

Memoir of Bishop White *by James Taylor*

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA was recently given a small leather-bound volume bearing the inscription "To be given to Richard Thomas as verbally promised by me James Taylor." Examination of the book revealed it to be of more than usual interest, containing as it does "Notices & Anecdotes" respecting a variety of subjects as recorded by an astute and curious observer who had had the advantage of personal acquaintance with most of the subjects of his notices. These include brief memoirs of both Scots and American personalities, many of whom were ecclesiastics, but of a variety of denominations. Among members of the clergy mentioned are the Rev. Benjamin Allen, the Rev. Dr. Stephen B. Balch, the Rev. Dr. Hugh Blair, and the Rev. Colin Campbell. Anecdotes concerning secular persons relate to Samuel Chase, Benjamin Chew, Thomas McKean, and the redoubtable Dr. Samuel Johnson. While often of penetrating insight, frequently of a humorous turn, and occasionally mordant, it is obvious that not all the observations could have been original with Taylor, and it is perhaps not impertinent to suppose that some of the notices were collected as sermon material, as well as for their overt entertainment value.

From some abstracts at the First Unitarian Church, Philadelphia, made from a now unlocated autobiographical sketch by James Taylor, and from Dr. Elizabeth M. Geffen's *Philadelphia Unitarianism* (Philadelphia, 1961), the salient facts of Taylor's life may be obtained. Born in 1767 in Perth, Scotland, Taylor was put to learning the weaving trade in 1782. By the time he removed to his uncle's house in London, in 1785, he was deeply interested in religion. The memorial abstracts mentioned above state "In September, 1791, he went to Bath. . . . While there, he attended Mr. Jardine's chapel called the Presbyterian House, although Mr. Jardine was a decided

Unitarian. Then, Dr. Henry Hunter's Scotch Church, London Wall. In January, 1793, he began to attend regularly Rev. William Jay at Argyle Chapel, but Mr. Jay was too much of a calvinist. Mr. Taylor then commenced a minute examination of the Bible, and, before he left England, he was a Unitarian."

Taylor sailed from London in 1794, accompanying Mr. and Mrs. Nathaniel Thomas, who had only recently been married. In Philadelphia he remained with them as their boarder until 1805. Taylor early became associated in religious matters with Philadelphians who had Unitarian leanings, and when, in May, 1796, "it was proposed to commence Unitarian worship in this city, he was one of its early and active promoters." His associates included Caleb Alder, William Young Birch, Arthur Blayney, John Bradley, Ralph Eddowes, Joseph Gales, George and John Royston, John and Thomas Shute, Robert Slater, Nathaniel Thomas, and James Tucker. Taylor became the first secretary of the Unitarian Society, and remained its faithful member, preacher, and administrator of the sacraments for many years. In 1841, however, Taylor resigned from the church because of the strong abolitionist position taken by the Rev. William Henry Furness. His letter of resignation stated his strong disapproval of "the introduction of any political matter into the pulpit of a Christian Church." From that time until his death in 1844, Taylor did not attend any church.

As early as 1795 he had received a power of attorney to act in the matter of a debt due an English mercantile house. This proved to be the beginning of a successful career as agent for various foreign houses. In this capacity, he acted either on his own responsibility or in partnership with others. In 1811 Taylor married his old friend Mary Thomas, the widow of Nathaniel Thomas with whom he had come to this country. Her four children by her first marriage, the Taylors not having any, apparently won his affections. One of these children was Richard Thomas, to whom the memorandum book was promised.

The following selection from the "Notices . . .", relating to Bishop William White, reflects observations, sometimes homely, occasionally something more, by a man more than usually qualified to make them. The bulk of the memoir was written during the Bishop's lifetime, as Taylor tells us. His account has been reproduced

here as close to its original form as possible, preserving Taylor's peculiar punctuation and capitalization and occasional misspellings.

Historical Society of Pennsylvania

JOHN D. KILBOURNE

BISHOP WHITE

The first Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal church for the State or Diocese of Pennsylvania, &, as I sincerely believe, one of the best men that ever lived. It is not intended in this article to do much more than to embody on paper a few facts & circumstances which have fallen under my own observation respecting him. This will be a pleasing exercise, for while so employed, whatever may be related will redound to his honour; while, by dwelling on a character so truly exemplary, the desire must naturally arise to resemble him. If so, may God succeed the endeavour.

I had not been many days in Philadelphia, when, on making inquiry respecting preachers, Bishop White was named as an ingenious, rational preacher, whose discourses were stored with excellent matter; & altho' delivered in a simple & unpretending manner, were well calculated to inform the minds, & to amend the hearts of his hearers. Altho' his manner is calm, & until of late years his delivery was somewhat rapid, there was sometimes a good deal of unction: particularly in a discourse on the love of praise, from John 12.43. delivered on a sunday morning in Christ Church, say in September 1795.

I could not, with any comfort, frequent the Episcopal church on sunday mornings, the Litany being peculiarly exceptionable; but in the afternoon service there was much less in which a Unitarian could not unite; & therefore, while we had no place of Worship,¹ I was, during several years, in the habit of attending the church where the Bishop was to preach on sunday afternoons: viz. Christ Church & St. Peters alternately—with the intermission of a 3^d Sunday; there being at that time 3 ministers to 2 churches.

Even at this distance of time, I can recollect some of the Bishop's remarks. A few specimens will now be given.

¹ The First Unitarian Church was dedicated Feb. 14, 1813. It stood at the northeast corner of Locust & Tenth Streets.

In a discourse from Ps: 118.26. on the sunday before Christmas, when commenting on the context, & pointing out the literal & original meaning of the Psalm, he thus explained the 22^d verse, "The stone which the builders refused, is become the head-stone of the corner." i.e, said the Bishop, 'the youngest son of an obscure family is seated on the throne of Israel & Judah.'

In a sermon during Lent from Luke 5.35, after remarking that the N.T. contains no precept enjoining fasting as a duty, & therefore that this is a matter left to the discretion of individuals; he thus proceeded: "Were I standing here in the character of your physician, I would say, that at this season of the year, when nature is sparing of her bounties, when some kind of food are less nutritious than at other times, & when the constitution is passing from its winter to its summer state, a greater degree of abstinence is expedient than at any other period, as you will thus be better able to sustain the heat of summer; and this is peculiarly necessary on the part of those, who thro' the bounty of a kind providence, live in the enjoyment of plenty."

At another time, when discoursing on I Cor: 14.15. & assigning reasons in favour of a Liturgy, & of precomposed forms of prayer, after adverting to the inconveniencies of an opposite mode of conducting public worship, in consequence of want of ability, self-possession & fluency, on the part of him who thus leads the public devotions, & which are sometimes distressing & always embarrassing to the auditors; producing barrenness of thought, redundancies repetitions, & sometimes long pauses—the Bishop went on to the following purport: 'Were this all, these would be light matters; but what shall we say of that vulgarity of language, that incoherent rant, that vile cant, that low buffoonery, & that impious familiarity which have too often pervaded Devotional exercises, & which are alike offensive to good taste & rational piety.'

When speaking of modern conversions more than 30 years ago in St. Peter's Church, he said, that such conversion was 'a certain mechanical process, originating in the grosser passions, having no connexion either with the understanding or the heart, & producing no lasting & salutary influence on the temper & life.'

My acquaintance with Bishop White commenced in May, or very early in June 1796: at that time the handful of Unitarians in this city

wished to obtain the use of a room in the University for the purpose of religious services, & I was advised to apply to Bishop White, & to request that he would present & advocate their written application to the Trustees. I did so, & read the letter to him; when he spoke to this effect: "The object in view is laudable, & the application is sufficiently respectful. I will certainly promote your wishes if I am present at the meeting of the Trustees, but of this I cannot be certain, being liable to be called on for professional services; & as this is the case with other Trustees, I would advise you to give the application to Mr. Edward Fox, the secretary, who must attend: in that case it will come before the Trustees as a matter of course, & there will be no disappointment." He then said, "you are explicit & frank in avowing your differing from us, but we ought not to take this amiss: if you are nearer the truth than we are, & can set us right, we ought to feel obliged; but if we hold the truth, & we think we do, we shall keep our ground; for the truth must prevail. You may do us good, but you cannot do us harm." There was no quorum at the hour & place of meeting, but a room was obtained thro the influence of Chief Justice McKean,² the President of the Board of Trustees.

I need not add, that it was highly gratifying to hear such liberal & truly Christian sentiments from the Bishop; but he was uniformly liberal, yet true to his own church.

With Dr. Priestley³ he was on terms of friendly intimacy, for he duly appreciated his talents & virtues, & on the part of the Doctor there was a reciprocity of feeling. He admired the Bishop as a preacher, & after our meetings were suspended, he usually, when in Philadelphia, attended on Sunday afternoons at the church where the Bishop officiated.

On the Sunday after the news of the Doctor's death reached Philadelphia, the Bishop preached from Gal: 5.6. The subject appeared to have been suggested by that event, tho' there was no mention of the

² Thomas McKean (1734-1817), Signer of the Declaration of Independence, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, 1777-1799, Governor of Pennsylvania, 1799-1808.

³ Joseph Priestley (1733-1804), scientist, educator, and theologian, came to America for religious and political reasons in 1794. He settled at Northumberland, Pa., where he remained till the end of his life, frequently visiting Philadelphia. Although chiefly thought of now because of his chemical discoveries, Priestley was the chief early protagonist of Unitarianism in the United States.

Doctor, nor any allusion to him. One thing is certain; the Bishop always speaks of him in terms expressive of respect & esteem.

Many instances might be produced of the benevolent & enlarged character of his mind.

Soon after the first publication of the "Episcopal Recorder,"⁴ an article was inserted therein, the object of which was to recommend, that from those who did not hold certain opinions, the usual courtesies of life were to be withheld. The Bishop told me that he immediately wrote to the Editor,⁵ expressing his disapprobation, & his determination, in case of any similar article again appearing in "the Recorder," not only to withdraw his subscription, but to prohibit the delivery of the paper at his door on any terms. "What," said he, "must I catechise a gentleman, before I ask him to take a cup of tea?"

One day, about 20 years ago, in passing along, he overheard an expression of this kind, "but they are not Christians." As the persons engaged in conversation were personally known, he asked, of whom they had been speaking? "of the Unitarians," was the reply; the Bishop then said, "Not so fast, Gentlemen: suppose they were to take it into their heads to say that we are not Christians, & they have the same right to condemn us that we have to condemn them, what could we do or say, having set the example?"

When our Hymn Book was published in 1813, I waited on the Bishop, & presented him with a copy; remarking that whatever were its faults & defects, I hoped that it did not contain any thing calculated to offend or grieve serious Christians of any persuasion; but, as I might have looked thro' it with too partial eyes, I begged as a favour, that he would narrowly inspect it with a special view to that object, & promised to receive his strictures with thankfulness, in case he discovered any thing reprehensible or improper.

⁴ The *Episcopal Recorder* was founded in Philadelphia in 1823 as the *Philadelphia Recorder*.

⁵ Albert B. Smyth, in *The Philadelphia Magazines and Their Contributors 1741-1850* (Philadelphia, 1892), states (p. 202) that the *Philadelphia Recorder* was founded by the Rev. G. T. Bedell (see footnote 16), and agrees (p. 201) with Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines 1741-1850* (Cambridge, Mass., 1938), 138, that the *Episcopal Recorder* was founded by the Rev. Benjamin B. Smith (1794-1884). This would seem to indicate that the change in the name of the periodical coincided with a change in editors. A prospectus of the *Philadelphia Recorder* appeared in *The Church Record* (Philadelphia) in February, 1823. In 1832, the Rev. Smith was consecrated first Bishop of Kentucky, and became Presiding Bishop in 1868.

Not hearing from him on the subject, when in his study several months afterwards, on perceiving the volume on his mantle piece, I begged to know whether he had found any exceptionable matter in it. He replied, & with his usual pleasantry: "Not yet, but when I do, I will let you know."

At another time, speaking of Unitarians, he observed, "*they* say you are not Christians, but I do not say so: to be sure, you stand very much on your characters." then, Sir, may I understand you as admitting that we are not worse than those of other denominations. "Yes," was the reply, "but, remember, that I do not say you are better." I rejoined, that is enough: with your authority in our favour thus far, I am not only satisfied, but highly gratified; were we to claim superiority to others as to personal character, this would afford strong presumption, if not conclusive proof, that we were sadly deficient with regard to at least one essential christian virtue.

At one of the meetings of the Bible Society of Philadelphia, of which the Bishop is president, one of the speakers called the post office law "an infamous law,"⁶ & used other expressions derogatory to certain religious denominations. Some time afterwards, on expressing to the Bishop my disapproval of such matter, he said, "I wish you had called the speaker to order: I was twice on the point of leaving the chair; for as there are no rules of order, I doubted my power to interfere, unless appealed to by a member of the society."

I once mentioned my reason for not receiving the Lord's Supper in the Episcopal church while we had no place of worship: viz that kneeling was prescribed, & that I objected to that posture when receiving the elements. He replied, "surely you could not expect me to tell you that I would act contrary to the rubric. But I am not bound to notice the posture of communicants. When the signal for retreat was given at the battle at Copenhagen, Lord Nelson, determined to disregard it, said, I have but one eye, & can't see such a signal; but," added he, 'they call me a low churchman.' He then added further:

⁶ This probably refers to a controversy which arose from the post office law of January, 1810, whereby postmasters were directed to attend at their offices "every day," interpreted by the Postmaster General's direction that offices were to be kept open on Sundays, if mails arrived on that day. W. L. Nicholson, *The Post Office Department . . . its History, Organization and Working* . . . (Washington, D. C., 1879), 15; Wesley E. Rich, *The History of the United States Post Office to the year 1829* (Cambridge, [Mass.], 1924), 105 ff.

'I considered that point settled here many years ago. When I was a young man, & assisting Mr. Duché,⁷ perceiving a gentleman dressed in black standing before the inclosure, while all the other communicants were kneeling, I whispered to Mr. Duché, pointing his attention to the circumstance. He promptly answered, "Never mind, give it to him."

Many years ago, during his afternoon sermon at Christ Church, 3 young men well dressed, stood up, looked about them, & began to converse. He looked at them repeatedly, but to no purpose; at last, laying his sermon down, & making them a very respectful bow, he said, "Gentlemen, when you have done talking, I'll proceed." This, as I was credibly informed, was spoken with perfect calmness. They instantly sat down, & tried to conceal themselves from the congregation.

During every period of sickness, altho' he sent his family into the country, & lodged there himself, he spent the whole of every day in Philadelphia, & promptly met every call for his professional services. When duty required, he thought not of personal inconvenience or hazard. In the year 1793 when the yellow fever appeared & spread, on hearing it ascribed to a divine judgement, he asked "how that could be made to appear?, for, by going a very little way into the country, there was perfect safety. But can the divine judgements be thus easily escaped?"

His "Memoirs of the Protestant Episcopal Church"⁸ contain much interesting matter, & are distinguished by fairness. The Author relates what occurred, without any attempt to conceal the mistakes that were made, or the weaknesses that appeared. Every thing is placed in its true light. His own observations are always judicious.

In the year 1813 he published lectures on the Church Catechism, & Dissertations; in these last are strictures on the Improved Version & remarks on Unitarianism. It was imagined by some persons, that the freedom of some of the Bishop's animadversions would have put an end to our friendly intercourse, & this was broadly intimated to

⁷ The Rev. Jacob Duché (1737/8-1798) was the son of Col. Jacob Duché, Mayor of Philadelphia in 1761. Made Rector of Christ Church and St. Peter's in 1775, he soon was named Chaplain of the Continental Congress. In 1777, however, he sailed for England, having found the Continental cause unpalatable. He returned to this country in 1792.

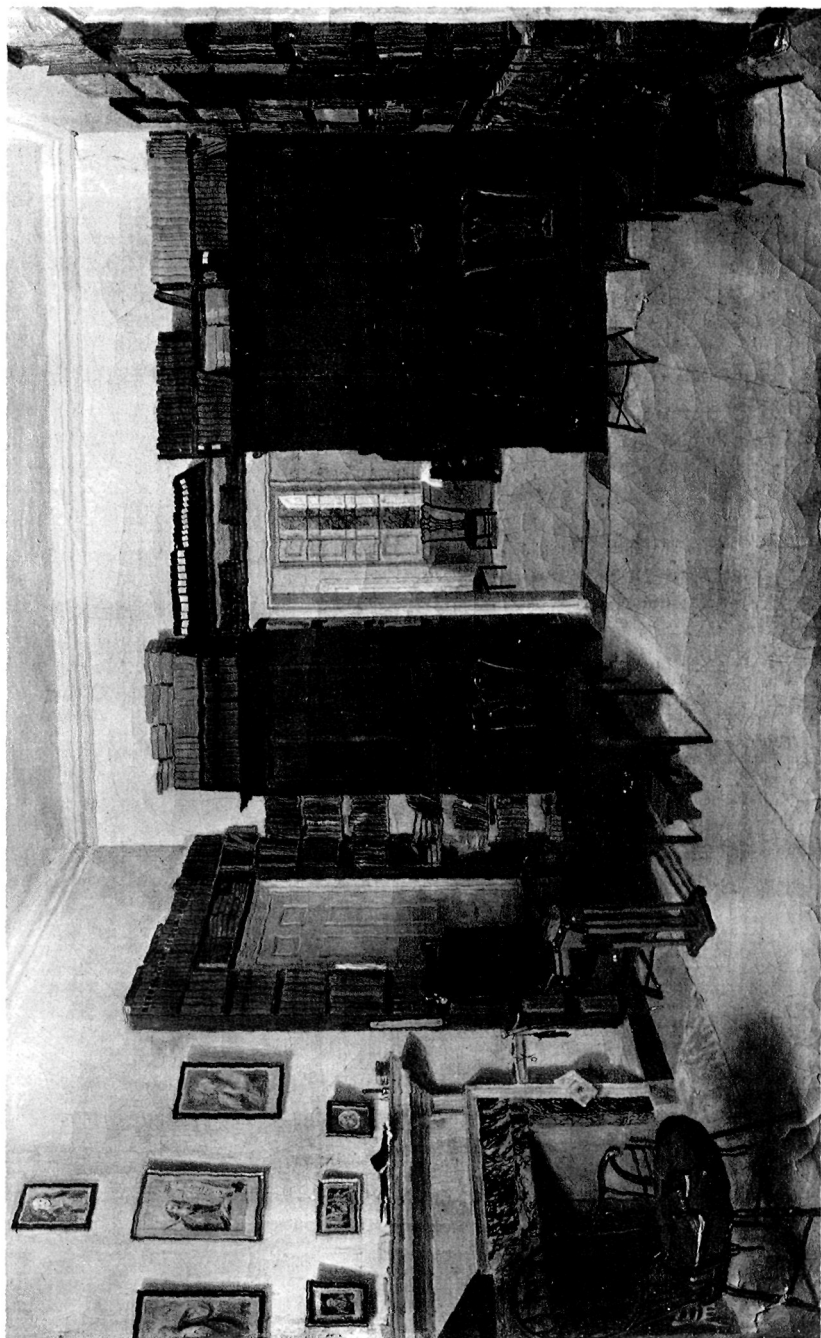
⁸ Published in 1820.

me by a very amiable lady: it so happened, that on the previous day I had received & accepted an invitation from the Bishop to meet one or two strangers. I mentioned this fact; adding, that the Bishop had a perfect right to defend his own side of the question, & to expose what he regarded as erroneous or untenable, & that he had neither manifested an unchristian spirit, nor resorted to any unfair modes of conducting his arguments. Therefore, altho' retaining my own opinions, I respected him for his fidelity to his own church, & could not overlook the learning, the ingenuity, & acuteness which characterized his volume.

Having made a good many memorandums on reading this work, I mentioned this to him a few months after it was published, (& here I ought to say, that he was polite enough to send me a copy two days before publication;) when he asked me what use I meant to make of them? I said, that at first I thought of writing to him, but abandoned that intention; fearing lest some unfortunate expression might escape me, which, if it occurred, would be to me a cause of bitter & lasting regret; & believing that a free & friendly conversation would be better suited to our respective positions. In that case, my written notes would be used as a brief or text book; & he could introduce his own remarks without inconvenience to me, as often, & at such times as he might deem best.

He was pleased with this last plan, & on the next morning I waited on him by appointment. Two hours & a half were occupied in discussion. My object was chiefly to show, that by the concessions of trinitarian scholars, the points of difference did not affect any essential truths. Let it suffice to say, that we began & ended in a most friendly manner. On neither side was there any attempt at proselytism. The Bishop finally took occasion to speak of D. Priestley in terms of high respect & esteem, on account of his varied attainments & exemplary character.

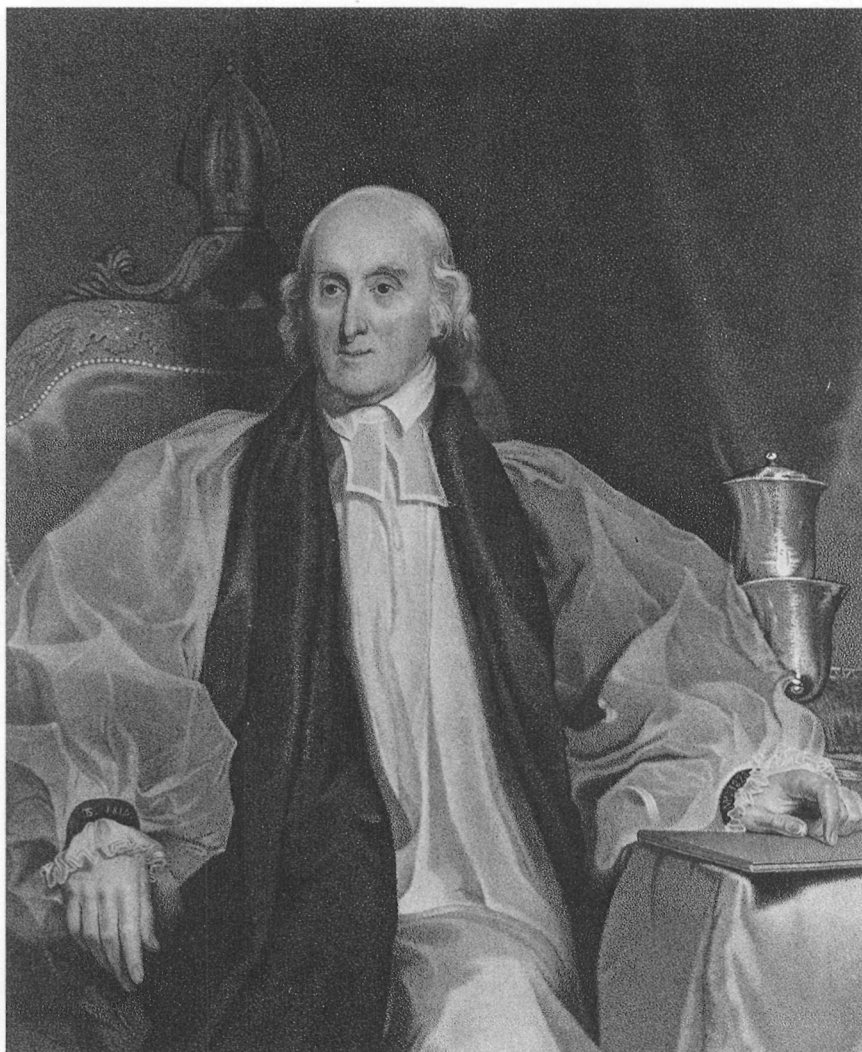
Altho' no one could be more scrupulously exact in complying with the ritual & rules of the Episcopal church, & altho', that church owes more to him than to any human being; for he was to it what General Washington was to his country, he was a lover of good men of every sect. Acting invariably from principle, he was firm, but not obstinate; for he well knew how to distinguish between things essential & things of secondary importance; & he could perceive & acknowledge the



John Sarian

BISHOP WHITE'S STUDY, 1836

Courtesy of Mrs. Arthur Starin



Engraving by Pekenino after Sully

BISHOP WILLIAM WHITE

existence or good qualities, without regard to the opinions of the party professing them: in other words, he judged of "the tree by its fruits."

A few years ago he sat for his likeness to Mr. Sully.⁹ After the head was finished, & when Mr S. was about to begin on the drapery, the Bishop, looking round & perceiving this; said, "Now that you are going to dress me, I suppose you will give me something to do." "Yes, Sir," replied Mr S. "I intend to place you in your pulpit, tho' I shall labour under some disadvantage, not having seen you there for some years." "How is that? Mr Sully, what church do you go to? 'Sir, I am a Unitarian, & attend the Unitarian Church.'" — "O! a Unitarian! Well! well. I never meddle with any body's religious opinions. If you are only a *good* unitarian, you will be safe enough."

Bishop White was remarkable for his great & unaffected modesty. In some of the lessons there are expressions which certainly ought to be altered; the Bishop did not feel himself at liberty to deviate from the common translation, but he read such passages in a low tone, blushing as he proceeded. At the close of the baptismal service, when he came to these words, "Ye are to take care that this child shall be brought the Bishop" etc. he spoke rapidly, & almost inaudibly: for a long time after he became a Bishop, it is said that he often blushed while going thro' that part of the service.

Perhaps, no human being ever more happily combined the "suaviter in modo" with the "fortiter in re."

Before the New Theatre¹⁰ could be opened, it was necessary to apply to the Legislature, which at that time met in Philadelphia.¹¹ At the head of the petitioners was the late General Walter Stewart;¹² but a counter petition had been prepared, & it so happened, that

⁹ This portrait was done in 1814 and is presumably that owned at one time by the Hon. William White Wiltbank of Philadelphia, although the latter picture portrays the Bishop seated, not in a pulpit.

¹⁰ The First Chestnut Street Theatre, "Old Drury," opened Feb. 17, 1794 and burned Apr. 2, 1820. On Dec. 2, 1822, it was reopened as the "New Theatre." Luther Eisenhart, ed., *Historic Philadelphia . . .*, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, XLIII, Part I (1953), 314, 316.

¹¹ The seat of Pennsylvania's government was transferred to Lancaster in November, 1799.

¹² Walter Stewart was born in Londonderry, Ireland, in 1756. After distinguished Revolutionary War service, he retired with the brevet rank of Brigadier General in 1783 and later became a successful merchant. He died in Philadelphia June 14, 1796. *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XLIV (1923), 275.

Bishop White, who went at the head of the deputation with that petition, was entering the state house as the other party was leaving it. The following dialogue is said to have taken place. (G.S.) "I am very sorry, Bishop White, to see you here" (B.W.) "Why so, General?" "Because, by the course you are pursuing, you will lose the pillars of your church."—"The *pillars* of the church!" (looking grave, & speaking in a solemn tone; but, quickly resuming his natural pleasant manner, he added, "I rather think, General, that you are mistaken. The pillars of the church support it, & therefore are *within* its walls, You must have been thinking of some rotten pillars on the outside, which are useless." The General could make no reply, for the laugh was completely turned against him.

The late Bishop Jervis¹³ was a slow speaker, & Bishop White's utterance was quick. As the latter was the presiding Bishop, he was looked up to by the other Bishops. Bishop Jervis had repeatedly requested of Bishop White that he would tell him any defect or impropriety in his delivery or reading.

At last, an opportunity offered for so doing: Bishop Jervis, being an inmate at Bishop White's, performed family worship. One morning, when they were by themselves, Bishop White reminded him of the request which he had made, & said. "I have always had a propensity to speak & read rapidly, & have never been able to correct this fault; now, as you are on the other extreme, I have been thinking that if we could only be mixed up together, we should make two clever fellows."

In returning from Baltimore after the convention in 1808,¹⁴ at the Havre de Grace ferry the crossing was tedious, & owing to a heavy rain the passengers were very wet when they landed at the opposite Ferry house; among these were several Episcopal ministers, some of whom were young, & all of them much younger than the Bishop. There was a general lamentation: rheumatisms, colds &c &c were anticipated; when the Bishop, not in the least disconcerted, altho as wet as any of them, pleasantly & ironically said, "poor old gentlemen, I really pity you: this is a very serious affair for persons of your

¹³ The Rt. Rev. Abraham Jarvis (1739-1813) was a native of Connecticut. He was consecrated second Bishop of Connecticut on Oct. 18, 1795, by Bishop White. Like Bishop White, the latter years of his episcopate were agitated by clerical disaffection. *Dictionary of American Biography*; George A. Jarvis, *et al.*, *The Jarvis Family* . . . (Hartford, Conn., 1879), 19 *et seq.*

¹⁴ Of the seven American Bishops, only the Bishop of Pennsylvania and the Bishop of Maryland (Thomas J. Claggett) attended the Baltimore Convention of 1808.

delicate health & advanced age. Now, we young folks don't mind a wetting: having youth on our side, we only laugh at such incidents."

The Bishop was a lover of innocent pleasantries, & a most delightful companion. Habitually cheerful, kind, & courteous; his manners were those of a well bred gentleman, & his deportment suitable to his office & character as a Christian Bishop. He put on neither lofty nor sanctimonious airs, every one felt perfectly at ease in his company, yet no one could even think of taking any undue liberty with him. He was remarkable for the soundness of his judgement, the quickness of his perceptions, & the vigour of his mind. Always prudent, but never unduly reserved; equally removed from levity & austerity. Strict & severe as regarded himself, but indulgent & liberal in respect to others. He knew how to "use the world without abusing it," & loved to see those around him happy. At weddings he is said to have materially contributed to the innocent gratification of the company by his happy & well timed anecdotes. With the young he was an especial favourite. While in the prime of life, it was not unusual to see him accompanied, by as many young ladies as could get near him, while walking to church; & surrounded by them when retiring from it. With young & old, male & female, he was a universal favourite; & not with those of the Episcopal church alone; for every one esteemed & loved him. He belonged to "the holy catholic church," ie. to the true church of Christ; which consists of the wisest & best of human beings of all ages, countries, & creeds.

A young Presbyterian minister, having denounced all parties at private houses as sinful; the Bishop was applied to for his opinion; when he is reported to have expressed surprise that such a question was asked; as he had never been an enemy to innocent enjoyments when not carried to excess; nor to cheerfulness, which so far from being sinful, was the duty & privilege of a Christian.

Before the Fayette Ball,¹⁵ the late Mr. (Dr.) Bedell¹⁶ in a sermon preparatory to the Lord's Supper, spoke decidedly against such amusements, & expressed a hope that none who intended to receive the sacrament would countenance them. This startled some ladies of

¹⁵ The Lafayette ball was held at the Chestnut Street Theatre on the evening of Oct. 4, 1824.

¹⁶ The Rev. Gregory Townsend Bedell (1793-1834) was the nephew of the Rt. Rev. Richard Moore, Bishop of Virginia. He became the first rector of St. Andrew's Church, Spruce St., Philadelphia, in 1822. William B. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit* . . . (New York, 1809), V, 554-560.

his church who were communicants, & who had bespoke their ball dresses: in their perplexity, however, they applied to Bishop White. —“Why, Ladies,” said he, “I don’t think it would do for one of my age to go to a dance; but I told my grand-daughters that *they ought* to go; only that they should be discreet.”

The revd. Dr. Francis Parkman¹⁷ of Boston related to me the following instance of the Bishop’s retentiveness of memory in his old age.

At his visit to Philadelphia in May 1817, he was introduced to the Bishop, & saw him at his own house. While engaged in conversation, a person called who had business with the Bishop, when he took leave of him. Twelve years afterwards he called on him without any farther introduction, & altho’ during that interval they had never met, the Bishop not only recognized him, & accosted him by his name, but reminded him of their convers[at]ion 12 years before, & mentioned the precise part of it at which it was broken off. Now, this was the recollection of one from his 70th to his 82.^d year.

Perhaps, the Bishop’s scrupulous & undeviating regard to truth, & the perfect fairness with which he argued, contributed to preserve the strength & clearness of his mental powers.

Bishop Doane¹⁸ remarked, only 2 years ago, that he was usually looked to by the other Bishops to draw up papers & documents, & that he could do this better than any of them.

At one time he was much in the practice of directing part of the 4th psalm to be sung: beginning with these words. “Consider that the righteous man Is God’s peculiar choice.” The frequency of this selection having been stated to him, accompanied by an intimation that it might be well enough to consider something else, he referred to the 89th verse of psalm 119 as affording a sanction for so frequent a resort to the 4th psalm. viz

“For ever & for ever, Lord,
unchang’d thou dost remain:”

¹⁷ Francis Parkman (1788–1852) was a native of Boston, of a Congregational background. In 1813 he became pastor of New North Church, Boston, remaining as such until 1850. His later years were characterized by Unitarianism. He was the father of Francis Parkman, the historian. Sprague, VIII, 447–456.

¹⁸ The Rt. Rev. George Washington Doane (1799–1859) was the second Bishop of New Jersey, consecrated in 1832. He was the leader of the “High Church” party in the United States, a counterfoil to the Bishop of Pennsylvania. Like White and Jarvis, his latter years were troubled by ecclesiastical difficulty.

Never, perhaps, was any presiding officer placed in a more trying situation than Bishop White, during the sittings of a special convention held at Philadelphia in 1826, for the purpose of electing an assistant Bishop; & never could any one have conducted himself with greater dignity & propriety. I have often heard of "meekness of wisdom," but never did I witness the exemplification of it so fully & happily. The Bishop had great reason to be dissatisfied with the course pursued, & with the language used on that occasion, by some from whom better things might reasonably have been expected; but keenly as he must have felt, no expression of anger or impatience escaped him: during what was emphatically called, "the stormy session," he remained calm & collected; he even allowed greater liberties to speakers who were adverse to his views & wishes, than to some of his most zealous & devoted friends.

The following extract from his address to the Convention before it adjourned, exhibits a true picture of his mind.

"I have painfully witnessed the progress of ecclesiastical transactions, in contrariety to the clearest dictates of religious & moral obligations—not without the accompaniment of indignities personally wounding to my feelings—such as I think unmerited, & certainly such as I have been a stranger to in my earlier years. The subject is mentioned, with the view of pledging my assurance to those who seek the integrity of our Zion, that during my continuance in life, & looking to divine aid for support, I will bear my testimony in favour of the truths of our holy religion, as exhibited by the institutions of our church, & against all endeavours directed to their destruction, or deterioration. While, in respect to what concerns me personally, I do not affect insensibility to the circumstance, it will be my prayer, that thro' the grace of God, I may be preserved from every grade of hostility to any individual in return; & from it's being felt in the intercourses & the duties attached to my official character."

Who could help venerating, admiring, & loving the author of such sentiments & the cultivator of such feelings! I take great pleasure in stating, that soon after the election of the present assistant Bishop,¹⁹

¹⁹ The Rev. Henry U. Onderdonk (1789-1858), Rector of St. Ann's Church, Brooklyn, N. Y., was elected Assistant Bishop of the Diocese of Pennsylvania in May, 1827, and was consecrated in October of that year. He became Diocesan on White's death in 1836, and resigned the Episcopate in 1844. The dispute between "High" and "Low" churchmen which occurred at Onderdonk's election as Assistant Bishop was the cause of much distress to Bishop White; to this, Taylor here alludes.

all unpleasant excitement subsided, & that the language of concession & regret was frankly & honestly addressed to Bishop White, by those who had been prominent & influential in advocating measures of which he disapproved. Ever since that time there has been one universal feeling of high & cordial esteem for him.

There yet remains another point of view in which the character of this "good Bishop" ought to be exhibited: viz as a liberal contributor to our benevolent institutions. Of many of these he is the President, & until very lately he was an active & efficient member of them. Punctual & regular in his attendance at the meetings of their Directors, & from his pen many of their appeals to the public proceeded. Every one agreed in honouring him, & in admiring that invariable kindness & courtesy which was evidently the accompaniment of benevolence & humility. Like Daniel, he was "a man greatly beloved."

Two old ladies, long since dead, who had known him from his birth, said in my hearing that "he was always good: a good baby, a good child, a good boy, a good young man:" & now it may be added, good thro' a long, honourable, & useful life.

He has been heard to say that he knows nothing of what is often called, "conversion;" yet, who has manifested more of a truly christian spirit, whose conduct has been more correct & exemplary, & who stands higher in the affections of all that know him? Like Jeremiah, he was "sanctified from his birth." Like the fore runner of our blessed Lord, he was early "filled with the holy spirit:" the spirit of piety & devotion, of truth & goodness, of peace & love.

Thus far I had written during the life-time of Bishop White. After an illness of 15 days in consequence of a fall, he died on Sunday July 17, 1836 at noon. His physician told me that he had no disease, but was literally worn out. He expired without any suffering, as gently as an infant. "Mark the perfect (man) & behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace."

On the morning of the Bishop's death, Dr. Chapman,²⁰ his physician, communicated the following anecdote, which happily exempli-

²⁰ Nathaniel Chapman (1780-1853), a native of Virginia, studied under Drs. John Weems of Georgetown, Md., Elisha C. Dick of Alexandria, and Benjamin Rush of Philadelphia. He founded the Philadelphia Medical Institute in 1817 and later succeeded Du Ponceau as president of the American Philosophical Society.

fies the strength of his parental affection, the correctness of his religious views, & his unreserved submission to the will of God.

When his eldest daughter, Mrs. Macpherson,²¹ was on her death bed; & when, in the opinion of her physicians Dr^s. Physic²² & Chapman, she had not more than 3 or 4 days to live, Dr^s. Montgomery²³ & Delancey²⁴ became very anxious that she should be made acquainted with her situation; which, as well as the cause of her illness, had been carefully concealed from her: it being known that she had often expressed great horror at the idea of being afflicted with the malady (cancer) which terminated her life. Dr. Chapman therefore informed the Bishop that his daughter was near to the close of her life, & that he had been desired to make this communication; it being the earnest wish of Dr^s. Montgomery & Delancey that he (the Bishop) would repeat it to his daughter. With much feeling, he replied, "I cannot do it"! But, recovering his usual self possession, he added "What good could this do? It is not the state of our feelings at the end of life, or the putting up of prayers in tones of peculiar pathos, that will avail us anything. It is by the tenor of our lives that our characters will be estimated by a holy & merciful God: I have therefore no fears for my daughter, & can leave her with entire confidence to the disposal of our Heavenly Father."

It has been well remarked, if such a man does not "enter into the joy of his Lord," heaven must be empty as regards the human race. Yes, to him death is a release from the infirmities necessarily attendant on extreme old age, & from all the sorrows & sufferings of this our mortal state: that in due time he may "draw immortal breath," & hold a distinguished place among the "multitude of the redeemed."

Another instance of the practical wisdom & christian integrity of this excellent Bishop, now occurs to me. A few years ago, a lady of our city, since deceased, was much impressed with a discourse in which

²¹ Elizabeth White (1776-1830) married, as his second wife, on Mar. 9, 1803, Gen. William Macpherson (1756-1813).

²² Philip Syng Physic (1768-1837), one of the foremost medical men of his time, is credited with many advances in surgery.

²³ The Rev. James Montgomery (1787-1834), Rector of St. Stephen's Church.

²⁴ The Rev. William Heathcote De Lancey (1797-1865), Assistant Minister (to Bishop White) of the United Parishes of Christ, St. Peter's, and St. James, was Provost of the University of Pennsylvania from 1828 to 1833. He was consecrated first Bishop of Western New York on May 9, 1839.

it was inculcated as a duty, that persons in affluent circumstances ought to divest themselves of all superfluous property, for religious & benevolent purposes; retaining only enough for their actual wants, which, it was argued, ought to be as much reduced as practicable. So far had the Lady referred to been influenced by this doctrine, that she had made a calculation as to how little would maintain her in a very plain manner: however, before putting her project in execution she consulted Bishop White, whose reply is said to have been to the following effect.

“Madam, you ought to do no such thing. The certain consequence would be, that you would no longer be able to do a generous or benevolent action. You would be completely cramped, & perhaps might be so much straitened as to be in a state of comparative poverty. No: retain your property; & then you will be able, as occasions offer, to do good with your surplus yearly income; selecting for your benefactions such objects as you shall deem most worthy of them, or most in need of them. You will thus be able, from time to time, to gratify your generous feelings; while preserving your place in society, & your example may have a beneficial influence on others.”

This advice was followed.