

# MARYLAND GAZETTE.

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## Miscellany.

For the MARYLAND GAZETTE.

No. III.

### ON THE CHURCH BILL.

YEOMAN in the Maryland Republic did hope, (he says,) "when he saw the signature of A Layman in the Maryland Gazette, that much light would be thrown on the subject of the Church Bill," but notwithstanding an attentive "examination," he finds to remain unilluminated; its merits and utility have not been exhibited to his satisfaction. The Layman expected to find men attached to favourite opinions, but not expect, and is sorry to find, the Yeoman's prejudices make him guilty of injustice, nature or ill manners.

The brightest rays of truth in vain shine on the mind when prejudices shut the mind to it. Whatever opposition we may meet with, or unfair insults we may sustain, we shall persevere, cheered by the animated advice of the poet,

"Repair of nothing which you would attain,  
Inevitable diligence your point will gain."

The lively interest with which the good Delegates in the house of delegates regarded the petition, merits our respect, a contrary opinion our pity and regret. We have long seen the clouds of party and vapours of vanity are hard to dispel, but it is not the selfish or incorrigible prejudiced we shall sit on the competency of our ability; judges are equally objectionable. We seek more judicious and equitable ones, and despair not to find them.

The Yeoman reviewer proceeds, and says, the Layman is so strenuous a partizan, that he has entirely lost sight of religion, by zeal for the promotion of federalism, insists that politics and religion should be separate, but unfortunately couples them throughout. The unbiased reader ought to see, the handbill was addressed "to the people of Maryland of all Political and Religious Opinions." The reply "stated it to be blended two very different subjects for attainment of one object," and being so blended, finding them so linked, the response probably went to shew its impropriety to do so, and not approve, the unnatural address already made. The Yeoman's next relative remark on the Layman is, "while he tells us that the bill was thought reasonable and proper by a large majority of the people's representatives, he tells us also that it is rejected by the Senate, thereby insinuating that the Senate are not the representatives of the people." The Layman is not quite so ignorant as not to know what relation subsists between the Senate and the people; the insinuation can only be contrived with improper art. As they are not the direct representatives, they must stand in the second and not the first degree of responsibility to the people.

The proficients estimate the virtues and proper uses of herbs according to their respective qualities; that which is in the first degree hot and dry, is more estimable than that of the second, as is the second more valuable than the third. If the Senate, though not their direct representatives, is, in the Yeoman's opinion, the most interesting and the most useful in our government, their interest of course is principally to be sought, and their enmity to be dreaded, by every unfortunate class of petitioners. This being admitted, the people may, I conceive, (with propriety,) address the Senate in the following manner: "Govern us well, and we will cheerfully confide in your administration; if you make encroachments on our rights, debase us, or prevent us, of that which we deem conducive to our interest and happiness, you put us on our guard, for political liberty is entirely founded on reciprocity and equilibrium of interest. If the law of equilibrium is destroyed by you, agitation must ensue, and your interests will be made until that equilibrium is restored. We thought ourselves citizens of a well constituted republic, and that that glorious title we must be tenacious of equal rights. If a distinction is made, we fancy ourselves Democratic, but are not Aristocracies, since the greater part of the people, are constrained to submit to the will of a few citizens not of our immediate election. A yoke which may continue to oppress the people as prejudice prevails, or partiality prevails; a spirit that is contrary to our reason and your justice. Shall we be ignorant, and ill misconceived terror, shall we be to you your line of duty, or build an impenetrable wall, that shuts out retributive justice, or obstructs our progress in the paths of civilization, and prospects of religious im-

provement." God forbid! The constitution, (adds the Yeoman,) "recognises the Senate as the representatives of the people, and wisely prescribed that they should be chosen for a longer time, in order to be a check upon that body; and never was a stronger proof of the wisdom of such a provision, &c." Excellent! Good checks are certainly desirable; nay, not only expedient but sometimes essentially necessary. If, as some assert, "the people are their own worst enemies," they ought to be bridled, though not saddled, I hope. If the Yeoman can make it appear Marylanders are generally illiterate, licentious or turbulent, it is time to work a reformation, it is time religious societies should be instituted, and empowered to enlighten the path and brighten the prospect of our benighted horizon. The argument is new and interesting, though highly coloured, it happily is in our favour. The writer's next paragraph boldly and unblushingly asserts, had the Senate been of the same mind as the "representatives of the people," and paid more regard to the interest of the "Episcopal Church" than to the welfare of the state, the poor would indeed, by this time, "have been illy fed and worse taught, for they would have been worse fed by a tenth, and taught the most abject submission." Marvellous! The above is the language of an enemy, labouring under strange fears and strong prejudices. What says its friends, who are exempted from them, who respect the truth, and will not sell it; the truth is, there is no item in the bill injurious to the rights of freemen. None calculated to advance the interest of the church at his unwilling expense. Nothing injurious or inconvenient can appear contrary to the laws of the land; the constitution forbids it; it would be an actual violation of the law under which it is made to establish tythes, or any thing else that could encroach upon other churches, or the rights and liberties of its own members. [See the 3d section of the contemplated law.] The Laymen of every parish is its natural guard, and guarantees the correctness of its principles and provisions; an illegal assumption of power would soon cancel its charter. The power which creates has the power to dissolve, to ameliorate or improve.

Laying all boding fears and prejudices aside, the question between us is simply this, whether the church bill has a tendency to promote or diminish the general happiness? Whether it is eligible, just and politic, to grant a fostering hand to religious societies for the furtherance of the public welfare and for the security or advancement of national credit, or by a fair experiment make a trial of the merits of the bill, and the virtues of the projectors; or whether it is best to forbear?

I have called, (I hope without offence) the Episcopalian Convention projectors, for the object and the design of the Church Bill is, I conceive, a good and benevolent contrivance to make religion more diffusive and acceptable, to make church property more productive and efficient, &c. as stated in my former numbers. If it is a contrivance, it proves a design, for every act is a contrivance, and the predominant feature indicates a design. If the design is good, its fruits cannot be bad. The Romanists, and others, had their contrivances, and have succeeded. If useless or found hurtful, they will die a natural death. The country is full of contrivances. The Farmers Bank is one, and perhaps the Yeoman is a director. The bill before us is a good one. In point of religion and conscience, we believe its merits entitle it to its enemies respect, and the Senate's acceptance. "But why should this charitable Layman, (says our unfriendly Yeoman,) lay violent hands on Mr. Jefferson, draw him from retirement, and hold him up to public view as a deist. Indeed I am fully justified in the opinion he has more zeal for federalism than for religion and virtue." The Layman did not lay violent hands on Mr. Jefferson, or express one solitary opinion of his merits or demerits. If the assertion is false, the opinion cannot be true. The words alluded to are these—"Knowing and believing, as I do, that Christianity, in its modest simplicity and most modest attire, disturbs no forms of government, or distresses any man, how then am I to be persuaded that the Protestants are turbulent, &c. that their principles have a malignant aspect towards the present, or any government. I know many disliked Mr. Jefferson, because he was a Deist, and reprobated his government, because they supposed it was partially administered; it does not follow either their religion or principles are inimical to human happiness, or that the federal members would support them in it. Christianity, wherever it is cherished, advances its benign and salutary influence among the inhabitants, and no denominations of Christians can be more zealous in supporting govern-

ment than the Episcopalians." If the Senate had approved and passed the bill, and the House of Delegates rejected it, the injury and the insult would have been the same. The Layman, without respect to federalists, would have reprobated what he conceives an unfair line of conduct—He is not one of those who would sacrifice principle to party—His motto is Fair Play—his demand is equality of rights—his object, the honour and prosperity of his church, without prejudice to any other.

The Yeoman's next trifling note and reflexion are—"We are told they do not petition for a palace, but for the creation of new churches. I am inclined to think A Layman never saw the petition, as it does not contain one word relative to new churches." True! Nor does it say one word about establishing an hierarchy, engrossing power, extorting from the poor man his ducks and his chickens, &c. and other whimsies, which the handbill exhibited; these bad fruits were the mere images and pictures of a fanciful imagination. Where is this extensive canvass hung up? or where are the numerous receptacles in which they are to be deposited? Not in the Church Bill or the Temple of Fame, I am sure—If not to be found there, it will be difficult to lodge it in any rational man's understanding. "Things not expressed may be understood, and if understood, it is equivalent to expression." Logic.

The Yeoman's argument artfully impeaches our ignorance or inattention, by mentioning new churches to be erected. And can he be so ignorant or inattentive as not know, or now to learn, the deplorable state of our country churches generally. If they are down, or not worth repairing, are they not to be rebuilt? and if rebuilt, will they not be new? Burnt churches and desolated churches are a disgrace to the country, and their adverse state is a powerful argument in favour of the bill's passing, as well as the want of vestries in some parishes, and their neglect of duty in others.

The Yeoman dreads "more power and influence should be given to the clergy;" he is afraid "more churches should be built, least ministers should multiply." "He would not wish his purse opened to support their luxury and increase their power;" and least they should have the power to do harm, he would withhold from them the Bill of Rights.—This is the burden of his song. Touch not my pocket.

When war is heard, and death is fear'd,  
How dolorous are those times!

He might as well recommend a man to pull his teeth out, least they should ach; or refuse to employ the doctor when sick, lest he should administer poison. Loss of confidence, what's the consequence? A disposition of affairs which would soon fill the world with misery and confusion, and, ere long, not only put an end to "religion and virtue," but to human society. Our generous critic "would not wish to rob the clergy of one of the glittering stars of their order." Note. Mr. Yeoman, it is hoped you understand farming better than you do religion or politics. Stars, forsooth! where are they? In the hemisphere! their order is the order of merit tormented! their badge, poor parishes and ruinous churches! This load they have hitherto patiently bore, and wish to be relieved.—Help, Senate of Maryland.

Again—"He does not think a rigid and aristocratical establishment necessary." Neither does the Layman. Having said, "the religion of Jesus, I trust, is firmly established in America," the following ignorant remark is made upon it: "Should have been better pleased if the gen. men of character who petitioned, and the federal majority of the house of delegates who proposed the law, had been of the same opinion." Where was the opinion of the democratic members, (12 I believe out of 14) "then we should not have a law introduced for its establishment." The writer does not, or affects not, to know the difference between a church establishment, and its hierarchy or supremacy. Every church is established where it is tolerated; a religious establishment is only the means of inculcating it, founded on its utility, the preservation and communication of religious knowledge. With respect to the form, propriety or excellence, of the different establishments in this country, we are silent; they are free by law, consequently established.—To diffuse a contrary idea, that they are disposed to be intolerant, or aim at supremacy, is to debase the institution, and the government itself.

Were the people all agreed in their religious opinions, where it might satisfy all, by uniting all in one common faith, the religion might then be the religion of the land, and all be constrained to contribute "a tenth, or more, (as the Yeoman says,) to support luxu-

ry and increase power;" but this state of things is never likely to happen in America. In Spain, an Hierarchy was established, and is now confirmed by a late Decree of the Junta. There the Roman Catholic religion rides triumphant. A preference given or made for the clerical order without limitation or exception. Again, this state of things cannot take place here; our constitution forbids it, and our nature revolts at it. I here ask, what is the perfection of our government? and what a religious constitution ought to aim at? Not only liberty of conscience, which is granted, but, I hope, the best means of promoting instruction with the funds to accomplish the progress of truth, with the peace of society, the right of private judgment uncorrupted, with the care of the public safety & private interest. The next notice we shall take of the Yeoman is, expressing his "hopes the honour of a Layman, and the gentlemen of character, will at least disavow the act with the provisions as proposed;" this is a sentiment of disapprobation, and piece of advice, as if something dishonourable had been attempted by us. We deny it. Upon this issue is joined. Let the honourable and candid reader be the judge—let him read the bill, and attend to the weight of the following clause in the 4th section.

It enables the Convention "to ordain, establish and put into execution, such by-laws, ordinances and regulations, as to them shall seem necessary and convenient, the same not being contrary to the constitution of the said church, or the laws of this State or of the United States; and generally to do and execute all such acts, matters and things, as to them shall or may appear to do." Here is a door open to build and repair churches, and promote the general welfare, and shuts the door against any unlawful act, or illegal assumption of power.

Sec't. 5th, authorises a committee to manage and apply the funds of such parish or congregation for its exclusive use and benefit, till the parish or congregation shall choose a vestry, to which the said church or churches, and other property of said parish or congregation, shall then be given up. The committee is required to state their proceedings, and report the condition of the parish or congregation to the convention.

The 6th section gives authority to require the vestry to lay before them an account of the funds and the manner in which they are appropriated, in cases where there is no minister. We are led to quote the above most important clauses in the Church Bill, and to make our strictures, not by any propensity to depreciate the labours of the Yeoman, much less to make a comparison between the merits of our performances, but solely by the consideration, that when a writer commits himself upon a public, such in which the community is interested, we are bound by a kind of justice to ourselves and the honourable Convention, to appear in behalf of defensive principles, to explode errors when they appear, and vindicate ourselves.

The sagacious Yeoman "believes the writer is little acquainted with religion or politics." I pray my readers to recollect, my address to the public was on defensive principles, in reply to several serious charges, ostentatiously displayed in a circulated handbill. I believe I have some charity. Charity is religion, for I am sure I would bestow cheerfully my mite to promote, and to support it. I have no ambition to be a politician, neither have I any fear of being out done in good intentions. I have chosen, (what every freeman has a right,) merely to deliver, in an independent manner, my ideas on a subject highly interesting to us all at present. I only wish reason and facts should sometimes support opinions, and that beneficial reflections should rise out of them. If every one contributes what he knows, he serves his country, since good might arise.—It was a law in Sparta, that every man should take a decided part in all political disputes, one side or the other,—under the presumption "the sincere friends of humanity, of liberty and equality, would appear the most numerous."—I aspire to no other praise than in being esteemed one of that number in Maryland.—Adieu.

A LAYMAN.

### CAPTAIN BARCLAY.

This gentleman yesterday completed his arduous pedestrian undertaking, to walk a thousand miles in a thousand successive hours, at the rate of a mile in each and every hour. He had until 4 o'clock P. M. to finish his task, but he performed his last mile in the quarter of an hour after three, with perfect ease and great spirit, amidst an immense concourse of spectators.

Capt. B. had 16,000l. depending upon this undertaking, the aggregate of the bets is supposed to amount to 100,000l.—[Lon. pap.]