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To the Rev. JOHN GAMMEL, Great Valley.

Sir,

Your letter of the twenty first of Feb. ult. addressed to Thomas Paine has been inserted in the Sunbury and Northumberland Gazette of the twenty third of June inst. I read it with attention, and now take the liberty of making a few observations on some parts of it.

I do not coincide with you in the extravagant opinion you have formed of "the intrinsic merit and memorable effects of the writings of Tom Paine in favour of the independence of the United States." In the writings of T. Paine during the revolutionary war, particularly in that production of his called common sense there is much good sense.—At the time of publication, it derived its popularity from the temper of the time. Unaided by the opinions and prejudices of that period it would have been little noticed. There is no doubt, that the contest would have been conducted with equal wisdom, and its termination equally speedy and glorious, if T. Paine and his writing had never been known. The minds of the Americans were sufficiently enlightened, their passions sufficiently roused, their termination to resist and to persevere with fortitude till the end, and energetic enough without any aid from such writings.

In your controversy with Paine, Sir, you have from pretensions to be guided by "the mild and forbearing spirit of the gospel,"—but at the same time you treat the Federal Clergymen with the greatest severity. In this respect you have sacrificed your brotherly love and unity of Religious sentiment with them as to the great articles of christianity, to the indulgence of party and political resentment. Your political opinions, usurped the controul of your religious temper. You have charged those clergymen with being inimical to the representative system of our Government.

"Some of them doubtless have been deceived. Others impelled by native pride or Aristocratic principles, or the prospect of gain or the hopes of elevation, have exerted all the influence attached to their profession in behalf of a faction combined for the destruction of our excellent constitution and the establishment of a monarchy on its ruins." This is mere party declamation and is unsupported by argument.

Where is the evidence that some of them have been deceived? Have those acknowledged that they were deceived by their ignorance, by their credulity, by their prejudices, by the false appearance of things and the cunning of those who had then the government in their hands? I have never heard of any such confessions. If then deceived, the deception still remains. As far as I know they still view that the conduct of Government then was worthy of wise statesmen, the state of the country considered particularly in its foreign relations. Is it not more probable, that the few ministers, in the union, who disapproved of certain measures of the federal administration, were deceived than the other, far more numerous, equally disinterested, equally good, equal if not possessed of superior information in relation to human nature, and human life and the science of government? Why any of the Federal Ministers, were impelled by native pride in their defence of the Federal Administration, whilst those who opposed it were exempt from its influence, is paradoxical, contradictory and absurd. Is not human nature the same in all classes of men: if so, the Democratic Ministers are as necessarily liable to be born with native pride as the Federal. Is it possible that nature should be partial in its distributions to men? To be munificent to one particular political sect and to be sordid, base and injurious to another? This, O nature, is not thy voice!—This is not thy determination! Or if thou art mutable in thy operations, why dost thou peculiarly subject Federal Clergymen to the influence of pride, so destructive to the representative system of government? In union with the most ignorant, and with the most designing and licentious of your party, you have charged federal Ministers with aristocratic principles, this like your other charges is unsupported by any evidence. It is the suggestion of ignorance, fancy or a worse disposition of the human heart.

I cannot perceive any reason, known to influence human nature, why federal Clergymen should be peculiarly attached to an aristocratic form of government, whilst their brethren of opposite political opinions are opposed to this form. Are the federal Ministers wealthier than the others? Have they better grounded prospects, of getting themselves, their friends and connections advanced to the exclusive possession of Aristocracy than others? Or are they men of greater talents and virtue, and are more eminently useful to society than others? If so, this is the only nobility, and which ought to have a correspondent influence on society. To talk of establishing an aristocratic form of Government, is to talk absurdly. The state of society cannot admit it. The materials of aristocracy are not among us. Property is too equally divided to receive such a form of government.—The federal Ministers know this to be the case. And their knowledge of the various forms of government, lead them to prefer our present representative system to every other. To charge them

with aristocratic principles, may for a time suit the mercenary and ambitious purpose of the leaders of the democratic party, by deluding & prejudicing the honest but uninformed part of the community. But lest those charges should not be competent to account for the conduct of the federal clergy, you specify in the range of your imagination, other possible ones "the prospect of gain or hope of elevation."

What an avaricious and ambitious class of men must the federal ministers be, if this charge be true?

But in consequence of their being friends of the late administration, what rational or probable ground had they of realizing their purposes of avarice or ambition? did they expect that they would be translated from their charges in the Church, to fill the most important departments in the government of the United States? Did they not know that there was more than enough of men in active and civil life capable & willing to serve all the purposes of the general government? Of all I know of the federal ministers, not one of them had ever the most distant idea of deriving any personal or private advantage from their political opinions. None of them were actuated by the hope of elevation.—None of them were candidates for nor expectants of, civil appointments. But this was not nor is not the case with some of the Democratic ministers. These heavy & false accusations, which you have exhibited against federal ministers could with more propriety be applied to those of your own sect. And in this conduct of yours, you have forfeited the mild, charitable and forbearing influence of christianity. If your mind, when you wrote, was under the influence of prejudice and resentment, if you have met with any bad treatment from federal ministers; you should have endeavoured to be sensible of the state of your mind before you wrote; and in your letter returned love for hatred, candour for censure, good for evil. To this treatment you were inadequate, and no doubt you justified yourself in this respect, for in your omniscience you saw they "exerted all the influence attached to their profession in behalf of a faction combined for the destruction of our excellent Constitution and the establishment of a monarchy on its ruins." You have seen, sir, what the federal ministers saw not. They clearly saw, what you have termed a faction, the legitimate rulers of the nation, legislating constitutionally, and that their obnoxious measures were justified by the then situation of our country, that they were designed and calculated, to support and defend the dignity, the honour, the interest, & independence of America. They never viewed that the sedition and alien bills were unconstitutional.—They could not discern that any of the laws enacted by the federal government, had the least tendency to destroy our excellent constitution, but on the contrary to maintain it in all its glory. They did not claim the prerogative of searching the human heart. From the apparent necessary measures adopted, they justly inferred the purity of the motives of our legislators.—They knew, that our government was the adamant pillars of the Constitution. They knew that they had no interest to destroy it: but on the contrary all that was near and dear to them concurred to engage their most zealous defence. Under these impressive views, federal Ministers, in due consistency with their office as teachers inculcated the necessity and reasonableness of obedience to the then Constituted authorities, "not only for wrath but for conscience sake,"—till constitutionally changed by the use of elections. For this conduct, and for their supposed merited praise, freely bestowed on the late administration, are they to be denounced, as having acted from the most base and flagitious principles? Such a denunciation is unworthy the character of any intelligent and virtuous man, but especially derogatory from the Ministerial.

Suffer me, Sir, to tell you, that if ever our federal constitution shall be destroyed, it will not be on account of the opinions nor practices of the federal republicans; which are equally opposed to the despotism of one, or a few, or the licentious tyranny of the mob. In this country we have more to dread, considering the corruptions of human life, from the ignorance and vices prevalent and likely to increase among the people than from all other sources whatever.

You further, Sir, accuse these clergymen who differ from you in political opinions, with hypocrisy. "On your return to this country," Thomas Paine, they raised against you, the voice of federal hypocrisy. Your infidelity was the ostensible, your republican pen the real ground of alarm. For no one deferring the name of a minister of the gospel can seriously believe, what they affected to fear, that the religion of Jesus can be materially affected by the presence or absence of Mr. Paine. In that book which bears the name, but not the evidence, of the age of reason, they have seen your most poisoned arrow aimed with your utmost skill and exerted with all your might against that religion," &c.

Suffer me, Sir, who am one of those clergymen, you so unjustly and uncandidly accuse, to inform you that the late arrival of T. Paine in this country gave me no alarm. I neither dreaded his infidel nor republican pen. If his political writings since he came to this country, are true-

ly republican, conducive to support our venerable constitution, to maintain inviolate, life, liberty and property, the order and happiness of society, what fear then should invade the minds of federal republicans? But if any of his sentiments are of anti-republican tendency, qualified by his signal vicious habits, to publish writings injurious to mankind in any of the important relations of life—safe enough to defend any measure, however wrong, should not you and I view his return to America with abhorrence: Under no religious nor serious virtuous principles, arrived at old age, addicted to beastly and habitual intoxication, what is he not capable of? I know that the democrats of America stand not in need of his wisdom. They have among them, many men superior to him in knowledge—far superior to him in virtuous acquisitions. But if the powers that be, stand in any need of the aid of a profligate writer they are lucky in the arrival of T. P. in this country. When the federal ministers, considered the nature and tendencies of the writings, called the age of reason, "to unsettle the faith of thousands? to root from the minds of the unhappy virtuous all their comfortable assurance of a future recompence; to annihilate in the minds of the flagitious all their fears of future punishment; to give the reins to the domination of every passion, and thereby contribute to the introduction of public infidelity and private unhappiness, usually and almost necessarily accompanying a state of corrupted morals," should they then on reasonable evidence be charged with hypocrisy, on account of manifesting their disapprobation, at the arrival and the manner of T. Paine coming into this country at the warm invitation of the President of the United States? With more shew of reason might not the silent approbation of the Democratic ministers in relation to this emigration, be construed as a relinquishment of their christian faith, or that they secretly preferred, their political to their religious creed? Or that the advantages derived to the world from T. Paine's political writings are infinitely superior to all the trifling evils and inconveniences accruing from his religious publications. I am of the opinion, and it is not singular, that the religious writings in question have done more mischief to mankind than all the writings of Isidore Morgan, Voltaire, Bolingbroke, Hume and Gibbon, put together, for they have had a more rapid and extensive circulation, have fallen into the hands of more individuals, and the manner of his writings better suited to the indolent and vicious taste of this corrupted age. Besides the recency of the publication, the title by which it is distinguished, and the popularity of his writings, in the revolutionary contest attracted the attention of thousands in this country to their own heart. As it is some time since the publication of the age of reason it is not to be expected there should be so much talk about it as its first appearance; notwithstanding it is far from having fallen into universal contempt. It became then the Ministers of Christianity, to testify publicly their righteous displeasure, at the arrival of the base and most wicked of all infidel writers. To have neglected this, they might have been charged with hypocrisy, or inconsistency. And you in your candour ought to have acknowledged this. Besides, Sir, you know that wise and good men have differed in their opinions and continue so in relation to religion and politics and almost on every subject of importance: To impute these differences to unworthy motives is beneath the character of a clergyman or of a philosopher.—If your representation of the character of your opponents, proceeded in an intellible and unavoidable manner, from a peculiarity of constitution or circumstances, you are to be pitied, but not to be despised.

I acknowledge that many private and public eulogies were voluntarily bestowed on the federal administration, and its chief: but none greater than you have given to the present government and its Chief. "I shall give it in the words of a republican, with whose intellectual greatness your diffidence would blush to be compared, whose influence is unrivalled and who sits this day at the head of the freest, happiest and most enlightened government in the world."

I have no knowledge that the federal ministers were abundant in the profession & malignancy of the abuse, which they bestowed on those who were constrained by the force of reason and integrity to disapprove some of Mr. Adams's measures." In this part of the country they persecuted none who differed from them in political opinions, but on the contrary, for their ingenious and open avowal of their sentiments, abundance of malignant abuse were heaped upon them. If any of the federal ministers, "have omitted a weekly and public supplication for the first magistrate of our country," as you say, they have done since the 4th of March 1801, they have been deficient in their ministry. If they have viewed him as an infidel and otherwise disqualified to render "equal and exact justice to all men of whatever state or persuasion, religious or political," there is more necessity for public address to the Supreme Ruler of the universe, that he may make the President a real christian, that he may be just ruling in the fear of God.

You have further asserted, that "they, mean-

ing federal ministers, have zealously engaged in support of an eastern newspaper, whose avowed object is opposition to his administration, and to the great majority of the people. With all their professional strength they have swelled the voice of calumny to stain his reputation, to ensnare his hands, to subject to universal contempt him and the government, over which the Providence of God has appointed him to preside." If the newspaper alluded to is the Palladium, and if it is edited and supported by some of the Massachusetts Clergy, I know not. But as far as I am acquainted with the Palladium it appears to be conducted with distinguished talents. I am by no means of the opinion that its avowed object is opposition to the present administration right or wrong. It may, no doubt have exhibited the present administration not in such flattering light as its devotees have done.—It may have firmly believed, circulated, and re-echoed the many histories which have been told of Mr. Jefferson that he violated the constitution, in appropriating, without law, upwards of thirty thousand dollars for the repairs of the frigate *Berceau*, and then delivered it up to France; that signing the law for the repeal of the late judiciary system of the United States was unconstitutional—that he remitted Callender's fine contrary to the Constitution—that contrary to justice and gratitude, he paid to Gabriel Jones of Rockingham, Virginia, the fifty pounds which he had loaned of him, and the interest, in paper money, which, when it came into his creditor's hands was not worth more than one shilling in the pound—that he had acted improperly in using his presidential influence, to secure the election of a favorite—that he had acted contrary not only to sound policy, but to his own public sentiments, in turning out of office worthy men, and choosing exclusively those of a certain political sect, to fill the vacancies made by executive pleasure, &c. &c. If this is calumny no doubt the Palladium and other newspapers are very criminal. Those who now complain of federal abuse, let them remember the unprecedented abuse of federal men and measures—that to misrepresentation and slander, the powers that be chiefly owe their elevation.

As you have been pleased to introduce into your letter an extract from Mr. Jefferson's notes on Virginia, and bestowed an extraordinary eulogy on it, I shall take the liberty to bring it in to my letter, and make a few observations on it and your commentary. "Reason and free inquiry are the only effectual agents against error. Give a loose to them they will support the true religion by bringing every false one to their tribunal, to the test of their investigation, they are the natural enemies of error and of error only. Had not the Roman government permitted free enquiry christianity could never have been introduced, had not free inquiry been indulged at the era of the reformation the corruptions of christianity could not have been purged away."

Did not the Philosophers of antiquity use their reason and free enquiry, to discover the true religion? And did they hereby ever attain to the true knowledge of the unity of God, the doctrine of an universal providence and the future state of retribution? They certainly did not. Amidst the greatest exercise of their intellectual powers, they never found that reason and free enquiry, secured them against error. To the indulgence of free enquiry, granted by the Roman government, in the infancy of christianity, its introduction into the world owes very little. To the working of miracles, it was chiefly indebted, for its introduction, its speedy and extensive propagation in the world. The pious characters and exemplary lives of the primitive teachers of christianity, their patience and fortitude under sufferings, contributed much to the growth of christianity in the Roman Empire. This extensive empire being under one supreme head, and the pacific state of the world then facilitated in some degree the introduction and spread of the christian system. Unaided by the miraculous attestations of divine power christianity, with all its reasonableness, and with every indulgence shewed to it by the Roman Emperor, never could have prevailed over so many obstacles which opposed its rise and progress in the world, as it did. The dreadful and cruel persecutions, carried on against the christians, in the early period of the christian era contributed more to the promotion of christianity in the world, than any lenity ever manifested by the Roman powers.

No doubt the exercise and indulgence of free inquiry at the era of the reformation, was the primary instrument of lopping off the papal corruptions of christianity. The scandalous sale of indulgences in the Roman church, contributed to the exercise of free enquiry and these produced the reformation. Your interpretation of Mr. Jefferson's paragraph does not appear to be fairly contained in it. "This is to say, the reasonableness of christianity was so gloriously resplendent, that it confounded the darkness of papal superstition." By the corruptions of christianity, Mr. Jefferson may have understood not only the superstition peculiar to the Roman church, but the doctrines which are generally believed in the protestant Churches. By the true religion, he may have