

C1820, A pr. 13]

Dear Sir

117ontic... Apr. 13. 20

(196)

Your favor of Mar. 27. is received, and my granddaughter Ellen has undertaken to copy the Syllabus, which will therefore be enclosed. it was originally written to Dr. Rush. on his death, fearing that the inquiry of the public might get hold of it, I asked the return of it from the family, which they kindly complied with. at the request of another friend, I had given him a copy. he lent it to his friend to read, who copied it, and in a few months it appeared in the Theological magazine of London. happily that reprinting is scarcely known in this country; and the Syllabus therefore is still a secret, and in your hands I am sure it will continue so.

But while this Syllabus is meant to place the character of Jesus in its true and high light, as his impostor himself but a great Reformer of the Hebrew code of religion, it is not to be understood that I am with him in all his doctrines. I am a Materialist; he takes the side of spiritualism. he preaches the efficacy of repentance towards forgiveness, I require a counterpoise of good works to redeem it &c. &c. it is the innocence of his character, the purity & sublimity of his moral precepts, the eloquence of his inculcations, the beauty of the apologues in which he conveys them, that I so much admire; sometimes indeed needing indulgence to Eastern hyperbolicism. my eulogies too may be founded on a postulate which all may not be ready to grant. among the sayings & discourses imparted to him by his biographers, I find many passages of fine imagination, correct morality, and of the most lovely benevolence: and other again of so much ignorance, so much absurdity, so much untruth, charlatanism, and imposture, as to pronounce it impossible that such contradictions should have proceeded from the same being. I separate therefore the gold from the dross; restore to him the former & leave the latter to Mr. Short

latter to the stupidity of some, and roguery of others of his disciples. of this band of dupes and impostors, Paul was the great Cory-
-thaeus, and first corrupter of the doctrines of Jesus. These pre-
-pable interpolations and falsifications of his doctrines led me to
try to sift them apart. I found the work arduous and easy, and
that his part composed the most beautiful morsel of morality
which has been given to us by man. The Syllabus is therefore
of his doctrines, not all of mine. I read them as I do those of
other ancient and modern moralists, with a mixture of ap-
-probation and dissent.

I rejoice with you, to see an encouraging spirit of internal im-
-provement prevailing in the state. The opinion I have ever expressed of
the advantages of a Western communication through the James river,
I still entertain and that the Cayuga is the most promising of the links
of communication. The history of our University you know
so far. 7 of the 10 pavilions destined for the Professors, and about 30
dormitories will be completed this year, and 3 others, with 6 Halls for
~~the~~ boarding, & 70 other dormitories will be completed the next
year, and the whole be in readiness then to receive those who are to
occupy them. but means to bring these into place, and to set the ma-
-chine into motion, must come from the legislature. an opposition
in the mean time has been got up. that of our alma mater Willi-
-am and Mary, is not of much weight. she must descend into
the secondary rank of academies of preparation for the University.
The serious enemies are the priests of the different religious sects,
to whose spells on the human mind it's improvement is ominous
their pulpits are now resounding with denunciations against the
appointment of Dr. Cooper whom they charge as a Monothelit in oppo-

-sition to their tritheism. hostile as these sects are in every other point, to one another, they unite in maintaining their mystical theology against those who believe there is one god only. The Presbyterian clergy are loudest. The most intolerant of all sects, the most tyrannical, and ambitious; ready at the word of the lawgiver, if such a word could be now obtained, to put the torch to the pile, and to rekindle in this virgin hemisphere, the flames in which their oracle Calvin consumed the poor Servetus, because he could not find in his Euclid the proposition which has demonstrated that three are one, and one is three, nor subscribe to that of Calvin that magistrates have a right to exterminate all heretics to Calvinistic creed. They want to reestablish by law that holy inquisition, which they can now only infuse into public opinion. We have most unwisely committed to the hieroglyphs of our particular superstition, the direction of public opinion, that Lord of the Universe. We have given them stated and privileged days to collect and catechise us, opportunities of delivering their oracles to the people in mobs, and of moulding their minds as wax in the hollow of their hands. But, in despite of their fulminations against endeavors to enlighten the general mind, to improve the reason of the people, and encourage them in the use of it, the liberality of this state will support this institution, and give fair play to the cultivation of reason. Can you ever find a more eligible occasion of visiting once more your native country, than that of accompanying our Corcoran, and of seeing with him this beautiful and hopeful institution in ovo?

[Altho' I had laid down as a law to my self, never to write, talk, or even think of politics, to know nothing of public affairs & therefore

had ceased to read newspapers. yet the Missouri question aroused
and filled me with alarm. the old schism of federal & republican, threat-
-ened nothing because it existed in every state, and united them together
by the fraternism of party. but the coincidence of a marked principle, moral &
^{political} with a geographical line, once conceived, I feared would never more be
obliterated from the mind; that it would be recurring on every occa-
-sion & renewing invitations until it would kindle such mutual & mortal
hatred, as to render separation preferable to eternal discord. I have been
among the most sanguine in believing that our Union would be of long
duration. I now doubt it much, and see the event at no great distance,
and the direct consequence of this question: not by the line which has been
so confidently counted on. the laws of nature controul this, but by the Potomak
Ohio, and Missouri, or more probably the Mississippi upwards to our Northern
boundary. my only comfort & confidence is that I shall not live to see this:
and I envy not the present generation the glory of throwing away the fruits
of their fathers sacrifices of life & fortune, and of rendering desperate the
experiment which was to decide, ^{ultimately} whether man is capable of self government?
this treason against human hope will signalize their epoch in future history,
as the counterpart of the medal of their predecessors.

you kindly enquire after my health. there is nothing in it im-
-mediately threatening, but swelled legs, which are kept down mechanical-
-ly by bandages from the toe to the knee. these I have worn for 6 months
but the tendency to turpidity may proceed from debility alone. I can walk the
round of my garden; not more. but I ride 6. or 8. miles a day without fatigue.
I shall set out to Poplar Forest within 3. or 4. days; a journey from which my physician
augurs much good. I salute you with constant and affectionate friendship
and respect.

Th. Jefferson