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The Independent Reflector
Number XXII [#6 on the College]

THURSDAY, APRIL 26, 1753

*The same Subject continued and concluded in An ADDRESS to the
Inhabitants of this Province*

*If we retain the Glory of our Ancestors,
Whose Ashes will rise up against our Dulness,
Shake off our Tameness, and give Way to Courage;
We need not doubt, inspir'd with a just Rage,
To break the Neck of those, that would yoke ours.*

Tatham's *Distracted State*

Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo.
["If I fail to influence the powers above, I will move
Acheron"]

VIRG.

MY DEAR COUNTRYMEN,

IN a Series of Papers, I have presented to your View **the Inconveniences that must necessarily result from making the RULE of the College, the Monopoly of any single Denomination.** I have considered it in a Variety of Lights, and explor'd its numerous Evils. To prevent them in the most effectual Manner, I have concerted a Plan, the Heads of which have been offered to your serious Consideration. Throughout the whole, I have given my Thoughts with the Freedom and Independence suitable to the Dignity of the Subject, and the Character of an impartial Writer. Upon my Representation of the Matter, nor Awe, nor Hope, hath had any Influence. But urg'd by the Love of Liberty, and a disinterested Concern for your, and your Posterity's Happiness, I have disclos'd the Importance, - the prodigious Importance of the present Question.

Far be it from me, to terrify you with imaginary Dangers, or to wish the Obstruction of any Measure conducive to the public Good. Did I not foresee, - was I not morally certain of the most ruinous Consequences, from a Mismanagement of the Affair, I should not address you with so much Emotion and Fervor: But when I perceive the impending Evil; when every Man of Knowledge and Impartiality entertains the same Apprehension; I cannot, I will not conceal my Sentiments. In such a Case, no Vehemence is excessive, no Zeal too ardent. The Alarm given is not confined to Particulars. No, the Effects I presage are dreaded far and wide as a general Calamity. Would to God our Tenor was merely panic! but it is founded on the unerring Testimony of History, of Reason, and universal Experience.

Nor fancy I aim at warping your Judgment by the Illusion of Oratory, or the Fascination of Eloquence. If in the Sequel, I appear

rather to declaim than prove, or seem to prefer the Flowers of Rhetoric to the Strength of Argument, it is because, by the clearest Demonstration, I have already evinc'd the Necessity of frustrating so injurious a Step. My Assertions have not been unsupported by Evidence; nor have I levell'd at your Passions, till I had convinc'd your Reason. After this, you will pardon a more animated Address, intended to warm the Imagination, and excite your Activity.

Of Prejudice and Partiality, I renounce the Charge; having alike argued against all Sects whatever, as I am in reality perfectly neutral and indifferent. For the Sincerity of my Intentions, I lay my Hand upon my Heart, and appeal to the enlighten'd Tribunal of Heaven.

Arise, therefore, and baffle the Machinations of your and their Country's Foes. Every Man of Virtue, every Man of Honour, will join you in defeating so iniquitous a Design. To overthrow it, nothing is wanting but your own Resolution. For great is the Authority, exalted the Dignity, and powerful the Majesty of the People. And shall you the avow'd Enemies of Usurpation and Tyranny, - shall you, the Descendants of *Britain*, born in a Land of Light, and rear'd in the Bosom of Liberty, - shall you commence Cowards at a Time when Reason calls so loud for your Magnanimity? I know you scorn such an injurious Aspersion. I know you disdain the Thoughts of so opprobrious a Servility; and what is more, I am confident the Moment you exert a becoming Fortitude, they will be sham'd out of their Insolence. They will blush at a Crime they cannot accomplish, and desist from Measures they find unsuccessful. Some of you, perhaps, imagine all Opposition unavailable. Banish so groundless a Fear. Truth is Omnipotent, and Reason must be finally victorious. Up and try. Be Men, and make the Experiment. This is your Duty, your bounden, your indispensable Duty. Ages remote, and Mortals yet unborn, will bless your generous Efforts; and revere the friendly Hand that diverted the meditated Ruin, as the Saviour of his Country.

The Love of LIBERTY is natural to our Species, and an Affection for POSTERITY, interwoven with the human Frame. Inflamed with this *Love*, and animated by this *Affection*, oppose a Scheme so detrimental to your Privileges, so fatal to your Progeny. Perhaps you conceive the Business is done. What! do you take it for granted that so it must be! Do you not then think yourselves free? Our Laws, our Assemblies, the Guardianship of our Mother Country, the mildest and the best of KINGS, do they not convince you that hitherto you know not what is Servitude? And will you trifle with an inestimable Jewel? Will you dance on a Precipice, and lay your Hand on a Cockatrice's Den? Unresisting will you yield, and resign without a Struggle? Will you not even venture at a Skirmish, to bequeath to your Posterity the priceless Treasure yourselves enjoy? Doubtless you resent the Insinuation. Courage then my Brethren: Reason is for us, that Reason whose awful Empire is spurn'd by your Adversaries; for such are those whoever they be, that aspire to a Superiority above their fellow Subjects. Whence then should proceed your Remissness in a Concern so momentous? Whence so tame a Submission, so ignominious a Compliance? Thou GENIUS of LIBERTY dispensing unnumber'd Blessings! Thou SPIRIT of PATRIOTISM ever watchful for the public

Good! Do ye inspire us with Unanimity in so interesting a Cause, and we will assert our Rights against the most powerful Invasion!

You, **Gentlemen of the CHURCH of ENGLAND**, cannot but condemn the unaccountable Assurance of whatever Persuasion, presumes to rob you of an *equal* Share in the Government of what *equally* belongs to all. With what Indignation and Scorn, must you, the most numerous and richest Congregation in this City, regard so insolent an Attempt! You who have the same Discipline, and the same Worship with the Mother Church of the Nation, and whose fundamental Articles are embrac'd by all protestant Christendom, - what Colour of Reason can be offered to deny you your just Proportion in the Management of the College? Methinks a due Respect for the national Church, nay common Decency and good Manners, are sufficient to check the presumptuous Attempt, and redden the Claimant with a guilty Blush. Resent, therefore, so shameless a Pretence, so audacious an Encroachment.

Nor can you **Gentlemen of the DUTCH CHURCH**, retrospect the Zeal of your Ancestors in stipulating for the Enjoyment of their religious Privileges, at the Surrender of the Province, without a becoming Ardor for the same Model of public Worship which they were so anxious in preserving to you in its primitive Purity. Or higher still, to trace the Renown of your Progenitors, recollect their Stand, their glorious and ever memorable Stand against the Yoke of Thraldom, and all the Horrors of ecclesiastic Villainy, its inseparable Concomitants. For their inviolable Attachment to pure unadulterated Protestantism, and the inestimable Blessings of Freedom civil and sacred, History will resound their deathless Praises; and adorned with the precious Memorials of their heroic and insuppressible Struggles against Imposition and Despotism, will shine with eternal and undecaying Splendor. Impell'd by their illustrious Example, disdain the Thoughts of a servile Acquiescence in the usurp'd Dominion of others, who will inevitably swallow up and absorb your Churches, and efface even the Memory of your having once formed so considerable a Distinction. Pity methinks it would be and highly to be deplored, that you should, by your own Folly, gradually crumble into Ruin, and at length sink into total and irrecoverable Oblivion.

Remember **Gentlemen of the English PRESBYTERIAN Church**, remember with a sacred Jealousy, the countless Sufferings of your pious Predecessors, for Liberty of Conscience, and the Right of private Judgment. What Afflictions did they not endure, what fiery Trials did they not encounter, before they found in this remote Corner of the Earth, that Sanctuary and Requiem which their native Soil inhumanly deny'd them? And will you endanger that dear-bought Toleration for which they retired into voluntary Banishment, for which they agoniz'd, and for which they bled? What drove your Ancestors to this Country, then a dreary Waste and a barren Desert? What forced them from the Land of their Fathers, the much-lov'd Region where first they drew the vital Air? What compell'd them to open to themselves a Passage into these more fortunate Climes? Was it not the Rage of Persecution and a lawless Intolerance? Did they not seek an Asylum amongst the Huts of Savages more hospitable more

humaniz'd than their merciless Oppressors? Could Oceans stop or Tempests retard their Flight, when Freedom was attack'd and Conscience was the Question? And will you entail on your Posterity that Bondage, to escape which they brav'd the raging Deep, and penetrated the howling Wilderness!

You, my FRIENDS, in Derision called **QUAKERS**, have always approv'd yourselves Lovers of civil and religious Liberty; and of universal Benevolence to Mankind. And tho' you have been misrepresented as averse to human Learning, I am confident, convinced as you are of the Advantages of useful Literature, by the Writings of your renown'd *Apologist*, and other celebrated Authors of your Persuasion, you would generously contribute to the Support of a College founded on a free and catholic Bottom. But to give your Substance to the rearing of Bigotry, or the tutoring Youth in the *enticing Words of Man's Vanity*, I know to be repugnant to your candid, your rational, your manly Way of thinking. Since the first Appearance of the *Friends*, thro' what Persecutions have they not waded? With what Difficulties have they not conflicted, e'er they could procure the unmolested Enjoyment of their Religion? This I mention not to spur you to revenge the Indignities offered to your Brethren, who being now beyond the Reach of Opposition and Violence, you, I am sure will scorn to remember their Tribulations with an unchristian Resentment. But to make their inhuman Treatment a Watch-Tower against the like Insults on your Descendants, is but wise, prudent and rational. At present, as ever you ought, you enjoy a righteous Toleration. But how long you will be able to boast the same Immunity, when the Fountain of Learning is directed, and all the Offices of the Province engrossed by one Sect, God only knows, and yours it is to stand on your Guard.

Equally tremendous will be the Consequences to you, **Gentlemen of the FRENCH, of the MORAVIAN, of the LUTHERAN, and of the ANABAPTIST Congregations**, tho' the Limits of my Paper deny me the Honour of a particular Application to your respective Churches.

Having thus, *My Country-Men*, accosted you as distinct Denominations of Christians, I shall again address you as Men, and reasonable Beings.

Consider, *Gentlemen*, the apparent Iniquity, the monstrous Unreasonableness of the Claim I am opposing. Are we not all Members of the same Community? Have we not an equal Right? Are we not alike to contribute to the Support of the College? Whence then the Pretensions of one in Preference to the Rest? Does not every Persuasion produce Men of Worth and Virtue, conspicuous for Sense, and renown'd for Probity? Why then should one be exalted and the other debased? One prefen'd and the rest rejected? Bating the Lust of domineering, no Sect can pretend any Motive for monopolizing the Whole? Let them produce their Title, and we will submit. Or do they think us so pusillanimous that we dare not resist? What! are we to be choak'd without attempting to struggle for Breath? One would, indeed, imagine the *Business was done*, and that with a Witness. One would fancy he already beheld *Slavery triumphant, and Bigotry*

swaying her enormous, her despotic Sceptre. But you, I trust, will assuage their Malice, and confound their Devices. You, I hope, will consider the least Infraction of your Liberties, as a Prelude to greater Encroachments. Such always was, and such ever will be the Case. Recede, therefore, not an Inch from your indisputable Rights. On the Contrary declare your Thoughts freely, nor loiter a Moment in an Affair of such unspeakable Consequence. You have been told it, - Posterity will feel it. Indolence, Indolence has been the Source of irretrievable Ruin. Langour and Timidity, when the Public is concerned, are the Origin of Evils mighty and innumerable. Why then in the Name of Heaven, should you behold the Infringement, supine and inanimate? Why should you too late deplore your Irresolution, and with fruitless Lamentation bewail your astonishing, your destructive Credulity? No; **defeat the Scheme before it is carried into Execution: Countermine it e'er it proves irreversible. Away with so pestilent a Project: Suffer it no longer to haunt the Province, but stigmatize it with the indelible Brands of the most scandalous Infamy.** Alas, when shall we see the glorious Flame of PATRIOTISM lighted up, and blazing out with inextinguishable Lustre? When shall we have *One Interest*, and that Interest be the *common Good*?

To assert your Rights, doth your Resolution fail you? To resist the Domination of one Sect over the Rest, are you destitute of Courage? Tamely will you submit, and yield without a Contest? Come then, and by Imagination's Aid, penetrate into Futurity. Behold your Offspring train'd in Superstition, and bred to holy Bondage. Behold the Province over-run with Priest-craft, and every Office usurp'd by the ruling Party!

Pause, therefore, and consider. Revolve the Consequences in a dispassionate Mind: Weigh them in the Scale of Reason, in the Balance of cool deliberate Reflection. By the numberless Blessings of LIBERTY, heavenly-born; - by the uncontrollable Dictates of CONSCIENCE, the Vicegerent of GOD; - by the Horrors of PERSECUTION, conceived in Hell, and nurs'd at *Rome*; - and by the awful Name of REASON, the Glory of the human Race; I conjure you to pluck out this Thorn, which is incessantly stinging and goading the Bosom of every Man of Integrity and Candour!

Next to the most patriot KING that ever grac'd a Throne, and the wisest LAWS that ever bless'd a People, **an equal TOLERATION of Conscience, is justly deem'd the Basis of the public Liberty of this Country. And will not this Foundation be undermined? Will it not be threatened with a total Subversion, should one Party obtain the sole Management of the Education of our Youth?** Is it not clear as the Sun in his Meridian Splendor, that this Equality, - this precious and never-to-be-surrender'd Equality, will be destroy'd, and the Scale preponderate in Favour of the Strongest? And are we silent and motionless, to behold the Abolition of those invaluable Bulwarks of our Prosperity and Repose? Is not the Man, - the Man do I call him? Is not the Miscreant, who refuses to repel their Destruction, an Accomplice in the Crime? Does he not agree to sacrifice that which, next to the Protection of our Mother Country, constitutes our Security,

our Happiness, and our Glory? He is beyond Question chargeable with this aggravated Guilt. - **Let us, therefore, strive to have the College founded on an ample, a generous, an universal Plan. Let not the Seat of Literature, the Abode of the Muses, and the Nurse of Science; be transform'd into a Cloister of Bigots, an Habitation of Superstition, a Nursery of ghostly Tyranny, a School of rabbinical Jargon.** The Legislature alone should have the Direction of so important an Establishment. In their Hands it is safer, incomparably safer, than in those of a Party, who will instantly discover a Thirst for Dominion, and lord it over the Rest.

Come on then, *My Country-Men*, and awake out of your Lethargy! Start, O start, from your Trance! By the inconquerable Spirit of the ancient BRITONS; - by the Genius of that CONSTITUTION which abhors every Species of Vassalage; - by the unutterable Miseries of PRIEST-CRAFT, reducing Nations and Empires to Beggary and Bondage; - by the august Title of ENGLISH- MEN, ever impatient of lawless tyrannic Rule; - by the grand Prerogatives of HUMAN NATURE, the lovely Image of the infinite DEITY; - and what is more than all, by that LIBERTY *wherewith CHRIST has set you free*; - I exhort, I beseech, I obtest, I implore you, to expostulate the Case with your Representatives, and testify your Abhorrence of so perilous, so detestable a Plot. In Imitation of the Practice of your Brethren in *England*, when an Affair of Moment is on the Carpet, petition your respective Members to take it into their serious Consideration. Acquaint them with your Sentiments of the Matter, and I doubt not, they will remove the Cause of your Disquiet, by an Interposition necessary to the public Prosperity, and eventual of their own immortal Honour.

The Reflector's Sentiments, relating to the religious Worship of the College, having been objected to under pretence, that no Prayer can be calculated to please all Parties, he intends, in some future Paper, to exhibit a Form, against which no Protestant of the most scrupulous Conscience can except.

Source: Klein, Milton, ed., The Independent Reflector...by William Livingston. (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1963), pp. 207-214.