

THE
WRITINGS AND SPEECHES
OF
DANIEL WEBSTER

National Edition

VOLUME SIXTEEN

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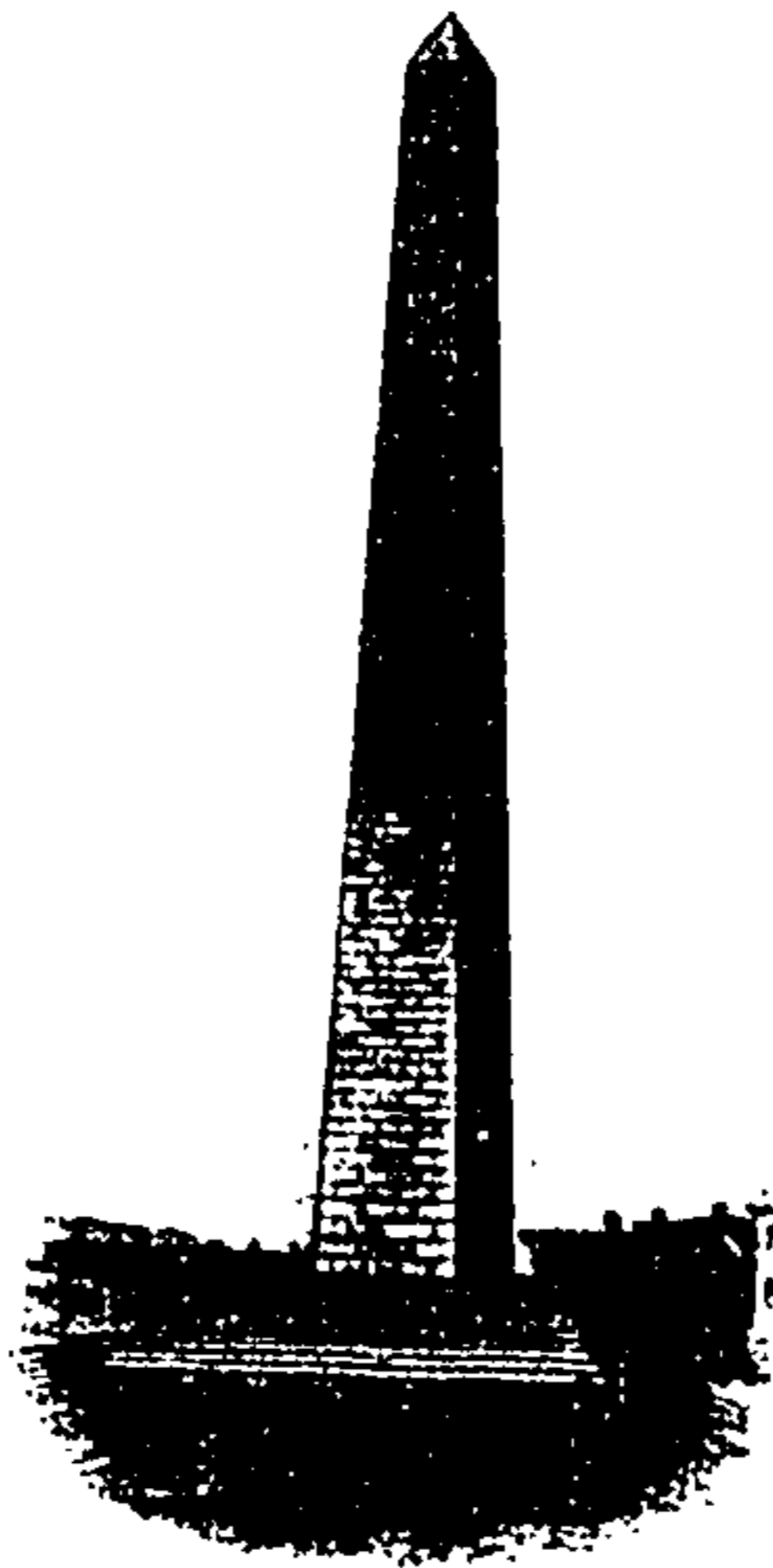
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THE WRITINGS AND
SPEECHES
OF
DANIEL WEBSTER

IN EIGHTEEN VOLUMES



VOLUME SIXTEEN

The Writings and Speeches of
DANIEL WEBSTER
HITHERTO UNCOLLECTED
VOLUME FOUR · LETTERS
NATIONAL EDITION · Illustrated
with Portraits and Plates



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VOL. IV. — I

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

To Rev. Thomas Worcester.¹

BOSCAWEN, August 8, 1807.

DEAR SIR, — The other day we were conversing respecting confessions of faith. Some time ago I wrote down for my own use a few propositions in the shape of articles, intending to exhibit a very short summary of the doctrines of the Christian religion as they impress my mind. I have taken the liberty to enclose a copy for your perusal. I am, Sir, with respect, yours, &c.

D. WEBSTER.

Confession of Faith.

I believe in the existence of Almighty God, who created and governs the whole world. I am taught this by the works of nature and the word of revelation.

I believe that God exists in three persons; This I learn from revelation alone. Nor is it any objection to this belief that I cannot comprehend how *one* can be *three* or *three one*. I hold it my duty to believe, not what I can comprehend or account for, but what my Maker teaches me.

I believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the will and word of God.

I believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God. The miracles which he wrought establish, in my mind, his personal authority, and render it proper for me to believe whatever he asserts; I believe, therefore, all his declarations, as well when he declares himself the Son of God, as when he declares any other proposition. And I believe there is no other way of salvation than through the merits of his atonement.

I believe that things past, present, and to come, are all equally present in the mind of the Deity; that with him there is no succession of time, nor of ideas; that therefore, the relative terms past, present and future, as used among men, cannot, with strict propriety, be applied to Deity. I believe in the doctrines of foreknowledge and predestination, as thus expounded. I do not believe in those doctrines, as imposing any fatality or necessity on men's actions, or any way infringing free agency.

I believe in the utter inability of any human being to work out his own salvation without the constant aids of the Spirit of all grace.

I believe in those great peculiarities of the Christian religion — a resurrection from the dead and a day of judgment.

I believe in the universal Providence of God; and leave to Epicurus, and his more unreasonable followers in modern times, the inconsistency of believing that God made a world which he does not take the trouble of governing.*

Although I have great respect for some other forms of worship, I believe the Congregational mode, on the whole, to be preferable to any other.

¹ From a newspaper clipping, in the New Hampshire Historical Society.

* Dr. Sherlock.

I believe religion to be a matter not of demonstration, but of faith. God requires us to give credit to the truths which he reveals, not because we can prove them, but because he declares them. When the mind is reasonably convinced that the Bible is the word of God, the only remaining duty is to receive its doctrines, with full confidence of their truth, and practice them with a pure heart.

I believe that the Bible is to be understood and received in the plain and obvious meaning of its passages; since I cannot persuade myself that a book intended for the instruction and conversion of the whole world, should cover its true meaning in such mystery and doubt, that none but critics and philosophers can discover it.

I believe that the experiments and subtleties of human wisdom are more likely to obscure than to enlighten the revealed will of God, and that he is the most accomplished Christian scholar who hath been educated at the feet of Jesus, and in the College of Fishermen.

I believe that all true religions consist in the heart and the affections, and that, therefore, all creeds and confessions are fallible and uncertain evidences of evangelical piety.

Finally, I believe that Christ has imposed on all his disciples a life of active benevolence; that he who refrains only from what he thinks to be sinful, has performed but a part, and a small part, of his duty; that he is bound to do good and communicate, to love his neighbor, to give food and drink to his enemy, and to endeavor, so far, as in him lies, to promote peace, truth, piety, and happiness in a wicked and forlorn world, believing that in the great day which is to come, there will be no other standard of merit, no other criterion of character, than that which is already established, "By their fruits ye shall know them."

LEGAL MATTERS.

*To Noah Emery, Exeter, N. H.*¹

PORTSMOUTH, Dec. 1. 1807.

In Jany. last a judgt was recovered in your Honor's Court in favor of Ezkl Webster *v.* Jacob Quimby. I am told Exñ was returned in August, with a non est Inventus. I now wish to sue the bail. Will you send me a sci. fac. agt him? or will you send me a copy of the judgt, and tell me to make one for myself?

As you please, only please to do one or the other forthwith, or you will lose an Entry, and I shall lose a debt. Please send by mail — if you see no *honest man* coming this way. If you send copy of judgt, do not forget to mention the name of the bail.

Yours

D. WEBSTER.

¹ From the original, in Mr. Webster's handwriting, in the Chamberlain Collection, Boston Public Library.

of his office, but also by the performance of several special duties, which the peculiar nature of the negotiations, made necessary.”

He says he is very sorry the Drawings have not arrived, so that you could have them, and expressed the greatest readiness to furnish any thing he could, to your use.

I fear our session will be longer than I expected. They say it will take Mr. Polk a week to find out what is the actual condition of things, as left by Mr. Tyler.

Yrs truly

D. WEBSTER

The instructions, letter &c were sent from the Department to the President — whether he sent them to the Senate, I do not yet know. I will inquire about the matter today.

THE OBSERVANCE OF THE SABBATH.

*To Charles W. Ridgely.*¹

WASHINGTON March 3, 1845.

DEAR SIR, — I feel greatly honored by your communication; which I received on my return to this city from the North, on Saturday; and am sincerely obliged to my friend Mr Williams, for causing me to be made a member of the Baltimore Sabbath Association.

The longer I live, the more highly do I estimate the importance of a proper observance of the Christian Sabbath, and the more grateful do I feel towards those who take pains to impress a sense of this importance, on the community. The Lord's day, is the day on which the Gospel is preached; it is the day of public worship throughout the world. And although we live in a reading age, and in a reading community, yet the preaching of the Gospel, is the form in which human agency has been, and still is, most efficaciously employed for the spiritual improvement of men. That the poor had the gospel preached to them, was an evidence of this mission, which the Author of Christianity himself proclaimed. And to the public worship of the Deity, and the preaching of the Gospel, the observance of the Sabbath, is obviously essential.

I am, dear Sir, with much regard,

Your obedient Servant,

DANIEL WEBSTER.

¹ From a copy in the New Hampshire Historical Society, sent to Edward Everett by Alexander M. Carter of Baltimore. The latter was a member of the Sabbath School Association of which Mr. Ridgely was Secretary.

has come in good time. If any tree should be produced from those nuts, I shall call them the Tomlinson chestnuts.

Owing to an accident, which has much affected the use of my hands & arms, for the present, I do not write without much difficulty, but I make an effort to sign this letter with my own hand. Your obliged brother-farmer & fellow citizen

DANL WEBSTER

THE SPRING SOWING AT ELMS FARM.

*To John Taylor.*¹

WASHINGTON, June 1, 1852.

JOHN TAYLOR, — By this time, I suppose, you have committed the greater part of your grains to the earth, and the rest remains to the providential arrangements of the season.

“Be gracious, Heaven! for now laborious man
Has done his part. Ye fostering breezes, blow!
Ye softening dews, ye tender showers, descend!
And temper all, thou world-reviving sun,
Into the perfect year!”

D. W.

SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

*To Professor Pease.*²

MARSHFIELD, June 15, 1852.

DEAR SIR, — I have received your very able and interesting annual report of the condition of the New York Sabbath School Association, and read it with great pleasure and instruction. It is gratifying, very gratifying to learn, that in “a city where vice and immorality run riot with impunity,” a few humble Christians have devoted their time and energies to the cause of religion, and I fervently pray that your labors may be crowned with success.

The Sabbath School is one of the great institutions of the day. It leads our youth in the path of truth and morality, and makes them good men and useful citizens. As a school of religious instruction it is of inestimable value; as a civil institution it is priceless, and has done more to preserve our liberties than grave statesmen and armed soldiers. Let it then be fostered and preserved until the end of time!

¹ From Reminiscences of Daniel Webster, by Peter Harvey.

² From a newspaper clipping.

I once defended a man charged with the awful crime of murder. At the conclusion of the trial I asked him what could induce him to stain his hands with the blood of a fellow-being. Turning his blood-shot eyes full upon me, he replied, in a voice of despair, "Mr. Webster, in my youth, I spent the holy Sabbath in evil amusements, instead of frequenting the house of prayer and praise." Could we go back to the early years of all hardened criminals, I believe, yes, firmly believe, that their first departure from the path of morality was when they abandoned the Sabbath School, and their subsequent crimes might thus be traced back to the neglect of youthful religious instruction.

Many years ago I spent a Sabbath with Thomas Jefferson, at his residence in Virginia. It was in the month of June, and the weather was delightful. While engaged in discussing the beauties of the Bible, the sound of the bell broke upon our ears, when, turning to the sage of Monticello, I remarked, "How sweetly, how very sweetly sounds that Sabbath bell!" The distinguished statesman for a moment seemed lost in thought, and then replied: "Yes, my dear Webster; yes, it melts the heart, it calms the passions, and makes us boys again." Here I observed that man was only an animal formed for a religious worship, and that notwithstanding all the sophistry of Epicurus, Lucretius and Voltaire, the Scriptures stood upon a rock as firm, as unmovable as truth itself; that man, in his purer, loftier breathings, turned the mental eyes towards immortality, and that the poet only echoed the general sentiment of our nature in saying that, —

"The soul secure in her existence, smiles
At the drawn dagger, and defies its point."

Mr. Jefferson fully concurred in this opinion, and observed that the tendency of the American mind was in a different direction; and that Sunday Schools — (he did not use our more correct term, Sabbath) — presented the only legitimate means, under the constitution, of avoiding the rock on which the French republic was wrecked. "Burke," said he, "never uttered a more important truth than when he exclaimed that a 'religious education was the cheap defence of nations.'" "Raikes," said Mr. Jefferson, "has done more for our country than the present generation will acknowledge; perhaps when I am cold he will obtain his reward; I hope so, earnestly hope so; I am considered by many, Mr. Webster, to have little religion, but now is not the time to correct errors

of this sort. I have always said, and always will say, that the studious perusal of the sacred volume will make better citizens, better fathers, and better husbands. Of the distinguished Raikes, he was *clarum et venerabile nomen.*" I took the liberty of saying that I found more pleasure in Hebrew poetry than in the best productions of Greece and Rome. That the "harp upon the willows by Babylon" had charms for me beyond anything in the numbers of the blind man of Smyrna. I then turned to Jeremiah (there was a fine folio of the Scriptures before me of 1458) and read aloud some of those sublime passages that used to delight me on my father's knee. But I fear, my dear friend, I shall tire you with my prolix account of what was a pleasant Sabbath, spent in the company of one who has filled a very large space in our political and literary annals.

Thanking you for your report, and heartily concurring with you in the truth of your quotation, that "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people," I remain, with a high regard, your friend,

D. WEBSTER.

THE NATIONAL WHIG CONVENTION OF 1852.

*To R. M. Blatchford.*¹

WASHINGTON, June 22, 1852.

MY DEAR MR. BLATCHFORD, — The result of the Baltimore Convention is certainly bad enough. It shows a great deal of folly, and a great deal of infidelity.

Our friends, one and all, did their best; I hear, particularly of your zealous and persevering efforts with the delegations of the Northwest. Indeed I am under infinite obligations to you all.

For myself I possess my soul in patience, and shall see you soon to thank you personally.

Yours always Faithfully, DAN'L WEBSTER.

P. S. In the meantime say to Mr. Grinnell, Mr. Ketchum, and Mr. Thayer, and all other friends whom you may see, that I can never be sufficiently grateful for their unparalleled efforts. I have written to Gen. Webb.

Yours always truly, D. W.

¹ This letter and the one which follows it are from copies in Edward Everett's Papers.

LAST DAYS AT MARSHFIELD.

*To R. M. Blatchford.*¹

Sunday 2 oclock

MY DEAR SIR, — There must have been a violent storm, far off in the ocean, as the sea has been breaking, for three days, on our shores, with little wind here. Yesterday morning the sight was awful, at Bluefish Rock, & the Brant Rock, & the mouth of the North River. I think a furious North Eastern Equinoctial Gale must have encountered the current of the Gulph Stream, & that their conflict disturbed the whole realm of Neptune beneath them. The wind here has been N. E. but not violent, till last night, at midnight, when it veered to the South, & brought us a warm & copious rain, of six hours, this morning. This reassures the verdure of Marshfield, for another month. I hope now for good weather, & a warm October; although the sea may require some days to resume its composure. We look to hear from you, & to see you, soon. The Lapwing is fitting for sea; I propose to sign her shipping articles tomorrow. When you come, I will stay here just as long as may be pleasant to you. I am in no haste for Franklin. One thing, only, I insist upon; that is, when you do come bring *time* enough with you.

Yrs always truly

DANL WEBSTER

CHRISTIANITY.

*To the Rev. Kingston Goddard.*²

MY DEAR SIR, — In thanking you for a beautiful and excellent sermon, with which I was much impressed, it occurred to me to suggest to you, perhaps presumptuously, that motives of a strong and peculiar character might be addressed to the third and last class of persons described by your text.

“ Domestic happiness, that only bliss
Of Paradise that has escaped our fall,”

is yet, like all things earthly, transitory. The circle of family love must one day be broken up by death; but if its members are led to

¹ From the original, in Mr. Webster's handwriting, in the possession of Mr. Grenville H. Norcross. “Sept. 26, 1852” is endorsed in another hand. Mr. Webster's last illness began in September, 1852, and none of his letters at that time mention a return to Franklin. The schooner “Lapwing” was fitted up and given to him in August, 1849, by Captain Forbes and Samuel Hall. See Private Correspondence, Vol. II. p. 336.

² From a newspaper clipping in the New Hampshire Historical Society.

become Christians, it will be joined again, and united to the great family of the redeemed and blessed in another world. The idea is common, but judging from my own feelings, and what we see of its effects on others, it is persuasive and touching.

Undoubtedly, an amiable man, with tender sentiments and affections, is liable to think of no greater felicity than is afforded by the domestic circle. Do you remember Dr. Watts' stanza,—

“ The fondness of a creature's love,
How strong it strikes the sense !
Thither our warm affections move,
Nor can we call them thence.”

I pray you, my dear sir, to excuse this apparent abruptness from a stranger, but a very sincere and most respectful good wisher.

DANL. WEBSTER.

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