

A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law
John Adams

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"There seems to be a direct and formal design on foot, to enslave all America."
(Paragraph 29)

Annotator's Notes

I first encountered this material in a PDF file given me in 2006, which turned out to be an extract from the document *The Revolutionary Writings of John Adams*, published by Liberty Fund, Inc., in 2000 (see below). The introduction herein was part of that document, and was written by C. Bradley Thompson, Department of History and Political Science Ashland University.

Adams' document was published first in four installments anonymously in the *Boston Gazette*, August 12 and 19, September 30, and October 21, 1765. Thomas Hollis later printed it in pamphlet form that had the title now used. The newspaper format had many italics and other formatting not in the original PDF I received. I have attempted to restore the italics, and some of the punctuation.

One special formatting I have added is in regards to the two themes on which Adams based his document, that of canon and feudal, religious and civil, church and state, whether he is writing of laws, systems, or liberties. With the background of prophetic perspective from which I come, the two freedoms in these two realms of society can be seen as predicted for the nation identified in the outworking of history as the United States of America. In Revelation 13:11 the description of this country occurs in these words, "I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb...." With animals representing nations (kingdoms, empires, etc.), the horns on the animal are symbols of its power, with these two horns having the quality of "a lamb," a term whose every other use in Revelation refers to Jesus. The true power of the USA as a nation is these two Christian liberties, which has created, under law, a haven for all religions and races. Adams explicitly ties the rejection by our forefathers of "all the base services and servile dependencies of the feudal system" to "that religious liberty with which Jesus had made them free" (paragraph 13). Thus I have underlined each mention of either of these branches of liberties.

I have followed the paragraphs in the online versions of the original articles (see below), and have inserted the dates at the beginning of each installment. I have also numbered the paragraphs (total of 29) consecutively throughout for ease of reference to them within the footnotes and elsewhere. I have also in footnotes defined words that are uncommon to the modern reader (or at least to me as one of them).

The original footnotes have been preserved with their original footnote symbols. The numbered footnotes are ones that I have supplied, though if noted are comments located in other online editions of the *Dissertation*.

Online editions of this document have been found at:

Founders' Library:

http://www.founding.com/founders_library/pageID.2138/default.asp
(accessed 3/14/16).

Founders Online:

<http://founders.archives.gov/ancestor/ADMS-06-01-02-0052> (This site has links to the individual newspaper sections posted separately, having helpful footnotes added, and an informative Editorial Note as well as Fragmentary Notes from Adams; accessed 3/11/16).

Liberty Fund:

http://lf-oll.s3.amazonaws.com/titles/592/0077_LFeBk.pdf (accessed 3/11/16).

TeachingAmericanHistory.org:

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/a-dissertation-on-the-canon-and-feudal-law/> (accessed 3/11/16).

The dangers of both religious and civil tyranny still exist. These despots face us in our world today in the continued promulgation of systems that make men slaves of men, either in soul or body. They appear as solutions to the dangers of moral rot, or foreign or domestic terrorism. They take the abuses of liberty as excuses for the necessary restriction of it. They attempt to bring about responsible citizenship by force when it can only come by moral renewal. They cloak themselves as free market economies and corporations that would ignore in the name of profit any degree of equity, rights, or protection of the environment. They promote themselves as necessary to avoid the chaos of religious extremism or of climate change. We must not ignore the fact that the prophetic warning of Revelation 13:11 ends with the prediction that the lamb-like power will also speak "as dragon." Eternal vigilance is still the price of liberty.

Introduction

Early in 1765 John Adams began writing an essay on the history of ecclesiastical and civil despotism for the Sodality, a private club of Boston lawyers. His purpose was to contrast the tyranny of the canon and feudal law against New England's heroic struggle for freedom. He soon decided to expand and publish his "Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law" when he learned of Parliament's approval of the Stamp Act in March 1765. In his diary, Adams described the Stamp Act as an "enormous Engine, fabricated by the british Parliament, for battering down all the Rights and Liberties of America."

The "Dissertation" is an essay in political education. Its larger purpose was to raise an alarm against an impending threat and to rouse the people in defense of their rights. Adams saw in the Stamp Act an early-warning signal indicating the direction of British colonial policy. It violated in two important ways the most fundamental principle of the English constitution: the principle of consent. The Stamp Act denied the rights guaranteed by Magna Carta that no citizen shall be deprived of his property or taxed without his consent, and it extended juryless courts of admiralty into the American colonies. When combined with the recently passed Sugar Act, the Stamp Act permitted the transfer of revenue enforcement from regular common-law courts to the newly empowered admiralty courts. In Adams's eyes, this meant that unconstitutional courts would now enforce unconstitutional taxes. He concludes rather ominously by suggesting that there was "a direct and formal design on foot, to enslave all America."

A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law

To the Printers.

[Monday, 12 August 1765]

1. "Ignorance and inconsideration are the two great causes of the ruin of mankind." This is an observation of *Dr. Tillotson*,¹ with relation to the interest of his fellow men in a future and immortal state. But it is of equal truth and importance if applied to the happiness of men in society, on this side the grave. In the earliest ages of the world, *absolute monarchy* seems to have been the universal form of government. Kings, and a few of their great counsellors and captains, exercised a cruel tyranny over the people, who held a rank in the scale of intelligence, in those days, but little higher than the camels and elephants that carried them and their engines to war.
2. By what causes it was brought to pass, that the people in the middle ages became more *intelligent* in general, would not, perhaps, be possible in these days to discover. But the fact is certain; and wherever a general knowledge and sensibility have prevailed among the *people*, arbitrary government and every kind of oppression have lessened and disappeared in proportion. Man has certainly an exalted soul; and the same principle in human nature,—that aspiring, noble principle founded in benevolence, and cherished by knowledge; I mean the love of power, which has been so often the cause of *slavery*,—has, whenever freedom has existed, been the cause of *freedom*. If it is this principle that has always prompted the princes and nobles of the earth, by every species of fraud and violence to shake off all the *limitations* of their power, it is the same that has always stimulated the common people to aspire at independency, and to endeavor at confining the power of the great within the limits of *equity* and *reason*.
3. The poor people, it is true, have been much less successful than the great. They have seldom found either leisure or opportunity to form a union and exert their strength; ignorant as they were of arts and letters, they have seldom been able to frame and support a regular opposition. This, however, has been known by the great to be the temper of mankind; and they have accordingly labored, in all ages, to wrest from the populace, as they are contemptuously called, the knowledge of their rights and wrongs, and the power to assert the former or redress the latter. I say RIGHTS, for such they have, undoubtedly, antecedent to all earthly government,—*Rights*, that cannot be repealed or restrained by human laws—*Rights*, derived from the great Legislator of the universe.²
4. Since the promulgation of Christianity, the two greatest systems of tyranny that have sprung from this original, are the *canon* and the *feudal* law. The desire of dominion, that great principle by which we have attempted to account for so much good and so much evil, is, when *properly restrained*, a very useful and noble movement in the human mind. But when such restraints are taken off, it becomes an encroaching, grasping, restless, and ungovernable power. Numberless have been the systems of iniquity contrived by the great for the gratification of this passion in themselves; but in none of

¹ John Tillotson (October 1630 – 22 November 1694) was the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury 1691-1694. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Tillotson, accessed March 9, 2016]

² It is appropriate that Adams as a lawyer would in his first reference to the God of the universe refer to Him as "the great Legislator" of that realm, the One who in His very creation is the Maker of laws. I will cumulatively footnote Adams' appellations of God.

them were they ever more successful than in the invention and establishment of the *canon* and the *feudal* law.

5. By the *former* of these, the most refined, sublime, extensive, and astonishing constitution of policy that ever was conceived by the mind of man was framed by the *Romish* clergy for the aggrandisement of their own order.³ All the epithets I have here given to the *Romish* policy are just, and will be allowed to be so when it is considered, that they even persuaded mankind to believe, faithfully and undoubtingly, that GOD Almighty⁴ had entrusted them with the keys of heaven, whose gates *they* might open and close at pleasure—with a power of dispensation over all the rules and obligations of morality—with authority to license all sorts of sins and crimes—with a power of deposing princes and absolving subjects from allegiance—with a power of procuring or withholding the rain of heaven and the beams of the sun—with the management of earthquakes, pestilence, and famine—Nay, with the mysterious, awful, incomprehensible power of creating out of bread and wine the flesh and blood of God himself. All these opinions they were enabled to spread and rivet among the people by reducing their minds to a state of sordid ignorance and staring timidity, and by infusing into them a *religious* horror of letters and knowledge. Thus was human nature chained fast for ages in a cruel, shameful, and deplorable servitude to him, and his subordinate tyrants, who, it was foretold, would exalt himself above all that was called God, and that was worshipped.⁵
6. In the latter we find another system, similar in many respects to the former; which, although it was originally formed, perhaps, for the necessary defence of a *barbarous* people against the inroads and invasions of her neighboring nations, yet for the same purposes of tyranny, cruelty, and lust, which had dictated the *canon* law, it was soon adopted by almost all the princes of Europe, and wrought into the constitutions of their *government*. It was originally a code of laws for a vast army in a perpetual encampment. The general was invested with the sovereign propriety of all the lands within the territory. Of *him*, as his servants and vassals, the first rank of his great officers held the lands; and in the same manner the other subordinate officers held of them; and all ranks and degrees held their lands by a variety of *duties* and *services*, all tending to bind the chains the faster on every order of mankind. In this manner the common people were held together in herds and clans in a state of *servile* dependence on their lords, bound, even by the tenure of their lands, to follow them, whenever they commanded, to their wars, and in a state of total ignorance of every thing divine and human, excepting the use of arms and the culture of their lands.

³ Consider Peter's note on this problem. "Through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you." (2 Peter 2:3)

⁴ Add to "the great Legislator of the universe" in the names for God this term, "GOD Almighty" (repeated in paragraph 26) and other uses (two in this same paragraph, as well as paragraphs 8, 18, and 26 twice) of simply "God" or "GOD."

⁵ This foretelling was by Paul regarding his comment that during "a falling away..., that man of sin [will] be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." (2 Thessalonians 2:4) Paul's observation in turn appear to be a commentary on Daniel 11:36, 37.

7. But another event still more calamitous to human liberty, was a wicked confederacy between the *two systems* of tyranny above described.⁶ It seems to have been even *stipulated* between them, that the *temporal* grandees should contribute every thing in their power to maintain the ascendancy of the *priesthood*, and that the *spiritual* grandees in their turn, should employ their ascendancy over the *consciences* of the *people*, in impressing on their minds a *blind, implicit* obedience to *civil* magistracy.⁷
8. Thus, as long as this confederacy lasted, and the people were held in ignorance, Liberty, and with her, Knowledge and Virtue too, seem to have deserted the earth, and one age of darkness succeeded another, till GOD in his benign providence raised up the champions who began and conducted the *Reformation*. From the time of the Reformation to the first settlement of *America*, knowledge gradually spread in Europe, but especially in *England*,⁸ and in proportion as that increased and spread among the people, *ecclesiastical* and *civil* tyranny, which I use as synonymous expressions for the *canon* and *feudal* laws, seem to have lost their strength and weight. The people grew more and more sensible of the wrong that was done them by these systems, more and more impatient under it, and determined at all hazards to rid themselves of it; till at last, under the *execrable* race of the *Stuarts*,⁹ the struggle between the people and the confederacy aforesaid of *temporal* and *spiritual* tyranny, became formidable, violent, and bloody.
9. It was this great struggle that peopled *America*.¹⁰ It was not religion *alone*, as is commonly supposed; but it was a love of *universal Liberty*, and an hatred, a dread, an horror, of the infernal confederacy before described, that projected, conducted, and accomplished the settlement of *America*.

⁶ This confederacy was a union of church and state, religious and civil, in a way that placed another man in the place reserved alone for God in the conscience of men.

⁷ A telling comment on this relationship occurred in the 20th century in the comment of Pius XII's associate, Ludwig Kaas, after the signing of the Lateran Treaty with Mussolini in 1929. "Kaas argued that the treaty with Mussolini was an ideal agreement between the modern totalitarian state and the modern Church, a treaty in which the central issue was the acceptance by the state of the Code of Canon Law for Catholic citizens. 'The authoritarian Church,' he reasoned, 'should understand the "authoritarian" state better than others.' Mussolini ordered things on the basis of a hierarchical concentration of power under the unlimited will of the Duce, and yet, Kaas explained, it would have made no sense for the Duce to interfere in the details of canon law. 'Nobody would have better understood the claim to comprehensive law, such as that demanded by the Church, than the dictator who in his own sphere had established a radical, unchallenged and unchallengeable, hierarchical Fascist edifice.'" (John Cornwell, *Hitler's Pope*, Penguin Books, 1999, p. 128)

⁸ Adams' explicit tie of the Reformation to England and thence to America reveals the thoroughly Protestant perspective on the source of the freedoms for which he argues being rooted in that heritage that again brought Scripture to the sole primacy of rule over the conscience.

⁹ Rulers of England of the House of Stuart

¹⁰ Compare the dates of the founding of Jamestown (1607) and Plymouth (1620) with the lifespan of James I of England, of the House of Stuart (1566-1625).

10. It was a resolution formed by a sensible people,—I mean the *Puritans*,— almost in despair. They had become intelligent in general, and many of them learned. For this fact, I have the testimony of Archbishop *King*¹¹ himself, who observed of that people, that they were more intelligent and better read than even the members of the church, whom he censures warmly for that reason. This people had been so vexed and tortured by the powers of those days, for no other crime than their knowledge and their freedom of inquiry and examination, and they had so much reason to despair of deliverance from those miseries on that side the ocean, that they at last resolved to fly to the *wilderness* for refuge from the temporal and spiritual principalities and powers, and plagues and scourges of their *native* country.
11. After their arrival here, they began their settlement, and formed their plan, both of ecclesiastical and civil government, in direct *opposition* to the canon and the feudal systems. The leading men among them, both of the clergy and the laity, were men of sense and learning. To many of them the historians, orators, poets, and philosophers of *Greece* and *Rome* were quite familiar; and some of them have left libraries that are still in being, consisting chiefly of volumes in which the wisdom of the most enlightened ages and nations is deposited,—written, however, in languages which their great-grandsons, *though educated in European universities*, can scarcely read.¹²

¹¹ William King, D.D. (1650–1729) was an Anglican divine in the Church of Ireland, who was Archbishop of Dublin from 1703 to 1729. He was an author and supported the Glorious Revolution, which replaced James II of the House of Stuart with William and Mary. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_King_\(bishop\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_King_(bishop)); accessed March 11, 2016)

¹² These "leading men" must have seen the proper relation of the Reformation of the 16th century (which Adam referenced in paragraph 8) to the European Greco-Roman heritage, because the Protestant insistence on *sola scriptura* was a clear separation of the authority of Scripture with its Hebrew mindset from, and an elevation above, the influence of Greek philosophy which molded the Greco-Roman world (which Adams again lauds in paragraphs 13 and 25). While there were many principles from that heritage that were to be admired, the trajectory of the Reformation was away from Hellenism and back to the Hebraic. For an argument against this direction, see the September 12, 2006 speech by the then-universal-legislator of the Catholic Church with its canon law, Pope Benedict XVI, at Regensburg, Germany, titled "Faith, Reason, and the University." (See http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg.html. Accessed March 9, 2016; title "universal legislator" found in article "What is Canon Law" <http://diocese-tribunal.org/canonlaw.php>, accessed 3/25/16.)

In Adams' diary notes, the draft of the *Dissertation* has following this paragraph these words: "I always consider the settlement of America with reverence and wonder, as the opening of a grand scene and design in Providence for the illumination of the ignorant, and the emancipation of the slavish part of mankind all over the earth." (See <http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/archive/doc?id=D10&numrecs=1&archive=all&hi=on&mode=&query=opening%2520of%2520a%2520grand%2520Scene&queryid=&rec=1&start=1&tag=text>; accessed 3/11/16; actual images of his diary with transcription.) To connect these thoughts with the development in the following century of the Advent Movement bears consideration, with its global mission, burdened with the final messages

[Monday, 19 August 1765]

12. Thus accomplished were many of the first planters in these colonies. It may be thought polite and fashionable by many modern fine gentlemen, perhaps, to deride the characters of these persons, as enthusiastical, superstitious, and republican. But such ridicule is founded in nothing but foppery¹³ and affectation,¹⁴ and is grossly injurious and false. Religious to some degree of enthusiasm it may be admitted they were; but this can be no peculiar derogation from their character; because it was at that time almost the universal character not only of England, but of Christendom. Had this, however, been otherwise, their enthusiasm, considering the principles on which it was founded and the ends to which it was directed, far from being a reproach to them, was greatly to their honor; for I believe it will be found universally true, that no great enterprise for the honor or happiness of mankind was ever achieved without a large mixture of that noble infirmity. Whatever imperfections may be justly ascribed to them, which, however, are as few as any mortals have discovered, their judgment in framing their policy was founded in wise, humane, and benevolent principles. It was founded in revelation and in reason too. It was consistent with the principles of the best and greatest and wisest legislators of antiquity. Tyranny in every form, shape, and appearance was their disdain and abhorrence; no fear of punishment, nor even of *Death* itself in exquisite tortures, had been sufficient to conquer that steady, manly, pertinacious spirit with which they had opposed the tyrants of those days in church and state. They were very far from being enemies to monarchy; and they knew as well as any men, the just regard and honor that is due to the character of a dispenser of the mysteries of the gospel of grace. But they saw clearly, that popular powers must be placed as a guard, a control, a balance, to the powers of the monarch and the priest, in every government, or else it would soon become the man of sin, the whore of Babylon, the mystery of iniquity, a great and detestable system of fraud, violence, and usurpation.¹⁵ Their greatest concern seems to have been to establish a government of the church more consistent with the Scriptures,¹⁶ and a government of the state more agreeable to the dignity of human nature, than any they had seen in Europe, and to transmit such a government down to their posterity, with the

of Christianity to the world, which were messages against both the principle and systems of tyranny. (See "The Significance of 1844 in Light of the United States of America" at http://www.fredbischoff.com/?page_id=764.)

These messages were to be accompanied with the work of Isaiah 58 (see verse 6, "to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free") as fulfillments of John 8:32, "the truth shall make you free," and Romans 8:2, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

¹³ Defined as "Folly; impertinence" (Webster's 1828 Dictionary)

¹⁴ Defined as "An attempt to assume or exhibit what is not natural or real; false pretense; artificial appearance, or show." (*Ibid.*)

¹⁵ "Man of sin" is from 2 Thessalonians 2:3; "whore of Babylon" is from Revelation 17:1-5; "mystery of iniquity" is from 2 Thessalonians 2:7. See paragraph 5 and footnote 5.

¹⁶ Note the role of Scriptures in guiding the form of church government. He refers again to the Bible later in this paragraph.

means of securing and preserving it forever. To render the popular power in their new government as great and wise as their principles of theory,¹⁷ that is, as human nature and the Christian religion require it should be, they endeavored to remove from it as many of the feudal inequalities and dependencies as could be spared, consistently with the preservation of a mild limited monarchy. And in this they discovered the depth of their wisdom and the warmth of their friendship to human nature. But the first place is due to religion. They saw clearly, that of all the nonsense and delusion which had ever passed through the mind of man, none had ever been more extravagant than the notions of absolutions, indelible characters, uninterrupted successions, and the rest of those fantastical ideas, derived from the canon law, which had thrown such a glare of mystery, sanctity, reverence, and right reverend eminence and holiness, around the idea of a priest, as no mortal could deserve, and as always must, from the constitution of human nature, be dangerous in society. For this reason, they demolished the whole system of diocesan episcopacy; and, deriding, as all reasonable and impartial men must do, the ridiculous fancies of sanctified effluvia from episcopal fingers, they established sacerdotal ordination on the foundation of the Bible and common sense. This conduct at once imposed an obligation on the whole body of the clergy to industry, virtue, piety, and learning, and rendered that whole body infinitely more independent on the civil powers, in all respects, than they could be where they were formed into a scale of subordination, from a pope down to priests and friars and confessors,—necessarily and essentially a sordid, stupid, and wretched herd,—or than they could be in any other country, where an archbishop held the place of a universal bishop, and the vicars and curates that of the ignorant, dependent, miserable rabble aforesaid,—and infinitely more sensible and learned than they could be in either. This subject has been seen in the same light by many illustrious patriots, who have lived in America since the days of our forefathers, and who have adored their memory for the same reason. And methinks there has not appeared in New England a stronger veneration for their memory, a more penetrating insight into the grounds and principles and spirit of their policy, nor a more earnest desire of perpetuating the blessings of it to posterity, than that fine institution of the late Chief Justice Dudley,¹⁸ of a lecture¹⁹ against popery, and on the validity of presbyterian ordination. This was

¹⁷ This challenge that "the first planters in these colonies" had of taking the "principles of theory" of freedom from tyranny, and applying them to "the popular power in their new government" is one that Adams' himself was to face as he was drawn shortly into a government not colonial but federal. See comments in footnote 34 under paragraph 21.

¹⁸ Paul Dudley (1675-1751), chief justice of the Superior Court of Massachusetts from 1745 until his death. See footnote on him in the Fragmentary Notes in the Founders Online edition of the *Dissertation* (see Annotator's Notes).

¹⁹ Adams referred in "that fine institution ... of a lecture" to what is known as the annual "Dudleian Lecture," which Dudley endowed in 1750, specifying that the topic of the lectures should rotate among four themes:

1. The principles of natural religion.
2. The truths of scriptural revelation.

certainly intended by that wise and excellent man, as an eternal memento of the wisdom and goodness of the very principles that settled America. But I must again return to the feudal law.

13. The adventurers so often mentioned, had an utter contempt of all that dark ribaldry of hereditary, indefeasible right,—the Lord's anointed,—and the divine, miraculous original of government, with which the priesthood had enveloped the feudal monarch in clouds and mysteries, and from whence they had deduced the most mischievous of all doctrines, that of passive obedience and non-resistance. They knew that government was a plain, simple, intelligible thing, founded in nature and reason, and quite comprehensible by common sense. They detested all the base services and servile dependencies of the feudal system. They knew that no such unworthy dependencies took place in the ancient seats of liberty, the republics of Greece and Rome; and they thought all such slavish subordinations were equally inconsistent with the constitution of human nature and that religious liberty with which Jesus had made them free.²⁰ This was certainly the opinion they had formed; and they were far from being singular or extravagant in thinking so. Many celebrated modern writers in Europe have espoused the same sentiments. Lord Kames²¹, a Scottish writer of great reputation, whose authority in this case ought to have the more weight as his countrymen have not the most worthy ideas of liberty, speaking of the feudal law, says,—"A constitution so contradictory to all the principles which govern mankind can never be brought about, one should imagine,

3. "The detecting and convicting and exposing the idolatry of the Romish church, their tyranny, usurpations, damnable heresies, fatal errors, abominable superstitions, and other crying wickedness in their high places."

4. "The validity of the presbyterial ordination of ministers" (specifically, in the form practiced at the time in Scotland and Geneva, and among Englishmen who opposed the episcopal ordination of the Church of England).

This is Harvard's oldest endowed lectureship, brief histories of which can be found online: (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dudleian_lectures, accessed 3/14/16, source of the above themes; <http://cushwa.nd.edu/news/61978-kathleen-sprows-cummings-to-present-harvards-dudleian-lecture-next-week/>, accessed 3/15/16). See also "The Pope at Harvard: The Dudleian Lectures, Anti-Catholicism, and the Politics of Protestantism," Pauline Maier, *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Third Series, Vol. 97 (1985), pp. 16-41.

²⁰ This is an allusion to Jesus' words in John 8:32, 36. "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.... If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

²¹ Henry Home, Lord Kames (1696 – 27 December 1782) was a Scottish advocate, judge, philosopher, writer and agricultural improver. A central figure of the Scottish Enlightenment, a founder member of the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh, and active in the Select Society, his protégés included David Hume, Adam Smith, and James Boswell. (See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Home,_Lord_Kames, accessed March 9, 2016.) The extract that follows and which was referenced in the next footnote as "Brit. Ant. p. 2" appears to be from Home's document *Essay Upon Several Subjects Concerning British Antiquities* (c. 1745).

but by foreign conquest or native usurpations."* Rousseau,²² speaking of the same system, calls it,—"That most iniquitous and absurd form of government by which human nature was so shamefully degraded."† It would be easy to multiply authorities, but it must be needless; because, as the original of this form of government was among savages, as the spirit of it is military and despotic, every writer who would allow the people to have any right to life or property or freedom more than the beasts of the field, and who was not hired or enlisted under arbitrary, lawless power, has been always willing to admit the feudal system to be inconsistent with liberty and the rights of mankind.

[Monday, 30 September 1765]

14. To have holden their lands allodially,²³ or for every man to have been the sovereign lord and proprietor of the ground he occupied, would have constituted a government too nearly like a commonwealth. They were contented, therefore, to hold their lands of their king, as their sovereign lord; and to him they were willing to render homage, but to no mesne²⁴ or subordinate lords; nor were they willing to submit to any of the baser services. In all this they were so strenuous, that they have even transmitted to their posterity a very general contempt and detestation of holdings by quitrents,²⁵ as they have also a hereditary ardor for liberty and thirst for knowledge.
15. They were convinced, by their knowledge of human nature, derived from history and their own experience, that nothing could preserve their posterity from the encroachments of the two systems of tyranny, in opposition to which, as has been observed already, they erected their government in church and state, but knowledge

* Brit. Ant. p. 2.

²² Jean Jacques Rousseau, *A Treatise on the Social Compact; or the Principles of Politic Law*, London, 1764. This book was in Adams' library. Rousseau (1712-1778) was perhaps the most influential philosopher of the eighteenth century. The sentence quoted begins "The notion of representatives is modern; descending to us from the feudal system, that most iniquitous...." (See the edition of Rousseau's book online as part of the Eighteen Century Collections Online Text Creation Partnership here: <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eccodemo/K107868.0001.001/1:4.3.15?rgn=div3;view=fulltext>, accessed 3/12/16.)

† Social Compact, page 164.

²³ This adverb derives from "allodial" which was defined in Webster's 1828 dictionary as "Pertaining to allodium; freehold; free of rent or service; held independence of a lord paramount; opposed to feudal." In turn, "allodium" is defined as "Freehold estate; land which is the absolute property of the owner; real estate held in absolute independence, without being subject to any rent, service, or acknowledgment to a superior. It is thus opposed to feud. In England, there is no allodial land, all land being held of the king; but in the United States, most lands are allodial."

²⁴ This adjective is defined as, "In law, middle; intervening; as a mesne lord, that is, a lord who holds land of a superior, but grants a part of it to another person. In this case, he is a tenant to the superior, but lord or superior to the second grantee, and called the mesne lord." (*Ibid.*)

²⁵ Defined as "A rent paid by a freeman in lieu of the services required by feudal custom." (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/quitrent>, accessed 3/13/16).

diffused generally through the whole body of the people. Their civil and religious principles, therefore, conspired to prompt them to use every measure and take every precaution in their power to propagate and perpetuate knowledge. For this purpose they laid very early the foundations of colleges, and invested them with ample privileges and emoluments; and it is remarkable that they have left among their posterity so universal an affection and veneration for those seminaries, and for liberal education, that the meanest of the people contribute cheerfully to the support and maintenance of them every year, and that nothing is more generally popular than projections for the honor, reputation, and advantage of those seats of learning. But the wisdom and benevolence of our fathers rested not here. They made an early provision by law, that every town consisting of so many families, should be always furnished with a grammar school. They made it a crime for such a town to be destitute of a grammar schoolmaster for a few months, and subjected it to a heavy penalty. So that the education of all ranks of people was made the care and expense of the public, in a manner that I believe has been unknown to any other people ancient or modern.

16. The consequences of these establishments we see and feel every day. A native of America who cannot read and write is as rare an appearance as a Jacobite²⁶ or a Roman Catholic, that is, as rare as a Comet or an Earthquake. It has been observed, that we are all of us lawyers, divines, politicians, and philosophers. And I have good authorities to say, that all candid foreigners who have passed through this country, and conversed freely with all sorts of people here, will allow, that they have never seen so much knowledge and civility among the common people in any part of the world. It is true, there has been among us a party for some years, consisting chiefly not of the descendants of the first settlers of this country, but of high churchmen and high statesmen imported since, who affect to censure this provision for the education of our youth as a needless expense, and an imposition upon the rich in favor of the poor, and as an institution productive of idleness and vain speculation among the people, whose time and attention, it is said, ought to be devoted to labor, and not to public affairs, or to examination into the conduct of their superiors. And certain officers of the crown, and certain other missionaries of ignorance, foppery, servility, and slavery, have been most inclined to countenance and increase the same party. Be it remembered, however, that liberty must at all hazards be supported. We have a right to it, derived from our Maker.²⁷ But if we had not, our fathers have earned and bought it for us, at the expense of their ease, their estates, their pleasure, and their blood. And liberty cannot be preserved without a general knowledge among the people, who have a right, from the frame of their nature, to knowledge, as their great Creator, who does nothing in vain, has given them understandings, and a desire to know; but besides this, they have a right, an indisputable, unalienable, indefeasible, divine right to that most dreaded and envied kind of knowledge, I mean, of the characters and conduct of their rulers. Rulers are no more than

²⁶ "Jacobite" echoes the earlier comment on the Stuarts (paragraph 8), and is defined in Webster's 1828 Dictionary as "A partizan or adherent of James II, king of England, after he abdicated the throne, and of his descendants; of course, an opposer of the revolution in 1688, in favor of William and Mary."

²⁷ Add to "the great Legislator of the universe," "GOD Almighty" this title "Maker" and its synonym later in the same paragraph of "Creator."

attorneys, agents, and trustees, for the people; and if the cause, the interest and trust, is insidiously betrayed, or wantonly trifled away, the people have a right to revoke the authority that they themselves have deputed, and to constitute abler and better agents, attorneys, and trustees. And the preservation of the means of knowledge among the lowest ranks, is of more importance to the public than all the property of all the rich men in the country. It is even of more consequence to the rich themselves, and to their posterity. The only question is, whether it is a public emolument; and if it is, the rich ought undoubtedly to contribute, in the same proportion as to all other public burdens,—that is, in proportion to their wealth, which is secured by public expenses. But none of the means of information are more sacred, or have been cherished with more tenderness and care by the settlers of America, than the press.²⁸ Care has been taken that the art of printing should be encouraged, and that it should be easy and cheap and safe for any person to communicate his thoughts to the public. And you, Messieurs printers,²⁹ whatever the tyrants of the earth may say of your paper, have done important service to your country by your readiness and freedom in publishing the speculations of the curious. The stale, impudent insinuations of slander and sedition, with which the gormandizers of power have endeavored to discredit your paper, are so much the more to your honor; for the jaws of power are always opened to devour, and her arm is always stretched out, if possible, to destroy the freedom of thinking, speaking, and writing. And if the public interest, liberty, and happiness have been in danger from the ambition or avarice of any great man, whatever may be his politeness, address, learning, ingenuity, and, in other respects, integrity and humanity, you have done yourselves honor and your country service by publishing and pointing out that avarice and ambition. These vices are so much the more dangerous and pernicious for the virtues with which they may be accompanied in the same character, and with so much the more watchful jealousy to be guarded against.

17. "Curse on such virtues, they've undone their country."³⁰

18. Be not intimidated, therefore, by any terrors, from publishing with the utmost freedom, whatever can be warranted by the laws of your country; nor suffer yourselves to be wheedled out of your liberty by any pretences of politeness, delicacy, or decency. These, as they are often used, are but three different names for hypocrisy, chicanery, and cowardice. Much less, I presume, will you be discouraged by any pretences that malignants on this side the water will represent your paper as factious and seditious, or

²⁸ Recall that the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, adopted 26 years later, states, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press...." In contrast to this and other statements of Adams herein of the importance of the freedom of the press, consider the impact of the Alien and Seditious Acts of 1798 on this freedom, and Adam's role in them. (See a review of these at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alien_and_Sedition_Acts, accessed 3/15/16.) Consider also a suggestion for why Adams took the path he did, as found in footnote 34, under paragraph 21.

²⁹ Benjamin Edes and James Gill, printers of the *Boston Gazette*

³⁰ Joseph Addison, *Cato*, Act IV, scene iv. (Footnote in the Founders Online edition. See Annotator Notes.)

that the great on the other side the water will take offence at them. This Dread of *representation* has had for a long time, in this province, effects very similar to what the physicians call a hydropho, or dread of water. It has made us delirious; and we have rushed headlong into the water, till we are almost drowned, out of simple or phrensical³¹ fear of it. Believe me, the character of this country has suffered more in Britain by the pusillanimity³² with which we have borne many insults and indignities from the creatures of power at home and the creatures of those creatures here, than it ever did or ever will by the freedom and spirit that has been or will be discovered in writing or action. Believe me, my countrymen, they have imbibed an opinion on the other side the water, that we are an ignorant, a timid, and a stupid people; nay, their tools on this side have often the impudence to dispute your bravery. But I hope in God the time is near at hand when they will be fully convinced of your understanding, integrity, and courage. But can any thing be more ridiculous, were it not too provoking to be laughed at, than to pretend that offence should be taken at home for writings here? Pray, let them look at home. Is not the human understanding exhausted there? Are not reason, imagination, wit, passion, senses, and all, tortured to find out satire and invective against the characters of the vile and futile fellows who sometimes get into place and power? The most exceptionable paper that ever I saw here is perfect prudence and modesty in comparison of multitudes of their applauded writings. Yet the high regard they have for the freedom of the press,³³ indulges all. I must and will repeat it, your paper deserves the patronage of every friend to his country. And whether the defamers of it are arrayed in robes of scarlet or sable, whether they lurk and skulk in an insurance office, whether they assume the venerable character of a priest, the sly one of a scrivener, or the dirty, infamous, abandoned one of an informer, they are all the creatures and tools of the lust of domination.

19. The true source of our sufferings has been our timidity. [Monday, 21 October 1765]
20. We have been afraid to think. We have felt a reluctance to examining into the grounds of our privileges, and the extent in which we have an indisputable right to demand them, against all the power and authority on earth. And many who have not scrupled to examine for themselves, have yet for certain prudent reasons been cautious and diffident of declaring the result of their inquiries.
21. The cause of this timidity is perhaps hereditary, and to be traced back in history as far as the cruel treatment the first settlers of this country received, before their embarkation for America, from the government at home. Everybody knows how

³¹ Adjective form of "phrensy" which is defined in Webster's 1828 Dictionary as "Madness; delirium, or that partial madness which manifests itself in wild and erratic sallies of the imagination. It is written also frenzy."

³² "Want of that firmness and strength of mind which constitutes courage or fortitude; weakness of spirit; cowardliness; that feebleness of mind which shrinks from trifling or imaginary dangers." (*Ibid.*)

³³ The reader is encouraged to review the Wikipedia article on "Freedom of the press" in which it is stated, "According to the *New York Times*, 'Britain has a long tradition of a free, inquisitive press', but '[u]nlike the United States, Britain has no constitutional guarantee of press freedom.'" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_of_the_press, accessed 3/14/16).

dangerous it was to speak or write in favor of any thing, in those days, but the triumphant system of religion and politics. And our fathers were particularly the objects of the persecutions and proscriptions of the times. It is not unlikely, therefore, that although they were inflexibly steady in refusing their positive assent to any thing against their principles, they might have contracted habits of reserve, and a cautious diffidence of asserting their opinions publicly. These habits they probably brought with them to America, and have transmitted down to us. Or we may possibly account for this appearance by the great affection and veneration Americans have always entertained for the country from whence they sprang; or by the quiet temper for which they have been remarkable, no country having been less disposed to discontent than this; or by a sense they have that it is their duty to acquiesce under the administration of government, even when in many smaller matters grievous to them, and until the essentials of the great compact are destroyed or invaded. These peculiar causes might operate upon them; but without these, we all know that human nature³⁴ itself, from indolence, modesty,

³⁴ This appears to be Adams' only caution about "human nature" in this document. His other comments (paragraphs 2, 5, 12, 13, 26, 27), as well as "nature" (paragraphs 13 and 16) and "the law of nature" (paragraph 25), appealed to the natural world as a vital source of knowledge, along with history. While he affirmed his belief in man as the product of a "Maker" and "Creator" (paragraph 16), and affirmed "the dignity of his nature, and the noble rank he holds among the works of God" (paragraph 26), his failure herein to mention consistently the results on human nature of the fall into sin (which term he attached only to "the man of sin" in paragraph 12), gives evidence of a failure to realize the roots of tyranny also within that nature, thus within self. The ability to find the narrow path between tyranny and anarchy, so fundamental to just government, was soon to be tested in the events erupting in the French Revolution, and the implications for the fledging government on this side of the Atlantic, of which at that very time Adams himself was the chief executive! Perhaps his greatest test came to him as president in the Alien and Sedition Acts, which he signed in 1798, which resulted, among other things, in the jailing of newspaper publishers. That date should be considered in light of the history of laws, particularly the code of canon law (with ties to the Justinian code) and the soon-to-appear Napoleonic code, as well as in the fulfillment of a prophetic time span mentioned at least seven times in Daniel and Revelation (Daniel 7:25; 12:7; Revelation 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14; 13:5), dealing specifically with tyranny (Daniel 7:21; Revelation 13:7), a change of laws (Daniel 7:25), and a proud arrogance (which Adams already addressed in his references to 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4, and 7 in paragraphs 5 and 12 where he used the labels associated with "the man of sin") that would attempt to alter God's law as it developed over centuries what came to be the canon law. These dangers inherent in fallen human nature we find demonstrating themselves in Seventh-day Adventism a century later, in a sad dichotomy between prophetic interpretation and church governance and relations. Ellen White addressed the principle both in a letter dated August 30, 1892 in which she described "the spirit of persecution" in our midst (*The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, p. 1013), and in an article dated February 19, 1894 titled "Romanism the Religion of Human Nature" (*Signs of the Times*). She became very specific in a September 1895 document "Thou Shalt Have No Other Gods Before Me" describing "the track of Romanism" of church administrators (*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel*

humanity, or fear, has always too much reluctance to a manly assertion of its rights. Hence, perhaps, it has happened, that nine tenths of the species are groaning and gasping in misery and servitude.

22. But whatever the cause has been, the fact is certain, we have been excessively cautious of giving offence by complaining of grievances. And it is as certain, that American governors, and their friends, and all the crown officers, have availed themselves of this disposition in the people. They have prevailed on us to consent to many things which were grossly injurious to us, and to surrender many others, with voluntary tameness, to which we had the clearest right. Have we not been treated, formerly, with abominable insolence, by officers of the navy? I mean no insinuation against any gentleman now on this station, having heard no complaint of any one of them to his dishonor. Have not some generals from England treated us like servants, nay, more like slaves than like Britons? Have we not been under the most ignominious contribution, the most abject submission, the most supercilious insults, of some custom-house officers? Have we not been trifled with, browbeaten, and trampled on, by former governors, in a manner which no king of England since James the Second has dared to indulge towards his subjects? Have we not raised up one family, in them placed an unlimited confidence, and been soothed and flattered and intimidated by their influence, into a great part of this infamous tameness and submission? "These are serious and alarming questions, and deserve a dispassionate consideration."

23. This disposition has been the great wheel and the mainspring in the American machine of court politics. We have been told that "the word *rights* is an offensive expression;" "that the king, his ministry, and parliament, will not endure to hear Americans talk of their *rights*;" "that Britain is the mother and we the children, that a filial duty and submission is due from us to her," and that "we ought to doubt our own judgment, and presume that she is right, even when she seems to us to shake the foundations of government;" that "Britain is immensely rich and great and powerful, has fleets and armies at her command which have been the dread and terror of the universe, and that she will force her own judgment into execution, right or wrong." But let me entreat you, sir, to pause. Do you consider yourself as a missionary of loyalty or of rebellion? Are you not representing your king, his ministry, and parliament, as tyrants,—imperious, unrelenting tyrants,—by such reasoning as this? Is not this representing your most gracious sovereign as endeavoring to destroy the foundations of his own throne? Are you not representing every member of parliament as renouncing the transactions at Runing Mede, (the meadow, near Windsor, where Magna Charta was signed;) and as repealing in effect the bill of rights, when the Lords and Commons asserted and vindicated the rights of the people and their own rights, and insisted on the king's assent to that assertion and vindication? Do you not represent them as forgetting that the prince of Orange was created King William, by the people, on purpose that their rights might be eternal and inviolable? Is there not something extremely fallacious in the common-place images of mother country and children colonies? Are we the children of Great Britain any

Workers, 1923, p. 362) who, due to their ignoring "the righteousness of Christ by faith" (p. 363), were left with something "inherent in their nature" (p. 364), something that perpetuated "bondage to Satan" (p. 361). Her observation is concise and to the point-- "Satan's methods tend to one end--to make men the slaves of men." (p. 361).

more than the cities of London, Exeter, and Bath? Are we not brethren and fellow subjects with those in Britain, only under a somewhat different method of legislation, and a totally different method of taxation? But admitting we are children, have not children a right to complain when their parents are attempting to break their limbs, to administer poison, or to sell them to enemies for slaves? Let me entreat you to consider, will the mother be pleased when you represent her as deaf to the cries of her children,—when you compare her to the infamous miscreant who lately stood on the gallows for starving her child,—when you resemble her to Lady Macbeth in Shakspeare, (I cannot think of it without horror,)

Who "Had given suck, and knew
How tender 't was to love the babe that milked her,"

But yet, who could
"Even while 'twas smiling in her face,
Have plucked her nipple from the boneless gums,
And dashed the brains out."³⁵

24. Let us banish for ever from our minds, my countrymen, all such unworthy ideas of the king, his ministry, and parliament.³⁶ Let us not suppose that all are become luxurious, effeminate, and unreasonable, on the other side the water, as many designing persons would insinuate. Let us presume, what is in fact true, that the spirit of liberty is as ardent as ever among the body of the nation, though a few individuals may be corrupted.

³⁵ In regards to this reference to Shakespeare, and that in paragraph 17 to Addison, Jason Shafer notes, "Adams' writings demonstrate both a fondness for theatrical metaphor and an impressive familiarity with the drama, particularly the works of Shakespeare. Addison, however, clearly captured his imagination as well..." (*Performing Patriotism: National Identity in the Colonial and Revolutionary American Theater*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007, p. 46). The following appears on the dust cover of Shafer's book referring to the date setting of Adams' *Dissertation*: "During the eighteenth century, North American colonists began to display an increasing appetite for professional and amateur theatrical performances and a familiarity with the British dramatic canon ranging from the tragedies of Shakespeare, Addison, and Rowe to the comedies of Farquhar, Steele, and Gay..." Thus was noted "the eighteenth-century commonplace that the theater could be a school for public virtue..." A little over a century after the publication of *Dissertation*, Ellen White commented on the unexpected outcome of this fascination, an observation with which, after almost a century and a half more, anyone sensitive to the morality and virtue to which Adams appealed throughout his *Dissertation* could agree, and further could apply Cato's curse to any supposed virtue in encouraging that medium. White wrote, "Among the most dangerous resorts for pleasure is the theater. Instead of being a school of morality and virtue, as is so often claimed, it is the very hotbed of immorality.... There is no influence in our land more powerful to poison the imagination, to destroy religious impressions, and to blunt the relish for the tranquil pleasures and sober realities of life than theatrical amusements." (*Testimonies for the Church*, Volume Four, 1881, p. 652)

³⁶ This paragraph and the next begin a series of first person plural imperatives, in his appeals to all, "Let us...", while in later paragraphs he will take on a more specific focus, which we will note.

Let us take it for granted, that the same great spirit which once gave Caesar so warm a reception, which denounced hostilities against John till Magna Charta was signed, which severed the head of Charles the First from his body, and drove James the Second from his kingdom, the same great spirit (may heaven preserve it till the earth shall be no more) which first seated the great grandfather of his present most gracious majesty on the throne of Britain,—is still alive and active and warm in England; and that the same spirit in America, instead of provoking the inhabitants of that country, will endear us to them for ever, and secure their good-will.

25. This spirit, however, without knowledge, would be little better than a brutal rage. Let us tenderly and kindly cherish, therefore, the means of knowledge. Let us dare to read, think, speak, and write. Let every order and degree among the people rouse their attention and animate their resolution. Let them all become attentive to the grounds and principles of government, ecclesiastical and civil. Let us study the law of nature; search into the spirit of the British constitution; read the histories of ancient ages; contemplate the great examples of Greece and Rome; set before us the conduct of our own British ancestors, who have defended for us the inherent rights of mankind against foreign and domestic tyrants and usurpers, against arbitrary kings and cruel priests, in short, against the gates of earth and hell. Let us read and recollect and impress upon our souls the views and ends of our own more immediate forefathers, in exchanging their native country for a dreary, inhospitable wilderness. Let us examine into the nature of that power, and the cruelty of that oppression, which drove them from their homes. Recollect their amazing fortitude, their bitter sufferings,—the hunger, the nakedness, the cold, which they patiently endured,—the severe labors of clearing their grounds, building their houses, raising their provisions, amidst dangers from wild beasts and savage men, before they had time or money or materials for commerce. Recollect the civil and religious principles and hopes and expectations which constantly supported and carried them through all hardships with patience and resignation. Let us recollect it was liberty, the hope of liberty for themselves and us and ours, which conquered all discouragements, dangers, and trials. In such researches as these, let us all in our several departments cheerfully engage,—but especially the proper patrons and supporters of law, learning, and religion!
26. Let the pulpit resound with the doctrines and sentiments of religious liberty.³⁷ Let us hear the danger of thralldom to our consciences from ignorance, extreme poverty, and dependence, in short, from civil and political slavery. Let us see delineated before us the true map of man. Let us hear the dignity of his nature, and the noble rank he holds among the works of God,—that consenting to slavery is a sacrilegious breach of trust, as offensive in the sight of God as it is derogatory from our own honor or interest or happiness,— and that God Almighty has promulgated from heaven, liberty, peace, and good-will to man!
27. Let the bar proclaim, "the laws, the rights, the generous plan of power" delivered down from remote antiquity,—inform the world of the mighty struggles and numberless sacrifices made by our ancestors in defence of freedom.³⁸ Let it be known, that British liberties are not the grants of princes or parliaments, but original rights, conditions of original contracts, coequal with prerogative, and coeval with government; that many of

³⁷ The appeals here are the imperatives for the pulpit.

³⁸ The focus turns to the bar, with imperatives for it.

our rights are inherent and essential, agreed on as maxims, and established as preliminaries, even before a parliament existed. Let them search for the foundations of British laws and government in the frame of human nature, in the constitution of the intellectual and moral world. There let us see that truth, liberty, justice, and benevolence, are its everlasting basis; and if these could be removed, the superstructure is overthrown of course.

28. Let the colleges join their harmony in the same delightful concert.³⁹ Let every declamation turn upon the beauty of liberty and virtue, and the deformity, turpitude, and malignity, of slavery and vice. Let the public disputations become researches into the grounds and nature and ends of government, and the means of preserving the good and demolishing the evil. Let the dialogues, and all the exercises, become the instruments of impressing on the tender mind, and of spreading and distributing far and wide, the ideas of right and the sensations of freedom.

29. In a word, let every sluice of knowledge be opened and set a-flowing. The encroachments upon liberty in the reigns of the first James and the first Charles, by turning the general attention of learned men to government, are said to have produced the greatest number of consummate statesmen which has ever been seen in any age or nation. The Brookes, Hampdens, Vanes, Seldens, Miltons, Nedhams, Harringtons, Nevilles, Sidneys, Lockes, are all said to have owed their eminence in political knowledge to the tyrannies of those reigns. The prospect now before us in America, ought in the same manner to engage the attention of every man of learning, to matters of power and of right, that we may be neither led nor driven blindfolded to irretrievable destruction. Nothing less than this seems to have been meditated for us, by somebody or other in Great Britain. There seems to be a direct and formal design on foot, to enslave all America. This, however, must be done by degrees. The first step that is intended, seems to be an entire subversion of the whole system of our fathers, by the introduction of the canon and feudal law into America. The canon and feudal systems, though greatly mutilated in England, are not yet destroyed. Like the temples and palaces in which the great contrivers of them once worshipped and inhabited, they exist in ruins; and much of the domineering spirit of them still remains. The designs and labors of a certain society, to introduce the former of them into America, have been well exposed to the public by a writer of great abilities;^{*40}

³⁹ The focused appeals end with imperatives for the colleges.

* The late Rev. Dr. Mayhew.

⁴⁰ The above footnote must have been inserted in an edition of the *Dissertation* after the original articles, as Jonathan Mayhew died in 1766. He was the Dudleian lecturer (see footnote 19) in 1765, the very year Adams first published the articles. His lecture was entitled, "Popish Idolatry: A Discourse Delivered in the Chapel of Harvard College." In this he stated that "our controversy with [the Church of Rome] is not merely a religious one... [It involved] a defense of our laws, liberties, and civil rights as men, in opposition to the proud claims and encroachments of ecclesiastical persons, who under the pretext of religion, and saving men's souls, would engross all power and property to themselves, and reduce us to the most abject slavery." (pp. 48, 49; <https://archive.org/details/popishidolatrydi00mayh>, accessed 3/15/16). Mayhew biography (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonathan_Mayhew, accessed 3/15/16) notes in

and the further attempts to the same purpose, that may be made by that society, or by the ministry or parliament, I leave to the conjectures of the thoughtful. But it seems very manifest from the Stamp Act itself, that a design is formed to strip us in a great measure of the means of knowledge, by loading the press, the colleges, and even an almanack and a newspaper, with restraints and duties; and to introduce the inequalities and dependencies of the feudal system, by taking from the poorer sort of people all their little subsistence, and conferring it on a set of stamp officers, distributors, and their deputies. But I must proceed no further at present. The sequel, whenever I shall find health and leisure to pursue it, will be a "disquisition of the policy of the stamp act." In the mean time, however, let me add,—These are not the vapors of a melancholy mind, nor the effusions of envy, disappointed ambition, nor of a spirit of opposition to government, but the emanations of a heart that burns for its country's welfare. No one of any feeling, born and educated in this once happy country, can consider the numerous distresses, the gross indignities, the barbarous ignorance, the haughty usurpations, that we have reason to fear are meditating for ourselves, our children, our neighbors, in short, for all our countrymen and all their posterity, without the utmost agonies of heart and many tears.

the online edition that in the Harvard commencement address of 1792, Mayhew was remembered in these lines:

While Britain claim'd by laws our rights to lead,
And faith was fetter'd by a bigot's creed.
Then mental freedom first her power display'd
and call'd a MAYHEW to religion's aid.
For this great truth, he boldly led the van,
That private judgment was the right of man.