

THE CLAIMS, &c.

7219

P. A. Jay

THE CLAIMS

OF

THOMAS JEFFERSON

TO THE

PRESIDENCY,

EXAMINED AT THE BAR

OF

CHRISTIANITY.



*Wm Brown?
Continued p. 167*

BY A LAYMAN.

L. A. ...



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EVERY body knows that the time is hastening, when a first magistrate of the United States is to be taken from among the people. A more important transaction than this can hardly be imagined. In a despotic government, perhaps, this appointment is of more importance; for there; the lives and fortunes of mankind are more absolutely confided to one hand, than in our scheme of policy; but the act is, among ourselves, of sufficient moment to rouse every hope and every fear, and call forth every energy and virtue to the battle, against ignorance, cowardice and vice.

In the hands of your President, my countrymen, are lodged the sacred power of making

laws, the direction of the national force, and the choice of foreign nations as enemies or friends; and consequently, in his hands are the causes of happiness and misery, the disposal of our lives, properties and persons; and the condition of us and our posterity. Do you doubt this? Are you wont to deem more lightly of the prerogatives of this officer? Consider a moment, that in certain cases, his voice is absolute; or, in other words, that in the making of laws, his *concurrence* is necessary; that the appointment of all the agents of the nation, at home and abroad, is his province; and that in him, is chiefly the right of forming treaties and declaring war.

True it is, that in the complex frame of our government, he is, in many cases, but one among many powers; but forget not that he is *one*, whose movements will generally controul the whole, and without whose activity the whole machine must stand still. To say that this period is more pregnant with fate than any former period has been, or any future one will be, is, perhaps, childish exaggeration. We shall always have independant nations for our neighbours, and much of our happiness will always depend upon the law that rules us. The most momentous effects will always flow

from our pacific intercourse from these neighbours, or the war we wage with them; but these will always be, as now, the most important objects that can engage the attention of mankind; and to exercise our utmost wisdom in the choice of those to whom such powers are entrusted, will always be the strongest dictate of our interest, and the chief precept of our duty.

Permit me then to request your attention to the merits of the candidates that are offered to your choice. Whether you have hitherto discussed the matter deeply or superficially, it will do you no harm to take another view of the question. Lay aside your several amusements for an hour and attend to me. This is no insolent demand. The subject is your own happiness. The voice does not call itself an oracle. The speaker clothes not himself in the garb of office; he girds not on the sword of spiritual authority; he awes you not by boasts of former service; avails himself not of any previous reputation to pre-occupy your homage. His name is MAN; his rank is that of your countryman and fellow citizen, and his claim to your attention nothing more than that he *wishes you well*. Have some regard, therefore, for a dispassionate adviser; have some

reverence for your first duty, and the happiness of yourselves, and give ear to counsel, which shall have, at least, all the fervour of an honest purpose, if it want the recommendation of eloquence or truth.

I know you well, my countrymen. You are but men, happily distinguished by the blessings of a wise government, from other men, but just like those that have gone before, and will come after you, in the constitution of your minds; impelled hither and thither by froward passions; thwarted, fettered and led like captives, by self-interests, and ignoble appetites; deciding as ancient habits or specious illusions prompt; and concealing even from yourselves the bondage in which you are detained by selfishness and prejudice. In running over the catalogue of these causes, that have determined your political conduct and opinions, what a tissue of folly and weakness presents itself, and how little does the wisdom of your decisions indicate that *re-creating* influence which some fond dreamers attribute to the *age* in which you live, and others to that wholesome *equity* which ennobles your political institutions.

Each of you has taken his side. Already are you prepared with your *buzza* for this, or

that idol—an idol with most of you, he undoubtedly is, whom your imagination invests with ideal excellence, and whose worship you preach with ignorant or selfish views. Some of you have caught the faith of the last speaker; some of you decide *thus* because your neighbours have done so, or your parents, kindred, or tutor, or *pastor* have thus decided. Some say *yes*, because the man, whom they hate or despise, says *no*; because a dollar will be added to their revenue, or a shilling taken from that of some one who is feared or envied. Money, in some shape, lucre, mere lucre, is the criterion of truth with thousands. With others it is some long remembered injury, suffered from some foreign individual; some inherited, or *in-infancy* acquired antipathy, or some remote view to their own aggrandizement, or that of those with whom they are connected, by the ties of friendship or relationship.

Such causes are they which give the first bias to the mind; that give speculative points, the beautifying lustre shed by the hovering angel *Inclination*; that make steadfast the wavering footsteps, and set them going in that path where every new advance fortifies the first conviction, and multiplies the auxiliaries of argument and sophistry.

It should seem an useless task to invite you, thus fettered and influenced, to an audience of the truth, but far am I from thinking that all my countrymen are inaccessible to argument, or deaf to expostulation. Far am I from thinking that any of them have *adder's ears*, or are incapable of forming a *true decision*, provided the truth shall possess an earnest and impartial advocate, and they can be persuaded to attend to him.

One of the persons, whom you are persuaded to exalt to the highest authority known in these states, is THOMAS JEFFERSON. Have you deeply pondered on the character of this man? Have you weighed well the consequences that will flow from his election? At moments when your minds are freest from the instigations of self-interest, what say you to the question—*Shall THOMAS JEFFERSON be the chief magistrate of these states?*

I have put this question to myself. I have endeavoured to abstract my mind from personal considerations. I have taken the broadest view that I was able, of the true interests of my country. I have listened to the pleas and admonitions of others, and I have, finally, answered from my inmost soul—**GOD FORBID!**

Let me now expostulate with you, who are of a different opinion. All of you are citizens and men, but all of you do not agree on the reasons of your judgment. You are all interested in the wise administration of the government, and you believe that the political maxims of Mr. Jefferson are right. But there is a part of his character which you view in different lights. Some of you regard his opinions on the subject of religion, as a recommendation to your choice, because those are your own opinions. To such I shall not urge, as a disqualification or demerit, that he is *no Christian*. To such, it is a source of gratulation, and a claim to favour, and to such therefore, I shall address reasonings that are purely political. But all of you regard not Christ as a phantom and religion as a fable. Some of you are earnest believers in the faith of your fathers, and to you, suffer me to put again this question—Shall *Thomas Jefferson*, who denies the truth, and avows the pernicious folly of all religion, be your governor?

Methinks I see you hesitate and falter. Some of you, the honest and impartial, who mean well, however hitherto erroneous your decisions may be, feel some reluctance to reject him on this score. While you approve his

political creed, and do not object to the general morality of his conduct, you are averse to cast him away, because he is without religion. Yet, as your faith is sincere, it is impossible for you not to hesitate. You cannot be blind to the flagrant inconsistency of raising one to the supreme office, who is not a Christian. You cannot but see that this is an open renunciation of your faith; an unlimited confession, that religion as a principle of action, is wholly indifferent; that to want it, is no defect; and that the highest office, a post in which the power of resisting temptation is most requisite, may yet be honestly administered by one who has *no religion*.

Obey not that impulse of your minds, which leads you to extenuate the force of this objection. Let your heart shrink at the mere approach to the Ark of your God. Be diligent to shun the first tendencies to profanation, and instead of rashly adventuring to the brink, keep at a safe and awful distance from the gulf, which is gaping for your destruction.

You put on, perhaps, the amiable guise of charity. You dwell on the unimportance of these differences, which distinguish one sect from another, and love to magnify the weight and force of those tenets in which they all

agree. Any one, who expatiates on the necessity, not only of a general agreement, but of a full and absolute concurrence in religious opinions; who endeavours to persuade you, that Christianity can be but *one thing*, simple and entire, and that he, who admits, to the name of Christian, one whose notions, of the attributes or precepts of Christ, differ from his own, fully acknowledges that his own peculiarities of doctrine are either frivolous or false. He that persuades you to this, may be branded as intolerant or bigotted; and a Syren may seduce you from the true path, because she wears the angel face, and counterfeits the witching accents of Charity.

Be it so. Let this persuasion be regarded as flowing from an inhuman or false zeal. There is no danger that I should incur the shame of such bigotry. Since Thomas Jefferson differs from you, not merely as Quaker differs from Calvinist, or Lutheran from Papist, but he differs from you totally, inasmuch as he is in no sense, and according to no form, a Christian. He wears not a shred; he spurns at every fragment of the religion of Christ.

Some there are among you, who indulge the fatal spirit of abstracting religion, or all of religion, that is necessary to future happiness

or moral rectitude, from written and partially prevailing creeds; from faith in the existence or authority of *this* man or *that* volume; from belief in Moses or Zoroaster, or Christ or Mahomet. With these it suffices that the man believes in the guardianship; the presence; the right and the power to distribute punishment and recompense, of *a God*.

I mean not to dispute this point with you. I am no divine. My voice you never heard from *bar* or *pulpit*. I mean not to detain you by arguments, to prove that the adoption of this opinion, is a virtual denial of the Saviour of men. Such arguments, though just and salutary on all occasions, are of no particular importance *now*, since Thomas Jefferson believes not the moral superintendance and the distributive justice of a Deity. He is no adherent of the vague and barren doctrines of what is called natural religion. With him, God has the same species of existence, if any existence be allowed him, as the meanest and inertest of his work. He is prime cause, perhaps; he is all contriving intellect; he is every thing that the reveries of a mere geometrician can make him; but actual superintendant, moral governor, punisher of the wicked, rewarder of the good, in and after life, *he is not*.

And now, you who are Christians, lay your hands upon your hearts. Can you still persist in saying—nevertheless, this man shall be our President? No. You still hesitate. You abandon your darling tenets, the dogmas of your politics, with reluctance. You look round for auxiliaries; for advocates: for some one who shall renovate your languishing zeal, and furnish you with some plea, to countenance your adherence to the old cause.

You need not be terrified. No fear that you will be deserted in your extremity. A champion and a succourer is ready at your elbow. A familiar, whose dexterity is not to be eluded, or perseverance repulsed, by a sober remonstrance or a plain tale. He is at hand; and with a conscience ever versatile, and tongue ever voluble, undertakes to speak for you.

But what can he say? What plausible argument can the most fertile imagination conjure up to justify your choice of this man? Will he attempt to reason you out of your religion; to convince you that your faith is an idle dream; a folly, that has only served the world with persecution and sedition, for some thousand years; and that irreligion is the strongest

recommendation to an office of power and influence that can be possessed?

This style will be natural and consistent in the mouth of your familiar; and let him talk away, I will depend, for your security, on your good sense, on the influence of your established principles, and on the counter-reasonings of that conscience, that witness in the cause of God and your Redeemer, dwelling in your own breast. And surely this is the only language he *can* speak. To leave your faith unmolested, and yet attempt to reconcile the choice of this man, with your duty, would be insulting you so grossly, that even his plausibilities would lose their flattering hue, and awaken only your abhorrence and contempt.

Will he tell you, that, indeed, the man has no religion, but that he clearly sees your interest, and will wisely and honestly promote it? Supposing, that you are one thing or another, that you are either Christian or Infidel, I shall make no answer to such arguments. In either case, my endeavours would be superfluous, at least, unseasonable, on this occasion. To suppose you blind to the sophistry of your familiar, and that formal reasonings were necessary, to make that sophistry apparent, would

be, to shew the same contempt for your understanding, which your familiar manifests.

But since he cannot be wholly silent in such a case, and comes prepared to say something, what is it, that he will say? It puzzles me to guess—but let us hear him.

“There are no arguments or facts sufficient to prove that Mr. Jefferson is not a Christian. The evidence of irreligion, found in his books, and in the conversations which have been published, are not sufficient.”

Were there any bounds to human audacity, were there any end to the subterfuges of sophistry, a man might well discredit his ears, which conveyed to him, such assertions as these. That any *end* should be thought so sacred or precious, as to justify the use of such means of misleading mankind, will not be believed by common and inexperienced minds.

But, to drop this astonishment at things, which, to say truth, are daily occurring—Pray, my good sir, what is it you mean, by these assertions? Come now, answer me. Is Thomas Jefferson a Christian? You have, indeed, dealt in insinuation and surmise. You take advantage of an injudicious attempt, to prove, by particular detail, what is notorious to all the world, and by shewing flaws and

defects in *such* evidence, you are willing, *indirectly*, to persuade the world that this man is religious. You know the weight which this charge must possess in honest and devout minds. You are anxious, therefore, to weaken or evade it. Perhaps, in the ardour of your zeal, you have sometimes put your lips to the ear of your disciple, and said,—“upon my soul, Mr. Jefferson, from my own certain knowledge, is a Christian. So my good fellow, set your heart at rest on that score.”

Perhaps you have whispered this, and depended on the *pig-stye* foresight, the *bovel-bounded* range of the understanding and inquiries of your dupe, for his reliance on your word. But is there any one, who takes, however small, a part in national affairs, who is liable to be thus deceived? Who knows not the sentiments of Thomas Jefferson on this head? Are we a nation, plunged into darkness so profound, that the creed of a man so long and so greatly conspicuous, should be still unknown to us?

But positive assertions like these will be rarely hazarded. There are so few whose ignorance lays them open to such influence, or whose integrity can be so greatly obscured, as to allow them to employ instruments like this,

that it is found a more suitable method to urge general arguments and probabilities, and to shew that any thing, heretofore published by Mr. Jefferson, is not absolutely inconsistent with his faith in Christianity.

No one, I believe, has hitherto openly and publicly asserted Mr. Jefferson to be a Christian. There are bounds to human audacity, as this silence evinces; but these bounds are set merely by the incredulity of mankind, and by the notoriety of that fact, to which our assertion may relate. — There is a poor fellow, in a certain house, who has been heard to say in a numerous company, with emphatical solemnity, that a few months before Washington's death, that great man was offered by a committee of the Congress, a crown of gold, and the homage of the United States, as to their hereditary sovereign. If one of the company insinuate any doubt of the truth of this great event, the man immediately replies, that all doubt is absurd, since thousands of men witnessed the transaction, and he, in particular, has reason to be positive, since it was *he* who headed this king-making committee, and actually delivered the crown, with his own hands, to the General.

But what shall we think of this fellow? He cannot, in an affair like this, intend to deceive us. He cannot suppose, that his single testimony will be credited in opposition, it may be, to our own senses. No, it is plain, that he himself is deceived, and that the man is *mad*. Thus should we be obliged to decide, with regard to any one, who should publicly affirm that Mr. Jefferson was a Christian. In such conduct, there would be neither knavery nor folly, but mere insanity.

And yet the difference, perhaps, is of no moment, between absolute assertions of a fact, and a train of argument, tending to disprove the opposite of that fact. What can be the purpose of those who deny the evidence of Mr. Jefferson's opinions, drawn from his writings? This and that passage, they tell us, do not prove his disbelief of the scriptures. The only inference which such denials can be intended to suggest, must be, that he *believes in them*.

Though I dissuade you from chusing Mr. Jefferson your President, I am far more his admirer and reverer, than the men who maintain his cause in this manner. I esteem him so much as to think, that he is incapable of

avowing opinions, which his understanding condemns; that he regards the efforts of his followers with contempt and disapprobation; that he frowns in secret upon those who are thus labouring, indirectly, to destroy a belief, which the frankness of his conversation and deportment has long ago made notorious.

To go about quoting books and conversations, to shew the creed of such a man, is like furnishing an attested copy, from the records of the British privy council, of the proclamation of George the third, as king of Great-Britain, to prove that such is the name of the British monarch. It is like applying the two hands to a lever made of rye straw, in order to lift an apple to the mouth. One might as well take the trouble to convince a well read man, that Moses has been mentioned in the Old Testament, by summoning this or that divine to a court of justice, and making him depose upon oath, that he had read the name of Moses in the sacred volume.

Such feeble methods of proving a notorious fact, are manifestly unjust to the truth. By producing this evidence, we tacitly acknowledge, that this is the best evidence we can produce. We open an unbounded field for cavil and objection, and ten to one but the art-

ful adversary will obtain advantages over us, which only our own inadvertency and folly have furnished him.

Suppose I want to shew the atheistical belief of a man, who is too candid to conceal his sentiments, and whose belief is well known to all those who are in habits of conversing with him, and by their means, to the rest of mankind. It would surely be irrational in me to quote a book, written by him ten years ago, wherein atheism is formally defended; for the objector is always ready with his arguments, to shew that this book only manifests the writer's opinion *at that* time, and that ten years is long enough to witness twenty changes of opinion. Much less wisdom would there be, in quoting a book, from whose contents the irreligion of the writer is only doubtfully inferable.

Thus, if in order to prove a man to have rejected Christianity, I quote his works, in which he denies the truth of the Mosaic account of the deluge, the antagonist is ready with his *yets* and *buts*. "What," says he, "may not a man admit the truth of the New Testament, and yet deny his faith in the Old? No matter whether this can be *truly* done or not. Cannot it, in fact, be admitted by the human understanding, and has not indeed this very belief distin-

guished a numerous sect of Christians in the early ages, by whom, at once, Christ was admitted as a divine teacher, while Moses was rejected as the agent of a mighty but evil spirit? Are there not many at this hour, who distinguish between Moses as the leader and law-giver of the Jews, and Moses as the historian of ages preceding his own; and while they admit his claims to inspiration, in the former character, deny him any faith in the latter, but as a mere collector of traditions, and copyist of chronicles?"

Suppose I should infer his disbelief of inspiration from declarations that all mankind could never have descended from a single pair, or that the Americans are older than the Asiatics. Here I may be again assailed by the same distinctions between the historical and legislative character of Moses, between the usual constructions of his history, and another which has had its advocates, and which places Paradise, not in the old, but in the new world: between those who regard the Mosaic record, as the history of the origin of man, in general, and others who consider it as a deduction of the origin of the Jews only."

Suppose I find, in the book, thus given in evidence, insinuations that the wooly headed

Africans are of a species different from the *human*, and thence infer that the maintainer of such tenets is no Christian; my antagonist may justly triumph over me.

“What,” he cries, “may not we affirm that a mouse is not a man, without rejecting Christianity? A negro, you say, is a man, and therefore entitled to all the privileges, which the Christian Revelation has secured to the race of Adam. True, if a negro *be* a man, then these claims are undeniable. True it is, “that God hath made of one blood all the nations of *men*,” and therefore “all the nations of *men*” are entitled to the same treatment; but this text does not inform us whether the *Eboe negro* belong to the *homo* or the *simia*, or whether he constitutes a species distinct from both. This is a question in natural history, which neither prophet nor apostle has enabled us to decide, nor has religion any thing to do in regard to this point, but to regulate our treatment of those, whose rank in the scale of animals has been previously determined by observation and enquiry. It matters not, whether you are able to prove the *Eboe* to be of the race of Adam. It matters not what you individually believe. Your belief on this head is merely a doctrine in natural history; as much as your

belief that the elephant and mammoth are the same. Religion can direct us only in our conduct towards those, whom, for whatever reasons, we believe to be of the human species."

Perhaps I find in this book, a dissuasion from the use of the bible as a school-book among children, and thence am precipitate enough to infer, the author's denial of Christ. Here again, the adversary will perceive and lay hold of his advantage, and plausibly expatiate on the truth of the assertion, that the bible narrative and language are unadapted to boyish and infantile intellects; or, admitting, *for himself*, the fitness and propriety of making the bible the vehicle of instruction to the young, he may yet maintain, that the belief of the contrary is, at least, compatible with faith in the Christian revelation, and has been really adopted by many, the soundness of whose faith has never been questioned.

All such inferences, therefore, are in themselves, disputable. Much more so is the evidence of particular conversations. He, whose interest it is to deny, will never admit the truth of sayings that are only reported as having been received at second hand; through channels, perhaps, or with intervals of time, which make the authenticity question-

able, and the turns of which allow of many a deceitful gloss and plausible evasion.

It is not on such foundations, that *I* believe; that the friends of Mr, Jefferson believe; that all my fellow-citizens, who extend their enquiries beyond their own noses, believe this person to be no Christian. The fact, indeed, has the same kind of evidence, which informs us that Mr. Jefferson was once a member of the colonial congress, and has since been ambassador to France. To prove either of these, by quoting documents and pamphlets, would evince a singular perversion of faculties; it would be relinquishing the true ground, and strongest hold, and voluntarily retreating to a plain of moving sand, and innumerable unseen pitfalls.

Thus, then, may we return to our original ground. He who is proposed to you as supreme magistrate, is no Christian. His political maxims, it is true, are erroneous. His selections of measures and agents, in the administration of the government, will be wrong, will injure and disgrace us; will set our safety and happiness in the most imminent hazard; and this alone would make it your duty to reject him. Supposing him devout and stedfast in the true faith, the political errors of his understanding

alone, would disqualify him for your ruler, and these errors it will be easy to exhibit in their true light. Many persons have ably executed this task, and an able pen will, no doubt, perform it again: but, at present, I omit to dwell upon these objections, because there is one error of the greatest magnitude, and which would alone form, if not in the apprehension of every citizen, yet at least in the minds of those whom I am now addressing, the minds of believers in religion, an insuperable objection. The man, who is offered to your choice, is without that faith which you deem necessary to future happiness, and to the right employment of those powers which heaven has entrusted, for useful purposes, to man. He is in want of that basis of integrity, on which only integrity can rest, and which becomes more necessary; the want of which is more disastrous and deplorable, in proportion to the extent of that authority, and the force of those talents, with which the man is invested.

You hesitate, but you hesitate from the reluctance you feel to give up some selfish or personal advantage, connected with the choice of Mr. Jefferson; from the shame of imagined inconsistency or fickleness; from former engagements, and the expectations of your

friends. I pity your struggle. Would to heaven my eloquence were able to unloose the fetters which constrain you; but I am too conscious of the disadvantages under which such a monitor as I am, labours. How hard is it to win your attention to arguments, to which it is at your own option to lend or refuse an ear. I cannot seize you by the arm, and lead your reluctant footsteps to my closet. I cannot subdue by repeated efforts your aversion to a suspected or obnoxious counsellor, and gain the concurrence of your reason, by forcing you to listen to my words. Still, in addressing to you what you may never deign to read, I perform, though despondingly, what I may deem my duty, and draw some courage from the hope that what may be despised or overlooked by many, may yet be attended to and pondered well by a few.

You see, that it is only on one supposition that I venture even to solicit your attention, the supposition that your faith is Christian. On this supposition too, I have hitherto forborne to argue, with you, on the folly of raising to the supreme office, *an infidel*; but, perhaps I have made too few allowances for the force of ingenious, though selfish advocates; and for the sophistry of passion. I have too hastily ima-

gined, perhaps, that the irreconcilable repugnance between faith in the name of Jesus, and the highest instance of confidence in the integrity and wisdom of a fellow-creature, in your power to give, cannot for a moment be hidden from your view. Your familiar may have diffidence or discretion enough to admit that Mr. Jefferson is no Christian, but he may trust to his dexterity in persuading you that even an infidel may be a fit President of the United States.

I confess to you, I am wholly at a loss in what manner to repel such insinuations. There are some points, respecting which, the truth is so manifest, and at the same time, of such importance, that to reason coolly about them, and as if they really were susceptible of some doubt, is the hardest of all tasks. There is in it a kind of *recreancy*; a treason to the great cause of virtue and happiness, which their sincere champions can scarcely reconcile to their feelings.

But, indeed, to discuss the subject calmly, is difficult for another reason. It is hard to imagine by what considerations, your familiar will endeavour to influence you; by what subterfuges he will try to elude conclusions so inevitable, without risking your indignation,

by aiming his shafts at your religion itself. How any one can attempt to prove that infidelity is no valid objection to a candidate for office, without countenancing or asserting the opinion that infidelity, in no case, is a fault, far exceeds my power of conception. Hence, to arm you against his sophistries, or to awaken your laudable zeal, is difficult; because I can scarcely imagine by what weapons you will be attacked, or by what sponge he will endeavour to *damp* your zeal.

Will he whisper in your ear, "that, though religion be of use, to give the due direction and force to our principles, yet, self-interest, when it chances to impel to the same course of action, with virtue and religion, will, of itself, be strong enough to keep us in the safe and honest path. Thomas Jefferson, to be sure, would be less exceptionable, if he had religion; but let us overlook his errors in that respect, for the sake of his political rectitude. He will not meddle with our consciences. He *cannot* meddle with them. All his power to shake our religious principles, must rest in him, as a man. It is by his converse and writings only, that he is a formidable enemy. By raising him to office, we in no respect enlarge his power. He will have nothing to do, as

President, with our religious concerns. We have no established church, whose ministers are changed or appointed by him; and of which, therefore, he might rule the destiny, and bid it flourish or decay, by the nomination of men, conniving at, acquiescing in, or favourable to his purposes.

“ He will have no power over the funds provided for the support of religious houses, and the encouragement and sustenance of ministers. These, in the strictest sense, are private property, and as sacred from his violating touch, as the purity of our wives or the fastenings of our coffers.

“ In no way can any indirect or covert influence be exercised. By what means can he damp the zeal of the apostles of religious truth? It is ridiculous to imagine that he will attempt to bribe our teachers into duplicity, prevarication or neglect: that he will divert the public treasures from the payment of the known agents of the public, its military and civil servants, to the purchase of the consciences of pastors, to hiring their tongues and hands, to betray or counteract the cause of religion.

“ Will he give stipends to men who shall wander up and down the land, expounding

texts in the *Age of Reason*? Will he erect buildings, (churches I cannot call them) in which salaried lectures shall exhort the people to throw off the yoke of priests, and expose to derision the impostures of Moses and Christ?

“ Will he endow colleges and commission professors for the propagation of deism and anarchy, and employ to these various purposes, the power, the influence, and the money which he possesses, as President of the United States?

“ Will he seduce members of the legislature, and employ them to propose and defend laws subversive of religion and morals, and repay their labours by pensions, and compensate their infamy by offices of trust and profit? What ridiculous bigotry must that be, which can dread these things from Mr. Jefferson. What childish ignorance that, which imagines, that even if he had the *will*, the office of President will invest him with the *power* to act in this manner!

“ To judge of what we may expect from him, only for a moment, consider the past, and reflect upon what he has already done. Where are the eloquent defences of irreligion which he has written? He is no stranger to the pen. It is a tool, of which he was long ago, an ac-

complished master, and he is fully aware of the power which it gives him, over the actions and opinions of mankind. Compared with this, with the miracles which writing and printing are able to perform; with the sway which is exercised by authority and rhetoric, engaged in a cause so congenial to the passions and foibles of mankind, the lust of novelty, and the impatiencé of restraint; the mere weight of office and the dignity of station are as nothing. How has he hitherto employed his leisure and retirements? What books has he written, and how often has he endeavoured to seduce us by the fame of past services, and to dazzle us by the lustre of a great reputation?

“ Never. Only one performance of considerable length has he written. In that, he has allowed the nature of the subject, in a few occasions, to draw him into the avowal of opinions, which ingenuity may, indeed, wrest into hostility to religion, but which are doubtless capable of constructions favourable to it, and which, at the very worst, are nothing more than brief, circumspect and ambiguous allusions.

“ Had the man been a Vanini, a Voltaire, or a Paine, who employed all the power they possessed as private persons, to the overthrow

of religion, it would be natural to expect, that if raised to a throne, the same use would be made of every imperial prerogative, and that every faculty and sinew would be bent to further that end, in their new capacity, to which all their force had been devoted in a private station.

“ But such is not Thomas Jefferson. His time and talents have been directed to the calm pursuits of natural philosophy. He has enriched science by speculations on the topographical and zoological condition of our country. Instead of reviling and traducing what mankind holds sacred, and preaching up new Gods or new governments, he has been busy in the classification and analysis of the animate and inanimate worlds; and while his character exhibits many similarities to that of Newton, there is not a hue or a shade which he possesses in common with the mischievous demagogues, who have troubled the world with their crude schemes of reformation, and who dream that they have found that lever after which Archimedes sighed in vain, and by which they hope to lift the world to empyrean heights, and to leave far below them every impure and variable element.

“ His opinions, indeed, coincide not with popular creeds, but they are void of arrogance and ostentation. He labours not to hide or to publish them. In that respect, he treads the difficult path, equally distant from rashness and cowardice, and exquisitely compounded of deference to others, and respect to himself. He neither seats himself in the chair of the scorner, nor borrows the cloak of the hypocrite. Benevolence and dignity are enshrined in his venerable person. Simplicity and frankness might pass for his other names.

“ That he is without religion, I will neither deny nor assert. I will leave it to be determined by those, by whom piety is vaunted, as the necessary safeguard of moral rectitude. To such I will offer the life of Jefferson; and while they are compelled to confess, that it is free from any odious stain; that in all the social relations, he falls not short of the usual standard of a pure life, I will leave them to decide, in one of these ways; either that his example is a refutation of that creed, which maintains the necessity of a basis in religion, to the edifice of blameless conduct; or that this man is an exception to a rule, in other cases true; or that, though a nominal or reputed unbeliever, yet there are maxims and habits

grounded in religion, which he acknowledges in secret, and an angel that hovers over him, unseen, even by his own eyes.

“ One of these conclusions must be drawn. Either of them will serve my purpose. Either of them will effectually destroy every moral argument against Mr. Jefferson, for since his integrity in the private or public stations he has hitherto filled, cannot be impeached, we have nothing to dread from his exaltation to a higher post, where, though his power will be greater, the hedges that will bound his path, and hinder him from wandering into evil, will be proportionably higher and less pervious.”

Such is the *tapbana* which may be employed to deaden your conscience; to lull you into the stupor of indifference, or make you deaf to salutary warnings. Can any thing better than this, be said; any topic more specious? More diffuse and more eloquent, your familiar may easily be; but these are surely the utmost heights, to which a fancy, the most anxious for success, the most enamoured of its theme, can soar.

And is your ear caught by a strain like this, though seductive? Needs there any foreign aid to strip those falacies of their glossy

coat, and shew you the subtlety and venom that lurks beneath?

Mr. Jefferson, says his advocate, is no profligate, no dissembler, no duty-breaker, no bane to the peace of families, no example or teacher of blasphemy, adultery or theft, and yet—mark, I pray you, the conclusion—he believes not, he professes not religion.

Religion, I suppose, is, in your eye, sacred, and true, and necessary. And why? Does it not impart force and harmony to morals? Does it not inspire with a just zeal in the cause of human happiness? Does it not make the hands strong and the heart strenuous, and while it furnishes the only adequate motive, supplies the only certain clue to the great end of individual and national good?

What are its tendencies? its views? Does it not regard this world, merely as the threshold of another? As a region of trials and mists, through which our passage is swift, and in which we are placed as in a seminary, for the exercise of self-denial, and the acquisition of merits, which entitle us to recompense hereafter? Does it not teach us, not merely that virtue has a sure and liberal reward, in another state; that vice will hereafter meet with condign and inevitable punishment, but likewise

(that in which all other teachers have failed) does it not teach us what virtue is, and what is vice?

Does it not warn us of a state to come, of a God whose eyes are pure, and who is present to our inmost thoughts; whose will is the criterion of truth; and whose decree will regulate our eternal allotment? Does it not teach us that the sole merit consists in preference of a remote, to a present good; in referring every action to the eternal and future happiness of others and of ourselves; in submission to the explicit will of a divine judge; and the modelling of our whole conduct, by the hope of his approbation?

I will not talk to you of your redeemer. I will not quote the sacred volume to shew the necessity of belief in *his* name, to present happiness and usefulness, and to future safety. I address you, indeed, as Christians, but I concern not myself with the forms or tenets which distinguish you from others that call themselves by the same name. These differences weigh nothing in the balance that I hold. I assail you not, by arguments forcible or feeble, according as your faith is that of Luther or Calvin, or Barclay or Wesley, but by pleas, to which you are bound to listen, and which your

understandings must admit to be irrefragable, in as much as you are *Christians*; have faith in a revealed and written will of your Maker, in the duty of submission to that will, in the distribution of bliss or woe, *hereafter*, according to our acknowledgement or defiance, our neglect or observance of that will.

As such, then, let me ask you, what it is to deny those truths; to make consciousness and retribution die with the body; to deny a written or revealed will of God; the connection between the stages of being on this side, and beyond death? He who does this, robs virtue of the only ground upon which it can rest—but that is to betray the cause, to palliate iniquity by specious names. To suppose that the spurner at religion and the rebel to God, only changes the name and the form of virtue, is false. He abolishes the thing; he annihilates the essence; he rears a Molock whose banquet is blood; he bites an apple fair and enticing, perhaps, to the eye, but found, on proof, to be *bitter ashes*; he hides the disappointment; he makes himself vender, and trumpets the baneful mass as nutritious and delectable.

What is that man who denies religion? What are his merits? Shall we pile up our offerings before him? Shall we praise him as a

true guide? Shall we invest him with homage, and lift him to power, and place the destinies of mankind in his hands?

God forbid! Let us not be found thus audaciously rejecting, thus openly belying a sacred principle. Of what avail is it, that our lips avow religion, while our actions deny it; that we maintain the necessity of these truths to the welfare of man, present and future, while our conduct absolutely affirms that they are futile and false?

And will not *this*; will not this signal preference of one who knows not religion, be such a declaration? Where lies the excellence of piety, if it form no title to our favour, no security for right conduct; no claim to be our guardian and counsellor? And where are the evils of impiety, if it form no bar in the road to our confidence and veneration; no disqualification for the possession of authority and influence?

It is not the man who serves your tea-table with milk; or one who makes your clothes; or who supplies your wants from afar; or who cures the maladies of your children, or educates their minds; of whose merits you are called upon to judge. Even in cases like these, none but the covert unbeliever, the hypocrite,

the luke-warm or the giddy, will deride you for reflecting upon the moral qualities of your neighbour, before you adopt a conduct towards him, which evinces your reliance on his probity, or esteem for his wisdom; and for being guided in your judgment of his claims to this respect and this confidence, by his admission or rejection of religious truths.

There are those indeed, who will revile you, and trusting to your thoughtlessness, will call your deliberation by the names of intolerance and bigotry, but hearken not to their revilings; or rather, while you listen, retort their scorn with pity, and repulse their artful stratagems, by simple, but irresistible truths. Call to mind the true nature of piety; and reflect that if her dictates be sacred, those who receive them not, are blind; that they want the only sure compass to guide them on this sea of temptations and passions; that they have not, what truly distinguishes and effectually recommends virtue.

Virtue! They have the *word*, it is true, but the meaning of the term in their mouths is *vice*. The set of motives and views which they call by that abused name, excludes every sanction, rejects every standard, and denies every attribute which you deem indispensable; which

you account, not merely an appendage, a corroborative, a thing to be put on or off, an ingredient to be rejected from, or admitted to the mass, without injuring or changing the *essence*. No, you deem that which they reject, the entire and unalterable thing, *virtue*.

You have no alternative; no middle way: you cannot tend hither or thither; recede, or linger, or advance at pleasure. Either the irreligious are strangers to true virtue; are victims of dire illusions; have no title to reverence and service, or—*Religion is a lie*. If, in your treatment of the most insignificant of your neighbours, you confer esteem, benefit and power, without regard to, or in contempt of these distinctions, what wretches do you make yourselves!

But the case before you, is no trivial consultation on the claims of butchers or taylor, of preceptors or physicians. You are called upon to manifest the last, the most open and flagrant contempt of every sacred principle, by raising one, without religion, to be the arbiter of the lives, liberties and properties of *five millions of men*! The *arbiter*, I call him, justly call him; not in the sense of royal, or imperial, or despotic, but in the sense which the defects of human society, the extent of our

country, and the vices of our countrymen, render necessarily, but dangerously wide.

I invoke nothing but compassion; succour from Divine mercy, and the aid of human benevolence on the head of the contemners of religion. I ask you not, to banish or to persecute; to maltreat or revile those who are so greatly unfortunate. All angry passions, all contumelies, every note of infamy, every instrument of torment, are excluded from the school of true piety. The lessons that are there taught, are succour to all; consolation to all the sons of wretchedness; admonitions to the erring; and such an exhibition of the truth, so lucid and so strenuous, as to win the love, and gain the convictions of the most obdurate and stupid.

I ask you not to withhold your hands, your counsel, your vindicating voice whenever the name of Jefferson becomes the sport of slander or his fortune the prey of adversity. Instead of being indignant or callous, unjust or uncompassionate to the outcasts of God, for them are the sublimest efforts of your charity to be exerted; in the cause of their eternal happiness, are you commanded to employ your best energies. Compared with their state, nakedness and famine, obloquy and exile, the pangs of dis-

ease and the reveries of madness are light; and for them, your works of mercy must be more signal, because their calamity is greatest.

The poor maniac who gnashes his teeth at his children or parents, who struggles for some mortal weapon, that he may hew them to pieces, and wash his hands in their blood, is, perhaps, at this moment, before some of you. Shall you fall into a rage with him, and hasten, with no thought but of vengeance and hostility, to upbraid him, to torment him, or impale him alive?

Alas! no. Your duty, the impulse of your minds is very different. Some constraint upon his liberty may be necessary, but meanwhile your benevolence is active in employing those means that experience has provided for the healing of distempered intellects. *The balm of hurt minds* is in your hand, and be it the all powerful assuasive of truth, or some lulling *nepenthe*, compounded by the skilful in the properties of vegetable nature, you are eager to administer the antidote.

But, perhaps, when hindered from mangling and destroying others, his rage is turned against himself. He strives to tear his own flesh, and looks wildly round for a stone that he may dash his head against it. What are

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your emotions at the spectacle? What honest heart but must melt; what eye but must overflow with pity! What hand but must be stretched forth to save the wretch from his own fury. What voice can fail to be his intercessor, and to invoke forbearance and compassion, since *he knows not what he does*.

And what but tearers of their own flesh, and rebels to a power exerted for their benefit, are the rejectors of God? and what but commiseration and succour ought they to receive from our hands? The enmities of such madmen are less destructive than their good will. Of their own frenzy they know nothing. They rave, and imagine themselves eloquent. They aim at you a deadly weapon, but they dream that it is the wand of Hermes that raises the beast into man, and lays cares and appetites asleep. They tear away your heart from its seat, and boast that they have given you a new soul. They push you to the edge of a gulph *without bottom*, and cast you headlong, and praise themselves for charity, for the scene is not a bottomless abyss to them; they think it a haven of repose,

A quiet, dreamless, endless sleep,
To those who only wake to weep.

Succour and compassion are their due—but to

whom belongs our reverence? Where lodge we that power, which the sublunary state of man makes necessary to be somewhere lodged? In whom shall we place dignity and honour?

Not surely in one of those wretches, whom their errors have made, at once, to the last degree pitiable and dangerous; who destroy us forever, while they fancy that they do us good: who are ruinous to us, in their own despite, since the bane, with which they deluge our vitals, is, in their frantic apprehension, the elixir of immortality.

He will not, say his advocates, say his fellow lunatics, who as long as they remain so, must reason as they do—he will not by laborious means, by employing the treasure of the nation, and managing the selfish passions of his agents, endeavour to make thousands and millions of us partakers in his insanity. He will not create preachers of his errors in our colleges, our churches and our closets, on our highways, and our chimney-tops. His four years reign will not be employed to convert us all into Atheists and profligates.

Amidst a just horror, I needs must laugh at this strain. And so your enemy it seems will not do every thing! He will not exert a power to your injury that is superhuman.

High as you will exalt him, he will not be a Chinese or Russian despot! He will not yoke you to his car like mules, and use your money like the dirt of his own corn-field!

No indeed, he will be nothing more than your President; the controuler of your legislative counsels; the *nominator* of the whole series of your agents; your representative in the eyes of the whole world; the prompter of your laws and the weaver and unraveller of all your leagues with your formidable neighbours. He will *only* be looked upon as a sample of his countrymen. His example will *only* be rendered an hundred times more extensive in its influence. Instead of being overlooked as heretofore by the eyes of the multitude, he will *only* become incessantly and unboundedly conspicuous. Fashions will take their birth from his elevation; his opinion will be quoted to countenance the audacity of numbers, and an argument will be put into the mouth of those with whom you shall venture to remonstrate on the folly, and to descant on the evils of *unbelief*; an argument which you will find it impossible to elude.

“*You talk of religion!*” will be the retort of the reprobate; “you boast of its power to enable us to resist the temptations that beset

human life ! It is the one thing needful, you cry, to peace hereafter, and to sober and honest life here: to consideration and power amongst men, it is the only valid passport !

“ Look *there*. Is not Jefferson your first magistrate? Is not Jefferson an unbeliever? Was not Jefferson raised to this sublime station by your voice? Had he gained only the voices of those who disbelieve like him, and with whom therefore his disbelief was meritorious, never would he have ascended to this height. By you he was raised; by you, to whom his opinions are notorious. Could you raise him higher? Is there any office of greater dignity and power in your gift? Were you called upon to shew your confidence in the wisdom and integrity of any man, is it possible to afford a stronger proof of it? To create a more conspicuous example, a more widely-seen, and long-lasting monument of the *nothingness* of piety; of its remoteness from the judgments, its disconnection with the affairs of mankind; its inefficacy in confirming integrity, in securing reputation; in drawing after it the worship, even of yourselves?

“ After this, will you dare to vaunt of holiness? to dwell with whining accents upon the progress of irreligion in the world? com-

plain of the industry, and deplore the talents of its champions?

Behold, in your mirrors, in each other the most formidable adversaries of religion. Behold in your own act, a wound to the cause you pretend to uphold, deeper, more incurable, more ghastly than any that has ever been inflicted on it by the rhetoric of Atheists, or the sword of persecutors. Hear you not the triumph of the votaries of that rhetoric? Mark you not the concourse of them, issued from their closets, their congratulatory and joyous greetings, on an event that illustriously testifies the success of their efforts, while it carries forward their success farther in one day, than the confederacy of all their pens had been able to carry it during ages."

For what can they wish, that will more effectually cast contempt upon the cause of religion, than the voluntary choice of this man, in whom shall reside the collective soul, the supreme power of these states? Must not those be henceforth dumb, who maintain the dependance of individual morals, and of national felicity, on religion; when they see a man destitute of this religious integrity, placed in the highest office, by the voices of men who yet seem to hold their religion dear?

Some clue there must be to such infatuation. Some epidemic fury must pervade the land. Faction must reign with more ferocity than any former age has witnessed—Selfishness more imperiously domineer, and scatter in our eyes, more of her impalpable dust.

But hold—The blameless deportment of this man has been the theme of encomium. Ay! He is no felon, nor pick-pocket, nor adulterer. He is chaste, temperate, hospitable, affectionate and frank.

To what purpose is this eulogy? Do his advocates imagine that to prove him neither ruffian nor outlaw, is to prove him fit for the highest office in the nation? That he who observes the usual forms of good neighbourhood; who is an equitable king in his own household, and closetted now and then, with an alembic or a telescope, is *therefore* qualified to sit upon a throne with dignity; to watch for the welfare of millions, and to maintain the public rights against the artifices or menaces or assaults of foreign powers?

Should you place Jefferson, my fellow-citizens, over you, you will not have raised one in whom the law has found offence. You will not be so basely low as to have rescued a felon from punishment, or have robbed the tap-house

or the stews of a profitable customer. These private qualities, which his age, his ample fortune, his habitual attachment to study, make it natural that he possesses, are worthy of esteem in any one. In him they are more remarkable, because religion, that finishing and excellence to private virtue, is wanting. Even temperance and affability are not seldom abandoned by him who rejects the guide of religious principle, while others who have trodden in the footsteps of Cæsar and Cromwell, have likewise been distinguished by their conciliating manners, and their restraint from sensual excesses. The social virtues have shone brightly in him, who, in his dealings with mankind at large, and with his country, has been cruel and perfidious; and attachment to the sciences is good or ill according to the end that is meditated, and is nothing, in an estimate like this, unless it be a fault.

Science and government are different paths. He that walks in one, becomes, at every step, less qualified to walk with steadfastness or vigour in the other. The most lamentable prelude, the worst preparation possible for a ruler of men, was a life passed like that of Newton. Would to heaven that the parallel that some choose to suggest between that divine sage and

the sage of Monticello, were complete; and that those disastrous incidents had never occurred, which have made Jefferson the point of union with his party.

Would he continue to pursue a sequestered tenor, and glean from books the ideas already formed, or investigate the history of the meaner classes of existence, with his own eyes, he might gratify himself, without direct injury to others. He might live, little indeed to the benefit of mankind, and not at all to the honor of his maker, but without perpetrating any ample or lasting mischief. *O! bona si sua norit!* O that his friends were aware that to him the only honorable station is a private one, that mankind would suffer his talents and energies to be harmlessly exhausted in adjusting the bones of a *non descript* animal, or tracing the pedigree of savage tribes, who no longer exist, and forbear to bring them forth into a scene untried; a scene, in which his most ardent worshippers may tremble for his magnanimity, and those who hold his opinions in abhorrence, may be certain of his failure.

To act, to speculate, are different functions. Poverty and incapacity to reason, are sometimes found in one, whose deeds are illustrious and full of design; and who, that knows