

Click on the QUOTE to go to that quote.

(These quotes are in the various books of this set, the "back" arrow in the Tool Bar will return you up to 50 moves.)

An Introduction to the so called "Jefferson Bible."

The "Jefferson Bible."

Some Religious Quotes From the Letters of Thomas Jefferson.

There are many other religious allusions throughout the Writings of Thomas Jefferson that prove Jefferson was far too great a thinker to be a believing Christian. These few quotes are given so the casual reader can quickly find the gist of Jefferson's theological thought.

(NOTE that Jefferson referred to all clergy as priests, not just the Catholic clergy)

Thomas Jefferson to:

Peter Carr, August 10, 1787.

(Volume 6, page 256.)

"Fix reason firmly in her seat, and call to her tribunal every fact, every opinion. Question with boldness even the existence of a god; because, if there be one, he must more approve of the homage of reason, than that of blindfolded fear."

"For example in the book of Joshua we are told the sun stood still several hours. Were we to read that fact in Levy or Tacitus we should class it with their showers of blood, speaking of statues, beasts, & c. But it is said that the writer of that book was inspired. Examine therefore candidly what evidence there is of his having been inspired."

"If it ends in a belief that there is no god, you will find incitements to virtue in the comfort and pleasantness you feel in its exercise, and the love of others which it will procure you."

"Your own reason is the only oracle given you by heaven, and you are answerable not for the rightness but uprightness of the decision."

"Because these Pseudo-evangelists pretended to inspiration as much as the others, and you are to judge their pretensions by your own reason, and not by the reason of those ecclesiastics."

**** ****

William Rutledge, Paris, February 2, 1788.

(Volume 6, page 417.)

"The long expected edict for the Protestants at length appears here. [Catholic France] It is an acknowledgment (hitherto withheld by the laws) that Protestants can beget children and that they can die and be offensive unless buried. It does not give them permission to think, to speak, or to worship. It enumerates the humiliations to which they shall remain subject, and the burthens to which they shall continue to be unjustly exposed."

**** *

Dr. Price, January 8, 1789.

(Volume 7, page 252.)

"I concur with you strictly in your opinion of the comparative merits of atheism and demonism, and really see nothing but the latter in the Being worshipped by many who think themselves Christians."

"The clergy and nobles, by their privileges and influence, have kept their property in great measure untaxed hitherto. They then remain to be squeezed, and no agent is powerful enough for this but the people."

"The clergy will move heaven and earth to obtain the suffrage by orders, because that parries the effect of all hitherto done for the people."

**** *

Doctor Benjamin Rush, Monticello, September 23, 1800.

(Volume 10, page 173.)

"The returning good sense of our country threatens abortion to their hopes, and they believe that any portion of power confided to me, will be exerted in opposition to their schemes. And they believe rightly; for I have sworn upon the altar of god, eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man."

(NOTE: This is the letter from which the shameful mis-quote used in the Jefferson Memorial in Washington D.C. was taken. The quote was taken entirely out of context in order to make it seem to say just the opposite of what Jefferson actually said.)

**** *

Joseph Priestly, March 21, 1801.

(Volume 10, page 227.)

"What an effort, my dear Sir, of bigotry in Politics and Religion have we gone through! The barbarians really flattered themselves they should be able to bring back the times of Vandalism, when ignorance put everything into the hands of power and priestcraft. They pretended to praise and encourage education, but it was to be the education of our ancestors. We were to look backwards, not forwards, for improvement;"

**** *

Moses Robinson, Washington, March 23, 1801.

(Volume 10, page 236.)

"The Eastern States will be the last to come over, on account of the domination of the clergy, who had got a smell of union between Church and State, and began to indulge reveries which can never be realized in the present state of science."

**** *

Levi Lincoln, August 26, 1801.

(Volume 10, page 273.)

"They crucified their Savior, who preached that their kingdom was not of this world; and all who practice on that precept must expect the extreme of their wrath. The laws of the present day withhold their hands from blood; but lies and slander still remain to them."

**** *

The Attorney General. (Levi Lincoln.) January 1, 1802.

(Volume 10, page 305.)

"... It furnishes an occasion, too, which I have long wished to find, of saying why I do not proclaim fastings and thanksgivings, as my predecessors did. The address, to be sure, does not point at this, and its introduction is awkward. But I foresee no opportunity of doing it more pertinently. I know it will give great offence to the New England clergy; but the advocate of religious freedom is to expect neither peace nor forgiveness from them."

**** *

Danbury Baptist Association, January 1, 1802.

(Volume 16, page 281.)

"... I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should "make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," thus building a wall of separation between Church and State."

"... I shall see with sincere satisfaction the progress of those sentiments which tend to restore to man all his natural rights, convinced he has no natural rights in opposition to his social duties."

**** ****

Joseph Priestly, April 9, 1803.

(Volume 10, page 374.)

"I should proceed to a view of the life, character, and doctrines of Jesus, who sensible of incorrectness of their ideas of the Deity, and of morality, endeavored to bring them to the principles of a pure deism, and juster notions of the attributes of God, to reform their moral doctrines to the standards of reason, justice and philanthropy, and to inculcate the belief of a future state."

**** ****

Thomas Leiper, January 21, 1809.

(Volume 12, page 236.)

"As to myself, my religious reading has long been confined. to the moral branch of religion, which is the same in all religions; while in that branch which consists of dogmas, all differ, all have a different set. The former instructs us how to live well and worthily in society; the latter are made to interest our minds in the support of the teachers who inculcate them."

**** ****

Baron Von Humboldt, December 6, 1813.

(Volume 14, page 20.)

"History, I believe, furnishes no example of a priest-ridden people maintaining a free government. This marks the lowest grade of ignorance, of which their civil as well as religious leaders will always avail themselves for their own purposes."

**** ****

Charles Clay, January 29, 1815.

(Volume 14, page 232.)

"Of publishing a book on religion, my dear sir, I never had an idea. I should as soon think of writing for the reformation of Bedlam, as of the world of religious sects. Of these there must be, at least, ten thousand, every individual of every one of which believes all wrong but his own."

"I abuse the priests, indeed, who have so much abused the pure and holy doctrines of their master, and who have laid me under no obligations of reticence as to the tricks of their trade."

"Government, as well as religion, has furnished its schisms, its persecutions, and its devices for fattening idleness on the earnings of the people. It has its hierarchy of emperors, kings, princes, and nobles, as that has popes, cardinals, archbishops, bishops, and priests. In short, cannibals are not to be found in the wilds of America only, but are revelling on the blood of every living people."

**** *

Mrs. M. Harrison Smith, August 6, 1816.

(Volume 15, page 59.)

"A change from what? the priests indeed have heretofore thought proper to ascribe to me religious, or rather anti-religious sentiments, of their own fabric, but such as soothed their resentments against the act of Virginia for establishing religious freedom. they wished him to be thought atheist, deist, or devil, who could advocate freedom from their religious dictations."

"I never told my own religion, nor scrutinized that of another. I never attempted to make a convert, nor wished to change another's creed. I have ever judged of the religion of others by their lives, and by this test, my dear Madam, I have been satisfied yours must be an excellent one, to have produced a life of such exemplary virtue and correctness."

"But this does not satisfy the priesthood. They must have a positive, a declared assent to all their interested absurdities, My opinion is that there would never have been an infidel, if there had never been a priest."

**** *

John Adams, May 5, 1817.

(Volume 15, page 108.)

"I had believed that the last retreat of monkish darkness, bigotry, and abhorrence of those advances of the mind which had carried the other States a century ahead of them. They seemed still to be exactly where their forefathers were when they schismatized from the covenant of works, and to consider as dangerous heresies all innovations good or bad. I join you, therefore, in sincere congratulations that this den of the priesthood is at length broken up, and that a protestant Popedom is no longer to disgrace the American history and character."

"If by religion we are to understand sectarian dogmas, in which no two of them agree, then your exclamation on that hypothesis is just, "that this would be the best of all possible worlds, if there were no religion in it."

**** *

Marquis De La Fayette, Monticello, May 14, 1817.

(Volume 15, page 114.)

[Of Quakers:] "They are Protestant Jesuits, implicitly devoted to the will of their superior, and forgetting all duties to their country in the execution of the policy of their order. When war is proposed with England, they have religious scruples; but when with France, these are laid by, and they become clamorous for it. They are, however, silent, passive, and give no other trouble than of whipping them along."

**** *

Ezra Styles, June 25, 1819.

(Volume 15, page 202.)

"You say you are a Calvinist. I am not. I am of a sect by myself, as far as I know."

"It is the speculations of crazy theologians which have made a Babel of a religion the most moral and sublime ever preached to man, and calculated to heal, and not to create differences."

**** *

TO WILLIAM SHORT, April 13, 1820.

(Volume 15, page 243.)

"But while this syllabus is meant to place the character of Jesus in its true and high light, as no impostor Himself, but a great Reformer of the Hebrew code of religion, it is not to be understood that I am with Him in all His doctrines. I am a Materialist; he takes the side of Spiritualism ; he preaches the efficacy of repentance towards forgiveness of sin; I require a counterpoise of good works to redeem it, etc., etc."

**** *

Rev. Thomas Whittemore, June 5, 1822.

(Volume 15, page 373.)

"These formulas have been the bane and ruin of the Christian church, its own fatal invention, which, through so many ages, made of Christendom a slaughter-house, and at this day divides it into castes of inextinguishable hatred to one another."

**** *

James Smith, December 8, 1822.

(Volume 15, page 408.)

"No historical fact is better established, than that the doctrine of one God, pure and uncompounded, was that of the early ages of Christianity;"

"In fact, the Athanasian paradox that one is three, and three but one, is so incomprehensible to the human mind, that no candid man can say he has any idea of it, and how can he believe what presents no idea? He who thinks he does, only deceives himself."

"With such persons, gullibility, which they call faith, takes the helm from the hand of reason, and the mind becomes a wreck."

"I write with freedom, because, while I claim a right to believe in one God, if so my reason tells me, I yield as freely to others that of believing in three."

**** *

Roger C. Weightman, June 24, 1826.

(Volume 16, page 181.)

"May it be to the world, what I believe it will be, (to some parts sooner, to others later, but finally to all,) the signal of arousing men to burst the chains under which monkish ignorance and superstition had persuaded them to bind themselves, and to assume the blessings and security of self government. That form which we have substituted, restores the free right to the unbounded exercise of reason and freedom of opinion."

**** *

Emmett F. Fields
Bank of Wisdom