

A  
SERMON

Preach'd at

The Election of the GOVERNOUR,

AT

BOSTON

IN

New-England,

*May 19th 1669.*

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By JOHN DAVENPORT.

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2 Sam. 23. 3.

*The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.*



These words may be considered two ways; 1. As holding forth a Prophecy of the Kingdom of the Messiah, who is the Mediator, Surety, and Head of the Covenant of Grace, for his People. In which Covenant David comforted himself whatever decayes should befall him, or his house in after-times. 2. As holding forth a Rule for the choice and ordering of Rulers over men.

According to this consideration of the words, I purpose to handle them at this time, as best suiting with the present occasion. And so the words hold forth a Rule of Wisdom, whereunto the Lord teacheth his People to apply their hearts, in setting Civil Government according to God's Ordinance, so as they may expect the presence and blessing of God, through Jesus Christ with them, and upon the Commonwealth.

I shall sum up all in one Doctrinal Conclusion, which shall be this;

*That it is the Ordinance of God, in reference to Civil Government in Commonwealths, that some men orderly chosen should rule over other men: and in reference to the qualification of Rulers, that they be just, ruling in the fear of God.*

Which is twofold. 1. Concerning the thing; *that some men should rule over others.* 2. Concerning the qualification of the persons that are to rule; *that they be just, ruling in the fear of God.* In this way of his Ordinance you see, in my Text, both these are joyned together, and noted as the Ordinance of God, in the Trinity of Persons, God the Father said it, who is called *the God of Israel*, by vertue of his gracious Covenant with them: and God the Son spake it, who is stiled, *the Rock of Israel*, for that title is ascribed to Christ the Mediator, and second Person: *For they drank of the Spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.* 1 Cor. 10. 4.

And they both spake it to *David* by the third Person, the Holy Spirit, who spake by *David*, ver. 2. But I shall handle them severally.

1. The first, that in reference to Civil Order in the Commonweal, God hath ordained, That some men, orderly chosen, should rule over other men.

It is not my purpose to discourse of the severall Forms of Government, *Monarchical, Aristocratical, and Democratical*, nor to trouble you with the divers readings of the words, according to the Original, being content to handle them as they are translated, and read in all your Bibles. From whence the Doctrine is collected. And the first thing to be proved, is,

*That Power of Civil Rule, by men orderly chosen, is Gods Ordinance.*

For,

1. It is from the Light and Law of Nature, and the Law of Nature is God's Law.

2. The orderly ruling of men over men, in general, is from God, in its root, though voluntary in the manner of coalescing: It being supposed that men be combined in Family-Society, it is necessary that they be joyned in a Civil-Society; that union being made, the power of Civil-Government, and of making Laws, followeth naturally, though the manner of union, in a Political Body, is voluntary. That we defend our selves from violence and wrong, is a consequent of pure Nature: but that we do it by devolving our Power into the hands of Civil Rulers, this seems to be rather positively moral, than natural.

3. Because this special Form of Civil Government of Commonweales, by men orderly chosen, the Scripture ascribes unto God; and also Civil Government, administred by Judges and Magistrates, as Christ spake concerning *Pilate*, Joh. 19. 11. *Jesus answered, Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: and they are said to judge not for man, but for the Lord*, 2 Chron. 19. 6. hence they are called *Gods*, Psal. 82. 6, 7. as appointed by him, according to Christ's exposition of those words, *Job. 10. 35. If he calleth them Gods, unto whom the Word of God was given.* See what the Wisdom of God, which is Jesus Christ, saith in *Prov. 8. 15, 16. By me Kings reign, and Princes decree justice.*

*Object.* In *1 Pet. 2. 13, 14.* Civil Government by Civil Rulers is called a humane Ordinance, ἀνθρωπίνῃ κλίσει.

*Answ.* Not to shew that it is a meer humane invention, and no Ordinance of God: for that is contradictory to *Rom. 13. 1. The Powers that be, are ordained of God. ver. 2. and he that resisteth, resisteth the Ordinance of*

of God. But it is so called, 1. Because men are the subject recipient of this Power. So the Syriack expresseth it, *Leculum benai ausho*, Obey all sons of men that are in Authority. 2. Because the Choice hereunto is from God by men, *Dent. 1. 13. Bring you men of Wisdom, and of Understanding, and known among your Tribes, and I will make them Rulers over you.* 3. Because humane Concernments are the proper objects of it. *If 1 Cor. 6. 4. when ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them up which are least esteemed in the Churches.* 4. Because the good of humane Societies is the end of it. Therefore *Durandus*, in his Book, *De Origine Juris*, saith well, Civil Power, according to God's Institution is of God, and according to its acquisition and use, it is of man. And whereas *Peter* extends this subjection to two sorts of objects; to the King as Supream, and to other Governors as sent by him, for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well; He therefore establisheth the Ruling Power over men in all sorts of Magistrates, who may be said, to be sent by the King, either immediate (as some are sent by express designation of the Person to such an office) or mediately, by his Royal Charter given to Corporations, to choose from among themselves, such as they account fit for such a trust. This is our case, who have by Part from the King, liberty and power to chuse a Governour, and Deputy-Governour, and a limited Number of Assistants, invested with Magistratical Authority over the People. My Text saith, He that Ruleth over men, whether as Supream or Subordinate, as being sent by him upon the Peoples choice, must be just, ruling in the fear of the Lord: Therefore we must distinguish between Family-Rulers, and Commonwealth-Rulers: Family-Rulers, *viz.* Husbands and Parents, are the Ordinance of God, without designation of the Persons thereunto, by Commission from the King, or Election of the People: but it is not so with Rulers of the Commonwealth: For the designation of these, or those, to be Civil Rulers, leaving out others, is from God, by the Peoples free Choice, at least by the Suffrages of the major part of them, wherein the rest must acquiesce: This Power of Rulers of the Commonwealth is derived from the Peoples free Choice (therefore it is said in the Doctrine, being orderly chosen) for the Power of Government, is originally in the People, and that Three Wayes:

1. Radically and vertually, as in the first Subject. For these Reasons.

1. Because, if living Creatures have radically in them a power of self-preservation, to defend themselves from violence and wrongs; men united in Societies, being reasonable Creatures, must have that power in a more reasonable and honourable way, to put this power into the hands of Civil

Rulers

Rulers ; nor doth a Community, in chusing Civil Rulers, surrender so much their right and liberty to their Rulers, as their Power, both Active to do, and Passive to suffer unjust violence, so as the People shall not have Moral Power to do, or avenge injuries, *proprio Marte*, without punishment. 2. Because, if men United in a Civil Society, may give Magistratical Power to such and such, leaving out others ; ( then this Power was in this united Society ; but it was not in them *formally* (for then all should be Rulers) therefore this Power was in them only *virtually* ; for *Nemo dat quod non habet*, None can give that which they have not either formally, or virtually in themselves.

2. Communicatively, By way of free Donation ; the People giving to this or that man, and not to others, the Ruling Power over them. For,

1. In regular actings of the creature, God is the first Agent ; there are not two several and distinct actings, one of God, another of the People : but in one and the same action, God, by the Peoples suffrages, makes such an one Governour, or Magistrate, and not another. 2. God regulateth his People exercising their Power, in chusing such and such, and not others, to Rule over them ; therefore they have Power from God's Ordinance to do it : for none can regulate a *Non Ens*, nor will God by his Word regulate unwarrantable actions, as he doth this. *Exod 18.21. Moreover, provide thou among all the People men of courage, fearing God, men dealing truly, bating covetousness ; and appoint such over them, to be Rulers over thousands, Rulers over hundreds. &c. Deut. 1. 16, 17. And I charged your Judges, that same time, saying, Hear the Controversies between your Brethren, and judge righteously between every Man and his Brother, and the Stranger that is with him ; ye shall have no respect of persons in judgement, but shall hear the small as well as the great ; ye shall not fear the face of man, for the judgement is Gods, &c.*

3. Limitively ; For the People so give Magistratical Power unto some, as that still they retain in themselves these Three Acts, 1. That they may measure out so much Civil Power, as God in his Word alloweth to them, and no more, nor less. 2. That they may set bounds and banks to the exercise of that Power, so as it may not be exuberant, above the Laws, and due Rights and Liberties of the People. 3. That they give it out conditionally, upon this or that condition ; so as, if the condition be violated, they may resume their power of chusing another.

Thus you see the first part of God's Ordinance, concerning Civil Rule and Government in Commonwealths, by some orderly chosen thereunto. The second part of God's Ordinance in this matter, followeth, which is concerning the qualifications of such Rulers over men.

2. That, as to the qualifications of Rulers over other men, it is God's Ordinance, that they *be just, ruling in the fear of the Lord.*

1. They *must be just.* They are to be termed just, in the sense of this Text, whose wills are sanctified and inclined by the Spirit of God, to perform to men whatsoever is due to them according to the Rules of the Word. 1. The principal and efficient hereof, is the sanctifying Spirit: therefore it is said, the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness, and truth. 2. The proper subject recipient of this gift of Grace, is the sanctified will, into which it puts a bent and inclination unto righteousness. For the faculties of the Soul are not by nature bent to that which is good, but contrary; *Gen. 4. But unto Cain and his Offering he had no regard, wherefore Cain was exceeding wrath, and his countenance fell down.* There may be light in the understanding, shewing what is good, but that which inclineth to good must be in the will, *Rom. 7. 18, 22. For to will is present with me, but I find no means to perform that which is good: for I delight in the Law of God concerning the inner-man.* He is truly just, who acteth justly out of love to Righteousness; unjust men may do just actions, upon other motives, as *Absalom* pretended, *2 Sam. 15. 4. O that I were made Judge in the Land, that every man which hath any matter of Controversie might come to me, that I might do him right.* And the unjust Judge acted in *Luke 18. 4, 5. Though I neither fear God, nor love man, yet because this Widow troubleth me, I will do her right.* 3. The effect of it is the performance of whatsoever is due to men. Hence Children doing their duties to their Parents; is said to be just, *Eph. 6. 1. Children obey your Parents in the Lord, for this is right.* And of Servants to their Masters is said to be just and equal, *Col. 4. 1.* And all things due to men are performed by living righteously, *Tit. 2. 12.* Teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. 4. The Rule is, not mans corrupt Reasons and Affections, but the Scripture. *Mich. 6. 8. He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do Justice, and Judgment, and to walk humbly with thy God.* *2 Tim. 3. 16. All Scripture is given by inspiration from God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness.*

Thus Rulers over men must be just, 1. In their personal Conversation, else that may be applyed to them in *Rom. 2. 1, 3. Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that condemnest, for in that thou condemnest another thou condemnest thy self, for those that condemnest dost the same things; and thinkest thou this, O man, that condemnest them which*  
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*Eph. 5. 9.*

do such things, and dost the same things, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? 2. In their administration of Justice and Judgment towards all men impartially, and promised, *Psal. 72. 2. Then shall he judge thy People in righteousness, and thy Poor with equity.* This God required, *Exod. 18. 21. Moreover, provide thou among all the People, men of courage, fearing God, men dealing truly, hating covetousness. &c.* And Job practised, *Job. 29. 14. and Samuel pleaded, when the People would alter the frame of Civil Government, 1 Sam. 12. 3. Behold, here I am, bear record of me, before the Lord and before his Anointed; whose Ox have I taken? or whose Ass have I taken? or of whose hand have I received any bribe, to blind mine eyes therewith, &c. to the 6th vers.* Wherein he shewed, 1. His Integrity, in that he adjured them before the Lord. 2. His Modesty, 1, In that he speaks only negatively, that he had done them no wrong, though he could have spoken positively of much good they had received by his Government. 2, In that he mentioned the lesser things, Oxen, and Asses, implying, that much less had he wronged them in greater things.

2. *They must Rule in the fear of God;* Which contains in it all matters of Religion contained in the first Table of the Law, whereof the filial, reverential, obediencial fear of God is the summe and foundation and head-points; *Eccles. 12. 13. Let us hear the end of all; Fear God, and keep his Commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. 1 Prov. 7. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge:* The fear of God is a sanctifying gift of Grace, wrought by the Holy Ghost in the hearts of the Elect, proceeding from a right knowledge of God, whence they exalt him above all, and are inclined to the obedience of his revealed will in all things. 1. The fountain hereof is sanctifying Grace; therefore I call it a gift of Grace; *Let us have grace, whereby we may so serve God, &c.* 2. The principal efficient hereof is the Holy Ghost, *Isa. 11. 2. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him.* 3. The subject recipient of it is the heart of the Elect, *Jer. 32. 40. And I will make an everlasting Covenant with them, that I will never turn away from them to do them good, but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.* 4. The rise of it is from a right knowledge of God, *Jer. 22. 15, 16. Did not thy Father eat, and drink, and prosper, when he executed Judgment and Justice, when he judged the cause of the afflicted, and Poor, he prospered: was not this because he knew me, saith the Lord. 1. In his Sovereignty, Jer. 10. 6. 2, In his Immensity, Isa. 40. 15, &c. Behold the Nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the dust of the ballance, &c. 3. In his Omnipresence, Psal. 130. 7. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or, whither shall I flee from thy presence? 4. In his Justice; he*

*Deut. 1.  
16, 17.*

*Heb. 12.  
28.*

is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, *Hos. 3. 5.* & *Sam. Heb. 10. 12. 24.* 5: The property of it is, 1. To exalt God above all, as the highest object of our submission. *Prov. 22. 4.* By humility and the fear of the Lord, are riches, honour, and life. 2. Affiance, *Psal. 147. 11.* But the Lord delighteth in them that fear him. 3. Love, *Deut. 10. 12.* And now Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, and to serve him; and love him.

And God is thus exalted, 1. When his word prevaieth above all other words, *Isa. 66. 2.* To him will I look, even to him that is of an humble and contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. *Acts 5. 28, 29.* Did not we straitly command you, that you should not teach in this Name? Then Peter and the Apostles answered and said, We ought rather to obey God than Men. 2. When the Omnipresence of God, causeth us to approve our selves, and wayes, to him. *Gen. 17. 1.* I am God al sufficient, walk before me, and be thou upright. *Job 1. 5.* He sanctified his Sons, and offered burnt Offerings; for Job thought, It may be my Sons have sinned, and blasphemed God in their hearts. *Eccles. 8. 12.* Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and God prolong his dayes, yet I know it shall be well with them that fear the Lord, &c. 3. When the fear of God overcometh all carnal fears. *Dan. 3. 16, 17, 18.* Shadrach, Meshach, & Abednego, answered and said to the King, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter; behold, the God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, & he will deliver us out of thine hand, O King: but if not, be it known unto thee, O King, that we will not serve thy God, nor worship the golden Image which thou hast set up. *Heb. 11. 27.*

Hence follows, 1. A firm cleaving to God, in the obedience of Faith, *Deut. 10. 20.* Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, thou shalt serve him, and cleave to him. Thus they must fear God in their persons.

2. In their Families, *Psal. 101. 2.* I will do wisely in the perfect way till thou comest to me, I will walk in the uprightness of my heart, in the midst of mine house. Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in uprightness *Josh. 24.* and in truth, and put away the Gods which your Fathers served beyond the flood, and in Egypt, and serve ye the Lord. 14.

3. They must exercise it in their Civil Government in the Commonwealth, *Psal. 2. 10, 11.* Be wise now therefore ye Kings, be learned ye Judges of the Earth; serve the Lord in fear, and rejoyce in trembling, *Psal. 27. 5.*

III. These two, Justice and the fear of God, must be conjoynd by Gods Ordinance in Rulers over men, if they would have his presence, assistance, and blessing with them in their publick Administrations.



*Reas. 1.* From the order of the conjunction of Justice with the fear of God, which is as of the Effect with the Cause; therefore the fear of God is first to be exercised, and Justice is to be regulated by it. The Scripture plentifully shews what a strong and powerful influence and efficacy, the true fear of God exerteth in reference to all Moral duties among men; Moderation in *Joseph*, who would not abuse his publick Authority unto private revenge, giving this for his Reason, *I fear God*, Gen. 50. 19, 20. Mercy with the Midwives preserving the Male-Infants, *Exod. 1. 21.* Justice in Judges against Uivry and Oppression, *Neb. 5. 9.* and his different carriage from former Governours, in easing the People of burthensome Charges, what he could, *Psal. 14. 15.* against the prophaning of the Temple, and of the Sabbath, and neglect of the Priests and Levites, and the Marriages of strange Wives, *Chap. 13.*

2. *Chron.*  
6, 7.

*Reas. 2.* From the great Trust committed to Civil Rulers,

1. To do Justice, according to Scripture-Rules, *2 Chron. 19. 6, 7.*

*Rom. 13.*  
4.

2. To see that others do justly towards one another; *for he is the Minister of God for thy good, &c.*

3. To protect men in every good way. *1 Tim, 2. 2. Pray for Kings, and for all that are in Authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.*

4. To uphold the Churches walking in the order of the Gospel. *Isa. 49. 23. Kings shall be thy nursing Fathers, and Queens thy nursing Mothers, &c.*

5. Their End should be to exalt Christ in dispensing his Government in *Textu*, *Psal. 2. 10, 11. & 72. 1. to 18.*

*Use.*

*Exhortation.* 1. To the Freemen, who are entrusted by the Community, to chuse Magistrates by their suffrages, to follow the counsel of *Jethro to Moses*, *Exod. 18. 21. Moreover, provide thou among all the People, men of courage, men fearing God, hating covetousness, &c.* as *Moses* did, *vers. 25.* which also *Moses* gave to the Tribes, *Dent. 1. 13.*

*Motive. 1.* The choice of good Rulers will be a sign and pledge of Gods intendment to bless their Government and his People thereby. For when God gives Rulers, whom he intends to make a blessing to his People, they shall be such as are blessed of him in Christ for the good of that People, *Isa. 1. 25, 26. Then I will turn mine hand upon thee, and burn out thy dross, till it be pure, and take away all thy tinn; and I will restore thy Judges as at the first, and thy Counsellors: as at the beginning.* If this be neglected, the Government will not be blessed, and the welfare of the People will be ruined. But if Christ bless the Governours, he shall be our peace, whatsoever Enemies come against us, or rise up among us: And

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he shall be our peace, when *Asher* shall come into our Land, &c. he will *Mic. 5.* raise seven Shepherds, and eight principal Men, that shall be our Relief. *5, 6.* But you have no Instance in Scripture, that ever God was with a People to bless them, in a course of special Providence, when they that feared not God, were their Rulers, by their own consent and choice: Let Christ therefore have the preheminance in all things, and in your choice of Rulers for the Commonwealth; and in order thereunto, see that they whom you choose to be Rulers, be men interessed personally in Christ: For when they that are called to Ruling Power, cease to exert it in subserviency to the Kingdom of Christ, there will be an end of *New-England's* Glory, and Happiness, and Safety.

*Mot. 2.* You must submit to their Authority, and perform all duties to them, whom you have chosen to be your Rulers, whether they be good or bad, by vertue of the Relation between them and you; So Wives to their Husbands, though Unbelievers, *1 Cor. 7. 13.* And Servants to their Masters though froward, *1 Pet. 2. 18.* Therefore as this should Caution Women and Youngmen to beware of chusing bad Husbands, and Masters; so, and much more, it should Caution you in your choosing publick Rulers, if you mind the publick or private good of yours.

*Mot. 3.* If men unjust, and that fear not God, be chosen Rulers of the Common-wealth, all the People are in danger of being punished by the wrath of God for the sins of their Rulers; Bad men being in publick place, will give bad counsel to corrupt Religion, *Ezek. 11. 1, 2.* *Fazaniab* and *Palatiah*, Princes of the People, are said to be the men that imagine mischief, and devise wicked counsel in the City; the end will be ruine. See when the men of *Shechem* chose a bramble, *Abimelech*, to be their Ruler, see *Judg. 9. 2, 14, 15, 23, 52, 53.* The sins of *Ferobeam*, and of those that succeeded him, their corrupting Religion, ruined not only their own Families, but also all *Israel*, which was threatned, *1 King. 14. 15.* For the Lord shall smite *Israel* as when a Reed is shaken in the Water, and he shall weed *Israel* out of this good Land, which he gave to their Fathers, and shall scatter them beyond the River, because they have made groves, provoking the Lord to anger. The same besel *Judah* for the sins of *Manasseh*, *Jer. 15. 4.* And for the sins of other Rulers, by corrupting Religion, and unrighteous dealings, whereof the Prophets complained.

*Exhort. 2.* To those, who by the consent of the Freemen, are according to Gods Ordinance, to be invested with Magistratical Power and Authority, to observe *Moses* his Charge to the Judges, *Deut. 1. 16, 17.* And I charged your Judges that same time, saying, Hear the Controversies between your Brethren, and judge righteously, &c. and *Jehoshaphats*,

Use

2 Chron. 19.9, 10. Be wise therefore ye Rulers, and consider that your Life, and all our Good, your Prosperity and Protection lies, not in this or that Politick design, or whatsoever else under the Sun, but alone in Gods gracious Presence with you, *Psal. 4.6,7.* Oh! provoke him not to depart from us, but seek the continuance of his presence with us, and fix your thoughts on the things which tend to assure Gods special providential Presence with us. The things incumbent on you, in order hereunto, are such as respect either Persons or Things; my desire is to speak in love to the Truth and Peace.

1. *For Persons:* Provide for the Protection, Encouragement, and Liberty of all those whom God owneth to be his People, that fear him; take care that they be not trodden under foot, nor swallowed up, nor exposed to the rage and contempt of men; only for those that walk orderly, and peaceably, not offensively to one or other, or to the Church of God; though they differ from others in their Apprehensions and Perswasions, though misguided; yet are willing to receive Light in Gods way and time: These are to God as the Apple of his Eye, and let their Safety be also to you. Be not ready to receive ill reports against them. *Jer. 20.10. Report say they, and we will report, &c. Psal. 15.3.* nor receiveth a false report against his neighbour, *1 Tim. 1.19.*

2. *For Things:* They are either the things of God, or the things of Men: 1. *For the things of God;* the publick Profession and Practice of Religion, which is in great danger by two extreams; misguided Zeal, and Formality: Let the Honourable Court therefore approve themselves to Rule in the fear of God, by their personal knowing, embracing, and obeying the Gospel of Christ; and by their protecting the Churches that are orderly gathered, and walk according to Gospel-Rules, from the violence and injuries of their opposers, remembering that dreadful threatning, *Isa. 60. 12. For the Nation and the Kingdom, that will not serve thee, shall perish, &c.*

I shall add a few Caveats. 1. Take heed of a various management of matters of Religion, to the advantage of the present postures and condition of your Civil Affairs. The things of Christ should be as *Josephs* Sheaf, to which all other should bow. When they are made to cringe and bend to mens Policies, they are no longer the things of Christ: All Gods Truths are Eternal and Unchangeable by men: Give them all at once the sovereignty of your Souls, and have not the least thought of making them bend to serve your worldly ends, but cleave to the Truth of the Precepts, and live by the Truth of the Promises; for  
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performance whereof, the God of Truth hath engaged his Alſufficiency.

2. Take heed and beware that you deprive not any Inſtituted Chriſtian Church, walking according to Goſpel Rules, of the Power and Priviledges which Chriſt hath purchaſed for them by his precious blood, and given unto them, *Mat. 16. 19.* God calls Civil Rulers to protect and preſerve ſuch Churches; if he hath given them liberty, and you ſubject them to bondage; if he hath given them power in their proper concerns within themſelves, and you countenance and uphold others to exerciſe power over the Churches, in ſuch things to whom Chriſt never gave ſuch power; you will have a ſad reckoning. Remember *Feptab's Argument*, againſt the encroachments of the *Amonites* upon the Rights of *Israel*, *Judg. 11. 14.*

3. Avoid carefully impoſing upon the Churches any thing that Chriſt hath not put upon them, *viz.* 1. Mens Opinions, eſpecially when they are ſuch as prevailed in an hour of Temptation, though conſented to by the major part of a Topical Synod, yet diſliked by ſome of themſelves, and by other godly Miniſters, both in this Countrey, and in other Countries, ſo that they are things Controverted and under Diſpute. Impoſe not ſuch things upon Churches, leſt Contentions ariſe in the Churches about Opinions, which are no part of the Faith once given to the Saints, for which we are called to contend earneſtly, *Jude 3.*

2. A ſtanding Council, for which we find no warrant in the New-Teſtament, nor Example in the Primitive Churches, nor in Succeeding Ages, for ſome hundred years after Chriſt. Nor is it ſafe for the Churches, which are thereby ſubjected under an undue Power out of the Church, which under a pretence — of helping the Church with their Light, bereave them of their Power; *in re propria*, binding them to reſt in their Decisions, and to praſtiſe accordingly. As for occaſional Councils, two extreams muſt be avoided. 1. A total rejecting Councils: For, when the need of any Church requireth ſuch helps, through want of Light, or of conſent within it ſelf, in weighty and difficult queſtions, it is their Liberty, and Prudence, and Duty, voluntarily to ſeek help from others choſen by that Church, being approved for their Orthodoxy, and Faithfulneſs to Chriſt, and to his Cauſe, and Intereſt; And when their Counſel is given, it is the Duty of the ſaid Church to try it by the Scripture; and if it be found to agree with the Oracles of God, to acquieſce in it, elſe not; according to that Rule, *1 Theſ. 5. 21.*

2. A preferring the Judgment of a Council when it ſuits with mens own minds, wills, and ends, above any Light for the contrary, though it be held forth from the Word of God, ſo as to reſt in what the Council ſaith, without conſidering whether it be according to the holy Mind and Will of God, declared

clared in the Scriptures. This is an abuse of Councils, which hath sharpened the Pens of Godly Learned men in their Writings against it, not only against Popish Councils, which bind People to receive their Superstitious Devices and Inpositions, as matters of Faith; but against other Councils, which have too peremptorily and absolutely obtruded their own Determinations without Scripture-proof. Hence *Luther* affirmed of the first general Council at *Nice* (which was accounted the best) That he understood not that the Holy Ghost speak in it; and that the Canons and Articles thereof, were but Hay, and Straw, and Stubble. And *Beza* (in his Preface to the New-Testament) saith, That such was the folly, ignorance, and ambition of many Bishops, in the best times, that you would have supposed the Devil to have been President in their Assemblies. And, long before these, *Nazianzen* complained, That he never saw good end of any, and resolved never to come at them more; yet he lived under the good Emperour *Theodosius*. When Councils seek to please themselves and other men, more then to serve Christ, their Conclusions will be answerable to their scope. Hence the German Interim was agreed upon by sundry Ministers to please the Emperour, but other Orthodox Ministers dissented, and wrote against it. The Synod in *England*, under the Prelacy, published Superstitious Ceremonies; against which many godly learned Ministers wrote, and were silenced; who are, to this day, called, *The good Old Nonconformists*: The late Reverend Teacher, to re-establish a Church, published a Catechism for the Children of it, wherein he taught them concerning the Power of Councils; that the Question is carried to the Council, but the Cause still remaineth in and with the Church. This shall suffice, for the present, to have been spoken to the Care that the Honourable Court is to Exercise about the *things of God*. The next things to be spoken to briefly, are the things of men; they are righteous Administrations of Justice in matters of this Life. These wheels also you are to set going. 1. If upon revisal of your Body of Laws any one be found to be unjust and oppressing, let it be expunged, and altered; And for those that are good, provide for good execution. 2. Let the soveraign Dictates of Nature, be constantly attended by you, which Christ notes to be the sum of all Moral Duties, in the two Tables, *Quod tibi fieri non vis, alteri ne faceris*, Mat. 7.12. Would you enjoy peace and liberty in Professing and Practising according to the Rules of the Word, as you are perswaded; let others also that fear God, and walk orderly and justly, and peaceably with them, enjoy the like Peace and Civil Liberties, lest other Rulers be encouraged by your Example, to measure to us again, with what measure we mete unto others, they accounting, as we do them.

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This is threatned in *Mat. 7. 2.* I shall conclude with a brief reminding you of the first beginning of this Colony of the *Massachusetts*, which I have the better advantage, and more special engagement to do; being one of them, by whom the Patent, which you enjoy, was procured; and to whom it was committed, by King *Charles* the first, and His Majesties most Honourable Privy Council. My Name was not mentioned in the Patent, because I desired it might be left out, lest the then Bishop of *London*, who was of the Privy Council, should have an ill eye upon me for my appearing so far in that work, whereunto he was opposit: but in expences for any Helps to promote the Work, in the first beginnings of it, I bore my part, meerly for the service of Christ, and for the help of his People, I not knowing that ever I should remove unto these parts, by vertue of that Patent. When it was obtained, and committed to us, we were made a Corporation for *New-England*, and accordingly acted, in fundry Meetings, and chose Mr *Endicot* to be the first Governour, and sent him hither; and for his encouragement, we gave him an House at *Salem*, which was built for the use of the Corporation in *London*; and he carried with him two Ministers. The next year the Corporation in *London*, understanding that honourable Mr *Winthrop*, inclined to remove himself and Family to *New-England*, chose him to be Governor, who came to *Boston*, and with him we sent the Patent, to prevent future inconveniencies; and God blessed it to that end, as it appeared soon afterward. In the first General Court, after his Arrival, the Civil Order was settled in a Select Company of Free Planters, such as were accounted most fit to manage publick Trust, to Christ's Ends; these choose a Governour, and Deputy-Governour, and a limited number of Assistants, invested with Magistratical Power, and Deputies from the respective Plantations, according to the Patent, which gave liberty to order Civil Affairs, as they found best. Churches also were gathered in a Congregational way, and walked therein, according to the Rules of the Gospel, with much peace and consent among themselves, which that now blessed Servant of Christ, Mr *John Cotton*, the first Teacher to this Church, so approved, that he wrote unto me, being then in *Holland*, to encourage my coming to *New-England*, that the Order of the Churches and of the Commonwealth was so settled, by common Consent; that it brought to his mind, the New Heaven and New Earth, wherein dwells Righteousness, advising me to come hither free from Engagements to others. But Satan, in a short time, stir'd up Strifes and Dissentions, to the great disturbance of the Churches and of the Countrey, which God at last mercifully quieted; nor hath the Gospel come unto you empty handed, but  
hath

hath brought unto you in its right hand, Spiritual Good Things, through Jesus Christ, with Eternal Salvation to those that believe in him; And in its left hand, Riches, and Honour, with Protection and Deliverances from Enemies of all sorts. Now therefore take heed and beware, that the Lord may not have just cause to complain of us, as he did of those in *Jer. 2. 21. & Rev. 2. 4.* lest you lose by Gods punishing Justice, what you received from his free Mercy, lest he remove the golden Candle-sticks, and the burning and shining Lights in them, as he hath already done many eminent Lights; and wo to them from whom the Gospel is removed, for their abusing it, and the Messengers of it. Would you yet see good dayes, and enjoy good things as in times past? Obey the counsel that the Spirit gave to the Church at *Ephesus*, *Rev. 2. 5.* And to the Angel of the Church in *Sardis*, *Rev. 3. 2, 3.* And take the course that *Jehoshaphat* took, and was blessed therein, and all *Judah* with him, *1 Chron. 17. 3.* The Lord was with *Jehoshaphat*, because he walked in the first wayes of his Father *David*: And see that your fruitfulness, in good, answereth the cost & pains that God hath been at with you in his Vineyard, lest the Lord be provoked to deal with us, as he did with his ancient Vineyard, *Isa. 5.* from the first to the eight verse.

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