

gion among all denominations of christians, without preference or distinction, as is set forth in the resolutions prefixed, which contain principles to universally received, that it cannot be supposed they will meet with a dissenting voice among mankind, if considered by themselves, without any other view, than as conducive to the general happiness of society.

That religion hath the most powerful influence upon manners, and hath been more or less interwoven with the very frame and texture of every civil government upon earth, needs but little proof.

The savages of the wilderness around us can bear testimony to this truth; and the ancient Romans, the wisest and the greatest of the nations, unenlightened by immediate revelation, owed more of their grandeur to their religious institutions, than either to their strength or stratagem. Religion pervaded their whole system of laws; its precepts regulated their conduct in peace and war; and if at any time, in the dire extremity of affairs, the safety of the commonwealth, their supreme law, required the least deviation from the laws of religion, yet still they paid a strict regard to its external sanctions and appearances, and threw a veil over the statues of their gods, to persuade the people, that the gods did either not see, or (for that time) would connive or dispense with the great and necessary, although (otherwise) sacrilegious, action.

If we come to revelation, the government of the Jews under the Old Testament was wholly a theocracy, or government of religion, instituted by God himself as their supreme lawgiver; and their empire was great and flourishing, or miserable and depressed, as they obeyed or forsook his holy laws. And as to the New Testament, where shall we find a system of religion which conduces so effectually to the good order, peace and happiness of society, as the religion of Christ? Whatsoever things are honest, pure, lovely, and of good report, are enforced by it, under the sacred sanction of everlasting rewards and punishments.

If we come to our own situation in America, and recal to memory the many arduous contests of the late war, while we were laying the foundations of our present liberty and happiness; religion, both in belief and practice, was considered as our principal support and stay. How frequent were our appeals to Heaven for the justice of our cause? How many our days of fasting and prayer, to implore the Divine protection on the success of our arms? And how many our days of thanksgiving for mercies received? By all which, religion was, at least, acknowledged in our national councils, as having the most powerful influence on the minds of men, in order to lead them to a sense of duty, and the faithful discharge of it as good citizens.

The right and duty of the legislative or supreme power to interpose in matters of religion, so far as concerns the general peace and welfare of the community, and "to make suitable provision, at the public expence, for the institution of the public worship of God," are fully acknowledged and recognised under the American revolution.

By the constitution of this state, no man can hold any office of profit or trust, without professing and declaring "his belief in the christian religion." Government can have no confidence in that man who is under no religious tie, and who believes neither Heaven nor hell, or, in other words, a future state of rewards and punishments. What the celebrated commentator on the law of England delivers on this subject, deserves the most serious attention.

"The preservation of christianity, as a national religion, is (abstracted from its own intrinsic truth) of the utmost consequence to the civil state, which a single instance will sufficiently demonstrate. The belief of a future state of rewards and punishments, the entertaining just ideas of the moral attributes of the Supreme Being, and a firm persuasion that he superintends, and will finally compensate, every action of human life, (all which are clearly revealed in the doctrines, and forcibly inculcated by the precepts, of our Saviour Christ), are the grand foundation of all judicial oaths, which call God to witness the truth of those facts, which perhaps may be only known to him and the party attesting; all moral evidence, therefore, all confidence in human veracity, must be weakened by irreligion, and overthrown by infidelity."

Upon the whole, since religion has such an intimate connexion with government, and is so conducive to the happiness of mankind in this world, as well as their best preparation for the happiness of the world to come, we cannot but consider it as the indispensable duty of every wise and virtuous legislature, to make the most early and permanent provision for the administration and support of both.

We have now stated the principles of the bill, and our motives for bringing it before you at this time. The subject is of the utmost magnitude, and it is your duty to weigh it with the greatest deliberation and temper. It requires no depth of learning, nor any other exertion than that of a common understanding, love to your country, and christian fortbearance, one with another.

In considering it therefore you will remember, that in religion, as well as government, the labourer is worthy of his hire; that the ministers of the gospel among us, for the future, must chiefly be our own natives; that their profession will deprive them, for the most part, of any other means of getting a livelihood, or providing for their families; that they ought to be endowed with considerable learning and knowledge to be respectable and useful in their sacred calling; and that without a competent support in prospect, few men will put themselves to the expence of a liberal education for the ministry; and the discharge of its sacred functions will be left chiefly to those, whose ignorance would render them improper even to be entrusted with any of our worldly affairs.

Objections will probably be made to the proposed mode of supporting the ministry. It may be called a "poll tax, and yielding partial favours, to raise one denomination of christians above others,