

A  
**DISCOURSE**

DELIVERED

*In the Presbyterian Church,*

IN

**SHEPHERDS-TOWN, (VA.)**

ON

**TUESDAY, THE FOURTH OF JULY, 1815.**

**BY JOHN MATTHEWS.**

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## MEMORIAL OF INDEPENDENCE.

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EXODUS XII, 14.....*And this day shall be unto you for a memorial.*

**H**ISTORY can furnish no parallel to those remarkable changes by which the Jews are distinguished from all other nations. Through every age, and through a great variety of circumstances, from the call of Abraham their venerable father, down to the present hour, they have been, and still are, a *peculiar people*. By an astonishing train of events, when yet but few in number, they were brought into Egypt. Joseph, one of their patriarchs, through divine wisdom, had been instrumental in saving that kingdom from the calamities of famine, probably from utter destruction. During the life of Joseph, he was honored as the saviour of the kingdom; and his brethren were respected on his account. But after his death, “there arose up a new king who knew not Joseph,” and who, disregarding the claims of gratitude and honour, subjects the Hebrews to the most cruel and degrading servitude. They are deprived of their liberties, both civil and religious. Their complaints only tend to exasperate their unfeeling oppressors to greater acts of cruelty. In the mean time Divine Providence has purposes to answer by them which require them to be placed in different circumstances; which require them to enjoy the privileges of an independent nation. Moses is raised up and qualified to be their deliverer, their guide and their law-giver. He is sent to encourage his brethren with assurances that the Lord God of their fathers had heard their cries and witnessed

their sorrows, and was determined to “bring them out of the affliction of Egypt, into a land flowing with milk and honey.” He is commissioned also to request of Pharaoh the liberty of this people, and to declare, in the name of JEHOVAH, what would be the certain consequence of a refusal. But Pharaoh scornfully replies, “who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord; neither will I let Israel go.” The divine threatening is verified. Plague after plague, judgment after judgment is sent. His resolution is sometimes shaken, and he appears to relent. But deep-rooted avarice, pride and ambition, are not easily subdued. The judgment is no sooner removed than his momentary fears are forgotten, his heart is hardened, and he refuses to let the people go. At length the day of their deliverance arrives. The angel of death flies through the land of Egypt, and the first born of every family, from the king on his throne to the captive in the dungeon, falls a victim to his sword! The haughty monarch, though not humbled in genuine repentance, is effectually terrified, and unites with the mass of his subjects in urging the Hebrews to depart. Thus ended the rigors of Egyptian bondage; and thus commenced the existence of the Jews as a distinct nation, governed by laws and enjoying privileges both civil and religious, peculiar to themselves. The change was too remarkable to be soon forgotten. The Lord God of their fathers, by the most signal display of divine power, had interposed in their behalf, and brought them out “with an high hand and with an out-stretched arm.” The day on which their deliverance was effected, by the command of Heaven, was *to be unto them for a memorial*. In each revolving year the return of this day was calculated to remind them of their former servitude, and of the obligations under which they were to worship that God who had “brought them out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage.” Nor was the day to be distinguished from others by frivolous merriment or scenes of

dissipation. A solemn religious ordinance, called the *passover*, commemorative of their preservation, when the first born of Egypt were slain, and of other circumstances connected with their deliverance, was now instituted, which they were to observe on this day “as a feast to the Lord, throughout their generations.” The father was commanded to explain the design of this ordinance to his son, saying, “this is done because of that which the Lord did unto me, when I came forth out of Egypt.” The annual return of this day, and the celebration of this ordinance were calculated to perpetuate the knowledge of those events which attended the birth of the Jewish nation; and the recollection of these things was calculated to ensure their perseverance in the service of that God who was their support and defence.

From this passage, sanctioned by the highest authority, we learn that nations not only may, but ought to perpetuate the knowledge and cherish the recollection of those great events which materially influence their character and prosperity. That day, in particular, which gives them a political existence, rescues them from a state of dependence and oppression, restores to them the enjoyment of liberty, and elevates them to the rank of free and independent nations—*this day ought to be to them for a memorial*. Such, to these United States, is the *fourth day of July*. It is their birth day. Previous to this, in 1776, they were colonies, dependent on the government of England for some of those privileges most essential to the happiness and prosperity of a nation. In many important cases that government claimed the power of legislating for these states; and had this been exercised with a due regard to the interests of these colonies, the relation might have continued; at least it would not so soon have been dissolved. But this power was abused and perverted to purposes of oppression. Principles were assumed which awakened the suspicions and alarmed the fears of the inhabitants of these states. Complaints and remonstrances were offered; but in vain. The obnox-

ious principles were still avowed. Petitions, expressed in the most respectful terms, proved unsuccessful. Preparations were making to carry into execution by force those laws to which the honour and safety of the subjects forbade them to submit. Their fears and complaints arose not so much from the greivances yet felt, as from the assumption of those principles from which, if once admitted, might result consequences much more deplorable and more intolerable. The first encroachments were cautiously and gradually made. Yet the Americans, jealous of their liberties, saw in these encroachments the formation of fetters which would chain them as vassals to the throne. That proper measures might be adopted in this momentous crisis, representatives were elected who met in general congress, and to whose collected wisdom the interests of these colonies were committed. The question for their decision was, not whether the present grievances were intolerable, but whether they should tamely submit to these encroachments, and permit some of their dearest rights and invaluable privileges to be wrested from them—or, attempt the defence and security of these rights by an appeal to arms. After mature deliberation, appealing to the great Arbiter of nations for the justice of their cause and the rectitude of their intentions, conscious of their responsibility for the interests of posterity and of this rising empire, deeply regretting the necessity of the case, our representatives decided on the latter—they did appeal to arms.—Their views, however, extended no further than to obtain a redress of grievances, security for their rights in future, and then to return to the cheerful discharge of the duties of subjects. But God, in his wisdom, had other views and other plans to be accomplished; and his purpose shall stand. Influenced by various reasons suggested by passing events, and by regard to the prosperity and happiness of their constituents and of unborn millions, the fathers of American liberty, solemnly *declared, that these were free and independent states!* This declaration dissolved the relation,

formerly sustained to the government of England. This was making a decided stand; this was passing the Rubicon. This changed the character of the contest in which they were engaged. They no longer contended for the rights of subjects and of colonies, but for the blessings of independence, for the liberties of freemen. The Lord of hosts was on our side; the cause of liberty prevailed; the contest was successful; the American Eagle perched in triumph over the British Lion; the stripes and stars proclaimed throughout the commercial world, that a new empire, founded on the principles of virtue and religion, had started in its magnificent course. The banner of freedom still floats in the breeze. Liberty is still the birth-right of American citizens. Through the kind providence of God, we are assembled on the *thirty-ninth* anniversary of independence. This day shall be unto us for a memorial. Let it remind us of the interposition of divine providence in our behalf—of the value of independence—and of the sentiments we should cherish, and the exertions we should make for the preservation of these blessings.

1st. Let this day *be to us for a memorial* of the many signal instances in which the good providence of God, if not miraculously, yet manifestly interposed in favor of the American cause. Let us reject, with a virtuous indignation, the cold, the dark, and atheistical opinion that the Supreme Being has no agency in accomplishing those changes which diversify the state and character of nations and of individuals. Let us cherish the devout sentiment, so well calculated to excite in our minds the most pleasing and grateful emotions, that an all-wise God has not excluded the world from his paternal regard; that he still regulates the events of our life, and directs and modifies the more extensive revolutions of states and empires. Influenced by these sentiments we may receive greater pleasure than we otherwise could from reviewing the history of the revolutionary contest; because we will thus be enabled to perceive, and disposed to acknowledge

the hand of God in conducting that contest to a glorious and happy issue.

“The heart of kings,” and by consequence, the heart of rulers, “is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water; he turneth it whithersoever he will.” A more striking instance of this can scarcely be found than in the government of England. God, in his sovereign pleasure, was pleased to hide from the British cabinet a correct knowledge of the true state and dispositions of the American people. They were left to legislate in the dark. Their most important decisions were formed under the influence of ignorance, prejudice and resentment. Of course their measures produced the contrary effect from what was intended; they hastened on that change which they were designed to prevent. Their counsel, like that of Ahitophel, was turned into foolishness. Had they sent an army, at the first onset, as numerous and as powerful as they afterwards did, they might, in all human probability, have crushed the cause of our independence in the bud. Dismayed by an army so numerous and formidable, the Americans might have despaired of success from any exertions they could make in their weak and unprepared state. Instead of this, however they sent a force which, though not to be despised was not so overwhelming as to discourage the friends of liberty from acting in their own defence. And when a more numerous army appeared, the Americans had, from experience, acquired greater knowledge of the military art, were more numerous, better supplied with munitions of war, and above all, had found that even British veterans could be driven from the field. Thus they had time to collect their strength, gained greater confidence in themselves, and finally triumphed over their enemies.

Had the British ministry pursued measures calculated to conciliate the affections of the American people, this country would not probably, at that time, have separated from the parent state. But instead of this the ministry at home, the commanders and officers in this country,



seem to have been animated with a spirit of implacable rancor, mingled with contempt towards the Americans. They were considered and treated as factious, seditious and turbulent rebels, incapable of being influenced by mildness and respect; whose discontent and froward spirit deserved to be subdued by severity. Measures better calculated to produce the effect which finally ensued, could scarcely have been devised. This treatment alienated the hearts of the Americans still more from the government of England; left them nothing to expect, in case they were conquered, but unlimited submission; united them more closely in the cause of liberty; and confirmed them in the resolution that the sword, first drawn in defence of colonial rights, should never be sheathed till independence was secured. Thus the measures of the British cabinet recoiled on their own heads: “for the Lord disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness; and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong.”

It may also be ascribed to Divine Providence that these states were not lost in the vortex of anarchy. A total and radical change in government, either civil or religious, is hardly ever effected without some disastrous consequences. When men are freed from the restraints of a government which they dislike, they are too apt to rush into the opposite extreme. But in this instance, when the operation of the old government ceased, instead of disorder and confusion, harmony and union prevailed. The states, individually, framed constitutions for themselves, and all became united in one general government. Thus the expectations of their enemies were again disappointed. He who says, with effect, to the waves and the tempest, “peace, be still,” either prevents or composes such national commotions as are inconsistent with the plans of his wisdom.

We are also very much indebted to Divine Providence for raising up a commander in chief of the Amer-



ican armies, so eminently qualified for the arduous task. Here the name of WASHINGTON will occur to every mind. We are informed that in his youth he felt a predilection for a sea-faring life; and had even obtained a commission as midshipman in the British navy. Had this intention been realized his habits of life would have been entirely different from what they were; America would have lost his active and useful services, and perhaps he would have ranked among the enemies of that cause which he afterwards defended. The persuasions of an affectionate mother induced him to relinquish the plan.—Little did that venerable matron think that the cause of American independence was, in all human probability, suspended on the strength and tenderness of her maternal affection! And as little did that noble youth himself know that in obeying the wishes of his mother, he was taking a step so important to his own glory, and the salvation of his country! Yet such were the designs of JEHOVAH. He intended that America should be free; and as one link in the chain of events on which that freedom was suspended, the mother refuses to part with her son, and the son is disposed to filial obedience.

Filial obedience will, sooner or later, meet its reward. It is agreeable to the will of God, most grateful to the heart of parents and friends, and generally leads to prosperity and usefulness in life. It indicates a generous sensibility of heart, a sweetness and docility of temper which will not fail to conciliate the good affections of all who observe it; and which are most important ingredients in all true and lasting friendships. On the other hand, those froward, ungracious youths, who disobey their parents and friends, incur the displeasure of God, and prove themselves deficient in those qualities of the heart which are essential in friendship. Who would expect to find an agreeable companion, an affectionate husband or wife, in that young person who treats parental author-

ity and tenderness with rude neglect, with headstrong and wanton disobedience? Those who make the experiment will probably testify, in the bitterness of their soul, that the expectation was vain. On your account, beloved children and young people, this short digression is made. Your parents and friends will readily pardon it, if they find you disposed to meet their wishes with kind and respectful attention.

Washington soon took an active part in the service of his native colony. When David encountered the lion and the bear, he had nothing in view but to rescue one of the lambs of his flock. But afterwards, by reflecting on this circumstance, he was inspired with courage to meet even Goliath; and thus saved his brethren from bondage and disgrace. When Washington embarked in military enterprises he had nothing in view but the defence of his fellow-citizens from rapine and murder.—The prospect of independence had not yet dawned on his mind. Yet in those perilous expeditions he acquired that knowledge and those habits which turned the eyes of America to him as her commander in chief, and raised his character, in well-earned renown, above the kings of this earth. It can be no disparagement of others, with whom he acted in concert, either in the council or in the field, to say that Washington was endowed, by Providence, with those characteristic qualities which the exigencies of this country demanded.

Many other striking instances of the interposition of Divine Providence, are, no doubt, within the recollection of many still living, and will meet the eye of all who read, with attention, the history of the revolution; all which are calculated to produce the pleasing conviction that, in the counsels of infinite wisdom, it was determined that these United States should enjoy the blessings of independence. Let us annually enliven this conviction, by spending a part of this memorable day in the exercises of public devotion. This will appear still more reasonable when we recollect,

2d. The value of that independence, of which this day ought to be to us *for a memorial*. Under the colonial government these states were all dependent on the crown of England, some in a greater and some in a less degree. This rendered it difficult and tedious, in many cases, to procure the passage of a law; and still more so to obtain an amendment or repeal of such as were found inconvenient or oppressive. Our invaluable privilege is, that we possess the power of framing our own laws.—The knowledge of the greatest statesmen being limited, they may sometimes, with the best intentions, enact laws which will disappoint their expectations and their wishes. These laws, when reduced to practice, may produce effects which were not intended. Circumstances either unknown, or not duly considered, may render it very desirable, or perhaps necessary for the public good, that they should be repealed or amended. It is therefore an invaluable blessing that we hold in our own hands the power of redress; that we are not subjected to the tedious and often humiliating process of petitioning a monarch so remote from us as to have but a very imperfect knowledge of, and perhaps still less regard for our sufferings. Our petitions are sent to those who are not beyond the reach of our control. At certain and stated periods the business of legislation, at least indirectly, devolves upon us. No law, therefore, found by experience to be inconvenient or oppressive, can long continue in these states, unless a majority of the people are actually deluded to their own interest. By changing the men, they may secure a change of measures. How different is this from our former condition. Formerly, if our petitions were barely read, though immediately afterwards cast under the table, it was considered, by those to whom they were addressed, as a mark of condescension and favor. Still greater is the difference between us and the subjects of those unfeeling tyrants on whom petitions and complaints have no other effect than to furnish them with a pretended excuse for greater injustice and

cruelty. When we intimate to our rulers that their measures are oppressive, and that a change is requisite, instead of trembling for our lives, we may use the plain, though dignified language of freemen, and tell them, if they refuse to alter, at no distant period we will dispense with their services, and repose our confidence in others, whose views and feelings are more congenial with our own.

This power has been exercised in various instances. The articles of confederation were soon found, after peace, to be inadequate to answer the purposes of a general government. To remedy these defects, the federal constitution was framed and adopted. Even this, according to its own provisions, has received various amendments. Cases soon occurred for which no sufficient provision was made. The legislatures of the different states and of the union, are annually altering their laws, with the professed design of bringing them nearer to perfection, of better securing the rights of the citizen, and of giving them a greater tendency to promote the happiness of society.

Another invaluable blessing we enjoy is *religious liberty*. The constitution of the United States provides against making any law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise of it. And in the constitutions of the respective states, religious liberty is a fundamental principle. Every person is at liberty to follow the decisions of their own mind, and to worship God in that form which they deem best calculated to promote their religious improvement, provided they do not infringe the rights of others.

Religion, from its very nature, must be a matter of choice. It implies the knowledge and belief of divine truth, together with those affections and that conduct which are the necessary consequences of this belief.—These are effects which cannot result from compulsion. The conduct may be controled; but no tortures ever yet invented, can convey the knowledge of sacred truth into

the mind, or awaken devout affections in the heart. Yet such have been the absurd attempts of intolerant bigotry. You differ from me respecting some religious doctrine or some form of worship; for your good I wish you to embrace my own opinions on these subjects. But how is this to be effected? The only natural or even possible way is, by a lucid statement of truth; by addressing your understanding with argument. But instead of this, I present to your view the burning stake, address your nerves with engines of torture. I fail to convince your judgment; but I possess power; I can dislocate your joints, break your bones, and with protracted agonies, destroy the life of your body for the salvation of your soul! Surely a more malignant fiend never rose from the bottomless pit or blackened the human character, than that spirit which can exult in the pangs of the dying martyr, or secretly curse those blessed hopes and that divine power which raise him in triumph above the pains and the fears of death! Blessed be God, no created power, though driven by the most implacable and furious passions, can divest the mind of its religious knowledge, or the heart of its pious affections! yet the christian may be debarred from the sources of further information, prevented from a proper attendance on external means, and embarrassed in his religious progress, by various ill-natured and vexatious restraints. From all such embarrassments and persecutions and deaths, through the merciful providence of God, we are happily free.

Such are our privileges, that if our laws are at any time found inconvenient or oppressive, we hold the remedy in our own hands: if we refuse to apply it, in a constitutional, that is, a proper way, we then become the authors of our own grievances. If we are not a religious people, it must be ascribed to a want of inclination, to some inveterate opposition of heart to the exercises of vital piety. All external restraints are removed. There are no flames or inquisitions to deter us from the sanctu-

ary of God, or from the exercise of private and family devotion. As it regards religious liberty, "every man may sit under his own vine and under his own fig-tree, and none shall make him afraid." May God, in his providence, continue this a land of freedom till sun and moon shall be no more.

These are privileges not only vouchsafed to us for our enjoyment, but also entrusted to our care for their preservation. Therefore,

3. Let this day be to us for a memorial of that anxiety we should cherish, and of those exertions we should make, that these blessings may be transmitted, unimpaired, as an invaluable legacy, to future generations.— If this day deserves to be distinguished from others, it certainly deserves a more honorable mark of distinction than that festivity which too often verges to excess. It ought to render more vivid the recollection of those events to which it relates, and to which it naturally turns the reflecting mind. Such is the nature of memory that its faithful representations will, in some degree, affect the mind in the same manner as the events thus remembered would do, or formerly have done. The design of memorials is to aid the memory in retaining its impressions. Let us then forget the current of passing events; let us go back to the period of *seventy six*: let us surround ourselves with the scenes of the revolution, when our liberties were suspended on the issue of a contest with one of the most powerful nations of Europe. To many yet living, who shared in the toils and dangers of that period, this will be literally a work of memory; they need only revive the recollection of what they have formerly experienced. We who have advanced on the stage too late to share in those labours, can only revive the impressions made by the narrative of our fathers, and by the page of history. To us the exercise of the imagination must be a substitute for experience and observation.

In reflecting on that period our attention is forcibly ar-



rested by that noble disinterestedness which characterized the friends of independence. This we learn, not from noisy and pompous professions; but from actions, and sufferings. Those indeed who deserve most confidence in the hour of peril, are not the most prolific in professions. This was a crisis that demanded the most prompt and strenuous exertions; and these demands were answered by the patrons of American liberty. They relinquished the pursuits, and severed themselves from the comforts and endearments of domestic life for the toils and privations and hazards of war. Impelled by motives truly magnanimous, they sacrificed their personal interest and convenience for the public good. The greatest reward they anticipated was the blessings of freedom to themselves and their posterity. True, there may have been some, there may have been many, who, under the mask of friendship to the American cause, were actuated solely by sordid motives; personal advantage was their object. The public good only furnished a pretence under which they could more successfully gratify their selfish desires. Such, however, deserve to be excluded from the friends of independence. From characters radically different from these we learn that noble disinterestedness which is worthy of our grateful remembrance and our imitation. To sufferings and exertions, flowing from patriotism the most pure and practical, we are indebted for the blessings we this day enjoy. To preserve and perpetuate these blessings, let us cherish the same elevated sentiments, yield to the same generous motives which marked the period of the revolution.

Again; let this day remind us of that harmony and union which generally prevailed during the revolutionary contest. We see those who embarked in the cause, anxious to discover the best measures for obtaining their object. In deliberating on these subjects there was often a difference of opinion; but this difference was not permitted to rouse the feelings of personal resentment.



No sarcastic allusion or keen retort, better calculated to wound the feelings of an opponent than to enlighten the mind, was suffered to mingle with their discussions. Had that difference of opinion which then existed, and may always be expected on measures of public utility, been permitted to irritate the feelings, and form political parties, hostile to each other; the one opposing, of course, every measure proposed by the other; attacking each other with opprobrious and abusive language; more pleased with an opportunity of exposing the faults than of acknowledging the virtues of each other; harbouring the most unfriendly jealousies respecting each other's motives and intentions; unwilling to promote even the public interest except by measures which originated with themselves—these states might yet have been colonies of Great Britain. Such animosity and discord would have proved fatal to the cause of liberty. This every person will readily perceive and acknowledge. If then we are indebted to the happy influence of harmony and union for the enjoyment of our liberties, let us cherish the same spirit as necessary to the preservation of these liberties. Let this day recal to our remembrance the forbearance and moderation of our predecessors towards each other when they differed in opinion respecting public measures. Let this remembrance smooth those asperities and soften those animosities of temper which have unfortunately grown out of a difference of opinion on political subjects. Let our zeal for the public good be tempered with the "meekness of wisdom."

In some other governments all that is expected from the people is implicit obedience to the mandates of a single chief. In such cases, where the people have no influence, either directly or indirectly, in framing the laws, their animosities can have but little effect on the government. With us, however, it is very different. If, in the discussion of political subjects, we suffer our minds to be inflamed with passion, this passion, instead of the sober dictates of reason, the calm deliberations of wisdom,

will be infused into the laws of our country, and will operate to the prejudice of social order and happiness through every department and section of the government. Some other governments are like a machine which produces its effect by the force of one single spring: ours is like a machine whose regular and successful movements depend on the concurrent actions of ten thousand springs, some more and some less important. If these springs should spend their force against each other, every person may foretell the consequence.

We live under a government of our choice. As a political society, we are not held together by the fetters of despotism, but by a love of liberty. Our obedience, therefore, ought to be cheerful, not constrained; flowing from love to our laws, not from fear of their penalties. Fear is a sentiment by which the vassals of tyranny are kept in subjugation: love and respect for the laws are the generous principles by which the subjects of a free government are influenced. When obedience is extorted by compulsion, there is, in the same proportion, either a degree of tyranny infused into the government; or a spirit of anarchy prevailing among the people—against both of which we ought most cautiously to guard; for both are dangerous, and even inconsistent with the prosperity and preservation of a Republic. In neither case can our obedience flow from love and respect for the laws; and of course, we have either lost a portion of our liberty, or we have ceased to be the genuine friends of that liberty.— In the one case the power vested in our rulers is perverted to purposes of oppression; in the other, the blessings of freedom are perverted into licentiousness. May not the degree of liberty we now enjoy, and the probability of its continuance to future generations, be safely ascertained by the degree of coercion, now found necessary, to secure obedience to our laws? But lest it should be thought these remarks are verging to political controversy, in which we have neither the qualifications nor inclination to engage, we will retire within more contracted

limits, and take ground, which, we trust, is perfectly secure from such suspicions.

By the laws of this state, *profane swearing, Sabbath-breaking, drunkenness and gambling*, are expressly prohibited. Let us apply the general remarks above stated to these particular cases. Are these laws tyrannical, unjust or oppressive? If they are, why then are they suffered to continue? Why is not the legislature petitioned to repeal them? No such petition has ever been forwarded. This is proof sufficient that they are not considered inconsistent, to say the least, with rational liberty. Then it will follow that all who are habitually violating these laws, or who are only restrained by fear of punishment, *are not friends to the liberties of the state*. The liberty to which they are friendly is *licentiousness*; it is *anarchy*. Such persons, although they live under an organized government, yet refuse to be governed by its laws. They follow their own passions, inclinations and appetites. Thus they have, in these cases, introduced the very essence of anarchy. This is a state where there are no laws; where ever one follows his own inclination as the rule of conduct. Extremes, it is said, will sometimes meet. These friends of licentiousness and anarchy, and the tyrannical despot, are governed by the very same principles. The tyrant governs himself, and the miserable victims of his power, according to his own inclination; the others govern themselves by the same rule. Both are alike pursuing the gratification of their own passions, regardless of the happiness of those with whom they are connected. Those who are thus licentious in practice, habitually rejecting the control of salutary laws, would, in all probability, be tyrants in power. It is difficult to conceive how the heart in which the spirits of anarchy and despotism are both combined, can feel a genuine friendship for the liberties of this country. Such may allege in their defence, they mean no harm; that it is not their intention to injure any person. But what tyrant could not offer the same plea in justification of his conduct?—

He will not acknowledge it is his *intention* to increase the degree of human misery. He only intends to secure and support his own authority; but misery is the necessary consequence of the measures he adopts for this purpose. So in the present instance; the profane swearer, the Sabbath breaker, the drunkard, and the gambler, whatever their intentions may be, are actually doing an essential injury to society. They are not found in arms against the government; but they are found divested of those principles and sentiments, essential to the friends of liberty; they are governed by the spirit of anarchy and depotism, which they are infusing into all others within the sphere of their influence.

To violate the precepts of the gospel, on any day, is criminal; but still more so on the Lord's day—a day intended to support and perpetuate the principles of the christian system, and which ought to be spent in religious exercises. So the indulgence of these licentious passions, is at any time, injurious to the cause of liberty; but still more so on *this day*—a day which ought to rekindle in our bosoms the purest love and respect for our laws.— And if the transgressor of the divine law, should particularly select the holy sabbath for this purpose, would this not be fronting his wickedness with audacity? So if this day, the memorial of our independence, should be distinguished from all others by greater licentiousness, can the practice, in this case, be complimented with softer terms, than in the other?

If a foreign enemy was to invade our country with the professed design of dishonouring our legislature, of destroying the influence of our laws, of doing an injury to our government, in no respect greater than what results from these practices, we would meet that enemy at the shore, and point him to the tomb of a Ross, of a Gibbs and of a Pakenham, to learn the reception he might expect. And would we defend our government from the insolence of an invading foe, that we might have the cruel and unnatural pleasure of gradually destroying it

ourselves? Shall we permit our own unbridled appetites and passions to do that which the lessons taught on the plains of Plattsburg, of Baltimore, and of New Orleans, ought to deter a foreign enemy from attempting?

That such practices abound among us, is a melancholy fact. Let those who are engaged in them shun the presence of a revolutionary soldier, lest his scars should remind them of the price of that liberty which they are gradually undermining: let them cautiously avoid the tomb of those American heroes who fell in battle, lest from its deep recesses a voice should expostulate with them: let them shudder—let them instantly reform, lest the illustrious shade of Washington, disturbed by their base ingratitude, should meet them with his paternal reproaches! Or, if they can see, with indifference, the vouchers for the price of liberty, furnished by the soldier; if they can pass, unappalled, by the tomb of the hero; if they can hazard, without dismay, the reproaches of Washington's spirit; if they refuse to reform, then let them shun the light of this day! Annually, at its approach, let them hide in some dark cavern of the earth, till it is past. Let them not mingle with the true friends of liberty, to whom this day will be the memorial of that independence which they love.

For the preservation of liberty, in a republican government, correct morals are of the last importance. Vice and profligacy of manners are symptoms of approaching dissolution. The republic of Rome, once the mistress, the admiration and terror of the world, owes her ruin to this cause. The repulsion of those Goths and Vandals, to whom she fell, at last, an easy prey, would, in her better days, have been little more than a pleasing amusement. Dissipation was the most formidable enemy by which she was ever assailed. The people of France had scarcely time to call themselves a Republic, till their atheistical sentiments and their unbounded licentiousness burst asunder those bonds by which alone a Republic can be held together. As we enjoy this form of government, let

us be warned by the example of others; let us strongly associate, in our minds, the idea of vice, in all its forms and degrees, with the subversion of our liberties. The corruption of public morals, like the poison lodged in the veins by the viper's fang, affects the whole system; and unless an effectual remedy is applied, must terminate in weakness and death. Let us, then, measure our attachment to the blessings of freedom by no other scale than that of our morals.

From the preceding remarks we may learn the happy and decisive influence of the christian religion in favor of civil liberty. This influence may be learned from the effects of that *charity* which characterises every true believer in divine revelation. This will prompt us to those disinterested exertions and sufferings, to which, under providence, we are indebted for the enjoyment of our liberties, on which the preservation of these liberties very much depends: for "charity seeketh not her own;" it warms and expands the heart with an active benevolence, which operates most strongly towards those with whom we are most intimately connected, but disposes us, "as we have opportunity, to do good unto all men." It preserves us from wantonly giving offence to others, and from the feelings of malice, resentment and revenge, under the reception of injuries and provocations: for "charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, 'oth not behave itself unseemly, thinketh no evil; charity suffereth long, is not easily provoked, beareth all things." It disposes us not only to meekness and forbearance, but also to the forgiveness of injuries: for "charity is kind." By the influence of this heaven-born principle, we are disposed to comply with this precept of an inspired apostle—"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Thus it is calculated to prevent those unfriendly suspicions, those unkind



jealousies, those bitter animosities and discords, so inconsistent with the peace and happiness of civil society. But further; this charity, this “love of God, shed abroad in the heart,” will subject our appetites and passions, and even our “thoughts, to the obedience of Christ.” It will purify the heart, the very source of moral action; and thus furnishes the best security for those correct morals on which the prosperity and permanence of our government so essentially depends: for “charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.” If we are “sweetly constrained by the love of Christ,” we will live, not according to the unhallowed inclinations of depraved nature, but according to his will “who died for us, and rose again.” Certain it is, that no truly pious man can either be a tyrant, in power; or a troublesome, dangerous, or even useless subject, under a government of wise and salutary laws.

So intimate is the connection between civil and religious blessings and privileges, that religion itself is often expressed by the terms *liberty* and *freedom*. “If, therefore, the son shall make you *free*, ye shall be *free* indeed.” The blessedness of the heavenly state is called “the glorious *liberty* of the sons of God.” Let us, then, through the knowledge and belief of the truth, through the aid of the holy spirit, and by a regular and serious attendance on the ordinances of the gospel, seek that “*liberty* wherewith Christ will make us *free*.” Let us implore divine grace to deliver us from the dominion of sin, from the tyranny of satan, the most cruel despot in the universe. Thus shall we be prepared to hail, with increasing joy, the next anniversary of American independence, if that “God in whose hand our breath is,” should permit us to see it return; if not, we shall be prepared to hear, with unspeakable delight, the sentence of our God and our judge—*well done, good and faithful servant: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*