

THE GOOD LAND WE LIVE IN.

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A

S E R M O N,

Delivered at *Suffield* (Connecticut) on the

Celebration of the

*Anniversary* of American

INDEPENDENCE.

July 7th, 1802.

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BY THE REV. STANLEY GRISWOLD,  
*Of New-Milford.*

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SUFFIELD:  
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—1802.—

Anniversary of American  
**INDEPENDENCE**

July 7th, Anno Domini, 1802.

*ORDERED, That the Committee do  
Communicate to the Rev. Mr. GRISWOLD,  
for and in behalf of the Citizens of Suffield—  
their very sincere thanks for his Sermon this day  
delivered, and request of him a Copy, that it may  
be printed.*

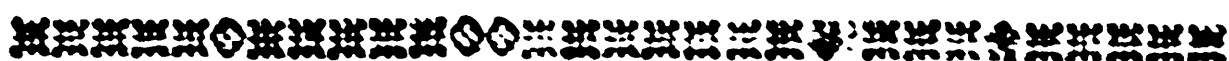
LUTHER LOOMIS,  
ASHBEL KING,  
TIMO. PHELPS,  
H. HUNTINGTON. } Committee.

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THE GOOD LAND WE LIVE IN.

DEUTERONOMY, VIII. 7—14.

**F**OR the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land; a land of brooks of water, of fountain and depths that spring out of the vales; a land of wheat and barley and vines and fig-trees and pomegranates; a land of oil, olive and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass. When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which he hath given thee.—Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God in not keeping his commandments and his judgments and his statutes, which I command thee this day: Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses and dwelt therein, and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, who brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.



**H**AD Moses been acquainted with *America*, scarcely could he have given it a more pertinent description than he has done in the former part of these words in describing the land of *Canaan*. Had he discoursed upon the obligations and duties of the *Americans* resulting from the signal deliverance wrought for them by heaven, his language could not have been far different from that which he uses with the *Jews* on the subject of their memorable deliverance from Egyptian bondage. Finally, had he seen the danger to which the people of this country would be exposed, after they should obtain quiet possession of the land, and grow rich, *when they should build goodly houses and dwell in them, when their herds and their flocks should be multiplied, and their silver and gold be multiplied*, the danger of forgetting their deliverer and the principles which once governed them, of being lifted up with pride and high things, of plunging into vice and becoming altogether absorbed in pursuits of sordid selfishness, the same solemn caution might have been expected from his lips which fell from them to the *Jews* in the concluding part of this passage: He would have uttered to us with emphatic accent, **BEWARE!**

WE are met, my friends, to contemplate a great object. I shall not carry your minds to the distant country of *Canaan*, to dwell on a particular description of that good land. Neither shall I rehearse the marvellous history of the deliverance of the *Jews* from their bondage in *Egypt*. I shall not even run a parallel between the circumstances of the *Jews* and of the *Americans*,  
which



which were strikingly similar at some periods of their national history, particularly during the lives of *Moses* and *Washington*. But as the occasion on which we are assembled is *American*, the object we shall contemplate is *AMERICA*. As we are eating and are full of its fruits, and are met to bless the Lord our God for the good land he hath given us, let us consider the land in some of its *essential beauties* and *circumstantial blessings*, that our gratitude may be the more ardent, and our rejoicings sincere.

What an object my friends rises before us! What a reward for our revolutionary struggles! This good land which stretches around us to such a vast extent, whose copious productions we are enjoying so richly, with all the adventitious blessings civil and religious which attend our nation, may be considered as the fruit of that *EVENT* we this day celebrate: At least may be considered as preserved by it, as confirmed, sealed and secured to us by our *INDEPENDENCE*.

LIFT up your eyes and behold its *magnitude*! It is large like the munificence of heaven. Stretching from sea to sea, and from southern climes to the pole, it composes no inconsiderable portion of the whole globe. Such a noble present never before was given to any people. Here is room for our children & children's children to spread and pitch their tents without being straitened for incalculable years to come. Long will it be before necessity will compel the bulk of our posterity to renounce their immediate dependance on heaven for subsistence by that most salubrious and virtuous occupation, the cultivation of the ground

Look also at the *fertility* of the soil, its *variety* and *useful productions*. I would not exalt our country

country in these respects above every other portion of the globe, nor make it a mere garden of Eden. But in the simple language of the text, we may say it is a *good land*. We all know it well rewards the cultivator, and yields the necessaries of life in good abundance. If a few spots on the earth can be singled out which surpass our country in these respects, yet taking so large a tract, covering so many degrees and embracing so many climates, I question whether its equal can be found beneath the sun, which shall hold throughout so good. From the climates where the ground almost spontaneously pours forth its riches, along thro' the middle regions from the shore of one ocean to the other, and northward to the perenial frosts, a kindness of soil prevails, which as soon as opened to the sun, yields abundant harvests. Over this immense tract are found but few barren heaths and no deserts of sand. Its mountains chiefly admit of cultivation, and what cannot be cultivated are reservoirs of useful materials laid up in store for the future wants of its inhabitants. To an unreflecting mind its extensive *waters* may seem to be a waste; but one who thinks correctly will rank them among its blessings. Fortunate indeed for this wide region are the seas embosomed in its centre, and the noble streams which intersect it in various directions.

WHAT other country, for so large an extent, will bear comparison? If we cast our eyes to distant *China*, we shall find fertile tracts and cities full of people; but their country is intersected with more and worse mountains than ours, and abounds in unwholesome morasses. If we come onward to *India*, we meet with good Islands and some beautiful provinces rich in valuable productions: but similar wastes exist there. If then we  
cross

cross into *Arabia* and *Egypt*, what do we see? A soil most luxuriant indeed along the banks of the Nile:—but by what is it surrounded? To the south is the broken country of the *Thebais*, uninhabited except by plundering Arabs, whom it serves as a shelter from the pursuit of man. In other directions are deserts of scorching sand, totally unproductive and the means of divers calamities. As to *Arabia*, it has long been divided into *Felix*, *Petrea*, *Deserta*. i. e. *pleasant*, *rough*, *barren*. Can *America* be thus divided? If one third part of our country be not *happy* in a way of eminence, yet where is the third that eminently deserves the name of a barren desert?—If we come farther on and look into *Africa*, there also *Zaaras*, sands and wastes present themselves, and no very fertile regions are to be found. If we turn northward to *Europe*, the eye fixes with delight on an *Italy* and a *France*, which perhaps are unequalled by any part of the world for mildness of climate and fertility of soil. In the latter respect *England* may be added to these charming countries. But we see at the same instant an inhospitable *Norway*, a bleak *Sweden*, a sunken *Denmark*, and a great part of *Russia*, *Germany* and *Prussia* are a broken, indifferent country. *Portugal* and *Spain* have nothing extraordinary to recommend them. On the whole, *Europe* taken collectively does by no means exceed an equal extent of our country.

We shall but just advert to one other region, which is *Syria*. The very country described by *Moses* in the text was little or nothing superior to the spot we inhabit. Between the land of *Canaan* and the *New England States* there was indeed a considerable resemblance. We recognize it in these words, *a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of the vallies*  
and

*and hills.* The face of Canaan was irregular and somewhat rough, proportioned nearly like these states for pasturage and tillage. Herds and flocks, milk and dairy, wool and flax were among its principal productions: these are among our's. Wheat and various grain were raised there: these we raise. There the vine was cultivated and wine produced in abundance: so it might be here. Their hills abounded in iron: so do our's. Lebanon and various heights were famous for excellent timber: so are many parts of our country. In short, we may consider our land as *another Canaan*, the gift of heaven, not far inferior to that which was given for an inheritance to Israel.

Our productions are all the solid necessities of life, with enough of its luxuries. The various climates embraced by our country are capable of affording every thing needed by man for his comfort, for his necessities or for his pleasure. Cloathing, food, physic, nothing can be named but what is, or might be produced here. We have the means, when sufficiently developed and improved, of being a *world within ourselves*, of being strictly and literally an *Independent People*. Tho' the extent of our territory invites principally to the rearing of the prime necessities of life, yet our situation in various respects powerfully urges attention to the mechanic arts, to manufacturing, the sister of agriculture, to original inventions of our own, and to every philosophical improvement.

It deserves to be remarked, that the *location* of our country relatively to other nations, is a distinguished favor attending it. God not only gave us this noble inheritance, but placed it so that others cannot despoil us of it. Canaan, rich and good as it was, still was so situated as to experience

ence continual assaults from neighboring potent kingdoms. Often were its inhabitants involved in difficulties from abroad, desolated by war, and more than once conquered. Once were they swept from their country and carried as a body into captivity. Similar troubles have been experienced to a greater or less degree by every portion of the other continent, none of which are guarded by a natural barrier like *America*. Around us the Almighty has drawn an immense *posse* filled with water, and seems to say to other nations, 'Touch not that people', to the Americans, 'Keep at home and be happy'. Should all other nations sink, we might live. Should all others conspire and rise against us, we might bid them defiance. The benefits of our remote situation have already been largely experienced both in peace and war. Had we been situated much nearer our enemy when he rose up against us, the probability is, we should not now have been an *independent* people. Look at the unhappy fate of *Ireland*! Or in the late commotions of the nations, had we been much nearer the scene of action, we should probably have been vexed and spoiled to a more ruinous degree, if not dragged into the contest. This circumstance of *remoteness* will prove a more effectual defence to our posterity, than other nations experience in their ramparts and batteries, whether fixed or floating. Thereby we shall be less in danger of infection from foreign vices, of agitation from foreign intrigues, as well as of desolation from foreign wars. Thus separated, we shall be in a manner compelled to cultivate the peaceful arts and to enjoy the blessings heaven has lavished upon us. In peace we may extract the riches of the land and of the sea; in peace spread the sail upon our waters to inter-

change

change our productions, and, if we please, carry them to the ends of the earth.

WHEN we think of these natural advantages of our country, shall we not *blejs the name of the Lord our God for the good land which he hath given us?*

But small would be the value of this gift, if it were not attended with blessings of a more exalted kind. Above its richness of soil above the extensiveness of its territory, above its abundant productions, above its rivers and pleasant streams, must be ranked, CIVILIZATION, FREEDOM and the GOSPEL.

CONSIDER, my friends, the blessing of *civilization*. And consider the imminent risque our fathers ran of losing it. I shall not expatiate largely on this blessing: But will simply ask, What good our rich soil would have done us without it? Of what service would have been our excellent rivers and harbors, our forests of timber, our mountains of ore? Of what use were these to the *wild Natives*? To them the soil slept idle beneath the thickets; the timber was shaped to no useful purpose; the valuable ores lay dormant in their beds. The rivers and coasts retained all their best fish, and were improved to no purpose of commerce worth naming. To *civilization* we owe the fields and meadows which smile around us in such beautiful order laden with their precious burthens. To *civilization* we owe our comely buildings, our flourishing towns and villages, where the gloom of the wilderness once spread, and the huts of the savages were pitched. From *civilization*, our noble rivers and bays, which before wafted nothing but the flimsy bark of the Native, are now whitened with sails of an active and great commerce. From *civilization* we received our litera-

ture

ture and every means of refined, mental and social enjoyment.

I WILL only remark further, that our forefathers were in eminent hazard of losing this blessing of *civilization*. Never was a fairer opportunity offered, nor greater temptations laid before a civilized people to revert to a state of barbarism than was experienced by the first settlers of this country. They were few in number, at a great remove from their parent state, frequently reduced to distress. Difficulties and great labor were to be encountered in clearing the land, in carrying on tillage, in defending their settlements. The country afforded plenty of game to induce them to straggle and scatter among the Natives who then were friendly. They had every inducement to give up painful tillage and betake themselves for subsistence to that first and easiest occupation of man, *hunting and fishing*. But in them was displayed the power of education and habit. Moreover God kept them—God encouraged their hearts—God assisted them to lay the foundation of a great empire. They were no more permitted to mingle with the Natives than God's ancient Israel were with the canaanites. They maintained their arts, their science, their manners, with their liberties and religion, which have progressed with various improvements from that period to this.

WE are now led, my friends, to contemplate an unspeakable felicity. All the natural advantages of our country, and all our civilization would profit us nothing, were we under *despotic sway*. Inestimably rich and precious is that blessing which was put into our complete possession by the EVENT we this day celebrate, the blessing of our FREEDOM.

WHAT would our country be worth to us, if we were tenants at will, vassals beneath a host of privileged orders and bloated tyrants with a Monarch at their head? Were our free and equal condition to be broken up, our farms to be resigned to Landlords, our earnings to be wrested from us for exorbitant taxes, rent and tythes, were a few among us to wallow in luxury and the rest in rags, were bagonets and battiles to cover our land and the wretched people to be kept down by the force of terror, deprived of free speech, deprived of arms and totally unable to help themselves. I have no hesitation to say, the picture our country would exhibit would be far more deplorable than when it was only trodden by the rude foot of the savage, and furnished lurking-places for wild beasts. Less interesting and far more horrible is the spectacle of a land covered with *men* in such a condition, than with senseless *wood*; is *society* in such circumstances than the *glooms of a wilderness*. The *state of nature* is horrid: but a *state of despotism* is more so. If a wise man were to choose between them, he would not hesitate, which to prefer: he would take up his bow and walk into the wilderness, preferring the Independence of a savage to the crouching meanness of the slave.

FREEDOM is the glory of civilized life. How interesting, how beautiful, to look over an extensive country and see it parceled into farms dressed by the hands of freemen, who are *owners*, who enjoy the fruits of their toils, having no lordly seigniors to vex, oppress and make them afraid. The golden harvest waves for him who raised it. The cattle which spread over the vales, and the flocks of the hills are *his* who feeds them. Man in this condition has that use of the earth which the creator designed when he made it: For, he  
made



made it no doubt for the use of its inhabitants. The earth thus parceled, thus cultivated, thus enjoyed by its inhabitants, exhibits a spectacle essentially different both from the *savage* state and from a state of *despotism*. It is *civil perfection*. It is the condition no doubt the earth is to be in, if ever it is to be happy.—This free and generally equal enjoyment of the earth and its productions by its inhabitants, is agreeable to that which was originally declared by the Almighty to his creature man, when he gave him for his food and use, every herb bearing seed, and every tree and every beast upon the earth, and every fowl of the air, and every thing that hath life. All this does not imply that the land should be violently taken from its owners and an equal distribution be made of it among the members of community. Far from it. What is contended for is, first of all that the members composing community should be owners of the land, for their own use and benefit, subject to no lords or feudal incumbrances whatsoever. And then secondly, that each individual should, on principles of perfect equality, be secured in the fruits of his own industry, should enjoy his own earnings and every thing which he possesses by just means.

WHEN a people, whom the Lord has led to settle in such a condition of domestic independence and general equality, can also obtain *national Independence*, freedom from the claims of all despots and exterior nations to interfere with their concerns, and can enjoy undisputed the privilege of self government, it must be acknowledged a happy circumstance, a great thing gained in their favor. Rarely is this privilege to be obtained; never without a struggle. So numerous are the Harpies which follow Man wherever he goes to settle to prey upon his substance and

and defile his dearest enjoyments, that there is no people without some of these foul creatures advancing their lawless claims over them; and for the most part with their talons firmly fixed upon their interests. It is exceedingly difficult to silence their claims and to be wholly disintangled from their grasp. Thus Israel had a tyrannic and inexorable Pharaoh to deal with, and the Americans a British King. There is no portion of the civilized world but is, or has been, claimed and usurpation attempted to be set up by some one or more of these hereditary or self made despots. Some nations have struggled to rid themselves of the pests, and have failed. Fortunate indeed is that people whose exertions are crowned with success, who can make themselves acknowledged by all princes and nations of the earth to be a Free, Sovereign and Independent People.

IF, after this, such a people can have a government among themselves exactly suited to their own free and equal condition, adapted to their genius and manners, adequate to all the purposes of private security and national protection, strong to *punish the evil doers*, yet not to *discourage those who do well*; in a word, a government that shall perpetuate their free and happy state of society, and not despoil them of it, we may exclaim, *O fortunatas nimium agricolas!* happy people! fortunate beyond expression!

THE sketch I have given was rather designed to be in the abstract, yet have I not described the *Americans*? Are not we that very people? Is not this our political condition? It is so in every respect we have mentioned. That beautiful and happy state of a country which is exhibited by independent cultivators, generally equal in their possessions

possessions and perfectly equal in their privileges, enjoying the fruits of their own labor, *sitting under their vines and figtrees, and having none to make them afraid*, is certainly the state of the *Americans*. Complete Independence of all nations, princes and despots on earth, and a full, undisputed right to exercise sovereignty for themselves and manage their own concerns, belong certainly to the *Americans*. This day witnesses it; for now was it DECLARED to the world, and by our bravery and the help of God, the world acknowledged it. Finally, a government suited to the genius of the people, adapted to their free and equal condition, adequate to private security and public defence, strong enough to punish *evil doers*, yet not *those who do well* (without violating its principles,) certainly it is the privilege of the *Americans* to enjoy. O happy people, then AMERICANS! who can be compared to you? What other nation thro' the wide world enjoys such political beatitude? Long may you enjoy it, and resist every attempt to rob you of it, under whatever specious name the attempt may be made. Much of this blessedness we owe to the *event* which we this day celebrate: Let us therefore rejoice and be glad.

Could earthly circumstances confer upon man complete happiness and leave no want existing, we might here close our remarks. But we are conscious of an immortal destiny, and it becomes our concern to seek an interest beyond the grave. Unsatisfied with earth, the soul *desires a better country, that is an heavenly*.

To crown therefore the felicities of our condition, we are blest with the knowledge of a most excellent *Religion*, the GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST. With the *milk and honey* of our terrestrial *Canaan*,  
we

*we have the bread of life which came down from heaven and giveth life unto the world; we have the meat which endureth forever.* In the gospel ANOTHER AMERICA is opened to our enraptured view, of which the one we now possess is but a faint type. It extends with infinite beauty over the everlasting hills on high, presenting pastures green with immortal verdure, and streams of endless pleasure. Pure is its light and mild its climate, *for the glory of God enlighteneth it and the Lamb is the light thereof.* In that region *all tears are wiped away and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.* Such is that country which the gospel discloses. *Emphatically is life and immortality brought to light by the gospel.*

FOR these glad tidings we can never be sufficiently thankful. What is this world, what is a beautiful and extensive territory measured by finite circles, what even is liberty with all our invaluable privileges, compared with the interest we have in immortality? As it is said of the *afflictions*, so we may say of the blessings of *this present time*, that they are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us. To know how to prepare ourselves for that glory, to know how to become citizens of a state which shall endure when the fashion of this world shall have passed away, must be accounted the greatest, the most inestimable favour that can be bestowed upon any people. The genuine gospel is a religion of the most sublime discoveries, of the richest consolations, and a pattern of the purest morality. In it we see all that is desirable, all that the afflicted soul needs, and all that the ardent spirit of man longs for. It conducts thro' *ways of pleasantness and paths of peace*, and leads up to *joys unspeakable and full of glory.* It tells how

how we may return to God, how enjoy his favor, how serve him acceptably. The piety it inculcates is simple like nature and of the sincerest kind. Hypocrisy it abhors. It breathes benevolence. Its precepts are a circle of the best morals. Conformity of heart and life to this superlatively excellent religion cannot fail to make a man happy both here and hereafter: Wherever he exists, he can be no other than happy.

THE enjoyment of this blessing is our's emphatically: for, here we have the *free exercise* of our religion. To have a good religion near us, and not be allowed to exercise it freely, or without great embarrassments, certainly is a diminution of the blessing. Here we may think, and we may worship, not merely as worldly policy directs, but as the Bible, truth and common sense dictate. We may freely approach the source, the foundation of things, and examine for ourselves without fear lest we should find the truth variant from this or that creed. Here we may be christians, not merely by the force of indiscriminating tradition, earthly interest or terrific superstition, but *en principe*.

IN such a state of religious freedom, Sceptics may exist, and fiery bigots may exist; but there is the fairest chance for GENUINE CHRISTIANS to exist. And I do not believe a state of freedom is by any means so favorable to the existance of the *former* as a state of intolerance. I contemplate this country, at some future period, as a land of the most GENUINE CHRISTIANITY. For, I contemplate it, not only as a land of *faith*, and a land of *hope*, but what is *greater than these*, a land of CHARITY. After Sceptics shall cease to witness nonsense too often displayed under the garb of religion

ligion and after they shall cease to have captiousness and folly offered in answer to their too curious enquiries, they will be attracted by the sublimity, the amiableness and the consolations of the gospel to its embrace. After mad bigots shall have sufficiently exhausted their fire and malice without effect, and witnessed long enough the patience and benevolence of their injured victims, it may be hoped they will gradually be led to listen to reason, and like Saul of Tarsus be converted to the way they persecute. Indeed the time is not far off in my view when the HONEST of all sects will unite in fellowship and brotherly communion, tho' they may still retain that variety of worship which we may suppose is not unpleasing to the Father of the universe. They *must* unite in these respects in heaven:— and where is the inconsistency of their *beginning* to do it on earth?—Thus, when all these, *faith, hope, &* more especially CHARITY, shall abound among us, we shall exhibit what no country before us has exhibited, a CHRISTIAN NATION. Then America will be a still brighter type of heaven!

Both for our *Religion*, then, and for the happy circumstance of *free toleration* in which we enjoy it, let us, my friends, lift up our hearts and bless the God of our salvation.

TIME forbids further enlargement on the interesting object we set out to contemplate, AMERICA, *the good land we live in*. Not half has been said which the fruitful subject affords, and the little that has been offered falls far below the excellence of the theme. In view however, of the particulars we have mentioned, may I not exhort in the animated language of the Psalmist,

*O sing*

*O sing unto the Lord a new song. O clap your hands all ye people: Shout unto God with the voice of triumph Sing praises to God, sing praises: Sing praises unto our King, sing praises: Both young men and maidens, old men and children, let them praise the name of the Lord.*

AND amidst these sprightly exhortations of David, may I not be permitted to mingle the salutary cautions of Moses, that we do not by our folly forfeit our inestimable liberties and privileges in the good land which is given us? There is a strange propensity in mankind, after they have experienced signal deliverance and are brought into the full and quiet enjoyment of eminent good, to loose the impressions which accompanied their deliverance, to fall away to other principles, and as it were to other gods, to plunge into ungrateful and corrupt courses, highly provoking to heaven, and naturally tending to bring upon them unspeakable woes. This has been the case more or less with every people who ever existed as a free nation. The period of their *virtue* has always been their *first* period. Afterwards degeneracy comes on. At *first* their religion and worship are simple and sincere, their justice stern, their integrity inflexible, their patriotism ardent, their courage invincible. Every thing glorious in the history of *Greece* was transacted in the period of its *Republics*, which was its earliest period. The famous *Roman Virtue* was their earliest virtue. The same might be observed of modern States, of *Switzerland*, of *Holland*, of *Britain*, in a word of every people who have once been worthy of the blessing of freedom.

BUT after a people come to be confirmed in the possession of what their virtue procured for them

them, when they come to eat and be full, and build goodly houses and dwell in them, when their herds and their flocks multiply, and their silver and gold is multiplied, and all that they have is multiplied, then a lamentable falling-away too often takes place, a change of spirit, of views, of principles, of morals, comes on with change of outward circumstances; and the progress is thro' luxury, profligacy, effeminacy, the loss of their liberties, to eventual destruction, or the horrors of Revolution. *Moses*, well versed in the knowledge of man, foresaw this exposure of his people, and with his last breath solemnly warned them of it before, they entered the good land. So *Washington*, in his last Legacy of advice to our nation, has warned us on many important points, vastly interesting to our welfare.

WE may indulge a pleasing hope that the *Americans* will furnish one solitary exception from all the nations who have been before us in adhering steadfastly to first principles and to early virtue and avoiding the broad way which so many have travelled to destruction. The examples before us are numerous and striking and ought to produce upon us this salutary effect. Perhaps it is by the accumulation of wretched examples, that the fortune of nations is finally to be turned. And who knows but that *America* is to be the first to reap this sanctified improvement? Surely it is time that so much experimental instruction should somewhere begin to yield an effect. The pointings of heaven are in our favour. There is much to hope: but there is somewhat to fear.

Moses directed his people, after they should get quiet possession of Canaan and should have eaten and were full, that *then they should bless the Lord*



*Lord their God for the good land which he had given them, and charges them not to forget it. In other places he directs them much to celebrate their memorable deliverance from bondage. I would just enquire, whether it is a token in our favor, that we of late years take so little notice of the Anniversary of our deliverance, and are so little disposed at any time to bless and ardently adore the Almighty for that event? Soon after our deliverance, we felt grateful for it; our rejoicings were animated, and we blessed God not only on this Anniversary, but on every proper occasion. Now that we are eating of the good of the land and are full, does it not look rather like forgetting the Lord our God, who brought us forth out of the house of bondage, to be thus listless to rejoicing and to praise?*

BUT there is another sense, still more important, in which God may be forgotten. That is, what Moses states in the text, *in not keeping his commandments and his judgments and his statutes.* This points to religious and moral corruption, and probably to *political*: for, the commandments and statutes which God gave to Israel embraced *civil* objects as well as spiritual. And perhaps the most notorious instance in which that people afterwards departed from God's commandments and Statutes in a *civil* respect, was when they renounced their dependence on *Him* and demanded a *King* to rule over them, that they might be like the other nations. This we know sorely displeased the Almighty, who remonstrated with them most earnestly by his prophet Samuel and set before them all *the manner of a king.* But when they persisted and shewed themselves so politically depraved, *he gave them a king in his wrath.*

BE all this, however, as it may, we are sure that *religicus* and *moral* corruption is intended. And here let me observe that Moses places this corruption *in not keeping the commandments of God*. It is not a great deal of outward pretence and nominal profession that renders mortals acceptable in the sight of Jehovah. Tho' due regard to decent outward *profession* be proper, yet God is most *truly forgotten* when we forget him in our *conduct*, he is most *effectually despised* when we despise him by our *practice*. Says an inspired writer, *This is the love of GOD that ye keep his commandments*. And Christ demands, *Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?* The Jews in some of their most degenerate periods were fond of *seeking God daily, & delighted to know his ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they asked of him the ordinances of justice, they took delight in approaching to God. Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?*—God explains the reason and tells them, *the fast he chose was not to bow down the head like a bull rush, but to loose the bands of wickedness to undo the heavy burthens, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke, to deal bread to the hungry, to cover the naked,\* and the like. Bring no more vain oblations, says God, I am full of burnt offerings and sacrifices, incense is an abomination unto me, the new moons and sabbaths, the calling*

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\* Isaiah 58.

calling of assemblies, I cannot away with. It is iniquity even your solemn meeting. But why, what made these solemn pretenders so offensive to heaven? It is added, *Your hands are full of blood. Wash you; make you clean; put away the evil of your doings; cease to do evil. learn to do well seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.* †

And what will Christ declare to those **MANY** who shall jay unto him at that day, *Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied (i. e. preached) in thy name, and in thy name done many wonderful works?* If we may credit his own words he will declare *I never knew you, depart from me ye that work iniquity.* Working iniquity is their mistake, and a very important mistake it is! Again, *Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven.* A multitude of solemn scripture equally applicable to the point might be cited. Permit me just to ask in view of these scriptures, whether it is a token in favour of any people, when the chief cry seems to be about *external. nominal profession, calling Christ, Lord,* and the like, while nothing extraordinary is said or done about *good works?* God forbid that I should discountenance valuable old Institutions. I am a friend to them and with them, by all means supported. I only speak comparatively between

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† Isaiah i.

tween *them* and *real practical religion*. Let me then ask, Is it a favorable token, when vast exclamation is made and chief attention seems to be excited about *institutions and old institutions and traditions* and things of this sort, while practical religion, judgment, mercy, charity and all the peaceful graces which form and adorn the Christian, pass with no special notice and obtain the lesser share of applause? yea, when the *latter* are in instances absolutely discarded and trodden under foot, when the *purst moral character* becomes of no consequence to men to shield them from reproaches; but the very FIRST of Christian virtues is violated in the act of denouncing men *Infidels*, not for want of *keeping the commandments of God*, no nor even for want of decent *outward profession*? Can all this be right? Would Moses call this the way *not to forget God*? Would the prophets call this the most acceptable thing to the Most High? Can Christ in heaven be so different from what he was on earth as to bestow more applause upon this calling of him, *Lord, Lord*, than upon *doing the things which he saith*? These are serious enquiries, and I address them to my fellow-citizens and fellow-Christians as worthy to be thought of at the present period. *Decent profession* is beautiful; but I must think it is more beautiful, to *keep the commandments of God*. And surely I shall not mistake the mind of Christ, if I exhort you chiefly and above all things to *despise love money and walk humbly*,

and at the same time not leave the *mint, annise and cummin* of exterior religion unattended to and undone. There is room for vast improvement among us with respect to the former, while we might also be more perfect in regard to the latter. Odi-ous vices abound in many alarming shapes. Of the heinous group, CALUMNY, PARTY-RANCOUR and LYING, stand most conspicuously in the front. To a pitch truly awful have these vices risen of late. Havoc, dreadful havoc have they made of the Christian graces among us and of our social peace. All the best interests of our country are put in jeopardy by their means. America trembles to her center ; and God only knows what the result will be. Oh that his power might issue forth to arrest the career of these foul, these infernal destroyers of human weal ! Oh God ! arise in thy majesty and strength, bruise the head of the old serpent, the Father of Lies, and send him roaring to the realms below : Fasten on him his everlasting chains : there let him clank them in eternal darkness, and go no more out to deceive the nations ! Rescue thy people, and save thine heritage, O Lord !

AFTER these vices, may be ranked, *selfishness, insatiable avarice, pride and vainglory, extortion, dishonesty, debauchery* and many others, which augur not well for our country.

country, and call aloud for consideration and amendment.

I SHALL forbear naming any appearances in the *political* region, that might be considered as symptomatic, either of our decline or improvement in pure principle. The tokens we have mentioned came more properly within the sphere of the preacher, being of a *religious* and *moral* cast.

BUT notwithstanding the things that are against us as a people, there is still room for sanguine hope, there is occasion for great joy when we contemplate our country. Our people spreading over a wide extent of territory will long be an agricultural people, and of course will be wont to retain their simple manners, virtues and principles both civil and religious. It must take a long time to operate on a people thus situated any considerable change to their detriment. Much may be calculated on the power of habit. Perhaps this was not more effectual to prevent our forefathers from degenerating into Savages, than it will prove with their posterity to save them from becoming Slaves. The general diffusion of knowledge among us and the means we have of preserving it, the multitude of books, our school-establishments, a free press, and our written Constitutions of Government, are favorable circumstances, promising much for this country.

MOREOVER

MOREOVER God governs the world, and we may place strong confidence in his benignant providence, that he will not forsake a people whom he has led thus far, whom he has distinguished in time past with eminent favors, and for whose prosperity he seems still to be interposing. Let us sincerely remember Him this day by rejoicing before him and blessing his great name. And let us still more truly remember Him by *keeping his commandments* in our lives. Let *America* rise in all its splendor to animate our songs: Let each one of its blessings excite a tribute of gratitude. But let none of its benefits be perverted by practical misuse. While we bless God for its plentiful and rich productions, let them not be made the occasion of intemperance, fraud, extortion, nor the cause of supercilious distinctions and pride. Let them not be squandered in luxurious dissipation, nor griped by the fist of avarice. Let the rich remember the poor who have been unfortunate in this good land: And let the poor of this country know that they are rich in comparison with the poor of other countries.

WHILE we bless God for our inestimable *liberty*, let us be careful *not to use it for a cloak of maliciousness*. Let us not slander and calumniate, because we can do it with impunity. Let freemen shew at least, let *Christians* shew that they can respect Magistrates and respect one another, out of choice  
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and from their own good sense, without restraints dangerous to their freedom.

FINALLY, in surveying the glories of our country, and pouring forth our gratitude to God, let the Gospel, the pure Gospel of the Redeemer, with which it is enlightened, move our chief rapture. Shall *that love* receive an inferior tribute of praise, *which passeth all understanding*, that love which impelled its illustrious Possessor to *make himself poor for our sakes, that we might be rich*, which carried him thro' scenes of dreadful suffering and at last the agonies of a Cross, for our salvation? Can we think of this unparalleled exhibition of friendship, and our hearts not burn within us? Can we contemplate it in all its height and depth and length and breadth, and our bosoms not swell with correspondent sentiments of friendship to him, and burst forth in effusions of grateful transport?

“ O for this love let rocks and hills  
 “ Their lasting silence break,  
 “ And all harmonious human tongues  
 “ The Saviour's praises speak.

But while we bless God for this unspeakable gift, let the pure Spirit of the gospel inspire our hearts and its precepts govern all our conduct. Let us *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour by well ordered lives*. Let us demonstrate the sincerity of our *love to Christ* by *keeping his commandments*, by *for-*  
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giving our enemies by doing as we would have others do to us, and as we have opportunity, doing good unto all men. Then will he say, YE ARE MY DISCIPLES INDEED. And we shall finally rise to possess *that better country that heavenly inheritance,* that celestial CANAAN and AMERICA, where is fulness of joy and streams of pleasure forevermore.

A M E N.

