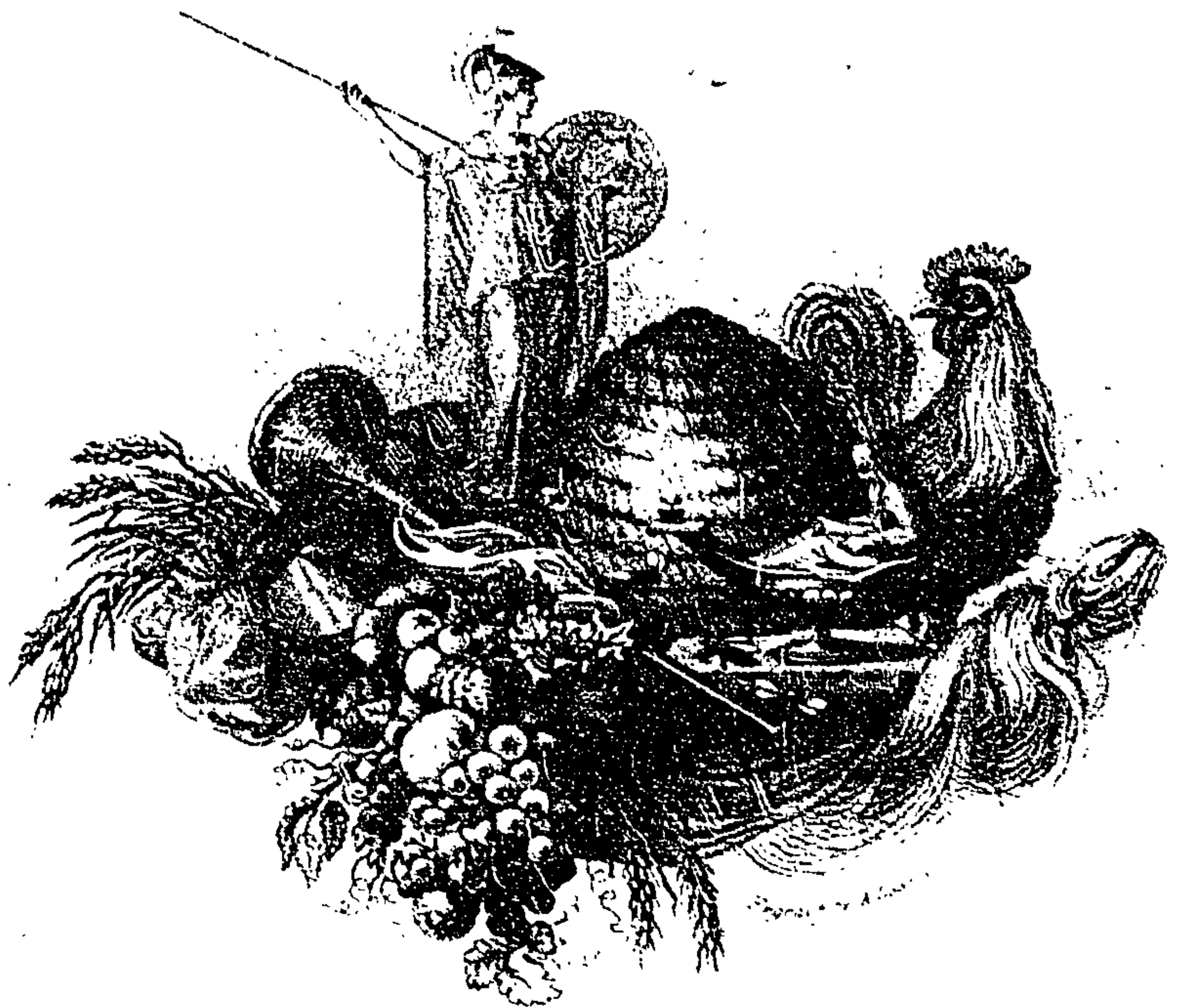


THE  
WORKS  
OF  
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.

VOLUME VI.



PHILADELPHIA:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY WILLIAM DUANE.

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1809.

Pay: J. H. Ballou  
Woodstock

THE  
**WORKS**  
OF  
DR. BENJAMIN FRANKLIN,  
IN  
*PHILOSOPHY, POLITICS, AND MORALS:*  
CONTAINING HIS  
DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENCE,  
AS MINISTER OF THE UNITED STATES,  
AT THE COURT OF VERSAILLES;  
HIS  
PRIVATE EPISTOLARY CORRESPONDENCE,  
MISCELLANEOUS, LITERARY, AND PHILOSOPHICAL SUBJECTS,  
BETWEEN THE YEARS 1753 AND 1790,  
DEVELOPING  
*THE SECRET HISTORY*  
OF HIS POLITICAL TRANSACTIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS.

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PUBLISHED FROM THE ORIGINALS, BY HIS GRANDSON,

WM. TEMPLE FRANKLIN.

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VOL. VI.

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PHILADELPHIA: PUBLISHED BY WILLIAM DUANE.

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1817.

# ADVERTISEMENT

BY THE PUBLISHER IN PHILADELPHIA.

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*THE Works of Dr. Franklin were put to press in London contemporaneously with the printing of the present volume. Many original letters however were in the hands of the Philadelphia publisher, and in the hands of other private individuals and literary societies in the United States, some of which, not possessed by Mr. W. T. Franklin, are inserted in the present volume; but so many others have been brought to light, both in the United States and in Europe, as to afford materials equally interesting for another volume. No arrangements however are at present made for their publication, though there probably will be very soon, of which notice will be given.*

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*Answer to the Reverend President Stiles.**Philadelphia, March 9, 1790.*

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

I RECEIVED your kind letter of January 28, and am glad you have at length received the portrait of governor Yale from his family, and deposited it in the college library. He was a great and good man, and had the merit of doing infinite service to your country by his munificence to that institution. The honor you propose doing me, by placing mine in the same room with his, is much too great for my deserts; but you always had a partiality for me, and to that it must be ascribed. I am however too much obliged to Yale College, the first learned society that took notice of me, and adorned me with its honors, to refuse a request that comes from it through so esteemed a friend. But I do not think any one of the portraits you mention as in my possession worthy of the situation and company you propose to place it in. You have an excellent artist lately arrived. If he will undertake to make one for you, I shall cheerfully pay the expense: but he must not delay setting about it, or I may slip through his fingers, for I am now in my 85th year, and very infirm.

I send with this a very learned work as it seems to me, on the ancient Samaritan Coins, lately printed in Spain, and at least curious for the beauty of the impression. Please to accept it for your college library. I have subscribed for the Encyclopedia now printing here, with the intention of presenting it to the college. I shall probably depart before the work is finished, but shall leave directions for its continuance to the end. With this you will receive some of the first numbers.

You desire to know something of my religion. It is the first time I have been questioned upon it. But cannot take your curiosity amiss, and shall endeavor in a few words to gratify it. Here is my creed: I believe in one God, the creator of the universe. That he governs it by his Providence. That he ought to be worshipped. That the most acceptable

service we render to him is doing good to his other children. That the soul of man is immortal, and will be treated with justice in another life respecting its conduct in this. These I take to be the fundamental points in all sound religion, and I regard them as you do in whatever sect I meet with them. As to Jesus of Nazareth, my opinion of whom you particularly desire, I think the system of morals and his religion, as he left them to us, the best the world ever saw or is like to see; but I apprehend, it has received various corrupting changes, and I have, with most of the present dissenters in England, some doubts as to his divinity; though it is a question I do not dogmatize upon, having never studied it, and think it needless to busy myself with it now, when I expect soon an opportunity of knowing the truth with less trouble. I see no harm however in its being believed, if that belief has the good consequence, as probably it has, of making his doctrines more respected and more observed, especially as I do not perceive that the Supreme takes it amiss by distinguishing the believers in his government of the world with any peculiar marks of his displeasure. I shall only add respecting myself, that having experienced the goodness of that being in conducting me prosperously through a long life, I have no doubt of its continuance in the next, though without the smallest conceit of meriting such goodness. My sentiments on this head you will see in the copy of an old letter inclosed,<sup>v</sup> which I wrote in answer to one from an old religionist whom I had relieved in a paralytic case by electricity, and who being afraid I should grow proud upon it, sent me his serious, though rather impertinent caution. I send you also the copy of another letter<sup>z</sup> which will show something of my disposition relating to religion.

With great and sincere esteem and affection, I am, &c.

PS. Had not your college some present of books from the King of France. Please to let me know if you had an expect-

<sup>v</sup> Supposed to be a letter to George Whitfield, dated June 6, 1753, p. 31.

<sup>z</sup> Uncertain: perhaps the following one.

tation given you of more, and the nature of that expectation? I have a reason for the inquiry.

I confide that you will not expose me to criticisms and censures by publishing any part of this communication to you. I have ever let others enjoy their religious sentiments, without reflecting on them for those that appeared to me unsupportable or even absurd. All sects here, and we have a great variety, have experienced my good will in assisting them with subscriptions for the building their new places of worship, and as I have never opposed any of their doctrines, I hope to go out of the world in peace with them all.

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To \* \* \*.

(Without date.)

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE read your manuscript with some attention. By the argument it contains against a particular Providence, though you allow a general Providence, you strike at the foundations of all religion. For without the belief of a Providence that takes cognizance of, guards and guides, and may favor particular persons, there is no motive to worship a Deity, to fear its displeasure, or to pray for its protection. I will not enter into any discussion of your principles, though you seem to desire it. At present I shall only give you my opinion, that though your reasonings are subtle, and may prevail with some readers, you will not succeed so as to change the general sentiments of mankind on that subject, and the consequence of printing this piece will be, a great deal of odium drawn upon yourself, mischief to you, and no benefit to others. He that spits against the wind, spits in his own face. But were you to succeed, do you imagine any good would be done by it? You yourself may find it easy to live a virtuous life without the assistance afforded by religion; you having a clear perception of the advantages of virtue, and the disadvantages of vice, and possessing a strength of resolution sufficient to enable you to resist common temptations. But think how great a portion of mankind consists of weak and ignorant men and women, and of inexperienced inconsi-

derate youth of both sexes, who have need of the motives of religion to restrain them from vice, to support their virtue, and retain them in the practice of it till it becomes *habitual*, which is the great point for its security. And perhaps you are indebted to her originally, that is to your religious education, for the habits of virtue upon which you now justly value yourself. You might easily display your excellent talents of reasoning upon a less hazardous subject, and thereby obtain a rank with our most distinguished authors. For among us it is not necessary as among the Hottentots, that a youth to be raised into the company of men should prove his manhood by beating his mother. I would advise you therefore not to attempt unchaining the tiger, but to burn this piece before it is seen by any other person, whereby you will save yourself a great deal of mortification from the enemies it may raise against you, and perhaps a good deal of regret and repentance. If men are so wicked *with religion*, what would they be if *without it*? I intend this letter itself as a *proof* of my friendship, and therefore add no *professions* to it; but subscribe simply yours,

B. FRANKLIN