

THE DEDICATION.

To JOHN ADAMS,

VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF
AMERICA.

DEAR SIR,

THE happiness I have had of your acquaintance and correspondence ever since your embassy to England, our common friendship for Dr. Price, the ardent friend of liberty and of America, your steady attachment to the cause of christianity, the favourable attention you gave to the following Discourses, when they were delivered, and the wish you expressed that they might be published, induce me to take the liberty to dedicate them to you.

Statesmen who have the firmness of mind to profess themselves Christians, and who have a just sense of the importance of christianity, are not numerous; and those of them who adopt a rational christianity, the evidences and doctrines of which will bear to be submitted to the test of reason, in this age, in which, while many are carried away by the prevailing tide of infidelity, others oppose it by an enthusiasm which disclaims the aid of reason, are still fewer; and are therefore entitled to the greater esteem of those who entertain the same sentiments.

We shall, no doubt, ourselves be ranked with enthusiasts by those unbelievers (and by far the greater part of them are of this class) who have become so without any just knowledge of the subject, or investigation of the evidence of revelation. But the contempt of such persons, whatever rank they may hold in the political or the learned world, is itself contemptible. Every serious inquirer after truth, will respect other serious inquirers, though their opinions should differ ever so much. But the censures of men, whether well or ill informed, will appear of little moment to those who look to the decision of the impartial Judge of all. And, mindful of his solemn warning, we must not be ashamed of him, or of his cause, in any circumstances, however unfavourable, lest he should be ashamed of us at a time when his favour will be of infinitely greater moment to us than any thing else.

You and I, Sir, are advancing to a period of life in which these views naturally open more and more upon us. We find this world receding, and another fast approaching, and we feel the importance of having something to look to when the present scene of things shall be closed. And whatever we value for ourselves, it behoves us to recommend to others. You will, therefore, rejoice if an exhibition of the evidences of revealed religion, such as is contained

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tained in these Discourses, should produce any effect.

It is happy that, in this country, religion has no connection with civil power, a circumstance which gives the cause of truth all the advantage that its best friends can desire. But religion is of as much use to Statesmen as to any individuals whatever. Christian principles will best enable men to devote their time, their talents, their lives, and what is often a greater sacrifice still, their characters, to the public good; and in public life this will often be, in a great measure, necessary.

Let a man attain to eminence, of any kind, and by whatever means, even the most honourable, he will be exposed to envy and jealousy, and of course he must expect to meet with calumny and abuse. It was the lot of our Saviour himself, and it is a part of the wise order of providence that it should always be so. For, besides that it is of the greatest importance to the community, that every person in a public station, should have the strongest motive for the greatest circumspection, unmixed praise is what no human mind can bear without injury. An undue elation, which would soon be found to be as hurtful to himself as unpleasant to others, would be the necessary consequence

sequence of it. And what principles can enable a man to consult the real good of his fellow citizens, without being diverted from his generous purpose by a regard to their opinion concerning him, like those of the Christian, who can be satisfied with the approbation of his own mind (which of course draws after it that of his Maker) and who, though not insensible to due praise, can despise calumny, and steadily overlooking every thing that is intermediate, patiently wait for the day of final retribution? As these principles enabled the apostles to rejoice in tribulation, and persecution of every kind, so the virtuous statesman will not complain of that abuse which operates so favourably both with respect to his own mind, and the interests of his country. They are Christian principles that best enable a man to bear this necessary and excellent discipline, and form the truly disinterested and magnanimous patriot.

*I cannot conclude this address without expressing the satisfaction I feel in the government which has afforded me an asylum from the persecution which obliged me to leave England, persuaded that, its principles being fundamentally good, instead of tending, like the old governments of Europe, to greater abuse, it will tend to continual melioration. Still, however, my utmost wish is to live as a stran-
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ger among you, with liberty to attend without interruption to my favourite pursuits; wishing well to my native country, as I do to all the world, and hoping that its interests, and those of this country, will be inseparable, and consequently that peace between them will be perpetual.

I am, with the greatest esteem,

Dear Sir,

PHILADELPHIA,
May, 1796.

Yours sincerely,

J. PRIESTLEY.