

of the people, we must deprive them of the power of making regulations of any sort. Religious opinions ought indeed to be free, and so ought all our opinions; but a general system of education gives force to this freedom, because it enlightens the mind, and makes it capable of judging with accuracy. And what is a Religious Establishment, but a branch of public education? I am, therefore, of opinion, that it is the duty of every Government to form a Religious Establishment for the State, as soon as they can ascertain that a majority of the citizens are agreed upon some points of Religious Union. It is true, the minority will clamour, as minorities always do, and it must clamour the longer, and with the more success, as religious disputes are interesting and easily darkened. The points of union ought certainly to be most plain and simple, so that, if it were possible, all might be satisfied. But they can never be so composed as to obviate every difficulty. The simple question—*are you a Christian?* would meet with opposition. Some would say, the word *Christian* is ambiguous; if a definition were attempted, it would only serve to multiply objections. It is vain, therefore, to look for a form of worship, any more than a measure of policy, that will please all; but one may easily be found, that shall promote true morality and purity of life, which shall keep piety warm without being enthusiastic, become the mother of good works, encouraging not excusing our duties, the guides and sweetener of life, the cordial of disease, the conqueror of death. But if the question of Religious Establishments has been hitherto doubtful, it can be so no longer. The Americans, by a general toleration without any establishment, will soon arrive at the lowest sink of human corruption—for the greater part of the country is left without the administration of any religion at all. Nor is this to be much wondered at, when we consider that, even in England, the higher ranks withdraw themselves from the public ordinances of religion, or attend them with indifference. So that, were there no provision made for the religious instruction of the people, there is no reason to suppose, that such provision would be supplied by the wealthy. Consequently, religion would gradually disappear; in some districts, those religiously inclined would be too few and too poor to support a Minister—and in others, quarrels and dissensions would produce the same effect.—Such is exactly the case in America; in many places the public worship of God is unknown, no regard is paid to the