

THE
CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE.

JUNE, 1830.

Religious Communications.

A LETTER FROM THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY to the Churches under their care, on the subject of the Monthly Concert.

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, to the People under their care—"Grace to you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Christian Brethren,—In attending, during our present sessions, to the reports from the several Presbyteries in our connexion, on the state of religion within their bounds respectively, we have been deeply grieved to find that the Monthly Concert for prayer has not been regarded, in a manner corresponding with its unspeakable importance. In some Presbyteries and congregations, indeed, it appears that the appointed season has been better observed than in others: but in almost all, the observance, we fear, has been defective, and in many, no room is left to doubt that the neglect has been great and lamentable. We therefore feel it to be our indispensable duty, to call your serious attention to this subject; and to endeavour to speak to you upon it, with the plainness, the fidelity, and the tenderness, becoming those to whom has been committed the care of souls, and who are under an awful responsibility for the faithful discharge of their sacred trust.

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As it is our earnest desire that our views may in no respect be misapprehended, we would first of all observe, that we are very far from wishing to place the day, or evening, assigned for the monthly concert, on the same footing with the holy sabbath. None but God, who gave us all our time, has a right to hallow any portion of it; and he has hallowed no more than one day in seven. This you know is the doctrine of our church, and it is a doctrine which we wish not to contravene, but to maintain and teach. There certainly may be occasions, when the most fervent Christian may not only find it his duty to be absent from the monthly concert, but to employ the time of its continuance in such secular business as would be utterly improper, during any of the sacred hours of the sabbath. But on the other hand, consider, brethren, that the word of God does plainly teach, that we should, as occasion requires, set apart a portion of secular time for special prayer, and for fasting too, when the aspect of God's providence plainly calls us to these duties. Recollect also, that from the nature of the case, it is not possible there should be an extended union for special prayer, without a publick agreement or understanding, as to the time when individuals shall come together for the purpose. Now, we regard the

way on the *unity* of the church. They speak for themselves. It is perfectly plain, that the visible church is united in the manner he states; and it is also equally plain, that it is not amalgamated into one denomination: thus, in one sense Christians are united, and in another, they are not united.

Injustice is done to Dr. Janeway by the Reviewer, when he says, p. 101, "he does not think it comports with the zealous promotion of that prosperity (of his own church), to afford the least countenance to *one* at least of our distinctive principles." After giving his views on the question of amalgamation, he proceeds in his sermon to give utterance to his charitable feelings: "In the mean time," &c. p. 13. Does this look like a refusal to afford to his Episcopal brethren the *least countenance*? *He does not repel them, but they repel him; at least those Episcopalians, who consign him and all Christians throughout the whole world, who do not bow to prelatical Episcopacy, to the UNCOVENANTED MERCIES OF GOD, and maintain that there can be NO COMMUNION WITH THE ADORABLE HEAD OF THE CHURCH, BUT THROUGH A DIOCESAN BISHOP.*

JEFFERSON'S PAPERS.

(Concluded from page 251.)

Among Mr. J.'s Anas, (Vol. iv. p. 512,) the following article appears:

"Doctor Rush tells me that he had it from Asa Green, that when the clergy addressed General Washington on his departure from the Government, it was observed in their consultation, that he had never, on any occasion, said a word to the publick which showed a belief in the Christian religion, and they thought they should so pen their address as to force him at length to declare publickly, whether he was a Christian or not. They did so. How-

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ever, he observed, the old fox was too cunning for them. He answered every article of their address particularly except that, which he passed over without notice. Rush observes, he never did say a word on the subject in any of his publick papers, except in his valedictory letter to the Governors of the States when he resigned his commission in the army, wherein he speaks of 'the benign influence of the Christian religion.'

"I know that Gouverneur Morris, who pretended to be in his secrets, and believed himself to be so, has often told me that General Washington believed no more of that system than he himself did."

As nearly the whole of this extraordinary article refers to an address made by the clergy to General Washington "on his departure from the government," and his reply to that address, we shall lay both these papers before our readers—The first we extract from the publications of the day; the original of the second, bearing the autograph signature of General Washington, is now before us.

To George Washington, President of the United States.

Sir,—On this day, which becomes important in the annals of America, as marking the close of a splendid publick life, devoted for near half a century to the service of your country, we, the undersigned clergy of different denominations residing in and near the city of Philadelphia, beg leave to join the voice of our fellow citizens, in expressing a deep sense of your publick services, in every department of trust and authority committed to you. But in our special character as ministers of the gospel of Christ, we are more immediately bound to acknowledge the countenance which you have uniformly given to his holy religion.

In your publick character, we have uniformly beheld the edifying example of a civil ruler always acknowledging the superintendance of divine Providence in the affairs of men; and confirming that example by the powerful recommendation of religion and morality, as the firmest basis of social happiness;—more especially in the following language of your affectionate parting address to your fellow

citizens—"Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labour to subvert these great pillars of social happiness—the surest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the religious man, ought to respect and cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connexions with private and publick felicity. Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Reason and experience forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principles." Should the importance of these just and pious sentiments be duly appreciated and regarded, we confidently trust that the prayers you have offered for the prosperity of our common country will be answered. In these prayers we most fervently unite; and with equal fervour we join in those which the numerous publick bodies that represent the citizens of these states are offering for their beloved chief. We most devoutly implore the divine blessing to attend you in your retirement, to make it in all respects comfortable to you, to satisfy you with length of days; and finally to receive you into happiness and glory infinitely greater than this world can bestow.

WM. WHITE,	JOHN ANDREWS,
ASHBEL GREEN,	J. F. SCHMIDT,
WM. SMITH,	ROBERT BLACKWELL,
JOHN EWING,	WM. ROGERS,
SAMUEL JONES,	THOMAS USTICK,
WM. HENDEL,	ANDREW HUNTER,
SAMUEL MAGAW,	JOHN DICKINS,
HENRY HELMUTH,	J. JONES,
SAMUEL BLAIR,	JOSEPH TURNER,
NICOLAS COLLIN,	EZEKIEL COOPER,
ROBERT ANNAN,	MORGAN J. RHEES,
WM. MARSHALL,	JAS. ABERCROMBIE,
JOHN MEDER,	

Philadelphia, March 3d, 1797.

To the Clergy of different denominations residing in and near the city of Philadelphia.

Gentlemen,—Not to acknowledge with gratitude and sensibility the affectionate addresses and benevolent wishes of my fellow citizens, on my retiring from publick life, would prove that I have been unworthy of the confidence which they have been pleased to repose in me.

And among those publick testimonies of attachment and approbation, none can be more grateful than that of so respectable a body as yours.

Believing, as I do, that *Religion and Morality are the essential pillars of civil society*; I view, with unspeakable plea-

sure, that harmony and brotherly love which characterize the Clergy of different denominations, as well in this, as in other parts of the United States; exhibiting to the world a new and interesting spectacle, at once the pride of our country and the surest basis of universal harmony.

That your labours for the good of mankind may be crowned with success; that your temporal enjoyments may be commensurate with your merits; and that the future reward of good and faithful servants may be yours, I shall not cease to supplicate the Divine Author of life and felicity.

Geo. WASHINGTON.

No one surely, on reading the preceding papers, will discover in them any evidence of the correctness of Mr. J.'s statement. If the clergy, in their consultation, had said what Mr. J., on the alleged report of Dr. Rush, makes them say, they must have been very ignorant, or very regardless of the truth. In General Washington's "valedictory letter to the governors of the states, when he resigned his commission in the army," we find—and we know that at least one of the clergy had then found—the two following passages—"The free cultivation of letters, the unbounded extension of commerce, the progressive refinement of manners, the growing liberality of sentiment, *and, above all, the pure and benign light of revelation*, have had a meliorating influence on mankind, and increased the blessings of society."—Again, in closing the letter, the General thus recognises the necessity of *divine influence*, in a fervent petition to Almighty God—"That He would most graciously be pleased to dispose us all to do justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that charity, humility, and pacifick temper of mind, which were the characteristics of the *Divine Author of our blessed religion*; without an humble imitation of whose example in these things, we can never hope to be a happy nation." Here we find "the benign light of REVELATION," not only expressly mentioned, but represented

as having a meliorating influence on mankind, greater than all that is derived from the cultivation of letters, the extension of commerce, the refinement of manners, and the growing liberality of sentiment. This is a most important truth in itself; and it is truth which shows that General Washington's creed and system of action, in relation to morals and religion, were the very antipodes to those of all such men as Mr. J. and Gouverneur Morris. Yet Washington, forsooth, is to be identified with them—with them who disbelieved and reviled revelation, and most impiously imputed to it an influence in the highest degree malignant. The General, too, speaks explicitly of the "Divine Author of our blessed religion," and of "an humble imitation of his example," and of God's "disposing us to do justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that charity, humility, and pacifick temper of mind," which characterized the Saviour. Where, we ask, among all the writings of the whole tribe of infidels shall we find any thing like this—unless, perhaps, in penning something intended to serve a momentary political purpose, and then to be sneered at afterwards; like Mr. J.'s proclamation for a fast in Virginia, at the commencement of our revolutionary war, to which we have already called the attention of our readers. Gen. Washington was no hypocrite—By no one trait of character was he more distinguished than by his love of truth, and an undisguised and inflexible adherence to its dictates. He never would have spoken of divine revelation, and of our blessed Saviour, as he did, if he had not sincerely believed in the truth of the one, and the divinity of the other.

It so happens that we can speak from personal knowledge of the foregoing address to President Washington, and of his answer; and can also probably state the circumstance out of which Mr. J.'s *Ana*

article, now under consideration, has been manufactured. It was a trifling error, in comparison with many that Mr. J. has shown us that he could commit, if he used the misnomer of Asa Green for the name of the present editor of the *Christian Advocate*. Be that as it might, the editor's name is the second which appears in the list of those who subscribed and presented the address—the brief history of which we are able to give, not merely from memory, but by the help of a diary kept at that time, and continued to the present. On the 1st of March, 1797, three days before General Washington left the presidential chair—alas! we fear we shall never look on his fellow again—the clergy of different denominations in the city and vicinity of Philadelphia, held a meeting for the purpose of addressing him on that interesting occasion. In this they did no more than was done by associations of citizens of almost every description—Not to have done it, would have been considered at that time as a censurable omission; yet the doing of it was, we are confident, a pleasant duty to every individual concerned. At the first meeting a committee, consisting of the first three individuals whose names are exhibited in the list, was appointed to draught an address; and the address itself was penned by the hand which now writes. Whether any alteration was made in the first draught, by the other members of the committee, is not distinctly recollected, but it is believed that there was none; or none that in any degree changed its bearing. On the 2d of March the committee waited on the President and furnished him with a copy, to enable him to prepare his answer. On the 3d, the day before he ceased to be President of the United States, the clergy went in a body and presented their address in form, and received the answer which is before the reader. In the "consultations of the clergy" on this occasion, it is

our belief that not a single syllable was uttered importing that the President had "never on any occasion said a word to the publick which showed a belief in the Christian religion." Any such allegation, as we have shown above, would have been palpably false, if it had been made; and by the writer, as already intimated, it was known then, as well as now, that on leaving the command of the army, the General had used the language which we have quoted from his letter to the governors of the several states. We have, with a view to what we now write, conversed with the venerable Bishop White, whose name is the first on the list, and who was one of the committee, and he has assured us, that he has no trace of recollection that any thing was said in the two meetings of the clergy, relative to the neglect of the President to declare his belief on the subject of divine revelation: And the address shows, beyond controversy, that nothing was said "to force him at length to declare publicly, whether he was a Christian or not."

It is however true, the foregoing statement notwithstanding, that although President Washington had, in numerous publick acts, recognised, in the most pointed and impressive manner, the government and providence of God, and in his farewell address, a part of which was quoted by the clergy, had spoken of the influence and importance of religion, in such a manner as neither Mr. J. nor any other infidel ever *seriously* spoke, yet he had not during his administration used such explicit language in regard to divine revelation, as he used when he resigned the command of the army. It is also true, that in penning the address, it was in the mind of the writer, (he knows not that it was in any other mind,) that a full and fair opportunity should be given him to speak, on leaving the chair

of state, as he had spoken on quitting his military command, and that the address was framed with some reference to this object. It is in like manner true, that General Washington did not see proper to do what the writer of the address hoped he would do; that the writer, also, regretted this omission, and regrets it still; and that in conversation with his friends he has occasionally mentioned the facts which he now states. He has not, indeed, the slightest recollection of having ever named them to Dr. Rush; but as he had the honour of an intimate acquaintance with that gentleman, he does not question that he repeated the facts to him; and that the Doctor mentioned them in some conversation had with Mr. J.; and that the facts, after being treated *philosophically* by Mr. J. produced this *article*, which, like certain chemical compounds, differs essentially in its inherent qualities from the original ingredients. The writer of the address most assuredly never did think, or say, that General Washington was an infidel; but he has said, and he says now, that it would have given him much gratification, if that great man had thought proper, during his presidency, or at its close, to speak out *again*, as he had once spoken before—spoken in such a manner as not to permit the enemies of revealed truth to use even his silence, for the vile purposes for which they now endeavour to employ it. What were the considerations which induced him to be reserved on this subject we know not. The greater part of his administration was passed during the period of the French revolution; of any hostility, or any friendship to which, after it had reached to a certain point, General Washington most sedulously endeavoured to keep both himself and his country from every appearance; and the hostility of that revolution to every thing professedly Christian,

is known to have been open and virulent. The General was a regular attendant on the publick worship of God; he showed the utmost respect to all the Christian institutions of his country; he recognised all the great principles of natural religion, repeatedly, publickly, and emphatically; he called the whole nation, by a publick proclamation, to solemn acts of devotion; he inculcated, in opposition to the false philosophy of the day, the impossibility of preserving pure morals without the aid of religion; he had once publickly and explicitly avowed his belief in divine revelation; he had constantly acted as infidels never act; and even in his answer to the clergy, he wrote as neither Mr. J., nor any of his unbelieving fraternity would have written. Perhaps he thought that this was going as far as the proprieties of his station, in the peculiar circumstances in which he was placed, required or permitted him to go. Nor are we unapprized that there are men, of whose belief of Christianity no doubt exists, who think that President Washington acted, in the matter here contemplated, exactly right; and that it must be attributed to our clerical views and feelings that we should wish him to have gone farther. Be it so—We do wish he had gone farther; we give it as our decided opinion, that every Christian man, whatever be his station or his circumstances, ought so frequently and explicitly to recognise his Christian faith and character, as not to leave to the enemies of his Saviour, any plausible opening for their false surmises and suggestions. But because we so think and speak, are we to be represented as saying, or insinuating, that every man, or any man, who thinks otherwise—and above all, that President Washington, because he differed from us in this opinion, must be set down as an unbeliever in divine revelation? The absurdity and injustice of such a representation is too

monstrous to need further exposure.

We think we ought not to close our review of these volumes, without a distinct notice of the great solicitude manifested by Mr. J. to keep his opinions and feelings on the subject of religion from the publick, while he lived; and yet that he should take effectual measures, that those opinions and feelings should be known and have their influence, after his death. It is clear that he dreaded to meet the consequences of a publick avowal of his sentiments, on this side the grave; and yet that he possessed such an inveterate hatred to revealed truth, that he could not be content to leave it unassailed, when he should be secure from the just resentment of its friends. This was, in our estimation, a combination of cowardice and malignity; and it has strongly reminded us of the caustick remarks uttered by Dr. Johnson, when Lord Bolingbroke's posthumous works made their appearance, by exactly the same course of procedure. We shall not repeat the remarks; they may be seen in Boswell's Life of Johnson. But as Mr. J.'s ruling passion was manifestly the desire of reputation and the love of fame, why did he not recollect that these might be lost after his decease, as well as before it? Or did he expect that the speedy and universal prevalence of Unitarianism, which he predicted, would save him from reproach? Whatever were his calculations, he has left a monument of his blasphemous impiety, which we are satisfied will cause his memory to be held in abhorrence by every American Christian, to the end of time. The love of their Saviour by all his genuine disciples is supreme—it can have no rival. The Christian can neither resign it, nor modify it, from a regard to a political party or a patriotick favourite: and after the publication of these papers, the Christians of our land (comprising, be-

yond a question, a majority of its talent and influence) will never hear the name of Jefferson, without such an association of it with his hatred of Christianity, as will sink him immeasurably in their estimation. In the close of a letter to Mr. Madison (vol. iv. p. 426) he says—"To myself you have been a pillar of support through life. Take care of me when dead." We verily think Mr. J. has left a hard and impracticable task to his friend. Not all the talents of Mr. Madison, great as we admit them to be; nor all the learning and eloquence of Unitarians, imposing as they certainly are; nor all the lauding and birth day celebrations of party politicians, however eminent in station, will be able to form "a pillar of support," which will durably sustain the reputation of the reviler of Christ and his cause—"The memory of the just is blessed; but the name of the wicked shall rot."

In the first part of our review, we expressed the opinion that the reputation of Mr. J. would have been consulted, by the suppression of more than a fourth part of this publication. We have since had opportunity more carefully to inspect and consider the work in its general spirit and tendency, and to hear the opinions relative to it of a number of Mr. J.'s decided political friends. That opinion is—and it coincides with our own—that more than one half of these papers ought to have been destroyed by his grandson, out of regard to the memory of his progenitor; even on the supposition that he had received from that progenitor a *command* to publish the whole. We are not bound to do an irreparable injury to the *character*, any more than to the person, or property, of those we love, because they command it. Real affection, in every such case, is best demonstrated by a firm refusal. One gentleman, of no inferior station or erudition, while he avowed to us his attachment to the political party of

Mr. J., gave it as his unequivocal opinion, that not more than one volume of these papers ought ever to have seen the light—in place of the four, which his legatee has published. Besides all that is offensive on the topics of religion and morals, there is such a manifestation of irritable feeling against his political rivals and opponents, leading him to misrepresentations of character and motives, and the notice and magnifying of trifling incidents, as is altogether unworthy of a philosopher and statesman—unworthy indeed of any man of conscious integrity, and of a firm and liberal mind. But the book as it is, we know is calculated to favour the infidel efforts and combinations of the day against the institutions, plans and operations of the friends of true religion; and we fear that the publisher had no reluctance that such should be its effect, especially as this circumstance would ensure for it a more immediate and extensive sale. It only remains, therefore, that so far as christian influence prevails, the book should be excluded from every library both public and private. It contains a mass of moral pestilence, which, if it has come unknowingly and unexpectedly, as we doubt not it often has, into the hands of Christians, they ought, without regard to pecuniary loss, to consign to the flames; and not leave it to poison fatally the minds of their children, or other unsuspecting and unguarded youth. If no Christian would, for the universe, take the responsibility of being the author of such a work, surely no one can be innocent who gives it circulation—nay, who does not use all lawful and practicable means to prevent the inconceivable injury which it is calculated to produce—to produce both to the temporal and eternal interests of every reader whose mind is not previously established in the love of sound principles, and the belief of revealed truth.