

## CHAPTER XV.

*Of the necessity of cultivating our intellects so we may be able to discharge our moral duties to our Maker, by reading and reflection, and of a proper understanding of our constitution and government, etc.*

It now becomes my duty, as I consider, to submit to the consideration of the people of the United States some remarks why I have written these my commentaries upon the federal constitution. It has been with the hope and desire of enlightening the public mind upon those subjects appertaining to the science of our national and state governments, which ought to be dear to every American heart; because, by a correct knowledge of it, our happiness and that of our posterity will be promoted; while, on the contrary, ruin and wretchedness will become the sad lot of us all.

The first great duty a man owes to himself in this life, when his mind becomes ripened for thought, reason, and reflection, in youth, manhood, and age, is to know himself, the position he occupies to his fellow-man, and unto his great Creator. For the purpose of this, God has created him a being with the knowledge of right or wrong, by the aid of His commands contained in the holy Bible, with perfect liberty to choose or refuse right or wrong, as his reason and desire may dictate unto him. It is this knowledge of what is good and what is evil that makes man a rational and responsible being; without this, he is called an idiot, not knowing right from wrong, and therefore can not be held responsible unto God nor man for his thoughts, words, nor actions. Hence, all a man's thoughts, words, or actions in this life are impaled within these two channels, for he can think and reason upon nothing else but what constitutes right, or what constitutes wrong, as contained in the holy Bible; wherefore, the moment he ceases

to think and to do right, he commences doing wrong, by doing that he is commanded not to do; and the moment he ceases to think and to do wrong, he commences doing right, by doing that he is commanded to do; whereby, this precious gift from God to man, this holy Bible, is intended to be a guide for youth, a shield for manhood, and a crutch for age.

This being the case, and as government is instituted for the happiness of man, by suppressing vice and promoting virtue, how important that knowledge may abound throughout the American family, as relates to the nature of their government; based upon the will of all, that none may become doomed, by the overthrow of it, to the tyrant's lash or the despot's oppression.

What a priceless boon is this knowledge from God to man! It makes life pleasant and renders age venerable and honorable. It is knowledge—knowing right from wrong—which acts as the principal agent in the promotion of all human affairs appertaining to the science of our government. It acts as a pleasure unparalleled; insuring the possessor a recompense, an influence, which, if not abused, results in much future happiness and honor. It is the guardian of state, the protector of religion, and a surety to individual rights. Nothing in this life can surpass it. It is a bright star, as it were, prominent among mankind, throwing its light upon all in proportion as men approach it; and by it a high degree of excellence and usefulness is obtained. It should, therefore, be our object as a free people, to direct our efforts toward the attainment of the knowledge of the science of our government. For God in his wisdom has so designed it that it is one of the main channels that leads to our happiness here and hereafter. Nothing demonstrates more sublimely the goodness of God than the ability and the means He has afforded unto us all for acquiring this knowledge of the science of our government. As we progress in this knowledge, treasures are opened unto us, not destined for the few only, not for a

particular class among us, but a fountain is opened for all who will drink at it; and success depends upon the united efforts of each individual American citizen, so far as his happiness, in a great degree, and usefulness in this life is gained and secured unto him. It is the acquisition of this knowledge, and a desire to obtain it by reason and reflection, knowing its importance, which has placed on the bright pages of American literature such names as James Madison, Henry Clay, and Daniel Webster—men who have been prominent in their day and generation in founding our government, and opening and portraying its science and its blessings unto us, for the joint benefit of all, that we may understand its benignant principles, and labor for its perpetuation by a union of our hearts and hands. So appropriate, useful, and beautiful have been their exertions in this behalf, as genius has dwelt on this theme in the senate of the United States, and rendered it immortal. I have here transcribed the advocacy of one of those illustrious men and citizens in behalf of the American Union for your thoughtful consideration, made something like thirty years ago, and reads as follows:

“I profess, sir, in my career hitherto, to have kept steadily in view the prosperity and honor of the whole country and the preservation of our federal Union. It is to that Union we owe our safety at home and our consideration and dignity abroad. It is to that Union that we are chiefly indebted for whatever makes us most proud of our country. That Union we reached only by the discipline of our virtues in the severe school of adversity. It had its origin in the necessities of disordered finance, prostrate commerce, and ruined credit. Under its benign influences these great interests immediately awoke, as from the dead, and sprang forth with newness of life. Every year of its duration has teemed with fresh proofs of its utility and its blessing; and although our territory has stretched out wider and wider, and our population spread farther and farther, they have not outrun its protection or its benefits. It has been to us all a copious fountain of national, social, and personal happiness. I have

not allowed myself, sir, to look beyond the Union to see what might lie hidden in the dark recess behind. I have not coolly weighed the chances of preserving liberty, when the bonds that unite us together shall be broken asunder. I have not accustomed myself to hang over the precipice of disunion to see whether, with my short sight, I can fathom the depth of the abyss below, nor could I regard him as a safe counselor in the affairs of this government whose thought should be mainly bent on considering not how the Union should be best preserved, but how tolerable might be the condition of the people when it shall be broken up and destroyed. While the Union lasts, we have high, exciting, gratifying prospect spread out before us for us and our children. Beyond that I seek not to penetrate the veil. God grant that, in my day at least, that curtain may not rise. God grant that on my vision never may be opened what lies behind. When my eyes shall be turned to behold for the last time the sun in heaven, may I not see him shining on the broken and dishonored fragments of a once glorious Union; on states dissevered, discordant, belligerent; on a land rent with civil feuds, or drenched, it may be, in fraternal blood! Let their last feeble and lingering glance rather behold the gorgeous ensign of the republic, now known and honored throughout the earth, still full high advanced, its arms and trophies streaming in their original luster; not a stripe erased or polluted, nor a single star obscured—bearing for its motto, no such miserable interrogatory as, *What is all this worth?* Nor those other words of delusion and folly, *Liberty first, and Union afterward.* But everywhere spread all over in characters of living light, blazing in all its ample folds, as they float over the sea and over the land, and in every wind under the whole heavens, that other sentiment, dear to every true American heart: *Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable!*”

Since the making those truthful, sublime, and beautiful utterances, by Daniel Webster, addressed to the president of the American senate, and by and through him to the senators and people of this great nation, to be treasured up,

in their minds and hearts, never—no, never!—to be forgotten and forsaken, what have we in sorrow witnessed in our once happy land? The broken and dishonored fragments of a once glorious American Union—states dissevered, discordant, belligerent; a land rent with civil feuds and drenched in fraternal blood! Brought to this sad condition by treason and rebellion on the part of those who once boasted and felt proud in being called American freemen and citizens. When I think of this, how sad I feel, and made ready to exclaim in the like sentiments for my country as Anthony did for his, in the beautiful speech which Shakespeare puts into his mouth, over the dead body of Cæsar, after an eloquent and pathetic description of the wounds under which Cæsar had fallen :

“O, what a fall was there, my countrymen!  
Then you, and I, and all of us fell down,  
And bloody treason flourished over us.”

It is to help save my country from the like ruin and wretchedness hereafter that she has so lately passed through, which has induced me to write these my commentaries on the federal constitution, that intelligence on this subject may abound among us all, that we may thereby preserve our American Union, liberty, and independence as a once more great and happy nation.

And I will now further proceed with these my labors, upon a subject that should be interesting and dear unto us all, by further remarking, for the encouragement of each American citizen, that confinement to narrow limits was never intended for genius and perseverance, although born in obscurity and reared under difficulties; yet it can and always will break the fetters surrounding it, and claim the admiration of man, owing to its usefulness among mankind. Nothing furnishes us better evidence of this truth than a reference to the biography of American ancestry, both men and women, who have built up this great nation and founded the government of the United States.

We are justified in awarding to them the high consideration of being the greatest men and women of which the

world can boast. Although they were, for the most part, born in obscurity, in a wilderness as it were, and reared in times of civil commotion and war, yet they stand forth to the world as the monuments of distinguished characters, of warriors, and statesmen, and noble women.

Surrounded by enemies ten times their number, they had bravery to protect, and intelligence to build up a nation and a national government, which has no equal, no ever had an equal, on the face of the earth. A century has passed away, and they have gone with it; but their government and the nation built up by them, although marred by their descendants, yet they remain monuments to their nobleness, wisdom, and patriotism. The consequence has been, the whole face of the American continent, together with the people, have almost entirely changed; but the wisdom of their policy is yet left unto Americans as their guiding star, and is still every day more and more developing for their future happiness, if they but will it so. Institutions of learning have become accessible to every child; books (and may they be of the right kind) have found their way into almost all the families, whereby this is styled, "*The progressive age.*" But it is a question of considerable doubt by some, whether or not, there is intelligence and virtue enough left in this great nation to preserve and protect our glorious government from a sad decay and ruin, for there can be no security for national safety when men seek no more knowledge than what is necessary to procure gain of dollars and cents, or accomplish other selfish designs. They are short-sighted, indeed, who sacrifice the good of the state, their own personal liberty and happiness, for selfish purposes only, that can afford them nor their children any lasting happiness whatever.

In despotic governments where mankind are forced and driven without any exercise of their judgment or feeling, the same amount of knowledge is not required of them as in this free democratic government of ours, where its progress and preservation depends exclusively upon the knowledge, patriotism, and doings of the whole people.

We have a vast country, containing over forty millions of people, who feel as if they had no superiors upon earth. In their own hands are placed their own government, their own protection, and the promotion of their own happiness. When they shall know their bounden duty; when they shall have intelligence to direct them in the faithful discharge of it, with sobriety, moderation, and prudence; when parents and teachers inculcate the necessity of knowledge, the principles of virtue, religion, union, and patriotism, instilling all into the hearts of the youth of our land of both sexes, then will the country occupy its true and proud position indeed, and the Americans enjoy genuine liberty and true happiness.

This, in a great degree, is to be accomplished by the young people of both sexes of this great nation, to whom this work is most respectfully dedicated by its author; for, in a short time, heavy responsibilities will fall upon them, to be borne with honor or shame by them, depending exclusively upon their preparation to sustain them. If they are qualified to bear up under them, the people of the United States may look forward with bright hopes and anticipations to their future welfare and happiness; if not, they can form no conception of their future destiny for wretchedness and ruin. The revolutions of the world, which stand forth so glaringly upon the pages of history, fully remind us all of the fate of nations, great, powerful, and majestic. And will not a like destiny also await us if we do not follow the true paths of knowledge, virtue, and patriotism? But here in our dear native land, where there is such an extensive field, where such inducements, such flattering opportunities present themselves, where knowledge is within the grasp of every one, we should prove false to ourselves, false to our noble ancestry, if we failed to secure that knowledge and those principles of moral rectitude, which alone can protect us and elevate us as a great nation.

There has been a time when the poverty and embarrassed condition of our beautiful land were great obstacles to the progress of knowledge, but they have long since been

removed. The horrors and privations of war, the dread of tyranny, and the want of opportunity can no longer oppose and suppress the genius and perseverance of this great nation if our knowledge be turned into the proper channel. All that is wanting now to render us the happiest and most intelligent people in the world, and continue us so, is our own efforts, and I hope the day is not far distant when, by the exercise of them as a free people, every American citizen may be properly termed an intelligent man upon all those subjects pertaining to his happiness here and hereafter, and every lady an accomplished, prudent, intelligent, noble woman, if this can be accomplished among mankind. In order, then, to arrive at this height of eminence and happiness in this life and the life to come, Americans, both males and females, must remember that God has given us a mind to reason and to think, as well as he has given us hands to work; that by the latter we may feed and clothe ourselves, while by the former we may prepare ourselves for the continual enjoyment of our liberties while here on earth, and also that we may be prepared to have a blessed immortality beyond the grave. That it is by the cultivation of our intellects, by reading, reasoning, and reflection, that our happiness here and hereafter is inseparably connected and secured; that by it our minds may become in a proper frame for thoughtful contemplation, when everything in us and about us will there inculcate the necessity and prompt us to the continual exercise of devotion to our Maker as our first great duty. And while we are thus doing so, as we journey on through this life, we will find ourselves encompassed with innumerable fears, weaknesses, wants, sorrows, diseases, wishes, and hopes, under which all human beings will be unable to assist us or give us any adequate relief. This is the reason why the poet has said, "Every heart has its own sorrows;" but wherever we cast our eyes, we will, at the same time, be surrounded with the immensity of a Being, who is possessed of all possible perfections, and who holdeth the issues of life and death, of happiness and misery, solely in his hands.



The power, majesty, grandeur, and wisdom of God, this Being, is discernible in every part of our frames, in every function of our bodies and operations of our minds; yes, in the curious and exquisite formation of every animal and insect. It is seen, on a still sublimer scale, in the size, the distances, grandeur, and wonderful revolution of the heavenly bodies; in the beautiful variegated canopy of heaven, in all the delicious landscapes of nature, in the pleasing succession of day and night, spring and autumn, summer and winter. Likewise, in winds and storms, thunder and lightning, earthquakes and volcanoes, the grand magnificent ocean, waves and comets, fulfilling His word, appearing and receding at His sovereign command; flowers, blossoms, fruits, fossils, minerals, petrifications, precipices, hills, caverns, valleys, lakes, and rivers, all tell us that God is immensely great and magnificent; "that he doeth what he will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and that none can withstand the thunder of his power." And now we are lost in wonder and astonishment at the contemplation from whence and from whom all this matter originated that is now brought to our view!

That He is able to gratify our wishes as a people, and support us under all our trials and sufferings; that He has wisdom enough to protect and guide us as a nation is demonstrable unto us all. The question then, is He willing to do so? On this head listen to all nature, for it speaks aloud unto us all on this subject. Look through the numberless orders and gradations of animals and insects; they appear to be contented and happy in the allotment He has provided for them. Now, as a great nation, let us cast our eyes on the inanimate creation, and we will find it a scene of harmony, of order and beauty, and seemingly constructed for our delight and gratification. Lovely picturesque views delight our imaginations; shrubs, and plants, and flowers regale us with aromatic smells; and the whole order of nature in our beautiful land is so arranged for our convenience, comfort, and happiness, as to be like unto the arrangement of a provident and good earthly father for the

convenience, support, happiness, and delight of his children. Indeed, if we but reason for a moment, we are ready to ask ourselves the question: Why did the Almighty create at all, but to diffuse and disseminate; yes, to provide man enjoyment and happiness in this life and the life to come? He being an inexhaustible source of happiness to himself from all eternity, He needed not, and, in fact, could not receive any addition to His own by making man happy. In Himself supremely blessed, fountain of eternal majesty and splendor, adored by seraphs, surrounded by myriads of angels and archangels, what dignity could He derive, or did He need, from the existence or services of man? Is it not, then, a matter of certainty that He created the human family for the enjoyment of their happiness? On this we may depend as much as we can upon the certainty of our existence, and that He is always more willing to be our protector and Heavenly Father than we are ready and willing to request it.

Open the sacred Bible, and from the beginning to the end it will demonstrate this truth, and exalt our ideas of the divine perfections of our Creator. "I delight in exercising loving kindness, saith the Lord. The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. If he clothes the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, how much more shall he clothe you, O ye of little faith," as we are by it divinely informed.

It is true there is evil in this world of which we form a part, as well as good. There are marks of judgment as well as mercy. There are hurricanes as well as pleasant breezes. Useless are intermixed with useful animals; poisonous and healthy herbs grow beside each other, and roses have their thorns. There are wars and rumors of wars; there are earthquakes that desolate whole countries; a thousand forms of disease; a thousand modifications of sorrow, anxiety, and death. Evil exists that virtue may abound; that man may be a free agent, knowing virtue from vice; that he may experience the blessedness of the one and the wretchedness of the other, and thereby choose between them. Without being sick, he knows not the value of health; without

knowledge what are the miseries of evil, he knoweth not the blessed fruits of righteousness; it is only by the contrasting the one with the other, he feels a relish to choose between them, and follow the ways of virtue or vice, agreeably to his desire, to be the partaker of the joys of the one or the sorrows of the other. Without this, man would but be a machine in the hands of his Creator, with no relish for the enjoyment of happiness, nor to be a partaker of his glory. But by this wise arrangement he fulfills the great design of his Maker, when he said, "Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness; so God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them."

This question concerning the origin of this good and evil has perplexed many, who call themselves reasoners and philosophers; but the Scripture, if read and properly understood by us as a nation, demonstrates sublimely that it is a providential arrangement, contrived in mercy, as a salutary regimen, a wise mode of purifying created beings for the innocence and happiness of a better world, by the exercise of their free agency. "There shall be new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid, when the earth is full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the seas."

But speculations apart, if we draw nigh to the Almighty as a great nation, He will draw nigh unto us as His people; if we seek His favor and love, all things shall work together for our good. Tribulation, anguish, nakedness, famine, peril, or the sword, will all be so many instruments in His hands of procuring our eternal happiness and glory.

Let us remember, as a free people, the gift of his only begotten Son to be a sacrifice for the sins of the world. It is more than a thousand lessons of a mercy that has no parallel and far exceeds all human comprehension, but is a demonstration how much God doth love the children of this world.

We, therefore, as a nation, should pay homage and true

devotion to our Maker, which is simply in itself an intercourse between us and God; between the supreme, self-existent, inconceivable Spirit which formed and preserves the universe, and that particular spirit with which He has animated a portion of matter upon earth that we call man. It is a silent act in which the soul divests itself of outward things, flies into heaven as it were, and pours forth all its wants, wishes, hopes, fears, sorrows, guilt, or pleasures into the bosom of an almighty friend. That man is capable of such an intercourse with his Creator, there are many living witnesses to prove. Without having recourse to the visions of fanatics, or the dreams of enthusiasts, it may be proved to spring from natural and philosophical causes. God is a spirit, so is the mind of man. Bodies can have intercourse, so can souls. Where minds are in an assimilating state of purity, they have union with their Maker. This was the bliss of Paradise; free agency interrupted it, and holiness must again restore it. To a soul thus disposed, the Creator communicates himself in a manner which is as insensible to the natural eye of mankind as the falling of dews, but not less refreshing to its secret powers than the dews are to vegetation. The primitive saints are describing this when they speak of their transports: "David felt it when he longed for God, as the hart panteth after the water brooks. St. Paul knew it when he gloried in his tribulations. It was embodied in him when he was carried up into the third heaven, and heard things impossible to be uttered. St. Stephen was filled with it when he saw the heavens open, and prayed for his murderers. By it martyrs were supported when they were stoned and sawn asunder." And when we feel it in ourselves, we can more fully appreciate how good God is unto us, and what should be our devotion as a free people unto him, as our Creator, Savior, Preserver.

That we may receive blessings from His divine hand, I will here state, in connection with other men's thoughts, we, as a free people, must study the holy Scriptures and keep His commandments therein contained. We can not expect to be happy here and hereafter, unless we obey His voice as our

great Creator. We should as a great nation ever have this sacred book within our serious thoughts. There is a richness and comfort in it that nothing else can equal. Every word is big with instruction; every sentence is of divine origin. It is a precious mine perpetually opening; the deeper we dig, the richer the ore. It is a feast adapted to every taste that desires comfort and instruction; the most exalted understanding must admire, and the lowest can not fail to comprehend its teachings and instructions.

If we only read for the sake of entertainment, where can we find a book equal to the Bible? What other production, either ancient or modern, has such striking passages of the pathetic, and sublime the vehement and impassioned? Where are there such lofty images, such grand conceptions, or such picturesque and animated descriptions as the psalms of David? There is scarcely a person among us, or in the world, to whose case some of them are not adapted, nor a sorrow which they can not soothe. In one part, plaintive, affecting, penitential; in another, full of triumph and exultation, ennobling, elevating; here describing the immensity, majesty, omnipotence, and omnipresence of God; there the littleness of the world, and the vanity of man; whoever can read them without emotion must be pronounced destitute of virtue and taste.

The prophets are the true sublime of holy reading for us. The bold images, metaphors, allusions, and descriptions with which they abound, have been the admiration of the most accomplished scholars, orators, and critics in the world. The proverbs of Solomon and the book of Ecclesiasticus are an excellent system for the government of private life as a people, as well as a fund of spiritual instruction. The sacred narratives of the Scripture are related with amazing simplicity and pathos; the parables are beautifully pointed and instructive, and the epistles of St. Paul are a model of the sublimest and most energetic eloquence that can be found in any age or in any language.

It is said that, "When the immortal Locke and Newton had explored every other kind of learning, they sat down to

contemplate the vanity and poverty of all comparatively to the richness of the sacred Scriptures. The famous Bacon, an oracle of learning in his day, and the wonder of all succeeding ages, confessed them to be the source of all real wisdom. The illustrious Seldon, on his death bed, assured Archbishop Usher that the whole of his immense library could not give him half the comfort which he derived from one single sentence of the inspired writings; and Addison, whose name must be ever dear to every friend of virtue and piety, spent no little time in collecting together and arranging into one common point of view, the united evidences of the christian religion founded thereon."

But old Scriptures may appear unto some of us, as a nation, at the present day, dry and insipid; but when we consider them as typical of the new, and affording a strong collateral testimony to the truth of revelation, as describing the circumstances, manners, and incidents of a peculiar chosen people, the Jews, whose history, rebellion, captivity, and dispersion are interwoven with the whole system of morality and christianity, we read them with a greater desire to understand them, that we may be a virtuous people. Christ our Savior is the foundation of the words of the apostles and prophets. All the incidents we read of by them revealed, point to him as their origin and as their end; "the great corner-stone in Zion, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

The bondage of the children of Israel in Egypt is to typify the dominion of sin over mankind, and their deliverance from this Egyptian bondage, by the sprinkling of blood at the passover, of man's redemption through the blood of Christ, the blessed Savior of the world, from this sin and iniquity. Their journeying through the wilderness is to demonstrate unto man the sad picture of their wearisome journey through this vale of tears. Moses illustrates the Savior making waters of comfort gush from the stony rock; the manna is the food of this Savior's word, and the waters are the graces of his Holy Spirit. The beautiful and affecting history of Joseph is emblematical of the personage of this

Savior, who was envied, hated, persecuted, and murdered by his brethren for the salvation of mankind, who again arose from the dead and exalted to the right hand of his MAJESTY ON HIGH. Abraham is a representative of the Almighty, offering up as a sacrifice his only son for the salvation of the world; and all the ceremonies of the law of God point to that true blood of sprinkling, which alone can take away the sins of the world. Thus is every page holy; thus do we tread, every moment of our lives, when we read and study the sacred Scriptures, on consecrated ground, and thus every word, when properly understood, is spirit and is life.

But of all the Scriptures, the Gospels, it is admitted, are certainly the most edifying and instructive. They are plain, forcible, spiritual; they come from the very mouth of holiness and wisdom, and do not admit of any wrong constructions or doubtful interpretations among mankind. If there were only the fifth chapter of St. Matthew's gospel extant, mankind would have an incomparable abridgment of morality and christianity sufficient to direct their faith or animate their practice throughout this life. Without this sacred Scripture, the world would now be unenlightened in their duty to God and unto themselves, worshiping stocks or stones, perhaps offering up human blood, and tormenting themselves with burdensome ceremonies, which have no manner of connection with the heart, immersed in sorrows which could not be eased, and perplexed with a thousand gloomy enigmas, which they could never solve or be comforted thereby.

This testimony in favor of revelation for the benefit of mankind is divided, for the sake of order, into two kinds—internal and external. The internal is that which arises from the nature and excellency of the precepts themselves, and from the writer's having had no private or sinister views to answer, but consulting only the general good and edification of the world. The first mark of authenticity is fixed on every page of the Scriptures. The laws of Christ are of such a nature as no man would have framed who wished to avail himself of the passions, prejudices, and interests of mankind,

for they prescribe, on the other hand, a universal humility, mortification, and self-denial; exhibit in the strongest colors the emptiness of riches and the vanity of ambition, and have no other view but to elevate the affections, regenerate the heart, and put all men on looking beyond the transient concerns of this life to the happiness of another. What else could happen to the original promulgators of these laws but that which actually did—violence and persecution? The Savior of the world positively declared that his kingdom was not of this world. He sought none of its distinctions and he received none unless by a strange perversion of ideas they are placed in having been born in the poverty of a manger, or being put to the tortures of the death of the cross. His apostles were inflamed with the very same disinterested zeal. They willingly resigned lucrative employments at the call of their Master. They cheerfully abandoned weeping friends, undertook the most hazardous voyages and travels, had no rest day nor night, were carried before kings and governors of the earth, “and were hated by all men for his name’s sake.” Read the account of their labors, persecution, banishment, death; peruse the history of all the martyrs, written with their blood, and then let mankind say whether their zeal must not have come from heaven, or what else could ever have inspired it but a sincere conviction of duty; “a faith which looked to a city with foundations, whose builder and maker was God.” Of Christ, his very enemies said, “Never man spake like unto this man.” His teachings and injunctions have but one aspect—to universal happiness; and one simple method to it—universal reformation among the human family. The angels that announced him, at his first appearance, proclaimed, “Peace on earth and good will toward men.” Every word of the Scriptures must convince any candid or thoughtful person that they come from God. The passions, pride, vices, and interest of mankind have induced not a few to set up for sceptics. “Much learning has made them mad,” or a little has rendered them frivolous and conceited. They have sought only to distinguish themselves by uncom-



mon opinions; they have been dupes to their own fancied penetration; they have attempted, as the creatures, to grasp the being and immensity of the Creator, in arms, as it were, of flesh, or have shrunk into scepticism as a refuge from their vices.

The external testimony in favor of virtue and the christian religion, founded on the holy Bible, arises from prophecy, miracles, and the corresponding evidence of history. And these seem to include all the probable methods heaven could employ for the conversion of mankind into a full belief of the truth. The whole sacred book of the Old Testament, as it is called, is from beginning to end a clear prediction of the coming of the Messiah. And this event we know has taken place, to the comfort of the virtuous and the christian world. Others predicted the destruction of Jerusalem, Babylon, Tyre, and the dispersion and calamities of the Jews, long before they happened, and all history which has been written since informs us that these awful judgments of God were wonderfully accomplished in their proper seasons.

That there should exist a diversity of opinion on the subject of the holy Bible, the virtue and christianity therein taught and inculcated, is not surprising. It has been the case ever since Christ was crucified, and will continue to be the case till the end of the world. Mankind will never have the same virtuous and christian sentiments, because they have not the same natural dispositions of humility, candor, teachableness, the same capacity, education, acquaintance, or even the same features, nor the same complexion. The history of the world and the christian church from the first moment of its existence to the present time is a history of these dissensions. So soon as Christ and his apostles disappeared, it is truly said, "Men mixed tares of human opinion with the good seed of the word." Even two of these apostles, as we are informed, had a sharp controversy on the subject of christianity, and this spirit has never disappeared from those their successors. There is and has been the same fashion in christian opinion as in other things. Particular notions have been abated, laid aside, resumed,

and dismissed again, under different names and leaders, upon the subject of christianity, exactly like the varying modes of dress, furniture, or entertainments. Nor is this the least impeachment of the Bible and holy religion. The truth of it is like the God from whence it comes: "The same yesterday, to-day, and forever. It is reserved as the privilege of a more glorious era, when all men shall be of one heart and of one soul, and keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace" In all human systems of faith there must be error. Where error is involuntary and springs from no criminal passions, but only from a weakness or misdirection of judgment, the Almighty, who looketh chiefly at the heart, doubtless will forgive. Charity, in the meantime, is the great bond of union among mankind. "They shall come from the east and from the west, and sit down in the kingdom of God." If they hope to be companions in glory "they should not surely fall out by the way." The christian and moral blood, which has stained so many ages of the church in this world, has flowed from the most malignant and selfish passions. The gospel breathes nothing but universal love, candor, and forbearance among all mankind. "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of," is the mild rebuke of this blessed Savior of mankind to every persecutor who would slay with the sword.

In connection with the study of the sacred Scriptures, we, as a nation, should also read Josephus, the historian of the Jews, whereby we will find that when God's chosen people obeyed his voice they were free and happy, and that when they refused so to do they become miserable outcasts from God and all mankind, which is typical to us and the remnant of the Jews on earth, that such is to be the fate of all nations who disobey his voice; also, Rollins' Ancient History, that we may learn and see the rise and fall of all the pagan nations of antiquity, whereby we will discover that vice and ignorance are the sure precursors of the ruin and wretchedness of all mankind in all the past ages of the world; the history of England, that we may discover the baneful effects of the collision of sentiments appertaining to virtue and

christianity when not tempered with charity and mercy, that it has in past ages deluged Europe in human blood, that we as a nation may guard against the like calamity and wretchedness as a free, christian people; Ramsey's History of the United States and Marshall's Life of Washington, that we may learn and see the hardships, sufferings, perils, sacrifices, and privations of our noble and immortal ancestors in contending and struggling for their and our enjoyment of civil and christian liberty, as a great and happy nation, that we may thereby place such a value upon our happiness and liberties, as by our intelligence and virtue to preserve them and cause them to be handed down to the remotest generations yet unborn. In order, therefore, to do this, we must familiarize ourselves with a correct knowledge of the federal constitution and government that secures to us such blessings; we must learn the correct history of this constitution and government; what gave rise to their existence, and what was the motive or design of the adoption of this constitution by a free people. I have shown you, in my preceding comments of this work, how this constitution and government come to exist; but for the purpose of impressing this indelibly upon your minds and hearts, I will here further state.

That the continent of North America was chiefly settled by emigrants from Great Britain. The jurisdiction over this new region, as well as the title to its lands, was claimed by her under the color of discovery and conquest. Hence, to acquire the right of property, as well as to sustain themselves against opposition, the authority of Great Britain became necessary to the early colonists, our ancestors. This was given to them, in the form of grants and charters, to companies and large proprietors. Such was the grant of the territory of Massachusetts to the Plymouth Company, and of Maryland to Lord Baltimore. See Pitkin's Civil History, p. 31.

There were originally three different forms of government in the colonies, namely: The charter, the proprietary, and the royal governments. The charter governments were

confined to New England; the middle and southern colonies were divided between the proprietary and royal governments. The charter governments were composed of a governor, deputy-governor, and assistants elected by the people. These, with the freemen, citizens of the colony, were to compose the "general courts," which were authorized to appoint such officers, and make such laws and ordinances for the welfare of the colony as to them might seem meet. These first forms of government in New England contained the same principles as, and were doubtless the origin of, our republican or democratic system. See Pitkin's Civil History, p. 36.

The proprietary governments were those of Maryland, Pennsylvania, the Carolinas, and New Jersey. Part of these soon became royal governments. In the proprietary governments, the power of appointing officers and making laws rested in the proprietors, by the advice and consent, generally, of the freemen. In some of them, as in the Carolinas, singular irregularities were found. In all, great confusion took place. See Pitkin's Civil History, p. 55.

In the royal governments, which were New York, Virginia, Georgia, and Delaware, the governor and council were appointed by the crown, and the people elected representatives to the colonial legislature. The governor had a negative in both houses of the legislature, and most of the officers were appointed by the king. See Pitkin's Civil History, p. 71.

These different governments, operating also upon a people of different habits and manners, as the Puritans of New England, the Cavaliers of Virginia, and the Quakers of Pennsylvania, produced many diversities of legislation and political character. Notwithstanding these, however, the necessities of a common danger from hostile tribes of Indians, and a common interest from similarity of circumstances, soon induced a union or confederacy of the colonies, as I have heretofore in my comments stated. Those of Massachusetts, Plymouth, Connecticut, and New Haven, as early as 1643, formed a league, offensive and defensive, which they declared should be perpetual, and distinguished by

the name of the United Colonies of New England. This confederacy subsisted for forty years under a regular form of government, in which the principle of a delegated congress was the prominent feature.

A congress of commissioners, representing New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland, was held at Albany in 1754. This convention unanimously resolved that a union of the colonies was absolutely necessary for their preservation. They proposed a general plan of federal government, which, however, was not adopted. See Kent's Commentaries, pp. 191, 192.

In October, 1765, a congress of delegates from nine states assembled at New York, and digested a bill of rights on the subject of taxation. See Kent's Commentaries, p. 193.

In September, 1774, an association of twelve states was formed, and delegates authorized to meet and consult for the common welfare.

In May, 1775, the first congress of the thirteen states assembled at Philadelphia, and in July, 1776, issued the declaration of independence. See Kent's Commentaries, p. 195.

In November, 1777, congress agreed upon the celebrated articles of confederation, under which the United States successfully terminated the revolution. This was the first formation of a general government of all the states, and continued until the adoption of the federal constitution in 1788. These articles of confederation, however, had inherent defects, which forced the states to the adoption of this federal constitution. During the revolution, the pressure of an instant and common danger kept the states in a close union, for the defense and protection of each other, and incited them to make all possible efforts in this common defense. When this war of the revolution was over, however, mutual jealousy and separate interests, weakening these common bonds, soon proved the utter insufficiency of a mere confederacy, such as those articles of confederation, for the purposes of national government. Then it was that the ablest heads and purest hearts in the nation exercised their facul-

ties in devising a new and better form of government. General Washington, in June, 1783, addressed a letter to the governors of the several states, in which he says: "There are four things which I humbly conceive are essential to the well-being, I may even venture to say to the existence, of the United States as an independent power. First, an indissoluble union of the states under one federal head. Secondly, a sacred regard to public justice. Thirdly, the adoption of a proper peace establishment. Fourthly, the prevalence of that pacific and friendly disposition among the people of the United States which will induce them to forget their local politics and prejudices." See Marshall's *Life of Washington*, vol. 5, chap. 1, p. 46.

Under the first head, he remarked that, "It is only in our united character that we are known as an empire, that our independence is acknowledged, that our power can be regarded, or our credit supported among foreign nations. The treaties of European powers with the United States of America will have no validity on a dissolution of the Union. We may find by our own unhappy experience, that there is a natural and necessary progression from the extreme of anarchy to the extreme of tyranny; and that arbitrary power is most easily established on the ruins of liberty abused to licentiousness." Such were the sentiments of Washington, and such were those then of the nation, relative to the inefficiency of the national government under the articles of confederation.

In January, 1786, the legislature of Virginia recommended a meeting of commissioners from the several states to review the powers of government. The delegates of five states met at the city of Annapolis, in Maryland, but adjourned, proposing a general convention at Philadelphia. In 1787 the convention of delegates from twelve states was convened in Philadelphia, and after much deliberation formed the present federal constitution of the United States. By a resolution of this convention, it was directed to be carried into effect when ratified by the conventions of nine states, chosen by "the people thereof." That ratification,

after much opposition, scrutinizing discussion, and the adoption of several amendments, it finally received, and all the states eventually assenting to its provisions became members of the American Union. In 1789 it went into practical operation, and from this period to the present time it has withstood unharmed the various violent influences of local feuds, opposing interests, domestic insurrection, and foreign violence, except what has been occasioned by the late sorrowful rebellion, which rebellion in our once happy land, and the amendments made to this constitution since this rebellion has been put down, I will comment upon in the next chapter, being the sixteenth, of these my commentaries upon this federal constitution. See Marshall's Washington, vol. 5, p. 129.

We have seen that at several different periods, namely, 1643, 1754, 1765, 1774, 1777, and in 1787, the territories composing what is called the United States formed associations for the purposes of a common government and general welfare. Let us now examine how these were originally constituted, and in what manner modified by time and experience.

By the articles of confederation made in 1643, between the colonies of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Haven, it was expressly declared to be a league, under the name of the united colonies of New England. The chief points in this confederation were: First. That each colony should have peculiar jurisdiction and government within its own limits. Secondly. That the quotas of men and money were to be furnished in proportion to the population, for which purpose a census was to be taken from time to time of such as were able to bear arms. Thirdly. That to manage such matters as concerned the whole confederation, a congress of two commissioners from each colony should meet annually, with power to weigh and determine all affairs of war and peace, leagues, aids, charges, and whatever else were proper concomitants of a confederation, offensive and defensive; and that to determine any question three-fourths of these commissioners must agree, or the matter is to be referred to the

general courts. Fourthly. That these commissioners may choose a president, but that such president has no power over the business or proceedings. Fifthly. That neither of the colonies should engage in any war without consent of the general commissioners. Sixthly. That if any of the confederates should break any of these articles, or otherwise injure any of the other confederates, then such breach should be considered and ordered by the commissioners of the other colonies.

Now it will be observed that this confederacy was by agreement a mere league, from motives of amity, for objects of general offense and defense. As such, it was as good a model as any which history presents us; but as a government it was utterly inefficient. Its principal defects in the last point of view were: First. The want of an executive, without which it could never act as a whole; all the acts of the commissioners had to be enforced by each separate colony, they did not act upon individuals. Second. The want of a general judiciary by which offenses arising between the several members, or against the whole confederacy, might be taken cognizance of. Third. The want of any general power to obtain credit or emit money. In short, this league did not pretend to be a government, and was deficient in nearly all the attributes of sovereignty.

Upon the last provision, that providing a remedy for breaches of the league by one of the confederacy, it is worthy of remark that it never entered into the heads of people then that it was possible for one party to a compact to make itself judges of its own breaches of it; on the contrary, it was provided that such breaches should be judged of by the other members of the confederacy. It was reserved for a much later period of history, and it would seem for far more ingenious men, to divine a mode by which a party to a contract can at once make itself a judge of its own violations of it, and invalidate at pleasure its provisions.

The next plan of association was that formed by the commissioners, who met at the city of Albany, in New York, in 1754. It was not accepted by the mother country, but



may serve to show what progress in ideas of government had then been made by the colonists. It is remarkable that the scheme proposed did not purport, like the other, to be a league or confederation, but a plan for one general government. Its principal provisions were: First. That the general government shall be administered by a president-general, appointed by the crown, and a grand council chosen by the representatives of the people in their general assemblies. Second. That the council should be chosen every three years, and shall meet once each year. Third. That the assent of the president be necessary to all acts of the council, and that it is his duty to see them executed. Fourth. The president and council may hold treaties, make peace, and declare war with the several Indian tribes. Fifth. For these purposes they have power to levy and collect such duties, imposts, and taxes as to them shall seem just. It will be seen that this was a much nearer approach to an organized government than the confederacy of 1643. It provided for a strong executive, but was without the sanction of a general judiciary, and made no provision for regulating the currency.

We now come to the articles of confederation. During the early part of the American revolution the powers of a general nature were executed without question or difficulty by a congress of deputies from the several colonies. Patriotism and a common danger to all absorbed all other principles, and made even ordinary or other ties among the colonies unnecessary to bind them together. Nevertheless, a universal opinion and wish, however, prevailed among them in favor of a more perfect union than what those advances of union secured; and after much deliberation, congress, in November, 1777, as heretofore stated, agreed upon the articles of confederation and perpetual union, as they were called, to accomplish this end. They were, after various delays, ratified by the different states; the principal objection at the time being in respect to the wild lands, which were claimed by several of the states, but which others urged should go to bear the common burden. In the sequel, those lands were nobly ceded by the states who

held them to the common benefit of the Union. See *Journal of Congress*, vol. 2, p. 475; see *Kent's Commentaries*, p. 197.

These articles of confederation provided :

*First.* That the style of this confederacy should be the "United States of America."

*Second.* That each state should retain its sovereignty, independence, and such rights as were not delegated to the general congress.

*Third.* That the object of the confederacy was the general welfare of them all, and their common defense against foreign aggression.

*Fourth.* That the citizens of one state shall have the privileges of citizens in another, and that full faith and credit shall be given to the records, acts, and judicial proceedings in another state.

*Fifth.* That for the management of the general interests, delegates shall be annually appointed to meet in congress, each state having not less than two nor more than seven, and that in determining questions in congress, each state shall have one vote.

*Sixth.* That no state shall, without the consent of congress, enter into any treaty or alliance with any foreign power or nation, or with any other state; nor lay any imposts or duties interfering with any stipulations contained in any treaty made by congress; nor keep any vessels of war or armed forces in time of peace, except such as congress may deem necessary; nor engage in any war without the consent of congress, unless the state be actually invaded or the danger imminent; nor grant letters of marque, unless such state be infested with pirates.

*Seventh.* That all charges for the general welfare shall be defrayed out of a common treasury, which shall be levied in proportion to the value of land within each state.

*Eighth.* The United States, in congress assembled, "shall have the exclusive right of making peace and war; entering into treaties and alliances; granting letters of marque, and establishing courts and rules for the trial of piracies

and felonies, and determining questions in relation to captures, and that the congress have the power to determine all questions and differences between two or more states concerning any cause whatever; which authority shall be exercised by instituting a court in manner and form as provided, where judgment shall be final and decisive; and that they have power to fix the standard of weights, measures, and coin; establish post-offices and commission officers; that they shall have power to appoint a committee of the states, and such other officers as may be necessary to manage the general affairs of the United States under their direction; to elect the presiding officer; to fix the sums of money to be raised; to borrow money, and emit bills of credit; to agree on the number of forces to be raised, which are to be distributed among the states in proportion to their white inhabitants; that "the United States" shall not exercise these powers unless nine states assent to the same, nor shall any question, except that of adjournment, be determined unless by the votes of a majority of the states.

*Ninth.* That it is further provided that the committee of the states, or any nine of them, shall be authorized to execute, in the recess of congress, such of the powers of congress as the United States, or any nine of them, shall think proper to vest them with.

*Tenth.* That all debts contracted under the authority of congress shall be deemed and considered as a charge against the United States, for which the public faith is pledged.

*Eleventh.* That every state shall abide by the determination of congress upon the questions submitted to it, and the union thus formed by the United States shall be perpetual.

Such is a synopsis of those articles of confederation under which the United States terminated the war of the revolution, and they continued to be the national government till the adoption of the federal constitution. It is perceived that the states still assumed the style of a league

or confederacy, and that they had, notwithstanding, granted away many attributes of sovereignty, even much greater than those proposed to be vested in the national government by the plan of 1754. Yet this latter confederacy and national government brought into being by those articles of confederation and perpetual union, as styled, had many obvious and palpable deficiencies and imperfections as a government; principally, however, in the mode and process of its administration.

*First.* There was an executive in form still wanting, though nearly all its powers were granted to congress and the "committee of the states."

*Second.* There was no general judiciary provided by it; yet its provisions went so far as to provide a marine or admiralty court, and a general tribunal to settle conflicts and disputes between the several states.

*Third.* The great deficiency of a national government for the preservation of American union was, that those articles of confederation did not act upon individuals, the American citizens, but upon the states, in their capacity as separate governments from this national government; and hence, that to raise men and money for the preservation of all this American Union, it was necessary to act through the medium of many distinct separate governments to get their consent so to do, which would be attended with delay and ruinous consequences to all.

By a comparison of the original association of 1643, the plan of 1754, and those articles of confederation, we find that the minds of the colonists, our forefathers, had gradually tended from the notion of separate sovereignty to that of a general and united government. Each change, founded on experience, had given additional strength to the confederacy. Thus the association of 1643 was a simple league, existing by means of treaties, and exercised through commissioners; and though possessing many of the attributes of sovereignty, holding them only through an alliance. The plan of 1754, though not adopted, was that of a general government, and had a strong executive.

These articles of confederation, though reverting back to the form of a confederacy or league, greatly increased in theory the powers of government; for example, they superadded to the powers of former congresses those of emitting bills of credit, establishing marine courts, and judging between the states. Under this confederation, the United States, by the peace of 1783, achieved their separate and independent existence as a nation. Yet we have already seen it was found insufficient for the purposes of a stable government; and how, in 1787, the present federal constitution was formed and adopted, and the national government by its adoption went into existence.

I have, in these comments of mine, established for your thoughtful consideration the following propositions:

*First.* That the idea of a union of the colonies originated in the very earliest stage of their existence.

*Second.* That their idea was that of a government, exercised for the general welfare, and founded upon a representation of the people.

*Third.* That for this purpose they from time to time formed leagues and confederacies.

*Fourth.* That these associations were made closer and stronger as time and experience progressed.

*Fifth, and lastly.* That they were all a continuation of a whole of them, and were all finally merged in this *more perfect union* and government, formed by the convention of 1787 and the adoption of the constitution of the United States of America.

Hence, our fathers have said, in the preamble to this constitution, what their motive was by its formation and adoption, which is as follows:

*"WE, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this constitution for the United States of America."*

That you may further see what was the design of our

forefathers in adopting this constitution and national government, I will here superadd to all this the copy of a letter addressed by General Washington, the father of his country, and the president of this convention who formed this constitution, to the president of congress under those articles of confederation, which reads as follows:

“It is obviously impracticable in the federal government of these states to secure all rights of independent sovereignty to each, and yet provide for the interests and safety of all. Individuals entering into society must give up a share of liberty to preserve the rest. The magnitude of the sacrifice must depend as well on situation and circumstance as on the object to be obtained. It is at all times difficult to draw, with precision, the line between those rights which must be surrendered and those which may be reserved; and on the present occasion this difficulty was increased by a difference among the several states as to their situation, extent, habits, and particular interests.

“In all our deliberations on this subject, we kept steadily in our view that which appears to us the greatest interest of every true American, the consolidation of the Union, *in which is involved our prosperity, felicity, safety—perhaps our actual existence.* This important consideration, seriously and deeply impressed upon our minds, led each state in the convention to be less rigid on points of inferior magnitude than might have been otherwise expected, and thus the constitution which we now present is the result of a spirit of amity, and of that mutual deference and concession which the peculiarity of our political situation rendered indispensable.” See Elliott’s Debates in the Convention, p. 249.

When we read the above we should bear in mind who General Washington was, and that this world has produced but one Washington; and that the spirit in which our constitution was formed, and the great object to be obtained by it, were very different from the spirit and objects entertained by some modern politicians. *Then, the consolidation*

*of our American Union was the great end in view, to which all other objects were pronounced, by Washington and his fellow-statesmen, of inferior magnitude.* Now, consolidation, whether of the Union, of law, or of government, is the great object of fear and danger, as they profess, to a class of men who either think or assert themselves to be the purest of patriots.

Now let our minds advert back to the organization of our national government and state governments under the federal constitution, and we will discover that the congress of the United States is empowered to pass all laws of a national character, and no others, for the prosperity and happiness of this great nation, which constitutes the legislative department of the national government. The executive department, the president of the United States, is empowered to see that those laws are faithfully executed, and no others, and preserve, protect, and defend this constitution and the people of the United States against foreign invasions or domestic violence. The judicial department, to adjudicate upon all laws of the United States made in pursuance of this constitution and the law of nations, and no others. While these three powers combined constitute the government of the United States, the state governments are left to themselves to legislate, execute, and adjudicate upon all those wants and interests pertaining to themselves, prompted by their localities—all happily combined by this federal constitution as constituting the great American Union, of which Union, General Washington alludes to in his letter above stated. And hence, when we come to examine and understand this federal constitution, we readily perceive that no power or powers is or are granted to this national government but those of a strictly national character, and that no effort has been made, or intended so to be, to divest the states, or any of them, of their domestic rights appertaining to their localities, to legislate, execute, and adjudicate for the welfare and happiness of each other. That all this talk about consolidation of the states into one national government—that is, to divest

the states of their domestic rights appertaining to their localities, or blot out their existence for one great national government—is without truth or any foundation whatever.

Now let us ask ourselves the question: Why have our illustrious forefathers provided for us written constitutions, both national and state, to live under as the foundations and basis of our governments? No other nation has ever done so before them. When we come to solve the question, we are led to know the wisdom of our immortal ancestors. It was to monument for us, and posterity after us, our rights, both civil and christian, as freemen, that we all, both males and females, might read, know them, and, by our understanding of them alike, comprehend them by the exercise of our intelligence; then, by our virtuous education, see them extended unto all, that in cases of political excitement majorities be kept within constitutional bounds, that minorities might not be oppressed by the majority, and that minorities be also kept within constitutional bounds by enforcing the civil authority; and when this could not be done, as in case of the last sorrowful rebellion, then by the war power of the government. When thus understood, Americans will feel proud of their governments and country; the brave men will rush to arms in their vindication and maintenance, and the lovely and beautiful ladies of our heaven-favored land will address their husbands, or, if single, their betrothed sweethearts, thus on the eve of battle in their defense and preservation:

“I love thee; yet ne’er be it said,  
That love did thy spirit restrain;  
I’d rather behold thee a hero and dead,  
Than a coward in life to remain.

Then forward, and fear not, let thy battle-cry be;  
With glory return, or return not to me.”