
Mr. *Hitchcock's*

S E R M O N.

December 22d, 1774.

4
S E R M O N

P R E A C H E D

A T

P L Y M O U T H

December 22d, 1774.

Being the Anniversary Thanksgiving, in
Commemoration of the first Landing
of our New-England Ancestors in
that Place, Anno Dom. 1620.

B Y

GAD HITCHCOCK, A. M.

PASTOR OF THE SECOND CHURCH IN PEMBROKE.

B O S T O N : Printed and Sold by EDES and
GILL, in Queen-Street. 1775.

At a Meeting of the Town of Plymouth, assembled and held at the Court-house in said Town, December 29, 1774. Voted that Col. Theophilus Cotton, Messrs. Isaac Lothrop, and Ephraim Spooner, be a Committee to wait on the Rev. Gad Hitchcock, with the Thanks of this Town for his ingenious and learned Discourse, delivered on the 22d Instant, being the Anniversary of the Landing of our Fathers in this Place, and request a Copy for the Press.

A true Copy of Record,
Attest. *Ephraim Spooner*, Town Clerk.

A
S E R M O N.

Genesis I. 31.

*And God saw every thing that he had made, and
behold, it was very good.*

*Psal. 119th, 134th ver. Deliver me from the oppres-
sion of man : So will I keep thy precepts.*

BEING assembled in the house of worship, which is erected on the ruins of paganism, and where satan's seat once was ; to commemorate the arrival of our illustrious ancestors, under the auspices of Heaven, to this new world ; and to improve an event astonishing in its rise, and progress, and in every gradation and circumstance, wearing the signatures of the divine care and providence, for the purpose of raising in our breasts sentiments of piety and gratitude towards God ; the two passages of sacred writ now read, though of a dissimilar nature and aspect, may not be unsuitably chosen for the foundation of our design.

My reverend brethren, who have gone before me on this occasion, having refreshed your memory with several historic facts, relative to the removal of our fore-fathers, through great impediment,

M

diment, and hazard, by means of the merciless rage, and cruelty of their persecutors, from England, to Holland ; their first settlement at Amsterdam ; afterwards at Leyden, and their return to England, with resolutions, by the will of God, to pursue their voyage, with all convenient speed, over the Atlantic, to the uncultivated regions of America ; and their landing on these distant and then savage shores, in a cold and inclement season ; actuated by the same principles, that at first induced them to abandon their fair inheritance in their own country, and seek an asylum from the illiberal persecuting spirit of their fellow citizens, in the more peaceful climes of a neighbouring state.

I shall not therefore risque the censure of this grave and intelligent audience, if I excuse myself from the repetition of such interesting particulars, and invite their attention to that part of the inspired word proposed for our present consideration ; which, however, I trust, will lead us to employ our minds in sentiments not altogether foreign from the intention of this anniversary.

The first passage, in accommodation to human conception and practice, represents the supreme Being, as reviewing his works, after they were finished ; and being satisfied when he saw his plan compleated ; and that every thing He had made, every class and order of beings, and each individual, in regard to the diversity of their rank, power, propensity and pursuits, perfectly corresponded to the original model formed in his own mind. *God saw every thing that He had made, and behold it was very good,* framed according to his purpose, and endued with every capacity, and quality, to answer the end of it's creation.

Among

Among the works of God, man holds a place of distinguished rank, and dignity; being made in the divine Image, and invested with dominion and superiority over the rest of the creatures. “ The change of phrase, and the manner of expression used, at the formation of man, it has been observed, denotes that he is the chief, and most perfect of the works of God, in this lower world”.

It is beside our design to enquire particularly, what is intended by the Image of God, in which man was at first created; about which divines have held some different opinions: But as it cannot imply less than pre-eminence of nature, and vastly superior endowments both of body and mind, as well as dominion, above any of those works which God pronounced very good; we shall dismiss the consideration of other natures, and confine our attention to his.

As God designed such a creature as man should exist at the head, and as Lord of this world; having prepared the way, and provided for his regular exercise and entertainment, by the previous formation of the earth, and the great variety of things both of the animal and vegetable kind that replenish and adorn it; his almighty fiat spake him into being.

In his exalted station, he was happy in the favour and approbation of his Creator; the superior principle of reason, and moral sense with which he was endowed, rendered him capable of discharging the duties of it; and behaving with that propriety, and dignity, as should redound to the divine glory, and his own progress, and advantage.

He had a capacity to improve in natural and moral science, and perfection; his appetites and
passions

passions were controulable by the superior principles of his nature, and his propensities carried him into acts of love, gratitude and obedience towards God. By observing the law of his nature, and those positive precepts which perfect wisdom saw fit to subjoin, he was able to make high advances in moral rectitude and happiness, and continue in the smiles and benediction of his maker.

He was a moral agent, endowed as it is commonly expressed, with freedom of will, or a self-determining power, in regard to such volitions and actions as form the moral character, and beget a likeness to the divine purity, or the contrary.

Liberty was an essential principle of his constitution, a natural quality, and a necessary spring, and incentive to all virtuous improvement.

His right to use the things provided for the supply of his necessities, or convenience, was derived from the divine grant, either explicitly made, or discovered by the light of his own understanding; subject to no restraint, but the law of his nature, which was not only consistent with, but the perfection of Liberty; obligation to obey the laws of the Creator, being only a check to licentiousness, and *abuse*.

He could not reasonably desire any change in his state, or any of his circumstances, but what his progress in holiness, and in the several pious, and social affections, would to the advantage of his felicity, necessarily produce.

Had he persevered in his natural rectitude, and attachment to God, and obedience to his laws, of which he was made capable; and posterity descended from him in his own likeness; angry contentions,

tentions, oppression, and cruelty which now take place, and are the sources of so much havock and misery to the human race, would not have been known in the world.

Government of some sort, adapted to the human nature and circumstances, would indeed, probably, have been instituted among them, as from many passages of scripture we have reason to think it is among the Angels themselves ; but there would have been no such laws as are made for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners.

It is perhaps, necessary to the order and happiness of all created intelligences, whose understanding must be limited, to have government among them ; though we need not enquire, whether in regard to created spirits, who have no bodily wants to supply, it ought to be distinct from, or more positive, than the original laws of their nature ?

To such beings, however, it seems necessary it should, who require bodily support and convenience, and who from their situation, and condition are capable of acquiring distinct and private property. This would have been the case with man, had he continued innocent, and become numerous, as it now is in his fallen and depraved state.

Disputes might and probably would sometimes arise, in regard to personal rights and property ; not, indeed, as now from the depravity of our affections, but meerly from the imperfection of knowledge ; which must be settled by some known rules, or laws established by the consent of the whole : otherwise property would in

some instances, remain precarious, and undetermined.

As there would however, be no evil inclination, or design in any individual, or suspicion of it in others, to invade the property, retain the rights, or check the liberty of any; and as these disputes would take place in consequence only of those errors of the memory, misapprehension and mistake to which the human mind, from its natural imbecility, tho' innocent, must be liable; they would always be issued in the most amicable manner, and to the entire satisfaction of the parties; and every one left to the free exercise of the gifts of nature, and the unmolested enjoyment of the bounties of providence.

Making daily progress in natural and moral perfection, dignity and happiness; of which in this state of things, mankind could not fail, they would proportionably fulfil, and always be fulfilling the wise and good end of their Creation.

With great propriety, therefore, might God on the review of the make of man, finding how admirably he was qualified to answer such a purpose, and to live in perpetual freedom and happiness, be represented saying, as in our text, *Behold it is very good.*

Such was the primitive state of man—happy in the divine image and favor, and in the purity and freedom of his own faculties.

But alas! how changed! what a reverse of things did he undergo at the fall! when he violated the law of his maker, given for the trial of his fidelity and obedience, and commenced rebel against God, what foul abuse did he make of the divine presence, and favour! what a sinful

ful nature ! What irregular propensities ! What strong untoward and eccentric appetites and passions were introduced into his constitution ! and how by one man's disobedience were many made sinners, and brought under the condemnation of the righteous law of God !

Mankind, however, though fallen into a disordered, and perverted state, were not suffered to perish in consequence of the one transgression ; but the fore-ordained grace of God counteracted the effects of it, by bringing forward a new, and happy dispensation, founded on the obedience and righteousness of Jesus Christ.

What marvellous designs of wisdom, and love had God our heavenly Father, in view, for a lost world ! and how ought our hearts to be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father and of Christ !

The rational faculties of the human mind, though sadly darkened, and indisposed to moral and religious performances, were not destroyed ; the passions, though depraved, were not eradicated : In every idea of the soul, but its primitive purity and rectitude, there remained the essential properties of humanity ; particularly the love of Liberty ; which is an original passion, not merely innocent, but requisite both before and since the fall, to all virtuous exertions, and happy enjoyments, though now extremely liable to abuse by ourselves, and restraint from our fellowmen.

In whatever view the principle of Liberty be considered, or by whatever name distinguished,

Whether by natural or moral, Civil or religious Liberty ; it has its rise from nature ; and it appears to be the will of God that mankind should possess it, in each of these senses.

Civil liberty is indeed, immediately derived from human compact, and founded on civil government ; but it more properly, though remotely, proceeds from nature, as it is the voice of reason that men, for the greater security of their persons and property, and the promotion of their happiness, should form into society, and establish government among them.

Considering men as being already so formed, I shall hereafter speak of liberty chiefly as it relates to their civil and religious affairs ; though it will be difficult to discourse without sometimes blending the other senses with it ; which I shall not be very careful to avoid.

The beneficial improvement both of our civil and religious rights depends on liberty.

Matters that pertain to conscience, and the worship and service of God, and the preparation of our Souls for another world, are the objects of religious liberty ; and those things that relate to our present security and happiness in civil government, are the objects of civil liberty.

In this manner civil and religious liberty, are usually distinguished ; but as there is a connection between those blessings which tend to our present happiness, in civil government, and those, which are necessary to lay the foundation of that which is future and eternal, and as conscience is really concerned in both ; and men can no more, without offending God, and violating the laws of society, resign, or neglect the former, than the

the latter ; these two senses of liberty seem so far to intermix, and in a sort become one.

The human mind is so framed by its wise author, as to be greatly susceptible of disadvantageous impressions in regard to its moral state and acts of worship, from the restraints of our civil liberty, which must be allowed to be an undeniable argument that such restraints are contrary to the will of God.

Of this the royal Psalmist was deeply sensible, and it gave rise to his prayer, contained in the other passage which has been read.—*Deliver me from the oppression of man, so will I keep thy precepts—*

This is an experimental declaration of one who was disposed to worship God and keep his precepts, of the extream difficulty of doing so, to any considerable advantage, while deprived of civil liberty, and oppressed, and borne down, by the superior force and cruelty of lawless persecutors.

The case of our venerable New-England forefathers, who suffered so much at home, in the reign of James the first, was in many respects similar to this, and an exemplification of the truth of it. Things did not pass well with them, either in church or state ; they were treated with rigour, and denied the liberty of the Gospel, and the enjoyment of the ordinances of God in their purity, by laws and mandates from both.

Mr. Robinson's church in particular, the seed whence this church grew, and many others have since branched, "was extremely harrassed ; some cast into prison, some beset in their houses, and some forced to leave their farms, and families", as has been witnessed by one, who was no
small

small sharer in their sufferings, both in old England, and New.

And to their pious zeal, love of liberty, and magnanimity is it chiefly owing, under the smiles and guidance of providence, that the wilds of America are now so immensely occupied by civilized and christian inhabitants.

The royal Psalmist had before prayed, in the verse preceeding our text, against all inward hindrance of duty and obedience; such as arose from evil inclination, and corrupt affections,—*Order my steps in thy word, says he, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.*

But sensible of another, and common temptation to transgression, and the neglect of God, he prays against this also in the text,—*Deliver me from the oppression of man; so will I keep thy precepts.*

This he considers as a great outward impediment in the way of his duty; but at the same time he was so well perswaded of the disposition of his own heart, as to think if it was but removed, and he was delivered out of the hands of them that oppressed him, he should go on in an even chearful course of obedience to the precepts of God; though under his present circumstances, from the restraint of his liberty, it was impossible for him to do it, according to his mind and conscience.

If we take into consideration the effects produced by oppression in the human mind,—the evil consequences of it to society, and the abatements of happiness it occasions to individuals; or consult the sacred oracles, and the several dispensations of God towards mankind; we shall find

that that it has been his design all along, to discountenance oppression in its various forms, and encourage and promote liberty in the world.

From our natural notions of the divine character, besides what we are taught by revelation, it may be argued, that the communication of happiness, in co-incidence with his own glory, was the great end proposed by God in the creation of man.

He designed we should be happy in both worlds; and accordingly by our internal frame and furniture, and outward enjoyments, we are provided with all the materials that are necessary for this purpose; we are constituted with liberty, as well to exercise and improve our rational faculties, as to make use of the blessings and liberalities of providence.

By the principle of liberty, which is the spring and animation of our rational exertions, we maintain our supremacy among the creatures of this lower world, which otherwise would annoy us; and by it we taste the sweets of the good things of life, and improve in piety and virtue, in divine and social affections, in natural and moral science, and in all those arts and accomplishments, which perfect and adorn human nature, and make men happy.

It is, however, subject to great impediment and diminution, from various causes, but from none more, except our own lusts, than the oppressions of our fellowmen.

Though the devil is the grand tyrant of mankind, yet if we resist him, he will flee from us; but the oppression of man may be so established, and triumphant, as to admit no hope, either of overcoming it by our own strength, or escaping out of its hands.

And

And when this is the case, it produceth the worst effects in the human mind. It breaks its force, enervates and obscures its faculties, cramps the spirits, destroys emulation, and snaps the sinews of every exalted and virtuous design.

The tempers, and dispositions of men are strangely vitiated and changed by oppression. The brave and enterprising grow irresolute and spiritless—the social and human, turn sullen, unfeeling and vicious—the wicked pass on to higher degrees of enormity, and the righteous decay ; obstructed in their course of obedience, they become heartless and unimproving.

The blessings of life—the means of natural, civil and moral improvements—the peace and tranquility of society, and the prospects of future happiness, are greatly disturbed and diminished by it. And when it is carried to its extremity, and begets confirmed slavery, like soil prepared to invigorate its proper seed, it is productive of many species of vice : Falshoods, thefts, and intemperance grow out of it ; which is a demonstrative proof that the benevolent Creator never formed the human nature for oppression, or originally designed it should be subject to it.

On the contrary, it is introduced at the door of sin ; and is, at once, promoted by the general depravity, and promotive of it.

Whereas liberty is innate, and original ; the plant of our heavenly Father ; liable indeed, like other original principles to neglect or abuse from ourselves and others ; but under proper nurture and guidance, capable of accomplishing noble and beneficent purposes.

tical evils, and continue the enjoyment of the blessing of liberty, in this new world.

And may we all have wisdom to improve it, for the advantageous purposes it is calculated to accomplish, in the diligent and faithful study of the holy Scriptures, and in cultivating the universal temper of piety and humanity; hereby enlarging the foundation, both of our present and future happiness: For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men; as free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of malicioulnets, but as the servants of God.

Liberty is the grand preservative of public spirit, and incentive to private virtue. How far soever the spirit of liberty has been, and still is crushed and borne down by mighty tyrants, the nimrods of the earth, it is happy for mankind that some of it yet remaineth in the world.

To this invigorating principle, are chiefly to be attributed those high advances in natural and moral philosophy, and those useful discoveries in civil and common life, which go far towards improving and embellishing human nature.

“ It, says a fine writer, elegance comes short of the just standard, and is not yet arrived at its proper maturity, human life must necessarily be deprived of the enjoyment of many conveniences, of which it is capable, and the manners of mankind must incline towards fierceness and superstition. If carried no farther than the just limit, it produces a more commodious method of living, gives rise to the invention of many true refinements, heightens the splendor and magnificence of society, tends to render mankind social and humane, begets mildness and moderation in
the

the tempers and actions of men, and helps to banish ignorance and superstition out of the world; and thus far it contributes to the perfection of human society”.

Liberty is requisite to the growth of every good seed in a commonwealth.

While men are free they have suitable encouragement and spirit to improve in the arts of commerce and government, as well as those of common life—they investigate new arts, and cultivate the old—they contrive methods of just refinement—they study how errors may be rectified, and defects supplied, and how things of real use may be perfected, and rendered more excellent—they go the round of their daily occupations with alacrity, and review their enjoyments with pleasure, and thus enterprize great schemes for the good of society.

Far from confining their views to their own times, and the emoluments of the present age, or the narrow circle of a few in any, they extend them to future periods, and lay foundations of improvement and magnificence for generations yet unborn.

Animated by the spirit of liberty, men are led to attempt great things, in the day of small things; and according to their limited and very imperfect capacity and manner, to imitate the works of God himself; to whom a thousand years are as one day, “Who has an immensely large, progressive scheme, consisting of many under parts, and intermediate steps; all placed in their proper periods, and each rising upon the past, and the whole conducted in that regular gentle manner, which is best suited to the moral government of a world of intelligent free agents, and most

most becoming a Being of infinite wisdom, and goodness”.

From such hints, which will probably be more largely considered by some successor, may be justly argued, that God made man to be free; and that in proportion as they have lost their liberty in any true sense, the benevolent purposes of the creator have some how, been impiously and injuriously counteracted in the world.

We shall come to the same conclusion if we examine the accounts of the holy scriptures: It is manifest from the dealings of God with mankind, recorded in them, that he has from the beginning, had a regard for liberty, and that tyrants, and oppressors, have been the objects of his abhorrence.

Oppression and tyranny began to work in early ages, in the person and family of Cain, and spread abroad its baneful influence, and pernicious effects among men; and when at length, by the unlawful mixtures of *Seth's* family with his elder brothers, the whole world became corrupt; and injustice, tyranny, and oppression prevailed; God manifested his displeasure against those giants in wickedness, by involving the whole human race, eight persons excepted, in one common ruin.

The miraculous deliverance of the children of *Israel* from the Egyptian Bondage, is a very signal instance of God's appearing in favour of liberty, and frowning on tyrants; and it shews how much he regards the rights of his people, and in how exemplary a manner, hard hearted tyrants, and merciless oppressors, sometimes feel his vengeance.

He had pity on his people, toiling in the service, and for the benefit of strangers, and groaning under the unreasonable weight of their burdens ; and he came down and set them free.

It ought not to be forgotten, that this was done, at a time, and in a manner peculiarly calculated and intended, to be a terror and warning to the remotest nations, and all future oppressors.

In what strains of paternal tenderness, on the one hand, and indignation on the other, is the divine Being represented as speaking, on this occasion ? I have surely seen the affliction of my people, which are in *Egypt*, and have heard their cry, by reason of their task-masters ; for I know their sorrows, and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians.

The same thing is further confirmed by the nature of the civil government of the *Jews*.

After they had been delivered out of the house of bondage, God saw fit to institute a certain form of mixed government among them, under which they were to be restored to the knowledge and practice of true religion, and the possession of their natural rights and liberties. This form was proposed to the consideration of the people, and they gave their full consent to it, and it was in all respects a free government.

The spirit of liberty breathed in every part, and was supported, defended, and promoted, by its whole constitution.

Wise laws were enacted for the preservation of Liberty, and the administration of Justice through the whole nation, and “ as their lands were to descend to their posterity, and were alienable but for a limited time, a proper and
natural

natural foundation was hereby laid, for keeping up the balance of power among the several tribes, the security of the liberty of the body of the people, and the rights of each individual. ”

From express prohibitions of oppression, and of the sale of any Israelite for a bondman ; from the release of debtors, the restoration of lands to their original owners, the general freedom of servants on sabbatical years, and times of rejoicing celebrated among the Jews, in commemoration of their deliverance out of Egypt, for all which things, particular statutes were ordained ; we may see how admirably their government was calculated to keep alive a spirit of liberty, and inspire them with the love of it.

At the time of their withdraw from the government of Jehovah, when they unwisely and ungratefully desired a change in their political state, and to come under the power of earthly Kings, God did not forsake them ; but on the contrary, manifested his concern for their welfare, and let them know how far, and in what respects, if they proceeded, they would be likely to be deprived of their liberties, by ordering a description of the manner of their King to be laid before them : He will take your sons and appoint them for himself ; for his chariots, and to be his horsemen ; and some shall run before his chariots— and he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captain over fifties, and will set them to eat his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots ; and he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers— and he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your olive yards, even the best of them,

and

and give them to his servants ; and he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers and to his servants, and he will take your men servants, and your maid servants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work, he will take the tenth of your sheep, and ye shall be his servants.

This is not a description of what their Kings would have any right or just authority to do ; but of what their practice would be ; if, as they requested, they had a King like the other nations ; unmindful of the common good, the only end of civil authority, they would treat their subjects injuriously, and make use of them and of their wealth for their own aggrandisement and evil design, divesting them of that liberty, which they so happily enjoyed, under their former government.

The evident traces of the spirit of liberty, discoverable in the writings of the succeeding Prophets, and running through them ; the frequent denunciations of the divine judgments against tyrants, and oppressors, the names and images by which they characterise them, their predictions of their final overthrow, and of a time approaching before the end of the world, when righteousness and peace, truth and liberty, and happiness shall prevail, are other undeniable proofs of God's care to uphold the cause of liberty, and his purpose to render it finally triumphant over all the tyrants of the earth ; those beasts and dragons, as the Prophets call them, that is, deceivers and destroyers of mankind.

The ancient Prophets were endowed with plentiful measures of the spirit of liberty ; their breasts glowed with the sacred flame, and they had a just sense of its necessity to promote improvements both in a civil and religious view. Far from
 thinking

thinking it a prostitution of their sacred office, they on the contrary, considered it as part of the duty of it, to give their voice in favour of liberty, and speak as they often did, in the severest language, and warmest strains of indignant eloquence against oppressive powers and domineering tyrants.

If we will now look into the writings of the new testament, we shall find that they are friendly to the cause of liberty.

In the most perfect sense of it, intending freedom from the bondage of satan and our own lusts, it was the great object of Christ's undertaking; and agreeably He applied to himself what had been long before testified of Him, by the spirit of prophecy—the spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, He hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised. It is said that the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, maketh free from the law of sin and death; and if the Son make us free, we shall be free indeed.

'Tis allowed that when Christ was in the world working out the redemption of sinners, He did not say many things concerning civil government and political liberty: Freedom of a far more important nature employ'd his time and thoughts: and his silence in this regard, has been turned into an argument by some, that the ministers of religion depart from the duty of their office, and act out of character, when in any state of our public affairs, they make such matters subjects of their discourses from the pulpit, or even in private conversation. But besides other substantial things that

that might be replied, it ought to be remembered, that the Prophets before, and the Apostles after him, were not so sparing ; and this I think is a solid proof, either that his silence was not intended as an example, or that some of the inspired Apostles at least misunderstood it.

There were special prudential reasons why Christ, 'till He had finished the work of his ministry, and fulfilled every thing in the scriptures concerning Him, should avoid speaking with any degree of freedom and openness of matters of government and the civil liberties of mankind. "The Jews were continually laying weight for something to accuse Him of to the Romans, tempting Him, and trying all methods to draw Him into any act, which might be construed treason, or disaffection to their government".

And considering the great wickedness of the Jews in that age, and their particular malignity against Christ, together with the usurpations and encroachments of some of the roman magistrates, had He said almost any thing of civil rights, they would have charged Him with sedition and treason. For similar reasons, He declined any direct answer, when questioned about his being the Messiah, and some other matters ; and it is hoped ministers will not be blamed for treating on the messiahship of Christ, because He himself had sometimes good reasons to be cautious.

But though Christ did not think proper to decide any thing, as to civil rights in particular cases ; yet from what He said, on several occasions, we may learn his sentiments on the subject of liberty, and government in general.

He not only bore testimony against spiritual tyranny, and the undue claims of power, in the Scribes and Pharisees—He not only intimated his detestation of persecution, when He advised

his Apostles, to beware of men, and if they persecuted them in one city to flee to another—He not only implicitly censured the tyrannies of the Gentile world, when he said to his disciples, that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, but it shall not be so among you: But he spake of Herod King of Galilee, with a degree of severity, when the Pharisees told him, that he would kill him. He also expressly commanded to render unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's, and unto God the things that are God's; the natural sense of which precept is this, that men should give tribute and custom, respect and obedience, to those cloathed with lawful authority, as far as they are due, and necessary to answer the ends of government, but that they are to make no encroachments on the things of God, which are likewise to be given to him, things pertaining to his service, appropriated to his worship; the rights of conscience and natural rights and liberties, which are the donations of his goodness, and necessary to the preservation of that peace and order, and justice among men, which He hath ordained.

In this precept much is said in little, relative to civil government; such prudence is displayed, as was sufficient to avoid the snare that was laid for Him, and at the same time, the most perfect general rule is given for the guidance of magistrates and people, and rendering society happy.

Among the apostles, St. Paul in his epistle to the Romans, hath explicitly spoken of civil government, and pointed out the ends of it, the duty of magistrates, and the ground of submission to their authority in the most concise and instructive manner.

His own conduct, on diverse occasions, manifested the sense he had both of civil and religious

liberty ; it was of a piece with his doctrine, and is the best comment upon it.

There was a remarkable display of the spirit of liberty in his behavior, when on a false accusation, and without legal process, he and Silas were, by order of the magistrates, beaten and cast into Prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks.

The magistrates, terrified by an earthquake, sent the serjeants to release them, but Paul, animated by the spirit of liberty, even in a goal, and sensible that his rights had been invaded ; insisted on a practical acknowledgment of it, from the magistrates themselves—Paul said unto them, they have beaten us openly, uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison ; and now do they thrust us out privily ? nay verily !—but let them come themselves, and fetch us out.

The serjeants reported these words to the magistrates, and they feared when they heard they were Romans. They knew they had injured them by depriving them of liberty, who were as free as themselves, and had as good a right to the privileges and protection of the roman government ; just as the Americans, by nature and charter, are entitled to the same rights and liberties as Britons, or as they themselves would have enjoyed, had they been born within the realm of England.

It is, however, hard for exalted characters, who have been used to have their orders executed, to bring themselves to make concessions ; but the magistrates were overawed by the earthquake, and from other considerations also, they found it necessary to come personally, and by entreaties make up the matter—they came and besought them, and brought them out.

But it may be asked ; why was Paul and his companion so obstinate ? why did they not come out when the serjeant came with orders to let them go free ? Why did they continue in confinement a moment longer than was necessary ? — The keeper of the prison, it seems thought they would readily embrace the offer, and as he had now great reason to esteem them, he ran hastily with the joyful tidings, and wished them peace.

But they had good reason for their conduct ; they knew the value of liberty, and its importance to mankind, and they chose rather to suffer the cruelty, and ignominy of a goal, a while longer, than not bear sufficient testimony against such magistrates as had unjustly invaded it.

Their behaviour in this affair may be considered, as having respect to themselves and others ; as to themselves, they were sensible if they did not improve this opportunity, to induce the magistrates who had done the injury to make reparation ; other magistrates would not be so likely to be deterred from a similar practice, nor these so effectually prevented from repeating the abuse, and perhaps carrying it to a greater extremity, when the horrors of the earthquake were gone off. — And as to other men, whose welfare they were obliged to promote, they knew if they did not bring their oppressors to acknowledge the injustice they had been guilty of, in denying them the liberties of Romans, they should set an example of ill influence to all who might afterwards be oppressed, and encourage magistrates to go any lengths in this ill treatment of subjects. But if they brought them to a practical nullifying of this instance of oppression, their example would be likely to be beneficial to mankind in future time, and induce them under similar abuses to tread in their steps. and so maintain liberty in the world.

Paul

Paul and Silas therefore, like men acquainted with their own, and the rights of society, acted this noble part, for the promotion and establishment of the cause of liberty.

No man was ever more tender of his liberties, or more desirous to continue such rich blessings in the world than the apostle Paul.

At a time when the chief captain had ordered him to be examined by scourging, and they were binding him with thongs for that purpose, with what independence of mind did he demand of the centurion,—Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?

And when the same officers on being informed of his assuming the freedom of Rome, doubting his claim, observed that it was with a great sum he himself had obtained this freedom; how did Paul assert his own pre-eminence,—but I was free born.

And afterwards, having fallen into the hands of the high priest, who as he was pleading his cause, commanded him to be smitten on the mouth; with what a manly spirit of resentment did he reply, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall, for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? Soon after, indeed, he recalled the reproachful language styling the high Priest a whited wall, and said he wist not that he was the high priest, but he never retracted the sense he had of the illegal indignity that was offered him. nor his zeal against such rulers as contradicted the end of their office.

When he was brought before Felix at one time, and Festus, and King Agrippa at another, he made his defence with the same free and intrepid spirit.—He yielded no rights, he resigned no liberties into the hands of any man, however

cloathed with authority, but he was always submissive to magistrates acting in their line, and ready to be governed and judged by the law.

If it should be enquired why these instances of Paul's conduct relative to civil liberty are handed down to us, since it was his chief business to instruct men in the great doctrines and duties of religion; it may be said, that among other reasons, which I need not mention, a probable one is, to let us know, the sense he had of the connection between religious and civil liberty, and that the former cannot be expected to exist, but upon the basis of the latter.

The conduct and discourses of the Apostles, whenever they had occasion to speak of civil liberty, were always friendly to its cause, and a reproof of tyranny and usurpation; — the great principle which they ever acted from themselves, and inculcated on others was, that we ought to obey God rather than man.

Although agreeable to what their Lord had said, they looked on themselves and all christians, as belonging to a society totally different from civil states, subjects of a kingdom which is not of this world; yet as the free exercise of the external offices of this peculiar kingdom, must in such a world as this, and among such inhabitants, greatly depend on the equity, impartiality and freedom of civil government, and as in this respect it was more, and in every laudable worldly respect, as much the interest of christians, as of other men, to live under such a government, they made conscience as 'tis natural to suppose they would, of speaking and acting on proper occasions, in a manner that had a tendency to recommend it to mankind.

Civil liberty, which itself is an object of great moment, is sometimes spoken of by the sacred

penmen, in both testaments, for its own sake ; at other times on the account of its salutary influence and effects on religious liberty.

Enough has been said by the ancient Prophets, and by Christ and the Apostles, to convince us that they had a most tender regard for the natural and civil rights of mankind, and an abhorrence of all spiritual tyranny and domination.

Christ has told us that the members of his mystical body, the church, are brethren—there are to be no masters among them—no authority exercised over the faith or consciences of any—one is our master, even Christ.

The Apostle Peter, who was himself an elder, hath strictly prohibited the elders of the flock, lording it over God's heritage.

And whoever are guilty of such usurpation, though dignified among men, and distinguished by the epithets of right reverend, and even his Holiness, are liable to the reproof administered by the Prophet to the ancient shepherds of Israel ; wo be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves ; should not the shepherds feed the flock ? ye eat the fat, and ye cloath you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed ; but ye feed not the flock, the diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye bro't again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost ; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.

At the time St. Paul had occasion to use friendly severity, at least with some of the Corinthians, he expressly disclaimed dominion over their faith, assigning this good reason for it, by faith ye stand.

Had we time to consider more largely the nature and genius of the religion of the Bible, its

various requirements, and the principles, affections and duties it enjoins; the divine regards both to civil and religious liberty, and God's intention to promote it among men, would appear in a strong and irresistible point of light.

That temper and conduct—that love of God and man, and those divine and social virtues, every where recommended; particularly that imitation of Christ, or correspondence of heart and life to his example, which are essential parts of his religion, are admirably calculated to secure the natural and religious rights and liberties of mankind, and put an end to the miseries of oppression and tyranny.

Christ not only set us an example of universal benevolence, but of the love of our country as consistent with it; like a true patriot he had a peculiar concern for the welfare of his own nation, and spent his life in the most beneficent actions among them, and he could not call to mind the calamities he knew they were about to suffer in consequence of their obstinacy and unbelief, but with the tenderest emotions of compassion and grief.

And so far as men partake of his spirit, and are actuated by the principles of his religion, be they magistrates or subjects, they will be led to a behaviour tending to support the general cause of liberty, and the particular freedom and prosperity of their own country.

It was, indeed, the great intention of Christ, to introduce men into a state of spiritual liberty; that being made free from sin, and become servants to God, they might have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life; but as his religion is formed to produce this effect, by reinforcing doctrines and principles, that have

have a tendency, to subdue those lusts and corruptions that enslave the mind, and to influence men to practise those virtues in which the freedom of the soul consists; and as the assistances and co-operations of the divine spirit are provided to break the yoke of satan and replace our souls in a state of moral strength and freedom, which is the purest and most perfect idea and condition of freedom we are capable of; so in virtue of the same influence and tendency, his religion contributes to the preservation and establishment of liberty in civil and religious societies. For, in proportion as the minds of individuals are made free from sin, and the virtues of the Gospel are practised; oppression and tyranny must cease, and liberty revive and prevail every where, both in church and state.

May therefore a deep sense of religion impress the minds, and influence the conduct of all men! and those happy times, we are taught to expect, come on! when the power of oppression shall be banished from the world; and a King shall reign and prosper, who shall execute judgment, and justice in the earth; and there shall be nothing to hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain.

It only remains that we make a few reflections, or inferences from what has been discoursed, and conclude with them.

First, We see what reason we have to admire and adore the wisdom and goodness of God, in constituting a religion for us, which, while it provides for the moral liberty of our souls, and our everlasting happiness in another world; hath not been unmindful of the rights of conscience, and the civil liberties of society, in this.

Liberty is the spirit and genius of the sacred writings; the great thing aimed at in them, is

to make men free from sin ; to deliver them out of bondage to their lusts, and procure and establish the moral freedom of their minds.

But though this be their main object, yet as liberty in any important sense, civil or religious, is friendly to the cause of godliness, stands in connection with it, and has its influence into the spiritual freedom of the soul ; they have taken care by enjoining self government, the generous affections and a righteous behaviour towards men, to provide for this kind of liberty in human society.

A just regard for the authority of the inspired word, will most effectually secure and promote it.

As far as the liberty of mankind has been impaired, and their rights invaded, and oppression and tyranny have prevailed in any kingdom or nation on earth ; so far has there been a repugnance to, and a departure from the true spirit of the holy scriptures.

The religion of the Bible hath a regard to our benefit in both worlds, it consists of such principles, duties and virtues, as are adapted to the human nature and circumstances ; it is so contrived as to deliver us from the vassalage of our lusts, and the oppression of man, by the same divine energy—it forms our tempers to the resemblance of God, and disposes us for the sublime exercises, and refined enjoyments of his heavenly Kingdom ; at the same time, and by the same means, that it promotes our best interest, peace and quietness on earth—godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

This is a consideration that demands our warmest gratitude ; and while our hearts are enlarged, and our mouths filled with the praises of God for so rich and inestimable a blessing ; may

it be our care to devote ourselves forever to his service ; and improve our religious advantages, according to their gracious design and tendency, for the promotion both of our present and future happiness.

Secondly ; If religion is eminently productive of liberty, and the security of it ; we are led, from the remarkable display of liberty in the great undertaking of our fore-fathers, to form a favourable judgment of their religion, and to believe it was pure and undefiled, and according to knowledge, in opposition to enthusiastic rant and fanaticism. There have been indeed, many instances of the love of liberty among a people, whose religion has been no other than pagan ; and no marvel ; it is a natural passion, capable however, of being strengthened by religion ; and is usually the strongest, where religion is the purest and the most divine.

Notwithstanding the names of our illustrious ancestors have been traduced, and their religion questioned, and even vilified by some, as the ravings of a disordered mind, or the effects of ignorance and superstition, an abuse which few escaped who were distinguished by the name of puritans ; yet the charitable as well as probable opinion is, that they were men of real piety and godliness ; and that like David of old, they desired to get out of the hands of their oppressors, that they might have more liberty to keep God's precepts, and worship and serve him according to the light of their own consciences.

I am not sensible of any bias, though I would not be too confident, from an undue veneration for antiquity, or for the superior knowledge and discernment of those whom we commonly call the fathers ; but with respect to the fathers of New-England, the more I am acquainted with their his-

tory and minutely enquire into their religion and morality, and particular behaviour towards the natives of this land, the greater reason have I to be perswaded, that their religion was derived from the fountain of truth, and therefore real and substantial.

It appears to have had the marks of divinity upon it; and to have been founded on the proper basis of all religion—the love of God; and that charity to man, that bond of peace and of all virtues, made a very conspicuous part of it.

At the time of our Fathers abandoning their native country, many things were out of order in the state, and they had reason to complain of the too arbitrary and undue exercise of the powers of government. But their chief motive in it was religion; freedom of worshipping God agreeably to the rule of his word, and the dictates of their own minds.

Religion was precious in their eyes; they were willing to leave houses and lands, and many dear and valuable possessions, for the sake of enjoying it in its purity. But they were men, and like other good men they were liable to, and had their failings; its well they had no more.

When we recollect the cruel treatment they met with from their brethren at home, and their sufferings abroad; the difficulties and perils of their voyage, and the many hardships and dangers they encountered after they had arrived, in this season of the year, to these dark and unfriendly shores; their unshaken fortitude and patient suffering of affliction in the cause of religion, fill our minds with equal pleasure and astonishment.

We ought doubtless to consider it, as an argument of the love of God ruling in their hearts, and of his grace abiding with them, and supporting them with the stedfast hope of good things

to come ; that under such tryals, their spirits were not broken, and their tempers soured to distrust, peevishness and vice.

It may, I believe, be justly affirmed, that their devotedness to God and his cause, their regard for the holy scriptures, and love of the truth as it is in Jesus, their faithfulness to themselves and posterity, and their assiduous care and endeavours to transmit their religion uncorrupted, and their liberties unimpaired to remotest ages ; are to be equalled but by few instances, and perhaps surpassed by none, since the days of inspiration.

Their history, if faithfully recorded, will shine with a peculiar lustre, in the annals of the church, down to its latest period in this militant state.

To us especially, who are entered on their labours, as our natural inheritance, and who, till of late years, have largely partaken of the happy fruits of their virtuous sufferings, and many toils, both in church and state ; and believe we shall again partake of them ; their names are justly venerable : But we intend no more than a decent expression of filial respect, when on this anniversary, we their children, rise up, and call them blessed.

Their example, however, as far as it was formed, by the love of religion and liberty, and the grace of God that was in them, ought to be regarded by us, and improved for the more perfect accomplishing of their great and pious designs.

In this view, we cannot but approve the late conduct of the town of Plymouth, in devoting the anniversary of our fore-fathers landing here, to a religious use, and a grateful recollection of the care of providence, in bringing about so memorable an event.

Much benefit, if I mistake not, both to ourselves, and posterity, may grow out of the design ; if it be but observed with sobriety, and

temperance, as a civil and religious festivity, and not suffered to degenerate into carnal mirth, and the works of darkness.

Thirdly—We learn that no man in community, of any rank or character whatever, can be uninterested in the cause of liberty; or lawfully neglect it; much less make use of his influence in opposing and bearing it down.

It is a common cause, and the right of nature. Every man that is born into the world, as Mr. Lock, that prince of philosophers hath said, “is born to it,” and every member of civil and religious society has an unalienable title to, and concern in it; and is bound by the most sacred and indissoluble ties, in a just exertion of his abilities and by every adequate method, to spread the love of it among mankind, and defend it, against tyrants and oppressors.

This observation comes with too self-evident clearness, and force, to the reason of man, to admit of avowed opposition from any, but yet in the political disputes in which we are at present, unhappily involved with our fellow subjects at home, there are some in the midst of us, and hard as it may be to believe it, such as are descended from our worthy ancestors, who from a misapprehension of the nature and just extent of the ministerial office, have pretended to deny it, in regard to the clergy in particular; and have used some feeble and uncouth attempts to wrest it out of their hands. The conduct however, of the holy Prophets and Apostles, the firm and open spirit with which they delivered their sentiments, on the subject of liberty, and bare testimony against lawless oppressors, though ignorantly passed over by them, will be discerned by others, to afford example to the ordinary ministers of religion, and authorize them, in their
public

public and private addressees to use their influence, if any they have, in supporting and cherishing the cause of liberty.

This is not barely a right that may be exercised or neglected at pleasure, but the duty of all ranks of men in society ; no one is, or can be, exempted. Liberty is the cause of all, and all should be ready to spend, and be spent in its service.

Political apostates, and other paricides will not indeed admit, though they cannot deny such doctrine ; it were to be wished there was no occasion to say that their unexampled behaviour, in this day of anxiety and contest, when the rights of all the colonies are the stake, is too manifestly calculated according to the weight of its influence, to cut up the liberties of America by the roots, and cool the passion, and obscure the sense of them in the breasts of their fellow countrymen. At the same time, strange to relate ! They fondly assume, and by assuming prophane the respectable characters of loyalty and friends to government ! Solicitous to hide from the world, and if possible from themselves, their unhallowed views of ambition and avarice, under the cover of venerable forms, as the grand apostate spirit himself is sometimes transformed into an angel of light, to accomplish the baneful designs of the kingdom of darkness. Notwithstanding, when they shall make their cordial submissions to their much injured country, and seek reconciliation with it, we may forgive, but it will be a hard thing to forget their crimes.

Fourthly, As liberty is the right of nature, confirmed to us by revelation, and essential to our happiness, we ought to be deeply humbled under the tokens of the divine resentments, in suffering so great an adversity to befall us, as that of being obliged to contend for it in opposition to

measures contrived to deprive us of so rich a blessing.

When the righteous providence of God, which in the friendless and defenceless state of our pious ancestors, condescended to be their sun and shield, the vigilant and almighty guardian of their persons, families and rights, hath seen it necessary to correct the growing infidelity, immorality and prophaneness of their degenerate offspring, by permitting a thick cloud to gather over our heads, and invelope the American colonies in darkness, some humiliating reflections ought to intermix with the joy and gratitude of the day.

We justify the ways of providence in all that is come upon us—the Lord hath done right, but we have done wickedly—our sins have been the procuring moral cause of the Judgments we feel, and we ought to be humble before God, and repent and amend our ways and doings; but yet with regard to man, we are greatly injured, we have reason to complain, and may justly assert our rights, and maintain our cause against them.

A more grievous misfortune however, could not befall us than this; we deeply lament it! We deprecate a contention with the parent state! It is the burden of America, and under the weight of it we are all ready to enquire with anxious hearts, watchman, what of the night? watchman, what of the night? is there any good news from our mother country? any thing to raise the hopes of our own? can America entertain expectations from british justice or parental sympathy of a deliverance out of her distresses.

In a situation so gloomy, let us commit our cause unto him who judgeth righteously, and lift up our heartt to God in the heavens, in earnest prayer and supplication—trust in him at all times,

oh ye people, pour out your hearts before him. Our expectation is from God. He is our salvation and our glory, the rock of our strength, and our refuge is in God.

The great affairs of states and kingdoms, are subject to his controul and governance. He changeth times and seasons; the hearts of Kings and of all men are in his hands, and He turneth them as rivers of water are turned. In the midst of our perplexity and fear, then let us look to God, who is high above all nations, and whose glory is above the heavens; and may we all as one man, break off our sins by repentance, and our iniquities by turning to the Lord; if we will thus penitently betake ourselves to him, though He hath smitten us, He will bind us up; his going forth is prepared as the morning, and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain, unto the earth.

Fifthly, Considering that the rights and liberties of the colonies are so important blessings, derived to us from the divine goodness, through the hands of our adventurous fore-fathers, it is hoped we shall not supinely suffer them to slip out of our possession, or be wanting in any instances of self-denial, and other wise and effectual means, to secure them to the present, and transmit them to future generations.

The alarm that is gone forth through the land, and the assiduous attention given to our public affairs, by all ranks, ages and sexes among us, we cannot but esteem a token for good, a symptom of vital strength, in the body politic, though some of its members are mutilated and maimed; nor can we attribute the firm union and cement of our numerous colonies, and the general agreement of their respective inhabitants in modes of opposition, to the same general mea-

tures, to any principle so justly, as the efficacy of the divine influence on the minds of men.

Judging from appearances, we have reason to hope, and believe, that God himself has risen to work out our salvation.

Let us not provoke him to withdraw the influences of his providence, by our own inactivity and neglect.

God usually worketh by means and instruments, in accomplishing the great purposes of his providence among men ; we have no reason from analogy, to expect a deliverance out of our political evils, by the immediate exertion of almighty power ; we must work ourselves, with a due dependance on the divine energy and blessing, and then, from the justice of our cause, may we expect that God will work with us and in us, and crown our endeavours with success.

The honourable, and much esteemed American Continental Congress, whom we voluntarily constituted the guardians of our rights, have with great judgment and faithfulness, pointed us to a mode of conduct, from which, if religiously adhered to by ourselves, and followed with the divine blessing, we may entertain the strongest hopes.

It is at once calculated to procure a radical redress of American grievances, and to promote the future peace, harmony and prosperity both of Great-Britain, and the colonies.—It shews that we contend for nothing but our own, that we aim at nothing but our rights, and wish and pray for nothing more ardently in this world, than a reconciliation and lasting connection with our brethren at home : If it succeeds, we are mutually happy ; if not, as
the

the wisest schemes of men may prove abortive, thro' the corruption and wickedness of some other, it will at least manifest to the whole world, that the demands of America are just, and her disposition loyal and pacific.

And then, when the worst of events cometh, to which that respectable body have in the mean time advised us to extend our views, and be prepared for, we may with firm hope and humble reliance, implore the aids of his providence, who is the almighty avenger of wrongs, with whom is wisdom and strength, who poureth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty, who leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools.

To conclude, Upon a retrospective view of our fore-fathers coming over into this land, the causes moving them to it—the pious designs they had in it—the many hardships and perils attending it, and the foundation hereby laid for useful improvements in the arts of civilized life, commerce and literature; but especially in the knowledge and practice of the christian religion, where ignorance and barbarism had before prevailed for unknown ages; we ought to be very thankful to almighty God for the peculiar care and guardianship of his providence, so conspicuous in every part of this grand enterprize.

God was with them of a truth, encouraging and defending them, and carrying them through difficulties and perils in a wonderful manner, which demands our particular attention and grateful acknowledgments this day.

He had, doubtless, great and wise purposes to serve, in leading them into this barbarous and extensive wilderness, which we have rea-

son to believe, are far from having yet been wholly accomplished.

It is remarkable, that in the many threatening dangers that beset our Fathers in early time, from the wicked machinations of open enemies, or the secret plots of treacherous and false-hearted friends, and that have since, even down to the present day, beset us, God hath always appeared on our side, and delivered us out of all our fears and distresses, and we trust he will still deliver us.

Not unto us, oh Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory.

It is not for short-sighted mortals to fathom the counsels of the most high God: His Judgments are unsearchable; and his ways past finding out.

But if it be lawful to permit our thoughts to delight us with contemplations on futurity; the American desert rejoices and blossoms as a rose, cities and empires rise, arts and sciences flourish, and the solitary places are glad. How great is the goodness of the Lord, and how great is his beauty! The time cometh, when old men and old women shall dwell in our streets, every man with his staff in his hand for very age; when corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids, and our cities shall be full of boys and girls, playing in our streets. But above all, when the aboriginal nations shall bow the knee at the name of Jesus, and confess him to be Lord, to the glory of God the Father; and pure and undefiled religion shall prevail in the land, and there shall be one Lord, and his name one.

A M E N.