

MONTPELIER, JAN. 22, 1822.

SIR: I have received the copy of your memoir on the fossil tree, which you politely forwarded. Of the decisive bearing of this phenomenon on important questions in geology, I rely more on your judgment than my own.

The present is a very inquisitive age, and its researches of late have been ardently directed to the primitive composition and structure of our globe, so far as it has been penetrated, and to the processes by which succeeding changes have been produced. The discoveries already made are encouraging, but vast room is left for the industry and sagacity of geologists. This is sufficiently shewn by the opposite theories which have been espoused; the one of them regarding water, the other fire, as the great agent employed by nature in her work.

It may well be expected that this hemisphere, which has been least explored, will yield its full proportion of materials towards a satisfactory system. Your zealous efforts to share in the contributions do credit to your love of truth, & devotion to the cause of science, and I wish they may be rewarded with the success they promise, and with all the present gratifications to which they entitle you. With friendly respects,

JAMES MADISON.

Thomas Jefferson returns his thanks to Mr. Schoolcraft for the memoir he has been so kind as to send him on the fossil tree of the river des Plumes. It is a valuable element towards the knowledge we wish to obtain of the crust of the globe we inhabit, and its crust alone is immediately interesting to us. We are only to guard against drawing our conclusions deeper than we dig. Mr. Schoolcraft is entitled to the thanks of the lovers of science for the preservation of this fact; he has those of Th. J. with his salutations of esteem and respect.

Monticello, Jan. 26, 1822.

COMMUNICATIONS.

To the Editors of the Centinel.

Gentlemen, It seems to be the fate of writers who attack a superstition or expose an error, to be pelted with the filth and abuse of every scribbler whose prejudices they encounter. Such appears to have been the treatment of Atticus in your paper of the 13th inst. By the correspondent who appears first in your columns. He is, I conceive, an illustration of the remark that religious prejudices are more resentful than others, and dogmatical in proportion to their absurdity. Of him it may be justly remarked, as of the Covenanters of former times, that the zeal of God's house hath eaten up both his good sense and good breeding, if indeed he ever possessed any share of either.

In his commencement, he displays either his own weakness, or that of his cause, by an invidious and contemptible resort to the "argumentum ad hominem," the argument that sectarians have so often used, and which they have enforced by religious wars and persecuting flames. Atticus may thank his stars that such things are at present unknown in our country. Your correspondent is concerned lest Atticus should have as great an effect on other weak minds as he appears to have had upon that of your correspondent; but Atticus hopes if there are others equally weak with your correspondent, there are few that are equally malignant.

The charge of youthfulness or juvenility is another first he makes against Atticus. To this I shall reply with Pitt, that "I will not undertake to determine whether youth can be justly imputed to any man as a reproach, but affirm that the wretch who after having seen the consequences of repeated errors, continues still to blunder, and whose age has only added obstinacy to stupidity," may justly become the object of contempt; and deserves not that any function should shield him from insult.

Your correspondent fancies that he has sufficiently established his position and his learning, together with the ignorance of Atticus, when he ventures to say there is scarcely a writer of any eminence among the clergy of the established church who does not differ from Mr. Paley in regard to the obligation of the Sabbath. I would here remark, that whatever may be the opinions of later writers, the obligation of the Jewish Sabbath upon Christians can hardly be a tenet or fixed article of the church's creed, or how should Mr. Paley retain his place among them after the publication of his philosophy? And if it be now a part of their creed or doctrines, it must, it would seem, have become so since the times of James 1st and Charles 1st. We are told by Mr. Hume, (vol 3, 327, Albany

edition) who quotes Kennet, a Bishop, (p. 702) that James 1st "had observed in his progress through England, that a judicious observance of the Sunday, chiefly by means of the Puritans, was every day gaining ground throughout the Kingdom, and that the people, contrary to former practice, and under colour of religion, were debarred such sports and recreations as contributed both to their health and their amusement. Festivals which, in other nations, and ages are partly dedicated to public worship, partly to mirth and society, were here totally appropriated to the offices of religion, and served to nourish those sullen and gloomy contemplations, to which the people were, of themselves, so unfortunately subject. The King imagined it would be easy to infuse cheerfulness into this dark spirit of devotion. He issued a proclamation, to allow and encourage, after divine service, all kinds of lawful games, and by his authority he endeavoured to give sanction to a practice which his subjects, (the Puritans,) regarded as the utmost instance of profaneness and impiety."—Quotes here Franklyn, p. 31.—The writer in your last observes that James attempted to introduce sports on Sunday; but it appears from this that they had existed before, had been unlawfully interrupted by the Puritans and that it was the purpose of James to restore them.

I may here remark, that the appellation of Sabbath, as given to Sunday, seems arbitrary and an affectation of puritanism. "The House of Commons (under Charles 1st, and which was become puritanical) enacted laws for the strict observance of Sunday, which the Puritans affected to call the Sabbath, and which they sanctified by the most melancholy indolence." Hume III, 401. "It is to be remarked that the different appellations of this festival were, at that time, known symbols of the different parties." Ibid.

Another expedient which the King (Charles 1st) tried in order to infuse cheerfulness into the national devotion, was not much more successful. He renewed his father's edict for allowing sports and recreations on Sunday, to such as attended public worship; and he ordered his proclamation for that purpose to be publicly read by the clergy, after divine service. Those who were puritanically affected refused obedience, and were punished," &c—p. 457. If then the church has in this varied her creed, or her members their faith, what must we think of her and of them? Is she like other human things that change with the times? Such a suspicion is indeed but too much confirmed by the history of the faith, its mutations and transmutations from the Ebionites and Arians, to the Puritans and Shakers of our days. But what must we think of a revelation concerning even the existence of which two such men as Paley and Clarke, equally zealous in the cause of truth, differ in opinion? We have seen in the history of the Jews the inconvenient and absurd consequences to which a holy Sabbath leads.—"In the Maccabean wars, they suffered a thousand of their number to be slain, rather than do any thing in their own defence on the Sabbath day; and in the final siege of Jerusalem, they refused any operation on that day by which they might have interrupted the enemy in filling up the trench."

The writer's opinion as to the cause of the prevalent division among nations, of time into weeks, is an instance of the absurdity into which bias often leads the mind. The revolution of the moon in 28 days or 4 weeks, and the different phases she presents during that time, her quarters, coinciding with our weeks, afford the most obvious and probable reasons for the division of time into months and weeks. Such is the opinion given by Cavallo II, 325, note. Phillips, in his astronomy, p. 145, observes, "the earlier inhabitants of the earth reckoned their time by the apparent motions of the moon, and followed the lunar, not the solar year." Such an account of the matter, I think, appears rather more rational and philosophical than his hypothesis, that the Sabbath was instituted among men at the creation; though perhaps for that very reason it is not so doctrinal. Philo declares, "The seventh day is a festival to every nation," and Tasso declares "That witchery delights in numbers odd."

But your correspondent contends, that while the command to the Jews concerning the Sabbath is binding on us, the day has been changed by the fact of the Apostles having met on that day for religious worship. Thus the day on which God himself rested, which he sanctified, and which he marked out to the Jews in the wilderness by the falling of the manna, and the observance of which he afterwards confirmed in thunders from Mount

• By these the author means other christian nations, and the same nation in other ages.

Sinai, is made, by the equivocal conduct of the Apostles, (1) to yield to another. And for what reason? Because it was the day of the resurrection. Thus the Son is exalted above the Father and preference given to his day. God we are told rested on the seventh day; but these persons, by a singular perversity, rest before they labour. We see in this subject an example of that perplexity and mysticism in which theological controversy has involved most of its topics; and perhaps the philosophic enquirer would be disposed to cut the knot of the difficulty by a very natural supposition, that the Sabbath of the seventh day was neglected out of opposition to the Jews, and another gradually established.

But it is denied that Paley has said the first Christians did not observe the present Sabbath. We shall see.—"Nor did Christ or his Apostles deliver, that we know of, any command to their disciples for a discontinuance upon that day of the common offices of their professions: a reserve which none will see reason to wonder at, or to blame as a defect in the institution, who consider that in the primitive condition of christianity, the observance of a new Sabbath would have been useless or inconvenient or impracticable. They already had a Sabbath which as citizens and subjects of that economy, they were obliged to keep and did keep. It was not therefore probable that Christ would enjoin another day of rest in conjunction with this." "When the new religion came forth into the gentile world, converts to it were, for the most part, made from the classes of society who have not their time and labour at their own disposal, and it was scarcely to be expected that unbelieving masters and magistrates would permit their labourers to rest from their work every seventh day, or that civil government indeed would have submitted to the loss of a seventh part of the public industry." P. 89-90. I regret that I have been compelled to make so long an extract—the reader may finish it in the original. Now as this writer opens with the assertion that this institution has ever been highly revered as a Sabbath among Christians, and regarded as of divine appointment; and as it is the unequivocal opinion of Mr. Paley that it was not at first so observed or so considered, the public may decide which opinion should preponderate. It is a little singular that the critical accuracy of your correspondent should permit him to name a writer of the second century among the first Christians, or should intimate that 'sabbatizing spiritually' was doing so bodily.

Your correspondent hath also displayed an uncommon erudition in our laws, by discovering that there is really a religion enjoying the preference, and entitled to the patronage of the general government. It is in this way, I suppose, that we are gradually to be led and argued into submission to an established priesthood. Surely this person hath before been practiced in the art of deducing the highest claims from the slenderest pretensions, and perhaps he may be nearly connected with that order of whom we spoke in our last as being 'more remarkable for the extension of their own claims than for the observance of those of the civil power.' By the way, this is one of the 'weak' parts of Atticus' communication which it seems to have been thought not advisable to attack or to denounce. Its avowed raison. But will he be so good as to inform us what sect of some hundreds is the favoured one?

He displays again his usual learning upon the subject of Lent, Easter, &c. I assure him that though I might not be ignorant of some of his sage distinctions, yet that I pride myself less upon a knowledge of such jargon than on some other subjects of human learning. The history, not the legends, of Saints, Martyrs, Relics and Heretics I think somewhat more instructive and even more pleasant than the observance of Lent or the ceremony of Ash-Wednesday. (2)

He desires that I should inform him who are our Turkish citizens. Is he ignorant that there may be such? and possessed of equal privileges with himself, with the exception of not being allowed to hold a particular office, to which I presume one need aspire as much as the other. I hope that our Congress, even if they possessed the right to make distinctions among faiths, and give preference or establishment to either, will never show itself less liberal than ancient Rome, who 'bestowed the freedom of the city on all the Gods in the universe,' and allowed for a time even the Egyptian and the Jew, the two most despised, and where superstitions were sometimes confounded by such writers as Tacitus and Suetonius, to live and worship within their walls. They were however both banished together, by Tiberius; and the confounding the Jew with the Egyptian seems to have been

the cause of his (the Jew's) misfortune.—See Tacit. ann. lib 2, Sueton. Tiber. c. 36. But perhaps he is less acquainted with our naturalization laws than with the appointment and pay of Chaplains by members of Congress. He seems also in this part of his subject, to have communicated the discovery that the Turks are Mahometans, or as he will have it, Mahomedans. Perhaps in his next he will inform us that the Dutch are in possession of Holland. I have to inform him that Mahometans have a fast called the Ramadan, which they probably regard full as holy as Lent or Sunday. The difficulty of comprehension he complains of in this part of his communication, is not perhaps very surprising in him.

He observes that Christians are commanded to 'submit to every ordinance of man' and yet it is plain they have not done it.—Nor Luther nor Calvin, nor Knox I think pursued that maxim, when they commenced their religious opposition to powers that had ordained a different conduct. Popery was overturned in Scotland, and the Presbyterian form of worship and discipline established on its ruins, by a Parliament which assembled and acted without the consent of the Queen of Scots, and this too after they had forcibly made themselves masters of the Kingdom. Mary, who was then in France, denied the validity of a Parliament thus assembled, and refused her sanction to those statutes. "But the Protestants gave themselves little concern about their Queen's refusal." Hume Hist. 2, 586. The same fault is not perhaps to be found in the English Clergy under Henry 8th, for most of them seem devoutly to have submitted and assented to all the changes of faith and form which he desired or ordained. A Convocation of the Clergy in his reign formed articles of faith of which it has been remarked, that "their tenets were of as motley a kind as the assembly itself, or rather as the King's system of theology, by which they were resolved entirely to square their principles;" and "that they were subscribed by every member of the assembly, while perhaps neither there nor throughout the whole Kingdom, could one man be found except Henry himself, who had adopted precisely the doctrines they contained." This conduct of the English Clergy, according to your correspondent, was very christian, but few will think it very respectable.

Upon the whole, I think, that this is a command which Christians do not appear more remarkable for observing than that which makes charity the first of virtues. Compare them with the Chinese and the Turks. The Sultan and his Celestial Majesty have more submissive subjects than any Prince in Christendom. Compare them with the Hindoos. The Priests of Bramah ride a more tame and yielding populace than do the Priests of Italy or Spain. And how much less firm is the hold, how much less steady the seat of those who command the protestant flocks, needs not to be told. Judged by this rule then I should not hesitate to say that the Turks, the Chinese and the Hindoos are the best Christians on earth.

Having already seen the effect upon nations of that rule of conduct laid down by your correspondent 'of submitting to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake,' it is worth while further to observe its effects upon individuals. These are happily set forth in a short dialogue, furnished us by a witty French writer. The scene is laid in the island of Samos, which sometimes changed masters between the Greeks, the Venetians and the Turks, and where of course the subject had full occasion for this meekest of rules. The characters are a Turkish (Mahomedan) Bashaw, and a Greek gardener.

Bashaw Tucton. "You sell your fruit, friend Karpos, very dear; however, it is pretty good—pray what religion do you profess now?"

Karpos. "Why, faith, my Lord Bashaw, I can't very well tell you. When our little island belonged to the Greeks, I remember I was ordered to say that Agiou pneuma proceeded only from tou patrou. I was told to pray to God standing bolt upright, with my arms across, and was prohibited eating milk in Lent. When the Venetians came, our new Italian curate ordered me to say that Agiou pneuma proceeded both from tou patrou and tou uiou, permitting me to eat milk, and making me pray on my knees. On the return of the Greeks and their expelling the Venetians, I was obliged to renounce tou uiou and milk porridge. You have at length expelled the Greeks, and I hear you cry out as loud as you can, Allah illa Allah! For my part I no longer know what I am; but I love God with all my heart, and sell my fruit very reasonably." Poor Karpos and the Clergy of Henry 8th, were excellent Christians upon this writer's

rule, and seem to have very piously abhorred opening doors to licentiousness.

But there is another maxim to which your correspondent refers, and which he would probably here bring to his aid. It is that 'we must obey God rather than man.' Here is indeed the doctrine that has opened the door to the 'widest licentiousness.' It is the doctrine to which every New-England Reformer and every religious Rebel resort for justification. It was the pretext under which the Puritans overthrew both Church and State in England and in Scotland. Knox, the 'Reformer,' puffed with spiritual pride and relying on his heavenly gifts, took a pride in insulting from the pulpit, and in the grossest manner, his royal mistress, the beautiful and lovely Queen of Scots, and showed in this, that bigotry can as effectually freeze the sentiments of chivalry as those of charity.

He professes ignorance of those 'who think through unbelievers' blood lies their directest path to heaven.'—And yet he must be aware that some such principle has been acted on by Christians. What prompted the wars of the reformation nearly all over Europe? Upon what principle have Heretics been put to death? 'Is it not written,' saith Baifour of Burley, (3) 'that thou shalt be zealous even to slaying?' The tree, it is settled, must be known and judged by its fruits.

I must, before I leave him, do justice to his critical or pedagogical talents. He shows such skill in orthography and syntax, that I should suppose him destined for the office of schoolmaster, and would advise him to aspire thereto. He would probably be quite exact in dotting the children's i's and crossing their t's; with the aid of a book, he might teach them to spell the names of the Fathers and of the Heretics; and perhaps he can sing a psalm as sonorously as Ichabod Crane himself.

In the end he affects to smile—there are some very tristful smiles, and methinks I do not envy him his on this occasion. Read this and then 'To supper with what appetite you may.'

NOTES.

(1) There is somewhere a maxim of the following import: 'Nihil tam convenientis est naturali requitati quam unumquodque dissolvi eo ligamine quo ligatum est.'

(2) I also find some edification and more amusement in the history of Puritans from Knox, Kettledrumly, Poundtext and Prynne, to the Blue lights of Connecticut.

(3) Perhaps my critical friend may here discover that Peter Pattieson is not a 'Historian.'

Your second correspondent comes forth with an air uncommonly chivalrous, and I regret that his claims to knighthood should have been diminished by the ungallant charges he makes on his adversary. He is, nevertheless, gentlemanly, compared with his colleague, and deserves from me proportionate respect. If I used the weapons of another, I did not call them mine, and I think it apparent that he is in this respect, equally guilty with myself, and somewhat more unfortunate. For if my weapons were few, they were also wieldy, while, towards his 'latter end,' he reminds me of that unfortunate Roman virgin who was overwhelmed and suffocated by the armour of her friends.

The Knight is much mistaken in supposing that I regard Mr. Paley or any other divine, as an oracle. As they contradict each other most, the fairest inference seems to be that they are the most misguided of mortals. But some I of course think more rational than others.—Among these is Mr. Paley; but he, we are informed, 'has been weighed in the balances and found wanting.' I do not find however, that such is related to have been his misfortune, in the notice that is given of him by Lempriere, who also writes his own name with a D. D. He observes of Paley, "that his Moral Philosophy is become a popular book, and its chapters are frequently subjects for disquisition in the schools of the Universities; yet it did not establish its reputation without being exposed to the caustic of contemporaries."—But even if Mr. P. be wholly condemned, the circumstance cannot excite surprise with those who have given some attention to Ecclesiastical History. He is much too liberal ever to acquire the reverence of a sect.—"When a controversy in theology is started, some people pretend with certainty to foretell the issue. Whichever opinion, say they, is most contrary to plain sense, is sure to prevail, even where the general interests of the system require not that decision. The reproach of heresy may, for some time, be banded about among the disputants, it always rests at last on the side of reason. Any one, it is