THE WORKS OF

JOHN ADAMS

VOL. 10: LETTERS AND STATE PAPERS

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The Works of John Adams

Volume 10

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TO BENJAMIN STODDERT.

Quincy, 15 October, 1811

Dear Stoddert,—

Your obliging letter of August 16th was presented to me by your son-in-law, Dr. Thomas Ewell, and his amiable lady, your daughter. Although I was confined with a wounded leg, which is not yet healed, and afflicted with a series of misfortunes, afflictions, and deaths among my tenderest connections, such as rarely happens to any man even in this troublesome world, I was not the less obliged to you for giving me an opportunity of seeing this sensible and amiable couple. These causes, however, have retarded my answer, and I hope will plead my excuse. I am happy to hear that your health is good, and I hope your happiness unalloyed.

I am as happy as ever I was in my life, as happy as I can ever expect to be in this world, and I believe as happy as any man can be, who sees all the friends of his youth dropping off about him, and so much sickness among his nearest relations, and who expects himself to drop in a very short time. Public affairs move me no more than private. I love my country and my friends, but can do very little for either. Reconciled and resigned to my lot in public and private, I wait with patience for a transfer to another scene.

After an introduction so solemn and gloomy, you will be surprised to find me turn to so ludicrous a subject as friend Timothy. You have seen his addresses to the people, in

which he has poured out the phials of his vengeance against me, after having nourished and cherished it in his bosom a dozen years. He has implicated General Sam Smith and his brother Robert Smith, the late Secretary of State, in a manner that ought in my opinion to bring them out in vindication of themselves and me.

God knows, I never made any bargain with them or either of them. I never knew or suspected that they had any animosity against Pickering, more than they had against you or McHenry, Wolcott or Lee. No hint was ever given to me, directly or indirectly from either, that they wished Pickering removed, or that they would vote for me on any condition, or in any circumstances whatsoever. When I appointed Winchester Judge, in opposition to the wish of Robert Smith, as you know very well, I had the best opportunities to conciliate the Smiths, if I had been so disposed. Pickering knows this as well as you. How, then, can he tell such an abominable story? I cannot think that he believes it himself. Had I not scruples about setting an example of a President's vindicating himself against such attacks from a mortified, disappointed, and vindictive minister, I should be at no loss for reasons to justify the removal of Mr. Pickering.

B. STODDERT TO JOHN ADAMS.

Bladensburg, 27 October, 1811

I sincerely thank you for your kind letter of the 15th. It always affords me the highest satisfaction to hear of you and from you, and more particularly when I hear favorable accounts of your health and contentment.

I have seen and regretted the attack of Colonel Pickering on you, in a point affecting your moral character. In relation to any intrigue of my countrymen, the Smiths, with you, for

his removal from the office of State, I have at all times felt the strongest conviction that you never did descend to such baseness, not only because I knew you were incapable of such degradation, but because I had reason to know that there was no kind of private intercourse between you and General Smith (and his brother was not at the seat of government), about the time of Colonel Pickering's removal. I knew it from this circumstance. A day or two before the New York election, in which Colonel Burr exerted himself with so much success as to produce a result that disappointed every body, and at a moment when members of Congress and all about the government believed that city would be entirely federal, General Smith and a Senator of high standing called on me at my office, and expressed their satisfaction with most of your measures, though disapproving of some which they seemed disposed rather to ascribe to the influence of others than to you, and signified a desire to have a friendly interview with you, and asked my opinion if such an interview would be agreeable. My reply, in substance, was, that I could not doubt it, but that I would speak to you on the subject, and let them know.

It so happened that I did not speak to you before the result of the New York election was known in Philadelphia. This result afforded Mr. Jefferson a prospect of the Presidential chair he seemed not to have had before. But for this result, I question whether it would not have been decided, about that time, by his friends, to suspend his pretensions for four years longer, and that their support, if from no other motive, for the chance of having influence in your administration, should be given to you.

If I never afterwards mentioned to you my visit from the General and the Senator, it was because I thought I perceived that their views had changed, with the change of prospect occasioned by the result of the New York election.

They spoke to me no more, and I am very confident they avoided you.

I am not good at remembering dates; and, never meaning to be a public man, I never kept memoranda of any political transactions. But I believe this election was just before the close of the session of Congress; and that at the close, or a day or two before, Colonel Pickering was removed. On the morning of the day of the removal, you communicated to Mr. Lee and myself, who chanced to meet at your house without being summoned, your intention, and observed, your mind had been made up on the subject before the commencement of the session, but that, to avoid a turbulent session (Colonel Pickering having many warm friends in both Houses), you had delayed to take the step until the close of the session. You said you respected Colonel Pickering for his industry, his talents, and his integrity, but mentioned instances to show that he wanted those feelings a Secretary of State should possess for the character of a President, and wanted temper to enable you to make peace with France, or preserve it with England; and, upon something suggested by Mr. Lee or myself to induce reconsideration on your part, you added, that you felt it a sacred duty to make a change in the Department of State, and proposed, that Mr. Lee or myself should communicate your decision to Colonel Pickering in terms least calculated to hurt his feelings. We both too sincerely respected him to undertake a task so disagreeable. I have never since conversed with Mr. Lee on this subject; but I do presume, were he to relate the occurrence, his relation would agree substantially with mine.

Colonel Pickering, like most honest, warm-tempered men, may be too partial, perhaps, in tracing to the best motives the actions of his friends, and too prone to ascribe to the worst the conduct of those whom he does not like. After hearing of the prediction of Mr. R. Smith at Annapolis (which I presume has been within the last two years), made

ten or twelve days before his removal, that he would be removed, it was not extraordinary that he should imagine Mr. R. Smith, his brother, the General, and others, had successfully intrigued with you for his removal as the price of their support. And when he made the charge against you, I cannot, from what I think I know of his character, persuade myself for a moment to doubt that he did most religiously believe in its truth.

Were I to venture to account for Mr. R. Smith's prediction at Annapolis, it would be in this way. The visit to me, of which I have spoken, shows that the most respectable of that party, with whom Mr. Smith was closely linked, were at least balancing in their minds whether their surest road to more influence in public affairs would not be to attach themselves to you, especially as your reëlection seemed at that time certain. Colonel Pickering, of all your ministers, was most obnoxious to those gentlemen. And it might have been contemplated by them, with the knowledge of Mr. R. Smith, to ask his removal in return for their support. And as it was too well known that the proper harmony between the President and Secretary of State did not exist, Mr. Smith being sure, as he thought, the offer would be made, might conclude, without great violence to probability, that the offer would be made, and, unacquainted with your honorable principles, that it would not be rejected.

If any use can be made of this feeble, though sincere testimony, in removing from that reputation you so justly value a transient cloud, most freely do I consent it should be so used. I may dissatisfy men, whose friendship I prize most highly, and make others my enemies, by this; but consideration of self never did nor ever shall deter me from doing an act of justice.

With my best respects, &c., &c.

Ben. Stoddert.

TO SAMUEL SMITH.

Quincy, 25 November, 1811

Sir,—

Colonel Pickering, in his letters or addresses to the people of the United States, has represented to the world, and supported by certificates or testimonies, which some persons think plausible, that a corrupt bargain was made between yourself and your brother on one part, and me on the other, that I should dismiss the then Secretary of State from his office, in consideration of your votes and influence for me at the next election of President and Vice-President.

As such a kind of traffic would be as dishonorable to yourself and your brother as to me, I think it would become all three of us to take some prudent measures to disabuse the public, if not to vindicate our characters.

For my own part, I declare upon my honor, and am at any time ready to depose upon oath, that no such communication, intimation, or insinuation ever passed, directly or indirectly, between me and yourself, or your brother. You must, therefore, know and feel the imputation both upon me and yourself to be false and injurious. Consequently I can see no objection that either of us can have to clearing up this matter before the public. I should be obliged to you, Sir, for your sentiments upon this subject, and continue to be, with much respect, your most obedient and humble servant.

Memorandum. Wrote on the same day, in the same words, mutatis mutandis, to the Hon. Robert Smith at Baltimore.

J. A.

ROBERT SMITH TO JOHN ADAMS.

Baltimore, 30 November, 1811

Sir,—

In reply to your letter of the 25th of this month, I have no hesitation in stating to you, that, at no period of your administration did I consider or understand that any kind of bargain or arrangement had, directly or indirectly, in any manner or form, been proposed or made, between yourself on the one part, and my brother and myself, or either of us, on the other part, in relation to the dismission of Mr. Pickering from the office of the Department of State.

Be pleased to accept an assurance of the great respect, with which I have the honor to be, Sir, your humble servant,

R. Smith.

SAMUEL SMITH TO JOHN ADAMS.

Washington, 1 December, 1811

Sir,—

I had the honor, yesterday, to receive your letter of the 25th ultimo, in which you say, “that Colonel Pickering in his letters to the people of the United States has represented to the world, that a corrupt bargain was made between yourself and brother on the one part, and me on the other, that I should dismiss the then Secretary of State from his office, in consideration of your votes and influence for me, at the next election of President and Vice-President.”

You appear to be of opinion, that some notice ought to be taken of this assertion to disabuse the public, justly observing that no such communication had ever passed directly or indirectly between you, my brother, and myself.

I have taught myself to despise every attack upon my political character; and I cannot persuade myself, that any man acquainted with your high character will believe that you would have permitted any person to have made to you

a proposition so very dishonorable. For myself I declare, that I never held any conversation with you, respecting Colonel Pickering; that I never heard you utter one word disrespectful of that gentleman; that I never did insinuate or express a wish to you that you would dismiss Colonel Pickering from office, nor did I ever insinuate or say, that I would, for any consideration whatsoever, support you by my vote or influence at the election of President and Vice-President. I never believed myself in your confidence. On the contrary, I did at that period think that you were personally hostile to me. It is well known, that I opposed your first election and your reelection, openly, on political ground. It is not known to me, that you had any knowledge of my brother Robert at the period alluded to; if any communication had ever passed between you and him, it must have been known to me. I never knew of any, and am certain that none did take place.

I have the honor to be, your obedient servant,

S. Smith.

TO ROBERT SMITH.

Quincy, 6 December, 1811

Sir,—

Yesterday I received from the post-office in this town your favor of the 30th of November, in answer to my letter to you of the 25th of that month.

I thank you, Sir, for the promptitude, punctuality, and accuracy of your reply, which is fully satisfactory. It is such, indeed, as I knew it must be from the immutability of truth.

TO SAMUEL SMITH.

Quincy, 13 December, 1811

Sir,—

I have received your letter of the 1st of this month in answer to mine of the 25th of November. It is not less frank and candid than prompt and punctual.

I have only to remark that you were certainly mistaken when you thought that “I was personally hostile to you.” Your brother Robert I never saw in my life, nor had any communication with him of any kind while I had any share in government.

TO BENJAMIN RUSH.

Quincy, 25 December, 1811

I never was so much at a loss how to answer a letter as yours of the 16th.

Shall I assume a sober face and write a grave essay on religion, philosophy, laws, or government?

Shall I laugh, like Bacchus among his grapes, wine vats, and bottles?

Shall I assume the man of the world, the fine gentleman, the courtier, and bow and scrape, with a smooth, smiling face, soft words, many compliments and apologies; think myself highly honored, bound in gratitude, &c., &c.?

I perceive plainly enough, Rush, that you have been teasing Jefferson to write to me, as you did me some time ago to write to him. You gravely advise me “to receive the olive branch,” as if there had been war; but there has never been any hostility on my part, nor that I know, on his. When there has been no war, there can be no room for negotiations of peace.

Mr. Jefferson speaks of my political opinions; but I know of no difference between him and myself relative to the Constitution, or to forms of government in general. In measures of administration, we have differed in opinion. I have never approved the repeal of the judicial law, the repeal of the taxes, the neglect of the navy; and I have

always believed that his system of gunboats for a national defence was defective. To make it complete, he ought to have taken a hint from Molière's "Femmes précieuses," or his learned ladies, and appointed three or four brigades of horse, with a Major-General, and three or four brigadiers, to serve on board his galleys of Malta. I have never approved his non-embargo, or any non-intercourse, or non-importation laws.

But I have raised no clamors nor made any opposition to any of these measures. The nation approved them; and what is my judgment against that of the nation? On the contrary, he disapproved of the alien law and sedition law, which I believe to have been constitutional and salutary, if not necessary.

He disapproved of the eight per cent. loan, and with good reason. For I hated it as much as any man, and the army, too, which occasioned it. He disapproved, perhaps, of the partial war with France, which I believed, as far as it proceeded, to be a holy war. He disapproved of taxes, and perhaps the whole scheme of my administration, &c., and so perhaps did the nation. But his administration and mine are passed away into the dark backwards, and are now of no more importance than the administration of the old Congress in 1774 and 1775.

We differed in opinion about the French revolution. He thought it wise and good, and that it would end in the establishment of a free republic. I saw through it, to the end of it, before it broke out, and was sure it could end only in a restoration of the Bourbons, or a military despotism, after deluging France and Europe in blood. In this opinion I differed from you as much as from Jefferson; but all this made me no more of an enemy to you than to him, nor to him than to you. I believe you both to mean well to mankind and your country. I might suspect you both to sacrifice a little to the infernal Gods, and perhaps unconsciously to

suffer your judgments to be a little swayed by a love of popularity, and possibly by a little spice of ambition.

In point of republicanism, all the difference I ever knew or could discover between you and me, or between Jefferson and me, consisted,

1. In the difference between speeches and messages. I was a monarchist because I thought a speech more manly, more respectful to Congress and the nation. Jefferson and Rush preferred messages.

2. I held levees once a week, that all my time might not be wasted by idle visits. Jefferson's whole eight years was a levee.

3. I dined a large company once or twice a week. Jefferson dined a dozen every day.

4. Jefferson and Rush were for liberty and straight hair. I thought curled hair was as republican as straight.

In these, and a few other points of equal importance, all miserable frivolities, that Jefferson and Rush ought to blush that they ever laid any stress upon them, I might differ; but I never knew any points of more consequence, on which there was any variation between us.

You exhort me to "forgiveness and love of enemies," as if I considered, or had ever considered, Jefferson as my enemy. This is not so; I have always loved him as a friend. If I ever received or suspected any injury from him, I have forgiven it long and long ago, and have no more resentment against him than against you.

You enforce your exhortations by the most solemn considerations that can enter the human mind. After mature reflection upon them, and laying them properly to heart, I could not help feeling that they were so unnecessary, that you must excuse me if I had some inclination to be ludicrous.

You often put me in mind that I am soon to die; I know it, and shall not forget it. Stepping into my kitchen one day, I found two of my poor neighbors, as good sort of men as two

drunkards could be. One had sotted himself into a consumption. His cough and his paleness and weakness showed him near the last stage. Tom, who was not so far gone as yet, though he soon followed, said to John, “You have not long for this world.” John answered very quick: “I know it, Tom, as well as you do; but why do you tell me of it? I had rather you should strike me.” This was one of those touches of nature which Shakspere or Cervantes would have noted in his ivory book.

But why do you make so much ado about nothing? Of what use can it be for Jefferson and me to exchange letters? I have nothing to say to him, but to wish him an easy journey to heaven, when he goes, which I wish may be delayed, as long as life shall be agreeable to him. And he can have nothing to say to me, but to bid me make haste and be ready. Time and chance, however, or possibly design, may produce ere long a letter between us.

TO THOMAS McKEAN.

Quincy, 2 June, 1812

Our ancient and venerable friend Clinton is gone before us. It had long been my intention to write to him, but while I was busied about many things perhaps of less importance, he has slipped out of my reach. I am determined no longer to neglect to write to you, lest I should glide away, where there is no pen and ink.

Nearly thirty-eight years ago our friendship commenced. It has never been interrupted, to my knowledge, but by one event. Among all the gentlemen with whom I have acted and lived in the world, I know not any two who have more uniformly agreed in sentiment upon political principles, forms of government, and national policy, than you and I have done, except upon one great subject—a most important and momentous one, to be sure. That subject

was the French revolution. This, at the first appearance of it, you thought a “minister of grace.” I fully believed it to be “a goblin damned.” Hence all the estrangement between us, that I know, or ever suspected. There is no reason that this should now keep us asunder, for I presume there can be little difference of opinion at present upon this subject. When Pultney accepted a peerage, some droll wit wrote,—

“Of all the patriot things that Pultney writ,
The earl of Bath confutes them every bit.”

We may now say,—

“Of all the glorious things French patriots writ,
The emperor confutes them every bit.”

There can be no question of honors or profits, or rank or fame, between you and me at present. Personal friendship and private feelings are all that remain. I should be happy to hear of your health and prosperity, but I cannot conclude without one political observation. In ancient times Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Virginia agreed very well. Why should they be at variance now?

I hope, Sir, you will excuse this intrusion, and believe me to be still, with much esteem, your friend and servant.

THOMAS McKEAN TO JOHN ADAMS.

Philadelphia, 13 June, 1812

On my return from a tour to the State of Delaware, I found your kind letter of the 2d instant, and thank you for this mark of esteem.

Our venerable friend Clinton has gone before us; so has the illustrious Washington, eleven years ago; and I have nearly outlived all my early acquaintance. I remain the only surviving member of the first American Congress, held in the city of New York in October, 1765; and but three more, of whom you are one, remain alive of the second, held in this city in September, 1774. It was my fate to be delegated

to that trust annually during the revolutionary war with Great Britain, until the preliminary articles of peace were signed in 1782, which afforded me an opportunity of knowing every member of Congress during the whole of that time; and I declare with pleasure, and also with pride, that I embraced the political sentiments of none with more satisfaction (being congenial with my own) than yours, nor do I recollect a single question in which we differed.

It is true, I was a friend to the revolution in France, from the assembly of the Notables until the king was decapitated, which I deemed not only a very atrocious but a most absurd act. After the limited monarchy was abolished, I remained in a kind of apathy with regard to the leaders of the different parties, until I clearly perceived that nation was incapable at that time of being ruled by a a popular government; and when the few and afterwards an individual assumed a despotic sway over them, I thought them in a situation better than under the government of a mob, for I would prefer any kind of government to such a state, even tyranny to anarchy. On this subject, then, I do not conceive we differed widely.

My dear Sir, at this time of our lives there can certainly be no question, as you observe, of honors, profits, rank or fame, between us. I shook hand with the world three years ago, and we said farewell to each other. The toys and rattles of childhood would, in a few years more, be probably as suitable to me as office, honor, or wealth; but, I thank God, the faculties of my mind are as yet little, if any thing, impaired, and my affections and friendships are unshaken: I do assure you that I venerate our early friendship, and am happy in a continuance of it.

Since my exemption from official and professional duties, I have enjoyed a tranquillity never (during a long protracted life) heretofore experienced, and my health and comforts are sufficient for a reasonable man.

Our country is at this moment in a critical situation; the result is in the womb of fate. Our system of government, in peace, is the best in the world; but how it will operate in war, is doubtful. This, however, is likely to be soon put to the test, and I sincerely regret it.

There is a cheerful air in your letter that evidences health, peace, and a competency, which that you may long enjoy is the sincere wish and ardent prayer of, dear Sir, your old friend and most obedient servant

Thomas McKean.

TO THOMAS McKEAN.

Quincy, 21 June, 1812

I have received your kind letter of the 13th of this month with emotions like those of two old friends after a separation of many years, such as we may suppose Ulysses to have felt on meeting one of his ancient associates (not one of the suitors) on his return to Ithaca.

Your name among the members of Congress in New York, in October, 1765, is, and has long been a singular distinction. I wish you would commit to writing your observations on the characters who composed that assembly, and the objects of your meeting. Otis and Ruggles are peculiarly interesting to me, and every thing that passed on that important occasion is and will be more and more demanded (and it is to be feared, in vain) by our posterity.

Of the Congress, in September, 1774, there remains Governor Johnson, of Maryland, Governor McKean, of Pennsylvania, Governor Jay, of New York, Judge Paine, of Massachusetts, and John Adams, not forgetting our venerable Charles Thomson, Secretary.

You had an opportunity that was denied me in 1778, 1779, 1780, 1781, 1782. I was in Europe from 1778 to

1788. There was a great change in Congress soon after 1778. The Massachusetts men were chosen of a very different stamp from Hancock, Sam Adams, and Gerry. Higginson, Gorham, King, Jackson, and Lowell were a batch of loaves of a very different flour from their predecessors. I would now give any thing for your knowledge of their oratory, dialectics, and principles and opinions. This nation now groans, and future ages, I fear, will have reason to rue the hunting of that day. After the peace, New York and Pennsylvania followed the example of Massachusetts, and brought in lukewarmness instead of zeal, not to say toryism in the place of whiggism.

I acknowledge that the most unaccountable phenomenon I ever beheld, in the seventy-seven years, almost, that I have lived, was to see men of the most extensive knowledge and deepest reflection entertain for a moment an opinion that a democratical republic could be erected in a nation of five-and-twenty millions of people, four-and-twenty millions and five hundred thousand of whom could neither read nor write.

My sentiments and feelings are in symphony with yours in another particular. The last eleven years of my life have been the most comfortable of the seventy-seven. I have never enjoyed so much in any equal period. Mr. Jefferson, I find, is equally happy. I have had opportunity, however, to know that the illustrious Washington was not, and that to his uneasiness in retirement great changes in the politics of this country were to be attributed, perhaps for the better, possibly for the worse. God knows. I am as cheerful as ever I was; and my health is as good, excepting a quiveration of the hands, which disables me from writing in the bold and steady character of your letter, which I rejoice to see. Excuse the word quiveration, which, though I borrowed it from an Irish boy, I think an improvement in our language worthy a place in Webster’s dictionary. Though my sight is good, my eyes are too weak for all the labor I require of

them; but as this is a defect of more than fifty years standing, there are no hopes of relief. The trepidation of the hands arising from a delicacy, or, if you will, a morbid irritability of nerves, has shown itself at times for more than half a century, but has increased for four or five years past, so as to extinguish all hopes that it will ever be less.

The danger of our government is, that the General will be a man of more popularity than the President, and the army possess more power than Congress. The people should be apprised of this, and guard themselves against it. Nothing is more essential than to hold the civil authority decidedly superior to the military power.

Wishing you life as long as you desire it, and every blessing in it, I remain, &c.

TO THOMAS JEFFERSON.

Quincy, 28 June, 1812

I know not what, unless it were the prophet of Tippecanoe, had turned my curiosity to inquiries after the metaphysical science of the Indians, their ecclesiastical establishments, and theological theories; but your letter, written with all the accuracy, perspicuity, and elegance of your youth and middle age, as it has given me great satisfaction, deserves my best thanks. *Endnote 002*

It has given me satisfaction, because, while it has furnished me with information where all the knowledge is to be obtained that books afford, it has convinced me that I shall never know much more of the subject than I do now. As I have never aimed at making any collection of books upon this subject, I have none of those you have abridged in so concise a manner. Lafitau, Adair, and De Bry were known to me only by name.

The various ingenuity which has been displayed in inventions of hypotheses to account for the original population of America, and the immensity of learning profusely expended to support them, have appeared to me, for a longer time than I can possibly recollect, what the physicians call the literæ nihil sanantes. Whether serpents' teeth were sown here and sprung up men; whether men and women dropped from the clouds upon this Atlantic island; whether the Almighty created them here, or whether they emigrated from Europe, are questions of no moment to the present or future happiness of man. Neither agriculture, commerce, manufactures, fisheries, science, literature, taste, religion, morals, nor any other good will be promoted, or any evil averted, by any discoveries that can be made in answer to these questions.

The opinions of the Indians and their usages, as represented in your obliging letter of the 11th June, appear to me to resemble the platonizing Philo, or the philonizing Plato, more than the genuine system of Judaism.

The philosophy both of Philo and Plato is at least as absurd; it is indeed less intelligible. Plato borrowed his doctrines from oriental and Egyptian philosophers, for he had travelled both in India and Egypt. The oriental philosophy, imitated and adopted in part, if not the whole, both by Plato and Philo, was, 1. One God, the good. 2. The ideas, the thoughts, the reason, the intellect, the logos, the ratio of God. 3. Matter, the universe, the production of the logos, or contemplations of God. This matter was the source of evil.

Perhaps the three powers of Plato, Philo, the Egyptians and Indians, cannot be distinctly made from your account of the Indians; but,

1. The great Spirit, the good, who is worshipped by the kings, sachems, and all the great men in their solemn festivals, as the author, the parent of good.

2. The devil, or the source of evil; they are not metaphysicians enough as yet to suppose it, or at least to call it matter, like the wiseacres of antiquity and like Frederic the Great, who has written a very silly essay on the origin of evil, in which he ascribes it all to matter, as if this was an original discovery of his own.

The watch-maker has in his head an idea of the system of a watch, before he makes it. The mechanician of the universe had a complete idea of the universe before he made it, and this idea, this logos, was almighty, or at least powerful enough to produce the world; but it must be made of matter, which was eternal. For creation out of nothing was impossible, and matter was unmanageable. It would not and could not be fashioned into any system, without a large mixture of evil in it, for matter was essentially evil.

The Indians are not metaphysicians enough to have discovered this idea, this logos, this intermediate power between good and evil, God and matter. But of the two powers, the good and the evil, they seem to have a full conviction; and what son or daughter of Adam and Eve has not?

This logos of Plato seems to resemble, if it was not the prototype of the Ratio and its Progress, of Manilius, the astrologer, of the Progress of the Mind, of Condorcet, and the Age of Reason, of Tom Paine. I would make a system, too. The seven hundred thousand soldiers of Zengis, when the whole or any part of them went to battle, set up a howl which resembled nothing that human imagination has conceived, unless it be the supposition that all the devils in hell were let loose at once to set up an infernal scream, which terrified their enemies and never failed to obtain them victory. The Indian yell resembles this; and therefore America was peopled from Asia.

Another system. The armies of Zengis, sometimes two, three, or four hundred thousand of them, surrounded a province in a circle, and marched towards the centre,

driving all the wild beasts before them—lions, tigers, wolves, bears, and every living thing—terrifying them with their howls and yells, their drums and trumpets, &c., till they terrified and tamed enough of them to victual the whole army. Therefore the Scotch high-landers, who practise the same thing in miniature, are emigrants from Asia. Therefore, the American Indians, who, for any thing I know, practise the same custom, are emigrants from Asia or Scotland.

I am weary of contemplating nations from the lowest and most beastly degradations of human life to the highest refinement of civilization. I am weary of philosophers, theologians, politicians, and historians. They are immense masses of absurdities, vices, and lies. Montesquieu had sense enough to say in jest, that all our knowledge might be comprehended in twelve pages in duodecimo; and I believe him in earnest. I could express my faith in shorter terms. He who loves the workman and his work, and does what he can to preserve and improve it, shall be accepted of him.

I also have felt an interest in the Indians, and a commiseration for them, from my childhood. Aaron Pomham, the priest, and Moses Pomham, the king of the Punkapaug and Neponset tribes, were frequent visitors at my father’s house, at least seventy years ago. I have a distinct remembrance of their forms and figures. They were very aged, and the tallest and stoutest Indians I have ever seen. The titles of king and priest, and the names of Moses and Aaron, were given them, no doubt, by our Massachusetts divines and statesmen. There was a numerous family in this town, whose wigwam was within a mile of this house. This family were frequently at my father’s house, and I, in my boyish rambles, used to call at their wigwam, where I never failed to be treated with whortleberries, blackberries, strawberries, or apples, plums, peaches, &c., for they had planted a variety of fruit

trees about them; but the girls went out to service and the boys to sea, till not a soul is left. We scarcely see an Indian in a year. I remember the time when Indian murders, scalpings, depredations, and conflagrations, were as frequent on the eastern and northern frontiers of Massachusetts as they are now in Indiana, and spread as much terror. But since the conquest of Canada all this has ceased; and I believe with you that another conquest of Canada will quiet the Indians forever, and be as great a blessing to them as to us.

The instance of Aaron Pomham made me suspect that there was an order of priesthood among them; but according to your account, the worship of the good spirit was performed by the kings, sachems, and warriors, as among the ancient Germans, whose highest rank of nobility were priests; the worship of the evil spirit by the conjurors, jongleurs, præstigiatores.

We have war now in earnest. I lament the contumacious spirit that appears about me, but I lament the cause that has given too much apology for it, the total neglect and absolute refusal of all maritime protection and defence. Money, mariners, and soldiers would be at the public service, if only a few frigates had been ordered to be built. Without this, our Union will be but a brittle China vase, a house of ice, or a palace of glass.

TO SAMUEL B. MALCOM.

Quincy, 6 August, 1812

Your favor of July 11th was duly received. Your resolution to subjugate yourself to the control of no party, is noble; but have you considered all the consequences of it? In the whole history of human life this maxim has rarely failed to annihilate the influence of the man who adopts it, and very

often exposed him to the tragical vengeance of all parties. *Endnote 003*

There are two tyrants in human life who domineer in all nations, in Indians and Negroes, in Tartars and Arabs, in Hindoos and Chinese, in Greeks and Romans, in Britons and Gauls, as well as in our simple, youthful, and beloved United States of America.

These two tyrants are fashion and party. They are sometimes at variance, and I know not whether their mutual hostility is not the only security of human happiness. But they are forever struggling for an alliance with each other; and, when they are united, truth, reason, honor, justice, gratitude, and humanity itself in combination are no match for the coalition. Upon the maturest reflection of a long experience, I am much inclined to believe that fashion is the worst of all tyrants, because he is the original source, cause, preserver, and supporter of all others.

Nothing short of the philosophy of Zeno, Socrates, Seneca, and Epictetus could ever support an ancient, and nothing short of the philosophy of Jesus could ever support a modern, in the resolution you have taken. Nothing less than the spirit of martyrdom is sufficient; for martyrdom will infallibly ensue. Not always in flames at the stake, not always in the guillotine; but in lies, slanders, insults, and privations, oftentimes more difficult to bear than the horrors of Smithfield or the Place de Louis XV.

Men have suffered martyrdom for party and for fashion in sufficient numbers; but none for contempt of party and fashion, but upon principles of the highest order.

But to descend from these romantic heights. I wish to know the name and age of your son, and the meaning of the letter B in your name. Your printed publications I am anxious to see. I am sorry you left your practice at the bar. There is the scene of independence. Cannot you return to it? Integrity and skill at the bar, are better supporters of independence than any fortune, talents, or eloquence

elsewhere. A man of genius, talents, eloquence, integrity, and judgment at the bar, is the most independent man in society. Presidents, governors, senators, judges, have not so much honest liberty; but it ought always to be regulated by prudence, and never abused.

Judge Vanderkemp is a great man, a star of the first magnitude under a thick cloud.

Smith has been the enemy of no man but himself; I lament the loss to the nation of military talents and experience, but I fear it is irremediable.

Without entering into any moral, political, or religious discussions of the subject of private combats, and individual administration of justice in one's own case, I cannot but lament that the sacred, solemn bench of justice should exhibit perpetual exemplifications of the practice before the people. This is not conformable to the policy even of Europe, where duelling is not carried to such rancorous, deliberate, and malicious excess as it is in America. Aristides, I do not remember to have read. *Endnote 004* Colonel Burr, Attorney-General Burr, Senator Burr, Vice-President Burr, almost President Burr, has returned to New York. What is to be his destiny?

Emulation, rivalry, ambition, have unlimited scope under our forms of government. We have seen enough already to admonish us what we have to expect in future. My poor coarse boudoir, five or six-and-twenty years ago, held up mirrors in which our dear countrymen might have seen their pictures. If this is vanity, it is also cool philosophy.

From your real well-wisher.

TO WILLIAM KETELTAS.

Quincy, 25 November, 1812

Sir,—

I have received your polite letter of the 6th of the month and your present of the “Crisis.” You will excuse a question or two. In page first, you say, “Our administrations, with the exception of Washington’s, have been party administrations.” On what ground do you except Washington’s? If by party you mean majority, his majority was the smallest of the four in all his legislative and executive acts, though not in his election.

You say, “our divisions began with federalism and antifederalism.” Alas! they began with human nature; they have existed in America from its first plantation. In every colony, divisions always prevailed. In New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Massachusetts, and all the rest, a court and country party have always contended. Whig and tory disputed very sharply before the revolution, and in every step during the revolution. Every measure of Congress, from 1774 to 1787 inclusively, was disputed with acrimony, and decided by as small majorities as any question is decided in these days. We lost Canada then, as we are like to lose it now, by a similar opposition. Away, then, with your false, though popular distinctions in favor of Washington.

In page eleventh, you recommend a “constitutional rotation, to destroy the snake in the grass;” but the snake will elude your snare. Suppose your President in rotation is to be chosen for Rhode Island. There will be a federal and a republican candidate in that State. Every federalist in the nation will vote for the former, and every republican for the latter. The light troops on both sides will skirmish; the same northern and southern distinctions will still prevail; the same running and riding, the same railing and reviling, the same lying and libelling, cursing and swearing, will still continue. The same caucusing, assemblaging, and conventioning.

In the same page eleventh, you speak of a “portion of our own people who palsy the arm of the nation.” There is too

much truth in this. When I was exerting every nerve to vindicate the honor, and demand a redress of the wrongs of the nation against the tyranny of France, the arm of the nation was palsied by one party. Now Mr. Madison is acting the same part, for the same ends, against Great Britain, the arm of the nation is palsied by the opposite party. And so it will always be while we feel like colonists, dependent for protection on France or England; while we have so little national public opinion, so little national principle, national feeling, national patriotism; while we have no sentiment of our own strength, power, and resources.

I thank you, Sir, for reminding me, in page twelfth, of my "many blunders in my administration," and should have been still more obliged to you, if you had enumerated them in detail, that I might have made a confession of them one by one, repented of them on conviction, and made all the atonement for them now in my power. In the same page, you observe, that "you never knew how far I extended my views as to a maritime force." I will tell you, Sir. My views extend very far—as far as Colonel Barré's when, in his last speech in parliament, he exclaimed, "Who shall dare to set limits to the commerce and naval power of this country?" Yet I know that Washington city was not built in a day, any more than Rome. I am not for any extravagant efforts. Your plan of a ship of the largest size for the whole, and a frigate of the largest size for each State, would satisfy me for the present.

Your last sentence is a jewel, "a monarchy of justice, an aristocracy of wisdom, and a democracy of freedom."

As I never knew your person, nor heard your name, till I read it in your letter, I hope you will excuse the freedom of your obedient servant.

TO J. B. VARNUM.

Quincy, 5 January, 1813

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The foundation of an American navy, which I presume is now established by law, is a grand era in the history of the world. The consequences of it will be greater than any of us can foresee. Look to Asia and Africa, to South America and to Europe for its effects. My private opinion had been for frigates and smaller vessels, but I rejoice that the ideas of Congress have been greater. The four quarters of the world are in a ferment. We shall interfere everywhere. Nothing but a navy under Heaven can secure, protect, or defend us.

It is an astonishment to every enlightened man in Europe, who considers us at all, that we have been so long insensible and inattentive to this great instrument of national prosperity, this most efficacious arm of national power, independence, and safety.

I could give you many proofs of this, but I will confine myself to two. In June, 1779, I dined with Monsieur Thevenard, intendant of the navy at Lorient, certainly one of the most experienced, best read, and most scientific naval commanders in Europe. That excellent officer said to me, in the hearing of the Chevalier de la Luzerne, Mr. Marbois, and twenty officers of the French navy, “Your country is about to become the first naval power in the world.” My answer was, “It is impossible to foresee what may happen a hundred, or two or three hundred years hence, but there is at present no appearance of probability of any great maritime power in America for a long time to come.” “Hundred years!” said Thevenard, “It will not be twenty years before you will be a match for any maritime powers of Europe.” “You surprise me, Sir; I have no suspicion or conception of any such great things. Will you allow me to ask your reasons for such an opinion.” “My reasons!” said Mr. Thevenard, “My reasons are very obvious. You have all the materials, and the knowledge and skill to employ them. You have timber, hemp, tar, and iron,

seamen and naval architects equal to any in the world." "I know we have oak and pine and iron, and we may have hemp; but I did not know that our shipwrights were equal to yours in Europe." "The frigate in which you came here," said Mr. Thevenard (the Alliance, Captain Landais) "is equal to any in Europe. I have examined her, and I assure you there is not in the king's service, nor in the English navy, a frigate more perfect and complete in materials or workmanship." "It gives me great pleasure, Sir, to hear your opinion. I know we had or might have materials, but I had not flattered myself that we had artists equal to those in Europe." Mr. Thevenard repeated with emphasis, "You may depend upon it, there is not in Europe a more perfect piece of naval architecture than your Alliance, and indeed several other of your frigates that have already arrived here and in other ports of France." My reply was, "Your character forbids me to scruple any opinion of yours in naval affairs; but one thing I know, we delight so much in peace and hate war so heartily that it will be a long time before we shall trouble ourselves with naval forces. We shall probably have a considerable commerce and some nurseries of seamen, but we had so much wild land, and the most of us loved land so much better than sea, that many years must pass before we should be ambitious of power upon the ocean. We had land enough. No temptation to go abroad for conquests. If the powers of Europe should let us alone, we should sleep quietly for ages without thinking much of ships of war."

I returned to America, and staid about three months, when Congress sent me to Europe again. We landed at Ferrol, in Spain. In a few days a French squadron of five ships of the line came in. I was soon invited to dine with the Admiral, or, as the French call him, Général or Chef d'Escadre, the Count de Sade, with all the officers of the squadron, on board his eighty gun ship. At table, in the hearing of all the company, the Count said to me, "Your