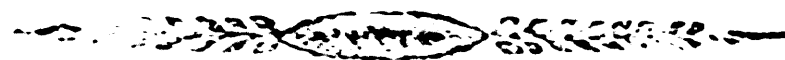




Mr. B A C K U S's

ELECTION-SERMON,

MAY 3th, 1793.



A
S E R M O N,

PREACHED BEFORE HIS EXCELLENCY
SAMUEL HUNTINGTON, Esq. L.L.D.
GOVERNOR,

AND THE HONORABLE THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OF THE

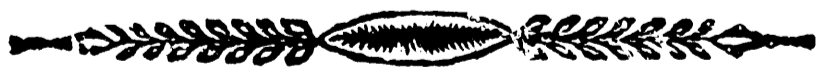
STATE OF *CONNECTICUT*,

CONVENED AT HARTFORD, ON THE DAY OF THE
ANNIVERSARY ELECTION.

MAY 9th, 1793.

BY CHARLES BACKUS, A. M.

PASTOR OF A CHURCH IN SOMERS.



HARTFORD:
PRINTED BY HUDSON AND GOODWIN,

MDCXCIII.



STATE OF CONNECTICUT.

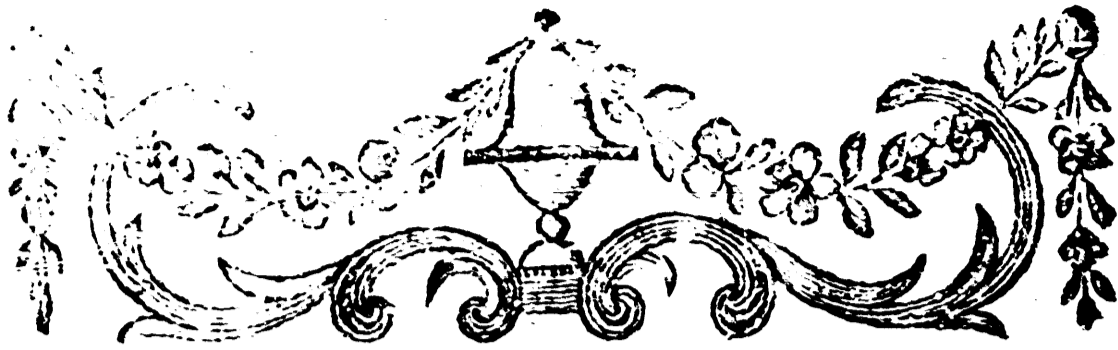
At a General Assembly of the State of Connecticut in America, holden at Hartford on the second Thursday of May 1793.

ORDERED, that the Hon. THOMAS SEYMOUR, and REUBEN SIKES, Esqrs. return the Thanks of this Assembly, to the Rev. CHARLES BACKUS, for his Sermon delivered on the late Anniversary Election in this State, and to desire a Copy thereof, that it may be printed.

*A true Copy of Record,
Examined, by*

GEORGE WYLLYS, Sec'y.





ELECTION SERMON.

GALATIANS VI. 10.

As we have, therefore, opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

THE Gospel of JESUS CHRIST, proclaims "Glory to GOD in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." Governed by the virtue of the gospel, we shall not confine our good will to the small circle near us, but shall extend it to all mankind: Nor shall we rest satisfied with the transient glare of a few splendid actions, but shall go into a practice, which embraces the whole extent of duty incumbent on man. The exhortation in the text, is a conclusion drawn from the promises of everlasting life, made to the faithful in the preceding verses. The exhortation addressed to the church at Galatia, contains a command which is binding on all men. It requires the

performance of those duties which fall under the denomination of acts of beneficence; and to do good in every other respect, as opportunities occur, to the whole family of Adam. No one can comply with this command, without considering man as possessed not only of certain appetites and desires, in common with the animal creation, but also of an intelligent and moral nature. If this last be left out of the account, man cannot be considered as an object of the benevolence which is required in the divine law.

THE Apostle places great stress on doing good *to them who are of the household of faith*. The reason is obvious: True christians resemble in some degree, the merciful Redeemer of sinners, who went about doing good—like him, they make those benevolent exertions which express good will to the whole human race. It is impossible to possess the affection, which embraces the greatest portion of intelligent happiness, without feeling at the same time a peculiar attachment to those, whose actions declare that the law of universal love is written in their hearts. These, as the ornaments of our race, and the lights of the world, claim our special love and attention. The accurate and impartial observer of mankind, will find much more to praise in the good man, who passes all his days in the vale of obscurity, than in some who are recorded as the boast of their nation or age. Since principle and conduct form the true distinction of rank, we shall deviate from rectitude, and set a pernicious example, if we estimate worth by station; or suffer ourselves to be governed by the censure, or applause, of the

ELECTION SERMON. 7

proud and the vain. On the subject of real worth, we may, however, safely venture an appeal to the moral sense, or conscience, implanted by the Creator in the human breast. When this is enlightened and solemnized, all men think alike, uniformly speak in commendation of virtue, and acknowledge it to be necessary for their guide and support. Were not this the case, there could be no propriety in holding up divine revelation before all; nor could the christian minister be justified, in making the gospel the theme of his discourse on every occasion.

THE passage of scripture chosen for the guide of our meditations, may, with propriety, on the present occasion, lead us to discourse on the importance of christian virtue to the civil ruler. The obligations to promote the common cause of virtue, must fall with the greatest weight on those, to whom most talents are committed by the great LORD of all. The superior obligations under which the civil ruler is placed to diffuse happiness, must be in proportion as his station rises above the ordinary walks of life. Nor can any stand in greater need of the guidance of divine wisdom, and the supports of divine grace, than he who is called to the laborious and difficult task of ruling over men.

To shew the importance of christian virtue to the civil ruler, it is necessary, in the first place, to attend to its nature. This will appear from a brief survey of some of the leading features of the christian religion, and the effects which it tends to produce on the principles and manners of society.

1 ELECTION SERMON.

CHRISTIANITY, must recommend itself to all, who will give it a fair and candid examination. In the sacred pages, the attributes of the MOST HIGH are unfolded, in a manner which is suited to inspire the reverence, command the love, and encourage the hopes of man. All our relations to him, with their connected duties, are clearly brought into view; whether he is considered as our Creator, Ruler, Lawgiver, Redeemer, or Judge. We are taught that "in GOD we live, and move, and have our being," and are constantly reminded of our obligations, to act up to the dignity of a creature placed at the head of this lower world. We are warned against forgetting that we received all our capacity, for service, or happiness, from the Former of our bodies, and the Father of our spirits. All creatures and events in the universe are under his direction and control; and will be made subservient to the designs of infinite wisdom and goodness. The first and great commandment in the divine law, requires us "to love GOD with all our hearts." No other affection of mind can conduct us to happiness; because no other can bring us into a moral union with the Author of our being. The depravity of the human race, has been deplored by the discerning philanthropy of all ages. This corruption is developed, and its operations are traced with such skill and impartiality, as to extort a confession from all, not sunk in brutish stupidity, that the Author of the scriptures is divine. The scheme of mercy opened in the gospel, comes in as a necessary relief to a guilty race; and furnishes a powerful spring to holiness of heart and life. Taught that the holiness of christians is the workmanship of GOD,

pride is hidden from man, and the LORD alone is exalted, in the application, as well as purchase of gospel grace. All those divine influences which are necessary for the guide, and support of good men, in every station of life, as well as to fit them for complete blessedness in the world to come, are contained in the promises of the gospel. These are addressed to the humble, the penitent, and the pure in heart. Sobriety, contentment, submission, patience, and all other graces and virtues, are required by the christian law; and enter into the character of those who inherit the kingdom of heaven. The doctrine of future rewards and punishments, is rescued from the errors of pagan philosophy, and placed in such a light, in the volume of inspiration, as to strike terror on the wicked, and minister consolation to the righteous, amidst the sharpest conflicts with the evils of time.

THE christian religion not only leads us to the knowledge of God, and points out the way to secure his favour, for time and eternity, but it acquaints us with the uniting bond of society. This is contained in the command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Had the love of our country been made the highest object of virtue, our religion, like all others, would have comprised principles which are hostile to the general welfare of mankind. What was the boasted virtue of ancient Rome, when rising to the zenith of her greatness, but affected justice and clemency, attempting to conceal the ambition of giving law to all nations, and subjecting them to pay servile hom-

age to the Roman name? In mercy to the world, that empire has long since crumbled in pieces, and such political arrangements have taken place, among the states and kingdoms formed out of her ruins, as forbid the success of any future madman who might aspire after universal conquest; and encourage the hope that the former horrors of war will never return. But whatever alteration may have been effected by the policy of courts, the human heart still retains its pride and malevolence. Of these there can be no effectual cure, but from imbibing the meek and benevolent spirit of the gospel, which breathes universal good will. Christianity includes, and particularly enjoins, justice, truth, compassion, the forgiveness of enemies, and the whole train of virtues, which give harmony and strength to the social bond. Were this divine religion universal, the world would be transformed into a region of peace and happiness. Hence, the Prophet Isaiah writes, when describing the effects of its prevalence among the nations, "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

WHEN we look for a character perfectly formed on the principles of benevolence, our attention is fixed upon the life and death of the SON OF GOD. From the beginning to the end of his days on earth, he obeyed every precept of the divine law, without a single deviation. He discovered an unshaken firmness in his attachment to truth, and human felicity, by lifting up his voice against the corruptions of the

day, and every species of iniquity practised by the children of disobedience. By his preaching, and example, he enforced the observance of the duties of social life. Instead of terrible displays of his miraculous power, he restored hearing to the deaf, sight to the blind, and life to the dead. Neither poverty, contempt, or the tongue of slander, could abate the ardor of his love, or the labour of his life, in promoting the present and future happiness of a rebellious race. The scene of his labours and sufferings, was closed by a most painful and ignominious death. He died as he had lived—on the cross, he pardoned a thief who was expiring by his side; and with his dying breath, fervently commended his murderers to the mercy of God.

BENEVOLENCE not only shines in the general nature, laws and promises of christianity, and in the life and death of its Founder, but will be gloriously displayed in the day of judgment. In that awful day, the LORD JESUS, the judge of the living and the dead, will in presence of the assembled universe, distinguish the righteous from the wicked, by the beneficence of their conduct; as manifested in ministering to the necessities, and alleviating the sorrows, of the excellent of the earth. CHRIST will consider what had been done, from real love to those friends of truth and of mankind, as done to himself. He is represented in the 25th of Matthew, as addressing the righteous, from the throne of his glory, in the following words—
 “ I was hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye cloathed me: I was sick, and ye visited me. I was in prison, and ye came unto me.”

A RELIGION, which is full of love, kindness, and compassion, must, when carried into general practice, produce the happiest effects on the principles and manners of society. All communities, whether smaller, or larger, will, in proportion as they resemble the great pattern of benevolence, improve the numerous opportunities which occur, in the various relations of life, to prevent, or diminish the misery, and advance the happiness, of their respective members.

THE diversity of gifts, with which the Creator hath endowed intelligent creatures, and the different circumstances allotted them in providence, give no countenance to the usurpations and cruelties of unfeeling despots. A virtuous temper, would prompt the most favoured, to offer thanks to the author of all good, for their distinguishing blessings; and to a behaviour which breathes compassion, towards those who are groping in darknets, or are smarting by the rod of oppression.

THE scripture account of the propagation of the human kind, is,—“That God hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth.” An universal practice, perfectly corresponding with the obligations thence derived, would present all the posterity of our common progenitor, when meeting, from the North, the South, the East, or the West, as embracing each other with the endearments of friendship.

To admit that children of the same family, have a natural right to enslave, or destroy one

another, would be adopting the first born of absurdities. Nothing can be urged in support of it either from natural or revealed religion. Hence, God would not suffer the Israelites to enslave, or destroy the Amorites, until their iniquity was full. In that case, it must be admitted, that the righteous and sovereign LORD of the world, had the same right to destroy the ancient inhabitants of Canaan by the hands of men, as he had to waste them by pestilence or famine, or to consume them by fire from heaven. The Israelites were not permitted to become the executioners of the divine wrath, until they had received a special commission from JEHOVAH, attested by miracles. If any would now claim a right to cut off, or enslave nations, from the example just named, let them prove their commission, by walking through the sea on dry ground ;—by drawing water from a rock ;—by feeding on bread rained down from heaven for their sustenance ;—by arresting the sun and moon in their course ;—or by miraculous interpositions which equally display the finger of God.

FROM the brief survey which we have taken, of the nature and fruits of christian virtue, it appears, that it gives no countenance to superstition, or any species of tyranny. It is built on the immutable principles of moral rectitude. To these, civil institutions must be conformed, to support rational liberty, or promote general happiness.

OUR religion teaches us to reverence civil government as an ordinance of God. It goes into a detail of the duties of rulers and subjects.

It denounces heavy woes against rulers who decree unrighteous decrees, and against a spirit of turbulence and faction in subjects. The sacred writings are full of promises to the upright and faithful on the seat of judgment, and to the just and the good of every rank in life. The Supreme Ruler hath left it to the wisdom of man, to accommodate the law of rectitude to the local, and other circumstances of a particular people ; but he hath declared his detestation of every kind of government, which does not, in its first principles, recur to those which give character to his own government over the intelligent creation.

2. THE importance of christian virtue to the civil ruler will appear from the temper and views, with which a good ruler enters into office.

THE virtuous man, from a conviction of duty, and with a humble diffidence of his own abilities, engages in public life, at the call of his country, with a sincere aim to promote its welfare. A moderate acquaintance with the world, may convince every person, that the post of honour is not the place for ease, or worthy a comparison in this respect, with the tranquility to be found in the humbler stations of life. Ancient and modern examples bear witness, that men who are best fitted to promote the true interest of society in high stations, will not be the most eager to rise in the commonwealth. Such characters, when put into office, like Moses when called to be a leader of the Hebrew nation, will call up the difficulties to be encountered, from what they discover in them-

selves, and in those over whom dominion is to be exercised, and will be kept from doating on enjoyments, which exist no where but in the deceitful prospects of ambition. Piety in the heart of a ruler, will lead him to look to God for wisdom and strength. Solomon, when he ascended the throne of Israel, addressed himself to the divine Majesty, in the language of a man who felt his own inability to govern, and his absolute need of direction and support from on high : " Give thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad ; for who is able to judge this thy so great a people ? "

A RULER of this description, will not stoop to low and sordid arts to bring himself into notice ; nor deviate from rectitude, through fear of being ejected. A small share of modesty and prudence, might guard against blackening faithful characters in public life, or addressing the prejudices of faction, to secure a post of honour. But such is the human heart in its present depraved state, and so many are the temptations to inglorious deeds, that virtue alone can prove a sure defence : " He who walketh uprightly, walketh surely. "

3. WHEN we consider the civil ruler as governing the commonwealth, his need of the influence of christian virtue will eminently appear.

THE decision of all controversies by laws, which are the voice of the collected wisdom of the community, gives a people the fairest opportunity of experiencing the blessings

of equal justice, within the reach of human art. Nothing, in the ordinary state of things, can darken their prospects of enjoying all the happiness which government can promise, so long as they retain sufficient knowledge and virtue, not to despise their privileges; and treat with contempt the clamours and intrigues of disaffected, or aspiring men.

No rank, obtained by birth, or royal favour, deserves to vie with the honour of a trust, given as an expression of the confidence of a free and enlightened people. An elevation to office among them, affords good evidence of personal merit in the ruler, and places him under the highest obligations to fidelity.

We can place no confidence in a legislator, who does not extend his views beyond a small district of the commonwealth, or confines his regard to one class of citizens. A just man, when called to guide the affairs of the state, will not consent to sacrifice one part of it to another. The wisest of our race may, indeed, err, and it will be found impossible to do equal justice in all cases, but the general good must be consulted: and an honest heart, accompanied with sound judgment, and good information, will rarely commit any material error. "The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips."

THE virtuous legislator acts on principles, which he is willing to submit to free and candid enquiry. Knowing that the torrent which is noisy, is not remarkable for depth, and that the torrent which swells to day, will have spent it-

self by to-morrow, he looks beyond the eclat, or censure of the moment, and keeps a watchful eye, against handing down to posterity, an example which will not bear examination: For he knows that discerning characters, will hereafter, sit in judgment upon him, who will stand remote enough from the subject, to pass impartial sentence. He has too much wisdom to forget, that tho' the acclamations of a promiscuous multitude, have been given to some, who have covered the worst designs under the garb of patriotism, their glory has been but for a moment; while the honest man has, sooner or later, received the just tribute of praise.

UPRIGHT rulers, will provide for the impartial administration of justice. The able and faithful minister of justice, appears in a venerable light; as a terror to evil-doers, and the friend and protector of the innocent. Innocence arraigned before him, is inspired with confidence; while guilt approaches with trembling.

To ascertain the merit of any system of civil polity, we must have recourse, not only to its moral complexion in general; but must in particular examine the attention which it pays to the existing habits of the people immediately concerned, together with its ability to avail itself of the various springs of human action.

NOTHING can justify losing sight of real life, in framing constitutions or laws. The peasant feels, and the philosopher acknowledges, the force of long habits. Tho' weakened for

a time, they will, in most instances, regain their former influence. Hence it appears, that nothing can effectually prevent a government, which promises to reform, from going back to its former depression, but the mental enlargement of its subjects. If politicians, or legislators, lose sight of the state of the people, their labours will resemble inscriptions on the sand, which are blotted out by the return of the tide. Highly favoured is that commonwealth, which falls into the hands of sages, who know what deference to pay to habits of long duration, how to counteract, and wear out, those which are hurtful; and have skill to place public affairs in a train which opens a door for future improvements.

SINCE habits have such force, it must be accounted a matter of the first importance, that good ones be formed; and that proper means be applied for this purpose. We can name no subject, in which the wise and the good, have been more unanimous, than the education of youth. This must find the patronage of every government, which is not built on the ruins of liberty and justice. They who have tasted the sweets of good government, must be worse than inhuman, not to feel an ardent desire to live in their successors, and to transmit to future generations, down to the end of time, the blessings which involve the welfare of mankind. Education, taken in its full extent, comprises the only means within the reach of human abilities of forming the minds of the young, to act their parts with propriety and dignity when they shall succeed the present actors. To give education its greatest force, it is necessary to

begin with inculcating knowledge and virtue, when impressions are made on the mind with the greatest ease. The morning of life, is the period in which a foundation must be laid for future improvements, and usefulness: In this forming age the mind receives a turn which is seldom lost. When the learning of a state is confined to a few families, distinctions, or cabals, will soon arise, which tend to destroy the principles of free governments. It must therefore be an important branch of political wisdom, to cause a general diffusion of knowledge among the people. To promote this design, and to qualify persons for extensive usefulness, not only the common schools of learning, but the higher literary establishments, have been found of great utility.

LITERATURE prepares the mind for free and candid discussion. It is of great use in discovering the boundaries of human knowledge, the line which divides the provinces of reason and faith, and the harmony which prevails among the various works of God. Whatever directly tends to promote these purposes, is suited to convince, that a revelation from Heaven is of absolute importance to erring mortals; and that their reason will find its best employment, in learning the lessons inculcated by infinite wisdom, and in giving these all the scope, indicated by our social nature, and required by the divine law.

A RITUAL which agrees with the spirit of christianity, will exhibit the social virtues in an amiable light. These can have no scope in the life of a solitary individual, and very little among

the tribes of men, which are few in number, and whose habits admit of no fixed place of residence. Hence it appears, that those arts which extend, refine, and sweeten the social intercourse, and the religion of the gospel, may be mutual helps.

BUT human science, carried to its highest pitch, cannot supply the place of piety and virtue. The religion of JESUS CHRIST can have no substitute. Admitting this to point out the way to present and future happiness, no man of virtue would consent to accept the most honorable post in life, were he thereby obliged to treat with indifference the household of faith, or forbidden to employ the weight of his influence in its favor.

WERE not man designed for moral government, and the retributions of eternity, we might justly be confounded, at finding his benevolent Creator suffering him to possess his present feelings, on a review of his conduct, and his present anxiety about a future state. The impressions of a right and a wrong, a moral Governor, and retribution, on the minds of men of all nations and ages, cannot be obliterated. They may not be found in an equal degree, they may be obscured by fable, their influence may be weakened, or suspended for a time; but cannot be destroyed. In seasons of extreme peril, many of the doubting speculations which entice, in the closet, will vanish; and the few first principles which lie open to the understandings of all, will force themselves into action. Involuntary homage will frequently be paid to moral and religious truths,

So long as the earth, the atmosphere, and the ocean, are composed of their present materials, and so long as pain and death are the portion of man. The divine goodness is conspicuous in rendering providence a constant monitor to man, to keep alive in his mind the laws both of natural and revealed religion.

THE ruler who sets out to govern mankind, without paying any regard to indelible moral impressions, steps upon new ground ; and to maintain consistency, must suppose, either that a new creation is brought into existence, or that it is in his power to throw into oblivion the former creed. Let us for a moment, admit that he succeeds, in banishing every moral and religious principle from the minds of his subjects ; and that all the members of that remarkable commonwealth, do not hesitate to pronounce piety and virtue, the priesthood and the temple, the idle dreams of enthusiasm. We should be justly chargeable with taking too bold a flight, even for the regions of imagination, should we represent all the members of that utopian society, as thinking on a scale large enough to connect private with public wrongs. Passing the licentiousness of the contemplative few, how would the great body of that people be kept in any tolerable order, without the severities of despotic government, or without calling in the aid of something not less shocking to humanity, than a court of inquisition ? Of the truth of this observation we can have no doubt, when we call up the numerous temptations to fly in the face of justice, which grow out of the independence of some, and the necessities of others, in all large communities. Nothing can

be found to supply the place of moral and religious principles ; which lay restraints where human laws cannot reach, and where none but Omniscience can behold ; and alone can influence, under many circumstances, to pay that sacred regard to truth, which involves the punishment of the guilty, or the protection of the innocent.

RESUMING the idea that some kind of religion will exist, and taking it for granted, that the peaceable enjoyment of it, is one of the unalienable rights of man, it will follow, that the protection of it must be one design of the social compact ; and that the ruler ought to be a nursing father to a religion, which is calculated to root out iniquity, and make men good citizens. Such is the religion of the gospel, as delivered in the holy scriptures.

PROPRIETY and justice forbid confounding the ecclesiastical with the civil department, or impairing the rights of an individual on account of his faith. A review of the evils which have sprung from an intolerant spirit, strikes a benevolent mind with horror.

SOCIETY must be sunk very low, or raised to a high pitch of real refinement, to be fitted for a general agreement in the doctrines modes and forms of religion. The fullest specimen of conformity, which has been seen in the christian church, since it became very extensive, was in the dark ages. We must wait for general union on better grounds, until the high prospects of futurity shall be unfolded. In passing through the middle state, shakings must be felt. These

are necessary to root up every plant which our heavenly Father hath not planted; and serve, at the same time, as a test, by which the friends and the enemies of religious order may be discriminated.

THE heavenly nature and original of the christian religion, the manner in which it was first propagated, and the Almighty power pledged for its defence, warn us against building our faith on the wisdom of men, and proclaim, that the Ark of God doth not rest on an arm of flesh. But should any take occasion from thence, to deny that christianity tends to support the social virtues, or plead that civil society ought not to countenance it, they will as far as their influence extends, clothe it with the austerities of the monastic life, and greatly promote the cause of those who place it in the catalogue of legendary tales. A similar abuse is chargeable on those, who urge the promises of infinite truth and power, to support the kingdom of peace, somewhere on the earth, to the close of time, in excuse for the neglect of proper means, to secure its blessings to themselves and posterity.

THE deep wound which every kind of tyranny has received, and the conquests of reason and virtue, afford matter of universal joy; and open a wide field of labour. We shall incur the aggravated guilt of despising the goodness of God, if we refuse to co-operate with the apparent designs of his gracious providence. In particular, we are called to maintain the strictest vigilance against all the mis-steps, which have led others into bondage, or have endan-

gered their freedom. To advance in this good work, it is necessary to draw into the channel of our exertions, the peculiar advantages, to be derived from the course of thinking, and enterprise, which mark the character of the present enlightened age.

EXPERIENCE has abundantly shewn, that the human mind, in an uncultivated state, is extremely incompressible, and liable to be driven into dangerous extravagancies, when its hopes and fears are artfully addressed by the warmth of party zeal. Living in an advanced period of the world, we have examples without number before us, to confirm us in the belief, that neglecting the moral culture of the mind in particular, will be followed with bad effects to society. Confining ourselves within a narrow range, let us come down to our young country, thinly inhabited in proportion to its extent, when compared with the European states and kingdoms. Besides the habits which the first settlers brought from the other side of the Atlantic, the smallness of their number, their poverty, hardships, and common danger, must have operated for a considerable length of time, as so many forcible bonds of union. Frequent emigrations from our older settlements, have also tended, in several respects, to prevent the rise of faction, and check the virulence of party rage. These evils, have, however, appeared among us, in some degree. In what places have they risen to the greatest height? An answer to this question, supported by its true reasons, would turn out decidedly in favour of the present argument.

THE enlightened and the candid of every

profession, clearly discern the close connection between rational liberty, the spirit of laws and moral and religious truths. They must reprobate the idea of attempting to disunite and set at variance, the things which have been united by the creator and moral governor of the world; and whose joint influence will be found necessary for the strength and happiness of society, so long as it shall be found on the earth. A rebellion against the harmony established by infinite wisdom, cannot meet with general approbation, at a time when civil government is deeply studied as a science; and new facts are constantly demonstrating that its perfection consists, in treating man according to his capacities, springs of action and relations.

THE generous philanthropy, which beholds with abhorrence the multitude of sanguinary laws, to be found among most nations, will derive its firmest support from a religion which inculcates, in the strongest manner, purity of heart and morals. If aids from this source be denied, crimes will multiply; and small encouragement can be taken from substituting those corrective punishments, which are designed to leave no indelible marks of infamy on reformed offenders.

It can admit of no question, whether it be right or safe, to trust to the mere voice of natural conscience, with casual instructions, for the assistance which the christian religion affords, for maintaining the order and happiness of society. It will be readily granted, that a good acquaintance with moral and religious

truths cannot be generally diffused, without an attendance, at stated seasons, on the public forms of religion. These will borrow their complexion and influence, in no small degree, from those who guide them. Hence appears the importance of stated teachers, placed under circumstances, steadily to attend on the business of their profession. The welfare of man, as to both worlds, requires, that the public forms of religion be kept up, in a manner, which has the most direct tendency to give weight and energy to moral and religious truths.

4. THE importance of christian virtue to the civil ruler, will appear from considering the commanding influence of his example.

GREAT is the force of example ; especially in those who fill the higher stations in life. To them all the lower ranks look up ; and by them a general cast will be given to the morals of community. If influential characters are licentious in their opinions, or dissipated in their manners, they will spread the contagion far and wide ; because they fall in with the current of degenerate human nature. Hence, when a wicked prince sat on the throne of Israel, the idolatry and vices of the court, soon became the idolatry and vices of the nation. Corrupt as mankind are, examples on the side of virtue, in rulers, contribute much to prevent the prevalence of wickedness, and embolden good men to attempt the work of general reformation. This was verified in the case of the ancient Jewish nation when their judges, or kings, obeyed the laws of JEHOVAH ; and will be found true among all other nations. If rulers are in the transgression, the laws will

be trampled under foot, or become an engine of tyranny. The ruler who fears not God, and regards not man, will not perish alone; but if he is permitted long to be in authority, will drag multitudes along with him into the gulph of ruin. The happy influence of the exemplary ruler will be extensively felt especially under a long administration. Justice borrows lustre from the venerable lips which pronounce it; and the laws are sanctioned in the public opinion, when those who frame, and those who execute them, are in high repute for wisdom and integrity. The pious example of the great, will excite reverence for religious institutions, and encourage an attendance on the public worship of God.

In improving this discourse, we may remark, how different is the general state of human society, from that which would result from the universal dominion of christian love. Love to God, and love to man, rising to perfection in every heart, would diffuse happiness through the family of the great Creator, and banish misery from the universe. But the encroachments of the strong upon the weak, and the conflicts of rivals, have filled the earth with oppression and violence, and watered it with blood. On the side of oppressors, there has been power; while on the side of the oppressed, entreaties and tears have been poured out in vain—they have had no comforter. The pride of genius, and of science, commanding eloquence, and conciliating manners, have often lent their aid, to give success to the enterprizes of lawless ambition; and to conceal the crimes of public robbers, and murderers, under the honorable

28. ELECTION SERMON.

names of valour and patriotism. The virtuous few, have wept in secret places, in beholding the light given from on high, to guide erring mortals in the way of peace and happiness, treated with scorn, or perverted to support the tyranny and cruelties of the wicked.

Our subject also leads us to infer the great obligations of a people who enjoy the blessings of good government. They are called to offer thanks to God, that they are not doomed to pass their lives under a domination, which tramples upon their rights, and riots in their spoils. The protection of the cause of righteousness, the support of liberty, and the enjoyment of peace, any where on the earth, are to be attributed to the power and grace of God. He hath the hearts of all men in his hand, and is able to improve even their passions, to accomplish the designs of his wisdom and mercy. Amidst all the convulsions which shake the world; whether the rod of tyrants, the scourge of war, the pride of ambition, or the thirst for gold, he who sitteth King forever, is advancing the glory of his kingdom, and unfolding the purposes of infinite love. The God of truth hath raised up chosen instruments, in different ages, to scatter light in midst of surrounding darkness; or hath girded them with might, to withstand and conquer legions, who were armed against the liberties of mankind. Let all states and nations who have been delivered from oppression, join with the faithful of old, "when the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion," in giving him the glory: "The LORD hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." The holy joy which fills the thankful heart,

will influence to a life of virtue. To such a life the external motives are increased, when man is restored to the privileges which belong to his nature. Where only merit can expect honorable distinction, earth, as far as possible, unites with Heaven, in encouraging to excel, in whatsoever things are honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. What language can paint the infamy of a people, raised to the summit of earthly blessings, if they fit themselves for despotic rule, by their follies and vices; or tarnish their glory by ingratitude towards their divine benefactor?

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, will be most inexcusable, if they do not "remember the years of the right hand of the Most High." He hath redeemed us from our enemies, given us a name among the nations, and a government established on the broad basis of liberty. To us is granted the rare privilege of living under a government which originates from the people; and can admit of corrections and improvements, without being inevitably exposed to the dreadful convulsions felt by nations long enslaved, when they are roused from their torpor, attempt to throw off the yoke of bondage, and to accomplish the work of an age in a day.

In laying the foundations of free states, a vast field opens for the display of great talents. Those who are at the head of public affairs in such periods, have a station of the first eminence assigned them: and if they faithfully perform its duties, they will render their memories precious. With what veneration do we look back on the illustrious sages of former

38 ELECTION SERMON.

of the world may pass, we shall soon cease to be active in them, and must be gathered to the innumerable multitude gone to the land of silence. Death will not blot us out of the creation, but will introduce us to everlasting happiness or misery, according to the deeds done in the body. It is of infinite moment, whatever be our employment or station in life, that we "seek first the kingdom of God, and its righteousness" and that our path be that of the just, which as the shining light, shineth more and more unto the perfect day. May we all meet in the general assembly and church of the first-born, and unite in the praises of those who are redeemed to God, by the blood of the LAMB, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. ————AMEN.



times, who were raised up to establish the freedom, and perpetuate the prosperity of nations? Among these we may justly rank the Fathers of New-England; to whose wisdom, generous services, and persevering fortitude, we are so much indebted for the privileges we enjoy. Those worthies, indeed, went into unjustifiable severities, in their treatment of those who differed from them in religious opinions: but we shall not judge them deserving of heavy censure; when we consider the complexion of the age in which they lived, and that no set of men have ever risen wholly above the prejudices of their own time. Salutary effects, derived from the combined influence of the civil, literary, and religious institutions of our ancestors, are felt down to the present day. May we prove ourselves worthy of so honorable a descent, and may future generations rise up and call us blessed.

THE form of government under which we have lived in this state, from its infancy, is accommodated only to the genius of a free people, well educated, trained up in similar habits, and not sunk in luxury and dissipation. The charge of an improper partiality for the state which gave us birth, cannot lie against us, when we attribute our uncommon prosperity, under providence, to the knowledge and manners of the inhabitants.

THIS joyful Anniversary, reminds us of our obligations to praise the God of our fathers, who hath continued to us our inestimable privileges. We have always had the satisfaction to see our nobles from ourselves, and our governors

proceeding from the midst of us. Elective governments have derived great lustre from the elections of this state. Rulers brought into office by the unsolicited suffrages of enlightened freemen, have the fairest opportunity which the world affords, of living in the hearts of the people. They enjoy a pleasure in the plain and respectful addresses of those who are in lower stations, which is unknown to the despot, who looks down on his subjects as born for slavery.

THE solemnities of this day, must remind our honorable Rulers, now assembled in the house of the LORD, of their obligations to be "ministers of GOD for good," and to seek his blessing.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,

THE Magistrate who possesses the virtues which adorn the man, can have no desire to be addressed in the style of adulation. Nor will an apology be necessary to a ruler of this description, for omitting in a devotional performance, a detail of the extensive and eminent services, which immortalize the patriot and the politician in the page of history.—As a servant of God, it must be your first concern to secure his favour. A just estimate of the dignity of an exalted station, and the expectations of the public, furnish high inducements to fidelity. But strong as these motives are, they are not sufficient to secure against the treachery of the heart under pressing temptations. Nothing but a humble dependence on divine aid, can effectually shield against the frowns or insidious arts of the wick-

31 ELECTION SERMON.

ed. The greatest natural and acquired abilities, are not alone sufficient to sustain the weight of public cares, hold an even balance between clashing interests, and endure with fortitude the storms to which the ruler is exposed. Who can stand in greater need of the grace contained in the christian covenant, than he on whom the eyes of the commonwealth are placed, as the defender of her rights, and the supporter of her laws? As a friend of men, you will employ your authority and example for the suppression of vice, and the encouragement of virtue and religion. In the chair of state, a signal opportunity is afforded to enforce the belief—That the spirit of the laws established by infinite wisdom is essential to the well being of society. A practical conformity to the standard of truth and happiness, exhibits a character which doth not depend on the breath of popular applause, and will be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, when earthly greatness shall be no more. Our prayer is, that your commanding influence may long incite to that course of life, which forms the character of the good man, and is the brightest ornament of our nature.

THE splendor of office which dazzles the unthinking, has few allurements to a mind matured by study and experience. A serious and devout temper will lead the honorable of the earth, often to abstract themselves from every thing foreign to the heart, and to look forward to the retributions of eternity. In retirements devoted to such purposes, your Excellency is sure to find those supports which a grateful people cannot bestow. May you through life enjoy the divine blessing, and when removed from this world,

be admitted to reign with the Redeemer in the world of everlasting joy.

THE trust committed to his Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, the Honorable Council, and House of Representatives, requires unre-mitted exertions for the welfare of this Republic. To them belongs the tribute of respect due to the rulers of a free and enlightened people.

HONORABLE GENTLEMEN,

WE look up to you to guard the state by salutary laws, secure the impartial administration of justice, and watch over the morals of the people. We are sure that you will not discountenance those sober, republican manners, which, under God, have been our defence and glory. You must feel the importance of encouraging literature, countenancing the public worship of God, and correcting the irreligion and immoralities of the day. You have honoured yourselves as the patrons of science, by your late liberal donation to our University. The Gentlemen of the civil and sacred orders, united in its government, and the republic of letters at large, look forward with great satisfaction to the period, as near at hand, when that respectable seat of learning will be furnished with the necessary buildings, and will contain all the professorships to be desired in an University. While you are holding out encouragements to cultivate every art and science, which can advance the interest and dignity of a free people, you will not fail to sup-

port those religious institutions, which are the great means of promoting piety and virtue. There is something so noble, so godlike, in employing great powers to diminish human misery, and increase human happiness, as must command respect and veneration. Ye guardians of our rights, be decided, be firm, in resisting the torrent of wickedness, and supporting the cause of virtue; and you are sure of the aid, and the prayers of all good men, and the protection of Heaven.

THE motives which arise from a thirst for human applause, are infinitely small, when compared with those which are drawn from the divine favour. The solemn hour is at hand, when the recollection of having done applauded actions can convey no joy to the heart, unless they can be traced to an unfeigned regard to the honour of God, and the real good of mankind. Harkening to the voice of HIM who is wonderful in counsel, may each of you be conducted safely through the labours of life, be comforted in death, and receive the crown of righteousness from the LORD, the righteous Judge, "Well done thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy LORD."

THE union and strength which the christian religion gives to society, the lustre it throws on every accomplishment, the aids it furnishes to all ranks and stations, and above all, the prospects it opens beyond the grave, render it the support and joy of its disciples. Christian ministers, must, in a high degree, glory in that

religion which they are called publicly to explain and enforce.

REVEREND FATHERS AND BRETHREN,

While we unite with our honorable Rulers in paying homage to the supreme King, it must yield us no small satisfaction to reflect, that our holy religion refutes every charge which can be brought against it, as unfriendly to the peace and liberties of mankind. It appears in a still more amiable light in its influence on society, as the nature and design of civil government are better understood. In a land of freedom, we can, with peculiar pleasure, put our hearers in mind "to be subject to principalities and powers, and to obey magistrates." The present united efforts of the curious and inquisitive, of every profession and opinion, to enlarge the boundaries of knowledge, must have great influence on the religious, as well as the political state of the world. It is peculiarly incumbent on us, to promote a spirit of free and candid enquiry to exhibit the religion of JESUS CHRIST in its native charms, and lead pious and exemplary lives. Many are the inducements to faithfulness, arising from the salutary effects which the evangelical ministry tends to produce on the civil state. But how vast and solemn are the motives with which we must be impressed, when we consider that the religion we are called to preach, displays the perfections of the DIVINE MIND in their glory! and reveals the great ATONING SACRIFICE, on which is founded man's hope of a blessed immortality! The mysteries of REDEMPTION are the study of angels, and furnish a theme for the admi-

ration and praise of those spotless intelligences who stand round the throne of God. They come down to earth, and are as a flaming fire, in ministering to the advancement and glory of the kingdom of our LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST. The existence of the states and kingdoms of the world, and all their changes and revolutions, are only parts of the grand scheme of providence, for promoting the designs, and displaying the glory of that kingdom. We must be roused to diligence and zeal in the duties of our sacred office, when we consider the connection of time with eternity, the worth of immortal souls, and the account we must soon give of our stewardship to the great LORD of all. When we have finished our course, may we depart in peace, and receive from the CHIEF SHEPHERD a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

FELLOW-CITIZENS OF THIS ASSEMBLY,

It becomes us to live under the government of that divine religion, which leads the heart to God, and fills it with benevolence towards men. Conformed to the law of love, we shall be solicitous to distinguish and honor real worth, and obey those who are in authority over us. While we consider them as responsible to the public, for the use of the powers with which they are intrusted, let us pay the just tribute of respect to the faithful guardians of all that is dear to us in life. Our rulers cannot render us prosperous, nor secure us against that state of servile dependence, which has ever been, in a remarkable degree, the dread of this republic, if we do not unite our endeavours with theirs to promote the common welfare.

PARENTS, may do much to strengthen the hands of the civil, as well as the religious minister; by inculcating on the minds of their children reverence to the Creator, training them up in good principles, and forming their morals. To shine in the gay circle will be small praise, if the heart remain a stranger to the charms of virtue. Youth appears amiable and promising, when it venerates the patriot, honours the upright ruler, and esteems the good of every grade in life; and when neither the brilliancy or obscurity of parents, diverts or deters from laudible enterprise.

RAISED to great eminence in the enjoyment of privileges, we may justly tremble in fear of the wretchedness into which we shall be thrown, if we refuse to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. Let us repent of our sins, repair to the grace of the gospel for pardon, and obey its laws: "Then shall our peace be as a river, and our righteousness as the waves of the sea." Let our high prosperity engage us to praise HIM, who prevents us from being involved in the troubles, which distress so many nations on the Eastern Continent, at the present time. But the generous soul, not confined by local attachments, or absorbed in its private ease, travels round the globe, every where recognizes the brother in the man, takes part in his joys and sorrows, and fervently prays for the speedy commencement of the glorious æra, when liberty and the religion of peace will fill the earth.

LET US not forget, that through whatever changes, the church on earth, and the kingdoms