

## MARYLAND GAZETTE

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## TO THE PRINTERS.

The re-publication of a piece printed in your Gazette, No. 1658, under the signature of MEANWELL, appears proper at this time, and will be acceptable to many of your readers.

## A CORRESPONDENT.

## To the PEOPLE of MARYLAND.

It is our indispensable duty as Christians, to render such acts of worship and obedience to God, through Jesus Christ, as he hath instituted in his holy Gospel, as suitable to his excellency and our dependence upon him. Christianity is nothing more than the doctrine of the mediation of Jesus Christ, together with its appendant duties. As God is a spirit, to be worshipped in spirit and in truth, and religion consists not in external rites and ceremonies, but an inward purity and integrity of heart; and the religion we profess, and the precepts of our blessed Lord and Saviour, tend to purify our hearts, to teach us to conquer our passions, and to make us better men, better neighbours, and better citizens, it is also our incumbent duty to cultivate, promote and encourage the knowledge and practice of our holy religion. To enforce men to the performance of their duty, the great Author of Nature has promised eternal happiness as the reward for the practice of virtue, and denounced everlasting torments on the impenitent sinner: the immortality of the soul, and the hope of happiness in a future state, must yield the most pleasing comfort to the mind of man, in this world of vanity and trouble: it adds to our pleasures, and is the only solid support under the unavoidable misfortunes of life. As little appearance of religion as there is in the world, yet its influence is felt in its affairs: no one can root out its principles, but, like nature, they will return again, and give checks to the commission of wicked actions; the thoughts of a just God, and the terror of an after-reckoning, will sometimes intrude themselves, and make the most hardened and determined villain tremble, and desist from his purpose. Even the worst of men are under some restraints from the principles of religion, and the wisest and best of men, in all ages of the world, have been those who lived up to the religion of their country, it not opposite to the rules of morality. What system of religion so effectually contributes to induce men to the practice of virtue and morality as the religion of Christ?—The wise and virtuous Cicero was of opinion, that Rome owed more of its grandeur to religion, than either to strength or stratagem. Sacred history concurs with prophane to prove the effect which religion has upon kingdoms and states; that without it they are but soapy bubbles, quickly dissolved, or ropes of sand, without any thing to cement or unite them. Religion is the strongest cement of society, and where there is no religion there is no confidence or trust. A wicked people can neither be grateful to their God, nor faithful to their country: they cannot be grateful to their God, because they live not under a sense of his mercies; they cannot be faithful to their country, because they disengage Providence from taking its part. If the observation be just, that every sin is a treason against the soul, then every wicked man is a traitor to his country. A good man will ever be found to be the best patriot, and the best subject; and it is indubitably true, that a bad man, whatever religion he may profess, can never be a good subject. I shall conclude these observations with a quotation from the celebrated Commentaries on the Laws of England. "The preservation of Christianity, as a national religion, is, abstracted from its own intrinsic truth, of the utmost consequence to the civil state; which a single instance will sufficiently demonstrate. The belief of a future state of rewards and punishments, the entertaining just ideas of the moral attributes of the Supreme Being, and a firm persuasion, that he superintends and will finally compensate every action in human life (all which are clearly revealed in the doctrines, and forcibly inculcated by the precepts of our Saviour Christ) are the grand foundation of all judicial catharses, which call God to witness the truth of those facts, which perhaps may be only known to him and the party asserting: all moral evidence, therefore, all confidence in human veracity, must be weakened by irreligion; and overthrown by infidelity." For, as the great Mr. Addison expresses himself, "I do not know how to trust a man, who believes neither heaven nor hell, or, in other words, a future state of rewards and punishments."

A. Black. 43.

"As it is our interest and duty, then, to endeavour to learn a knowledge of our God and Saviour, in which stands our eternal life, it remains to be considered in what manner this knowledge can be best acquired; whether by leaving the ministers of the Gospel to the precarious support of voluntary contribution, or by establishing, by law, a decent and liberal provision for their support and maintenance.

"Few Christians will deny the benefit, nay the necessity, of having spiritual guides and teachers, to lead us, as well by the example of their lives and conversation, as by their preaching and expounding the holy Scriptures, into the way of everlasting happiness. I will not suppose that any Christian will deny the order and hierarchy of the church of God, under the Old and New Testament, such as a regular succession in the Christian priesthood, and consequently the preaching of the Gospel, and the administering the holy sacraments.

"Common observation proves, that to obtain a competent knowledge in any trade, art, science, or profession, study and practice are required: no man will ask a question of law of a physician, or trust his health to the advice of a lawyer: the most ignorant would not ask a smith to build him a house, or a carpenter to make him an ax. If learning increases knowledge, and study and contemplation yields wisdom, then, in every business and profession, the skillful and learned are to be preferred to the ignorant and illiterate. If the great business of our lives is to learn our duty to our Maker, and our avocations in life, and our want of education will not permit many of us either the time or the means of knowing the holy Scriptures, to whom can we so properly apply for instruction, as to gentlemen who have dedicated themselves to the service of their God, who are enabled, from their knowledge of the original and learned languages, and their acquaintance with their idioms, properties, and phrases, to solve the difficulties which often occur in holy writ? Can a teacher improve his hearers without learning? or can he convey unto them that knowledge of which he himself is not possessed? Can a man, ignorant and illiterate in every other kind of knowledge, be supposed to be wise and learned in the explication of the Scriptures? Can a man preach sound doctrine without ever having studied divinity, or without any education or study at all? Can a man write or speak with any elegance or propriety, without the least knowledge of grammar, rhetoric, or logic? And shall we trust our precious and immortal souls to a man, whose ignorance renders him improper to be entrusted with any of our temporal concerns?

"I do not admit the claim of the methodists, and other enthusiasts to the *call of the spirit*; I believe not in their boasted impulse and intercourse with the Spirit of God, and am inclined to think the operations of the spirit, which they pretend to, are merely visionary and chimerical. I believe in the inspiration of the apostles, and can readily perceive from thence a strong evidence of their mission, and of the truth of the doctrine they preached; nay, without the immediate and divine assistance (several of them being very illiterate) they could never have taught and explained the precepts of their master. Those holy persons were, agreeable to the promise of our Saviour, not only endowed with the gift of all languages, but were enabled to work miracles in confirmation of the doctrine they preached. Their modern visionaries pretend not to the power of working miracles, in that they might be detected and exposed; but in their claim to the spirit of truth, they escape all conviction, because, when called on for their proofs, they can only allege, that they feel it in their souls; which no one can deny, though few will believe. Many of these wild enthusiasts, itinerant preachers, are certainly called and moved, and actuated, by some other spirit than that of God, because the doctrines they preach, and deliver as the only means of salvation, are directly contrary to the word of God, and not only supremely stupid, but approach to blasphemy.

"All Christians must agree, that we ought to serve and worship our God, and can only expect his mercy and protection through our blessed Saviour, though they differ as to the mode or manner, owing in great measure to the prejudice of education, the influence of their parents, tutors, or spiritual guides, or the different degrees of their intellectual faculties.

"From an opinion that the public worship of God will tend to excite a spirit of religion and devotion among our people, and that the reading of the Bible, in our places of public worship, will greatly tend to inform the ignorant and unlearned

in their duty to their Maker, their neighbours, and their country, and satisfied that able, learned, and virtuous ministers of the Gospel are necessary to exhort men to their duty, to explain the Scriptures, and to confute the adversaries of truth, I now venture to address you, to entreat you seriously to consider, whether it is not your duty to make an offering of part of your property for the maintenance of the Christian clergy of all denominations, and that your gift should be permanent, liberal and generous.

"If the salaries to the clergy be not permanent and liberal, we can never expect to have a succession of men in holy orders endued with a competent degree of learning and knowledge, and without such qualification they can be of no service to us, neither can they promote the cause of virtue and the religion of Christ. Few men will put themselves to the expence of giving a liberal and learned education to their children, and direct their studies for the pulpit, unless a provision be settled by law, adequate to their maintenance, their station in life, and the dignity of their office. It seems to me not reasonable, that those who embrace a profession the most honourable and sacred, and which prevents their pursuing any profitable art, science, or labour, should be maintained by those for whose good they thus abstract themselves from the world, and deprive themselves of the means of acquiring riches. Without fixed and stated salaries, we can never expect a learned and regular clergy. While lips shall preserve knowledge, and at whose mouths we shall seek the law."

"From the above observations I shall presume to infer, that our duty to our religion, as Christians, and the soundest policy, as statesmen, demand that our legislature should protect, cherish and support the Christian religion, and that the best human means in our power will be to establish permanent and liberal salaries on its teachers and ministers. I cannot omit to mention, that the universal usage and custom over Christendom, proves the sentiments of the best and wisest men in all ages, to accord in the propriety and necessity of supporting the ministers of the Gospel."

"To what has been urged, permit me to offer an authority, which ought to be conclusive with all Christians, I mean the pure word of God, and the unerring oracles of truth. Search the holy Records and there you will find that, under the Mosaic institution, the priests, who were anointed and consecrated to the service of God, and appointed to teach his statutes, were by his express command entitled, for their subsistence and support, to a part of the five sacrifices or offerings, prescribed to the people of Israel. The ambassadors of Christ perform the same offices to Christians, except the ceremonial of the law, as the Jewish priests to the people of that nation; by parity of reason, then, they are equally entitled to a maintenance from their hearers. In the holy Gospel you will find, that our blessed Lord and Saviour, when he sent his apostles to preach his doctrine, declared, that "The workman was worthy of his meat;" and you may read, that the apostle Paul, having directed the Christians of Corinth and those parts to contribute to the relief of the churches of Jerusalem and Judea, who were in great want, by reason of a dearth and persecution, declared, that they were *debtors*, and that it was their duty also to minister unto them in carnal things, because they were made partakers of their spiritual things; i. e. that they were in duty bound, by the great benefit received from the preaching of the Gospel, to recompence them in some sort, by supplying them with needful sustenance for the body. And the same apostle thus expresses himself, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth, in all good things;" and is very explicit in his Epistle to the Corinthians on this head: after declaring that he was not obliged to bestow his labour in the Gospel, without a maintenance for himself and family, he enters into an argument to prove the justice of such claim by all the apostles. "Who, says he, goeth a warfare at any time at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? Or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?" And then enquires, whether he has only

Exod. c. 28 and 29. Numb. c. 8, v. 6. Exod. c. 2, v. 3 and 10. c. 6, v. 16, 17, 26, and 29. 7. v. 6 to 10. Numb. c. 18, v. 8 to 14, v. 18 and 24.

Matthew, c. 10, v. 10. Luke, c. 10, v. 7 and 8.

1 Cor. c. 16, v. 1.

Rom. c. 15, v. 27.

Gal. c. 6, v. 6.