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**Title:** "The Destiny of America," by James M. Kimberlin

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## The Destiny of America

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Is this glorious republic of ours destined in a few short years to fall, or advancing still in glory in grandeur in might is it destined still to be the beacon-star to nations upon the wild ocean of revolution and anarchy? - still to be the Asylum of the down-trodden and oppressed of every <sup>clime</sup> land? <sup>or</sup> Is this fair land extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the Lakes to the Gulf, now the happy abode of millions, the glory of the whole earth to be torn by civil strife and thus by suicidal hand, to perish, or by a foreign heel to be trodden into the dust? Heaven forbid it! Let us guard well the glorious heritage which our fathers have transmitted us - for which they fought and bled. We are admonished by the voice of history that governments and nations pass away. From Greece and Rome there comes a voice up through the misty ages of the past, telling us that earthly grandeur is short-lived. Come the terror of the nations is no more.

Her warlike legions that once thundered  
along the plains of Italy, are still in death.  
And classic Greece - where is she? Where  
is her ancient splendor? It has departed  
It has vanished like the dew of the  
morning. If as one has said, we have  
no way of judging of the future but by the  
past - no lamp by which to guide our feet,  
but the lamp of experience, we see the  
value of history, which makes the ex-  
perience of the past our own.

It shows us where others have erred -  
it discovers the rock upon which other  
nations have split.  
What though all may be calm now - what though  
no cloud may be seen in all our horizons -  
Though prosperity reigns through all our borders,  
and each one under his own vine and  
fig-tree worships his God according to the dic-  
tates of his own conscience, yet the fell  
cry of "Disunion" may <sup>again</sup> be again raised, or  
foreign foes may <sup>again</sup> be again stirred up.  
Then let us always be on the alert. Let  
the people guard their own liberties, and  
America will always be free, and  
"The Star-Spangled Banner will continue to wave,  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave."

We say let the people - for they alone will guard  
with a jealous eye their ~~interests~~. Legislators  
may be corrupted - how many have been! - how  
many have sold their country for gold!  
But then if the people are to govern -  
if the people are to be sovereign, the people  
must be instructed - knowledge must be  
generally diffused; education must be  
extended to the poor man's son as well  
as to the rich man's. For here in this  
land of liberty distinction is open to all  
every man may aspire to the highest hon-  
ors within the nations gift.

But, if the people are to govern themselves  
they must be accustomed to restraint.  
Hence we see the importance of having  
virtuous principles instilled into their  
minds. What but the salutary influences  
of the Gospel or of the doctrine of final  
rewards and punishments keeps men  
under the dominion of civil govern-  
ment? Suppose all restraints of this  
kind cut loose even for the short period of  
one year and who could tell what  
would be the consequences? Where would  
the ruin and devastation that would follow  
such an event stop? Where the idea of

God and of his authority over us - of a fu-  
ture state of rewards and punishments en-  
tirely erased from the mind of mankind, the  
governing interests of individuals and of commu-  
nities would soon generate quarrels that would  
never end, but in one wide spread ruin.

Again, there are several things that may exercise  
either directly or indirectly a prejudicial influ-  
ence on the destiny of America. Say some Injy-  
tious Providence of God, slavery exists among  
us. We do not mean that God is the author of  
slavery, but that he permits it, just as he does any  
thing else. More than once has our Union, perhaps  
our existence as a nation been endangered by it:  
Ominous clouds have rolled up, and for a time  
shed a darkness over our land; and foreign nations  
have looked on, with no wish for our safety, to see what  
the issue would be. But the God of nations - the God  
of our fathers has been with us, and the dark  
clouds have blown past, and peace and harmony  
have <sup>again</sup> ~~been~~ been restored. But the future - what  
shall it bring forth? Slavery yet exists among  
us. The abolitionist of the North and the advo-  
cate of slavery in the South are yet as in-

venerate in their hatred against each other as ever.  
Days of darkness may again come - our national  
horizon may be again clouded over. But <sup>what</sup> shall  
the end be? It is hid from mortals, but we know  
that he who ruleth the destiny of nations will work  
out his own sovereign will whatever it may be,  
and we believe that he will still guide and  
govern the interests of this <sup>proper</sup> nation. God has  
given us a place among the nations  
of the earth and doubtless he has a  
great work for us to perform. Our privileges  
and blessings are great - and to whom much  
is given of him shall much be required.

The influence of America on the nations  
of the earth will always be felt. Already  
~~the nations of Europe~~ have begun to throw  
off the shackles of Tyranny, and though the  
spirit of republicanism may be suppressed  
for a time, yet it will continue to burn,  
in spite of despots, and it will burst  
out when the full time has come  
and Thrones shall be demolished.

J. M. Kimball

Common Council of the City

J. M. Kimball June 12<sup>th</sup> 1851

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*[Faint, mostly illegible handwritten text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.]*

J. M. Kimball

Commencement Oration of, James Monroe Kimberlin, Class of 1851  
Transcribed by Michael M. Geduldig, November 2006  
Edited by Don Sailer, September 2009

## The Destiny of America

Is this glorious republic of ours destined in a few short years to fall, or advancing still in glory in grandeur in might is it destined ~~still~~ to be the beacon-star to nations [tossed?] upon the wild oceans of revolution and anarchy? - still to be the asylum of the down-trodden and oppressed of every clime ~~land~~? Or is this fair land extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the Lakes to the Gulf, now the happy abode of millions, the glory of the whole earth to be torn by civil strife and thus by suicidal hand, to punish, or by a foreign heel to be trodden into the dust? Heaven forbid it! Let us guard well the glorious heritage which our fathers have transmitted us - for which they fought and bled. We are admonished by the voice of history that governments and nations pass away. From Greece and Rome their comes a view up through the misty ages of the past, telling us that earthly grandeur is short lived. Rome the terror of the nations is no more

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her warlike legions that once thundered along the plains of Italy are still in death. And classic Greece - where is she? Where is her ancient splendor? It has departed. It has vanished like the dew of the morning. If as one has said, we have no way of judging of the future but by the past - no lamp by which to guide our feet - but the lamp of experience, we see the value of history, which makes the experiences of the past our own.

It show us where others have erred - it discovers the rock upon which other nations have split. What though all may be calm now - what though no cloud may be seen in all our horizons - though prosperity reigns through all our borders, and each one under his own vine and fig-tree worships ~~his~~ God according to the dictates of his own conscience, yet the full cry of "Disunion" may be again raised, or foreign foes may again be ~~again~~ stirred up. Then let us always be on the alert. Let the people guard their own liberties, and America will always be free, and "The Star-Spangled banner will continue to wave, O'er the land of the free and home of the brave."

We say let the people - for they alone will guard with a jealous eye their liberties. Legislators may be corrupted - how many have been! - how many have sold their country for gold! But then if the people are to govern - if the people are to be sovereign, the people must be instructed - knowledge must be generally diffused; education must be extended to the poor man's son as well as to the rich man's. For here in the land of liberty distinction is open to all - every man may aspire to the highest honors within the nation's gift.

But ~~Again~~, if the people are to grow themselves they must be accustomed to restraint. Would we see the importance of having virtuous principles instilled into their minds. What but the salutary influence of the Gospel or of the doctrine of final rewards and punishments keeps men under the dominion of civil government? Suppose all restraints of this kind cut loose even for the short period one year and who could tell what would be the consequences? When would the ruin and devastation that would follow such an event stop? Were the idea of

God and of his authority over us - of a future state of rewards and punishments entirely erased from the mind of mankind, the jarring interests of individuals and of communities would soon generate quarrels that would never end, but in one widespread ruin.

Again, there are several things that may exercise either directly or indirectly a [prejudicial?] influence of the Destiny of America. By some inglorious providence of God, slavery exists among us. We do not mean that God is the author of slavery, but that he permits it just as he does everything else. More than once has our Mission, perhaps our existence as a nation been endangered by it. Ominous clouds have rolled up, and for a time shed a darkness over our land and foreign nations have looked on, with no wish for our safety, to see what the issue would be. But the God of nations - the God of our fathers has been with us, and the dark clouds have blown past, and peace and harmony have again ~~been~~ been [active?]. But the future - what shall it bring forth? Slavery yet exists among us. The abolitionist of the North and the advocate of slavery in the South are yet as in-

veterate in this hatred against each other as ever. Days of darkness may again come - our national horizon may be again clouded over. But what shall the end be? It is hid from mortals. But we know that he who [illegible] the destiny of nations will work out - his own sovereign will [illegible] it may be, and we believe that he will still guide and prosper the interests of this nation. God has given us a place among the nations of the earth and doubtless he has a great work for us to perform. Our privileges and blessings are great and to whom much is given of him shall much be required. The influence of America on the nations of the earth will always be felt. Already ~~the nations of~~ Europe has begun to throw off the shackles of tyranny, and though the spirit of republicanism may be suppressed for a time, yet it will continue to burn, in spite of despots, and it will burst out when the fuel of time has come out and thrones shall be demolished.