

THE
WRITINGS
OF
THOMAS JEFFERSON:

BEING HIS

AUTOBIOGRAPHY, CORRESPONDENCE, REPORTS, MESSAGES,
ADDRESSES, AND OTHER WRITINGS, OFFICIAL
AND PRIVATE.

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TO EACH VOLUME, AS WELL AS A GENERAL INDEX TO THE WHOLE,

BY THE EDITOR

H. A. WASHINGTON.

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I pray for the happiness of your nation, and that it may be blessed with sound views and successful measures, under the difficulties in which it is involved; and especially that they may know the value of your counsels, and to yourself I tender the assurances of my high respect and esteem.

JOHN ADAMS TO THOMAS JEFFERSON.

QUINCY, December 25, 1813.

DEAR SIR,—Answer my letters at your leisure. Give yourself no concern. I write as for a refuge and protection against *ennui*.

The fundamental principle of all philosophy and all christianity, is “*Rejoice always in all things!*” “Be thankful at all times for all good, and all that we call evil.” Will it not follow that I ought to rejoice and be thankful that Priestley has lived? That Gibbon has lived? That Hume has lived, though a conceited Scotchman? That Bolingbroke has lived, though a haughty, arrogant, supercilious dogmatist? That Burke and Johnson have lived, though superstitious slaves, or self-deceiving hypocrites, both? Is it not laughable to hear Burke call Bolingbroke a superficial writer? To hear him ask: “Who ever read him through?” Had I been present, I would have answered him, “I, I myself, I have read him through more than fifty years ago, and more than five times in my life, and once within five years past. And in my opinion, the epithet ‘superficial,’ belongs to you and your friend Johnson more than to him.”

I might say much more. But I believe Burke and Johnson to have been as political christians as Leo Tenth.

I return to Priestley, though I have great complaints against him for personal injuries and persecution, at the same time that I forgive it all, and hope and pray that he may be pardoned for it all above.

Dr. Brocklesby, an intimate friend and convivial companion of Johnson, told me that Johnson died in agonies of horror of anni-

hilation; and all the accounts we have of his death, corroborate this account of Brocklesby. Dread of annihilation! Dread of nothing! A dread of nothing, I should think, would be no dread at all. Can there be any real, substantial, rational fear of nothing? Were you on your death-bed, and in your last moments informed by demonstration of revelation, that you would cease to think and to feel, at your dissolution, should you be terrified? You might be ashamed of yourself for having lived so long to bear the proud man's contumely. You might be ashamed of your Maker, and compare him to a little girl, amusing herself, her brothers and sisters, by blowing bubbles in soap-suds. You might compare him to boys sporting with crackers and rockets, or to men employed in making mere artificial fire-works, or to men and women at fairs and operas, or Sadlers Wells' exploits, or to politicians in their intrigues, or to heroes in their butcheries, or to Popes in their devilisms. But what should you fear? Nothing. *Emori nolo, sed me mortuum esse nihil estimo.*

To return to Priestley. You could make a more luminous book than his, upon the doctrines of heathen philosophers compared with those of revelation. Why has he not given us a more satisfactory account of the Pythagorean Philosophy and Theology? He barely names Œileus, who lived long before Plato. His treatise of kings and monarchy has been destroyed, I conjecture, by Platonic Philosophers, Platonic Jews or Christians, or by fraudulent republicans or despots. His treatise of the universe has been preserved. He labors to prove the eternity of the world. The Marquis D'Argens translated it, in all its noble simplicity. The Abbé Batteaux has since given another translation. D'Argens not only explains the text, but sheds more light upon the ancient systems. His remarks are so many treatises, which develop the concatenation of ancient opinions. The most essential ideas of the theology, of the physics, and of the morality of the ancients are clearly explained, and their different doctrines compared with one another and with the modern discoveries. I wish I owned this book and one hundred thousand more that I want every day, now when I am almost incapable of mak-

ing any use of them. No doubt he informs us that Pythagoras was a great traveller. Priestley barely mentions Timæus, but it does not appear that he had read him. Why has he not given us an account of him and his book? He was before Plato, and gave him the idea of his Timæus, and much more of his philosophy.

After his master, he maintained the existence of matter; that matter was capable of receiving all sorts of forms; that a moving power agitated all the parts of it, and that an intelligence produced a regular and harmonious world. This intelligence had seen a plan, an *idea* (Logos) in conformity to which it wrought, and without which it would not have known what it was about, nor what it wanted to do. This plan was the *idea*, image or model which had represented to the Supreme Intelligence the world before it existed, which had directed it in its action upon the moving power, and which it contemplated in forming the elements, the bodies and the world. This model was distinguished from the intelligence which produced the world, as the architect is from his plans. He divided the productive cause of the world into a spirit which directed the moving force, and into an image which determined it in the choice of the directions which it gave to the moving force, and the forms which it gave to matter. I wonder that Priestley has overlooked this, because it is the same philosophy with Plato's, and would have shown that the Pythagorean as well as the Platonic philosophers probably concurred in the fabrication of the Christian Trinity. Priestley mentions the name of Achylas, but does not appear to have read him, though he was a successor of Pythagoras, and a great mathematician, a great statesman and a great general. John Gram, a learned and honorable Dane, has given a handsome edition of his works, with a Latin translation and an ample account of his life and writings. Saleucus, the Legislator of Locris, and Charondas, of Sybaris, were disciples of Pythagoras, and both celebrated to immortality for the wisdom of their laws, five hundred years before Christ. Why are those laws lost? I say *the spirit of party* has destroyed them; civil, political and ecclesiastical bigotry

Despotical, monarchical, aristocratical and democratical fury have all been employed in this work of destruction of everything that could give us true light, and a clear insight of antiquity. For every one of these parties, when possessed of power, or when they have been undermost, and struggling to get uppermost, has been equally prone to every species of fraud and violence and usurpation.

Why has not Priestley mentioned these Legislators? The preamble to the laws of Zaleucus, which is all that remains, is as orthodox christian theology as Priestley's, and christian benevolence and forgiveness of injuries almost as clearly expressed.

Priestley ought to have done impartial justice to philosophy and philosophers. Philosophy, which is the result of reason, is the first, the original revelation of the Creator to his creature, man. When this revelation is clear and certain by intuition or necessary induction, no subsequent revelation supported by prophecies or miracles can supersede it. Philosophy is not only the love of wisdom, but the science of the universe and its cause.

There is, there was, and there will be but one master of philosophy in the universe. Portions of it, in different degrees, are revealed to creatures.

Philosophy looks with an impartial eye on all terrestrial religions. I have examined all, as well as my narrow sphere, my straightened means and my busy life would allow me, and the result is, that the Bible is the best book in the world. It contains more of my little philosophy than all the libraries I have seen; and such parts of it as I cannot reconcile to my little philosophy, I postpone for future investigation.

Priestley ought to have given us a sketch of the religion and morals of Zoroaster, of Sanchoniathon, of Confucius, and all the founders of religions before Christ, whose superiority would, from such a comparison, have appeared the more transcendent.

Priestley ought to have told us that Pythagoras passed twenty years in his travels in India, in Egypt, in Chaldea, perhaps in Sodom and Gomorrah, Tyre and Sydon. He ought to have told us that in India he conversed with the Brahmins, and read the

Shasta, five thousand years old, written in the language of the sacred Sansosistes, with the elegance and sentiments of Plato. Where is to be found theology more orthodox, or philosophy more profound, than in the introduction to the Shasta? "God is one creator of all universal sphere, without beginning, without end. God governs all the creation by a general providence, resulting from his eternal designs. Search not the essence and the nature of the eternal, who is one; your research will be vain and presumptuous. It is enough that, day by day, and night by night, you adore his power, his wisdom and his goodness, in his works. The eternal willed in the fullness of time, to communicate of his essence and of his splendor, to beings capable of perceiving it. They as yet existed not. The eternal willed and they were. He created Birma, Vitsnou and Siv." These doctrines, sublime, if ever there were any sublime, Pythagoras learned in India, and taught them to Zaleucus and his other disciples. He there learned also his Metempsychosis, but this never was popular, never made much progress in Greece or Italy, or any other country besides India and Tartary, the region of the grand immortal Lama. And how does this differ from the possessions of demons in Greece and Rome? from the demon of Socrates? from the worship of cows and crocodiles in Egypt and elsewhere?

After migrating through various animals, from elephants to serpents, according to their behavior, souls that at last behaved well, became men and women, and then if they were good, they went to heaven.

All ended in heaven, if they became virtuous. Who can wonder at the widow of Malabar? Where is the lady, who, if her faith were without doubt that she should go to heaven with her husband on the one, or migrate into a toad or a wasp on the other, would not lay down on the pile, and set fire to the fuel?

Modifications and disguises of the Metempsychosis, has crept into Egypt, and Greece, and Rome, and other countries. Have you read Farmer on the Dæmons and possessions of the New Testament? According to the Shasta, Moisasor, with his com-

panions, rebelled against the eternal, and were precipitated down to Ondoro, the region of darkness.

Do you know anything of the Prophecy of Enoch? Can you give me a comment on the 6th, the 9th, the 14th verses of the epistle of Jude?

If I am not weary of writing, I am sure you must be of reading such incoherent rattle. I will not persecute you so severely in future, if I can help it.

So farewell.

TO THOMAS LIEPER.

MONTICELLO, January 1, 1814.

DEAR SIR,—I had hoped, when I retired from the business of the world, that I should have been permitted to pass the evening of life in tranquillity, undisturbed by the peltings and passions of which the public papers are the vehicles. I see, however, that I have been dragged into the newspapers by the infidelity of one with whom I was formerly intimate, but who has abandoned the American principles out of which that intimacy grew, and become the bigoted partisan of England, and malcontent of his own government. In a letter which he wrote to me, he earnestly besought me to avail our country of the good understanding which existed between the executive and myself, by recommending an offer of such terms to our enemy as might produce a peace, towards which he was confident that enemy was disposed. In my answer, I stated the aggressions, the insults and injuries, which England had been heaping on us for years, our long forbearance in the hope she might be led by time and reflection to a sounder view of her own interests, and of their connection with justice to us, the repeated propositions for accommodation made by us and rejected by her, and at length her Prince Regent's solemn proclamation to the world that he would never repeal the orders in council *as to us*, until France should have revoked her illegal decrees *as to all the world*, and her minister's