

Were there time, it would be easy to point out similar corrupting and paralyzing influences, emanating from perverted systems of religion, upon most modern republics. But this would require too much of detail for the present occasion.

The history of the efforts made to establish free governments in South America, and in Mexico, strikingly illustrates and confirms the position taken in this discourse. The people there doubtless wonder why their exertions to build up free institutions have produced only a succession of civil wars, with short intervals of military despotism. But when we learn the intolerant character of their religion, we wonder not at the ignorance and superstition of the people, nor that they cannot be governed by any thing save despotic power. To expect freedom with such a religion, and such ignorance, is like looking for grapes upon thorns, and figs upon thistles.

Another historic fact, illustrative of this argument, is, that a state religion has always exerted an unfavorable influence upon popular education and civil and religious liberty. The mere existence of a state religion, indeed, puts an end to religious freedom, by the bestowment of governmental patronage upon one denomination, and thus leaving the others, at the best, to exist by mere sufferance. Despotism has always found religion a most convenient instrument for riveting its chains upon the people. The state first embraces religion, as if for protection, but soon throttles it, and then uses its lifeless form as a speaking trumpet, through which is proclaimed the divine right of kings, the duty of unreserved submission to their authority, and other anti-republican dogmas. Witness Turkey, Italy, Russia, and Austria; and, I might add, almost every Asiatic kingdom. There you see the perfected fruit of a union of church and state, in the almost total ignorance, degradation, and servitude, of the people. In