or by whatever name you please, they are the same parties still and pursue the same object. The last appellation of aristocrats and democrats is the true one expressing the essence of all. - Letter to Henry Lee (10 August 1824)

I think myself that we have more machinery of government than is necessary, too many parasites living on the labor of the industrious. - Letter to William Ludlow (6 September 1824)

"A Decalogue of Canons for Observation in Practical Life"

- 1.Never put off till to-morrow what you can do to-day.
- 2.Never trouble another for what you can do yourself.
- 3.Never spend your money before you have it.
- 4.Never buy what you do not want, because it is cheap; it will be dear to you.
- 5.Pride costs us more than hunger, thirst and cold.
- 6.We never repent of having eaten too little.
- 7.Nothing is troublesome that we do willingly.
- 8.How much pain have cost us the evils which have never happened.
- 9.Take things always by their smooth handle.
- 10.When angry, count ten before you speak; if very angry, an hundred.

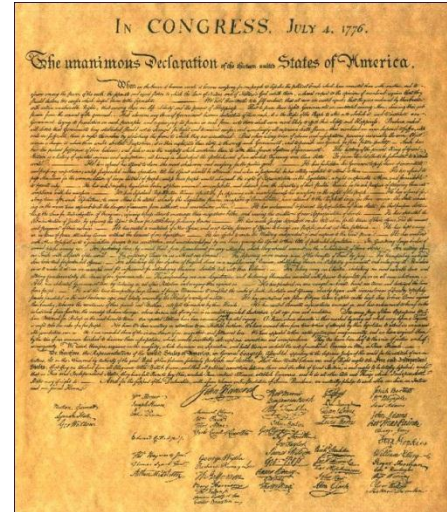
Letter to the infant Thomas Jefferson Smith (21 February 1825)]

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An opinion prevails that there is no longer any distinction, that the republicans & Federalists are completely amalgamated but it is not so. The amalgamation is of name only, not of principle. All indeed call themselves by the name of Republicans, because that of Federalists was extinguished in the battle of New Orleans. But the truth is that finding that monarchy is a desperate wish in this country, they rally to the point which they think next best, a consolidated government. Their aim is now therefore to break down the rights reserved by the constitution to the states as a bulwark against that consolidation, the fear of which produced the whole of the opposition to the constitution at its birth. Hence new Republicans in Congress, preaching the doctrines of the old Federalists, and the new nick-names of Ultras and Radicals. But I trust they will fail under the new, as the old name, and that the friends of the real constitution and union will prevail against consolidation, as they have done against monarchism. I scarcely know myself which is most to be deprecated, a consolidation, or dissolution of the states. The horrors of both are beyond the reach of human foresight. -

Thomas Jefferson to William B. Giles, December 26, 1825

There is not a truth existing which I fear or would wish unknown to the whole world. - Letter to Henry Lee (15 May 1826)



All eyes are opened, or opening, to the rights of man. The general spread of the light of science has already laid open to every view the palpable truth, that the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of God. These are grounds of hope for others. For ourselves, let the annual return of this day forever refresh our recollections of these rights, and an undiminished devotion to them. - Letter to Roger C. Weightman ,

Declaration of Independence (1776)

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth the *separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them*, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with inherent and inalienable Rights; that among these, are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness; that to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

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For the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.

Thomas Jefferson's First Inaugural Address

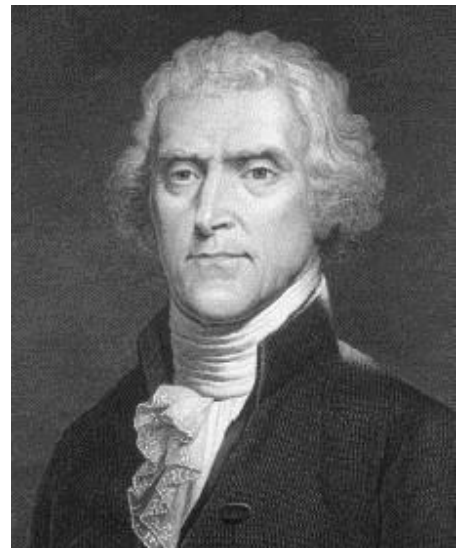
All, too, will bear in mind this sacred principle, that though the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail, that will to be rightful must be reasonable; that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal law must protect, and to violate would be oppression.

Every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle. We have called by different names brethren of the same principle. We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists.

If there be any among us who would wish to dissolve this Union or to change its republican form, let them stand undisturbed as monuments of the safety with which error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it.

Would the honest patriot, in the full tide of successful experiment, abandon a government which has so far kept us free and firm on the theoretic and visionary fear that this Government, the world's best hope, may by possibility want energy to preserve itself? I trust not.

Sometimes it is said that man can not be trusted with the government of himself. Can he, then, be trusted with the government of others? Or have we found angels in the forms of kings to govern him? Let history answer this question.



A wise and frugal Government, which shall restrain men from injuring one another, shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned. This is the sum of good government, and this is necessary to close the circle of our felicities.

Equal and exact justice to all men, of whatever state or persuasion, religious or political; peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none; the support of the State governments in all their rights, as the most competent administrations for our domestic concerns and the surest bulwarks against antirepublican tendencies; the preservation of the General Government in its whole constitutional vigor, as the sheet anchor of our peace at home and safety abroad; a jealous care of the right of election by the people -- a mild and safe corrective of abuses which are lopped by the sword of revolution where peaceable remedies are unprovided; absolute acquiescence in the decisions of the majority, the vital principle of republics, from which is no appeal but to force, the vital principle and immediate parent of despotism; a well-disciplined militia, our best reliance in peace and for the first moments of war till regulars may relieve them; the supremacy of the civil over the military authority; economy in the public expense, that labor may be lightly burthened; the honest payment of our debts

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and sacred preservation of the public faith; encouragement of agriculture, and of commerce as its handmaid; the diffusion of information and arraignment of all abuses at the bar of the public reason; freedom of religion; freedom of the press, and freedom of person under the protection of the habeas corpus, and trial by juries impartially selected.

I have learnt to expect that it will rarely fall to the lot of imperfect man to retire from this station with the reputation and the favor which bring him into it.

I shall often go wrong through defect of judgment. When right, I shall often be thought wrong by those whose positions will not command a view of the whole ground. I ask your indulgence for my own errors, which will never be intentional, and your support against the errors of others, who may condemn what they would not if seen in all its parts.

I advance with obedience to the work, ready to retire from it whenever you become sensible how much better choice it is in your power to make.

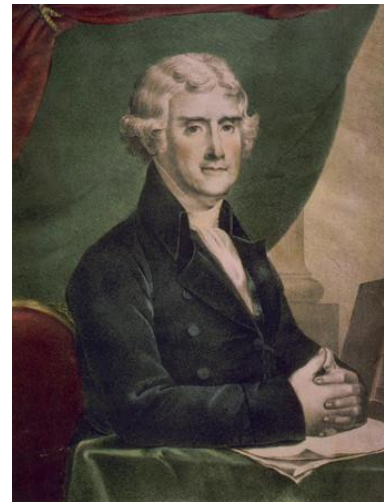
He who steadily observes the moral precepts in which all religions concur, will never be questioned at the gates of heaven as to the dogmas in which they all differ.

Finance, Banking & Taxation

The idea of creating a national bank I do not concur in, because it seems now decided that Congress has not that power...

I am an enemy to all banks discounting bills or notes for anything but coin.

Necessity, as well as patriotism and confidence, will make us all eager to receive treasury notes, if founded on specific taxes.



There can be no safer deposit on earth than the Treasury of the United States. The incorporation of a bank and the powers assumed [by legislation doing so] have not, in my opinion, been delegated to the United States by the Constitution. They are not among the powers specially enumerated. - Opinion on the Constitutionality of the Bill for Establishing a National Bank., 1791.

The government of the United States have no idea of paying their debt in a depreciated medium, and... in the final liquidation of the payments which shall have been made, due regard will be had to an equitable allowance for the circumstance of depreciation. - Letter to Jean Baptiste de Ternant, 1791.

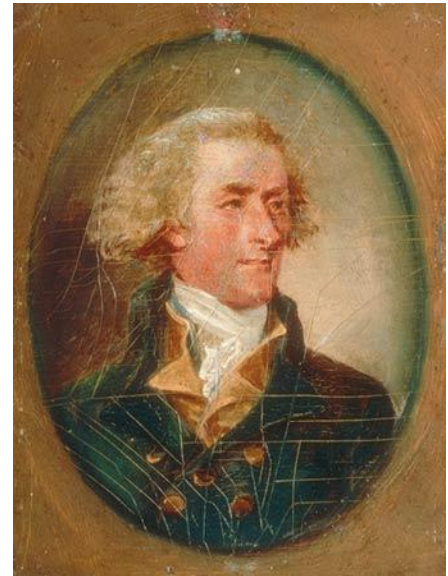
I wish it were possible to obtain a single amendment to our Constitution. I would be willing to depend on that alone for the reduction of the administration of our government to the genuine principles of its Constitution; I mean an additional article, taking from the federal government the power of borrowing. - Letter to John Taylor (26 November 1798)

Founding Father Quotes

The monopoly of a single bank is certainly an evil. The multiplication of them was intended to cure it; but it multiplied an influence of the same character with the first, and completed the supplanting the precious metals by a paper circulation. Between such parties the less we meddle the better. - Letter to Albert Gallatin, 1802.

In order to be able to meet a general combination of the banks against us in a critical emergency, could we not make a beginning towards an independent use of our own money, towards holding our own bank in all the deposits where it is received, and letting the treasurer give his draft or note for payment at any particular place, which, in a well-conducted government, ought to have as much credit as any private draft or bank note or bill, and would give us the same facilities which we derive from the banks? - Letter to Albert Gallatin, 1803.

[The] Bank of the United States... is one of the most deadly hostility existing, against the principles and form of our Constitution... An institution like this, penetrating by its branches every part of the Union, acting by command and in phalanx, may, in a critical moment, upset the government. I deem no government safe which is under the vassalage of any self-constituted authorities, or any other authority than that of the nation, or its regular functionaries. What an obstruction could not this bank of the United States, with all its branch banks, be in time of war! It might dictate to us the peace we should accept, or withdraw its aids. Ought we then to give further growth to an institution so powerful, so hostile? - Letter to Albert Gallatin, 1803.



The principle of rotation... in the body of [bank] directors... breaks in upon the esprit de corps so apt to prevail in permanent bodies; it gives a chance for the public eye penetrating into the sanctuary of those proceedings and practices, which the avarice of the directors may introduce for their personal emolument, and which the resentments of excluded directors, or the honesty of those duly admitted, might betray to the public; and it gives an opportunity at the end of the year, or at other periods, of correcting a choice, which on trial, proves to have been unfortunate. - Letter to Albert Gallatin, 1803.

It has always been denied by the republican party in this country, that the Constitution had given the power of incorporation to Congress. On the establishment of the Bank of the United States, this was the great ground on which that establishment was combated; and the party prevailing supported it only on the argument of its being an incident to the power given them for raising money. - Letter to Dr. Maese, 1809.

That we are overdone with banking institutions which have banished the precious metals and substituted a more fluctuating and unsafe medium, that these have withdrawn capital from useful improvements and employments to nourish idleness, that the wars of the world have swollen our commerce beyond the wholesome limits of exchanging our own productions for our own wants, and

Founding Father Quotes

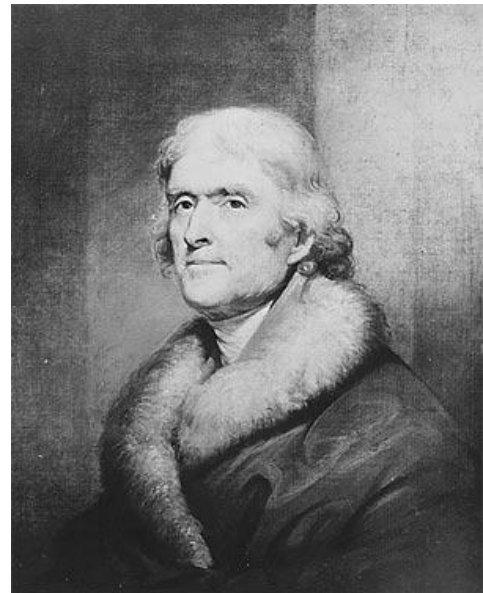
that, for the emolument of a small proportion of our society who prefer these demoralizing pursuits to labors useful to the whole, the peace of the whole is endangered and all our present difficulties produced, are evils more easily to be deplored than remedied. - Letter to Abbe Salimankis, 1810.

The idea of creating a national bank I do not concur in, because it seems now decided that Congress has not that power (although I sincerely wish they had it exclusively), and because I think there is already a vast redundancy rather than a scarcity of paper medium. - Letter to Thomas Law, 1813.

Everything predicted by the enemies of banks, in the beginning, is now coming to pass. We are to be ruined now by the deluge of bank paper. It is cruel that such revolutions in private fortunes should be at the mercy of avaricious adventurers, who, instead of employing their capital, if any they have, in manufactures, commerce, and other useful pursuits, make it an instrument to burden all the interchanges of property with their swindling profits, profits which are the price of no useful industry of theirs. - Letter to Thomas Cooper, 1814.

I am an enemy to all banks discounting bills or notes for anything but coin. - Letter to Thomas Cooper, 1814.

Necessity, as well as patriotism and confidence, will make us all eager to receive treasury notes, if founded on specific taxes. Congress may borrow of the public, and without interest, all the money they may want, to the amount of a competent circulation, by merely issuing their own promissory notes, of proper denominations for the larger purposes of circulation, but not for the small. Leave that door open for the entrance of metallic money. - Letter to Thomas Cooper, 1814.



The State legislatures should be immediately urged to relinquish the right of establishing banks of discount. Most of them will comply, on patriotic principles, under the convictions of the moment; and the non-complying may be crowded into concurrence by legitimate devices. - Letter to Thomas Cooper, 1814.

Instead of funding issues of paper on the hypothecation of specific redeeming taxes (the only method of anticipating, in a time of war, the resources of times of peace, tested by the experience of nations), we are trusting to tricks of jugglers on the cards, to the illusions of banking schemes for the resources of the war, and for the cure of colic to inflations of more wind. - Letter to José Correia da Serra (1814)

Treasury notes of small as well as high denomination, bottomed on a tax which would redeem them in ten years, would place at our disposal the whole circulating medium of the United States... The public... ought never more to permit its being filched from them by private speculators and disorganizers of the circulation. - Letter to William H. Crawford, 1815.

Founding Father Quotes

Put down the banks, and if this country could not be carried through the longest war against her most powerful enemy without ever knowing the want of a dollar, without dependence on the traitorous classes of her citizens, without bearing hard on the resources of the people, or loading the public with an indefinite burden of debt, I know nothing of my countrymen. Not by any novel project, not by any charlatanerie, but by ordinary and well-experienced means; by the total prohibition of all private paper at all times, by reasonable taxes in war aided by the necessary emissions of public paper of circulating size, this bottomed on special taxes, redeemable annually as this special tax comes in, and finally within a moderate period. - Letter to Albert Gallatin, 1815.

Our people... will give you all the necessaries of war they produce, if, instead of the bankrupt trash they now are obliged to receive for want of any other, you will give them a paper promise funded on a specific pledge, and of a size for common circulation. - Letter to James Monroe, 1815.

The system of banking we have both equally and ever reprobated. I contemplate it as a blot left in all our constitutions, which, if not covered, will end in their destruction, which is already hit by the gamblers in corruption, and is sweeping away in its progress the fortunes and morals of our citizens. - Letter to John Taylor (28 May 1816)

The bank mania... is raising up a moneyed aristocracy in our country which has already set the government at defiance, and although forced at length to yield a little on this first essay of their strength, their principles are unyielded and unyielding. These have taken deep root in the hearts of that class from which our legislators are drawn, and the sop to Cerberus from fable has become history. Their principles lay hold of the good, their pelf of the bad, and thus those whom the Constitution had placed as guards to its portals, are sophisticated or suborned from their duties. - Letter to Josephus B. Stuart (1817)

Nearly all of it is now called in by the banks, who have the regulation of the safety-valves of our fortunes, and who condense and explode them at their will. - Letter to John Adams (1819)

Certainly no nation ever before abandoned to the avarice and jugglings of private individuals to regulate according to their own interests, the quantum of circulating medium for the nation — to inflate, by deluges of paper, the nominal prices of property, and then to buy up that property at 1s. in the pound, having first withdrawn the floating medium which might endanger a competition in purchase. Yet this is what has been done, and will be done, unless stayed by the protecting hand of the legislature. The evil has been produced by the error of their sanction of this ruinous machinery of banks; and justice, wisdom, duty, all require that they should interpose and arrest it before the schemes of plunder and spoliation desolate the country. - Letter to William C. Rives (1819)

Put down all banks, admit none but a metallic circulation that will take its proper level with the like circulation in other countries, and then our manufacturers may work in fair competition with those of other countries, and the import duties which the government may lay for the purposes of revenue will so far place them above equal competition. - Letter to Charles Pinckney, (1820)

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN QUOTES

Mankind naturally and generally love to be flatter'd: Whatever soothes our Pride, and tends to exalt our Species above the rest of the Creation, we are pleas'd with and easily believe, when ungrateful Truths shall be with the utmost Indignation rejected. "What! bring ourselves down to an Equality with the Beasts of the Field! with the meanest part of the Creation! 'Tis insufferable!" But, (to use a Piece of common Sense) our Geese are but Geese tho' we may think 'em Swans; and Truth will be Truth tho' it sometimes prove mortifying and distasteful. - "A Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain" (1725)

I believe there is one Supreme most perfect being. ... I believe He is pleased and delights in the happiness of those He has created; and since without virtue man can have no happiness in this world, I firmly believe He delights to see me virtuous. - "Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion" (1728)

Ambition has its disappointments to sour us, but never the good fortune to satisfy us. - "On True Happiness", Pennsylvania Gazette, 20 November 1735

I think opinions should be judged of by their influences and effects, and if a man holds none that tend to make him less virtuous or more vicious, it may be concluded that he holds none that are dangerous; which I hope is the case with me. - Letter to his father, 13 April 1738,

Let all Men know thee, but no man know thee thoroughly: Men freely ford that see the shallows. - Poor Richard's Almanack (1743)

Remember that time is money. - Advice to a Young Tradesman (1748)

History will also afford frequent Opportunities of showing the Necessity of a Publick Religion, from its Usefulness to the Publick; the Advantage of a Religious Character among private Persons; the Mischiefs of Superstition, &c. and the Excellency of the Christian Religion above all others antient or modern. - Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pensilvania (1749)

Much less is it adviseable for a Person to go thither [to America], who has no other Quality to recommend him but his Birth. In Europe it has indeed its Value; but it is a Commodity that cannot be carried to a worse Market than that of America, where people do not inquire concerning a Stranger, What is he? but, What can he do? - Information to Those Who Would Remove to America

The Game of Chess is not merely an idle amusement; several very valuable qualities of the mind, useful in the course of human life, are to be acquired and strengthened by it, so as to become habits ready on



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all occasions; for life is a kind of Chess, in which we have often points to gain, and competitors or adversaries to contend with, and in which there is a vast variety of good and ill events, that are, in some degree, the effect of prudence, or the want of it. By playing at Chess then, we may learn: 1st, Foresight, which looks a little into futurity, and considers the consequences that may attend an action ... 2nd, Circumspection, which surveys the whole Chess-board, or scene of action: — the relation of the several Pieces, and their situations; ... 3rd, Caution, not to make our moves too hastily... - "The Morals of Chess" (article) (1750)

But I must own that I am much in the Dark about Light. I am not satisfy'd with the doctrine that supposes particles of matter call'd light continually driven off from the Sun's Surface, with a Swiftiness so prodigious! - Letter to Cadwallader Colden (April 23, 1752).

For my own Part, when I am employed in serving others, I do not look upon myself as conferring Favours, but as paying Debts. In my Travels, and since my Settlement, I have received much Kindness from Men, to whom I shall never have any Opportunity of making the least direct Return. And numberless Mercies from God, who is infinitely above being benefited by our Services. Those Kindnesses from Men, I can therefore only Return on their Fellow Men; and I can only shew my Gratitude for these mercies from God, by a readiness to help his other Children and my Brethren. For I do not think that Thanks and Compliments, tho' repeated weekly, can discharge our real Obligations to each other, and much less those to our Creator. - Letter to Joseph Huey (6 June 1753)



The Faith you mention has doubtless its use in the World. I do not desire to see it diminished, nor would I endeavour to lessen it in any Man. But I wish it were more productive of good Works, than I have generally seen it: I mean real good Works, Works of Kindness, Charity, Mercy, and Publick Spirit; not Holiday-keeping, Sermon-Reading or Hearing; performing Church Ceremonies, or making long Prayers, filled with Flatteries and Compliments, despis'd even by wise Men, and much less capable of pleasing the Deity. The worship of God is a Duty; the hearing and reading of Sermons may be useful; but, if Men rest in Hearing and Praying, as too many do, it is as if a Tree should Value itself on being water'd and putting forth Leaves, tho' it never produc'd any Fruit. - Letter to Joseph Huey (6 June 1753)

Every Body cries, a Union is absolutely necessary, but when they come to the Manner and Form of the Union, their weak Noddles are perfectly distracted. - Letter to Peter Collinson (29 December 1754)

Love your Enemies, for they tell you your Faults. - Poor Richard's Almanack (1756)

I have read your Manuscript with some Attention. By the Arguments it contains against the Doctrine of a particular Providence, tho' you allow a general Providence, you strike at the Foundation of all Religion: For without the Belief of a Providence that takes Cognizance of, guards and guides and may favour particular Persons, there is no Motive to Worship a Deity, to fear its Displeasure, or to pray for its

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Protection. I will not enter into any Discussion of your Principles, tho' you seem to desire it; At present I shall only give you my Opinion that tho' your Reasonings are subtle, and may prevail with some Readers, you will not succeed so as to change the general Sentiments of Mankind on that Subject, and the Consequence of printing this Piece will be a great deal of Odium drawn upon your self, Mischief to you and no Benefit to others. He that spits against the Wind, spits in his own Face. But were you to succeed, do you imagine any Good would be done by it? You yourself may find it easy to live a virtuous Life without the Assistance afforded by Religion; you having a clear Perception of the Advantages of Virtue and the Disadvantages of Vice, and possessing a Strength of Resolution sufficient to enable you to resist common Temptations. But think how great a Proportion of Mankind consists of weak and ignorant Men and Women, and of inexperienc'd and inconsiderate Youth of both Sexes, who have need of the Motives of Religion to restrain them from Vice, to support their Virtue, and retain them in the Practice of it till it becomes habitual, which is the great Point for its Security; And perhaps you are indebted to her originally that is to your Religious Education, for the Habits of Virtue upon which you now justly value yourself. You might easily display your excellent Talents of reasoning on a less hazardous Subject, and thereby obtain Rank with our most distinguish'd Authors. For among us, it is not necessary, as among the Hottentots that a Youth to be receiv'd into the Company of Men, should prove his Manhood by beating his Mother. I would advise you therefore not to attempt unchaining the Tyger, but to burn this Piece before it is seen by any other Person, whereby you will save yourself a great deal of Mortification from the Enemies it may raise against you, and perhaps a good deal of Regret and Repentance. If Men are so wicked as we now see them with Religion what would they be if without it? - Letter to unknown recipient (13 December 1757)



That Being, who gave me existence, and through almost threescore years has been continually showering his favors upon me, whose very chastisements have been blessings to me ; can I doubt that he loves me? And, if he loves me, can I doubt that he will go on to take care of me, not only here but hereafter? This to some may seem presumption ; to me it appears the best grounded hope ; hope of the future built on experience of the past. - Letter to George Whitefield (19 June 1764)

Idleness and Pride Tax with a heavier Hand than Kings and Parliaments; If we can get rid of the former we may easily bear the Latter. - Letter to Charles Thomson, 11 July 1765

I am for doing good to the poor, but I differ in opinion of the means. I think the best way of doing good to the poor, is not making them easy in poverty, but leading or driving them out of it. In my youth I travelled much, and I observed in different countries, that the more public provisions were made for the poor, the less they provided for themselves, and of course became poorer. And, on the contrary, the less

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was done for them, the more they did for themselves, and became richer. - On the Price of Corn and Management of the Poor (29 November 1766)

But your Squabbles about a Bishop I wish to see speedily ended. ... Each Party abuses the other, the Profane and the Infidel believe both sides, and enjoy the Fray; the Reputation of Religion in general suffers, and its enemies are ready to say, not what was said in the primitive Times, Behold how these Christians love one another, but, Mark how these Christians hate one another! Indeed when religious People quarrel about Religion, or hungry People about their Victuals, it looks as if they had not much of either among them. - Letter to Jane Mecom, 23 February 1769

A great Empire, like a great Cake, is most easily diminished at the Edges. - "Rules By Which A Great Empire May Be Reduced To A Small One"; The Public Advertiser (September 11, 1773)

We hear of the conversion of water into wine at the marriage in Cana as of a miracle. But this conversion is, through the goodness of God, made every day before our eyes. Behold the rain which descends from heaven upon our vineyards; there it enters the roots of the vines, to be changed into wine; a constant proof that God loves us, and loves to see us happy. The miracle in question was only performed to hasten the operation, under circumstances of present necessity, which required it. - Letter to Abbé Morellet (1779)

All Wars are Follies, very expensive, and very mischievous ones. When will Mankind be convinced of this, and agree to settle their Differences by Arbitration? Were they to do it, even by the Cast of a Dye, it would be better than by Fighting and destroying each other. - Letter to Mary Hewson[6], Jan. 27. 1783

There never was a good war or a bad peace. - Letter to Josiah Quincy (11 September 1783)

I wish the Bald Eagle had not been chosen as the representative of our country; he is a bird of bad moral character; like those among men who live by sharpening and robbing, he is generally poor, and often very lousy. The turkey is a much more respectable bird. - letter to Sarah Bache (January 26, 1784).

I've lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing Proofs I see of this Truth — That God governs in the Affairs of Men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his Notice, is it probable that an Empire can rise without his Aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the Sacred Writings, that except the Lord build the House they labor in vain who build it. I firmly believe this, — and I also believe that without his concurring Aid, we shall succeed in this political Building no better than the Builders of Babel: We shall be divided by our little partial local interests; our Projects will be confounded, and we ourselves shall become a Reproach and Bye word down to future Ages. - Speech to the Constitutional Convention (28 June 1787)

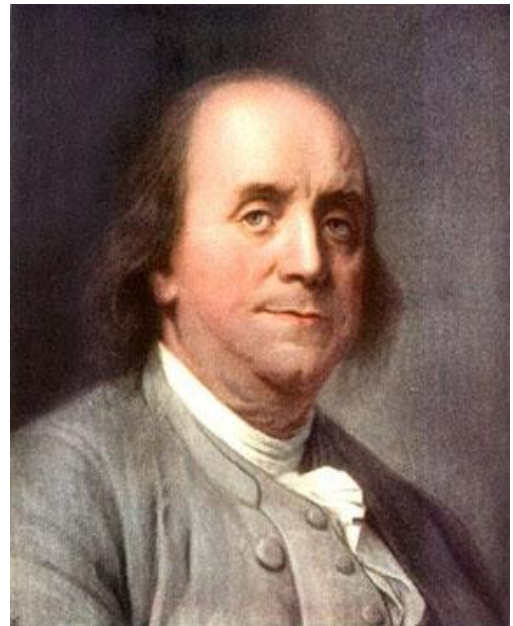


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In these sentiments, Sir, I agree to this Constitution, with all its faults, — if they are such; because I think a general Government necessary for us, and there is no form of government but what may be a blessing to the people, if well administered; and I believe, farther, that this is likely to be well administered for a course of years, and can only end in despotism, as other forms have done before it, when the people shall become so corrupted as to need despotic government, being incapable of any other. - Speech to the Constitutional Convention (28 June 1787)

Whilst the last members were signing it Doctor Franklin looking towards the President's Chair, at the back of which a rising sun happened to be painted, observed to a few members near him, that Painters had found it difficult to distinguish in their art a rising from a setting sun. "I have," said he, "often and often in the course of the Session, and the vicissitudes of my hopes and fears as to its issue, looked at that behind the President without being able to tell whether it was rising or setting: But now at length I have the happiness to know that it is a rising and not a setting Sun." - At the signing of the United States Constitution, Journal of the Constitutional Convention (17 September 1787)

Remember me affectionately to good Dr. Price and to the honest heretic Dr. Priestly. I do not call him honest by way of distinction; for I think all the heretics I have known have been virtuous men. They have the virtue of fortitude or they would not venture to own their heresy; and they cannot afford to be deficient in any of the other virtues, as that would give advantage to their many enemies; and they have not like orthodox sinners, such a number of friends to excuse or justify them. Do not, however mistake me. It is not to my good friend's heresy that I impute his honesty. On the contrary, 'tis his honesty that has brought upon him the character of heretic. - Letter to Benjamin Vaughan (24 October 1788)



Our new Constitution is now established, and has an appearance that promises permanency; but in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes. - Letter to Jean-Baptiste Leroy (13 November 1789)

The art of concluding from experience and observation consists in evaluating probabilities, in estimating if they are high or numerous enough to constitute proof. This type of calculation is more complicated and more difficult than one might think. It demands a great sagacity generally above the power of common people. The success of charlatans, sorcerors, and alchemists — and all those who abuse public credulity — is founded on errors in this type of calculation. - Benjamin Franklin and Antoine Lavoisier, Rapport des commissaires chargés par le roi de l'examen du magnétisme animal (1784)

As to Jesus of Nazareth, my Opinion of whom you particularly desire, I think the System of Morals and his Religion, as he left them to us, the best the world ever saw or is likely to see; but I apprehend it has

Founding Father Quotes

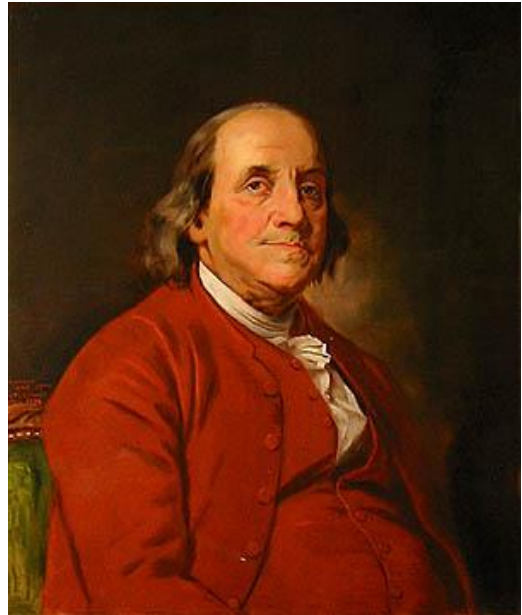
received various corrupt changes, and I have, with most of the present Dissenters in England, some Doubts as to his divinity; tho' it is a question I do not dogmatize upon, having never studied it, and I think it needless to busy myself with it now, when I expect soon an Opportunity of knowing the Truth with less Trouble. - As quoted in Benjamin Franklin: An Exploration of a Life of Science and Service (1938) by Carl Van Doren, p. 777

The Autobiography (1817)

Indeed I scarce ever heard or saw the introductory Words, Without Vanity I may say, etc. but some vain thing immediately follow'd. Most People dislike Vanity in others whatever Share they have of it themselves, but I give it fair Quarter wherever I meet with it, being persuaded that it is often productive of Good to the Possessor and to others that are within his Sphere of Action: And therefore in many Cases it would not be quite absurd if a Man were to thank God for his Vanity among the other - Comforts of Life. [Part I, p. 2]

From a Child I was fond of Reading, and all the little Money that came into my Hands was ever laid out in Books. - [Part I, p. 9]

I believe I have omitted mentioning that in my first Voyage from Boston, being becalm'd off Block Island, our People set about catching Cod and haul'd up a great many. Hitherto I had stuck to my Resolution of not eating animal Food' and on this Occasion, I consider'd with my Master Tryon, the taking every Fish as a kind of unprovok'd Murder, since none of them had or ever could do us any Injury that might justify the Slaughter. All this seem'd very reasonable. But I had formerly been a great Lover of Fish, and when this came hot out of the Frying Pan, it smelt admirably well. I balanc'd some time between Principle and Inclination: till I recollected, that when the Fish were opened, I saw smaller Fish taken out of their Stomachs: Then, thought I, if you eat one another, I don't see why we mayn't eat you. So I din'd upon Cod very heartily and continu'd to eat with other People, returning only now and then occasionally to a vegetable Diet. So convenient a thing it is to be a reasonable Creature, since it enables one to find or make a Reason for everything one has a mind to do. - [Part I, p. 28]



My Parents had early given me religious Impressions, and brought me through my Childhood piously in the Dissenting Way. But I was scarce 15 when, after doubting by turns of several Points as I found them disputed in the different Books I read, I began to doubt of Revelation itself. Some Books against Deism fell into my Hands; they were said to be the Substance of Sermons preached at Boyle's Lectures. It happened that they wrought an Effect on me quite contrary to what was intended by them: For the Arguments of the Deists which were quoted to be refuted, appeared to me much Stronger than the Refutations. In short I soon became a thorough Deist. - [Part I, p. 45]

Founding Father Quotes

This Library afforded me the Means of Improvement by constant Study, for which I set apart an Hour or two each Day; and thus repair'd in some Degree the Loss of the Learned Education my Father once intended for me. Reading was the only Amusement I allow'd myself. I spent no time in Taverns, Games, or Frolics of any kind. And my Industry in my Business continu'd as indefatigable as it was necessary. - [Part II, p. 64]

These Names of Virtues with their Precepts were

1. TEMPERANCE. Eat not to Dulness. Drink not to Elevation.
2. SILENCE. Speak not but what may benefit others or your self. Avoid trifling Conversation.
3. ORDER. Let all your Things have their Places. Let each part of your Business have its Time.
4. RESOLUTION. Resolve to perform what you ought. Perform without fail what you resolve.
5. FRUGALITY. Make no Expense but to do good to others or yourself; i.e. Waste nothing.
6. INDUSTRY. Lose no Time. Be always employ'd in something useful. Cut off all unnecessary actions.
7. SINCERITY. Use no hurtful Deceit. Think innocently and justly; and, if you speak, speak accordingly.
8. JUSTICE. Wrong none, by doing Injuries or omitting the Benefits that are your Duty.
9. MODERATION. Avoid Extremes. Forbear resenting Injuries so much as you think they deserve.
10. CLEANLINESS. Tolerate no Uncleanliness in Body, Clothes, or Habitation.
11. TRANQUILLITY. Be not disturbed at Trifles, or at Accidents common or unavoidable.
12. CHASTITY. Rarely use Venery but for Health or Offspring; Never to Dulness, Weakness, or the Injury of your own or another's Peace or Reputation.
13. HUMILITY. Imitate Jesus and Socrates. [Part II, pp. 67-68]

The last of Franklin's chart of 13 virtues: "My List of Virtues contain'd at first but twelve; but a Quaker Friend having kindly inform'd me that I was generally thought proud; ... I determined endeavouring to cure myself if I could of this Vice or Folly among the rest, and I added Humility to my List..." [Part II, p. 75]

In reality there is perhaps no one of our natural Passions so hard to subdue as Pride. Disguise it, struggle with it, beat it down, stifle it, mortify it as much as one pleases, it is still alive, and will every now and then peep out and show itself. You will see it perhaps often in this History. For even if I could conceive that I had completely overcome it, I should probably be proud of my Humility. - [Part II, p. 76]

Human Felicity is produc'd not so much by great Pieces of good Fortune that seldom happen, as by little Advantages that occur every Day. - [Part III, p. 108]

JOHN ADAMS QUOTES

Tis impossible to judge with much Præcision of the true Motives and Qualities of human Actions, or of the Propriety of Rules contrived to govern them, without considering with like Attention, all the Passions, Appetites, Affections in Nature from which they flow. An intimate Knowledge therefore of the intellectual and moral World is the sole foundation on which a stable structure of Knowledge can be erected. - Letter to Jonathan Sewall (October 1759)

Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passion, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence. - Argument in Defense of the British Soldiers in the Boston Massacre Trials (4 December 1770)

There is danger from all men. The only maxim of a free government ought to be to trust no man living with power to endanger the public liberty. - Notes for an oration at Braintree (Spring 1772)

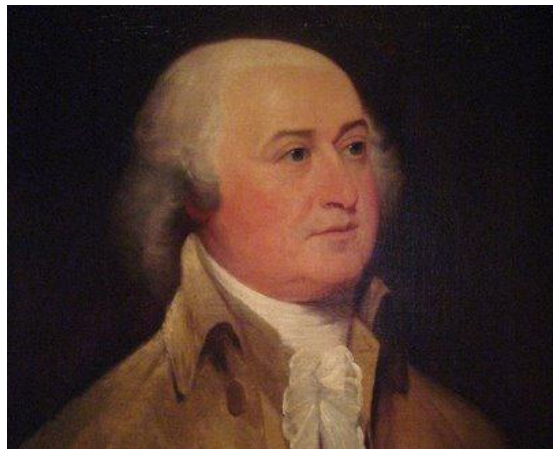
A Constitution of Government once changed from Freedom, can never be restored. Liberty, once lost, is lost forever. - Letter to Abigail Adams (17 July 1775)

I agree with you that in politics the middle way is none at all. - Letter to Horatio Gates (23 March 1776)

Let them revere nothing but religion, morality and liberty.
- Letter to Abigail Adams (15 April 1776) [1]

You bid me burn your letters. But I must forget you first.
- Letter to Abigail Adams (28 April 1776)

There is something very unnatural and odious in a government a thousand leagues off. A whole government of our own choice, managed by persons whom we love, revere, and can confide in, has charms in it for which men will fight. - Letter to Abigail Adams (17 May 1776)



Statesmen, my dear Sir, may plan and speculate for Liberty, but it is Religion and Morality alone, which can establish the Principles upon which Freedom can securely stand. The only foundation of a free Constitution is pure Virtue, and if this cannot be inspired into our People in a greater Measure than they have it now, They may change their Rulers and the forms of Government, but they will not obtain a lasting Liberty. They will only exchange Tyrants and Tyrannies. - Letter to Zabdiel Adams (21 June 1776)

I am well aware of the Toil and Blood and Treasure, that it will cost Us to maintain this Declaration, and support and defend these States...

I am well aware of the Toil and Blood and Treasure, that it will cost Us to maintain this Declaration, and support and defend these States. Yet through all the Gloom I can see the Rays of ravishing Light and

Founding Father Quotes

Glory. I can see that the End is more than worth all the Means. And that Posterity will triumph in that Days Transaction, even although We should rue it, which I trust in God We shall not. - Letter to Abigail Adams (3 July 1776)

The second day of July, 1776, will be the most memorable epoch in the history of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward forevermore. - Letter to Abigail Adams (3 July 1776)

I long for rural and domestic scenes, for the warbling of Birds and the Prattle of my Children. Don't you think I am somewhat poetical this morning, for one of my Years, and considering the Gravity, and Insipidity of my Employment? — As much as I converse with Sages and Heroes, they have very little of my Love or Admiration. I should prefer the Delights of a Garden to the Dominion of a World. - Letter to Abigail Adams (16 March 1777)

I must study politics and war, that our sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy. The science of government it is my duty to study, more than all other sciences; the arts of legislation and administration and negotiation ought to take the place of, indeed exclude, in a manner, all other arts. I must study politics and war, that our sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy. Our sons ought to study mathematics and philosophy, geography, natural history and naval architecture, navigation, commerce and agriculture in order to give their children a right to study painting, poetry, music, architecture, statuary, tapestry and porcelain. - Letter to Abigail Adams (12 May 1780)



You will never be alone with a poet in your pocket. - Letter to John Quincy Adams (14 May 1781)

Thanks to God that he gave me stubbornness when I know I am right. - Letter to Edmund Jenings (1782)

All the perplexities, confusions, and distresses in America arise, not from defects in their constitution or confederation, not from a want of honor or virtue, so much as from downright ignorance of the nature of coin, credit, and circulation. - Letter to Thomas Jefferson (23 August 1787)

The new Government has my best Wishes and most fervent Prayers, for its Success and Prosperity: but whether I shall have any Thing more to do with it, besides praying for it, depends on the future suffrages of Freeman. - Letter to Thomas Jefferson (2 January 1789)

There is nothing which I dread so much as a division of the republic into two great parties, each arranged under its leader, and concerting measures in opposition to each other. This, in my humble

Founding Father Quotes

apprehension, is to be dreaded as the greatest political evil under our Constitution. - Letter to Jonathan Jackson (2 October 1789)

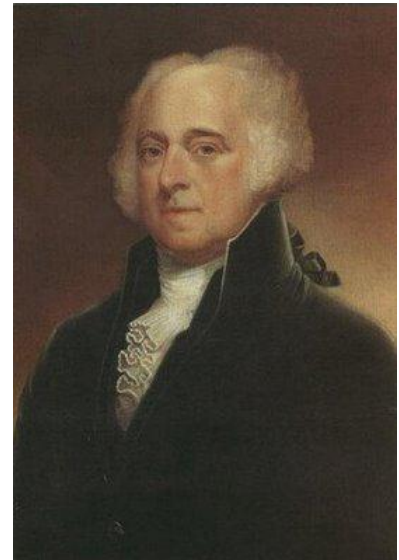
The History of our Revolution will be one continued Lye from one end to the other. The essence of the whole will be that Dr. Franklin's electrical Rod, smote the Earth and out sprung General Washington. That Franklin electrified him with his rod—and thence forward these two conducted all the Policy, Negotiations, Legislatures and War. - Letter to Benjamin Rush, 4 April 1790.

My country has in its wisdom contrived for me the most insignificant office that ever the invention of man contrived or his imagination conceived; and as I can do neither good nor evil, I must be borne away by others and meet the common fate. - On the Vice-Presidency of the United States, in a letter to Abigail Adams (19 December 1793)

I read my eyes out and can't read half enough. ... The more one reads the more one sees we have to read. - Letter to Abigail Adams (28 December 1794)

The consequences arising from the continual accumulation of public debts in other countries ought to admonish us to be careful to prevent their growth in our own. - First Address to Congress (23 November 1797)

We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge, or gallantry, would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net. Our Constitution was made only for a religious and moral people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other. - Letter to the Officers of the First Brigade of the Third Division of the Militia of Massachusetts (11 October 1798)



I pray Heaven to bestow the best of blessings on this house and all that shall hereafter inhabit it. May none but honest and wise men ever rule under this roof. - On the White House, in a letter to Abigail Adams (2 November 1800)

I had heard my father say that he never knew a piece of land run away or break. - Autobiography (1802–1807)

Our obligations to our country never cease but with our lives. - Letter to Benjamin Rush (18 April 1808)

The Declaration of Independence I always considered as a Theatrical Show. Jefferson ran away with all the stage effect of that; i.e. all the Glory of it. I will insist that the Hebrews have done more to civilize men than any other nation. If I were an atheist, and believed in blind eternal fate, I should still believe that fate had ordained the Jews to be the most essential instrument for civilizing the nations. If I were an atheist of the other sect, who believe or pretend to believe that all is ordered by chance, I should believe that chance had ordered the Jews to preserve and propagate to all mankind the doctrine of a supreme,

Founding Father Quotes

intelligent, wise, almighty sovereign of the universe, which I believe to be the great essential principle of all morality, and consequently of all civilization. - Letter to François Adriaan van der Kemp (16 February 1809)

When I went home to my family in May, 1770, from the town meeting in Boston, which was the first I had ever attended, and where I had been chosen in my absence, without any solicitation, one of their representatives, I said to my wife, "I have accepted a seat in the House of Representatives, and thereby have consented to my own ruin, to your ruin, and to the ruin of our children. I give you this warning, that you may prepare your mind for your fate." She burst into tears, but instantly cried out in a transport of magnanimity, "Well, I am willing in this cause to run all risks with you, and be ruined with you, if you are ruined." These were times, my friend, in Boston, which tried women's souls as well as men's. - Letter to Benjamin Rush (12 April 1809)

You and I ought not to die before we have explained ourselves to each other. The Declaration of Independence I always considered as a Theatrical Show. Jefferson ran away with all the stage effect of that; i.e. all the Glory of it. - Letter to Benjamin Rush (21 June 1811)

The general principles on which the fathers achieved independence, were ... the general principles of Christianity, in which all those sects were united, and the general principles of English and American liberty, in which all those young men united, and which had united all parties in America, in majorities sufficient to assert and maintain her independence. Now I will avow, that I then believed and now believe that those general principles of Christianity are as eternal and immutable as the existence and attributes of God; and that those principles of liberty are as unalterable as human nature and our terrestrial, mundane system. - Letter to Thomas Jefferson, 28 June 1813.



While all other Sciences have advanced, that of Government is at a stand; little better understood; little better practiced now than three or four thousand years ago. - Letter to Thomas Jefferson (9 July 1813)

You and I ought not to die before we have explained ourselves to each other. - Letter to Thomas Jefferson (13 July 1813)

Indeed, Mr. Jefferson, what could be invented to debase the ancient Christianity which Greeks, Romans, Hebrews and Christian factions, above all the Catholics, have not fraudulently imposed upon the public? Miracles after miracles have rolled down in torrents. - Letter to Thomas Jefferson (3 December 1813)

What do we mean by the Revolution? The war? That was no part of the revolution; it was only an effect and consequence of it. The revolution was in the minds of the people, and this was effected from 1760 - 1775, in the course of fifteen years, before a drop of blood was shed at Lexington. If the Christian religion, as I understand it, or as you understand it, should maintain its ground, as I believe it will, yet

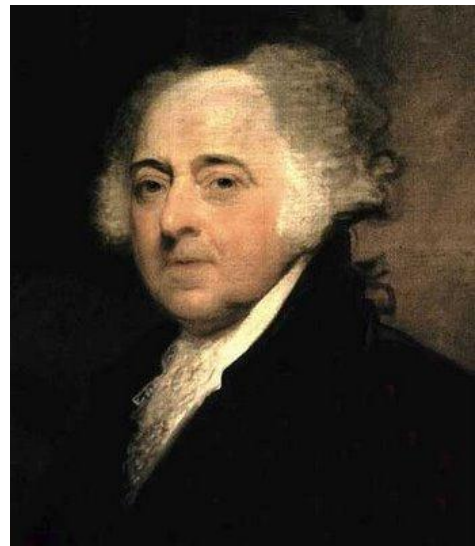
Founding Father Quotes

Platonic, Pythagoric, Hindoo, and cabalistic Christianity, which is Catholic Christianity, and which has prevailed for 1,500 years, has received a mortal wound, of which the monster must finally die. Yet so strong is his constitution, that he may endure for centuries before he expires. - John Adams, letter to Thomas Jefferson (July 16, 1814).

As long as Property exists, it will accumulate in Individuals and Families. As long as Marriage exists, Knowledge, Property and Influence will accumulate in Families. - Letter to Thomas Jefferson (16 July 1814)

As to the history of the revolution, my ideas may be peculiar, perhaps singular. What do we mean by the Revolution? The war? That was no part of the revolution; it was only an effect and consequence of it. The revolution was in the minds of the people, and this was effected from 1760–1775, in the course of fifteen years, before a drop of blood was shed at Lexington. - Letter to Thomas Jefferson (24 August 1815)

We may appeal to every page of history we have hitherto turned over, for proofs irrefragable, that the people, when they have been unchecked, have been as unjust, tyrannical, brutal, barbarous and cruel as any king or senate possessed of uncontrollable power ... All projects of government, formed upon a supposition of continual vigilance, sagacity, and virtue, firmness of the people, when possessed of the exercise of supreme power, are cheats and delusions ... The fundamental article of my political creed is that despotism, or unlimited sovereignty, or absolute power, is the same in a majority of a popular assembly, an aristocratical council, an oligarchical junto, and a single emperor. Equally arbitrary, cruel, bloody, and in every respect diabolical. - Letter to Thomas Jefferson (13 November 1815)



Power always sincerely, conscientiously, de très bon foi, believes itself right. Power always thinks it has a great soul and vast views, beyond the comprehension of the weak. - Letter to Thomas Jefferson (2 February 1816)

I see in every Page, Something to recommend Christianity in its Purity and Something to discredit its Corruptions. I almost shudder at the thought of alluding to the most fatal example of the abuses of grief which the history of mankind has preserved — the Cross. Consider what calamities that engine of grief has produced! With the rational respect that is due to it, knavish priests have added prostitutions of it, that fill or might fill the blackest and bloodiest pages of human history. - Letter to Thomas Jefferson (3 September 1816)

Let the human mind loose. It must be loose. It will be loose. Superstition and dogmatism cannot confine it. We have now, it Seems a National Bible Society, to propagate King James's Bible, through all Nations. Would it not be better to apply these pious Subscriptions, to purify Christendom from the Corruptions of

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Christianity; than to propagate those Corruptions in Europe Asia, Africa and America! ... Conclude not from all this, that I have renounced the Christian religion, or that I agree with Dupuis in all his Sentiments. Far from it. I see in every Page, Something to recommend Christianity in its Purity and Something to discredit its Corruptions. ... The Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount contain my Religion. - Letter to Thomas Jefferson (4 November 1816)

Let the human mind loose. It must be loose. It will be loose. Superstition and dogmatism cannot confine it. - Letter to his son, John Quincy Adams (13 November 1816)

Twenty times in the course of my late reading have I been on the point of breaking out, "This would be the best of all possible worlds, if there were no religion in it!!!" But in this exclamation I would have been as fanatical as Bryant or Cleverly. Without religion this world would be something not fit to be mentioned in polite company, I mean Hell. - Letter to Thomas Jefferson (19 April 1817).

I really wish the Jews again in Judea, an independent nation, for, as I believe, the most enlightened men of it have participated in the amelioration of the philosophy of the age; once restored to an independent government, and no longer persecuted, they would soon wear away some of the asperities and peculiarities of their character, possibly in time become liberal Unitarian Christians, for your Jehovah is our Jehovah, and your God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is our God. - Letter to Mordecai Manuel Noah (1819)

Abuse of words has been the great instrument of sophistry and chicanery, of party, faction, and division of society. - Letter to J.H. Tiffany (31 March 1819)

When we say God is a spirit, we know what we mean, as well as we do when we say that the pyramids of Egypt are matter. Let us be content, therefore, to believe him to be a spirit, that is, an essence that we know nothing of, in which originally and necessarily reside all energy, all power, all capacity, all activity, all wisdom, all goodness. - Letter to Thomas Jefferson (17 January 1820)

Can a free government possibly exist with the Roman Catholic religion? - Letter to Thomas Jefferson (19 May 1821)

The Europeans are all deeply tainted with prejudices, both ecclesiastical and temporal, which they can never get rid of. They are all infected with episcopal and presbyterian creeds, and confessions of faith. They all believe that great Principle which has produced this boundless universe, Newton's universe and Herschell's universe, came down to this little ball, to be spit upon by Jews. And until this awful blasphemy is got rid of, there never will be any liberal science in the world. - Letter to Thomas Jefferson (22 January 1825)



Founding Father Quotes

Old minds are like old horses; you must exercise them if you wish to keep them in working order. No man who ever held the office of president would congratulate a friend on obtaining it. He will make one man ungrateful, and a hundred men his enemies, for every office he can bestow. - Letter to Josiah Quincy III (14 February 1825)

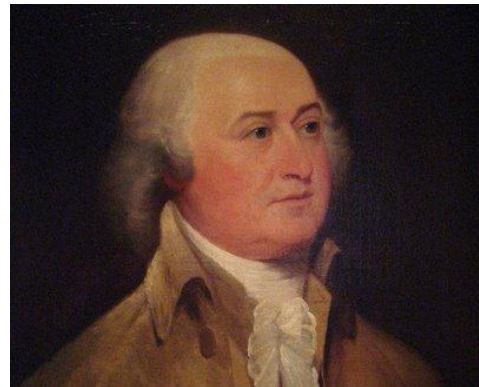
My best wishes, in the joys, and festivities, and the solemn services of that day on which will be completed the fiftieth year from its birth, of the independence of the United States: a memorable epoch in the annals of the human race, destined in future history to form the brightest or the blackest page, according to the use or the abuse of those political institutions by which they shall, in time to come, be shaped by the human mind. - Reply to an invitation to 50th Independence Day celebrations from a committee of the citizens of Quincy, Massachusetts (7 June 1826)

Negro Slavery is an evil of Colossal magnitude and I am utterly averse to the admission of Slavery into the Missouri Territories. - Letter to William Tudor

Diaries

Where do we find a precept in the Gospel requiring Ecclesiastical Synods? Convocations? Councils? Decrees? Creeds? Confessions? Oaths? Subscriptions? and whole cart-loads of other trumpery that we find religion incumbered with in these days? Major Greene this evening fell into some conversation with me about the Divinity and satisfaction of Jesus Christ. All the argument he advanced was, "that a mere creature or finite being could not make satisfaction to infinite justice for any crimes," and that "these things are very mysterious."

"17. Wednesday. A fine morning. Proceeded on my journey towards Braintree. Stopped to see Mr. Haven, of Dedham, who told me, very civilly, he supposed I took my faith on trust from Dr. Mayhew, and added, that he believed the doctrine of satisfaction of Jesus Christ to be essential to Christianity, and that he would not believe this satisfaction unless he believed the Divinity of Christ. Mr. Balch was there too, and observed, he would not be a Christian if he did not believe mysteries of the gospel; that he could bear with an Arminian, but when, Dr. Mayhew they denied the Divinity and satisfaction of Christ, he had no more to do with them; that he knew to make of Dr. Mayhew's two discourses upon the expected of all things. They gave him an idea of a cart whose wanted greasing; it rumbled on in a hoarse, rough manner; there was a good deal of ingenious talk in them, but it was thrown together in a jumbled, confused order. He believed the Doctor wrote them in a great panic. He added further that Arminians, however stiffly they maintain their opinions in health, always, he takes notice, retract when they come to die, and choose to die Calvinists. Set out for Braintree, and arrived about sunset."



Entry for 17 February 1756

Founding Father Quotes

Spent an hour in the beginning of the evening at Major Gardiner's, where it was thought that the design of Christianity was not to make men good riddle-solvers, or good mystery-mongers, but good men, good magistrates, and good subjects, good husbands and good wives, good parents and good children, good masters and good servants. The following questions may be answered some time or other, namely, — Where do we find a precept in the Gospel requiring Ecclesiastical Synods? Convocations? Councils? Decrees? Creeds? Confessions? Oaths? Subscriptions? and whole cart-loads of other trumpery that we find religion incumbered with in these days?

(18 February 1756)

No man is entirely free from weakness and imperfection in this life. Men of the most exalted genius and active minds are generally most perfect slaves to the love of fame. They sometimes descend to as mean tricks and artifices in pursuit of honor or reputation as the miser descends to in pursuit of gold.

(19 February 1756)

A pen is certainly an excellent instrument to fix a man's attention and to inflame his ambition.

(14 November 1760)

This is the most magnificent movement of all! There is a dignity, a majesty, a sublimity, in this last effort of the patriots that I greatly admire. The people should never rise without doing something to be remembered — something notable and striking. This destruction of the tea is so bold, so daring, so firm, intrepid and inflexible, and it must have so important consequences, and so lasting, that I can't but consider it as an epocha in history!



On the Boston Tea Party (17 December 1773)

Virtue is not always amiable.

(9 February 1779)

By my physical constitution I am but an ordinary man ... Yet some great events, some cutting expressions, some mean hypocracies, have at times thrown this assemblage of sloth, sleep, and littleness into rage like a lion.

(26 April 1779)

The Christian religion is, above all the religions that ever prevailed or existed in ancient or modern times, the religion of wisdom, virtue, equity, and humanity, let the blackguard Paine say what he will; it is resignation to God, it is goodness itself to man.

Founding Father Quotes

(26 July 1796)

Tacitus appears to have been as great an enthusiast as Petrarch for the revival of the republic and universal empire. He has exerted the vengeance of history upon the emperors, but has veiled the conspiracies against them, and the incorrigible corruption of the people which probably provoked their most atrocious cruelties. Tyranny can scarcely be practised upon a virtuous and wise people.

(31 July 1796)

It is folly to anticipate evils, and madness to create imaginary ones.

(4 August 1796)

Omnium rerum domina, virtus. Virtue is the mistress of all things. Virtue is the master of all things. Therefore a nation that should never do wrong must necessarily govern the world. The might of virtue, the power of virtue, is not a very common topic, not so common as it should be.

(6 August 1796)

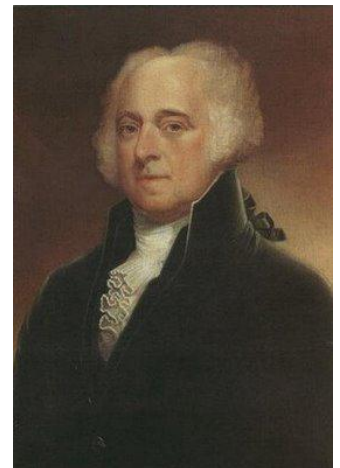
A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law (1765)

Let every sluice of knowledge be opened and set a-flowing.

The preservation of the means of knowledge among the lowest ranks is of more importance to the public than all the property of all the rich men in the country.

Always consider the settlement of America with reverence and wonder, as the opening of a grand scene and design in providence, for the illumination of the ignorant and the emancipation of the slavish part of mankind all over the earth.

The poor people, it is true, have been much less successful than the great. They have seldom found either leisure or opportunity to form a union and exert their strength; ignorant as they were of arts and letters, they have seldom been able to frame and support a regular opposition. This, however, has been known by the great to be the temper of mankind; and they have accordingly labored, in all ages, to wrest from the populace, as they are contemptuously called, the knowledge of their rights and wrongs, and the power to assert the former or redress the latter. I say RIGHTS, for such they have, undoubtedly, antecedent to all earthly government, — Rights, that cannot be repealed or restrained by human laws — Rights, derived from the great Legislator of the universe.



Liberty must at all hazards be supported. We have a right to it, derived from our Maker. But if we had not, our fathers have earned and bought it for us, at the expense of their ease, their estates, their pleasure, and their blood.

Founding Father Quotes

Liberty cannot be preserved without a general knowledge among the people, who have a right, from the frame of their nature, to knowledge, as their great Creator, who does nothing in vain, has given them understandings, and a desire to know; but besides this, they have a right, an indisputable, unalienable, indefeasible, divine right to that most dreaded and envied kind of knowledge, I mean, of the characters and conduct of their rulers. Rulers are no more than attorneys, agents, and trustees, of the people; and if the cause, the interest, and trust, is insidiously betrayed, or wantonly trifled away, the people have a right to revoke the authority that they themselves have deputed, and to constitute other and better agents, attorneys and trustees.

The jaws of power are always open to devour, and her arm is always stretched out, if possible, to destroy the freedom of thinking, speaking, and writing.

Be not intimidated, therefore, by any terrors, from publishing with the utmost freedom, whatever can be warranted by the laws of your country; nor suffer yourselves to be wheedled out of your liberties by any pretenses of politeness, delicacy, or decency. These, as they are often used, are but three different names for hypocrisy, chicanery, and cowardice.

Let us tenderly and kindly cherish therefore, the means of knowledge. Let us dare to read, think, speak, and write.

Let every sluice of knowledge be opened and set a-flowing.

Novanglus Essays (1774 - 1775)

Nip the shoots of arbitrary power in the bud, is the only maxim which can ever preserve the liberties of any people.

No. 3

We are told: "It is a universal truth, that he that would excite a rebellion, is at heart as great a tyrant as ever wielded the iron rod of oppression." Be it so. We are not exciting a rebellion. Opposition, nay, open, avowed resistance by arms, against usurpation and lawless violence, is not rebellion by the law of God or the land. Resistance to lawful authority makes rebellion. ... Remember the frank Veteran acknowledges, that "the word rebel is a convertible term."

No. 5

A government of laws, and not of men.

No. 7; this was incorporated into the Massachusetts Constitution in 1780

Metaphysicians and politicians may dispute forever, but they will never find any other moral principle or foundation of rule or obedience, than the consent of governors and governed.

No. 7

Thoughts on Government (1776)

The form of government which communicates ease, comfort, security, or, in one word, happiness, to the greatest number of persons, and in the greatest degree, is the best. We ought to consider what is the end of government, before we determine which is the best form. Upon this point all speculative politicians will agree, that the happiness of society is the end of government, as all Divines and moral Philosophers will agree that the happiness of the individual is the end of man. From this principle it will follow, that the form of government which communicates ease, comfort, security, or, in one word, happiness, to the greatest number of persons, and in the greatest degree, is the best.

Fear is the foundation of most governments; but it is so sordid and brutal a passion, and renders men in whose breasts it predominates so stupid and miserable, that Americans will not be likely to approve of any political institution which is founded on it.

When annual elections end, there slavery begins.

Laws for the liberal education of youth, especially of the lower class of people, are so extremely wise and useful, that, to a humane and generous mind, no expense for this purpose would be thought extravagant.

The judicial power ought to be distinct from both the legislative and executive, and independent upon both, that so it may be a check upon both, as both should be checks upon that.

A Defence of the Constitutions of Government (1787)

The rich, the well-born, and the able, acquire an influence among the people that will soon be too much for simple honesty and plain sense, in a house of representatives. The most illustrious of them must, therefore, be separated from the mass, and placed by themselves in a senate; this is, to all honest and useful intents, an ostracism.

Vol. I, Preface, p. xi

Children should be educated and instructed in the principles of freedom.

Ch. 3 : Errors of Government and Rules of Policy

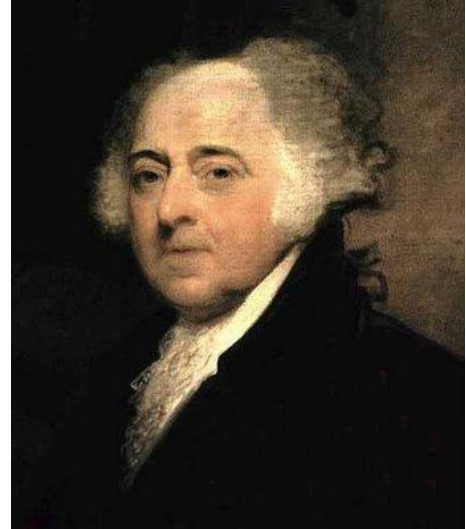
The moment the idea is admitted into society, that property is not as sacred as the law of God, and that there is not a force of law and public justice to protect it, anarchy and tyranny commence. If "Thou shall not covet," and "Thou shall not steal," are not commandments of Heaven, they must be made inviolable precepts in every society, before it can be civilized or made free.

Ch. 1: The Right Constitution of a Commonwealth Examined

Founding Father Quotes

Killing one tyrant only makes way for worse, unless the people have sense, spirit and honesty enough to establish and support a constitution guarded at all points against the tyranny of the one, the few, and the many.

The right of a nation to kill a tyrant, in cases of necessity, can no more be doubted, than to hang a robber, or kill a flea. But killing one tyrant only makes way for worse, unless the people have sense, spirit and honesty enough to establish and support a constitution guarded at all points against the tyranny of the one, the few, and the many. Let it be the study, therefore, of lawgivers and philosophers, to enlighten the people's understandings and improve their morals, by good and general education; to enable them to comprehend the scheme of government, and to know upon what points their liberties depend; to dissipate those vulgar prejudices and popular superstitions that oppose themselves to good government; and to teach them that obedience to the laws is as indispensable in them as in lords and kings.



Ch. 18

A single assembly will never be a steady guardian of the laws, if Machiavel is right, when he says, Men are never good but through necessity: on the contrary, when good and evil are left to their choice, they will not fail to throw every thing into disorder and confusion. Hunger and poverty may make men industrious, but laws only can make them good; for, if men were so of themselves, there would be no occasion for laws; but, as the case is far otherwise, they are absolutely necessary.

Vol. I, letter XXVI Ch. 4 Opinions of Philosophers : Dr. Price

There never was yet a people who must not have somebody or something to represent the dignity of the state, the majesty of the people, call it what you will — a doge, an avoyer, an archon, a president, a consul, a syndic; this becomes at once an object of ambition and dispute, and, in time, of division, faction, sedition, and rebellion.

Letter LV: Conclusion

Discourses on Davila (1790)

The world grows more enlightened. Knowledge is more equally diffused. Newspapers, magazines, and circulating libraries have made mankind wiser. Titles and distinctions, ranks and orders, parade and ceremony, are all going out of fashion.

This is roundly and frequently asserted in the streets, and sometimes on theatres of higher rank. Some truth there is in it; and if the opportunity were temperately improved, to the reformation of abuses, the

Founding Father Quotes

rectification of errors, and the dissipation of pernicious prejudices, a great advantage it might be. But, on the other hand, false inferences may be drawn from it, which may make mankind wish for the age of dragons, giants, and fairies.

No. 13

Are riches, honors, and beauty going out of fashion? Is not the rage for them, on the contrary, increased faster than improvement in knowledge? As long as either of these are in vogue, will there not be emulations and rivalries? Does not the increase of knowledge in any man increase his emulation; and the diffusion of knowledge among men multiply rivalries? Has the progress of science, arts, and letters yet discovered that there are no passions in human nature? no ambition, avarice, or desire of fame? Are these passions cooled, diminished, or extinguished? Is the rage for admiration less ardent in men or women? Have these propensities less a tendency to divisions, controversies, seditions, mutinies, and civil wars than formerly? On the contrary, the more knowledge is diffused, the more the passions are extended, and the more furious they grow.



No. 13

Property must be secured, or liberty cannot exist. But if unlimited or unbalanced power of disposing property, be put into the hands of those who have no property, France will find, as we have found, the lamb committed to the custody of the wolf. In such a case, all the pathetic exhortations and addresses of the national assembly to the people, to respect property, will be regarded no more than the warbles of the songsters of the forest. The great art of law-giving consists in balancing the poor against the rich in the legislature, and in constituting the legislative a perfect balance against the executive power, at the same time that no individual or party can become its rival. The essence of a free government consists in an effectual control of rivalries. The executive and the legislative powers are natural rivals; and if each has not an effectual control over the other, the weaker will ever be the lamb in the paws of the wolf. The nation which will not adopt an equilibrium of power must adopt a despotism. There is no other alternative. Rivalries must be controlled, or they will throw all things into confusion; and there is nothing but despotism or a balance of power which can control them.

No. 13

Letters to John Taylor (1814)

Liberty, according to my metaphysics, is an intellectual quality; an attribute that belongs not to fate nor chance. Neither possesses it, neither is capable of it. There is nothing moral or immoral in the idea of it. The definition of it is a self-determining power in an intellectual agent. It implies thought and choice and power; it can elect between objects, indifferent in point of morality, neither morally good nor morally evil. If the substance in which this quality, attribute, adjective, call it what you will, exists, has a moral sense, a conscience, a moral faculty; if it can distinguish between moral good and moral evil, and has power to choose the former and refuse the latter, it can, if it will, choose the evil and reject the good, as we see in experience it very often does.

I, p. 448.

I do not say that democracy has been more pernicious on the whole, and in the long run, than monarchy or aristocracy. Democracy has never been and never can be so durable as aristocracy or monarchy; but while it lasts, it is more bloody than either.

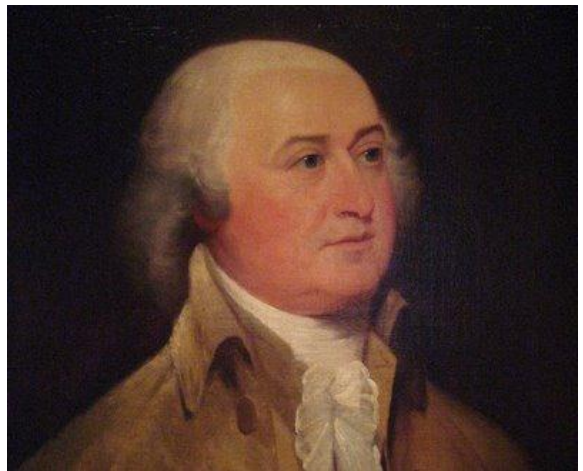
XVIII, p. 483.

Remember, democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts, and murders itself. There never was a democracy yet that did not commit suicide. It is in vain to say that democracy is less vain, less proud, less selfish, less ambitious, or less avaricious than aristocracy or monarchy. It is not true, in fact, and nowhere appears in history. Those passions are the same in all men, under all forms of simple government, and when unchecked, produce the same effects of fraud, violence, and cruelty.

XVIII, p. 484.

The priesthood have, in all ancient nations, nearly monopolized learning. Read over again all the accounts we have of Hindoos, Chaldeans, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Celts, Teutons, we shall find that priests had all the knowledge, and really governed mankind. Examine Mahometanism, trace Christianity from its first promulgation; knowledge has been almost exclusively confined to the clergy. And, even since the Reformation, when or where has existed a Protestant or dissenting sect who would tolerate a free inquiry? The blackest billingsgate, most ungentlemanly insolence, the most yahooish brutality is patiently endured, countenanced, propagated and applauded. But touch a solemn truth in collision with a dogma of a sect, though capable of the clearest proof, and you will soon find you have disturbed a nest, and the hornets will swarm about your legs and hands, and fly into your face and eyes.

XXXI, p. 517.



What do we mean by the American Revolution?

But what do we mean by the American Revolution? Do we mean the American war? The Revolution was effected before the war commenced. The Revolution was in the minds and hearts of the people; a change in their religious sentiments of their duties and obligations. ... This radical change in the principles, opinions, sentiments, and affections of the people, was the real American Revolution.

By what means this great and important alteration in the religious, moral, political, and social character of the people of thirteen colonies, all distinct, unconnected, and independent of each other, was begun, pursued, and accomplished, it is surely interesting to humanity to investigate, and perpetuate to posterity.

To this end, it is greatly to be desired, that young men of letters in all the States, especially in the thirteen original States, would undertake the laborious, but certainly interesting and amusing task, of searching and collecting all the records, pamphlets, newspapers, and even handbills, which in any way contributed to change the temper and views of the people, and compose them into an independent nation.

The colonies had grown up under constitutions of government so different, there was so great a variety of religions, they were composed of so many different nations, their customs, manners, and habits had so little resemblance, and their intercourse had been so rare, and their knowledge of each other so imperfect, that to unite them in the same principles in theory and the same system of action, was certainly a very difficult enterprise. The complete accomplishment of it, in so short a time and by such simple means, was perhaps a singular example in the history of mankind. Thirteen clocks were made to strike together — a perfection of mechanism, which no artist had ever before effected.

In this research, the gloriole of individual gentlemen, and of separate States, is of little consequence. The means and the measures are the proper objects of investigation. These may be of use to posterity, not only in this nation, but in South America and all other countries. They may teach mankind that revolutions are no trifles; that they ought never to be undertaken rashly; nor without deliberate consideration and sober reflection; nor without a solid, immutable, eternal foundation of justice and humanity; nor without a people possessed of intelligence, fortitude, and integrity sufficient to carry them with steadiness, patience, and perseverance, through all the vicissitudes of fortune, the fiery trials and melancholy disasters they may have to encounter.

THOMAS PAINE QUOTES

The supposed quietude of a good man allures the ruffian; while on the other hand, arms, like law, discourage and keep the invader and the plunderer in awe, and preserve order in the world as well as property. The balance of power is the scale of peace. The same balance would be preserved were all the world destitute of arms, for all would be alike; but since some will not, others dare not lay them aside. Horrid mischief would ensue were one-half the world deprived of the use of them; for while avarice and ambition have a place in the heart of man, the weak will become a prey to the strong.

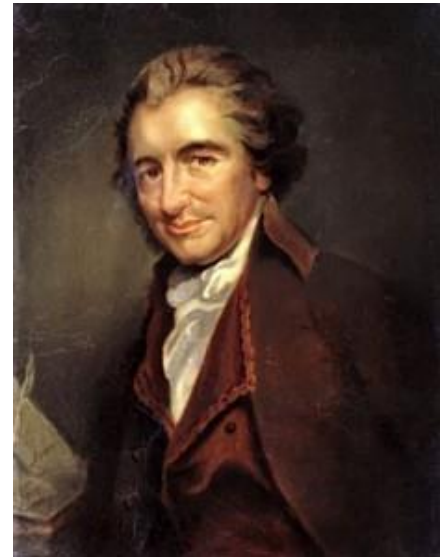
"Thoughts on Defensive War" in Pennsylvania Magazine (July 1775); signed "A Lover Of Peace"

Common Sense (1776)

Some writers have so confounded society with government, as to leave little or no distinction between them; whereas they are not only different, but have different origins. Society is produced by our wants, and government by our wickedness; the former promotes our happiness POSITIVELY by uniting our affections, the latter NEGATIVELY by restraining our vices. The one encourages intercourse, the other creates distinctions. The first a patron, the last a punisher.

Perhaps the sentiments contained in the following pages, are not YET sufficiently fashionable to procure them general favour; a long habit of not thinking a thing WRONG, gives it a superficial appearance of being RIGHT, and raises at first a formidable outcry in defense of custom. But the tumult soon subsides. Time makes more converts than reason.

The cause of America is in a great measure the cause of all mankind. Many circumstances hath, and will arise, which are not local, but universal, and through which the principles of all Lovers of Mankind are affected, and in the Event of which, their Affections are interested. The laying a Country desolate with Fire and Sword, declaring War against the natural rights of all Mankind, and extirpating the Defenders thereof from the Face of the Earth, is the Concern of every Man to whom Nature hath given the Power of feeling; of which Class, regardless of Party Censure, is the AUTHOR.



Who the Author of this Production is, is wholly unnecessary to the Public, as the Object for Attention is the DOCTRINE ITSELF, not the MAN. Yet it may not be unnecessary to say, That he is unconnected with any Party, and under no sort of Influence public or private, but the influence of reason and principle.

Society in every state is a blessing, but government even in its best state is but a necessary evil; in its worst state an intolerable one; for when we suffer, or are exposed to the same miseries BY A

Founding Father Quotes

GOVERNMENT, which we might expect in a country WITHOUT GOVERNMENT, our calamity is heightened by reflecting that we furnish the means by which we suffer.

WHEREFORE, security being the true design and end of government, it unanswerably follows, that whatever FORM thereof appears most likely to ensure it to us, with the least expense and greatest benefit, is preferable to all others.

Of more worth is one honest man to society and in the sight of God, than all the crowned ruffians that ever lived.

It is pleasant to observe by what regular gradation we surmount the force of local prejudice as we enlarge our acquaintance with the world.

O! ye that love mankind! Ye that dare oppose not only tyranny but the tyrant, stand forth! Every spot of the Old World is overrun with oppression. Freedom hath been hunted round the globe. Asia and Africa have long expelled her. Europe regards her like a stranger and England hath given her warning to depart. O! receive the fugitive and prepare in time an asylum for mankind.

When we are planning for posterity, we ought to remember that virtue is not hereditary.

The sun never shined on a cause of greater worth. 'Tis not the affair of a city, a country, a province, or a kingdom, but of a continent—of at least one eighth part of the habitable globe. 'Tis not the concern of a day, a year, or an age; posterity are virtually involved in the contest, and will be more or less affected, even to the end of time, by the proceedings now. Now is the seed time of continental union, faith and honor. The least fracture now will be like a name engraved with the point of a pin on the tender rind of a young oak; The wound will enlarge with the tree, and posterity read it in full grown characters.

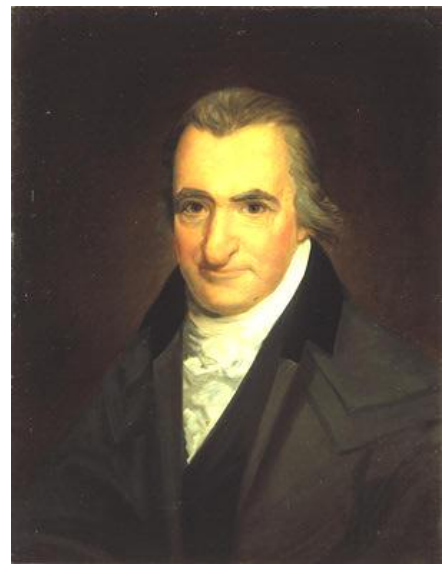
It is of the utmost danger to society to make it (religion) a party in political disputes.

Mingling religion with politics may be disavowed and reprobated by every inhabitant of America.

I bid you farewell, sincerely wishing, that as men and christians, ye may always fully and uninterruptedly enjoy every civil and religious right.

There is something exceedingly ridiculous in the composition of monarchy; it first excludes a man from the means of information, yet empowers him to act in cases where the highest judgment is required.

Hereditary succession has no claim. For all men being originally equals, no one by birth could have the right to set up his own family in perpetual preference to all others for ever, and tho' himself might



Founding Father Quotes

deserve some decent degree of honours of his contemporaries, yet his descendants might be far too unworthy to inherit them.

I offer nothing more than simple facts, plain arguments, and common sense.

A long habit of not thinking a thing wrong, gives it a superficial appearance of being right, and raises at first a formidable outcry in defense of custom.

Society is produced by our wants, and government by wickedness; the former promotes our happiness positively by uniting our affections, the latter negatively by restraining our vices. The one encourages intercourse, the other creates distinctions. The first is a patron, the last a punisher. Society in every state is a blessing, but government even in its best state is but a necessary evil.

In the early ages of the world, according to the Scripture chronology there were no kings; the consequence of which was, there were no wars; it is the pride of kings which throws mankind into confusion.

Every thing that is right or natural pleads for separation. The blood of the slain, the weeping voice of nature cries, 'tis time to part.

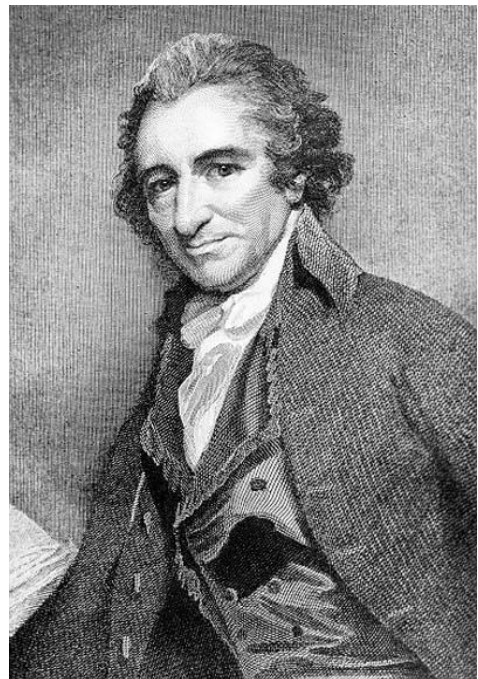
Government by kings was first introduced into the world by the Heathens, from whom the children of Israel copied the custom. It was the most prosperous invention the Devil ever set on foot for the promotion of idolatry.

But where, say some, is the King of America? I'll tell you, friend, he reigns above, and doth not make havoc of mankind like the Royal Brute of Great Britain... so far as we approve of monarchy, that in America the law is king.

O ye that love mankind! Ye that dare oppose, not only the tyranny, but the tyrant, stand forth! Every spot of the old world is overrun with oppression. Freedom hath been hunted round the globe. Asia, and Africa, have long expelled her — Europe regards her like a stranger, and England hath given her warning to depart. O! receive the fugitive, and prepare in time an asylum for mankind.

We have every opportunity and every encouragement before us, to form the noblest purest constitution on the face of the earth. We have it in our power to begin the world over again. A situation, similar to the present, hath not happened since the days of Noah until now. The birthday of a new world is at hand, and a race of men, perhaps as numerous as all Europe contains, are to receive their portion of freedom from the event of a few months.

Wherefore, since nothing but blows will do, for God's sake let us come to a final separation.



Founding Father Quotes

Small islands not capable of protecting themselves are the proper objects for kingdoms to take under their care; but there is something very absurd in supposing a continent to be perpetually governed by an island.

But there is another and greater distinction for which no truly natural or religious reason can be assigned, and that is, the distinction of men into **KINGS** and **SUBJECTS**. Male and female are the distinctions of nature, good and bad the distinctions of heaven; but how a race of men came into the world so exalted above the rest, and distinguished like some new species, is worth enquiring into, and whether they are the means of happiness or of misery to mankind.

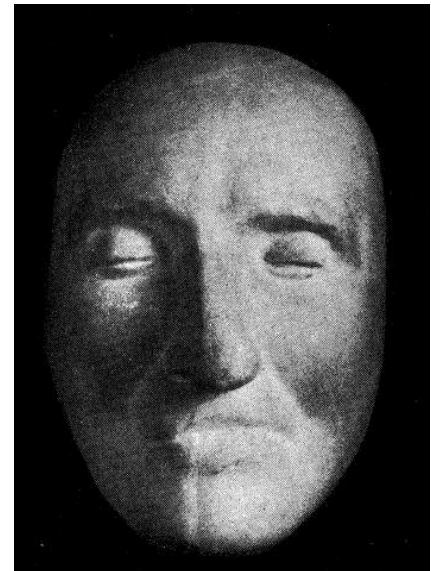
The American Crisis (1776 - 1783)

THESE are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: it is dearness only that gives every thing its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as **FREEDOM** should not be highly rated.

The Crisis No. I (written 19 December 1776, published 23 December 1776)

'Tis surprising to see how rapidly a panic will sometimes run through a country. All nations and ages have been subject to them. Britain has trembled like an ague at the report of a French fleet of flat-bottomed boats; and in the fourteenth [sic (actually the fifteenth)] century the whole English army, after ravaging the kingdom of France, was driven back like men petrified with fear; and this brave exploit was performed by a few broken forces collected and headed by a woman, Joan of Arc. Would that heaven might inspire some Jersey maid to spirit up her countrymen, and save her fair fellow sufferers from ravage and ravishment! Yet panics, in some cases, have their uses; they produce as much good as hurt. Their duration is always short; the mind soon grows through them, and acquires a firmer habit than before. But their peculiar advantage is, that they are the touchstones of sincerity and hypocrisy, and bring things and men to light, which might otherwise have lain forever undiscovered. In fact, they have the same effect on secret traitors, which an imaginary apparition would have upon a private murderer. They sift out the hidden thoughts of man, and hold them up in public to the world. Many a disguised Tory has lately shown his head, that shall penitentially solemnize with curses the day on which Howe arrived upon the Delaware.

The Crisis No. I



Founding Father Quotes

It matters not where you live, or what rank of life you hold, the evil or the blessing will reach you all. The far and the near, the home counties and the back, the rich and the poor, will suffer or rejoice alike. The heart that feels not now is dead; the blood of his children will curse his cowardice, who shrinks back at a time when a little might have saved the whole, and made them happy. I love the man that can smile in trouble, that can gather strength from distress, and grow brave by reflection. 'Tis the business of little minds to shrink; but he whose heart is firm, and whose conscience approves his conduct, will pursue his principles unto death.

My own line of reasoning is to myself as straight and clear as a ray of light. Not all the treasures of the world, so far as I believe, could have induced me to support an offensive war, for I think it murder; but if a thief breaks into my house, burns and destroys my property, and kills or threatens to kill me, or those that are in it, and to "bind me in all cases whatsoever" to his absolute will, am I to suffer it? What signifies it to me, whether he who does it is a king or a common man; my countryman or not my countryman; whether it be done by an individual villain, or an army of them? If we reason to the root of things we shall find no difference; neither can any just cause be assigned why we should punish in the one case and pardon in the other. Let them call me rebel and welcome, I feel no concern from it; but I should suffer the misery of devils, were I to make a whore of my soul by swearing allegiance to one whose character is that of a sottish, stupid, stubborn, worthless, brutish man.



The Crisis No. I

If there must be trouble, let it be in my day, that my child may have peace.

The Crisis No. I

Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom must, like men, undergo the fatigue of supporting it.

The Crisis No. IV

But when the country, into which I had just set my foot, was set on fire about my ears, it was time to stir. It was time for every man to stir.

The Crisis No. VII

The Rights of Man (1791)

I speak an open and disinterested language, dictated by no passion but that of humanity. To me, who have not only refused offers, because I thought them improper, but have declined rewards I might with reputation have accepted, it is no wonder that meanness and imposition appear disgusting. Independence is my happiness, and I view things as they are, without regard to place or person; my country is the world, and my religion is to do good.

Man is not the enemy of man but through the medium of a false system of government.

The circumstances of the world are continually changing, and the opinions of man change also; and as government is for the living, and not for the dead, it is the living only that has any right in it.

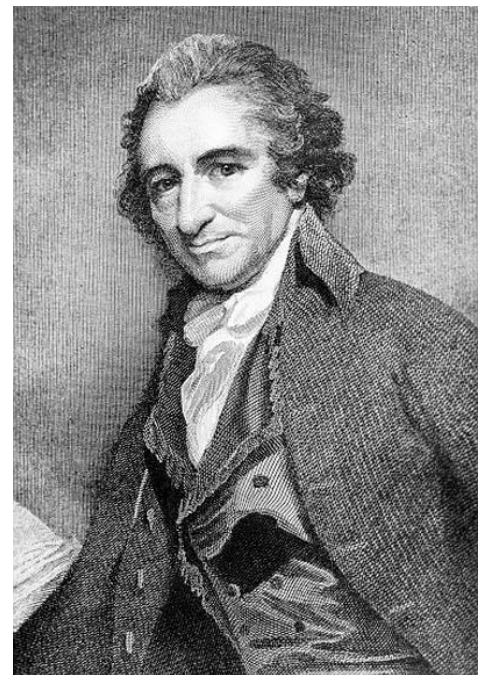
The Age of Reason - Part 1

I believe in one God, and no more; and I hope for happiness beyond this life.

Each of those churches show certain books, which they call revelation, or the word of God. The Jews say, that their word of God was given by God to Moses, face to face; the Christians say, that their word of God came by divine inspiration: and the Turks say, that their word of God (the Koran) was brought by an angel from Heaven. Each of those churches accuse the other of unbelief; and for my own part, I disbelieve them all.

All national institutions of churches, whether Jewish, Christian, or Turkish, appear to me no other than human inventions set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolize power and profit.

Thomas did not believe the resurrection; and, as they say, would not believe without having ocular and manual demonstration himself. So neither will I; and the reason is equally as good for me, and for every other person, as for Thomas.



Whenever we read the obscene stories the voluptuous debaucheries, the cruel and torturous executions, the unrelenting vindictiveness with which more than half the bible is filled, it would be more consistent that we call it the word of a demon rather than the word of God. It is a history of wickedness that has served to corrupt and brutalize mankind; and, for my part, I sincerely detest it as I detest everything that is cruel.

But it is necessary to the happiness of man, that he be mentally faithful to himself. Infidelity does not consist in believing, or in disbelieving; it consists in professing to believe what he does not believe.

Founding Father Quotes

It is impossible to calculate the moral mischief, if I may so express it, that mental lying has produced in society. When a man has so far corrupted and prostituted the chastity of his mind, as to subscribe his professional belief to things he does not believe, he has prepared himself for the commission of every other crime.

It is a contradiction in terms and ideas to call anything a revelation that comes to us at second hand, either verbally or in writing. Revelation is necessarily limited to the first communication. After this, it is only an account of something which that person says was a revelation made to him; and though he may find himself obliged to believe it, it cannot be incumbent on me to believe it in the same manner, for it was not a revelation made to me, and I have only his word for it that it was made to him.

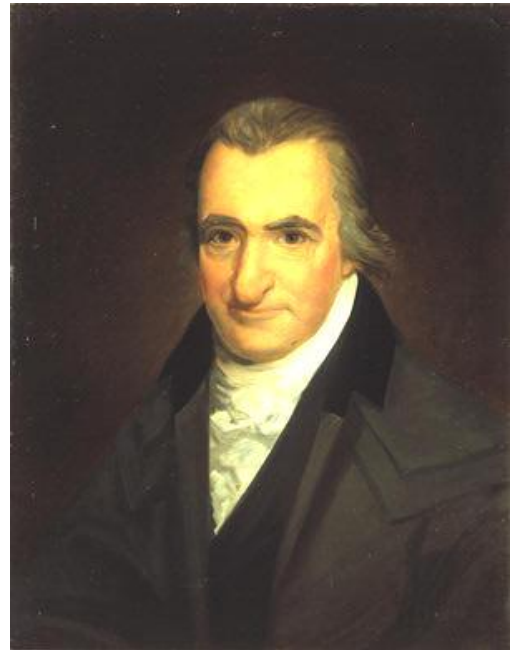
But if objects for gratitude and admiration are our desire, do they not present themselves every hour to our eyes? Do we not see a fair creation prepared to receive us the instant we are born — a world furnished to our hands, that cost us nothing? Is it we that light up the sun, that pour down the rain, and fill the earth with abundance? Whether we sleep or wake, the vast machinery of the universe still goes on. Are these things, and the blessings they indicate in future, nothing to us? Can our gross feelings be excited by no other subjects than tragedy and suicide? Or is the gloomy pride of man become so intolerable, that nothing can flatter it but a sacrifice of the Creator?

If Jesus Christ was the being which those Mythologists tell us he was, and that he came into this world to suffer, which is a word they sometimes use instead of to die, the only real suffering he could have endured, would have been to live. His existence here was a state of exilement or transportation from Heaven, and the way back to his original country was to die. In fine, everything in this strange system is the reverse of what it pretends to be.

The doctrine of redemption is founded on a mere pecuniary idea corresponding to that of a debt which another person might pay; and as this pecuniary idea corresponds again with the system of second redemption, obtained through the means of money given to the Church for pardons, the probability is that the same persons fabricated both the one and the other of those theories; and that, in truth there is no such thing as redemption — that it is fabulous, and that man stands in the same relative condition with his Maker as he ever did stand since man existed, and that it is his greatest consolation to think so.

For what is the amount of all his prayers but an attempt to make the Almighty change his mind, and act otherwise than he does? It is as if he were to say: Thou knowest not so well as I.

The word of God is the creation we behold and it is in this word, which no human invention can counterfeit or alter, that God speaketh universally to man.



Founding Father Quotes

I do not believe in the creed professed by the Jewish church, by the Roman church, by the Greek church, by the Turkish church, by the Protestant church, nor by any church that I know of. My own mind is my own church.

It is only by the exercise of reason that man can discover God.

What more does man want to know than that the hand or power that made these things is divine, is omnipotent? Let him believe this with the force it is impossible to repel, if he permits his reason to act, and his rule of moral life will follow of course.

As to the Christian system of faith, it appears to me as a species of Atheism — a sort of religious denial of God. It professes to believe in a man rather than in God. It is a compound made up chiefly of Manism with but little Deism, and is as near to Atheism as twilight is to darkness. It introduces between man and his Maker an opaque body, which it calls a Redeemer, as the moon introduces her opaque self between the earth and the sun, and it produces by this means a religious, or an irreligious, eclipse of light. It has put the whole orbit of reason into shade.

That which is now called natural philosophy, embracing the whole circle of science, of which astronomy occupies the chief place, is the study of the works of God, and of the power and wisdom of God in his works, and is the true theology.



The Book of Job and the 19th Psalm, which even the Church admits to be more ancient than the chronological order in which they stand in the book called the Bible, are theological orations conformable to the original system of theology. The internal evidence of those orations proves to a demonstration that the study and contemplation of the works of creation, and of the power and wisdom of God, revealed and manifested in those works, made a great part in the religious devotion of the times in which they were written; and it was this devotional study and contemplation that led to the discovery of the principles upon which what are now called sciences are established; and it is to the discovery of these principles that almost all the arts that contribute to the convenience of human life owe their existence. Every principal art has some science for its parent, though the person who mechanically performs the work does not always, and but very seldom, perceive the connection.

It is a fraud of the Christian system to call the sciences human invention; it is only the application of them that is human. Every science has for its basis a system of principles as fixed and unalterable as those by which the universe is regulated and governed. Man cannot make principles, he can only discover them.

The Almighty Lecturer, by displaying the principles of science in the structure of the universe, has invited man to study and to imitation. It is as if He had said to the inhabitants of this globe that we call ours, "I

Founding Father Quotes

have made an earth for man to dwell upon, and I have rendered the starry heavens visible, to teach him science and the arts. He can now provide for his own comfort, and learn from my munificence to all to be kind to each other."

The age of ignorance commenced with the Christian system

The Age of Reason - Part 2

People in general do not know what wickedness there is in this pretended word of God. Brought up in habits of superstition, they take it for granted that the Bible is true, and that it is good; they permit themselves not to doubt of it, and they carry the ideas they form of the benevolence of the Almighty to the book which they have been taught to believe was written by his authority. Good heavens! it is quite another thing; it is a book of lies, wickedness, and blasphemy; for what can be greater blasphemy than to ascribe the wickedness of man to the orders of the Almighty?

Chapter I: The Old Testament

The sublime and the ridiculous are often so nearly related, that it is difficult to class them separately. One step above the sublime makes the ridiculous, and one step above the ridiculous makes the sublime again.

Chapter I: The Old Testament; this may be the origin of Napoleon's celebrated mot, *Du sublime au ridicule il n'y a qu'un pas* (From the sublime to the ridiculous there is but one step).

The most detestable wickedness, the most horrid cruelties, and the greatest miseries, that have afflicted the human race have had their origin in this thing called revelation, or revealed religion.

Chapter III: Conclusion

Of all the systems of religion that ever were invented, there is none more derogatory to the Almighty, more unedifying to man, more repugnant to reason, and more contradictory in itself, than this thing called Christianity. Too absurd for belief, too impossible to convince, and too inconsistent for practice, it renders the heart torpid, or produces only atheists and fanatics.

Chapter III: Conclusion

The study of theology as it stands in Christian churches, is the study of nothing; it is founded on nothing; it rests on no principles; it proceeds by no authorities; it has no data; it can demonstrate nothing; and admits of no conclusion. Not any thing can be studied as a science without our being in possession of the principles upon which it is founded; and as this is not the case with Christian theology, it is therefore the study of nothing.

Chapter III: Conclusion

First Principles of Government (1795)

The right of voting for representatives is the primary right by which other rights are protected. To take away this right is to reduce a man to slavery, for slavery consists in being subject to the will of another, and he that has not a vote in the election of representatives is in this case.

It is never to be expected in a revolution that every man is to change his opinion at the same moment. There never yet was any truth or any principle so irresistibly obvious that all men believed it at once. Time and reason must cooperate with each other to the final establishment of any principle; and therefore those who may happen to be first convinced have not a right to persecute others, on whom conviction operates more slowly. The moral principle of revolutions is to instruct, not to destroy.

It is the nature and intention of a constitution to prevent governing by party, by establishing a common principle that shall limit and control the power and impulse of party, and that says to all parties, thus far shalt thou go and no further. But in the absence of a constitution, men look entirely to party; and instead of principle governing party, party governs principle.

An avidity to punish is always dangerous to liberty. It leads men to stretch, to misinterpret, and to misapply even the best of laws. He that would make his own liberty secure must guard even his enemy from oppression; for if he violates this duty he establishes a precedent that will reach to himself.



Agrarian Justice (1795 - 1796)

Men did not make the earth... It is the value of the improvements only, and not the earth itself, that is individual property... Every proprietor owes to the community a ground rent for the land which he holds.

Discourse to the Theophilanthropists (1798)

The society adopts neither rites nor priesthood, and it will never lose sight of the resolution not to advance any thing as a society inconvenient to any sect or sects, in any time or country, and under any government.

It will be seen that it is so much the more easy for the society to keep within this circle, because, that the dogmas of the Theophilanthropists are those upon which all the sects have agreed, that their moral

Founding Father Quotes

is.that upon which there has never been the least dissent; and that the name they have taken expresses the double end of all the sects, that of leading to the adoration of God and love of man.

The Theophilanthropists do not call themselves the disciples of such or such a man. They avail themselves of the wise precepts that have been transmitted by writers of all countries and in all ages.

The Theophilanthropists believe in the existence of God, and the immortality of the soul.

Religion has two principal enemies, fanaticism and infidelity, or that which is called atheism. The first requires to be combated by reason and morality, the other by natural philosophy.

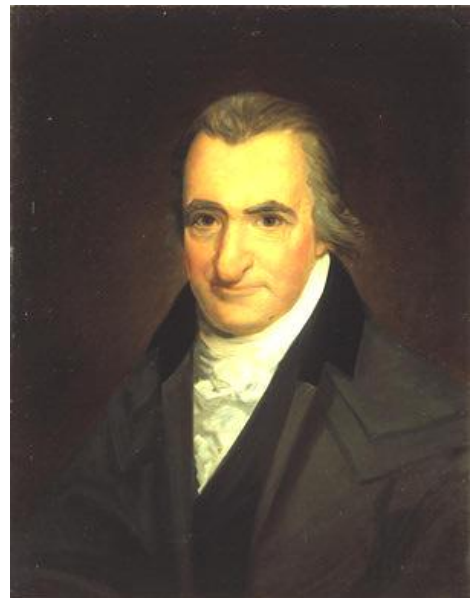
The universe is the bible of a true Theophilanthropist. It is there that he reads of God. It is there that the proofs of his existence are to be sought and to be found. As to written or printed books, by whatever name they are called, they are the works of man's hands, and carry no evidence in themselves that God is the author of any of them. It must be in something that man could not make, that we must seek evidence for our belief, and that something is the universe; the true bible; the inimitable word, of God.

Contemplating the universe, the whole system of creation, in this point of light, we shall discover, that all that which is called natural philosophy is properly a divine study— It is the study of God through his works — It is the best study, by which we can arrive at a knowledge of the existence, and the only one by which we can gain a glimpse of his perfection.

Do we want to contemplate his power? We see it in the immensity of the Creation. Do we want to contemplate his wisdom? We see it in the unchangeable order by which the incomprehensible Whole is governed. Do we want to contemplate his munificence? We see it in the abundance with which he fills the earth. Do we want to contemplate his mercy? We see it in his not withholding that abundance even from the unthankful. In fine, do we want to know what God is? Search not written or printed books, but the Scripture called the Creation.

The universe is composed of matter, and, as a system, is sustained by motion. Motion is not a property of matter, and without this motion the solar system could not exist. Were motion a property of matter, that undiscovered and undiscoverable thing, called perpetual motion, would establish itself. It is because motion is not a property of matter, that perpetual motion is an impossibility in the hand of every being, but that of the Creator of motion. When the pretenders to Atheism can produce perpetual motion, and not till then, they may expect to be credited.

It has been the error of schools to teach astronomy, and all the other sciences and subjects of natural philosophy, as accomplishments only; whereas they should be taught theologically, or with reference to



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the Being who is the Author of them: for all the principles of science are of divine origin. Man cannot make, or invent, or contrive principles; he can only discover them, and he ought to look through the discovery to the Author.

When we examine an extraordinary piece of machinery, an astonishing pile of architecture, a well-executed statue, or a highly-finished painting where life and action are imitated, and habit only prevents our mistaking a surface of light and shade for cubical solidity, our ideas are naturally led to think of the extensive genius and talent of the artist. When we study the elements of geometry, we think of Euclid. When we speak of gravitation, we think of Newton. How, then, is it that when we study the works of God in creation, we stop short and do not think of God? It is from the error of the schools in having taught those subjects as accomplishments only and thereby separated the study of them from the Being who is the Author of them.

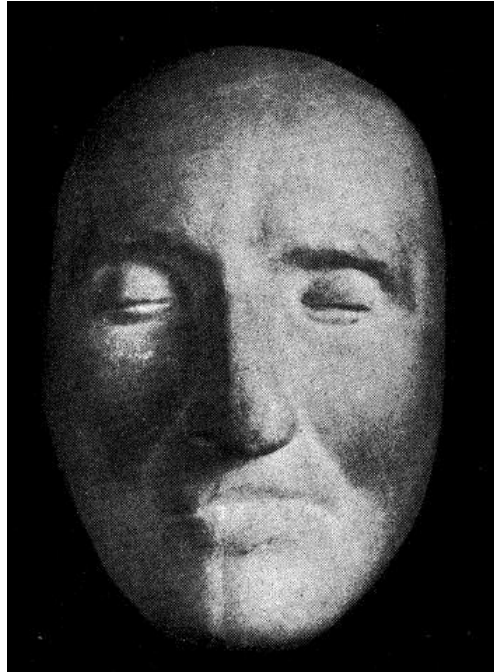
The evil that has resulted from the error of the schools in teaching natural philosophy as an accomplishment only has been that of generating in the pupils a species of atheism. Instead of looking through the works of creation to the Creator Himself, they stop short and employ the knowledge they acquire to create doubts of His existence. They labor with studied ingenuity to ascribe everything they behold to innate properties of matter and jump over all the rest by saying that matter is eternal.

Giving then to matter all the properties which philosophy knows it has, or all that atheism ascribes to it, and can prove, and even supposing matter to be eternal, it will not account for the system of the universe or of the solar system, because it will not account for motion, and it is motion that preserves it. When, therefore, we discover a circumstance of such immense importance, that without it the universe could not exist, and for which neither matter, nor any, nor all, the properties of matter can account, we are by necessity forced into the rational and comfortable belief of the existence of a cause superior to matter, and that cause man calls, God.

As to that which is called nature, it is no other than the laws by which motion and action of every kind, with respect to unintelligible matter, is regulated. And when we speak of looking through nature up to nature's God, we speak philosophically the same rational language as when we speak of looking through human laws up to the power that ordained them.

God is the power of first cause, nature is the law, and matter is the subject acted upon.

But infidelity by ascribing every phenomenon to properties of matter, conceives a system for which it cannot account, and yet it pretends to demonstration. It reasons from what it sees on the surface of the earth, but it does not carry itself on the solar system existing by motion. It sees upon the surface a



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perpetual decomposition and recomposition of matter. It sees that an oak produces an acorn, an acorn an oak, a bird an egg, an egg a bird, and so on. In things of this kind it sees something which it calls a natural cause, but none of the causes it sees is the cause of that motion which preserves the solar system.

The atheist who affects to reason, and the fanatic who rejects reason, plunge themselves alike into inextricable difficulties. The one perverts the sublime and enlightening study of natural philosophy into a deformity of absurdities by not reasoning to the end. The other loses himself in the obscurity of metaphysical theories, and dishonours the Creator, by treating the study of his works with contempt. The one is a half-rational of whom there is some hope, the other a visionary to whom we must be charitable.

When at first thought we think of a creator our ideas appear to us undefined and confused; but if we reason philosophically, those ideas can be easily arranged and simplified. It is a Being, whose power is equal to his will.

It was the excess to which imaginary systems of religion had been carried, and the intolerance, persecutions, burnings, and massacres, they occasioned, that first induced certain persons to propagate infidelity; thinking, that upon the whole, that it was better not to believe at all, than to believe a multitude of things and complicated creeds, that occasioned so much mischief in the world. But those days are past, persecution has ceased, and the antidote then set up against it has no longer even the shadow of apology. We profess, and we proclaim in peace, the pure, unmixed, comfortable, and rational belief of a God, as manifested to us in the universe. We do this without any apprehension of that belief being made a cause of persecution as other beliefs have been, or of suffering persecution ourselves. To God, and not to man, are all men to account for their belief.