

John Adams 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?" - **Diary entry, February 18, 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." - **Diary entry, February 19, 1756**

"Suppose a nation in some distant Region, should take the Bible for their only law Book, and every member should regulate his conduct by the precepts there exhibited. Every member would be obliged in Conscience to temperance and frugality and industry, to justice and kindness and Charity towards his fellow men, and to Piety and Love, and reverence towards Almighty God. In this Commonwealth, no man would impair his health by Gluttony, drunkenness, or Lust-no man would sacrifice his most precious time to cards, or any other trifling and mean amusement-no man would steal or lie or any way defraud his neighbour, but would live in peace and good will with all men-no man would blaspheme his maker or prophane his Worship, but a rational and manly, a sincere and unaffected Piety and devotion, would reign in all hearts. What a Eutopa, what a Paradise would this region be." - **Diary Entry, February 22, 1756**

"Tis impossible to avail our selves of the genuine Powers of Eloquence, without examining in their Elements and first Principles, the Force and Harmony of Numbers, as employed by the Poets and orators of ancient and modern times, and without considering the natural Powers of Imagination, and the Disposition of Mankind to Metaphor and figure, which will require the Knowledge of the true Principles of Grammar, and Rhetoric, and of the best classical Authors. Now to what higher object, to what greater Character, can any Mortal aspire, than to be possessed of all this Knowledge, well digested, and ready at Command, to assist the feeble and Friendless, to discountenance the haughty and lawless, to procure Redress of Wrongs, the Advancement of Right, to assert and maintain Liberty and Virtue, to discourage and abolish Tyranny and Vice?" - **Letter to Jonathan Sewall, October, 1759**

"Tis impossible to judge with much Precision 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**

"A pen is certainly an excellent instrument to fix a man's attention and to inflame his ambition." - **Diary entry, November 14, 1760**

"We electors have an important constitutional power placed in our hands: we have a check upon two branches of the legislature, as each branch has upon the other two; the power I mean of electing at

stated periods, one branch, which branch has the power of electing another. It becomes necessary to every subject then, to be in some degree a statesman: and to examine and judge for himself of the tendencies of political principles and measures." - **From "U" to the Boston Gazette, August 29, 1763**

"Democracy will soon degenerate into an anarchy, such an anarchy that every man will do what is right in his own eyes and no man's life or property or reputation or liberty will be secure, and every one of these will soon mould itself into a system of subordination of all the moral virtues and intellectual abilities, all the powers of wealth, beauty, wit and science, to the wanton pleasures, the capricious will, and the execrable cruelty of one or a very few." - **An Essay on Man's Lust for Power, August 29, 1763**

"Resistance to sudden violence, for the preservation not only of my person, my limbs, and life, but of my property, is an indisputable right of nature which I have never surrendered to the public by the compact of society, and which perhaps, I could not surrender if I would." - **Boston Gazette, September 5, 1763**

"I 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." - **A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law, 1765**

"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." - **A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law, 1765**

"Let every sluice of knowledge be opened and set a-flowing." - **A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law, 1765**

"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." - **A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law, 1765**

"Let the pulpit resound with the doctrines and sentiments of religious liberty. Let us hear the dangers of thralldom to our consciences from ignorance, extreme poverty, and dependence; in short, from civil and political slavery. Let us see delineated before us the true map of man. Let us hear the dignity of his nature, and the noble rank he holds among the works of God-that consenting to slavery is a sacrilegious breach of trust, as offensive in the sight of God as it is derogatory from our own honor or interest or happiness - and that God Almighty has promulgated from heaven liberty, peace, and goodwill to man!" - **A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law, 1765**

"Set before us the conduct of our own British ancestors, who defended for us the inherent rights of mankind against foreign and domestic tyrants and usurpers, against arbitrary kings and cruel priests; in short against the gates of earth and hell." - **A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law, 1765**

"They (the Puritans) saw clearly that of all the nonsense and delusion which had ever passed through the mind of man, none had ever been more extravagant than the notions of absolutions, indelible characters, uninterrupted successions, and the rest of those fantastical ideas, derived from the canon law, which had thrown such a glare of mystery, sanctity, reverence, and right reverend eminence and holiness around the idea of a priest as no mortal could deserve, and as always must, from the constitution of human

nature, be dangerous to society. For this reason they demolished the whole system of diocesan episcopacy, and, deriding, as all reasonable and impartial men must do, the ridiculous fancies of sanctified effluvia from Episcopal fingers, they established sacerdotal ordination on the foundation of the Bible and common sense." - **A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law, 1765**

"They even persuaded mankind to believe, faithfully and undoubtingly, that God Almighty had entrusted them with the keys of heaven, whose gates they might open and close at pleasure; with a power of dispensation over all the rules and obligations of morality; with authority to license all sorts of sins and crimes; with a power of deposing princes and absolving subjects from allegiance; with a power of procuring or withholding the rain of heaven and the beams of the sun; with the management of earthquakes, pestilence, and famine; nay, with the mysterious, awful, incomprehensible power of creating out of bread and wine the flesh and blood of God himself. All these opinions they were enabled to spread and rivet among the people by reducing their minds to a state of sordid ignorance and staring timidity, and by infusing into them a religious horror of letters and knowledge. Thus was human nature chained fast for ages in a cruel, shameful, and deplorable servitude to him and his subordinate tyrants, who, it was foretold, would exalt himself above all that was called God and that was worshipped." - **A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law, 1765**

"Property is surely a right of mankind as real as liberty." - **A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law, 1765**

"But none of the means of information are more sacred, or have been cherished with more tenderness and care by the settlers of America, than the press. Care has been taken that the art of printing should be encouraged, and that it should be easy and cheap and safe for any person to communicate his thoughts to the public. And you, Messieurs printers, whatever the tyrants of the earth may say of your paper, have done important service to your country by your readiness and freedom in publishing the speculations of the curious. The stale, impudent insinuations of slander and sedition with which the gormandizers of power have endeavored to discredit your paper are so much the more to your honor; for the jaws of power are always opened to devour, and her arm is always stretched out, if possible, to destroy the freedom of thinking, speaking, and writing." - **A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law, 1765**

"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." - **A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law, 1765**

"Numberless have been the systems of iniquity contrived by the great for the gratification of this passion in themselves; but in none of them were they ever more successful than in the invention and establishment of the canon and the feudal law." - **A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law, 1765**

"Let us dare to read, think, speak and write." - **A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law, 1765**

"By the former of these (canon law), the most refined, sublime, extensive, and astonishing constitution of policy that ever was conceived by the mind of man was framed by the Romish clergy for the aggrandizement of their own order." - **A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law, 1765**

"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." - **A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law, 1765**

John Adams Quotes:

"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." - **A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law, 1765**



"Let us tenderly and kindly cherish therefore, the means of knowledge. Let us dare to read, think, speak, and write." - **A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law, 1765**

"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." - **A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law, 1765**

"It should be your care, therefore, and mine, to elevate the minds of our children and exalt their courage; to accelerate and animate their industry and activity; to excite in them an habitual contempt of meanness, abhorrence of injustice and inhumanity, and an ambition to excel in every capacity, faculty, and virtue. If we suffer their minds to grovel and creep in infancy, they will grovel all their lives." - **A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law, 1765**

"I have accepted a seat in the [Massachusetts] House of Representatives, and thereby have consented to my own ruin, to your ruin, and the ruin of our children. I give you this warning, that you may prepare your mind for your fate." - **Letter to Abigail Adams, May, 1770**

"Human government is more or less perfect as it approaches nearer or diverges farther from the imitation of this perfect plan of divine and moral government." - **Draft of a Newspaper Communication, About August, 1770**

"The law... will not bend to the uncertain wishes, imaginations and wanton tempers of men... On the one hand it is inexorable to the cries and lamentations of the prisoners; on the other it is deaf, deaf as an adder, to the clamors of the populace." - **Argument in Defense of the British Soldiers in the Boston Massacre Trials, December 4, 1770**

"Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclination, or the dictates of our passions, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence." - **In Defense of the British Soldiers on trial for the Boston Massacre, December 4, 1770**

"He requires of me, such Compliances, such horrid Crimes, such a Sacrifice of my Honour,

my Conscience, my Friends, my Country, my God, as the Scriptures inform us must be punished with nothing less than Hell Fire, eternal Torment. And this is so unequal a Price to pay for the Honours and Emoluments in the Power of a Minister or Governor, that I cannot prevail upon myself to think of it. The Duration of future Punishment terrifies me. If I could but deceive myself so far as to think Eternity a Moment only, I could comply, and be promoted." - **Diary Entry, referring to the prospect of being tempted to promote a government official unjustly for personal gain, February 9, 1772**

"If men through fear, fraud or mistake, should in terms renounce and give up any essential natural right, the eternal law of reason and the great end of society, would absolutely vacate such renunciation; the right to freedom being the gift of God Almighty, it is not in the power of Man to alienate this gift, and voluntarily become a slave." - **Rights of the Colonists, November 20, 1772**

"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, Massachusetts, Spring, 1772**

"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!" - **Diary entry, about the Boston Tea Party, December 17, 1773**

"We went to meeting at Wells and had the pleasure of hearing my friend upon "Be not partakers in other men's sins. Keep yourselves pure." ...We... took our horses to the meeting in the afternoon and heard the minister again upon "Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." There is great pleasure in hearing sermons so serious, so clear, so sensible and instructive as these..." - **Letter to Abigail Adams, July 4, 1774**

"When the Congress met, Mr. Cushing made a motion that it should be opened with Prayer. It was opposed by Mr. Jay of New York and Mr. Rutledge of South Carolina because we were so divided in religious sentiments, some Episcopalians, some Quakers, some Anabaptists, some Presbyterians and some Congregationalists, that we could not join in the same act of worship. Mr. Samuel Adams arose and said, "that he was no bigot; and could hear a Prayer from any gentleman of Piety and virtue who was at the same time a friend to his Country. He was a stranger in Philadelphia, but had heard that Mr. Duche` deserved that character and therefore he moved that Mr. Duche' an Episcopal clergy man, might be desired to read Prayers to Congress tomorrow morning." The motion was seconded, and passed in the affirmative. Mr. Randolph, our president waited on Mr. Duche` and received for answer, that if his health would permit, he certainly would. Accordingly next morning he appeared with his clerk and in his pontificals, and read several Prayers in the established form and

then read the Psalter for the seventh day of September which was the 35th Psalm. You must remember this was the next morning after we had heard the rumor of the horrible cannonade of Boston, "it seemed as if Heaven had ordained that Psalm to be read on that morning." After this, Mr Duche` unexpectedly to everybody, struck out into extemporary Prayer, which filled the bosom of every man present. I must confess I never heard a better Prayer, one so well pronounced. Episcopalian as he is, Dr. Cooper himself never prayed with such fervor, such order, such correctness, and pathos, and in language so elegant and sublime for America, for Congress, for the Province of Massachusetts Bay, especially the town of Boston. It had excellent effect upon every body here. I must beg you to read the Psalm. Here was a scene worthy of the printers art. It was in Carpenter's Hall, in Philadelphia, a building which still survives, that the devoted individuals met to whom this service was read. Washington was kneeling there, and Henry, Randolph, Rutledge, Lee, and Jay, and by their side there stood bowed in reverence, the Puritan Patriots of New England, who at that moment had reason to believe that an armed soldiery was wasting their humble households. It was believed that Boston had been bombarded and destroyed. They prayed fervently "for America, for Congress, for the Province of Massachusetts Bay, and especially for the town of Boston", and who can realize the emotions with which they turned imploringly to Heaven for Divine interposition and aid. "It was enough", says Mr. Adams to melt a heart of stone. I saw the tears gush into the eyes of the old, grave Pacific Quakers of Philadelphia." - **Letter to Abigail Adams, September 7, 1774**

"This day I went to Dr. Allison's meeting in the afternoon, and heard the Dr. Francis Allison... give a good discourse upon the Lord's Supper... I had rather go to Church. We have better sermons, better prayers, better speakers, softer, sweeter music, and genteeler company. And I must confess that the Episcopal church is quite as agreeable to my taste as the Presbyterian... I like the Congregational way best, next to that the Independent..." - **Letter to Abigail Adams, October, 1774**

"It is the duty of the clergy to accommodate their discourses to the times, to perach against such sins as are most prevalent, and recommend such virtues as are most wanted. For example, if exorbitant ambition against those vices? If public spirit is much wanted, should they not inculcate this great virtue? If the rights and duties of Christian magistrates and subjects are disputed, should they not explain there. show their nature, ends, limitations, and restrictions, how much soever it may move the gall of Massachusetts." - **Novanglus, A History of the Dispute with America, from its Origin, in 1754, to the Present Time, 1774**

"Nip the shoots of arbitrary power in the bud, is the only maxim which can ever preserve the liberties of any people." - **The Novanglus Papers, No. 3, Boston Gazette, 1774-1775**

"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." - **The Novanglus papers, No. 7, Boston Gazette, 1774-1775**

"If Aristotle, Livy, and Harrington knew what a republic was, the British constitution is much more like a republic than an empire. They define a republic to be a government of laws, and not of men. If this definition is just, the British constitution is nothing more or less than a republic, in which the king is first magistrate. This office being hereditary, and being possessed of such ample and splendid prerogatives, is no objection to the government's being a republic, as long as it is bound by fixed laws, which the people have a voice in making, and a right to defend." - **As Novanglus, in Boston Gazette, March 6, 1775**
"But America is a great, unwieldy Body. Its Progress must be slow. It is like a large Fleet sailing under Convoy. The fleetest Sailors must wait for the dullest and slowest. Like a Coach and six-the swiftest Horses must be slackened and the slowest quickened, that all may keep an even Pace." - **Letter to Abigail Adams, June 11, 1775**

"We have appointed a continental Fast. Millions will be upon their Knees at once before their great Creator, imploring his Forgiveness and Blessing, his Smiles on American Councils and Arms." - **Letter to Abigail Adams, June 17, 1775**

"A Constitution of Government once changed from Freedom, can never be restored. Liberty, once lost, is lost forever." - **Letter to Abigail Adams, July 7, 1775**

"Human nature itself is evermore an advocate for liberty. There is also in human nature a resentment of injury, and indignation against wrong. A love of truth and a veneration of virtue. These amiable passions, are the "latent spark..." If the people are capable of understanding, seeing and feeling the differences between true and false, right and wrong, virtue and vice, to what better principle can the friends of mankind apply than to the sense of this difference?" - **The Novanglus, 1775**

"I agree with you that in politics the middle way is none at all." - **Letter to Horatio Gates, March 23, 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." - **Letter to George Wythe, April, 1776**

"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." - **Letter to George Wythe, April, 1776**

"When annual elections end, there slavery begins." - **Letter to George Wythe, April, 1776**

"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." - **Letter to George Wythe, April, 1776**

"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." - **Letter to George Wythe, April, 1776**

"Let them revere nothing but religion, morality and liberty." - **Letter to Abigail Adams, April 15, 1776**

"The Form of Government, which you admire, when its Principles are pure is admirable, indeed, it is productive of every Thing which is great and excellent among Men. But its Principles are as easily destroyed, as human nature is corrupted. Such a Government is only to be supported by pure Religion or Austere Morals. Public Virtue cannot exist in a nation without Private, and public Virtue is the only Foundation of Republics." - **Letter to Mercy Warren, April 16, 1776**

"Public virtue cannot exist in a nation without private, and public virtue is the only foundation of republics. There must be a positive passion for the public good, the public interest, honour, power and glory, established in the minds of the people, or there can be no republican government, nor any real liberty: and this public passion must be superior to all private passions." - **Letter to Mercy Warren, April 16, 1776**

"Men must be ready, they must pride themselves and be happy to sacrifice their private pleasures, passions and interests, nay, their private friendships and dearest connections, when they stand in competition with the rights of society." - **Letter to Mercy Warren, April 16, 1776**

"You bid me burn your letters. But I must forget you first." - **Letter to Abigail Adams, April 28, 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, May 17, 1776**

"The dons, the bashaws, the grandees, the patricians, the sachems, the nabobs, call them by what names you please, sigh and groan and fret, and sometimes stamp and foam and curse, but all in vain. The decree is gone forth, and it cannot be recalled, that a more equal liberty than has prevailed in other parts of the earth must be established in America." - **Letter to Patrick Henry, June 3, 1776**

"Objects of the most stupendous magnitude, and measure in which the lives and liberties of millions yet unborn are intimately interested, are now before us. We are in the very midst of a revolution the most complete, unexpected and remarkable of any in the history of nations." - **Letter to William Cushing, June 9, 1776**

"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." - **Letter to Zabdiel Adams, June 21, 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." - **Letter to Zabdiel Adams, June 21, 1776**

"The only foundation of a free Constitution, is pure Virtue, and if this cannot be inspired into our People, in a great Measure, than they have it now. They may change their Rulers, and the forms of Government, but they will not obtain a lasting Liberty." - **Letter to Zabdiel Adams, June 21, 1776**

"The object is great which We have in View, and We must expect a great expense of blood to obtain it. But We should always remember that a free Constitution of civil Government cannot be purchased at too dear a rate as there is nothing, on this side (of) the New Jerusalem, of equal importance to Mankind." - **Letter to Archibald Bullock, July 1, 1776**

"Before God, I believe the hour has come. My judgement approves this measure, and my whole heart is in it. All that I have, and all that I am, and all that I hope in this life, I am now ready here to stake upon it. And I leave off as I began, that live or die, survive or perish, I am for the Declaration. It is my living sentiment, and by the blessing of God it shall be my dying sentiment. Independence now, and Independence for ever!" - **Speech to the Continental Congress, July 1, 1776**

"The Second Day of July 1776, will be the most memorable Epocha, 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 forever.

You will think me transported with enthusiasm, but I am not. I am well aware of the toil and blood and treasure that it will cost to maintain this Declaration, and support and defend these States. Yet through all the gloom I can see the rays of ravishing light and glory. I can see that the end is worth more than all the means; that posterity will triumph in that day's transaction, even though we [may regret] it, which I trust in God we shall not." -

Letter to Abigail Adams, July 3, 1776

"It is the will of Heaven that the two countries should be sundered forever. It may be the will of Heaven that America shall suffer calamities still more wasting and distressing yet more dreadful. If this is to be the case, it will have this good effect, at least: it will inspire us with many virtues, which we have not, and correct many errors, follies, and vices, which threaten to disturb, dishonor, and destroy us. The furnace of affliction produces refinement, in states as well as individuals. And the new governments we are assuming, in every part, will require a purification from our vices and an augmentation of our virtues or they will be no blessings. The people will have unbounded power. And the people are extremely addicted to corruption and venality, as well as the great. I am not without apprehensions from this quarter, but I must submit all my hopes and fears to an overruling Providence, in which, unfashionable as the faith may be, I firmly believe." - **Letter to Abigail Adams, July 3, 1776**

"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 Shews, Games, Sports, guns, Bells, Bonfires and Illuminations from one End of this Continent to the other from this Time forward forever more. You will think me transported with Enthusiasm but I am not. 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 Glory. I can see that the End is more than worth all the Means. And that Posterity will triumph in that Days Transaction, even altho We should rue it, which I trust in God We shall not." - **Letter to Abigail Adams, July 3, 1776**

"Yesterday the greatest question was decided which ever was debated in America; and a greater perhaps never was, nor will be, decided among men. A resolution was passed without one dissenting colony, "that these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States." - **Comment about the vote to declare independence form Britain, in a letter to Abigail Adams, July 3, 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. Yet through all the Gloom I can see the Rays of ravishing Light and 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, July 3, 1776**

"I am surprised at the suddenness as well as the greatness of this revolution... It is the will of Heaven that the two countries should be sundered forever. It may be the will of Heaven that America shall suffer calamities still more wasting, and distresses yet more dreadful. If this is to be the case it will have this good effect at least. It will inspire us with many virtues which we have not, and correct many errors, follies, and vices which threaten to disturb, dishonor, and destroy us. The furnace of affliction produces refinement in states as well as individuals. And the new Governments we are assuming in every part will require a purification from our vices, and an augmentation of our virtues, or they will be no blessings. The people will have unbounded power, and the people are extremely addicted to corruption

and venality, as well as the great. But I must submit all my hopes and fears to an overruling Providence, in which, unfashionable as the faith may be, I firmly believe." - **Letter to Abigail Adams, July 3, 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, July 3, 1776**

"A constitution founded on these principles introduces knowledge among the people, and inspires them with a conscious dignity becoming freemen; a general emulation takes place, which causes good humor, sociability, good manners, and good morals to be general. That elevation of sentiment inspired by such a government, makes the common people brave and enterprising. That ambition which is inspired by it makes them sober, industrious, and frugal.

- **Thoughts on Government, 1776**

"If there is a form of government, then, whose principle and foundation is virtue, will not every sober man acknowledge it better calculated to promote the general happiness than any other form?" - **Thoughts on Government, 1776**

"Laws for the liberal education of the youth, especially of the lower class of the people, are so extremely wise and useful, that, to a humane and generous mind, no expense for this purpose would be thought extravagant." - **Thoughts on Government, 1776**

"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 numbers of persons, and in the greatest degree, is the best." - **Thoughts on Government, 1776**

"Judges, therefore, should be always men of learning and experience in the laws, of exemplary morals, great patience, calmness, coolness, and attention. Their minds should not be distracted with jarring interests; they should not be dependent upon any man, or body of men." - **Thoughts on Government, 1776**

"That, as a republic is the best of governments, so that particular arrangements of the powers of society, or, in other words, that form of government which is best contrived to secure an impartial and exact execution of the laws, is the best of republics." - **Thoughts on Government, 1776**

"There is no good government but what is republican. That the only valuable part of the

British constitution is so; for the true idea of a republic is "an empire of laws, and not of men." That, as a republic is the best of governments, so that particular arrangement of the powers of society, or in other words, that form of government which is best contrived to secure an impartial and exact execution of the law, is the best of republics." - **Thoughts on Government, 1776**

"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." - **Thoughts on Government, 1776**

"It is the duty of all men in society, publicly, and at stated seasons, to worship the SUPREME BEING, the great Creator and Preserver of the universe. And no subject shall be hurt, molested, or restrained, in his person, liberty, or estate, for worshipping GOD in the manner most agreeable to the dictates of his own conscience; or for his religious profession or sentiments; provided he doth not disturb the public peace, or obstruct others in their religious worship." - **Thoughts on Government, 1776**

"Government is instituted for the common good; for the protection, safety, prosperity, and happiness of the people; and not for profit, honor, or private interest of any one man, family, or class of men; therefore, the people alone have an incontestable, unalienable, and indefeasible right to institute government; and to reform, alter, or totally change the same, when their protection, safety, prosperity, and happiness require it." - **Thoughts on Government, 1776**

"The dignity and stability of government in all its branches, the morals of the people, and every blessing of society depend so much upon an upright and skillful administration of justice, that 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, and both should be checks upon that." - **Thoughts on Government, 1776**

"Fear is the foundation of most governments." - **Thoughts on Government, 1776**

"It already appears, that there must be in every society of men superiors and inferiors, because God has laid in the constitution and course of nature the foundations of the distinction." - **Thoughts on Government, 1776**

"Wisdom and knowledge, as well as virtue, diffused generally among the body of the people, being necessary for the preservation of their rights and liberties, and as these depend on spreading the opportunities and advantages of education in the various parts of the country, and among the different orders of people, it shall be the duty of legislators and magistrates... to cherish the interest of literature and the sciences, and all seminaries of

them." - **Thoughts on Government, 1776**

"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... All sober inquirers after truth, ancient and modern, pagan and Christian, have declared that the happiness of man, as well as his dignity, consists in virtue." - **Thoughts on Government, 1776**

"Each individual of the society has a right to be protected by it in the enjoyment of his life, liberty, and property, according to standing laws. He is obliged, consequently, to contribute his share to the expense of this protection; and to give his personal service, or an equivalent, when necessary. But no part of the property of any individual can, with justice, be taken from him, or applied to public uses, without his own consent, or that of the representative body of the people. In fine, the people of this commonwealth are not controllable by any other laws than those to which their constitutional representative body have given their consent." - **Thoughts on Government, 1776**

"As good government is an empire of laws, how shall your laws be made? In a large society, inhabiting an extensive country, it is impossible that the whole should assemble to make laws. The first necessary step, then, is to depute power from the many to a few of the most wise and good." - **Thoughts on Government, 1776**

"The use of the Bible is so universal and its importance so great that your committee refers the above to the consideration of Congress, and if Congress shall not think it expedient to order the importation of types and paper, the Committee recommends that Congress will order the Committee of Commerce to import 20,000 Bibles from Holland, Scotland, or elsewhere, into the different parts of the States of the Union. Whereupon it was resolved accordingly to direct said Committee of Commerce to import 20,000 copies of the Bible." - **On Committee to import bibles, September 11, 1777**

"Let justice be done though the heavens should fall." - **Letter to Elbridge Gerry, December 5, 1777**

"I have had many Opportunities, in the Course of this journey, to observe, how deeply rooted, our righteous Cause is in the Minds of the People -- and could write you many Anecdotes in Proof of it. But I will reserve them for private Conversation. But on 2d Thoughts why should I? One Evening, as I satt in one Room, I overheard Company of the Common sort of People in another, conversing upon serious subjects. One of them, whom I afterwards found upon Enquiry to be a reputable, religious Man, was more eloquent than the rest-he was upon the Danger of despizing and neglecting serious Things. Said whatever Person or People made light of them would soon find themselves terribly mistaken. At length I heard these Words -- "it appears to me the eternal son of God is opperating Powerfully against the British Nation for their treating lightly serious Things." One Morning, I asked my Landlady what I had to pay? Nothing she said -- "I was welcome, and she hoped I would always make her House my Home, and she should be happy to entertain

all those Gentlemen who had been raised up by Providence to be the Saviours of their Country." This was flattering enough to my vain Heart. But it made a greater Impression on me, as a Proof, how deeply this Cause had sunk into the Minds and Hearts of the People. -- In short every Thing I see and hear, indicates the same Thing." - **Letter to Abigail Adams, December 15, 1777**

"In vain are Schools, Academies, and Universities instituted, if loose Principles and licentious habits are impressed upon Children in their earliest years... The Vices and Examples of the Parents cannot be concealed from the Childre. How is it possible that Children can have any just Sense of the sacred Obligations of Morality or Religion if, from their earliest Infancy, they learn their Mothers live in habitual Infidelity to their fathers, and their fathers in as constant Infidelity to their Mothers?" - **Diary Entry, June 2, 1778**

"The foundation of national morality must be laid in private families... How is it possible that Children can have any just Sense of the sacred Obligations of Morality or Religion if, from their earliest Infancy, they learn their Mothers live in habitual Infidelity to their fathers, and their fathers in as constant Infidelity to their Mothers?" - **Diary, June 2, 1778**

"The idea of infidelity (disbelief in the God inspired nature of Christianity) cannot be treated with too much resentment or too much horror. The man who can think of it with patience is a traitor in his heart and ought to be execrated as one who adds the deepest hypocrisy to the blackest treason." - **Letter to James Warren, August 4, 1778**

"Virtue is not always amiable." - **Diary entry, February 9, 1779**

"As no truth is more clearly taught in the Volume of Inspiration, nor any more fully demonstrated by the experience of all ages, than that a deep sense and a due acknowledgement of the growing providence of a Supreme Being and of the accountableness of men to Him as the searcher of hearts and righteous distributor of rewards and punishments are conducive equally to the happiness of individuals and to the well-being of communities... I have thought proper to recommend, and I hereby recommend accordingly, that Thursday, the twenty-fifth day of April next, be observed throughout the United States of America as a day of solemn humiliation, fasting and prayer; that the citizens on that day abstain, as far as may be, from their secular occupation, and devote the time to the sacred duties of religion, in public and in private; that they call to mind our numerous offenses against the most high God, confess them before Him with the sincerest penitence, implore his pardoning mercy through the Great Mediator and Redeemer, for our past transgressions, and that through the grace of His Holy Spirit, we may be disposed and enabled to yield a more suitable obedience to his righteous requisitions in time to come; that He would interpose to arrest the progress of that impiety and licentiousness in principle and practice so offensive to Himself and so ruinous to mankind; that He would make us deeply sensible that "righteousness exalteth a nation but sin is a reproach to any people." - **Call for National Fast Day, March 6, 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." - **Diary entry, April 26, 1779**

"I must study politics and war that my sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy. My sons ought to study mathematics and philosophy, geograhy, natural history, 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, May 12, 1780**

"The right of a nation to kill a tyrant in case of necessity can no more be doubted than to hang a robber, or kill a flea." - **Constitution of Massachusetts, Declaration of Rights, 1780**

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

"It has ever been my hobby-horse to see rising in America an empire of liberty, and a prospect of two or three hundred millions of freemen, without one noble or one king among them. You say it is impossible. If I should agree with you in this, I would still say, let us try the experiment, and preserve our equality as long as we can. A better system of education for the common people might preserve them long from such artificial inequalities as are prejudicial to society, by confounding the natural distinctions of right and wrong, virtue and vice." - **Letter to Count Sarsfield, February 3, 1786**

"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, August 25, 1787**

"The moment the idea is admitted into society that property is not as sacred as the laws of God, and that there is not a force of law and public justice to protect it, anarchy and tyranny commence. If `Thou shalt not covet' and `Thou shalt not steal' were not commandments of Heaven, they must be made inviolable precepts in every society before it can be civilized or made free." - **A Defense of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America, 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." - **A Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America, Vol. 1, Preface, p. xi, 1787**

"Children should be educated and instructed in the principles of freedom." - **A Defense of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America, 1787**

"The proposition that the people are the best keepers of their own liberties is not true. They are the worst conceivable, they are no keepers at all; they can neither judge, act, think, or will, as a political body." - **A Defense of the Constitution of the Government of the United States of America, 1787**

"To suppose arms in the hands of citizens, to be used at individual discretion, except in private self-defense, or by partial orders of towns, counties or districts of a state, is to demolish every constitution, and lay the laws prostrate, so that liberty can be enjoyed by no man; it is a dissolution of the government. The fundamental law of the militia is, that it be created, directed and commanded by the laws, and ever for the support of the laws." - **A Defense of the Constitutions of the Government of the United States of America, 1787-1788**

"The deliberate union of so great and various a people in such a place, is without all partiality or prejudice, if not the greatest exertion of human understanding, the greatest single effort of national deliberation that the world has ever seen." - **Quoted in a letter from Rufus King to Theophilus Parsons, February 20, 1788**

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

"A desire to be observed, considered, esteemed, praised, beloved, and admired by his fellows is one of the earliest, as well as the keenest dispositions discovered in the heart of man." - **Discourses on Davila, No. 4, 1790-1791**

"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." - **Discourses on Davila, No. 13, 1790-1791**

"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 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." - **Discourses on Davila, No. 13, 1790-1791**

"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." - **Discourses on Davila, No. 13, 1790-1791**

"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." - **Discourses on Davila, No. 15, 1790-1791**

"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." - **About the Vice-Presidency, in a letter to Abigail Adams, December 19, 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, December 28, 1794**

"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." - **Diary Entry, referring to Paine's opinion of Christianity, July 26, 1796**

"And may that Being who is supreme over all, the Patron of Order, the Fountain of Justice, and the Protector in all ages of the world of virtuous liberty, continue His blessings upon this nation." - **First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1797**

"We should be unfaithful to ourselves if we should ever lose sight of the danger to our liberties if anything partial or extraneous should infect the purity of our free, fair, virtuous, and independent elections." - **First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1797**

"In the midst of these pleasing ideas we should be unfaithful to ourselves if we should ever lose sight of the danger to our liberties if anything partial or extraneous should infect the purity of our free, fair, virtuous, and independent elections." - **First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1797**

"As the safety and prosperity of nations ultimately and essentially depend on the protection

and the blessing of Almighty God, and the national acknowledgment of this truth is not only an indispensable duty which the people owe to Him, but a duty whose natural influence is favorable to the promotion of that morality and piety without which social happiness can not exist nor the blessings of a free government be enjoyed; and as this duty, at all times incumbent, is so especially in seasons of difficulty or of danger, when existing or threatening calamities, the just judgments of God against prevalent iniquity, are a loud call to repentance and reformation; and as the United States of America are at present placed in a hazardous and afflictive situation by the unfriendly disposition, conduct, and demands of a foreign power, evinced by repeated refusals to receive our messengers of reconciliation and peace, by depredations on our commerce, and the infliction of injuries on very many of our fellow-citizens while engaged in their lawful business on the seas – under these considerations it has appeared to me that the duty of imploring the mercy and benediction of Heaven on our country demands at this time a special attention from its inhabitants.

I have therefore thought fit to recommend, and I do hereby recommend, that Wednesday, the 9th day of May next, be observed throughout the United States as a day of solemn humiliation, fasting, and prayer; that the citizens of these States, abstaining on that day from their customary worldly occupations, offer their devout addresses to the Father of Mercies agreeably to those forms or methods which they have severally adopted as the most suitable and becoming." - **Thanksgiving Proclamation, March 23, 1798**

"Without wishing to damp the ardor of curiosity or influence the freedom of inquiry, I will hazard a prediction that, after the most industrious and impartial researchers, the longest liver of you all will find no principles, institutions or systems of education more fit in general to be transmitted to your posterity than those you have received from your ancestors." - **Letter to the young men of Philadelphia, May 7, 1798**

"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, October 11, 1798**

"As no truth is more clearly taught in the Volume of Inspiration, nor any more fully demonstrated by the experience of all ages, than that a deep sense and a due acknowledgement of the growing providence of a Supreme Being and of the accountableness of men to Him as the searcher of hearts and righteous distributor of rewards and punishments are conducive equally to the happiness of individuals and to the well-being of communities... I have thought proper to recommend, and I hereby recommend accordingly, that Thursday, the twenty-fifth day of April next, be observed throughout the United States of America as a day of solemn humiliation, fasting, and prayer;

that the citizens on that day abstain, as far as may be, from their secular occupation, and devote the time to the sacred duties of religion, in public and in private; that they call to mind our numerous offenses against the most high God, confess them before Him with the sincerest penitence, implore his pardoning mercy, through the Great Mediator and Redeemer, for our past transgressions, and that through the grace of His Holy Spirit, we may be disposed and enabled to yield a more suitable obedience to his righteous requisitions in time to come; that He would interpose to arrest the progress of that impiety and licentiousness in principle and practice so offensive to Himself and so ruinous to mankind; that He would make us deeply sensible that "righteousness exalteth a nation but sin is a reproach to any people."

- Call for National Fast Day, March 6, 1799

"His Example is now complete, and it will teach wisdom and virtue to magistrates, citizens, and men, not only in the present age, but in future generations, as long as our history shall be read." - **Message to the U.S. Senate, December 19, 1799**

"The German letter proposing to introduce into this country a company of schoolmasters, painters, poets, etc., all of them disciples of Mr. Thomas Paine, will require no answer. I had rather countenance (allow) the introduction of Ariel and Caliban (two evil spirits in Shakespeare's plays) with a troop of spirits." - **Letter to John Marshall, August 11, 1800**

"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." - **About the White House, in a letter to Abigail Adams, November 2, 1800**

"My opinion against it [slavery] has always been known... Never in my life did I own a slave." - **Letter to George Churchman and Jacob Lindley, January 24, 1801**

"I had heard my father say that he never knew a piece of land run away or break." - **Autobiography, 1802-1807**

"Mr. Jefferson has reason to reflect upon himself. How he will get rid of his remorse in his retirement, I know not. He must know that he leaves the government infinitely worse than he found it, and that from his own error or ignorance." - **Letter to Dr. Benjamin Rush, April 18, 1808**

"Our obligations to our country never cease but with our lives." - **Letter to Benjamin Rush, April 18, 1808**

"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, 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 Francois Adriaan van der Kamp, February 16, 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 Dr. Benjamin Rush, April 12, 1809**

"I have not seen, but am impatient to see, Mr. Cheetham's life of Mr. Paine. His political writings, I am singular enough to believe, have done more harm than his irreligious ones. He understood neither government nor religion. From a malignant heart he wrote virulent declamations, which the enthusiastic fury of the times intimidated all men, even Mr. Burke, from answering as he ought. His deism, as it appears to me, has promoted rather than retarded the cause of revolution in America, and indeed in Europe. His billingsgate, stolen from Blount's Oracles of Reason, from Bolingbroke, Voltaire, Berenger, &c., will never discredit christianity, which will hold its ground in some degree as long as human nature shall have any thing moral or intellectual left in it. The Christian religion, as I understand it, is the brightness of the glory and the express portrait of the character of the eternal, self-existent, independent, benevolent, all powerful and all merciful creator, preserver, and father of the universe, the first good, first perfect, and first fair. It will last as long as the world. Neither savage nor civilized man, without a revelation, could ever have discovered or invented it. Ask me not, then, whether I am a Catholic or Protestant, Calvinist or Arminian. As far as they are Christians, I wish to be a fellow-disciple with them all." - **Letter to Dr. Benjamin Rush, January 21, 1810**

"For America's second president, the most venerated document of the Revolution was just one more occasion for sour grapes: "The Declaration of Independence I always considered as a theatrical show. Jefferson ran away with all the stage effect of that... and all the glory of it." - **Letter to Dr. Benjamin Rush, June 21, 1811**

"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, June 21, 1811**

"Religion and virtue are the only foundations, not only of republicanism and of all free government, but of social felicity under all governments and in all the combinations of human society." - **Letter to Dr. Benjamin Rush, August 28, 1811**

"It is religion and morality alone which can establish the principles upon which freedom can securely stand. Religion and virtue are the only foundations... of republicanism and all free governments." - **Letter to Dr. Benjamin Rush, August 28, 1811**

"The general principles on which the fathers achieved independence were... the general principles of Christianity. ...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." - **Letter to Thomas Jefferson, June 28, 1813**

"Who composed that Army of fine young Fellows that was then before my Eyes? There were among them, Roman Catholics, English Episcopalians, Scotch and American Presbyterians, Methodists, Moravians, Anabaptist, German Lutherans, German Calvinists Universalists, Arians, Protestants, Deists and Atheists; and "Protestans qui ne croyant rien [Protestants who believe nothing]." Very few however of several of these Species present. Nevertheless, all Educated in the general Principles of Christianity: and the general Principles of English and American Liberty.

Could my Answer be understood, by any candid Reader or Hearer, to recommend, to all the others, the general Principles, Institutions or Systems of Education of the Roman Catholics? Or those of the Quakers? Or those of the Menonists? Or those of the Methodists? Or those of the Moravians? Or those of the Universalists? Or those of the Philosophers? No.

The general Principles, on which the Fathers Achieved Independence, were the only Principles in which that beautiful Assembly of young Gentlemen could Unite, and these Principles only could be intended by them in their Address, or by me in my Answer. And what were these general Principles? I answer, 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. I could therefore safely say, consistently with all my then and present Information, that I believed they would never make Discoveries in contradiction to these general Principles." - **Letter to Thomas Jefferson, June 28, 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, July 9, 1813**

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

"You say that at the time of the Congress, in 1765, "The great mass of the people were zealous in the cause of America." "The great mass of the people" is an expression that deserves analysis. New York and Pennsylvania were so nearly divided, if their propensity was not against us, that if New England on one side and Virginia on the other had not kept them in awe, they would have joined the British. Marshall, in his life of Washington, tells us, that the southern States were nearly equally divided. Look into the Journals of Congress, and you will see how seditious, how near rebellion were several counties of New York, and how much trouble we had to compose them. The last contest, in the town of Boston, in 1775, between Whig and Tory, was decided by five against two. Upon the whole, if we allow two thirds of the people to have been with us in the revolution, is not the allowance ample? Are not two thirds of the nation now with the administration? Divided we ever have been, and ever must be. Two thirds always had and will have more difficulty to struggle with the one third than with all our foreign enemies." - **Letter to Thomas McKean, August 21, 1813**

"When I was in England from 1785 to 1788, I may say I was intimate with Dr. Price [Richard Price was a theologian and a strong British supporter of American rights and independence, with Congress bestowing on him an American citizenship in 1778]. I had much conversation with him at his own house, at my houses, and at the house and tables of many friends. In some of our most unreserved conversations when we have been alone, he has repeatedly said to me, "I am inclined to believe that the Universe is eternal and infinite. It seems to me that an eternal and infinite effect must necessarily flow from an eternal and infinite Cause; and an infinite Wisdom, Goodness, and Power that could have been induced to produce a Universe in time must have produced it from eternity." "It seems to me, the effect must flow from the Cause..." It has been long – very long – a settled opinion in my mind that there is now, never will be, and never was but one Being who can understand the universe, and that it is not only vain but wicked for insects [like us] to pretend to comprehend it." - **Letter to Thomas Jefferson, September 14, 1818**

"He may long continue to live and be well; and to see the good work of the War prospering in his hands; for a more necessary War, was never undertaken. It is necessary against England; necessary to convince France that we are something: and above all necessary to convince ourselves, that we are not, Nothing." - **Letter to Dr. Benjamin Rush, October 8, 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, wave succeeding wave in the Catholic church, from the Council of Nice, and long before, to this day." - **Letter to Thomas Jefferson, December 3, 1813**

"Suppose a nation in some distant region should take the Bible for their only law book and every member should regulate his conduct by the precepts there exhibited. ...What a Eutopia, what a Paradise would this region be. I have examined all... and the result is that the Bible is the best Book in the world. It contains more of my little philosophy than all the libraries I have seen." - **Letter to Thomas Jefferson, December 25, 1813**

"I have examined all religions, as well as my narrow sphere, my straightened means, and my busy life, would allow; and the result is that the Bible is the best Book in the world. It contains more philosophy than all the libraries I have seen." - **Letter to Thomas Jefferson, December 25, 1813**

"Remember democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts, and murders itself. There never was a democracy yet that did not commit suicide." - **Letter to John Taylor, April 15, 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." - **Letter to John Taylor, April 15, 1814**

"If the Christian religion, as I understand it, or as you understand it, should maintain its ground, as I believe it will, yet Platonic, Pythagoric, Hindoo, and cabalistical Christianity, which is Catholic Christianity, and which has prevailed for 1500 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." - **Letter to Thomas Jefferson, July 16, 1814**

"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." - **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, July 16, 1814**

"National defense is one of the cardinal duties of a statesman." - **Letter to James Lloyd, January, 1815**

"If there is ever an amelioration of the condition of mankind, philosophers, theologians, legislators, politicians and moralists will find that the regulation of the press is the most difficult, dangerous and important problem they have to resolve. Mankind cannot now be governed without it, nor at present with it." - **Letter to James Lord, February 11, 1815**

"The question before the human race is, whether the God of nature shall govern the world by his own laws, or whether priests and kings shall rule it by fictitious miracles." - **Letter to Thomas Jefferson, June 20, 1815**

"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." - **Letter to F. A. Vanderkemp, July 13, 1815**

"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, August 24, 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, November 13, 1815**

"You ask, how has it happened that all Europe has acted on the principle, "that Power was Right..." Power always sincerely, conscientiously, de tres bon foi, believes itself right... Power must never be trusted without a check." - **Letter to Thomas Jefferson, February 2, 1816**

"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, February 2, 1816**

"I do not like the late resurrection of the Jesuits... If ever any congregation of men could merit eternal perdition on earth, and in hell, according to these historians, though, like Pascal, true Catholics, it is this company of Loyolas." - **Letter to Thomas Jefferson, May 5, 1816**

"My history of the Jesuits is not elegantly written, but is supported by unquestionable authorities, is very particular and very horrible. Their restoration is indeed "a step toward darkness," cruelty, perfidy, despotism, death and I wish we were out of danger of bigotry and Jesuitism." - **Letter to Thomas Jefferson, August 9, 1816**

"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, September 3, 1816**

"My History of the Jesuits is in four volumes... This society has been a greater calamity to mankind than the French Revolution, or Napoleon's despotism or ideology. It has obstructed progress of reformation and the improvement of the human mind in society much longer and more fatally." - **Letter to Thomas Jefferson, November 4, 1816**

"Conclude not from all this that I have renounced the Christian religion... 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, November 4, 1816**

"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 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, November 4, 1816**

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

"As I understand the Christian religion, it was, and is, a revelation. But how has it happened that millions of fables, tales, legends, have been blended with both Jewish and Christian revelation that have made them the most bloody religion that ever exist." - **Letter to Judge F. A. Van der Kemp, December 27, 1816**

"Without religion this world would be something not fit to be mentioned in polite society, I mean hell. So far from believing in the total and universal depravity of human nature, I believe there is no individual totally depraved. The most abandoned scoundrel that ever existed, never yet wholly extinguished his conscience, and while conscience remains there is some religion." - **Letter to Thomas Jefferson, April 19, 1817**

"When people talk of the Freedom of Writing, Speaking, or thinking, I cannot choose but laugh. No such thing ever existed. No such thing now exists; but I hope it will exist. But it must be hundreds of years after you and I shall write and speak no more." - **Letter to Thomas Jefferson, July 15, 1817**

"The Revolution was effected before the war commenced. The Revolution was in the hearts and minds of the people... This radical change in the principles, opinions, sentiments, and affections of the people, was the real American Revolution." - **Letter to Hezekiah Niles, February 13, 1818**

"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." - **Letter to H. Niles, February 13, 1818**

"Now, sir, for my griefs! The dear partner of my life for 54 years as a wife and for many more as a lover, now lies in extremis, forbidden to speak or to be spoken to... If human life is a bubble, no matter how soon it breaks, if it is, as I firmly believe, an immortal existence, we ought patiently to wait the instructions of the great Teacher. I am, Sir, your deeply afflicted friend, John Adams." - **Letter to Thomas Jefferson, on Abigail's nearing death, October 7, 1818**

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

"Every measure of prudence, therefore, ought to be assumed for the eventual total extirpation of slavery from the United States... I have, through my whole life, held the practice of slavery in... abhorrence." - **Letter to Robert J. Evans, June 8, 1819**

"Have you ever found in history, one single example of a Nation thoroughly corrupted that was afterwards restored to virtue?... And without virtue, there can be no political liberty... Will you tell me how to prevent riches from becoming the effects of temperance and industry? Will you tell me how to prevent luxury from producing effeminacy, intoxication, extravagance, vice and folly?... I believe no effort in favour of virtue is lost..." - **Letter to Thomas Jefferson, December 21, 1819**

"That you and I shall meet in a better world, I have no more doubt than I have that we now exist on the same globe. If my natural reason did not convince me of this, Cicero's dream of Scipio, and his essays on friendship and old age, would have been sufficient for the purpose. But Jesus has taught us, that a future state is a social state, when he promised to prepare places in his Father's house of many mansions for his disciples." - **Letter to Samuel Miller, July 8, 1820**

"This oration will be read five hundred years hence with as much rapture as it was heard. It ought to be read at the end of every century, and indeed at the end of every year, forever and ever. (Regarding: Whatever makes men good Christians, makes them good citizens.)" - **Speech at Plymouth, December 22, 1820**

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

You inquire why so young a man as Mr. Jefferson was placed at the head of the committee for preparing a Declaration of Independence? I answer: It was the Frankfort advice, to place Virginia at the head of everything. Mr. Richard Henry Lee might be gone to Virginia, to his

sick family, for aught I know, but that was not the reason of Mr. Jefferson's appointment. There were three committees appointed at the same time, one for the Declaration of Independence, another for preparing articles of confederation, and another for preparing a treaty to be proposed to France. Mr. Lee was chosen for the Committee of Confederation, and it was not thought convenient that the same person should be upon both. Mr. Jefferson came into Congress in June, 1775, and brought with him a reputation for literature, science, and a happy talent of composition. Writings of his were handed about, remarkable for the peculiar felicity of expression. Though a silent member in Congress, he was so prompt, frank, explicit, and decisive upon committees and in conversation - not even Samuel Adams was more so - that he soon seized upon my heart; and upon this occasion I gave him my vote, and did all in my power to procure the votes of others. I think he had one more vote than any other, and that placed him at the head of the committee. I had the next highest number, and that placed me the second. The committee met, discussed the subject, and then appointed Mr. Jefferson and me to make the draft, I suppose because we were the two first on the list. The subcommittee met. Jefferson proposed to me to make the draft. I said, 'I will not,' 'You should do it.' 'Oh! no.' 'Why will you not? You ought to do it.' 'I will not.' 'Why?' 'Reasons enough.' 'What can be your reasons?' 'Reason first, you are a Virginian, and a Virginian ought to appear at the head of this business. Reason second, I am obnoxious, suspected, and unpopular. You are very much otherwise. Reason third, you can write ten times better than I can.' 'Well,' said Jefferson, 'if you are decided, I will do as well as I can.' 'Very well. When you have drawn it up, we will have a meeting.'" - **Letter to Timothy Pickering, August 6, 1822**

"We think ourselves possessed, or, at least, we boast that we are so, of liberty of conscience on all subjects, and of the right of free inquiry and private judgment in all cases, and yet how far are we from these exalted privileges in fact! There exists, I believe, throughout the whole Christian world, a law which makes it blasphemy to deny or doubt the divine inspiration of all the books of the Old and New Testaments, from Genesis to Revelations. In most countries of Europe it is punished by fire at the stake, or the rack, or the wheel. In England itself it is punished by boring through the tongue with a poker. In America it is not better; even in our own Massachusetts, which I believe, upon the whole, is as temperate and moderate in religious zeal as most of the States, a law was made in the latter end of the last century, repealing the cruel punishments of the former laws, but substituting fine and imprisonment upon all those blasphemers upon any book of the Old Testament or New. Now, what free inquiry, when a writer must surely encounter the risk of fine or imprisonment for adducing any argument for investigating into the divine authority of those books? Who would run the risk of translating Dupuis? But I cannot enlarge upon this subject, though I have it much at heart. I think such laws a great embarrassment, great obstructions to the improvement of the human mind. Books that cannot bear examination, certainly ought not to be established as divine inspiration by penal laws. It is true, few persons appear desirous to put such laws in execution, and it is also true that some few persons are hardy enough to venture to depart from them. But as long as they continue in force as laws, the human mind must make an awkward and clumsy progress in its investigations. I wish they were repealed. The substance and essence of Christianity, as I understand it, is eternal and unchangeable, and will bear examination forever, but it has

been mixed with extraneous ingredients, which I think will not bear examination, and they ought to be separated." - **Letter to Thomas Jefferson, January 23, 1825**

"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, February 14, 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 the citizens of Quincy, Massachusetts, June 7, 1826**

"Public affairs go on pretty much as usual: perpetual chicanery and rather more personal abuse than there used to be... Our American Chivalry is the worst in the world. It has no Laws, no bounds, no definitions; it seems to be all a Caprice." - **Letter to Thomas Jefferson, April 17, 1826**

"Independence forever." - **Last public words as a toast for the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1826**

"Thomas Jefferson still lives." - **After waking momentarily before he died, Afternoon July 4, 1826**

"If it be the pleasure of Heaven that my country shall require the poor offering of my life, the victim shall be ready, at the appointed hour of sacrifice, come when that hour may. But while I do live, let me have a country, and that a free country!" - **As recorded by Daniel Webster**