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Mr. *Cummings's*

S E R M O N,

DELIVERED

APRIL NINETEENTH,

1781.

A  
S E R M O N

PREACHED AT

LEXINGTON;

ON THE 19th OF April, 1781.

Being the Anniversary of the Commencement of Hostilities  
between *Great-Britain* and *America*, which took Place in  
that Town, on the 19th of *April*, 1775.

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By HENRY CUMINGS, A. M.

Pastor of the Church in *Billerica*,

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*Hitherto hath the LORD helped us:*

SAMUEL:

*There are many devices in a man's heart ; nevertheless the  
council of the LORD, that shall stand.*

SOLOMON,

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B O S T O N :

Printed by BENJAMIN EDES & SONS,

IN TATE-STREET.

M,DCC,LXXXI.

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S E R M O N.

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P S A L M LXXVI. 10.

*“ Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee : the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.”*

**T**HOUGH GOD, (for wise reasons, best known to himself) has permitted sin to enter into the world ; yet, we may be sure, he will not suffer the purposes of his goodness to be frustrated by it ; but will, in some way or other, over-rule this worst of evils, for good ; and make sinners themselves, (contrary to their design and intention) the instruments of promoting the great ends of his moral government, and the occasional causes of benefit to others, at the same time, that they expose themselves to misery and ruin, which will inevitably come upon them, either in this world or in that to come, or in both, as a just punishment for their wickedness, unless prevented by repentance.

It

It cannot be doubted, but the infinitely wise God knows how to promote his own glory, by those ungoverned lusts of envious, discontented and proud mortals, which are a prolific source of continual mischief and misery, both to particular persons and societies, and whereby thousands and ten thousands are involved in great troubles and grievous distresses, all the days of their lives. And as God knows how to promote his own glory, by the lusts of men, so we have reason to believe that he will do it, (as he has done it already in innumerable obvious instances, from the beginning of the world) either by laying restraints upon those lusts, or over-ruling their operations in such a manner, as to make them contribute (in direct contrariety to their natural aim) to the execution of his own gracious purposes ; or by taking occasion from them, to exhibit such remarkable displays of his power, wisdom and goodness, as shall be admirably adapted to beget and cherish adoring thoughts of his being, perfections, and providence, and to produce all those external honorary acts of worship and homage, which he requires of us.

We live in an angry and provoking world. Ever since the fatal apostacy of our first parents, *the wrath of man* has been at work to spread misery and wretchedness over the face of the earth. *Hateful and bating one another*, is too much the character of by far the greater part of the human race. It seems indeed, that it must be evident to everyone, that the happiness of social life depends essentially

essentially upon the exercise of mutual benevolence and the constant reciprocal interchange of kind and friendly offices; but yet, as if men were entirely ignorant of the vast advantages of love and harmony, peace and friendship, it may, with truth, be affirmed of the generality, that they

“ Live in hatred, enmity and strife  
 “ Among themselves, and levy cruel wars,  
 “ Wasting the earth, each other to destroy.”

**THROUGH** the prevalence of pride, envy, ambition, avarice, and other corrupt lusts, the earth is full of the habitations of violence, cruelty and war. These passions are the grand source of mutual jealousies, animosities, enmities, reproaches, insults and injuries; they lead directly to a violation of every moral obligation, and of every principle of social virtue; their natural fruits are injustice, unrighteousness & oppression, from whence come strife and contention, discord, tumult and disorder; and when they are inflamed with wrath and armed with power, they generally drive matters to extremity, pushing men into such arbitrary and cruel actions and pursuits, as enkindle the flames of war, which it often requires a vast effusion of human blood to extinguish.

**BUT** when we see or feel the sad effects of the disorderly passions and baneful distempers of human nature, our comfort is, that *the Lord God omnipotent reigneth*, who can and will answer his own most wise purposes thereby, or set bounds thereto, as to his infinite wisdom shall seem best.

This

This comfortable doctrine is clearly contained in the text. We may rest assured, that the supreme governor of the world, will not suffer *the wrath of man*, of a weak and impotent mortal, (how much soever advanced above his fellow mortals) to overthrow his government, or defeat the counsels of his wisdom ; but will cause it to *praise him* ; that is, (as was just now suggested) he will either so check and restrain it, or so manage and over-rule the operations of it, as to make it subservient to the ends and designs of his providence, and the occasional cause of such events, as shall shew forth his perfections, and induce every attentive and pious observer, to praise and glorify him.

I DOUBT not, my hearers, but you can recollect instances that have fallen under your own observation, wherein the lusts of particular persons have been either remarkably restrained, or remarkably over-ruled, as occasions of good, where evil was designed and intended. Every instance of this kind, that comes within our view, should lead us to admire and adore the wisdom and goodness of God, who disappointeth the evil designs of sinners, and causeth even the operation of their lusts to be productive of events, in favour of those, whom they meant to injure.

SACRED history furnishes us with many instances, to this purpose. I will mention a few of them, which will serve, at once, to illustrate the meaning of the text, and to suggest some thoughts and reflections, suitable to the present occasion.

**THE**

THE story of Joseph, in the book of Genesis; affords one instance; to this purpose. Instigated by pride, envy, anger and unreasonable resentment; his brethren sold him into Egypt. They had nothing in view; in this base and unnatural action, but the gratification of their own unruly passions and corrupt lusts; but the wisdom of God over-ruled it for good, contrary to their expectation and design. They *thought evil* against their innocent brother; when they sold him for a slave; but this heinously wicked action of theirs, was the occasion of his promotion to high honor and authority in the Egyptian court, whereby he was enabled to *save his father's house; and much people alive* in a time of famine.

ANOTHER pertinent instance, we may find in the history of Pharaoh, in the beginning of the book of Exodus. The wrath and madness of Pharaoh, and the cruelties which his haughty and savage temper prompted him to exercise upon the children of Israel, in order to check their growth, and secure them in a state of dependance and base servitude, prepared the way; under the government of Providence, for their remarkable deliverance; and afforded occasions for a series of such wonderful displays of the power of God, as could not but excite all pious observers; to pay him their devout honors and adorations. And the destruction, which Pharaoh's pride and obstinacy plunged him into, was no less remarkable, than was the deliverance of Israel. From whence it is natural to observe, that proud aspiring mortals  
are

are often *ensnared in the work of their own hands*, and defeated by the very measures which they take to carry their iniquitous schemes into execution. *There are many devices in a man's heart, says the wise man, but the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.*

THE great men, the princes and potentates of the earth, who are entrusted with the management of the affairs of states and kingdoms, are as much subject to the controul of an higher power, as any of the lower ranks and classes of people. They are all at the disposal of the supreme Governor of the world, whose providence, as it is concerned in all occurrences and events, and in all the vicissitudes of human affairs, so does more especially interpose in the rise and fall of empires, and in all the great revolutions that take place among the nations of the earth. In ways and by means unthought of and unforeseen, the profoundest policies and most promising schemes of restless ambition, are often disconcerted, and the measures adopted by it, made to terminate in its own confusion. When this is the case, we have always reason to adore the providence of that Almighty Being, who presides over the world, and is the disposer of all events.

THOSE men, who are actuated by a lust of power and domination, seem, sometimes, to be judicially left of God, to use such methods, for the promotion of their ambitious schemes, as have a direct tendency to defeat their enterprizes, and



to preserve to others those important rights and liberties, of which they endeavour to rob them, for the sake of aggrandizing themselves. The conduct of *Rehoboam*, after the death of his father *Solomon* (as it is recorded in the twelfth chapter of the first book of Kings) affords a very striking example of this kind. As soon as *Rehoboam* came to the throne of his father, the people applied to him, with their petitions, for a redress of grievances : But Rehoboam, despising the moderate counsels of the aged and wise, and following the imprudent advice of young and unskillful courtiers, as being more agreeable to his own aspiring and ambitious views, *answered* the people *roughly*, and rejected their petitions with insult. In consequence of such ill-treatment, ten tribes revolted, and set up another king over them : Of this revolt and revolution, Rehoboam himself was the immediate occasional or procuring cause. His pride and haughtiness, alienated from him the hearts of the greatest part of his subjects, and divided his father's dominion into two kingdoms. But it is very observable, that it is expressly said, *The cause was from the Lord* ; and this is assigned as the reason why Rehoboam, adhering to the imprudent counsels of raw and rash politicians, rejected, with affrontive insolence, the reasonable petitions of the people. This revolution being agreeable to the will of God, Rehoboam was left to his own folly, which kept the things of his peace out of sight, and influenced him to take a step, which provoked the most of the tribes to throw off their allegiance, and reject him from

being king over them. Thus God often *taketh the wise in their own craftiness*; causing the measures which they principally depend upon, for accomplishing their ambitious designs, to produce events directly contrary to their views and expectations.

By their wrath, by their vindictive resentments, the haughty and ambitious, are sometimes precipitated into actions, for the gratification of their pride and revenge, which not only issue in their own ruin, but in the advancement of those whom they meant to destroy. Haman (of whom we have a particular account in the book of Esther) is an instance, in proof of this. In the fierceness of his wrath (the occasion of which, it may be presumed you are not ignorant of) Haman plotted the destruction of Mordecai, and all the Jews in the kingdom of Ahasuerus; and had the address to obtain a decree from the king, for that purpose. But this infernal plot terminated in his own utter ruin, and led the way to Mordecai's promotion, affording, at the same time, an occasion for a signal display of the wisdom and goodness of Providence, in the deliverance of the Jews from the destruction that was just ready to fall upon them. This instance, with that of Pharaoh before mentioned, will sufficiently justify the following observation, viz. that,

**GREAT** and important revolutions, in favour of the cause of righteousness and liberty, are sometimes brought about, by means of the cruel and vindictive measures, which powerful oppressors  
take,

take, to promote their ambitious views, and to keep others in awe and servile dependence. Wrath and cruelty are generally rash and precipitate, and calculated to raise a spirit of indignation and desperate opposition, in those who feel the sad effects of them. The haughty tyrant, who endeavours to advance his oppressive schemes, and to set himself up above all law and justice, by severities and cruelties, dictated by wrath, does thereby frequently work out his own disappointment, and is forced eventually to acknowledge his impotence, and to own a power above himself.

BUT when the power of oppressors is so great, as to bear down all opposition, and compel people to a servile submission, it is to be considered as a just judgment of God, who sometimes causes *the wrath of man to praise him*, by employing it to punish a people for their sins. And herein we may observe the unsearchable wisdom of God, who, while man (unnecessitated by any foreign impulse) is impiously and wickedly gratifying his lusts, makes those very lusts subservient to his providence, for the punishment of others. This is admirably set forth in the conduct of the Assyrian monarch (as the same is recorded in the tenth chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah.) God was pleased to make use of this haughty tyrant, as a rod, for the correction and chastisement of his people; wisely managing the distempers of his proud and ambitious mind, for the punishment of the Jews, for their sinful defections from him. But as the Assyrian acted freely, being  
under

under no constraint, it was no excuse for him, that GOD made his pride and ambition, instrumental in bringing his righteous judgments on the Jewish nation; but his conduct was highly affrontive to Heaven, and exposed him to the righteous resentments of the Supreme Governor. *Wherefore, says GOD, when I have performed my whole will on Zion and Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.*

IN the instances that have been mentioned above, we see, that so far as GOD permits the *wrath of man* to exert itself, he will over-rule the operations of it, for advancing the important purposes of his government; and we are fully assured that he will, in no cases, suffer it to break out farther, than shall redound to his praise and honor. *The remainder of wrath he will restrain;* that is, he will set bounds to it, and render it unable to accomplish what it aims at. Thus (as we are informed in the 37th chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah) he restrained Sennacherib's wrath, and forced him to quit his enterprize against Jerusalem. Sennacherib carried his boasts and menaces to such an height, as implied a defiance of the great Lord of heaven and earth; but the GOD whom he defied interposed, and prevented his attempting what he designed, by the miraculous destruction of one hundred and eighty-five thousand of his army in one night; thus *putting an hook in his nose, and a bridle in his jaws, and obliging him to return home ashamed.*

Such

Such miraculous interpositions of providence for *restraining the wrath of man*, cannot indeed be rationally expected, in common cases ; but God can do this as effectually, without a miracle, as with, as will appear from what will presently be offered.

SHOULD God permit the wrath of man to do all that it designs, what havock and devastation, what mischief and wretchedness, would it spread through the world ? This world, at best, is a very turbulent scene ; but it would be much more so, did not providence lay restraints upon the lusts and passions of ill-designing men, and prevent their going to such lengths in mischief, as they wish. It is happy for the world, that man's power is not equal to his wrath ; and that those, who, instigated by an evil temper, form mischievous projects, are often hindered from executing them ; at least, to that extent, which they desire.

THERE are many ways, wherein God checks and restrains *the wrath of man*, and defeats its pernicious devices, when, and so far as he pleases.

SOMETIMES he does this by raising a spirit of fear, whereby men are discouraged from undertaking or prosecuting those mischievous enterprizes, which their wrath and corrupt lusts would otherwise prompt them to undertake and pursue. As God has the *hearts of all men in his hands, and turneth them whithersoever he will, as the rivers of water*, so there is reason to believe that,  
by

by secret influences, he does sometimes raise and sometimes depress the natural spirits of men, for the promotion of his purposes of judgment or of mercy. Every one who is acquainted with; and firmly believes the divine philosophy of the scriptures, must be clear in this, that God can; and frequently does, by immediate impressions on the mind, so effectually dishearten and intimidate those, whose vindictive passions would lead them into all manner of mischief and cruelty; as either to confine the operations of their wrath to themselves, or to render it weak and impotent, faint and irresolute, in its attempts against others. The tyrants of the earth are, no doubt, often thus restrained. *Faintness is sent into their hearts,* and fear takes hold on them, which serves as a barrier against that torrent of wrath, which would otherwise spread destruction and desolation all around them. Again,

SOMETIMES GOD *restrains men's wrath* by interposing unthought-of accidents, obstacles and difficulties, which entirely disconcert their measures and overthrow their mischievous schemes and devices. *The race is not to the swift, says the royal preacher, nor the battle to the strong; neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all:* by which he doubtless means to teach us, “ that  
 “ there is a secret providence concerned in all  
 “ human affairs, which sometimes presents men  
 “ with unexpected opportunities, or interposeth  
 “ accidents;

“ accidents, which no human wisdom could  
 “ foresee; which sometimes produceth events  
 “ contrary to human probabilities, giving success  
 “ to very unlikely means, and defeating the swift,  
 “ the strong, the learned, the industrious, and  
 “ those that are best versed in men and business,  
 “ of their several ends, and designs.” All nature  
 is at the beck of the great Creator, who,  
 when he pleases, can employ any part thereof, to  
*disappoint the devices of the crafty, and carry*  
*the counsels of the forward head on.* What we  
 call second causes, are entirely dependent upon  
 the great first cause, to whom they owe all their  
 force and energy; and who can, and, no doubt,  
 often does (either immediately by himself, or  
 mediately by subordinate agents) occasionally sus-  
 pend, retard or quicken their influence, to frus-  
 trate the most promising schemes of men, and  
 thereby to humble their pride, to teach them  
 their dependence, and to promote his own most  
 wise purposes. Secret and hidden causes he of-  
 ten sets to work, whereby unforeseen and unex-  
 pected events are produced, which overthrow the  
 schemes of human pride, ambition and revenge.  
 By storms and pestilences, by disasters and mis-  
 fortunes, which no human skill could foresee, or  
 power obviate, he frequently prohibits the wrath  
 of the mightiest potentates, and crushes the mis-  
 chievous machinations of his people's enemies in-  
 to abortion.

FURTHER, GOD sometimes checks and *re-*  
*strains the wrath of men, by leaving them to ju-*  
**C** *dicial*

dicial infatuation, whereby they are led to adopt counsels and measures, tending, in the natural course of things, to defeat their designs, and overthrow their enterprizes. When men are pushing forward their iniquitous schemes with the greatest zeal and vehemence, and have the most flattering prospects of success, they are sometimes, by an unaccountable imprudence, led to reject the counsels most favourable to their designs, and to embrace those that lead directly to disappointment. The story of Absalom, in the second book of Samuel (not to mention again the case of Rehoboam) furnishes an instance of this kind. Absalom raised a rebellion against his father David; but in prosecuting his ambitious views, he was remarkably influenced to adopt measures, calculated to defeat and disappoint him. The sage advice of Ahithophel, a judicious and skilful counsellor, though most favourable to his designs, was *turned into foolishness* in his sight, and he was left to comply with counsels of a different nature, which issued in the ruin both of his wicked projects, and himself. This was *the Lord's doing*. And thus GOD sometimes judiciously *hides wisdom from the wise*, and leaves them to pursue such imprudent methods, as directly tend to disappoint their hopes, and frustrate their most promising schemes.

ONCE more, another way wherein GOD *restrains the wrath of man*, is, by rousing those who suffer, or are likely to suffer by it, to stand in their own defence; and inspiring them with

courage.



courage and resolution, to oppose and resist, to the utmost, all the mischievous efforts of the ambition, wrath and anger of those proud aspiring mortals, who would, if possible, rob them of their natural rights, and plunge them into a state of servility. And this is the most usual method of Providence, for restraining and curbing the disorderly passions and corrupt lusts of ambitious and revengeful men. Sometimes indeed God is pleased to interpose in an extraordinary way, for the deliverance of his people from the rage and wrath of their enemies; to take their controversy, as it were, into his own hands; and to work salvation for them, by means, in which their own agency is not at all concerned: but most commonly, it is by the right use, of those means of preservation and safety, which he has put into their power, that he defends & saves them. There is nothing more irrational than to neglect such means, and depend upon miraculous protections. When God purposes to restrain the wrath of his people's enemies, he usually rouses a spirit of opposition, stirs them up to make a resolute resistance, and animates and excites them to the most vigorous efforts for the maintenance of their rights. And whenever a people are enabled to baffle and disappoint their enemies, and defeat their attempts to gratify their ambition or revenge, they ought to ascribe the glory to God, whose interposing providence has prospered their endeavours, and crowned their enterprizes with success.

AND now, my hearers, as the subject does naturally suggest such reflections as are suitable to this *anniversary*, you may very reasonably expect an application of what has been said, adapted to the present occasion. This therefore will now be attempted.

IN the rise and progress of the present war, we have seen both parts of our text verified, in innumerable instances. *The wrath of man* has been made to *praise GOD*, by producing events contrary to those, which it aimed at. *The wrath of man* has also been restrained, defeated and confounded, and after all its vaunting boasts, been obliged to own its impotence and weakness. And, in short, though GOD has permitted *the wrath of man* to plunge us into great troubles and distresses, as a just punishment for our manifold impieties and vices, yet he has hitherto so managed and over-ruled it, so curbed and checked it, as to afford the clearest evidence of his powerful providence, which presides over the world, and governs all things.

THE pride, avarice and ambition of Great-Britain, gave rise to the present hostile contests. From this source originated those oppressive acts, which first alarmed the freemen of America; and provoked them, after petitioning in vain for redress, to form plans of opposition and resistance. This conduct of America exasperated the British administration, and roused all their wrath. Transported with angry resentments, they proceeded  
from

from oppression to open war, in order to frighten and compel us into a submission to those arbitrary and despotic schemes, which they were determined, at all hazards, to carry into execution. But those vindictive and sanguinary counsels and measures, which, in the vehemence of their passions, they adopted, for this purpose, have, by the providence of God, contrary to their expectations, involved them in the most perplexing difficulties, by uniting thirteen provinces of America, in that declaration of independence, which they now wish us to rescind.

I BELIEVE it will be obvious to every one, who will take a survey of the violent and hostile proceedings of Great-Britain, and of the measures she took to intimidate these states, and awe them into unconditional submission, prior to their declaration of independence, that every part of her conduct, was calculated to produce this great event; having a direct tendency to plunge the people of America, into a state of desperation, by cutting them off from every chance of maintaining their liberties, in any other way, than by erecting themselves into an independent nation, and opposing force with force. Now, when we consider, that, before our breaking our connection with Great-Britain, the methods and measures used and pursued by her, in order to accomplish her unrighteous designs against us, and promote her ambitious views, did all uniformly tend to reduce us to the necessity of taking that Step, does it not seem, as if she had been left to judicial infatuation,

fatuation, and that her conduct can best be accounted for, by saying, as in the case of the revolt of the ten tribes from Rehoboam, *The cause was from the Lord?* This (as has been observed) is expressly assigned, as the reason why Rehoboam *hearkened not to the people, but answered them roughly.* And may we not, with equal propriety, assign this as the reason, why the British king, instead of hearkening to the cries and prayers of his loyal subjects in America, should either treat their complaints and petitions with neglect, or answer them only with insult and additional injuries, and send forth his fleets and armies, to awe them into silence, and force them into servile submission? May we not reason thus; *The cause was from the Lord,* therefore the king of Great-Britain, judicially blinded to his own interest, hearkened not to the prayers and petitions of the oppressed and aggrieved people of America; but took such violent methods, in order to compel them into slavish passive obedience, as reduced them to the disagreeable necessity of a revolt and final separation? Had our petitions and prayers been properly regarded, and moderate pacific measures pursued, we should have entertained no thoughts of a revolt; for even after hostilities had commenced, we were ardently desirous of continuing united with our mother country, if such an union could have been preserved, without making a sacrifice of our liberties. I am persuaded, we may safely appeal to that Being, who searches all hearts, to justify us, when we declare, that it was far from our intention or inclination to  
separate

separate ourselves from Great-Britain ; and that we had it not even in contemplation to set up for independency ; but on the contrary, earnestly wished to remain connected with her, until she had deprived us of all hopes of preserving such a connection, upon any better terms than unconditional submission. It was her refusing to grant us better terms, that united these states, and formed the confederation, which has connected them together like a band of brethren, and, of many members, made them one compacted and well-cemented body. And that she should insist upon this, and, depending upon her power to crush us, should reject and trample under foot all our petitions, and come against us with hostile force, in order to establish an absolute despotic dominion over us, argues that she was left to her own folly (as Rehoboam was) to pursue measures contrary to her peace, and which, in the natural course of things, tended to produce that revolution, which has dismembered the British empire, and raised so great a part of it to a state of independence.

AND as the wrath of Great-Britain, under the over-ruling providence of God, first occasioned this great revolution, so her wrath has hitherto been defeated in all its powerful efforts to reduce us back to a state of dependence ; which can be ascribed to nothing but the interposition of a powerful Providence, laying restraints upon her, and weakening her hands, so that she could not perform her enterprizes. For if we look back, and  
consider

consider the strength of our enemies, and our own weak condition, when the awful scenes of war first opened upon us, we cannot but acknowledge it to be owing to the special interposing power of the Supreme Disposer of all things, that we were not soon overcome, but have been enabled to maintain our cause hitherto, in many severe conflicts, through several bloody campaigns.

WHEN we consider how unprepared and unprovided we were for the contest, when hostilities first commenced; that we were without money, without ammunition, without magazines, without cloathing for soldiers; that we had neither military discipline nor any regular settled civil government; that we were destitute of that assistance from foreign powers, which we have had since; and, in short, that under the greatest disadvantages, being deficient in all military preparations, we were forced into a war, with an enemy, well prepared and well provided with all essentials for the conflict, having a numerous and well-disciplined army, commanded by skilful and experienced officers, who had been bred to arms; and a navy superior to any in Europe, which gave them the empire of the seas, and rendered their resources almost inexhaustible; when we consider these things, what reason have we to adopt the language of the Psalmist, and say, *If it had not been the Lord, who was on our side, our enemies would have swallowed us up quick?* Especially, when we consider further, the peculiar hazards and difficulties we were subjected to, from  
internal

internal enemies, who under the pretext of neutrality, or the disguise of friendship, were constantly plotting mischief against us, and doing all that they could, with safety, to weaken our hands; to discourage and dishearten us; to obstruct our operations; to perplex and entangle our affairs; and to aid and assist the British forces. The principal advantages gained, at one time or another, by our professed enemies, who have openly waged war against us, have been greatly owing to assistances afforded them, by secret enemies among ourselves, who, had not the mercy of God prevented, would, before now, have ruined their country. We have therefore abundant reason to be thankful to the sovereign Ruler of the world, not only that he hath hitherto protected us against the open violence of our avowed foes; but also that he hath guarded us against the treacheries and treasonable conspiracies, of false and disaffected persons, whom we have harboured in our own bosoms; and defeated those hidden and mischievous artifices, which they have used to work our destruction.

THE scene of war, in which we have been involved, has been chequered with an alternate succession of favourable and unfavourable events. Sometimes we have met with disappointments and defeats, when we had raised expectations of success. At other times we have been prospered, even beyond our most sanguine expectations. In several instances our enterprizes have been crowned with wonderful success, exceeding our most

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flourishing

flattering hopes. And, on the whole, we have great reason to adore the providence of God, who has hitherto remarkably restrained the wrath of our enemies ; mercifully defended and protected us ; and supported our righteous cause, by many signal interpositions.

To every attentive observer, it must be obvious, that the wrath of Great-Britain, so far as it has been permitted to exert itself, has contributed to bring about and establish our independency. It has evidently been the occasion of events, which have raised us to an honorable consideration among the European powers, and induced some of them openly to espouse our cause, and aid us by a friendly alliance. It is also worthy of observation, that the wrath, which has been enkindled in American breasts, has been over-ruled for the promotion of the same great ends. Great-Britain first prepared fuel, and then put fire to the combustibles, which she had prepared ; for setting the passions of America into a flame. And the wrath, which she has thus roused in America, has been wisely managed by Providence, for checking and restraining her rage and vengeance. Her conduct has not only been the occasion of stirring up a noble spirit of liberty throughout America, and kindling into a blaze every spark of virtuous patriotism, and true courage ; but of firing the mind with honest indignation and resentment ; yea, of transporting the passions, in some instances, among individuals, into criminal excesses. But even these excesses of the passions, have



have, by Providence, been made to conspire with better principles, and more laudable springs of action, to strengthen the opposition to British tyranny, and check the career of British rage and cruelty.

FAR be it from me to justify any excesses of wrath and anger. I am no advocate for outrages, even on the most provoking occasions. But I cannot but observe, that, as on the one hand, it will not be denied, that the human passions have, in some instances, among particular persons broken forth into a criminal excess of riot ; so, on the other, it cannot but be acknowledged, that there have been many instances of a very culpable indifference and tameness of temper, which, without any emotion, could behold the impending ruin of the country, or have quietly submitted to concessions fatal to liberty.

WE are not to suppose, that either reason or religion requires the total suppression of the passions. It is both rational, and a duty, to stir them up into exercise, when suitable objects are presented to view. None of our original passions, are in themselves vicious. They become vicious only by their exorbitancy. It is the excess of them that is criminal. While they are tempered with prudence and discretion, and kept within due bounds, they may be indulged to advantage upon many occasions.

THOUGH rage, and inflamed wrath, are no essential properties of patriotism ; yet patriotism,  
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without feeling or sensibility, is a meer name. The passionate appearance of the same love of one's country, and of the same determined zeal for promoting the honor and interest of it, will indeed be different, in different constitutions. A patriot of a calm and dispassionate temper, tho' he cannot but feel just resentment at the wrongs, and injuries done to his country, and shew a steady resolution to do all, that in him lies, to maintain his country's cause, against all its enemies, will yet not shew the same vehement warmth, that will discover itself in a patriot, of a more sanguine and fiery temper, nor be so liable to be betrayed, by a fierce zeal, into imprudent and rash measures.

AND here let me observe, that to me it seems an argument of the wisdom of God, that (as there are few comparatively possessed of virtuous principles; and as even the best principles, without a stimulus from the passions, would remain dormant and inactive; and as the generality are influenced by their passions only, which need something to restrain and direct them, or to rouse them up, when the public good calls for great and general exertions) Providence has so ordered it, that there should be a diversity of tempers and constitutions among men, to be both a spur and a check to one another; that the more warm and vehement might give an active spring to the more cool and sluggish, and, on the contrary, the more calm and moderate be a curb to the more sanguine and hasty; and that the two extremes,  
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meeting with those, who are more equally tempered with due proportions of zeal and prudence, all might happily unite ; and, by the mutual collision of their different tempers and passions, be enabled to collect their several powers, into one combined and vigorous effort, for carrying into execution, every necessary enterprize, against a common enemy, and for the promotion of the welfare and prosperity of society.

BUT whatever we may think of the ends of Providence, in ordering such a diversity of tempers among men, this is certain, that GOD will so manage the most disorderly, turbulent and boisterous passions, as to make them promotive of the designs of his government, or lay such restraints upon them, that instead of frustrating, they shall really subserve the purposes of his wisdom. Of this we have had the clearest evidence, in a variety of instances in the course of the present war ; which affords substantial ground for a rational hope and trust in GOD, for the future.

HAD the power of Great-Britain been equal to her wrath, what a miserable and wretched situation should we have been in, before now ! From the rage and vindictiveness, which she has discovered ; from the threats which she has thrown out ; and from the barbarous cruelties which have marked her steps in the prosecution of the present war (especially when she gained any advantages over us) we may easily infer what would be our unhappy fate. Should her wrath prevail, at  
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last, and force us to surrender at discretion. In this case, all would be seizure and process, confiscation and imprisonment, blood and horror, insolence and arbitrary punishment. For so it always has been, and always will be, when what is called a rebellion is suppressed, and the supposed rebels obliged to throw themselves unconditionally upon the mercy of their incensed prince.

GREAT-BRITAIN indeed, since our alliance with France, has made a shew of offering a redress of grievances, and of granting us even more than we asked for, before our declaration of independence; on condition of our re-uniting ourselves with her, in violation of our national faith and honor, which we have solemnly plighted to our generous ally; but should we comply with this condition, what security could we have of her lasting friendship? Philip, of Spain, when he found that his arbitrary proceedings had thrown his subjects, in the low countries, into a ferment and flame, and raised such an opposition to his government, as he was unable immediately to suppress, was once prevailed upon by the representations of the governess, the Duchess of Parma, to hearken to their complaints and petitions, and grant a redress of grievances; in consequence of which, things in general, soon returned to a tollerably quiet and peaceable state. But notwithstanding this seeming compliance with the desires of his subjects, Philip only meant to gain time, being determined, as soon as circumstances should be more favourable, to prosecute

cute his ambitious and tyrannical schemes. Accordingly, in a little while, he commissioned the Duke of Alva, at the head of a large army of veteran troops, to carry the same into the most rigorous execution : This conduct of his, rekindled the flame, and revived those commotions, which eventually cost Spain a great part of her low country provinces. Should we, in contradiction to our solemn engagements to others, return to our connection with Great-Britain, upon the plan proposed by her commissioners (who, by the way, are not empowered to ratify any thing) we might soon, after the example of the low countries, be again obliged to separate from her, and to fly to arms for our defence. And in this case she would have a fairer chance of subjugating us, and we should be in the utmost danger of falling a prey to her power and wrath, because, having violated our faith with foreign powers, they would hardly be persuaded to trust us again, or to afford us those supplies and succours, that we might stand in need of.

It is doubtless the ardent desire of every one, now present, to see a speedy and happy end to the war. But can any suppose, that a separate composition with Great-Britain, upon her terms, would restore public peace and tranquility, and close the scenes of war? Have we not rather reason to believe, that it would oblige us immediately to engage in her quarrel with those, who have befriended us in our distress, and assist her in avenging herself upon them, for the aid which  
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they afforded us? A separate peace with Great-Britain, upon any other plan, than that of equality and mutual independence, would plunge us directly into a war with France and Spain, who would have reason to resent such a flagrant violation of our national faith and honor. And probably it would also arm many other European powers against us. We can therefore have no hopeful prospect, of enjoying the blessings of peace, or of enjoying them long, but upon the plan of independency.

THE appeal has been made to Heaven, and Heaven has hitherto supported us, and restrained the wrath of our enemies. Trusting in God therefore, we should take courage still to *stand fast in the liberties, wherewith he has made us free*, without fondly desiring any dishonorable and dangerous compositions.

BUT though from the great things which God has done for us, we are encouraged to hope, that his providence will, in due time, work complete salvation for us, if we continue to exert ourselves, as becometh free men; yet no one can certainly tell what will be the issue of the present contest, or how it will terminate. The volumes of futurity are locked against human inspection; nor is it possible to ascertain the event of any human enterprize or undertaking. Our concern should be, to make the great Governor of futurity our friend, as we desire the kind assistances of his propitious providence, to bring our enemies to make peace with us, upon terms of honor, justice and equality, AND

AND here, let me observe, that nothing darkens our prospects more, or gives us more reason to be fearful, as to the event of the present contest, than the great and general prevalence of unrighteousness among us. He must have been very unobserving; who does not know, that by means of unrighteousness, the body-politic has been, and still is; labouring under a dangerous disease, *the whole head being sick and the whole heart faint*, and there being but little soundness, *from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot.*

THE goodness of our cause does not make success certain. A good cause often suffers, and is sometimes lost, by means of the sin and folly of those, who are engaged in it. This is a consideration, which ought to lie with weight on our minds, at the present day, and engage us to *put away the evil of our doings; and keep ourselves from every wicked thing.*

WHEN Solomon says, *righteousness exalteth a nation*, he asserts no more, than what the experience of all ages has found to be true. For righteousness not only procures the smiles of a propitious Providence upon a people; but also tends, in the natural course of things, to promote their prosperity; being adapted to prevent dissensions and discords among them, to cement them together in the firmest union, and, by preserving public and private credit, to enable them to collect their force and strength, when the case requires, for repelling an invading enemy, and defending themselves against all the hostile attempts  
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of aspiring ambition. The effects of unrighteousness are very different ; for unrighteousness not only provokes God to withhold his blessings from a people ; but it also tends, in its own nature, to entangle and perplex their affairs, and to render them weak, and unable to oppose any violent assaults of arbitrary power, by creating among them internal strife and contention ; by dividing them into angry parties ; by destroying mutual trust and confidence ; and so rendering it extremely difficult, and next to impossible, to unite them in measures, necessary for their safety and defence against a common enemy, or the despotic views of designing ambition.

We have therefore reason to fear, if unrighteousness should continue to abound, that the righteous Judge of the world, will cease to restrain the wrath of our enemies, and, leaving us in the hands of our own folly, permit them to execute the dreadful purposes of their furious resentments, as a just punishment for our obstinate perseverance in our evil ways. But if we will put away our unrighteousness, *cease to do evil, and learn to do well.* we shall have grounds to hope, that the *righteous Lord, who loveth righteousness,* will still be our friend and patron, and enable us to maintain our cause, against the utmost force of our enraged enemies, until they are brought to reason or ruin. For,

“ To the righteous, GOD is near,  
 “ And never will their cause forsake.”

THOUGH



**THOUGH GOD** is pleased to employ the wrath of our enemies, as a rod of correction, to punish us, for our sins ; and may permit them to proceed to great lengths, in the prosecution of their arbitrary and unrighteous schemes, in order to teach us righteousness, and make us pious and virtuous ; yet their conduct is nevertheless odious and abominable in his sight, and will not (as we have reason to believe) pass unpunished. We may therefore assure ourselves, that when we leave our sins, and become an obedient people, God will bring to nought all their mischievous designs, either by disposing them to peace, or by leaving them to follow the lead of their own haughty temper, until they plunge themselves into destruction. For God often turns the oppression of the oppressor upon his own head, and causes him, in the end, to fall into the pit which he digged for others. And a people, who have smarted under the cruel rod of oppression, may rationally expect this, when they are suitably prepared for salvation by repentance and reformation. For the most powerful and successful oppressors, are only rods of God's school (like the proud Assyrian beforementioned) and when he has answered the designs of his providence by them, he usually lets loose his wrath upon them, and punishes them for their arrogance, pride and mischievous ambition. The destruction which sometimes falls upon such men, is finely described in the fifteenth chapter of the book of Job, from the 31st verse to the end, which I will give you in the words of an elegant modern version :

" Woe to the man, who by oppression climbs,  
 " Drunk with successes, and secure in crimes;  
 " For bitter change shall come; untimely blast  
 " His boughs shall wither, and his fruit shall  
 (cast.

" As when the vine her half-grown berries  
 (shows,

" Or poison'd olive, her unfolding flowers.

" Know, all ye wicked, all ye venal crew,

" Your splendid tents the shulking bribe shall  
 (rue;

" A fire it kindles, and the flame supplies,

" Till the gay scene a dismal desert lies.

" See now oppression (and its boasted gain)

" Conceived, and usher'd into birth in vain;

" The flattering crime, which so much anguish  
 (bred,

" Turns all its plagues on its own parent's  
 head."

\* BEFORE I conclude, let me apply myself, in a few words to the militia of this town, who appear under arms, on this memorable occasion.

S I R S,

T H E manner of your observing this day, in commemoration of the commencement of the present war, the scene whereof, was first opened in this place, does you honor, as it gives an evidence, at once, of your piety, and of your patriotism and firm attachment to the cause of your country. With honest indignation we recollect the day, when the storm of British vengeance, which

which had been long gathering, first burst upon your heads, in the wanton massacre of several of your brave fellow citizens and soldiers. The memory of those, who have magnanimously jeopardated their lives, and shed their blood in their country's cause, will ever be dear to us. We particularly retain an honorable remembrance of those, who first fell a sacrifice to British wrath; and feel emotions of sympathy towards their surviving relatives, who cannot but be sensibly affected on this occasion. We would also join with you, in grateful acknowledgments to God, who mercifully checked the wrath of our enemies in its first eruptions, and caused it to recoil back on their own heads. We doubt not, but from the warmth of honest resentment; from a love of liberty and of your country, you will persevere to oppose and resist those insolent and haughty enemies, of whose wanton cruelty, you have had too melancholy a specimen, to permit you to expect much mercy at their hands, should they gain their point.

LET me now observe, that your appearing equipt in military armour, as soldiers prepared for war, naturally leads to reflections on the pernicious influence of those corrupt lusts of human nature, *from whence come wars.* They who would be glad to *live peaceably with all men,* are often unhappily forced into contention, and obliged to take arms, and engage in hazardous contests, in order to defend their lives and liberties, against the evil designs of unreasonable men, who when they suppose they have power and strength to accomplish

comply with their purposes, scruple not to give unbounded scope to their pride, covetousness and ambition ; which passions are mortal enemies to the rights of mankind, and the source of that slavery and cruel bondage, under which so many of the nations of the earth groan at this day.

A CONSIDERATION of the pernicious influence and effects of these corrupt lusts and passions should engage you and should engage us all, to mortify them in ourselves. For where they prevail, they not only lead to a conduct prejudicial to the peace and welfare of human society, but make men slaves in the worst sense, how much soever they may hate the name.

WHILE therefore, you are engaged with a laudable zeal in the cause of civil liberty, you will permit me to remind you, that there is another kind of liberty of an higher and nobler nature, which it is of infinite importance to every one to be possessed of ; I mean that glorious internal liberty, which consists in a freedom from the dominion of sin, and in the habit and practice of all the virtues of a good life. This is that noble and exalted liberty of the *sons of God*, of which our saviour speaks, when he says, *If the sons of God shall make you free, then shall ye be free indeed.* And this, once gained, will inspire you with the greatest magnanimity and fortitude, in the cause of outward liberty. *For the righteous are bold as lions.*

To conclude. Let us all, with that ardor and earnestness, which the importance of the thing requires, labour after this *glorious liberty of the sons of God*; that when we shall quit this tumultuous warring world, (having acted our parts well in it) we may be admitted to those peaceful mansions, where, free from strife and contention, and all the pernicious effects of ungoverned wrath and ambition, we shall enjoy a blessed immortality, in the tranquil uninterrupted possession of every felicity that our natures are capable of.

A M E N;

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