

whose forefathers, in times long gone by, sustained a struggle of eighty years against Spain—the greatest power of the time—for religious and political liberty, to participate with the native of America in celebrating the grand achievements of the fathers of the revolution, who baffled the giant power of England, and astonished the world by establishing institutions which, while they placed this Union on the same line with Holland and Switzerland, as an independent republic, made it far outstrip either of its illustrious predecessors in the application of genuine popular sovereignty.

It is meet that, on this occasion, we should call to our minds the principles which guided the founders of the magnificent political fabric, which is displaying on this continent its giant dimensions with unprecedented rapidity, and the causes which thus far favored its successful completion. The past is the great storehouse of human actions and ideas, of which history is the inventory, kept for the accommodation of subsequent generations, that they may select for reproduction such facts as have successfully withstood the action of the crucible of time, and leave untouched those which experience has proved to be prejudicious or worthless. A close scrutiny of the past, therefore, is the nearest and safest way to form a proper program for the future.

At the time of the American revolution, there was an agitative power working both in the old and new world, which convulsed nations, shook thrones, and resulted in the destruction of dynasties that had for centuries wielded a despotic power over millions, whom they considered as inferior beings, born to obey. In Europe liberal sentiments in relation to political institutions were generally connected with the atheistical, or, at least, deistical ideas, that characterize French and German philosophy. The weeds were profusely sown with the wheat, and while attempts were made to build up more rational forms of government, vigorous blows were aimed, at the same time, at the very foundation of Christianity; biblical revelation, traditional religion, and what was termed "Priestcraft." Some of the prominent men of this continent, in consequence with the philosophers of the old world, had been infected with the spirit of infidelity. Thomas Jefferson, though one of our best citizens and patriots at that time, whose intimacy with the famous author of "The Age of Reason"—Thomas Payne—is generally known, affords an instance in support of our assertion.

But happily for our country, the people of the colonies had escaped the infection. The seed planted by the Pilgrims and Huguenots had taken deep root and, therefore, in the colonies, the practical idea of civil and religious liberty was not connected, as in Europe, with enmity against revealed truth and religion. Our Declaration of Independence has, in that respect, a memorial and marked feature. The preparation of that document was entrusted to a committee of five, to-wit, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman and Robert R. Livingston. Jefferson being chairman, his colleagues assigned to him the task of preparing a draft of the declaration, to be presented to Congress. That ever memorable from the pen of the illustrious Jefferson, though it makes mention of a Creator, a God of nature, and of a Judge of the universe, did not contain a single word alluding to Divine Providence. In the conviction of having right, justice and common sense on his side, the philosophical patriot stood in his own strength in facing the risks of the anticipated revolution. A single and short addition to the original draft gives evidence that the great majority at least of the Continental Congress, notwithstanding they were, as well as Jefferson, deeply convinced of the righteousness of their cause against Britain, felt the necessity of the interposition of a Higher Power. In their hearts their revolt against the King of England was not connected with a feeling of independence from the King of Heaven and Earth. At the close of the declaration, Congress