

part, these rapturous assessments simply expressed the excitability of men putting their lives on the line for what seemed a hopeless cause. They needed to see greatness, and so they saw it. But the accounts are too specific and too consistent for that to be the only reason. Soon after Washington's appointment as Commander in Chief, that dour critic of men, John Adams, told his wife that the Virginian was destined to become 'one of the most important characters in the world.' Again and again, Washington struck the men of his day as an exemplar of ancient republican ideals, almost as though he had stepped from the pedestal of the ages."

Another historian has written: "Washington's writings are crowded with ringing affirmations of revolutionary ideals" and "Washington's friends and enemies alike testified that he deeply believed what he wrote. Like Cromwell's captain, Washington knew what he fought for, and loved what he knew. He was of one mind about that."

Today, Washington speaks to us across the ages about virtue, education, and religious freedom. In his first inaugural address, Washington stated: "There is no truth more thoroughly established than that there exists in the economy and course of nature an indissoluble union between virtue and happiness; between duty and advantage; between the genuine maxims of an honest and magnanimous policy and the solid rewards of public prosperity." And "that we ought to be no less persuaded that the propitious smiles of heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right, which Heaven itself has ordained."

About the importance of seeing education and virtue as one philosophical whole, Washington wrote to his nephew George Steptoe Washington these words: "Should you enter upon the course of studies here marked out, you must consider it as the finishing of your education, and, therefore, as the time is limited, that every hour misspent is lost forever, and that future years cannot compensate for lost days at this period of your life. This reflection must show the necessity of an unremitting application to your studies. To point out the importance of circumspection in your conduct, it may be proper to observe that a good moral character is the first essential in a man, and that the habits contracted at your age are generally indelible, and your conduct here may stamp your character through life. It is therefore highly important that you should endeavor not only to be learned but virtuous."

In relation to religion, he was also convinced, as he declared in his farewell address, religion was an indispensable foundation for both morality and republican government.

□ 1800

As President, he attended the services of a variety of denominations. He

addressed Jews as equal fellow citizens in his famous and articulate letter to the Newport Hebrew congregation in 1790. In it he said, "the citizens of the United States of America, have a right to applaud themselves for having given to mankind examples of an enlarged and liberal policy, a policy worthy of imitation. All possess alike liberty of conscience, and immunities of citizenship. It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it were by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights. For happily the government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support. . . . May the children of the Stock of Abraham, who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other inhabitants; while every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and figtree, and there shall be none to make him afraid."

This commitment to freedom of conscience had been previously heard in 1775 when Washington had written, "while we are contending for our own Liberty, we should be very cautious of violating the Rights of Conscience in others, ever considering that God alone is the Judge of the Hearts of Men, and to him only in this Case, they are answerable."

Finally, his Farewell Address, with its encouragement to avoid excessive partisanship, maintain American neutrality, achieve diplomatic independence, in short, to implement "unity at home and independence abroad" still strikes the chords of wisdom and prudence in our ears.

I salute the man in whose tribute a monument without words stands in our capital today. Its height, stature and distinctiveness speak for themselves. He was a unique man who seemed to be immune to both bullets and smallpox. It may or may not be true that Washington "had neither copiousness of ideas nor fluency of words."

Nevertheless, even a sometime harsh critic like Thomas Jefferson had to admit that "the moderation and virtue of a single character . . . probably prevented this revolution from being closed, as most others have been, by a subversion of that liberty it was intended to establish."

Now, Washington did say that "with our fate will the destiny of unborn millions be involved," and as we look to his birth, life, service, and death, we know that he was right, and that should give us pause.

Without Washington's character, his perseverance and achievements, all the important historiographical debates over the founding would be merely parlor games of philosophical intrigue. Unlike events in decades and centuries past, Washington believed in, literally started, and served in the system of

government which would be called self-government. Feudalism; monarchy; primogeniture; artificial hereditary distinctions, sectarian bloodbaths. These were not to be the demarcations of this new Nation. As Washington, in his cautiously optimistic manner said in his 1783 Circular to the States, "the foundation of our empire was not laid in the gloomy age of ignorance and superstition, but at an epoch when the rights of mankind were better understood and more clearly defined than at any former period." These rights were understood and defined on this newly freed and expanding continent, a land of which Washington said, "is there a doubt whether a common government can embrace so large a sphere? Let experience solve it. . . . It is well worth a fair and full experiment."

For "Washington, America was a practical experiment in the preservation of liberty and the success of republican government." As he said in his First Inaugural Address on April 30, 1789, "The preservation of the sacred fire of liberty and the destiny of the republican model of government are justly considered, perhaps, as deeply, as finally, staked on the experiment entrusted in the hands of the American people."

In contrast to monarchies, Washington established the republican principle of rotation in office. "Presidents, no matter how indispensable, were inherently disposable."

George Washington was "an extraordinary man who made it possible for ordinary men to rule." In the words of the great Frederick Douglass, the former slave and abolitionist, "I would not, even in words," he said, "do violence to the great events, and thrilling associations, that gloriously cluster around the birth of our national independence." "No people ever entered upon pathways of nations, with higher and grander ideas of justice, liberty and humanity than ourselves."

Madam Speaker, we have George Washington to thank for such beneficence. He made it happen. Now let us live up to that challenge to articulate and legislate the contours of liberty and justice for our collective humanity in these United States.

Happy birthday, President Washington. We honor you and appreciate your service to this, to our great country.

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#### LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Ms. ESHOO (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today after 2:45 p.m.

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#### SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to: