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C O R P O R A T I O N A N D T E S T A C T S.

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T H E T H I R D E D I T I O N.

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A System of Toleration, attended with humiliating Distinctions, is so vicious in itself, that the Man who is forced to tolerate is as much dissatisfied with the Law as he that obtains such a Toleration.

Speech of COUNT CLERMONT TONNERE.

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L O N D O N,

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M D C C X C.

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GENTLEMEN,

**H**AD the question of yesterday been decided in a manner more favourable to our wishes, which however the previous intimations of your temper in the business left us little room to expect, we should have addressed our thanks to you on the occasion. As it is, we address to you our thanks for much casual light thrown upon the subject, and for many incidental testimonies of your esteem (whether voluntary or involuntary we will not stop to examine) which in the course of this discussion you have favoured us with. We thank you for the compliment paid the Dissenters, when you suppose that the moment they are eligible to places of power and profit, all such

places will at once be filled with them. Not content with confounding, by an artful sophism, the right of eligibility with the right to offices, you again confound that right with the probable fact, and then argue accordingly. Is then the Test Act, your boasted bulwark, of equal necessity with the dykes in Holland; and do we wait, like an impetuous sea, to rush in and overwhelm the land? Our pretensions, Gentlemen, are far humbler. *We* had not the presumption to imagine that, inconsiderable as we are in numbers, compared to the established Church; inferior too in fortune and influence; labouring, as we do, under the frown of the Court, and the anathema of the orthodox; we should make our way so readily into the secret recesses of royal favour; and, of a sudden, like the frogs of Egypt, swarm about your barns, and under your canopies, and in your kneading troughs, and in the chamber of the King. We rather wished



wished this act as a removal of a stigma than the possession of a certain advantage, and we might have been cheaply pleased with the acknowledgment of the right, though we had never been fortunate enough to enjoy the emolument.

Another compliment for which we offer our acknowledgements may be extracted from the great ferment, which has been raised by this business all over the country. What stir and movement has it occasioned among the different orders of men! How quick the alarm has been taken, and sounded from the Church to the Senate, and from the press to the people; while fears and forebodings were communicated like an electric shock! The old cry of, *the Church is in danger*, has again been made to vibrate in our ears. Here too if we gave way to impressions of vanity, we might suppose our-

selves of much greater importance in the political scale than our numbers and situation seem to indicate. It shews at least we are feared, which to some minds would be the next grateful thing to being beloved. We, indeed, should only wish for the latter; nor should we have ventured to suppose, but from the information you have given us, that your Church *was* so weak. What! fenced and guarded as she is with her exclusive privileges and rich emoluments, stately with her learned halls and endowed colleges, with all the attraction of her wealth, and the thunder of her censures; all that the orator calls *the majesty of the Church* about her, and does she, resting in security under the broad buckler of the State, does she tremble at the naked and unarmed sectary? he, whose early connections, and phrase uncouth, and unpopular opinions set him at a distance from the means of advancement;

he,

he, who in the intercourses of neighbourhood and common life, like new settlers, finds it necessary to clear the ground before him, and is ever obliged to root up a prejudice before he can plant affection. He is not of the world, Gentlemen, and the world loveth her own. All that distinguishes him from other men to common observation, operates in his disfavour. His very advocates, while they plead his cause, are ready to blush for their client ; and in justice to their own character think it necessary to disclaim all knowledge of his obscure tenets. And is it from his hand you expect the demolition of so massy an edifice ? Does the simple removal of the Test Act involve its destruction ? These were not *our* thoughts. *We* had too much reverence for your establishment to imagine that the structure was so loosely put together, or so much shaken by years, as that the removal of so slight a pin should endanger

the whole fabric—or is the Test Act the *talisman* which holds it together, that, when it is broken, the whole must fall to pieces like the magic palace of an enchanter? Surely no species of regular architecture can depend upon so slight a support. — After all what is it we have asked? — to share in the rich benefices of the established church? to have the gates of her schools and universities thrown open to us? No, let her keep her golden prebends, her scarfs, her lawn, her mitres. Let her dignitaries be still associated to the honours of legislation; and, in our courts of executive justice, let her inquisitorial tribunals continue to thwart the spirit of a free constitution by a heterogeneous mixture of priestly jurisdiction. Let her still gather into barns, though she neither sows nor reaps. We desire not to share in her good things. We know it is the children's bread, which must not be given  
to

to dogs. But *having* these good things, we *could* wish to hear her say with the generous spirit of Esau, *I have enough, my brother.* We could wish to be considered as children of the State, though we are not so of the Church. She must excuse us if we look upon the alliance between her and the State as an ill sorted union, and herself as a mother-in-law who, with the too frequent arts of that relation, is ever endeavouring to prejudice the State, the common parent of us all, against a part of his offspring, for the sake of appropriating a larger portion to her own children. We claim no share in the dowry of her who is not our mother, but we may be pardoned for thinking it hard to be deprived of the inheritance of our father.

But it is objected to us that we have sinned in the manner of making our request; we have brought it forward as a claim instead  
of

of asking it as a favour. We should have sued, and crept, and humbled ourselves. Our preachers and our writers should not have dared to express the warm glow of honest sentiment, or, even in a foreign country glance at the downfall of a haughty aristocracy. As we were suppliants, we should have behaved like suppliants, and then perhaps——No, Gentlemen, we wish to have it understood, that we *do* claim it as a right. It loses otherwise half its value. We claim it as men, we claim it as citizens, we claim it as good subjects. We are not conscious of having brought the disqualification upon ourselves by a failure in any of these characters.

But we already enjoy a complete toleration ——It is time, so near the end of the eighteenth century, it is surely time to speak with precision, and to call things by their proper names

names. What you call toleration, we call the exercise of a natural and unalienable right. We do not conceive it to be toleration, first to strip a man of all his dearest rights, and then to give him back a part; or even if it were the whole. You tolerate us in worshipping God according to our consciences —and why not tolerate a man in the use of his limbs, in the disposal of his private property, the contracting his domestic engagements, or any other the most acknowledged privileges of humanity? It is not to these things that the word toleration is applied with propriety. It is applied, where from lenity or prudence we forbear doing all which in justice we might do. It is the bearing with what is confessedly an evil, for the sake of some good with which it is connected. It is the Christian virtue of long suffering; it is the political virtue of adapting measures to times and seasons and situations.

*Abuses*

*Abuses* are tolerated, when they are so interwoven with the texture of the piece, that the operation of removing them becomes too delicate and hazardous. *Unjust claims* are tolerated, when they are complied with for the sake of peace and conscience. The failings and imperfections of those characters in which there appears an evident preponderancy of virtue, are tolerated. These are the proper objects of toleration, these exercise the patience of the Christian and the prudence of the Statesman; but if there be a power that advances pretences which we think unfounded in reason or scripture, that exercises an empire within an empire, and claims submission from those naturally her equals; and if we, from a spirit of brotherly charity, and just deference to public opinion, and a salutary dread of innovation, acquiesce in these pretensions; let her at least be told that the virtue of forbearance should be transferred,

and



and that it is we who tolerate her, not she who tolerates us.

*Complete Toleration*, though an expression often adverted to by both parties, is in truth a solecism in terms ; for all that is tolerated ought to be done away whenever it is found practicable and expedient. Complete Convalescence is no longer Convalescence, but Health ; and complete Toleration is no longer Toleration, but Liberty. Let the term therefore be discarded, which, however softened, involves in it an insult with regard to us, and however extended, an absurdity with regard to yourselves. Sensible that a spirit of liberality requires the indulgence to be *complete*, and desirous at the same time to retain the idea of our holding it through sufferance and not of right, you have been betrayed into this incongruity of expression. Those are always liable to be betrayed into such, who have not the  
courage

courage to embrace a system in its full extent, and to follow a principle wherever it may lead them. Hence the *progress* from Error to Truth, and from Bigotry to the most enlarged freedom of sentiment, is marked with greater *inconsistencies* than that state in which the mind quietly rests in the former position. It is only when we view objects by a dubious and uncertain twilight that we are apt to mistake their figure and distances, and to be disturbed by groundless terrors; in perfect darkness we form no judgment about them.—It has ever been the untoward fate of your Church to partake largely of these inconsistencies. Placed between the Catholics on one side, and the Dissenters on the other, she has not been able to defend either her resistance or her restraints, and lies equally open to censure for her persecution and her dissent. Pressed by the difficulties of her peculiar situation, she is continually obliged in the course of her polemic warfare

warfare to change her ground, and alter her mode of defence ; and like the poor Bat in the fable, to tell a different story upon every new attack ; and thus it must be, till she shall have the magnanimity to make use of all her light, and follow her reason without reserve.

For Truth is of a nature strangely encroaching, and ought to be kept out entirely if we are not disposed to admit her with perfect freedom. You cannot say to her, Thus far shalt thou go, and no further. Give her the least entrance, and she will never be satisfied till she has gained entire possession. Allow her but a few plain axioms to work with, and step by step, syllogism after syllogism, she insensibly mines her way into the very heart of her enemy's entrenchments. Truth is of a very intolerant spirit. She will not make any compromise with Error, and if she be obliged to hold any fellowship with her, it is such  
fellowship

fellowship as light has with darkness, a perpetual warfare and opposition. Every concession made by her antagonist is turned into a fresh weapon against her, and being herself invulnerable, she is sure to gain by each successive contest, till her adversary is driven from every shelter and lurking-hole, and fairly obliged to quit possession of the field.

But this, it is again imputed to us, is no contest for religious liberty, but a contest for power, and place, and influence. We want civil offices—And why should citizens *not* aspire to civil offices? Why should not the fair field of generous competition be freely opened to every one!—A contention for power—It is not a contention for power between Churchmen and Dissenters, nor is it as Dissenters we wish to enter the lists; we wish to bury every name of distinction in the common appellation of Citizen. We wish not  
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the name of Dissenter to be pronounced, except in our theological researches and religious assemblies. It is you, who by considering us as Aliens, make us so. It is you who force us to make our dissent a prominent feature in our character. It is you who give relief, and cause to come out upon the canvas what we modestly wished to have shaded over, and thrown into the back ground. If we are a party, remember it is you who force us to be so.—We should have sought places of trust—By no unfair, unconstitutional methods should we have sought them, but in the open and honourable rivalry of virtuous emulation; by trying to deserve well of our King and our Country. Our attachment to both is well known.

Perhaps however we have all this while mistaken the matter, and what we have taken for bigotry and a narrow-minded spirit is

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after

after all only an affair of calculation and arithmetic. Our fellow-subjects remember the homely proverb, “ the fewer the better cheer,” and, very naturally, are glad to see the number of candidates lessened for the advantages they are themselves striving after. If so, we ask their excuse, their conduct is quite simple, and if, from the number of concurrents, Government were to strike out all above or under five feet high, or all whose birth-days happened before the Summer Solstice, or, by any other mode of distinction equally arbitrary and whimsical were to reduce the number of their rivals, *they* would be equally pleased, and equally unwilling to admit an alteration. We are a mercantile people, accustomed to consider chances, and we can easily perceive that in the lottery of life, if a certain proportion are by some means or other excluded from a prize, the adventure is exactly so much the better for the remainder.

If

If this indeed be the case, as I suspect it may, we have been accusing you wrongfully. Your conduct is founded upon principles as sure and unvarying as mathematical truths; and all further discussion is needless. We drop the argument at once. Men have now and then been reasoned out of their prejudices, but it were a hopeless attempt to reason them out of their interest.

We likewise beg leave to apologize to those of the clergy, whom we have unwittingly offended by endeavouring to include *them* as parties in our cause. ‘Pricked to it by foolish honesty and love,’ we thought that what appeared so grievous to us could not be very pleasant to them: but we are convinced of our mistake, and sorry for our officiousness. We own it, Sirs, it was a fond imagination that because *we* should have felt uneasy under the obligation imposed upon you, it should

have the same effect upon yourselves. It was weak to impute to you an idle delicacy of conscience, which perhaps can only be preserved at a distance from the splendid scenes which you have continually in prospect. But you will pardon us. We did not consider the force of early discipline over the mind. *We* are not accustomed to those falvos, and glosses, and accommodating modes of reasoning with which you have been long familiarized. You have the happy art of making easy to yourselves greater things than this. You are regularly disciplined troops, and understand every nice manœuvre and dextrous evolution which the nature of the ground may require. We are like an unbroken horse; hard mouthed, and apt to start at shadows. Our conduct towards you in this particular we acknowledge may fairly provoke a smile at our simplicity. Besides, upon reflection what should you startle at? The mixture of secular and religious concerns



concerns cannot to you appear extraordinary ; and in truth nothing is more reasonable than that, as the State has been drawn in to the aggrandizement of your Church, your Church should in return make itself subservient to the convenience of the State. If we are wise, we shall never again make ourselves uneasy about your share of the grievance.

But we were enumerating our obligations to you, Gentlemen, who have thwarted our request, and we must take the liberty to inform you that if it be any object of our ambition to exist and attract notice as a separate body, you have done us the greatest service in the world. What we desired, by blending us with the common mass of citizens, would have sunk our relative importance, and consigned our discussions to oblivion. You have refused us ; and by so doing, you keep us under the eye of the public, in the interesting

point of view of men who suffer under a deprivation of their rights. You have set a mark of separation upon us, and it is not in our power to take it off, but it is in our power to determine whether it shall be a disgraceful stigma or an honourable distinction. If, by the continued peaceableness of our demeanour, and the superior sobriety of our conversation, a sobriety for which we have not yet quite ceased to be distinguished; if, by our attention to literature, and that ardent love of liberty which you are pretty ready to allow us, we deserve esteem, we shall enjoy it. If our rising seminaries should excel in wholesome discipline and regularity, if *they* should be schools of morality, and yours, unhappily, should be corrupted into schools of immorality, you will entrust us with the education of your youth, when the parent, trembling at the profligacy of the times, wishes to preserve the blooming and ingenuous child from the degrading taint

of

of early licentiousness. If our writers are solid, elegant, or nervous, you will read our books and imbibe our sentiments, and even your Preachers will not disdain, occasionally, to *illustrate* our morality. If we enlighten the world by philosophical discoveries, you will pay the involuntary homage due to genius, and boast of our names when, amongst foreign societies, you are inclined to do credit to your country. If your restraints operate towards keeping us in that middle rank of life where industry and virtue most abound, we shall have the honour to count ourselves among that class of the community which has ever been the source of manners, of population and of wealth. If we seek for fortune in that track which you have left most open to us, we shall increase your commercial importance. If, in short, we render ourselves worthy of respect, you cannot hinder us from being respected—you cannot help respecting us—

and in spite of all names of opprobrious separation, we shall be bound together by mutual esteem and the mutual reciprocation of good offices.

One good office we shall most probably do you is rather an invidious one, and seldom meets with thanks. By laying us under such a marked disqualification, you have rendered us—we hope not uncandid—we hope not disaffected—May the God of love and charity preserve us from all such acrimonious dispositions! But you certainly have, as far as in you lies, rendered us quick sighted to encroachment and abuses of all kinds. We have the feelings of men; and though we should be very blameable to suffer ourselves to be biased by any private hardships, and hope that, as a body, we never shall, yet this you will consider, that we have at least no bias on the other side. We have no favours to blind

us, no golden padlock on our tongues, and therefore it is probable enough, that, if cause is given, we shall cry aloud and spare not. But in this you have done yourselves no disservice. It is perfectly agreeable to the jealous spirit of a free constitution that there should be some who will season the mass with the wholesome spirit of opposition. Without a little of that bitter leaven there is great danger of its being corrupted.

With regard to ourselves, you have by your late determination given perhaps a salutary, perhaps a seasonable check to that spirit of worldliness, which of late has gained but too much ground amongst us. Before you—before the world—we have a right to bear the brow erect, to talk of rights and services; but there is a place and a presence where it will become us to make no boast. We, as well as you, are infected. We, as well

as you, have breathed in the universal contagion—a contagion more noxious, and more difficult to escape, than that which on the plains of Cherson has just swept from the world the martyr of humanity; the contagion of selfish indifference, and fashionable manners has seized us: and our languishing virtue feels the debilitating influence.—If you were more conversant in our assemblies than your prejudices will permit you to be, you would see indifference, where you fancy there is an over proportion of zeal: you would see principles giving way, and families melting into the bosom of the church under the warm influence of prosperity. You would see that establishments, without calling coercive measures to their aid, possess attraction enough severely to try the virtue and steadiness of those who separate from them. You need not strew thorns, or put bars across our path; your golden apples are sufficient to make us turn  
out

out of the way. Believe me, Gentlemen, you do not *know* us sufficiently to aim your censure where we should be most vulnerable.

Nor need you apprehend from us the slightest danger to your own establishment. If you will needs have it that it *is* in danger, we wish you to be aware that the danger arises from among yourselves. If ever your creeds and formularies become as grievous to the generality of your Clergy as they already are to many delicate and thinking minds amongst them; if ever any material articles of your professed belief should be generally disbelieved, or that order which has been accustomed to supply faithful pastors and learned enquirers after truth should become a burden upon a generous public; and if her dignities and emoluments, instead of being graced by merit or genius, and thus in some measure balancing the weight of hereditary honour and influence,

fluence, should be considered as appendages to them, the cry for reformation would then be loud and prevailing. It *would* be heard. Doctrines which will not stand the test of argument and reason will not always be believed, and when they have ceased to be generally believed they will not long be articles of belief. If therefore there is any weak place in your system, any thing which you are obliged to gloss over, and touch with a tender hand, any thing which shrinks at investigation—Look ye to it, its extinction is not far off. Doubts and difficulties, that arise first amongst the learned, will not stop there; they inevitably spread downwards from class to class; and if the people should ever find that your articles are generally subscribed as articles of peace, they will be apt to remember that they are articles of expence too. If all the Dissenters in the kingdom, still believing as Dissenters do, were this moment,

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in order to avoid the reproach of schism, to enter the pale of your church, they would do you mischief; they would hasten its decline; and if all who in their hearts dissent from your professions of faith were to cease making them, and throw themselves amongst the Dissenters, you would stand the firmer for it. Your church is in no danger because we are of a different church; they might stand together to the end of time without interference; but it will be in great danger whenever it has within itself many who have thrown aside its doctrines, or even, who do not embrace them in the simple and obvious sense. All the power and policy of man cannot continue a system *long* after its truth has ceased to be acknowledged, or an establishment *long* after it has ceased to contribute to utility. It is equally vain, as to expect to preserve a tree, whose roots are cut away. It may look as green and flourishing as before for a short

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time,

time, but its sentence is passed, its principle of life is gone, and death is already within it. If then you think the church in danger, be not backward to preserve the found by sacrificing the decayed.

To return to ourselves, and our feelings on the business lately in agitation—— You will excuse us if we do not appear with the air of men baffled and disappointed. Neither do we blush at our defeat; we may blush, indeed, but it is for our country; but we lay hold on the consoling persuasion, that reason, truth and liberality must finally prevail. We appeal from Philip intoxicated to Philip sober. We know you will refuse us while you are narrow minded, but you will not always be narrow minded. You have too much light and candour not to have more. We will no more attempt to pluck the green unripe fruit. We see in you our future friends  
and

and brethren, eager to confound and blend with ours your interests and your affections. You will grant us all we ask. The only question between us is, whether you will do it to-day—To-morrow you certainly will. You will even intreat us, if need were, to allow you to remove from your country the stigma of illiberality. We appeal to the certain, sure operation of increasing light and knowledge, which it is no more in your power to stop, than to repel the tide with your naked hand, or to wither with your breath the genial influence of vegetation. The spread of that light is in general gradual and imperceptible; but there are periods when its progress is accelerated, when it seems with a sudden flash to open the firmament, and pour in day at once. Can ye not discern the signs of the times? The minds of men are in movement from the Borysthenes to the Atlantic. Agitated with new and strong emotions, they  
swell

swell and heave beneath oppression, as the seas within the Polar Circle, when, at the approach of Spring, they grow impatient to burst their icy chains; when what, but an instant before, seemed so firm, spread for many a dreary league like a floor of solid marble, at once with a tremendous noise gives way, long fissures spread in every direction, and the air resounds with the clash of floating fragments, which every hour are broken from the mass. The genius of Philosophy is walking abroad, and with the touch of Ithuriel's spear is trying the establishments of the earth. The various forms of Prejudice, Superstition and Servility start up in their true shapes, which had long imposed upon the world under the revered semblances of Honour, Faith, and Loyalty. Whatever is loose must be shaken, whatever is corrupted must be lopt away; whatever is not built on the broad basis of public utility must be thrown

to the ground. Obscure murmurs gather, and swell into a tempest; the spirit of Enquiry, like a severe and searching wind, penetrates every part of the great body politic; and whatever is unsound, whatever is infirm, shrinks at the visitation. Liberty, here with the lifted crossier in her hand, and the crucifix conspicuous on her breast; there led by Philosophy, and crowned with the civic wreath, animates men to assert their long forgotten rights. With a policy, far more liberal and comprehensive than the boasted establishments of Greece and Rome, she diffuses her blessings to every class of men; and even extends a smile of hope and promise to the poor African, the victim of hard, impenetrable avarice. Man, *as man*, becomes an object of respect. Tenets are transferred from theory to practice. The glowing sentiment and the lofty speculation no longer serve ‘but to adorn the pages of a book;’ they are brought home to men’s

business and bosoms; and, what some centuries ago it was daring but to think, and dangerous to express, is now realized, and carried into effect. Systems are analysed into their first principles, and principles are fairly pursued to their legitimate consequences. The enemies of reformation, who palliate what they cannot defend, and defer what they dare not refuse; who, with Festus, put off to a more convenient season what, only because it is the present season is inconvenient, stand aghast; and find they have no power to put back the important hour, when nature is labouring with the birth of great events. Can ye not discern — But you do discern these signs; you discern them well, and your alarm is apparent. You see a mighty empire breaking from bondage, and exerting the energies of recovered freedom: and England—which was used to glory in being the assertor of liberty, and refuge of the oppressed——Eng-  
land

land, who with generous and respectful sympathy, in times not far remote from our own memory, has afforded an asylum to so many of the subjects of that very empire, when crushed beneath the iron rod of persecution; and, by so doing, circulated a livelier abhorrence of tyranny within her own veins——England, who has long reproached her with being a slave now censures her for daring to be free. England, who has held the torch to her, is mortified to see it blaze brighter in her hands. England, for whom, and for whose manners and habits of thinking, that empire has, for some time past, felt even an enthusiastic predilection; and to whom, as a model of laws and government, she looks up with affectionate reverence——England, nursed at the breast of liberty, and breathing the purest spirit of enlightened philosophy, views a sister nation with affected scorn and real jealousy, and presumes to ask whether she

yet exists——Yes, all of her exists that is worthy to do so. Her dungeons indeed exist no longer, the iron doors are forced, the massy walls are thrown down; and the liberated spectres, trembling between joy and horror, may now blazon the infernal secrets of their prison house. Her cloistered Monks no longer exist, nor does the soft heart of sensibility beat behind the grate of a convent, but the best affections of the human mind permitted to flow in their natural channel, diffuse their friendly influence over the brightening prospect of domestic happiness. Nobles, the creatures of Kings, exist there no longer; but Man, the creature of God, exists there. Millions of men exist there who, only now, truly begin to exist, and hail with shouts of grateful acclamation the better birth-day of their country. Go on, generous nation, set the world an example of virtues as you have of talents. Be our model, as we have been  
yours.



yours. May the spirit of wisdom, the spirit of moderation, the spirit of firmness, guide and bless your counsels. With intelligence to discern the best possible, may you have prudence to be content with the best practicable. Overcome our wayward perverseness by your steadiness and temper. Silence the scoff of your enemies, and the misgiving fears of your timorous well-wishers. Go on to destroy the empire of prejudices, that empire of gigantic shadows, which are only formidable while they are not attacked. Cause to succeed to the mad ambition of conquest the pacific industry of commerce, and the simple, useful toils of agriculture. While your corn springs up under the shade of your Olives, may bread and peace be the portion of the Husbandman; and when beneath your ardent sun, his brow is bathed in honest sweat, let no one dare any longer with hard and vexatious exactions to wring from him the bitter drop of anguish. Instructed by the experience

rience of past centuries, and by many a sad and sanguine page in your own histories, may you no more attempt to blend what God has made separate; but may religion and civil polity, like the two necessary but opposite elements of fire and water, each in its province do service to mankind, but never again be forced into discordant union. Let the wandering pilgrims of every tribe and complexion, who in other lands find only an asylum, find with you a country, and may you never seek other proof of the purity of your faith than the largeness of your charity. In your manners, your language, and habits of life, let a manly simplicity, becoming the intercourse of equals with equals, take the place of overstrained refinement and adulation. Let public reformation prepare the way for private. May the abolition of domestic tyranny introduce the modest train of household virtues, and purer incense be burned upon the hallowed altar of  
 conjugal

conjugal fidelity. Exhibit to the world the rare phænomenon of a patriot minister, of a philosophic senate. May a pure and perfect system of legislation proceed from their forming hands, free from those irregularities and abuses, the wear and tear of a constitution, which in a course of years are necessarily accumulated in the best formed States; and like the new creation in its first gloss and freshness, yet free from any taint of corruption, when its Maker blest and called it good. May you never lose sight of the great principle you have held forth, the natural equality of men. May you never forget that without public spirit there can be no liberty; that without virtue there may be a confederacy, but cannot be a community. May you, and may we, consigning to oblivion every less generous competition, only contest who shall set the brightest example to the nations, and

may its healing influence be diffused, till the reign of Peace shall spread

— — — ‘ from shore to shore,  
 ‘ Till *Wars* shall cease, and *Slavery* be no more.’

Amidst causes of such mighty operation, what are we, and what are our petty, peculiar interests! Triumph, or despondency, at the success or failure of our plans, would be treason to the large, expanded, comprehensive wish which embraces the general interests of humanity. Here then we fix our foot with undoubting confidence, sure that all events are in the hands of him, who from seeming evil

— — — ‘ is still educating good;  
 ‘ And better thence again, and better still,  
 ‘ In infinite progression.’

In this hope we look forward to the period when the name of *Dissenter* shall no more be  
 heard

heard of, than that of *Romanist* or *Episcopalian*, when nothing shall be venerable but truth, and nothing valued but utility.

*March 3, 1790.*

A DISSENTER.

D

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