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Quotes by Madison, James

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James Madison (March 16, 1751 – June 28, 1836) was the fourth (1809–1817) President of the United States. He was co-author, with John Jay and Alexander Hamilton, of the Federalist Papers, and is traditionally regarded as the Father of the United States Constitution.

The diversity in the faculties of men, from which the rights of property originate, is not less an insuperable obstacle to a uniformity of interests. The protection of these faculties is the first object of government.

- Madison, James

Learned Institutions ought to be favorite objects with every free people. They throw that light over the public mind which is the best security against crafty and dangerous encroachments on the public liberty.

- Madison, James

What is government itself but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary.

- Madison, James

We are right to take alarm at the first experiment upon our liberties.

- Madison, James

Liberty may be endangered by the abuse of liberty, but also by the abuse of power.

- Madison, James

As a man is said to have a right to his property, he may be equally said to have a property in his rights.

- Madison, James

The proposed Constitution is, in strictness, neither a national nor a federal constitution; but a composition of both.

- Madison, James

Is it not the glory of the people of America, that, whilst they have paid a decent regard to the opinions of former times and other nations, they have not suffered a blind veneration for antiquity, for custom, or for names, to overrule the suggestions of their own good sense, the knowledge of their own situation, and the lessons of their own experience? To this manly spirit, posterity will be indebted for the possession, and the world for the example, of the numerous innovations displayed on the American theatre, in favor of private rights and public happiness.

- Madison, James

The accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive, and judiciary, in the same hands, whether of one, a few, or many, and whether hereditary, self-appointed, or elective, may

justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny.

- Madison, James

The safety and happiness of society are the objects at which all political institutions aim, and to which all such institutions must be sacrificed.

- Madison, James

The genius of Republican liberty, seems to demand on one side, not only that all power should be derived from the people; but, that those entrusted with it should be kept in dependence on the people, by a short duration of their appointments; and, that, even during this short period, the trust should be placed not in a few, but in a number of hands. Stability, on the contrary, requires, that the hands, in which power is lodged, should continue for a length of time, the same. A frequent change of men will result from a frequent return of electors, and a frequent change of measures, from a frequent change of men; whilst energy in Government requires not only a certain duration of power, but the execution of it by a single hand.

- Madison, James

The free system of government we have established is so congenial with reason, with common sense, and with a universal feeling, that it must produce approbation and a desire of imitation, as avenues may be found for truth to the knowledge of nations.

- Madison, James

If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men,

neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary.

- Madison, James

Equal laws protecting equal rights the best guarantee of loyalty & love of country.

- Madison, James

Since the general civilization of mankind, I believe there are more instances of the abridgment of the freedom of the people, by gradual and silent encroachments of those in power, than by violent and sudden usurpations.

- Madison, James

And as it [the federal district] is to be appropriated to this use with the consent of the State ceding it; as the State will no doubt provide in the compact for the rights, and the consent of the citizens inhabiting it; as the inhabitants will find sufficient inducements of interest to become willing parties to the cession; as they will have had their voice in the election of the Government which is to exercise authority over them; as a municipal Legislature for local purposes, derived from their own suffrages, will of course be allowed them; and as the authority of the Legislature of the State, and of the inhabitants of the ceded part of it, to concur in the cession, will be derived from the whole people of the State, in their adoption of the Constitution, every imaginable objection seems to be obviated.

- Madison, James

What spectacle can be more edifying or more seasonable, than that of Liberty & Learning, each leaning on the other for their mutual & surest support?

- Madison, James

Learned Institutions ought to be favorite objects with every free people. They throw that light over the public mind which is the best security against crafty & dangerous encroachments on the public liberty.

- Madison, James

The danger of disturbing the public tranquillity by interesting too strongly the public passions, is a still more serious objection against a frequent reference of constitutional questions to the decision of the whole society.

- Madison, James

In order to judge of the form to be given to this institution [the Senate], it will be proper to take a view of the ends to be served by it. These were, first, to protect the people against their rulers, secondly, to protect the people against the transient impressions into which they themselves might be led.

- Madison, James

War contains so much folly, as well as wickedness, that much is to be hoped from the progress of reason; and if any thing is to be hoped, every thing ought to be tried.

- Madison, James

The constitution supposes, what the History of all Governments demonstrates, that the Executive is the branch of power most interested in war, & most prone to it. It has

accordingly with studied care, vested the question of war in the Legislature. But the Doctrines lately advanced strike at the root of all these provisions, and will deposit the peace of the Country in that Department which the Constitution distrusts as most ready without cause to renounce it. For if the opinion of the President not the facts & proofs themselves are to sway the judgment of Congress, in declaring war, and if the President in the recess of Congress create a foreign mission, appoint the minister, & negotiate a War Treaty, without the possibility of a check even from the Senate, untill the measures present alternatives overruling the freedom of its judgment; if again a Treaty when made obliges the Legislature to declare war contrary to its judgment, and in pursuance of the same doctrine, a law declaring war, imposes a like moral obligation, to grant the requisite supplies until it be formally repealed with the consent of the President & Senate, it is evident that the people are cheated out of the best ingredients in their Government, the safeguards of peace which is the greatest of their blessings.

- Madison, James

The happy Union of these States is a wonder; their Constitution a miracle; their example the hope of Liberty throughout the world.

- Madison, James

To the press alone, chequered as it is with abuses, the world is indebted for all the triumphs which have been gained by reason and humanity over error and oppression.

- Madison, James

I think it absolutely necessary that the President should have the power of removing [his subordinates] from office; it will make him, in a peculiar manner, responsible for their

conduct, and subject him to impeachment himself, if he suffers them to perpetrate with impunity high crimes or misdemeanors against the United States, or neglects to superintend their conduct, so as to check their excesses.

- Madison, James

The essence of Government is power; and power, lodged as it must be in human hands, will ever be liable to abuse.

- Madison, James

It will be of little avail to the people, that the laws are made by men of their own choice, if the laws be so voluminous that they cannot be read, or so incoherent that they cannot be understood; if they be repealed or revised before they are promulgated, or undergo such incessant changes that no man, who knows what the law is to-day, can guess what it will be to-morrow.

- Madison, James

A popular Government, without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a Prologue to a Farce or a Tragedy; or, perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance: And a people who mean to be their own Governors, must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives.

- Madison, James



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