

Thomas Jefferson

JEFFERSON'S

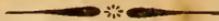
NOTES,

ON THE

State of Virginia ;

WITH THE

APPENDIXES — COMPLETE.



To which is subjoined,

A SUBLIME AND ARGUMENTATIVE

Dissertation,

ON

Mr. JEFFERSON'S

RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLES.



Baltimore :

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1800.

A
Vindication
OF THE
RELIGION
OF
MR. JEFFERSON,
AND A
STATEMENT OF HIS SERVICES
IN THE
CAUSE
OF
Religious Liberty.

—•••••—
BY A FRIEND TO *REAL* RELIGION.
—•••••—

*From Envy, Hatred and Malice, and all Uncharitableness—
Good LORD Deliver Us!*

Lit. of Prot. Episc. Church.

BALTIMORE:

Printed for the Editor of the AMERICAN, by W. PECHIN.

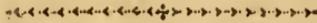
PRICE—18 Cents.



Mr. Jefferson's

Services *in the Cause of Religion*—

VINDICATED.



IT has pleased the Divine Being, in the emancipation of our country from the yoke of civil bondage, to bless it also with a more extensive and enlightened enjoyment of the privileges of religious liberty than ever was possessed by any Nation of equal extent, similarly circumstanced, and whose citizens were deversified with so many various views of the christian religion.

If our gratitude has been zealously and warmly manifested towards those patriots and heroes whose services, under Divine Providence were most illustrious in vindicating our civil rights, and establishing our liberties. It ought to be no less just and sincere in paying a due tribute to those who, not only during the revolution, but since that period, have been most zealous and active in their exertions in withstanding every encroachment on our religious privileges. If so, I hesitate not to affirm that Mr. *Jefferson* is the man to whom the friends of religious society are more indebted than to any other in the United States. Of the truth of this I hope to be able to convince the impartial, unprejudiced mind of every reader who will take the trouble of examining his documents and the proofs by which they are supported.

It is a most felicitating circumstance to every friend to true religion that not only the spirit of our Federal Con-

stitution ; but also the general spirit of our State Constitutions, breathe a general spirit of religious liberty. On the enjoyment of this liberty depend the rights of conscience, those rights over which none but our God and our own minds ought to have any coercive controul.

Wherever those rights are subjected to civil usurpation or tyranny, no true religion can prosper or be generally cherished. To this cause, this fatal cause may be referred, in a great measure, that degeneracy into which christianity has sunk and been degraded through every nation of Europe. Its tyrannical and civil Lords or Despots, by means of their civil power usurped, also a religious prerogative over the minds and consciences of their vassals ; prescribed to them what they should believe, and what not : established one ecclesiastical system and rejected another ; preferred this religious denomination and rejected that, just as it might best suit their ambitious views in oppressing the people ; and in keeping them enslaved under the galling yoke of not only temporal, but spiritual bondage. The pretended ministers of religion not only acquiesced in this, but became the advocates of the tyranny which provided for their worldly interests and ambition ; and instead of maintaining that " Liberty with which Christ had made them free ;" sold that noble, that divine, religious birth-right for a mess of pottage ; for worldly interests and vain distinctions. For mitres, tythes and titles, they bartered away the sacred, divine rights of those, over which they ought to have been the faithful watchmen, the religious and spiritual guides and guardians.

Any man who will take the pains to trace the history of religion, in every European country where christianity has been professed ; or even what has been the true state of religion in our own country, must be convinced of the justness, or truth of these observations.

Very early after our glorious revolution, the same, or a similar ruinous system of policy respecting religion was likely to have been introduced into the state of Virginia, and had it not been for the patriotic exertions of a Jefferson, at that time in all probability would have been introduced—and if it had, who knows where or when it might have stopped ?

Let those who have dared to represent Mr. Jefferson as the enemy of religion, consider this; let them also attend to the following preamble to the law passed at that time by the assembly of the State of Virginia, which law owes its existence to Mr. Jefferson.

AN ACT

For establishing RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, passed in the Assembly of Virginia, early in the year 1786:

‘ Well aware that Almighty God hath created the mind
 ‘ free : that all attempts to influence it by temporal pun-
 ‘ ishments or burdens, or by civil incapacitations, tend
 ‘ only to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness, and are
 ‘ a departure from the plan of the *Holy Author* of our
 ‘ religion, who, being Lord of body and mind, yet chose
 ‘ not to propagate it by coercions on either, as was in his
 ‘ Almighty power to do ; that the impious presumption
 ‘ of Legislators and Rulers, civil as well as ecclesiastical,
 ‘ who being themselves fallible and uninspired men, have
 ‘ assumed dominion over the faith of others ; setting up
 ‘ their own opinions and modes of thinking as the only
 ‘ true and infallible, and as such endeavouring to impose
 ‘ them on others, have established and maintained false
 ‘ religions over the greatest part of the world, and through
 ‘ all time : that to compel a man to contributions of mo-
 ‘ ney for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves,
 ‘ is sinful and tyrannical ; that even the forcing him to
 ‘ support this or that teacher of his own religious persua-
 ‘ sion, is depriving him of the comfortable liberty of giv-
 ‘ ing his contributions to the particular pastor whose mor-
 ‘ als he would make his pattern, and whose power he feels
 ‘ most persuasive to righteousness ; and is withdrawing
 ‘ from the ministry those temporal rewards which, pro-
 ‘ ceeding from an approbation of their personal conduct,
 ‘ are an additional excitement to earnest and unremitting
 ‘ labours for the instruction of mankind ; that our civil
 ‘ rights have no dependence on our religious opinions ;
 ‘ more than on our opinions in physics or geometry ; that
 ‘ therefore the proscribing any citizen as unworthy of pub-
 ‘ lic confidence, by laying upon him an incapacity of be-
 ‘ ing called to offices of trust and emolument, unless he

' profess or renounce this or that religious opinion, is de-
 ' priving him injuriously of those privileges and advantages
 ' to which in common with his fellow citizens, he has a
 ' natural right; that it tends also to corrupt the principles
 ' of that very religion it is meant to encourage, by bribing
 ' with a monopoly of worldly honours and emoluments,
 ' those who will externally profess and conform to it; and
 ' though indeed, those are criminal who do not withstand
 ' such temptation; yet neither are those innocent who lay
 ' the bait in their way; that to suffer the civil magistrate
 ' to intrude his powers into the field of opinion, and to
 ' restrain the profession or propagation of principles, on
 ' supposition of their ill-tendency, is a dangerous fallacy,
 ' which at once destroys all religious liberty, because he
 ' being of course, judge of that tendency, will make his
 ' opinions the rule of judgment, and approve or condemn
 ' the sentiments of others only as they shall square with or
 ' differ from his own; that it is time enough for the right-
 ' ful purposes of civil government, or its officers to inter-
 ' fere when principles break out into overt acts against
 ' peace and good order, and finally, that *truth* is great
 ' and will prevail if left to herself; that she is the proper
 ' and sufficient antagonist to error, and has nothing to fear
 ' from the conflict, unless by human interposition disarm-
 ' ed of her natural weapons, free arguments and debate,
 ' errors ceasing to be dangerous when it is permitted free-
 ' ly to contradict them.'

Such is the preamble to that memorable law which gave religious liberty and the rights of conscience to the State of Virginia. A law to which, if Mr. Jefferson may not lay an exclusive claim to the merit and honor of being its author, it is well known and must be evident to every one acquainted with his sentiments, as expressed in his notes on Virginia; that it was framed, adopted and passed principally by his patriotic exertions in its favour.

Now where is the public character to which religion, even the christian religion, as professed by different denominations in these states, is more indebted? Has he not been uniformly the able advocate of that religious liberty, which every denomination considers as its most invaluable

privilege? We have no concern with the peculiar creed or confession of any public civil character? It is sufficient for us that he be the determined vindicator of that liberty which is not only the best guardian of true religion, but also provides and secures to us the happiness of worshipping God according to our consciences "without any to make us afraid," to tyrannize over our opinions; to trample down that sacred prerogative conferred on us by God; and that happy civil constitution with which, in his providence, he hath blessed these states.

The friends of this constitution they cannot be, who would deny Mr. Jefferson, or any other man, liberty of conscience in religious matters. That constitution has laid no penal prohibition from places of the highest trust, on any man for his opinions on any religious subjects. How preposterous and absurd is it then in the invidious opponents of Mr. Jefferson, to be crying up their zeal for the government and constitution, when they are thus counteracting the most salutary and distinguished spirit which it breathes.

What would be the consequences in these states, were each religious denomination opposed to every candidate for the presidency, who did not come up to a correspondence with their religious opinions?

Even on the supposition, then, that there existed any just foundation for the rash unattested innuendoes which some partizans throw out against Mr. Jefferson, respecting religion, it is directly contrary to our constitutional prerogative, and inimical to the genuine spirit of that religious liberty, which we hold as not the least valuable fruit of our happy and glorious revolution.

But the truth is, we have too many among us who are enemies to religious liberty; even ecclesiastics we have, and those not a few, who had they the *golden fleece* of temporals, would not much care if the wolves of tyranny and despotism had the *stock*; Men, who are panting after church prerogatives and ecclesiastical distinction. They and their adherents, some through delusion and others through design, it may be expected would be opposed to him, who has been uniformly opposed to their temporal pride and ambition; founded on the oppression rather than the instruction of the religious—uniformly opposed

to that sort of clerical influence which arises rather from worldly or secular dignities, and titled presumption, than the real consciousness of acquired and exemplary worth, or pastoral care and diligence.

To this consideration may be assigned that hue and cry, and a most anti-American unconstitutional one it is, that has been raised against Mr. Jefferson on the score of religion.

The very conduct which ought to immortalize his name among the friends of genuine christianity; among the friends to religious toleration of every denomination; among all the lovers of the gospel unassociated with and unshackled by civil tyranny, that very conduct has by these men and these deluded by their influence, been made the ground of their fallacious and unjustifiable opposition to Mr. Jefferson's election.

His arguments, irresistibly persuasive arguments, in favour of religious liberty; his observations on the dangerous absurd tendency of civil or legislative interposition respecting religious opinions we may presume, had no little influence in inspiring the framers of our excellent Federal Constitution with a just sense of its importance, and consequently in adopting it as one of its most distinguished principles. Yet, how have those observations and arguments been abused and perverted to discredit their author? Because, in his Notes on Virginia, he has shewn in strong terms that men who embrace the greatest extremes of contradiction in their religious creeds;—even those who believe in a Trinity, and those who do not—or those who believe in one God or those who believe in a plurality, may, notwithstanding, live together in civil and social harmony and happiness, these designing ambitious sophists and partizans have attempted to give it the worst possible colouring. They forget that our excellent constitution says, tho' in other words, the very same thing. They do not consider that those very sentiments which Mr. Jefferson has there expressed, are adopted in their fullest scope and spirit in our national constitution. And consequently that instead of Mr. Jefferson being vilified or reviled on account of them, he ought to be so much the more honoured by every man, who regards what that constitution breathes, teaches and inculcates, civil or religious; by every man who is proud of the civil and religious privileges of an American.

It is owing in a great degree to the patriotic services of a Jefferson that foreign, and especially British hierarchy, in connection, in close embrace with civil power has not made greater progress among us than it has. More dangerous steps have been made towards its restoration in this country, than by many have been well considered, or occasioned a suitable alarm. Between its spirit and that of a civil aristocracy or even monarchy, there is a greater sympathy and closer connection than many are aware of.

In this state, in particular, we have felt its unconstitutional, encroaching, and increasing influence. Our state constitution has, it is true provided against it : But some late acts can shew how far it has been revered by our legislators. Every encroachment of this nature on our religious liberty—every attempt to render the clergy of any particular denomination more dignified in a temporal view than those of another, Mr. Jefferson, to his honour be it told, opposed with success in Virginia—and has consequently brought down upon him the resentment of the patrons of hierarchical or religious preference in Maryland.

In illustration of these observations have we not seen that in conformity with the old British church system, our legislature in 1798 by an act, known by the name of the *Vestry act*, have made provision for a sort of religious location of each county into parishes—locally designated by names implying a peculiar church jurisdiction in that territory ? Have we not in that act seen them, unconstitutionally assuming all the spiritual prerogative of a bishop's court in England ; establishing vestries—and inflicting very considerable fines and penalties on those who should refuse to serve in that capacity ;—arming the pastors against their flock with other weapons than the author of our religion ever designed or inculcated—creating and enforcing religious distinctions, and offices that ought to be perfectly voluntary, and thereby robbing their fellow creatures of that religious “ liberty, wherewith Christ hath made them free ?” In conformity with the old British system of spiritual oppression, have we not seen them also in that act, giving legal authority to proud priests to designate themselves local RECTORS over districts or parishes, even where their own religious denomination is far

from constituting the most numerous or respectable body of the inhabitants? Although our state constitution provides against this and every proud usurpation of a like nature; although it sanctions no civil mark of distinction, especially of a local nature, which evidently must tend to give the clergy of our denomination, a sort of titular and local pre-eminence over those of another; yet we find that all this our legislature, since the revolution, has done;—and in doing so, has consequently, so far, conformed to that old, rotten, corrupt and despicable system, by which the christian faith, in the hands of civil despots has been degraded into an engine of state policy; has been exhibited to the disgusted view of every lover of christianity in its genuine simplicity, as the over-grown bloated monster of temporal and spiritual tyranny and usurpation.

Now, have we not wanted the abilities of a Jefferson in this state? Have we not wanted his patriotic services and exertions in behalf of that religious liberty we enjoy by the constitution of Maryland;—that exemption from legislative preference or partiality against which it was intended to guard us; but which we see has been perverted and abused? And may we not ask why has this taken place in a state in which we considered our civil and religious rights so well guaranteed by the constitution? Why—because no friend to the rights of conscience—no advocate for our religious liberties and the genuine spirit of christianity, no enemy to legislative interposition and partiality of equal talents and patriotism to a Jefferson, arose among us to withstand this presumptuous inlet to religious corruption and spiritual oppression.

Have the inhabitants of this state so soon forgotten the tyranny and abuse, the injuries and insults they suffered from the proud priests of the British hierarchy? have they so soon forgotten the part which those favorite sons of civil power, ever the uniform advocates of political aristocracy, acted during the revolution? I say have the inhabitants of this state of every religious denomination, so far forgotten this as to abuse that character for want of religion, whose patriotic principles and exertions banished the hungry proud swarm from our coasts, and whose unwearied services have also been most conspicuous in endeavouring

to prevent a new hive of our own rearing, armed with similar stings, from swarming under the unconstitutional sunshine of legislative partiality, and favour.

Citizens of America ! of all religious denominations, beware of interfering with the religion of any man considered as a candidate for any office your suffrages can confer. You know not to what consequences, such conduct, so contemptuous of our constitution, may tend.

Ye honest and patriotic Roman Catholics ! Remember that it is not a revolution of many years, since you were denied the full and free rights of conscience in these states — Reflect that it is not long since you durst not rear a decent chapel in these lands for that religion you profess. — Reflect how your ancestors were driven either from England, on account of what Mr. Jefferson has contended against in this country, namely, the interference of the legislature with the rights of conscience ;—or out of Ireland, by those sanguinary and penal codes, to which on account of your religion you were doomed by the intolerant spirit of proud ecclesiastics, who were sanctioned by a temporal despot as head of the church. Recall to mind the bloodshed, sufferings and persecutions of your catholic ancestry in England and in Ireland especially—enslaved, depressed, degraded and trampled upon, merely on account of their religion ; and being deprived of every civil and religious right, that can dignify the name of man or citizen ;—And then resolve whether you can, possibly, join in opposing the man on account of religion, who has most ably laboured throughout life, that you might enjoy the free exercise of your's. You join in politics with men who ardently pray for the land of your ancestor's, being desolated by British vengeance ; her inhabitants butchered with wanton cruelty, because they have dared to oppose that monstrous combination of civil and prelatie power, under which they had for centuries groaned ;—And you reject a Jefferson whose services have eminently tended to preserve you and your religion from a similar yoke here ! and who also has uniformly sympathised with your oppressed, degraded and injured brethren over the British dominions. Beware, then, of allowing religious feuds, prejudices or partialities to mingle themselves with your civil rights ; with your free

unbiaſſed exerciſe of the rights of ſuffrage ; which our conſtitution informs us, has nothing to do with any man's religion. Would you be ſatisfied that any man ſhould be rejected from a public truſt, or office, merely on account of his being a Catholic ? If you would not, then be not actuated by a like principle towards theirs ;—more eſpecially towards a man who has ever been the able and zealous patron of religious liberty.

Ye honeſt and patriotic members of the Proteſtant Epiſcopal Church ! has not Mr. Jefferſon been educated in in the beſt principles of that church in which you believe ? are you not alſo impreſſed with the importance of religious liberty to a free independent commonwealth, where there are ſo many various denominations ; and among which you, by no means conſtitute the largeſt, or moſt numerous body, taking all the ſtates into view. Have your clergy at any period of your church-hiſtory in theſe ſtates, been more worthy your ſupport, as faithful paſtors, than ſince they received leaſt of legiſlative patronage and ſupport ? Do you think that their being taught to look to the ſtate and not to you for their temporal boon, would make them more faithful in their duty to you ? Do you think it conſtitutional in the ſtate legiſlature to arm them with laws to inflict fines or penalties on you ?—Will it tend to make them better men ; or you better chriſtians ? I am ſure you are neither ſo weak nor ſo wicked as to believe ſo. Should a contracted or bigoted policy influence the legiſlature of this ſtate, contrary to its conſtitution, by ſuch laws as that of the *VESTRY Act*, to give your clergymen a local conſequence and ſuperiority to the clergy of other denominations, interſperſed among them in every pariſh over the ſtate, may not this lead to retaliation by other ſtates in the union where you are not the moſt reſpectable in numbers ;—and thus tend not to promote ; but to check that chriſtian benevolence and harmony which every where ought to ſubſiſt among the miniſters of religion of all denominations ?

If you be ſenſible of theſe truths, then reflect on the patriotic ſervices of a Jefferſon in the cauſe of religious liberty. It is he who has taken the lead in reducing your church, in theſe ſtates to its primitive ſimplicity and independence on civil power—and to that condition which is beſt calculated to enable you and your poſterity to enjoy

the religious improvements of its best principles and doctrines, without seeing it the degraded, corrupted tool of civil tyranny & oppression. You must be blind to all those most interelling and important advantages, if you are not gratefully sensible of what Mr. Jefferson has done for your church in particular, and religion in general, in these respects, even since the revolution.

Ye zealous and piously patriotic members of the Methodist Churches? ye, too, are interested in keeping political and religious influence apart. It is not possible that you can approve any such monstrous marriage;—any such unnatural union. Are ye not a reformed Progeny;—an infant church that may be said to have arisen from the effects of that corrupting combination? Was it not from this heterogeneous union of civil and religious power, that all that degeneracy took place which occasioned a *Wesley*, and all your most pious and able founders to leave the infectious bosom of old mother church establishment, and adopt a less corrupt and more pious system? If then, you be sensible of this truth; if you have experienced in your success the happy effects of religious liberty; if it has been the means of enabling you, under the dispensations of Providence, to accomplish the reformation of thousands and tens of thousands of those previously given over to an abandoned and profligate life;—will you not cherish a suitable tribute of gratitude to that patriot who has laboured through life, to prevent that degeneracy in religion which every where must arise from a combination between legislators or civil governments—and those proud priests who seek to bask under their sunshine—rather than that respectability which is derived alone from the able and faithful discharge of their duty in the churches? Surely you can never approve of basely calumniating that character to whose exemplary exertions in the cause of religious liberty, yours as much as any other denomination of christians is so much indebted.

Ye who bear the designation of the pious and christian Friends! Are ye not also grateful for any service, however small, in such a cause? How many of your society are scattered over the various states in the Union? Would you wish to see them as they are in England punished and persecuted for conscience-sake? In Virginia, especially,

Has not a Jefferson been the able advocate of their religious rights? Has he not by the law, here introduced to your notice, been the instrument, under Providence, of securing to them the rights of conscience, free from the penalty of being subjected to any undue pre-eminence in other denominations? And are you insensible of those services? No, you cannot be; your hearts bleed too feelingly for the hundreds of your suffering society that in the English dominions, and other established hierarchies; under an intolerant bench of spiritual Lords over God's heritage, are consigned frequently to the gloomy dungeon for conscience-sake.

I say, my pious Friends! your hearts, bleed too feelingly for their sufferings and oppression; their fines and imprisonments, not to be duly grateful to the man, who in this country, more than any other public character, has directly opposed a similar system being adopted in Virginia, and probably from its example, in other states of the Union.

Independent of these considerations, so near to your feelings and principles, you must, you cannot but approve of that hatred to slavery in every point of view; to that tyranny and oppression, of every species; that philanthropy and benevolence towards man in every state and under every designation for which the life of a JEFFERSON is so exemplary and uniformly illustrious. In the silence, the calm peaceful silence of your own breasts, impartially weigh and reflect what is due from you and from America, to such a character; and I have no fear but you will reduce it to practice in your conduct.

Ye various, patriotic and pious members of the Reformed Churches in America, by whatever name designated by men. Whether Presbyterians, Baptists, Secedars, or Covenantors—Some of you in those very designations, shew, what you have suffered from court-persecution, and the idolized Dagon of Prelacy, and church establishment. It has been the boast of your greatest worthies, and long and respectable is their honoured list;—that they bled in the cause of religious freedom, in opposition to the bloody and persecuting spirit of proud hierarchy and religious natural establishments by the encroachments and ambition of titled ecclesiastics.

As you revere that glorious ancestry who were martyred in this cause ; as you value the divine advantages of religious liberty and the rights of conscience to you and your posterity, you will venerate the man, who of all the great political characters in this country next to a *Washington*, has most uniformly vindicated and ably asserted the equal constitutional claim of all religious denominations, in these states, to religious liberty.

If any of your clergy be so ignorant of this, or so vain of one pretident being of their denomination, as to declaim against one of any other, reflect on the consequences of so narrow, illiberal and unconstitutional a principle. Let no such bigotry disgrace your conduct or patriotism. No political character, existing in these states, at this moment, has done as much in favour of that form of ecclesiastic or church government which you approve, as Mr. Jefferson ;—none who has so illustriously opposed the first inroads of ecclesiastic encroachment. For this it is that he has incurred the odium of spiritual tyrants of all religious denominations. For this it is that he is so obnoxious to every clerical high-toned churchman, who with the character and ambition of a Bishop *Sharpe*, has been seeking to reduce this state in particular to the old yoke of ecclesiastical bondage ; and will you join in the foul-mouthed cry of foreign breathed bigotry, and unconstitutional calumny. O let it not be said amidst the assemblies of the people!—Name it not in the congregations of the friends of religious liberty.

Men of every religious persuasion ! weigh in your own candid minds these admonitory hints. Try them by the standard of truth and the principles of our constitution. None of you can hold in greater abhorrence all religious licentiousness ;—all infidelity in principle or in practice than the writer of these strictures. Were I not convinced that all the clamour and calumny against Mr. Jefferson on account of religion is mere electioneering imposition, I would be as far from attempting his Vindication as any of you can be. Let then these observations have their due weight, and I venture to pronounce that every honest and candid mind will join with me in opinion. My conviction is founded on the facts here submitted to your attention. Read the *Vestry Act* passed by the legislature of this state in 1798, and think for yourselves. Contrast this unjust,

partial and unconstitutional act, with that excellent, and I may add pious preamble to the Virginia act, on the subject of religion, and say whether your own legislature, or Mr. Jefferson from whose distinguished pen proceeded that act, have been the best friends to religious liberty : which of them breathes a spirit most consonant with the various civil and religious interests of the inhabitants of this and all the other states in the union.

No doubt need exist of the Virginia act, here brought into view, having been drawn up by Mr. Jefferson. Attestations to this effect could easily be procured if necessary. Along with this consider that the greater part of those men who make the greatest out-cry against him on account of religion ; live, themselves the life of atheists—and give little, if any countenance to the support of the christian religion and the cause of general piety. They seek, in my opinion, wickedly seek, in the very face of the constitution of the United States, to make religion what it is in England, a state tool, by which they hypocritically impose on such of the unsuspecting part of the community as have most piety and religion at heart.

When such men speak of any of you, of any denomination, who are truly pious or religious, they pronounce you bigoted enthusiasts, fanatical puritans and hypocrites ; and that merely because you manifest some regard for the worship of God ; while at the same time they have the impudence to impose upon you and the public by a pretended zeal for religion, when they think this may suit some ambitious party purpose, and hesitate not to calumniate a character dignified with the vice presidency of the United States—who even on the supposition that their infamous charge on account of religion was true, would hardly be reduced to the same grade of guilt, in that respect, with his scandalous revilers.

Will any man of sense or virtue pretend to vindicate such conduct? Surely they cannot ; it can only be dictated by the most malignant spirit of party-animosity, and ought to be beneath men of any sense of honour, even though they had no regard for religion.

Obliged to relinquish the infamous charge of “ *Atheism* ” —they next attack Mr. Jefferson’s character with that of “ *DEISM* ; ” or in other words that he rejects the scriptures &

a divine revelation. But let us examine candidly, whether this calumny be not equally groundless as the former. In various parts of that gentleman's publications we find him express himself in the most respectful manner of God and his holy religion. In particular in his notes on Virginia, he speaks of the divine perfections & attributes, in a manner and style which could only be derived from his acquaintance with, and belief in the word of God. The greatest philosophers that ever lived in the world, Aristotle Socrates, Plato or Cicero among the ancients, and even the most illustrious among the modern men, were never able to attain any just ideas of the Divine Being, but such as they derived from a knowledge of the Divine Revelation. When Mr. Jefferson, then, speaks of all the glorious attributes of the Deity, his infinite justice, goodness and wisdom; tell me, ye who dare to say that he has no religion, whence he derived those ideas, but from divine revelation? These sentiments of God and religion could, I say, have been derived only from his knowledge of the scriptures.

The avowed and published declarations Mr. Jefferson has made in favour of revealed religion are various; and to be found almost in every publication of importance that has come from his pen.

Is there an American ignorant of the *Declaration of America's Independence*; & to whom it owes its dignified style and sentiments, equally pious and patriotic?

This ever memorable Instrument which ought to be indelibly engraven on every heart, in its introduction is as follows:---

“ When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth the separate and equal station to which the LAWS of nature, and of NATURE'S GOD entitled them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.”

“ We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their CREATOR with certain unalienable rights, &c.”

When we read such sentiments as the above; when in

the solemn accents of as solemn a transaction as is in the power of a great people to perform, we find every thing to them that is dear and sacred founded on the LAWS and consequently the will of GOD---How illiberal, how presumptuous is it in any of that people to say that the author denied those laws or that revealed *will of God?* †

Where we find, even our temporal rights and privileges as also our bodily or mental endowments assigned to the great CREATOR, is it charitable; is it liberal; is it like christians, to say that the author of such sentiments is a man who denies his *Creator's* existence; the immortality of the human soul—and all the soul-exalting doctrines of religion? Whatever party, or party men are so mean as to stoop to such defamation of character;—such prostitution of truth;—such ungenerous opprobrium; instead of shewing you, my fellow-citizens, that Mr. JEFFERSON, the author of the preceding sentiments, in that blessed, that pious, that hallowed instrument, that separated your necks from the tyrant's yoke; I say, the men who would charge religious infidelity on the author of such sentiments, only shew you that they themselves are destitute of religion; are devoid of every ennobling principle of religion that christianity inculcates.

To have no charity for our neighbour's or fellow-citizen's name or fame; to persecute, slander and revile on no better proof than mere presumption, is directly opposite to the most amiable and divine dictates of that religion we profess---but when this is cherished towards a man, whose whole life, it may be said, has been zealously, ably and faithfully devoted to the maintaining the civil and religious rights of his country---language is at a loss for suitable epithets to express the malignity, cruelty, barbarism, and I may add, irreligion of such conduct.

But another proof of his regard for the word of God, and its being encouraged and patronised by such public and patriotic characters as those who hold the chief place in the government of the United States, we find in his subscribing, some time since, to the most expensive and handsome edition of the word of God ever published in these states. I allude to the Hot-Press Bible published at Philadelphia; a work, which in every point of view, does

honor to the editors, and all the friends of religion who have patronised it.

Now, notwithstanding all the noise that the opponents to Mr. Jefferson make about his want of religion, we find his honoured name in the list of its patrons, while many of those whose pretended superior regard to religion and its encouragement, are not to be found there. Thus it is, that, for electioneering purposes we find many who, probably, never had a bible in their families, crying out against Mr. Jefferson for denying the sacred volume, although we find him its public patron, introducing it, in its most respectable appearance, to his family; and thus giving the most dignified countenance and support to the most valuable edition of the scriptures ever published in America.

Citizens of the United States, in general, and of Maryland in particular, whatever may be your religious creed, profession or denomination—consider well what has been here, in truth and sincerity, submitted to your attention. Proofs of all here advanced, are easy to be attained, they are in the hands of the public; and no man of information whose face has not been hardened by want of principle can deny them; if so, you can have nothing to fear from Mr. Jefferson's want of regard to religion; or the free exercise of it by those of every church or denomination.

Has he ever undertaken any office for his country, that he has not fulfilled with honour and approbation—for which he has not received his country's thanks. What man ever more fully and sincerely enjoyed the confidence of a *Washington* than Mr. Jefferson; has he not singled him out for particular trusts and offices of importance, from among his co-patriots of the highest merit? Can you then for a moment suppose, that this long tried patriot through the worst and best of times—I say can you possibly suppose that this man of untarnished fame and merit, after all he has voluntarily done, in behalf of religious liberty, when the zeal of other patriots was either cold or at best luke warm on the subject, would be less attentive to the sacred religious rights of his fellow citizens, when elevated by their suffrages to the presidency of these states?

The supposition is too preposterous and absurd to be so calculated upon by any principles of truth or candour.

It is the province of mere clamour and false alarm to turn the attention off from where the real danger lies. Thus, while many of our state patriots are thundering out anathemas against Mr. Jefferson on the score of religion: They themselves have lately been sapping the very constitutional foundation of our religious rights; have enacted laws that give an evident superiority to a particular denomination, or at least to its clergy, in open violation of the state constitution; of the individual or personal rights of the members of that church themselves; and in violation also of that equal claim to respectability in society, which every religious denomination in Maryland ought to enjoy, in as far, especially, as any local division into parishes can confer or secure that claim.

This may serve to shew you how much depends on the men you choose to represent you in the state assembly; should the future persevere in the same partial policy that some of the state legislatures have done; experience shews you I hope that your religious liberty has infinitely more to fear from them than from Mr. Jefferson.

Freemen of Maryland! If you have then any regard for your civil and religious rights; rights which if you do your duty, your constitution secures to you against every inroad, you will give these observations your candid attention; you will not be cajoled into the base office of defaming a character which, for more than twenty-five years has borne a distinguished share in the services and councils of his country; who has for you braved danger in various forms—Whose person, on account of his incorruptible and stern patriotism has ever been most inimical to the tyrants who sought to put you under the yoke of both civil and religious bondage and oppression—whose property, or at least all of it that the flames could destroy—his houses, furniture, stock, fences, &c. &c. were consigned to one general conflagration; and on whose invaluable head the hordes of British babarians had set more than an ordinary price.

If to such a character you want gratitude—If for such a man you have nothing better than vile calumny, and low electioneering abuse and scurrility, I hesitate not to

pronounce that you yourselves are neither entitled to the name of men, nor Americans; and far less have you any well founded pretension to the religious character of the sincere christian.

Americans! think then on this subject; and after all, should any of you be led to judge any other man in these states better entitled by merit and past services to the presidency—act like men, and not like mean, cajoled, dastardly slaves—act like yourselves---and dare to be independent of every overbearing, tyrannical, ambitious party spirit.

Let every character---every patriot; whether an Adams or a Jefferson, candidly have their due; rob them not of any claim, any well won claim to their country's confidence and approbation. Nothing extenuate;—and still less set down against them in slander or malice. But, above all, descend not to the low electioneering artifice of holding up to public odium against any candidate, any charge, on account of which, even if authenticated, our national constitution has laid no prohibitory exclusion from any place of trust or emolument in the power of your suffrages to confer.

Should these few strictures assist in leading any of you, who have been misinformed, to a better understanding of what has been their subject;—and if they should in any degree, have tended on an impartial, candid perusal, to set aside what the writer considers a very unjust and unconstitutional stab at the character of a man who has, from youth up to hoary years, been employed in his country's most honourable service, I shall think the hour I have devoted to the purpose one of the happiest and best spent in all my life;—and I would fondly hope not altogether uninteresting or unserviceable to my Fellow-Citizens, of every religious denomination.

A Friend to real Religion.