

*The PRESIDENT'S Reply.*

To the GENERAL COMMITTEE, representing the UNITED BAPTIST CHURCHES, in Virginia.

GENTLEMEN,

I REQUEST that you will accept my best acknowledgments, for your congratulations on my appointment to the first office in the nation. The kind manner in which you mention my past conduct, equally claims the expression of my gratitude.

After we had, by the smiles of Divine Providence on our exertions, obtained the object for which we contended, I retired at the conclusion of the war, with an idea that my country could have no farther occasion for my services, and with the intention of never entering again into public life. But when the exigencies of my country seemed to require me once more to engage in public affairs, an honest conviction of duty superceded my former resolution, and became my apology for deviating from the happy plan which I had adopted;

If I could have entertained the slightest apprehension that the constitution framed in the Convention where I had the honour to preside, might possibly endanger the religious rights of any ecclesiastical society, certainly I would have never placed my signature to it; and if I could now conceive, that the general government might be ever so administered as to render the liberty of conscience insecure, I beg you will be persuaded, that no one would be more zealous than myself, to establish effectual barriers against the horrors of spiritual tyranny, and every species of religious persecution.

For, you doubtless remember, I have often expressed my sentiments, that every man, conducting himself as a good citizen, and being accountable to God alone for his religious opinions, ought to be protected in worshipping the Deity according to the dictates of his own conscience.

While I recollect, with satisfaction that the religious society of which you are members, have been throughout America—uniformly—and—almost—universally the true friends to the liberty, and the persevering promoters of our glorious revolution; I cannot hesitate to believe, that they will be the faithful supporters of a free, yet efficient general government. Under this pleasing expectation, I rejoice to assure them, that they may rely upon my best wishes and endeavours, to advance their prosperity.

In the mean time, be assured, Gentlemen, that I entertain a proper sense of your fervent supplications to God for my temporal and eternal happiness. I am, Gentlemen, your most obedient servant,

G. WASHINGTON.

*The above address to the President was presented by a Committee, delegated from nine of the Baptist Associations in the State of Virginia, which, together with two others not included, represent two hundred and two regular churches, consisting of about 20,000 members.*