

Philadelphia 9. June 1790



After very sincere Congratulations upon Your Excellency's Election to the distinguished Office of Chief Magistrate of the United States, — I beg leave to solicit your Excellency's friendship in a case duple interesting indeed to me; but in which I conceive, if not mistaken, the Honor and Justice of the Union are also concerned.

Your Excellency, I presume, is uninformed of the large Sums of Continental money I loaned to the United States at an early period of the War, and which I continued to add to, while in my power. I made these loans under a firm belief of being repaid, according to the pledged Faith of Congress; but in this expectation I was disappointed — some of my certificates I converted into Specie, at an incredible discount; and purchased the House I now occupy, for the Amount, to the best of my recollection, of £2700 — The great loss I sustained by this Exchange of property, I felt exceedingly. — I doubt not Your Excellency recollects, that I printed an Edition of the Bible, at a time when the scarcity of that valuable book was such, as to claim the Attention of Congress, and excite their solicitude for a Supply; It was done under the inspection of a ^{Honorable} Committee of that Body, though at my sole expence, and the work was highly approved and recommended to the inhabitants of the United States — by the Act of Congress of September 12th 1783. The peace which took place soon after, removed the Obstructions to importation, and so glutted the market with Bibles that I was obliged to sell mine much below prime cost, and in the End, I actually sunk above £3000 by the impression — These two circumstances render my losses exceedingly heavy, and indeed, almost Unsupportable: But, Sir, I flatter myself I may hope for some Compensation, in a small share of Public Favour; especially when it is considered, that the Work was undertaken in a great measure at the instance, and under the Patronage of Congress — Under this impression, together with the perfect conviction of your Excellency's benevolence; and your sympathy with all the virtuous feelings of Human Nature; — I humbly trust that you will be pleased to have me appointed Printer & Stationer to Congress; or in any other way in which I might be of Public Service, in the line of my business. — I had it in Contemplation, to Petition your Excellency for an exclusive right, for a term of Years, to print the Bible within the United States, conceiving that

that my sufferings, in consequence of my former Undertaking would entitle me to a preference: But a faithful execution of this Work would require, in Order to carry it on with propriety and good effect, such large Sums of Money, as I am utterly incapable of commanding; And therefore, however pleasing an employment it would be to me, while I live, I am constrained to relinquish your intentions in this respect, for want of the Means to carry them into effect.

I would respectfully further inform your Excellency, that the House I purchased as before mentioned, is under Mortgage, on account of a foreign debt, for about £1400, the payment of which will become due in about 11 Months, and unless I should be so happy as to obtain some steady employment, to improve a valuable Stock in my printing Office, I much fear the House must be sold under every possible disadvantage; by which I should be reduced, with a large family, in my old age, after having earned by the industry of many years a hardy little property. It is not my desire to become rich — a moderate Subsistence, in the way of labouring for it, is all I covet.

I now take the liberty of praying Your Excellency's countenance and support — Although my Feelings might dictate Arguments in my favour, I suppress them; in a perfect confidence that they are rendered unnecessary, by Your Excellency's known Benevolence & love of Justice (under the Supreme Being) I intirely rest my plea!

Happy to hear of Your Excellency's recovery from your late indisposition, and humbly requesting you to forgive the freedom I have used, I beg leave to subscribe myself

With all Duty and Respect
Sir,

Your Excellency's Most Obedient

Humble Servant

Robt. Aitken

N.B. Suffice me to mention, The Rev. Dr. Mason, & Dr. Rogers of N. York, who have known me for many years — likewise the Hon. Robert Morris, Mr. Bondinot, Mr. Gerry & some others, are perfectly acquainted with my Character.

His Excellency President of the United States
of America.

From
Mr. Robert Aitkin
June 9th 1790



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