

Adams and Jefferson on Religion, Morals and Philosophy
A Dramatic Reading of Excerpts from their Letters
1813 - 1820



John Adams
1735 - 1826



Abigail Adams
1744 - 1818



Thomas Jefferson
1743-1826

August 1, 2010

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Rappahannock
Hosted by Dave Rowden

**A Dramatic Reading of Selected Letters between Thomas Jefferson and
John Adams on Religion, Morals and Philosophy**
August 1, 2010

Readers

Abigail Adams: Marge Rowden

Thomas Jefferson: Cliff Schelling

John Adams: Dave Rowden

Good Morning! My name is Abigail Adams. Before we begin I would like to clear the air on an issue concerning John and myself. He was my great friend and my life's companion. We were equals in every respect. Some have questioned why I was the one who had to take care of our farm, our family and our livelihood while John saw to the founding of our great nation. It was my wish to pursue the course our life followed. I spent time with my husband in the Court of St. James. I did not like it. As I told Mr. Jefferson on one occasion, I much preferred my farm to the court of St. James, where I seldom met with characters so inoffensive as my hens and chickens, or minds so well improved as my garden."

I will be your moderator for today's presentation. On my right is my husband, John Adams, and on my left is his great friend and mine, Thomas Jefferson. Today, John and Mr. Jefferson will be reading excerpts from their correspondence over the relatively short period of

1813-1820, on the subjects of Religion, Morals and Philosophy. They seldom agreed on anything concerning politics, but on the subjects of Religion, Morals and Philosophy, there was much they believed in common.

We begin our presentation with an excerpt from a letter from John to Mr. Jefferson on the progress of the human mind.

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, July 15, 1813: We must explain our selves to each other.

Never mind yet my dear sir if I write four letters to your one. You're one is worth more than my four. Where are now, in 1813, the perfection and the perfectibility of human nature? Where is now the progress of the human mind? ...You and I ought not to die before we have explained ourselves to each other. I shall come to the subject of religion by and by. Your friend

John Adams

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, July 16, 1813: Mr. Adams' on how he would sketch his own personal view of Christianity and religion.

In your letter dated April 9 you say: "in consequence of some conversations with Dr. Rush...I had promised someday to write him a

letter, giving my view on the Christian system." I too, have often reflected on it since and even sketched the outlines of my own view.

I should first take a general view of the moral doctrines of the most remarkable of the ancient philosophers, of whose ethics we have sufficient information. I should do justice to the branches of Morality they have treated well, and point out the importance of those in which they are deficient. I should take the view of Deism and ethics of the Jews and show in what a degraded state they are, and the necessity they have presented for reformation.

I should proceed to the life... of Jesus who, sensible of the incorrectness of their [the Jews] idea of the Deity, and of morality, endeavored to bring them to the principles of a purer Deism... This view would purposely omit the question of his Divinity, and even his inspiration.

...It would be necessary to remark on the disadvantages his doctrines had to encounter not having been committed to writing by himself but by the most unlettered men by memory long after they had heard

them from him, when much was forgotten and much misunderstood. His character and doctrines have received still greater injury from those who pretend to be his special disciples who have disfigured ... his actions and precepts [for their] of personal interest ... Yet such are the fragments 'remaining as to show a master workman and that his system of morality... is even more perfect than any of those of the ancient philosophers

This is the outline. "Sancte Socrate, ora pro nobis!" (Holy Socrates, pray for us!)

Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, August 22, 1813: Not having the time to take up every subject in many of John Adams letters on many topics, Mr. Jefferson selects one ...

Your approbation of my outline to Dr. Priestley is a great gratification to me. I very much suspect that if thinking men would have the courage to think for themselves, and to speak what they think, it would be found they do not differ in religious opinions as much as is supposed. I remember to have heard Dr. Priestley say, that if all England would candidly examine itself and confess, it would find that Unitarianism was really the religion of all.

It is too late in the day for men of sincerity to pretend they believe in the platonic mysticisms that three are one ...

...this constitutes the craft, the power and the profit of the priests.

Sweep away their gossamer fabrics of factitious religion, and they would catch no more flies. We should all then, like the Quakers, live without an order of priests, moralize for ourselves, follow the oracle of conscience, and say nothing about what no man can understand, nor therefore believe.

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, September 14, 1813: "Ye will say I am no Christian" On Unitarianism, and inklings Universalism.

The human understanding is a revelation from our maker could never be disputed or doubted.

We can never be so certain ... as we are from the revelation of nature i.e. nature's God. Two and two are equal to four, not one is equal to three and three is equal to one.

This is the doctrine of Christian theologians in general, 10 to 1. God has infinite wisdom, goodness and power. He created the universe. His duration is eternal. ...[and] God created this spec of dirt and the

human species for his glory, with the deliberate design of making 9/10 of our species miserable forever.

Now my friend, can prophecies or miracles convince you or me that an infinite benevolence, wisdom and power, created and preserves millions to make them miserable forever for his own glory? What a wretch! ... Is he vain, tickled with adulation and exalting ... in the sweetness of his vengeance? Pardon me maker, for these awful questions. My answer to them is always ready. I believe no such things!

The love of God and his creation, ... [the] exultation in my own existence, though but an atom, ... in the universe is my religion.

Now, snarl, ye Calvinists, ye Athanasian divines if you will. You will say I am no Christian! I say you are no Christians and there the account is balanced! Yet I believe all the *honest* men among you are Christians-- in my sense of the word.

Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, July 5, 1814: *Having amused himself with reading seriously Plato's Republic, Mr. Jefferson comments on Plato's "foggy mind" and suggests he has escaped the oblivion of his brethren due to the adoption and incorporation of his whimsies into the body of artificial Christianity.*

The Christian priesthood, finding the doctrines of Christ leveled to

every understanding, and too plain to need explanation, saw in the mysticism of Plato materials with which they might build up an artificial system, which might, from its indistinctness, admit everlasting controversy, give employment for their order, and introduce it to profit, power and preeminence.

The doctrines which flowed from the lips of Jesus himself are within the comprehension of a child; but thousands of volumes have not yet explained the Platonisms engrafted on them; and for this obvious reason, that nonsense can never be explained.

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, July 16, 1814: *On the future of Christianity*

I am bold to say, that neither you nor I will live to see the course which the wonders of the times will take. ... The Christian religion, as I understand it, or as you understand it should maintain its ground, as I believe it will, Yet platonistic, cabalistic Christianity ... which has prevailed for 1500 years, has received a mortal wound of which the

monster must finally die; yet so strong is his constitution, that he may endure for centuries before he expires..

Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, August 22, 1813: *In this letter Mr. Jefferson offers his philosophy of life to John and his concerns about sharing this syllabus , which compares the teaching's of Jesus to those of the earlier Greek and Roman philosophers, and to the religion of the Jews of Jesus' time. Previously, he had only shared this pre cursor to the Jefferson Bible with Dr. Benjamin Rush and Dr. Priestley.*

The fate of my letter to Priestley, after his death, was a warning to me on that of Doctor Rush. At my request, his family was so kind as to quiet me by returning my original letter and syllabus. By this, you will be sensible how much interest I take in keeping myself clear of religious disputes before the public, and especially of seeing my syllabus disemboweled by the Auspices of the modern Paganism. Yet I enclose it to you with entire confidence, free to be perused by yourself and Mrs. Adams, but by no one else, and to be returned to me.

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, September 22, 1813: On Priestley's shortcomings and the hymn of Cleanthes

Considering all things, I admire Dr. Priestley's last effort... but as I think it is extremely imperfect, I beg of you to pursue the investigations according to your promise to Dr. Rush and according to your syllabus. It may be presumptuous to call anything of Dr. Priestley's imperfect, but I have found that among all the vast exertions of genius I have never found one that is not imperfect. And, this last is egregiously so.

I found on no notice of Cleanthes, the Stoic or of his hymn. This alone ought to have commanded Priestley's attention. Pope had read if Priestley had not, that simple verse:

“Most glorious and immortal beings,

Though denominated by innumerable names and titles,

Always omnipotent,

Beginning and end of nature,

Governing the universe by fixed laws,

Blessed be thy name!”

What think you of this translation? Is it too Jewish or too Christian?

Pope did not think it was either. For the first sentence in his own universal prayer is more Jewish and more Christians still. If it is not a literal translation, it is a close paraphrase of that simple verse of Cleanthes.

“Father of all in every age,
And every clime adored
By Saint and by Sage,
Jehovah, Jove or Lord”

Was Priestly afraid that the Stoics would appear too much like Unitarian Jews and Christians?

Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, August 1, 1816: Mr. Jefferson responds to two of John's philosophical letters.

I know nothing of the history of the Jesuits you mention in four volumes. Is it a good one? I dislike, with you, their restoration, because it marks a retrograde step from light towards darkness.

We shall have our follies without doubt. Some one or more of them will always be afloat. But ours will be the follies of enthusiasm, not bigotry, not of Jesuitism. Bigotry is the disease of ignorance, of

morbid minds; enthusiasm of the free and buoyant. Education and free discussion are the antidotes of both. We are destined to be a barrier against the returns of ignorance and barbarism. Old Europe will have to lean on our shoulders, and to hobble along by our side, under the monkish trammels of priest and kings, as she can.

I like the dreams of the future better than the history of the past.

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, July 13, 1813: On the failure French Revolution and his views on the inequality of men

The first time you and I differed in opinion on any material question was after your arrival from Europe.

You were persuaded...France would succeed in establishing a free republican government. I was well persuaded ... that the project of such a government over 25 million people when more than 20 million of them could neither read nor write, was an unnatural, irrational, impractical undertaking.

Napoleon has lately invented the word, which perfectly expresses my opinion. . He calls the project *ideology* and John Randolph though he was 14 years ago a wild enthusiast for equality and fraternity appears now to be a regenerate proselyte to Napoleon's opinion and mine that it was all madness.

Inequalities of mind and body are so established by God Almighty in his constitution of human nature that no art or policy can ever plane them down to the level.

I have never heard reasoning more absurd, sophistry more gross, in proof of the Athanasian creed or transubstantiation, than the subtle labors of Rousseau to demonstrate the natural equality of mankind justice for everyone.

The Golden rule, "*do as you would be done,*" is all the equality that can be supported or defended by reason or reconciled by common sense.

Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, October 4, 1816: Mr. Jefferson responds to John Adams' undertaking the twelve volumes of Dupuis by discussing the analysis of his work by the French philosopher Destutt Tracy.

I gather from his other works that he adopts the principle of Hobbes that justice is founded in contract solely, and does not result from the construction of man.

I believe, on the contrary, that it is instinct and innate, that the moral sense is as much a part of our constitution as that of feeling, seeing, or hearing; as a wise creator must have seen to be necessary in an animal destined to live in society; that every human mind feels pleasure in doing good to another; that the non-existence of justice is not to be inferred from the fact that the same act is deemed virtuous and right in one society which is held vicious and wrong in another; because, as the circumstances and opinions of different societies vary, so the act which may do them right or wrong must vary also, for virtue does not consist in the act we do, but in the end it is to effect.

If it is to effect the happiness of him to whom it is directed, it is

virtuous, while in a society under different circumstances and opinions, the same act might produce pain, and would be vicious. The essence of virtue is in doing good to others, while what is good may be one thing in one society, and its contrary in another.

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, January 20, 1820: *On the nature of God*

When we say God is Spirit, we know what we mean as well as we do when we say that the pyramids of Egypt are matter. Let us be content and therefore to believe him to be spirit, that is, an essence that we know nothing of, in which originally and necessarily reside all energy, all power, ... all wisdom, and all goodness. Behold the creed and confession of faith of your ever affectionate friend.

John Adams

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson May 21, 1819: *John's shortest letter, He says he is through writing, though he continued to live and write to Mr. Jefferson for another seven years.*

Though I cannot write, I still enjoy life. The world is dead. There is nothing to communicate in religion, morals, philosophy or politics.

Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, August 15, 1820: *We end our presentation with the ending of one of Mr. Jefferson's letters. It captures the intellectual curiosity and personal affection these two great men shared with each other.*

I am satisfied, and sufficiently occupied with the things which are, without tormenting or troubling myself about those which may indeed be, but of which I have no evidence. I am sure that I really know many, many things, and none more surely that that I love you with all my heart, and pray for the continuance of your life until you shall be tired of it yourself.

My beloved John, and Mr. Jefferson both died on July 4, 1826. We will now take questions you might have for Mr. Adams or Mr. Jefferson. Please indicate to whom you are addressing your question.

End of Reading

Helpful Information

Joseph Priestley, 1733 - 1804

The English Unitarian minister and chemist, was born, a cloth-dresser's son, at Fieldhead in Birstall Parish, Leeds. At the grammar school he entered in 1745, Priestley learned Latin, Greek and improved on a system of shorthand. Both independently and with tutors, he became proficient in physics, philosophy, algebra, mathematics and a variety of ancient Near Eastern and modern languages.

Benjamin Rush, 1746 - 1813

Dr. Rush was a Founding Father of the United States. He was a physician, writer, educator, humanitarian and a Universalist as well as the founder of Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. In 1812, he helped reconcile the friendship of Thomas Jefferson and John Adams by encouraging the two former Presidents to resume writing to each other. Dr. Rush was also an early opponent of slavery and capital punishment.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 1712 - 1778

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was one of the most influential thinkers during the Enlightenment in eighteenth century Europe. His first major philosophical work was *A Discourse on the Sciences and Arts*. In this work, Rousseau argues that the progression of the sciences and arts has caused the corruption of virtue and morality. His second work was *The Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*. The central claim of the work is that human beings are basically good by nature, but were corrupted by the complex historical events that resulted in present day civil society. Rousseau's praise of nature e.g. "The Noble Savage" is a theme that continues throughout his later works. His major work on political philosophy, *The Social Contract*, was published in 1762. This work caused great controversy in France and was immediately banned by Paris authorities.

John Randolph 1773 - 1833

Randolph was a Representative and a Senator from Virginia. He was born in Cawsons, Virginia, known as John Randolph of Roanoke to distinguish him from relatives. (The name Roanoke refers to Roanoke Plantation in Charlotte County, Virginia.

Cleanthes, 331 - 232 BCE

Cleanthes was a [Stoic](#) philosopher of Assus in Lydia, and a disciple of Zeno of Citium. After the death of Zeno he presided over his school. He was originally a wrestler, and in this capacity he visited Athens, where he became acquainted with philosophy. His natural faculties were slow. But resolution and perseverance enabled him to overcome all difficulties. At last he became so complete a master of Stoicism that he was perfectly qualified to succeed Zeno. His fellow disciples often ridiculed him for his dullness by calling him an ass. However, his answer was, that if he were an ass he was the better able to bear the weight of Zeno's doctrine. He wrote much, but none of his writings remain except a hymn to Zeus.. It is said that he starved himself to death in his 99th year.

Alexander Pope, 1688 - 1744

Pope was an eighteenth-century English Poet, best known for his satirical verse and for his translation of Homer. He is the third most frequently quoted writer in *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, after Shakespeare and Tennyson. Pope was famous for his use of the heroic couplet. His most well known poem was the satirical, "Rape of the Lock."

Pope was born to Edith Pope and Alexander Pope Senior, a linen merchant of Plough Court, Lombard Street, London, who were both Catholics. Pope's education was affected by the penal law in force at the time upholding the status of the established Church of England, which banned Catholics from teaching,

attending a university, voting, or holding public office on pain of perpetual imprisonment. Pope was taught to read by his aunt, then went to Twyford School. He also attended two Catholic schools in London. Such schools, while illegal, were tolerated in some areas.

His translation of the *Iliad* appeared between 1715 and 1720. It was acclaimed by Samuel Johnson as "a performance which no age or nation could hope to equal".

Charles Francois Dupuis, 1742-1809

A distinguished French philosopher and savant. In 1794 he produced his celebrated "*Origin of all Cultes*" or Universal Religion, which excited much controversy by the novelty and boldness of his speculations. He proposed Jesus of Nazareth was not a historical person, but a mythological person created by the early Christian Community.

Antoine Louis Claude Destutt, Comte de Tracy, 1754-1836

The liberal French nobleman Destutt de Tracy was one the leading idologues (a student of the science of ideas) that sought to extend Enlightenment liberalism to post-Revolutionary France. He was, together with Say, the founder of the French Liberal School.

Athanasian Creed (*Quicumque vult*)-- is a Christian statement of belief, focusing on Trinitarian doctrine and Christology. The Latin name of the creed, *Quicumque vult*, is taken from the opening words "Whosoever wishes." The Athanasian Creed has been used by Christian churches since the sixth century AD. It is the first creed in which the equality of the three persons of the Trinity is explicitly stated, and differs from the Nicene-Constantinopolitan and Apostles' Creeds in the inclusion of anathemas, or condemnations of those who disagree with the Creed.

Transubstantiation--the belief that the bread and wine served during the

Eucharist actually becomes the physical body and blood of Christ when the priest consecrates the Host and the Wine.

Four Philosophies of Importance Referenced in the Letters of

Jefferson and Adams

Deism, Platonism, Platonic Christianity, and Stoicism

In the letters of Jefferson and Adams, there were numerous references to Deism, Platonism and Platonic Christianity, as well as a reference to the Stoic, Cleanthes, also known as the Ass of Zeno. The following provides a description of the major concepts of Deism, Platonism that were incorporated into Orthodox Christianity, and description of the basic tenets of Stoicism.

Deism

The simplest conceptualization of Deism, is that one can only know God or the Creator through reason and not through revelation. Thus it is a religious and philosophical belief that a supreme being created the universe, and that this (and religious truth in general) can be determined using reason and observation of the natural world alone, without the need for either faith, intercessors (e.g. Priests) or organized religion. Many Deists reject the notion that God intervenes in human affairs, for example through miracles and revelations

Platonism and Platonic Christianity¹

In the third and fourth centuries, Christianity was coming into its own as a force in the Roman empire. Paganism was beginning to wane as the primary belief system, and it was getting competition from the revised Hebrew religion. But there was another belief system that was gaining popularity as well—Platonism. Platonism was begun by the philosopher Plato in ancient Athens, and held that the spirit world was the prime reality on which all of our physical reality was based.

¹ Rev. Steven Kimes, Mennonite Pastor, Portland, Oregon
(<http://radicaltheologians.blogspot.com/2006/05/platonic-christian-paradigm.html>)

Some platonic philosophers of this time —such as Ignatius and Augustine— saw quite a bit of compatibility between Platonism and Christianity, and came to believe in Jesus as the human face behind the platonic philosophy. Then these teachers began defending their platonic form of Christianity against those whom they saw as "heretics" and "unbelievers." These became the strongest defenders of Christianity of the third and fourth centuries. Their idea of Christianity became enormously influential and their concept of Christianity continues to this day. Below are some of the main beliefs of a Platonic form of Christianity

Spirit World is the Real World

According to Plato, there is an alternative universe which holds all the reality of the physical universe we see and feel. It is the Spirit world, and it is not less real than the physical world, but more real.

God is the Primary Cause—Pure Spirit

Aristotle, Plato's student, followed in this logic concerning God. He said that all things have a source, a cause. If creation came from the earth, then the earth came from somewhere, as did the sun and all of our universe. However, at some point one must arrive at the First Cause, because if there is no origin of all things, then nothing could exist. The platonic Christians hold that the Prime Cause is God, who is pure spirit, being made up of nothing physical, of this universe.

Flesh is Corrupt, Spirit is Good

Because God and the Spirit world is where all good comes from, then spiritual things are the only things that are good. This also means that the physical universe we live in is automatically crippled, automatically prone toward weakness. This weakness is called by the platonic Christians the flesh. The flesh is corruptible, able to drift further and further from the Spirit, which is pure good. Fundamentally, the more physical—the flesh—the more corruption and evil. The more Spirit, the more purity and good.

Humanity is part spirit, part flesh

Every human born, according to the platonic Christian philosophers, is part spirit and part flesh. The flesh, they say, is the body, which is corruptible and imperfect. But every human also has a spirit, which is the human's connection to God. Between the flesh and the spirit is the soul, which is the basis of the mind and will. The soul is the fundamental part of humanity—neither pure flesh nor pure spirit—which determines the moral direction of the person, whether toward the spirit or toward the flesh.

Morality is based on the control of the flesh and motivation

To be a good human, therefore, we must constantly choose the spirit as opposed to the flesh. The flesh leads us to physical desire, to sexuality, to gluttony, to greed, to anger—all of the seven deadly sins are sins of the flesh, created by the platonic Christians. However, ultimately, humans are judged not on their deeds,

but their motivation—that which their souls determined. If a soul chose the good, even though it lead them to corruption, then the soul may be saved though the body is corrupt.

Jesus was God Incarnate

Platonic Christians speak of Jesus as the Son of God, the human who was God from birth. Since Jesus was born as God incarnate, thus he was not human as we are human. Yes, Jesus was human, he had flesh and he had spirit, but his soul was already committed to the spirit, and so he constantly rejected the corrupt flesh. Thus, he never sinned. In this way, he had perfect faith and lived perfectly before his Father. Because of this, Jesus' life could not really provide us with a proper example, because he had a different make up than we. So if we fall short of Jesus, that is only because he was God and we are not.

The highest Christian act is spiritual contemplation

Those of us who are Christians are those who have entered into Jesus death through baptism and the Lord's supper. As we partake with Jesus, according to platonic Christians, we find ourselves being led by Him to act in the Spirit, and to set aside the flesh. Thus, as we find gluttony, drunkenness and sexuality set aside, we will also partake more and more in the Spirit realm through contemplation of the Pure Spirit—God himself. We can focus on God through meditation, through praise, through singing or through quoting the Scripture. But the focus is to transport oneself out of this world and into God.

The Church is Invisible

Because morality is a completely internal process, we cannot know who is more spiritual than another. While it is true that the most fleshly people would not be spiritually minded, for the most part we cannot tell. Some are spiritually minded and some are not. But the true people of God are invisible—only God knows who they are. The rest of us cannot judge.

Heaven is Living in Spirit

The ultimate goal of every platonic Christian is, therefore, the stripping away of our bodies—our corrupt flesh—and living in spirit in the presence of God. This is heaven—a pure spiritual existence. In heaven God is the continuous focus, and all who enter heaven take full satisfaction and pleasure in adoring and contemplating God, the Pure Spirit, the Source of all Things.

The following quote from Gibbon expresses clearly the confusion and angst Platonism has caused within Christian Philosophy—especially during the Enlightenment.

“If Paganism was conquered by Christianity, it is equally true that Christianity was corrupted by Paganism. The pure Deism of the first Christians (who differed from their fellow Jews only in the belief that Jesus was the promised Messiah,) was changed, by the Church of Rome, into the incomprehensible dogma of the trinity.

Many of the pagan tenets, invented by the Egyptians and idealized by Plato, were retained as being worthy of belief. The doctrine of the incarnation, and the mystery of transubstantiation, were both adopted, and are both as repugnant to reason, as was the ancient pagan rite of viewing the entrails of animals to forecast the fate of empires!"²

Stoicism³

Stoicism was one of the new philosophical movements of the Hellenistic period. The name derives from the porch (*stoa poikilê*) in the Agora at Athens decorated with mural paintings, where the members of the school congregated, and their lectures were held. Unlike 'epicurean,' the sense of the English adjective 'stoical' is not utterly misleading with regard to its philosophical origins. The Stoics did, in fact, hold that emotions like fear or envy (or impassioned sexual attachments, or passionate love of anything whatsoever) either were, or arose from, false judgments and that the sage—a person who had attained moral and intellectual perfection—would not undergo them. The later Stoics of Roman Imperial times, Seneca and Epictetus, emphasize the doctrines (already central to the early Stoics' teachings) that the sage is utterly immune to misfortune and that virtue is sufficient for happiness. Our phrase 'stoic calm' perhaps encapsulates the general drift of these claims. It does not, however, hint at the even more radical ethical views which the Stoics defended, e.g. that only the sage is free while all others are slaves, or that all those who are morally vicious are equally so.

² Edward Gibbon, Preface to: *History of Christianity: Comprising All That Relates to the Progress of the Christian Religion in "The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire", and a Vindication of Some Passages in the 15th and 16th Chapters* (New York, NY: Peter Eckler, 1891), page xvi.

³ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (On Line). First published, April 15, 1996 , rev. February 7, 2008