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## Religious.

SELECTED FOR THE MINERVA.  
AN EXTRACT.

The connexion between the American Government and the Christian Religion; and the dependence of the former upon the latter for their perpetuation: together with the duty of Christians in the exercise of their political rights, &c. and the consequences of neglecting them.

CONTINUED.

No politician can understand the present unparalleled condition of the world, either as it relates to the true source of bleeding humanity, its design, and ultimate end, only as he is informed by the revelations of God himself in the scriptures. Nor is it possible to employ an antidote to avert the ruin which seems to threaten our world, but from the same source. I know, that this is thought quite superstitious, and unphilosophical, to refer to the Bible for political information relative to the duties or happiness of a people, or the destinies of nations, since the natural energies of the human mind were developed by the principles of modern philosophy. Religious error, and oppression, and that very philosophy, are the efficient causes of the present desolation of the old world. Under the dispensations of heaven, they operate as the mutual scourges of each other. This same wretched philosophy, and the misapprehensions of the Gospel in the minds of the people of the United States of America, in regard to their political, and religious interests, duties, and policy, are amongst the great procuring causes of their present sufferings, and those which are impending. This disastrous state of things will progress in some form or other; or, if suspended, the causes will continue to exist, and be ready at all times to be put into activity, until the wisdom which is from above directs the conduct of our people and governments in the exercise of their civil rights, and political operations. I am asked, how is this great reformation to be effected, and in what will it consist? I answer, that it is to be effected by the professors, and friends of christianity doing their duty in the exercise of their elective franchise, in their selection of proper persons for public office. The reformation will consist in God being recognized as the rightful and gracious sovereign of our world, and in the principles, and spirit of christianity, being the rule of civil administration, and national policy. This is not to be effected by the civil establishment of religion; but by making the will of God, as revealed, the law of the mind, by which the civil and religious duties of men alone can be perceived, felt, and properly regarded.

I cannot but think, that this subject can be placed in such a fair, intelligible, and strong point of view, as to produce an entire union of opinion, and an irresistible conviction of the importance and necessity of observing the duties which it imposes. In the first place, I ask, in order to rouse the conscience, which has heretofore been lulled into a sinful repose by the *impious maxim*, that religion, and political rights and blessings have no connexion; and to awaken the mind to a candid, serious investigation whether the worshippers of God, in this christian land, and the citizens of the United States, exist independent of, and without obligations to him, in the possession, and enjoyment of their civil rights, and privileges? The voice of every christian will answer in the negative. I again ask, what those dependencies are, what those duties, and how to be discharged? I answer, that it is not only in God we live, and move, and have our being, but that we are dependent upon him for those divine principles in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, by the influence of which man is qualified for a republican government, and, in the observance of which a nation can only be prosperous, and happy. These principles in the divine economy of grace were given to man for his instruction, and by which to regulate his conduct; not to supersede the use of his intellectual, and moral powers, but to enlighten, direct, and govern them. They cannot produce a happy result, without being thus observed. When thus regarded, as the governing principles of grace and truth, God is glorified in the happiness of man; which is the true design, and tendency of the Gospel dispensation. It is not less true in a political, than in a religious point of view. The command is, that *whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God*. It may be asked, how is God glorified by a representative government? I answer, by the public functionaries being regulated by his word, and commandment, in their public administration, and private conduct. Men of these principles, and characters can only be promoted to office by the people; and, of course, God's glory, and the social happiness of mankind in this respect, depend upon the right use of the principle of elective franchise. Here, then, we arrive by a direct course of deduction, to the indispensable political duty of every christian, and enlightened friend of humanity. I do not mean that God will, by the immediate

operations of his spirit, miraculously bless our nation for choosing of men to administer the governments, who are devoted to his service, and glory. The happiness or misery of a nation is correspondent with the rectitude or depravity of its measures; these are of a like complexion with the moral character, and principles of the rulers. The only means which produce a pure, and undefiled heart, are the truths of the gospel. Hence it is, "when the righteous are in authority the people rejoice, and when the wicked bear rule, the people mourn." Prov. 29, 2. Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people. Prov. 14, 34. The legislative, executive, and judiciary branches of government, being occupied by enlightened, and pure christianity, would, of necessity, exhibit an entirely renovated state of things. The Glory of God, and happiness of mankind, would, of necessity be the consequence. God would reign in peace, and man would live in happiness. Spiritual wickedness, and high places, would be put down, and God would be glorified in all things; his name would never be used but with suitable awe and veneration.

The Gospel becoming the law of the mind, and the ruling principle of the heart, man would cease to thirst for his fellows blood; and a conduct regulated by it, would disarm raging passion of its fierceness, and heap coals of fire upon the head of its unhappy possessor. The consternating, and heart-piercing interrogatory of our Saviour, "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" would paralyze inordinate desire, projects of ambition, &c. which lead to eleanery, corruption, and intrigue, and prompt to such a course of measures, and policy, as to make the people mourn, and nations to war against nations. The penitentiary system, which was certainly the growth of christianity in its origin, though probably not known or thought to be so by mankind in general, would be entirely completed, and regulated by its principles. The unhappy subjects of its operations, would upon their entrance there, be presented with a Bible; and during their confinement, labor, and privations, which are well calculated to abate, or break the force of wicked habits and passions, to tranquilize the mind, and bring it to reflection, would be tenderly, affectionately, and solemnly taught the great truths of the Gospel, as the only mean of a radical reformation of mind, and conduct; of an intellectual, and moral regeneration. In its present plan, and economy, but little is effected in this way; the chief object seems to be, to make money by the labor of the poor wretches; their bodily exertions in mechanical operations, and their occasional confinement in dark cells, are the chief objects of regard—they are sufficiently impressed with their degraded and base condition; but their ears are scarcely ever saluted by the cheering, and renovating voice of the Gospel. This part of the system savors of any thing else as much as christianity. Bodily chastisements, unconnected with proper mental discipline, and moral instruction, can never produce abiding reformations.

This state of Gospel triumph would not only diffuse its blessings all around, upon every condition, and order of society, in the government in which we live, but it would extend its blessings to the savage tribes. The influences of the Gospel in civilizing the heathen nations, every person must admit. It not only exalts them to a proper sense of their own relations, and interests, by the knowledge of spiritual things which it imparts, but by the influence of this very knowledge, and the duties which it imposes, it changes their blood thirsty nature into friendship, piety, and peace.

The opinions of mankind of interest, and happiness, are relative; they arise from the views the mind has of its connection with external things: the invisible, and everlasting relations which it sustains, and which are only ascertainable, and can be perceived through the revelations of God's spirit in the Gospel, exhibit a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory to the humble and contrite heart: but a fearful lookings for of judgment, and fiery indignation against the ungodly. Through the influence of these considerations, and the chastisements of heaven upon disobedience, the objects of sensuality, avarice, and ambition are stripped of their improper attractions, and the cup of forbidden indulgence is dashed and poisoned.

When the contracted, and bigotted notions about religion shall be ended, and those objections which arise from angry sectarian contentions in the eyes of mankind, are obviated, and its true professors conscientiously perform their duties, and obey the commandments of the Lord, then peace will be as a river, and righteousness as the waves of the sea, Isa. 48, 48. Then the reign of the Prince of Peace upon earth as described in the following, and striking manner by Isa. will commence in our world. "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the Leopard, shall lie down with the kid, and the calf, and the young lion, and fating together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek; and his

rest shall be glorious." Isa. 11, 6-10. "The nations, and people shall beat their swords into plough shares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more." Isa. 2, 4. When the great reformation takes place amongst christians, in the performance of their religious and political duties, when they became one, the world will begin to believe in the redeemer, and his glorious reign will become universal.

In governments like those of America, in which the people are the source of power, and which is delegated by election for short periods to their public functionaries, a very awful responsibility is devolved upon the christian part of the community in the exercise of their elective franchise. Every representative for whom they vote to fill any office, represents them, not only in the eyes of the nation, according to the social compact, but also in the eyes of God, and the angels of heaven. All the peculiarities of character by which he is distinguished, whether of prosperity or blasphemy; intemperance, or debauchery; false honor, or pride; political intrigue, or treachery; projects of ambition, or self aggrandisement; whether advanced by secret corruption, or overt acts of treason; or on the other hand, if distinguished by doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly before God, having an eye to his honor, and glory, and the real happiness of the people: I say, whether distinguished by one or other of these peculiarities of character, it is reflected back upon them who are his constituents; his actings and doings are their own by representation; and the curses or blessings correspondent with this diversity of character and conduct must be felt by all. There is but one way right, and all the rest are wrong. "The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good spirits; but the wisdom which is not from above is earthly, sensual and devilish." James 3, 15, 17. Fools despise wisdom—her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is the tree of life to them that lay hold upon her; and happy is every one that retaineth her. The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens. The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but he blesteth the habitation of the just. Surely he scorneth the scorners; but he giveth grace unto the lowly. The wise shall inherit glory, but shame shall be the promotion of fools." It is in consequence of the wisdom in which God has founded the earth, that any other conduct, amongst men or nations, than that which is dictated by the word of his counsel as the rule of their duty, leadeth to iniquity, and ensureth his chastisements. This proceeds from the connection which exists between causes and effects in religion, governments, &c. How absurd and inconsistent, then, is it, for a christian people to appoint days of fastings, humiliations, &c. and to pray to God to give wisdom to their counsellors, &c. &c. and at their elections, to make no distinction between those who believe in God, and acknowledge his authority, and the truth of his word, and those who, by their words, and deeds, say there is no God; that the scriptures are not true, or that the duties, and relations of men, and nations, are not ascertained by his revelations in them? The prayers and devotions of men, under such circumstances, are they, concerning which God hath said, "When ye spread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when you make many prayers I will not hear." Isa. 11, 15. His commands are "wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well." Ibid 16. "If ye be willing and obedient ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured by the sword; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Ibid 19-20. The mediatorial governor of the world, who spake as never man spake, said, "A good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gathereth they grapes. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt." These truths are not less divine, and unexceptionable, when applied to the administrators of government, and to public functionaries, than to the professors of the christian religion, as such. How absurd would it be, to expect, by the prayers of the christian world, to make figs grow upon thorns, or grapes upon bramble bushes? Make the tree good, and his fruit good. "Faith without works is dead." James 2, 20, 26.—If devotion, fasting, &c. do not inspire christians with a sense of their duties &c. in their political, as well as their religious relations, and prompt them to their performance, they are not authorised by god to hope for the smiles, and blessings of heaven. Rulers, and counsellors who reject the word of God, and its divine authority will not by the prayers of his worshippers be insured by the wisdom of his counsels; for "the entrance of his word it giveth understanding to the simple." It was by reason of this truth that Solomon said, "This wisdom have I seen under the sun, and it seemed great unto me: there was a little city, and few men within it, and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it. Now there was

found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. Then said I, wisdom is better than strength. Wisdom is better than weapons of war; but one sinner destroyeth much good." Eccles. 9th. How often do we see men of extraordinary powers of mind in public stations, so much devoted to their own popularity, and exclusively attentive to those things which promote it, both in their public and private conduct, as to demonstrate that the true and abiding interests of the country have but little or no place in their minds. It cannot be otherwise; for, unless the invisible relations, and dependencies of man are realized, passion vanity, ambition, &c. must of necessity be the governing principles. The truths of the Gospel believe, afford the only true, and effectual cure for these things. For a moment view the present threatening aspect of these United States. Their union is endangered, which if consumed must prove the most ruinous of all events, to thousands of unsuspecting and innocent persons. Trace this evil to its source, and it will be found to originate in the passions, pride, self conceit, vanity, or ambition, &c. of a few men, who, in opposition to each other, are struggling for office, or are actuated by unworthy competition; who, in order to be pre-eminently distinguished, use violent, and angry re-primand, and opprobrious epithets. When they turn their faces to their constituents, they expect (and alas! too often meet with them) high sounding plaudits. The people, becoming warmed by the same kind of strange fire, are urged on to great extremes, political bickerings and animosities. Party spirit, and angry violence, always spring from their source; and without the controlling influence of christianity it cannot be otherwise where there are great intellectual powers, or restless spirits. They, without the equiposing influence of those views, considerations, and motives, which are ascertained to the mind by the revelations of God, are as irregular, rapid, and violent in their operations as the motion of a watch, or clock, without a balance wheel, or a pendulum. The truth of these remarks may be easily apprehended, by abstracting in the mind all the ideas, and opinions; all the fears, and hopes; and all the mental exercises, which arise from religious considerations, habits, manners, and customs. Destroy the Sabbath, and all the christian ordinances; and release the public mind from every restraint which is imposed upon it by revealed religion, and a free government could not possibly exist. It is apparent to every observant and reflecting mind that in proportion to the existence of religious truths in the minds of men, and as they operate upon public opinion in forming the morals of a state or nation, so is the capacity of the people for the enjoyment of a free government in a state of peace, tranquility, and happiness, and the certainty of its preservation. And on the contrary, as a people recede from true religion, and absolve themselves from its restraints, so do they approach licentiousness and anarchy which are the never failing precursors of violence, usurpation, and despotism. Our memorable, and unparalleled Washington, who had been on the public theatre for near half a century, and whose intrinsic excellencies, as a great, and good man, will ever be placed in the superlative degree, as long as worth, and greatness are esteemed—this greatest of the sons of America; who knew, by actual experience, and observation, the springs of human action, and the absolute necessity of divine truth solemnly, and conscientiously regarded by the statesman, and people, in order to give stability, and to secure the continuance of a free government, made the following observations in his great political legacy, his Farewell Address to the people of the United States:—"Of all the dispositions, and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness—these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connexions with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked, where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in our courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition, that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principles.

"It is substantially true; that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of a popular government. The rule indeed extends with more or less force to every species of free government. Who that is a sincere friend to it can look with indifference upon attempts to shake the foundation of the fabric?" Ramsay's life of Washington, page 294.

## Roanoke Navigation Company.

THE STOCKHOLDERS of the Roanoke Navigation Company are requested to meet in the town of Halifax on Tuesday the 16th day of August next. By order of the President and Directors,

ROBT. JOHNSTON, Sec'y.

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