

*Alia  
given by M<sup>r</sup> Lewis*



*Mr. Cumings's*

S E R M O N

Preached *November 27. 1766*



A

# Thanksgiving

S E R M O N

Preached at *Billerica,*

November 27. 1766.

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By HENRY CUMINGS, A. M. ☞

Pastor of the CHURCH there.

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*Happy is that People that is in such a Case : Yea happy is  
that People, whose God is the LORD.*

King DAVID.

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B O S T O N : N. E.

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# A Thanksgiving-Sermon.



P S A L M XVI. 6.

*The Lines are fallen to me in pleasant Places ; yea I have a goodly Heritage.*



**T** becomes us, not only at all times, to maintain a grateful sense of the various undeserved favours of our heavenly Father, and to offer to him our private and daily-repeated ascriptions of praise in our several habitations ; but since we are social creatures, and our concerns and interests are connected together, and the Creator of the universe is our common Lord, it becomes us also, upon some set times, in a public manner, to join our hearts and voices, to render to him our united thanksgivings, for his manifold goodness and beneficence.

AND it is not only fit and reasonable, that we should associate and assemble together, to offer our thankful acknowledgments to God, upon those weekly-recurring holy times, which he hath appointed

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ed for this purpose, in his sacred word; but also, that upon some other times, we should socially agree and engage in this grateful employment, *especially* when the favourable providence of heaven gives us great occasion therefor.

AND as every revolving year is crowned with innumerable instances of the divine bounty and benevolence; it must be allowed to be a most reasonable service, to unite in offering an annual tribute of gratitude to our heavenly Father; and to spend a day together, in solemn devout recognitions of the *marvellous loving kindneses of him, whose eyes are continually upon us for good.*

AND as this day is appointed by the civil magistrate, to be observed as a day of public thanksgiving, for the numerous blessings of providence showered down upon us, thro' the course of the passing year, let us herein *sacrifice unto the Lord, with the voice of thanksgiving*, and pay our grateful homage to the *Most High*.—And may the benefits, which our all-merciful Creator has bestowed upon us, (*benefits, not only great in themselves, but heightened from this consideration, that they are bestowed upon worthless, sinful worms of the dust,*) inkindle in our breasts a warmth of sacred affection; that so, our offerings, this day, may be superior to a bare, formal, customary presentation of our bodies before the Lord, and of such a spiritual nature, as to meet with the divine acceptance, thro' *Jesus Christ, the Righteous.*

THE words, which I have read to you, are very proper to turn our tho'ts into a chanel suitable to the present occasion. They naturally lead us to me-  
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ditate upon the various distinguishing mercies, which the great Author of all good has conferred upon us, for which we cannot too frequently pay our grateful acknowledgments to him.

THE psalm containing these words, is intitled, *Michtam* of David. *Michtam* is an *Hebrew* word, signifying fine gold; and it is designed to teach us, that the psalms to which it is prefixed, are peculiarly precious, and to be prized more *than gold; yea than much fine gold.* This psalm contains copious matter of very excellent instruction, which, it would be beside my purpose, to inlarge upon, at this time.

THE devout psalmist, after expressing the greatest confidence and complacence in the Lord *Jehovah*, whom he had chosen for *the portion of his inheritance*, utters the words before us, saying, *the lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; yea I have a goodly heritage.* He utters these words, upon a recollection of the eminent blessings he enjoyed, under a grateful sense of their proceeding from God, the inexhaustible source of good, with religious joy and gladness of heart, and with the highest emotions of love to the sovereign Ruler of the universe.

HE had a pleasant and goodly heritage, because he had chosen God for *the portion of his inheritance*, and had an happy sense of his gracious presence and favour. *This*, with the confident expectations, which he had, of eternal life, thro' the promised *Messiah*, (to whom he evidently points, in this psalm,) was enough to yield him delight under any circumstance of life, and make every place pleasant to him.

THOSE,

THOSE, who enjoy *the light of God's countenance*, have *that*, which sweetens the bitterest portions of mortality, and puts greater *gladness into their hearts*, than the largest abundance of this world's goods can possibly excite. They rejoyce, in assured hopes of an incorruptible, never-fading inheritance, beyond the grave, in the regions of immortality,—an inheritance far superior to, and more glorious than all the riches, grandeur, and magnificence of this world.

BUT the psalmist, in these words; may be supposed to refer chiefly to outward blessings, and the felicity of his temporal circumstances. His lot was cast in a land under the peculiar benediction of heaven; among a people highly favoured of the Lord with outward prosperity; and (which deserves more particular consideration) in a land of light, *a valley of vision*, where the true God was known and worshipped, and where people were clearly taught from heaven, how they might obtain favour with their offended Creator.

THOUGH God has made of one blood all the nations, that dwell upon the face of the whole earth, and is good to them all, causing his sun to rise, and his rain to descend upon all places, and, in his kind providence, providing for the comfortable sustenance of all people; yet, for wise ends, to us at present unknown, he makes a discrimination between them, exalting some above others, by distinguishing favours of providence.—We are part of a nation and people, whom the Sovereign Disposer of all things, has distinguished from the greatest part of the world, by various peculiar blessings: And each one of us, may, with great propriety, adopt the words of the psalmist,  
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and say, *the lines are fallen to me in pleasant places, &c.* Now, in order to improve these words, as an excitation to us to praise God, the author of our existence and all the happy circumstances thereof, I purpose to shew, in several particulars, how they are applicable to our condition, state, and circumstances in the world; and to make such reflections, as I go along; as may serve to rouse our hearts to suitable exercises of gratitude:

I SHALL take it for granted, that you have faith in the providence of God; that you firmly believe, that all events, whether prosperous or adverse, that happen to men, are under the direction and government of the Almighty; that you are fully persuaded, that all the outward privileges and advantages, whether natural, civil or religious, that any person or people enjoy, are not casual events, but proceed from the righteous disposal of our heavenly Father. This being taken for granted, as *what* is necessary to your making a profitable improvement of what may be said, I will proceed as I proposed.

I. OUR lot is fallen in an happy *climate*, and good land:

WE live in the temperate *zone*, between the extremes of heat and cold. Our summers are not so sultry and scorching, as theirs who live under the *Æquator*, and for a considerable distance upon each side of it. Our winters are not so excessive cold and severe, as theirs who live in some more northern regions, particularly in *Lapland, Iceland and Greenland*. This happy temperature of the seasons, in the *climate* where providence has cast our lot, is a very agreeable

ble circumstance of life ; yea it is a vast advantage to us in our pursuits of the comfortable enjoyments of life, which would be greatly obstructed, by such excesses of heat and cold, as the torrid and frigid *zones* are visited with.—We live also in an healthy *climate*. The air in general is salubrious and wholesome. And who knows not, that health is the greatest temporal blessing ; and that it is necessary to sweeten life, and give a relish to every pleasant enjoyment ?

NOR *are the lines fallen* to us *only* in an happy climate, but in a good land, capable, by proper culture, of producing the necessaries of life in great abundance. Not, that I suppose this land calculated for independency. I believe no part of the earth is fitted for intire independency, though, perhaps, this part is as well fitted for it as any.

THE great Proprietor of the world has been pleased so diversely to scatter his bounties thro' the several parts of the earth, that *this* place abounds in many things comfortable, commodious, and convenient, which *that* place lacks, while, at the same time *that* has an overplus of other good things which *this* lacks. The design of providence in thus distributing its bounties of different sorts to different places, is doubtless *this*, to teach mankind their mutual dependance upon one another, and the necessity of a mutual correspondence and commerce, of mutual kindness and benevolence, of mutual faith, trust and confidence, and to bind them together in unity, by the strong cords of interest.

NUMEROUS



NUMEROUS are the benefits that accrue to us from trade and commerce : And so great, *especially*, are the advantages, that result from our present happy connection with, and subordination to our Mother-country, that (far from entertaining the remotest wish for independency) every sensible man must earnestly desire the firm establishment and continuation thereof, so long as we are favoured with the unmolested enjoyment of the rights of men, and privileges of *British* subjects.—But to return,

WE inherit a good and fertile land ; *a land flowing with milk and honey* ; a land, which, by suitable cultivation, throws out of its exuberant bosom, the largest stores of the necessaries of life. Such is the richness of the land, which we possess, that competent supplies of food and raiment, are easily obtainable, under the common smiles of providence. Through honest industry, in some lawful calling, join'd with temperance, prudence and frugality, we may live as comfortably, as any people upon earth ; yea if we improve well the advantages, and means of temporal prosperity, that providence has put into our hands, we may not only acquire food and raiment convenient for us, but obtain a considerable affluence of the good things of this world. Indeed, some unforeseen unexpected events of providence, impossible to be obviated by the utmost human skill and power, sometimes reduce to straits and necessities, the most industrious and prudent persons, and keep them low, and prevent their prospering and flourishing in the world. But however, it is plain to observe, that the poverty and want of most people among us, originate either from indolence, or intemperance, or some particular expensive vices to which they are addicted.

Was it not for sloth and laziness, intemperance and excess, luxury, prodigality and extravagance, the poor and needy would be few in number, in comparison with what they now are.

No one who reflects upon the plentiful provision of things both necessary and delightful, that the earth annually affords to the prudent and industrious husbandman, can want conviction of the richness of this part of the earth, wherein his lot is fallen, and of its admirable adaptedness to yield plentiful stores, not only of those things that are absolutely necessary for the support, but also of those that are conducive to the ease and comfort of man. Do we not receive its annual productions in vast variety and rich abundance? Has not this year, *especially*, been a witness of its riches, and of the favour of that kind providence, which makes the earth fruitful, and causes her to *yield her increase*?

It is worthy of our thankful notice, this day, that this year has been remarkably plentiful. It is unusual to reap both the former and the latter harvest in equal abundance. Our ordinary labours have been crowned with uncommon success. *The beauty of the Lord* has been upon us; and he has greatly blessed us in *our basket*, and in *our store*.

MAY our hearts expand with unfeigned gratitude for these liberal bounties of our gracious Parent in Heaven, who, in due season, *visited the earth, and watered it,—who made it soft with showers, and blessed the springing thereof,—who clothed the pastures with flocks, and also covered the valleys with corn,—who has made our oxen strong to labour, and our hands sufficient*  
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*for us,—who has so kindly preserved and provided for us, that there has been no breaking in, nor going out, and no complaining in our streets,—who has crowned the year with his goodness, and caused his paths to drop fatness, and has so plentifully filled our garners, that they afford all manner of store.*

Happy we ! If we have wisdom to improve these favours of providence aright, and to make suitable returns of thanksgiving to God, who has given us our dwelling to be the fatness of the earth, and has poured down his blessings upon us, especially this year, as the dew of heaven from above, yea as plentiful showers upon the grass, to the end that we might sing his praise, and glorify his name.

Does it become us to rejoyce in the Lord, and joy in the God our salvation, altho' the fig-tree should not blossom, and there should be no fruit in the vine ; altho' the labour of the olive should fail, and the fields should yield no meat ; altho' the flocks should be cut off from the fold, and there should be no herd in the stalls ?—Ought we to rejoyce in the Lord, and give thanks, even in this case ? And shall we not praise his name ! Ought we not with grateful exultation of soul to acknowledge his goodness, when he has made the earth and the fruit-trees thereof to enrich us largely with their treasures, filled our hearts with food and gladness, and caused our sheep to bring forth thousands, and ten thousands in our streets !

WHEN we consider, that tho' God might justly have left all men to unavoidable misery, when sin entered into the world, yet he is pleased daily to visit our abodes with his tender mercies, to cloath us liberally

ally with his *wool and flax*, to nourish and cheer us with his *corn, wine and oyl*; when we consider, that though, for man's offence, he has poured the cup of malediction upon the earth, yet he has graciously tempered it with his goodness, and to us, *especially*, has been distinguishingly kind, in casting our lot in this good land, than which, if it was put at our option, it would be impossible for us to chuse a better, all things considered, one situated in a more temperate and healthy climate, and at the same time more fertile of the various necessaries of life, affording us all the bounties of nature, "the good, the useful, and agreeable;" when we consider the many happy years which we have seen, and especially the *present*, which has been blessed with extraordinary instances of the divine munificence, giving us to receive the riches of the earth, in the most abundant supplies of our several wants and necessities: When we consider these things, verily we cannot want sufficient matter to fire our hearts with fervent love and gratitude to our supreme Lord, and Benefactor.

WHEN David told Mephibosheth, *that he should eat bread continually at his table, he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am?* A most humble acknowledgment of a kindness! Mephibosheth was of royal extract, and equal to David by nature, but yet he receives his kindness with extraordinary expressions of thankfulness. Ought not we then, who are vile sinful wretches, under the humblest sense of our unworthiness of the least mercy, and with unfeigned exertions of gratitude, to acknowledge the bounties of the great *King of Kings*, who tho' he might justly leave us to a most wretched forlorn condition, strip  
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of every good thing, yet in infinite compassion, feeds us richly at the table of his providence, and *giveth us richly all things to enjoy!*—Lord! what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him, or the son of man that thou makest account of him?

INGRATITUDE, in times of calamity, whether public or private, fixes an eye upon the dark side of things, inattentive to the sunshine, that illuminates the other side; and forgetful of the manifold blessings that are mixed with all the adversities of the present life, murmurs, repines, complains, and arrains the goodness of God. Nor are the murmuring lips of ingratitude stopped by the greatest temporal prosperity. In a time of general plenty, the language of ingratitude is,—“Tho’ the earth has largely *yielded her increase*, and enriched us with plentiful stores of all good things, yet they will fetch little or nothing in the market; the price of things is so low, that we are not much profited by our abundance.”—It is well if you are all clear of such kind of murmurings under the present great plenty.

INGRATITUDE! thou child of sathan, and black offspring of hell, avaunt. Get thee behind me, and be for ever banished from my soul. Ingratitude! thou bane of piety and devotion, which kickest against the hand that feeds thee, and spittest in the face of the great *Giver of every good and perfect gift*, depart from every human breast, and be exterminated from the face of the earth, and flee to the shades of darkness, the infernal regions, thy proper seat and mansion.

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THAT heart must be very wrong, which gives entertainment to this infernal monster. Those do so, who pervert the good things of Providence, as fewel to feed their lusts, to gratify their pride and vanity; envy and malevolence, and abuse them as occasions of various sinful pleasures, such as rioting and reveling, intemperance and debauchery. Let us not be guilty of such ingratitude, but endeavour to honour the Lord with our substance; and (according to the Apostle's direction) let us *do good, be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.*

NOR are those who pervert the bounties of heaven to the purposes of licentiousness, pride and malice, the *only* persons who nourish the monster of ingratitude in their bosoms. Those also do so, who are filled with gloomy discontent under the allotments of providence. Shall man complain of his lot, when it is infinitely better than he deserves? Shall guilty man "a worm sprung from the mud," be dissatisfied with that portion of happiness which the unmerited bounty of Heaven has afforded him? Shall we, who have a most agreeable situation in the world, to whom all the springs of temporal felicity are set open, whom God has loaded with such a vast variety of benefits, as render our lives sweet to us; shall we, shall any of us complain? Does not "the whole creation in universal concert praise the Creator?"—Let us not refuse to join the concert.—Ingratitude makes a man but as a blot and blurr among the works of God: The ungrateful man may therefore be properly addressed, in the striking language of Dr. South, which (unless my memory fails me) is as follows.—"Thou ungrateful brute! Thou scandal to mankind, and to thy creation! What shall  
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“ we say of thee, and to what shall we compare thee?  
 “ There is nothing in heaven above, or earth be-  
 “ neath, that is like thee; therefore if thou wouldst  
 “ find thy parallel, go to hell, which is both the re-  
 “ gion and emblem of thy ingratitude, for besides  
 “ thyself, there is nothing but hell, that is always  
 “ receiving, and never restoring.”

AND if ingratitude for the blessings which I have already mentioned be a most abominable crime, it must surely be much more criminal, a more heinous sin, to be unthankful for the superior favours of Heaven, which I have yet to remind you of.

H. WE live under a most excellent constitution of civil government; and enjoy great and invaluable civil liberties and privileges.

THEIR mutual dependance, and the necessities of their nature, oblige mankind, if they would live comfortably and happily in the world, to combine together under some form of government. The constitution of government among us is a transcript of *that of Great-Britain*. The form of government adopted by *Great-Britain*, is perhaps the most perfect that this imperfect state admits of, less liable to inconveniences, and more promotive of the public good, the grand end of all government, than any other that can be imagined. This form of government is an harmonious mixture of *Monarchy, Aristocracy, and Democracy*. *Monarchy* is the *Rule of One*, or where the supreme power is invested in a single person. *Aristocracy* is a form of government lodged in the hands of the nobles. *Democracy*, is the government of a state by the common people, or by persons whom they shall chuse. Now by the mixture of these three forms of government, the consti-  
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tution of *Great-Britain*, has considerable advantages over either of the simple forms. For such a compounded form of government (as one observes) “spreads the basis or foundation of the constitution wider, and makes it consequently more firm :—” “Draws to itself the principal conveniences of every form, such as the lustre of a Court, the grandeur of Nobility, the ease and freedom of the people ;—” “and better guards against the common misfortunes of every form of government, one part of the constitution balancing the other.” The supreme dignity, power and prerogative of the KING, the honour and splendor of the *Nobility*, the rights and liberties of the *common People*, by this mixture of government, are sufficiently secured, and so connected together that *they* are strongly byassed to consult each others good. *British Subjects* enjoy as great freedom, as it is possible any should enjoy under any form of government, and can never be enslaved without their consent, or a violation of the constitution. And here I would add, that as we are *British Subjects*, we are as firmly established in the rights of *British Subjects*, by *Magna Charta*, the grand prop of *English Liberties*, as the inhabitants of *Great-Britain* themselves. And these rights are further confirmed to us by a *Royal Charter*. And therefore we cannot be deprived of our property, or any ways enslaved, without our consent (by representatives) unless both the constitution of *Great-Britain*, and our *Charter*, be first set aside.

We have reason to rejoyce in the excellent form of government we live under, whereby we are delivered from oppression, slavery and tyranny, and are secured in the free unmolested enjoyment of our lives and property ; whereby provision is made for the redress of wrongs, for our safety and security, and for  
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the curbing the lusts of men, which, was it not for the restraints of the civil law, would soon break forth in such outrages and violences, as would dissolve the community, and throw us into a state of confusion and anarchy.

SUCH is the excellent constitution we live under, that we may *lead quiet and peaceable lives*, and every one may *sit down under his own vine, and fig-tree*, and enjoy without fear or disturbance, the fruits of his labour. This affords abundant matter of thanks to the supreme Lord of the world, who *ruleth in the kingdoms of men*, to whom we are ultimately beholden for all our civil liberties and privileges.

AND it becomes us, at all times, to reflect, with grateful affection, upon that most favourable interposition of Providence, which we have this year experienced, whereby we are re-established in the enjoyment of the blessings of our excellent civil constitution, after some injurious attempts to wrest them from us. This year will stand in the annals of this country, as one of *the years of the right hand of the Most High*, wherein *British Americans*, were delivered from threatening slavery, and restored to the embraces of almost-exiled liberty.—The *Stamp-Act* cannot be remembered by any *American son of liberty*, but with abhorrence. We have, indeed, too great affection for our gracious King, too high a veneration for the Parliament, and put too great confidence in their friendly disposition towards *America*, to entertain a tho't that *this Act* originated from them. We rather believe that it obtained a *parliamentary* sanction, thro' the deceitful plausibility, and the specious glossing lies, of some individuals, the first contrivers of it, who were enemies to the nation, and, for ought I know, had an hidden intent of plunging *Great Britain* and her colonies

lonies into one common destruction. This was the natural tendency of the *Act*; and this would probably have been the consequence, had coercive measures been used to enforce it. And then, what would have become of *America*? What of *Great-Britain*? ICHABOD might soon have been wrote in capitals upon each of them. And then (to borrow the words of Dr. *Mayhew*) “ what would become of those few “ states, which are now free? What, of the prote- “ stant religion?” Of *both* which *Great-Britain* is the main support. “ The former might not improbably “ fall before the *Grand Monarch* on this side the Alps; “ the latter before the *successor* of the apostle Judas, “ the *Grand Vicar* of satan beyond them; and so, at “ length one universal despotism swallow up all!”

By *this Act* we were deprived of two of the main inherent rights of *Englishmen*, a right of taxing ourselves, and trials by juries. And as these rights are the *life and soul of the English* constitution, so *this Act* was like a dagger planted in its very vitals. In this light, the great orator and patron of the nation, the renowned *PITT*, view'd it, as appears from a clause in his speech against enforcing the *Act* by arms. He is said to have spoken thus: “ On a good, on a “ sound bottom, the force of this country can crush “ *America* to atoms.—But on this ground, on the “ *Stamp-Act*, when so many here will think it a cry- “ ing injustice, I am one that will lift up my hand “ against it.—*America*, if she fell, would fall like a “ strong man, would embrace the pillars of state, and “ pull down the constitution along with her.” From the same view of things he is also reported to have said; “ *I rejoyce that America has resisted:*” Words, that *America* may think she has abundant reason to adopt, since she may imagine, that her refusing to put  
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on the yoke, was a principal mean, in the hand of Providence, of saving her from bondage.

THE clouds were sometime gathering over us; the thunders of slavery wounded our ears with their remote grumbling noise; the threatening storm approached continually; until upon the inauspicious *first* of November 1765, a little more than twelve months ago, our whole hemisphere was covered over with a dark and gloomy cloud, which hung lowering over us for some months, threatening a dreadful desolating tempest of oppression, bondage, ignominious servitude. But upon the following ever-memorable *eighteenth* of March, he who has the *hearts* of all men in his hand, and turneth them whithersoever he will, gave us favour in the sight of our gracious King, and disposed him to give his royal assent to an Act for revoking the severe decree of taxation that had gone forth against *America*: As soon as the joyful news of which, saluted our anxious ears, *light arises in our obscurity*, the dismal dreary clouds flee away, the heavens recover their wonted serenity, our hearts expand with joy, with cordial gratulations we welcome reviving liberty, which, with heightened lustre and beauty, flies to our longing bosoms, while slavery, that brat of satan, vanishes out of sight.

WE have already spent a day in religious commemoration of this most gracious appearance of Providence. But let us not look upon that as a sufficient return to our supreme friend, who so seasonably appeared for us, delivered us from our dismal apprehensions, and *turned our mourning into dancing*. Let the flame of gratitude burn in our breasts, as long as the lamp of life lasts, for this signal deliverance, in consequence of which we stand, this day, *free men before the Lord*.

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MAY God continue to us the inviolate enjoyment of liberty, and transmit it down to the latest posterity. And as we hope for this favour, let us not abuse our liberty *for a cloke of maliciousness* or licentiousness, but be careful to improve it to wise and good purposes. And as we value our excellent civil constitution, and the blessings thereof, let us peaceably *submit ourselves unto every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the King as supreme ; or unto governours as unto them that are sent by him, for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well ; especially, let us submit ourselves unto our divine Lord and King, and yield a chearful obedience to his commands, and an easy subjection to his government.—Then shall our peace be as a river.—*

MAY propitious Heaven ever smile upon the *English* nation, bless it with peace, wealth and liberty, and make it still more glorious and honourable among the nations.—May the united interests of *Great-Britain*, and her colonies, stand firmly fixed upon a sure, solid immoveable basis.—May the King *reign in righteousness*, and the bosoms of all his subjects glow with the most affectionate loyalty.—And may we in these remote parts of his dominions, ever taste the blessings of his mild government ; and being free (as at present, thro' his royal benevolence, and the benevolence of his patriotic ministry) from fearful apprehensions of further grievances, and animated with hopes of the future peaceable enjoyment of our restored liberties, may we live together in perfect order, harmony and tranquility.

III. WE live in a land of light, and *valley of vision*.

OUR land is gloriously illuminated with the light of revelation. This is a superior blessing to either  
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of the former, because we are by it taught how we may regain the favour of our offended Creator, and secure an inheritance in the regions of bliss and immortality. It is not in the power of nature's light to teach these things. If we are well acquainted with ourselves, we cannot be insensible that we are in a state of such deep depravation, that without the light of revelation, we should *walk in darkness*, with regard to the affairs of another world. The light of nature is so dim, since the fall, that altho' it should be granted, that without the assistance of revelation, it plainly discovers the being of a God, yet it is unable to shew how sinners may worship him acceptably, to raise a future state of recompences out of obscurity, and consequently to enforce the duties of morality with such strong and powerful motives, as are sufficient to overcome the lusts of men.

WHAT an invaluable and seasonable blessing then is the light of revelation? The will and pleasure of God concerning us, and his eternal purposes and designs of mercy towards us, are thereby clearly manifested. We are raised above the fears of dropping into nothing at death, and above the fears of the unavoidable wrath of the Almighty, and if we sincerely repent, there is opened before us, a most agreeable prospect into futurity. The marvellous light poured on us by revelation enriches our understandings with the most reviving and glorious truths, fires our imaginations and passions with the most enamouring prospects, and helps, and strengthens every faculty divine in the human soul, to rise from its captivity and slavery to brutal lusts. This light affords sufficient encouragement and animation to us in the pursuit of the ways of virtue, and, thro' faith, enables us to overcome the world. And it sets before us in  
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the most striking amiable light all the divine attributes, and *especially* displays such astonishing instances of divine grace and goodness, as afford matter of everlasting praise, and thanksgiving.

WITH what fervent affection, with what exalted pleasure, with what holy admiration, does the good man behold, in the volume of God's word, pictured before him the liveliest most endearing images, that stupendous act of grace, which made provision for the redemption of rebellious men ! With what holy exultation of soul does he reflect upon that unbounded love, that infinite philanthropy, which God, whose *mercy is great above the heavens*, exercised towards mankind, when they had lost their original rectitude, forfeited happiness, and exposed themselves to misery, by constituting his son to be their Saviour, and the repairer of their natures, to redeem them from guilt and condemnation, and recover them to a resemblance of himself, and to a capacity of enjoying that happiness from which they had fallen ! With what rapture does he reflect upon the advent of the son of God into the world, and feeling something of that divine enthusiasm, which warmed the breasts of the angelic host, upon this astonishing occasion, join with them in giving glory to God, that there is *peace on earth, and good will towards men* ! With what joy does he consider the many assurances of pardon, reconciliation with God, and eternal life, which the gospel gives him ! How unpeakably consolating is it to him, to contemplate upon that never-fading and immortal crown of glory reserved for him in the heavenly *Jerusalem* ; and to consider that when his soul shall burst these bonds of fettering clay, and be loosed from the prison of this mortal body, it shall be conducted by guardian angels to regions of glory, honour and  
*immortality,*

*immortality*, and that his body also, after it has been mingled, perhaps for ages with its mother-earth, shall by the voice of the Almighty be roused from the dormitories of the dead, & be cloathed with everlasting bloom and vigor, and then receiving its former inhabitant, be translated into the immediate presence of God, and the Saviour, and into the company of saints and angels, to join with the heavenly hosts in their eternal hallelujahs, and to enjoy endless, uninterrupted and supreme felicity ! And how does a prospect of such future bliss, such endless felicity and glory everlasting, rouse all his active powers into exercise, and excite him, as a racer in the olympic games, to exert his utmost *so to run, as that he may obtain !*

THESE, *these*, my Brethren, are the glorious, the joyful things, the ravishing prospects, which the light of revelation opens to us, and assures us of upon repentance. And what (I had almost said) an invincible motive to holy living, must these things be, *especially* when it is considered on the other hand, what dreadful things are denounced against impenitence ?

How thankful ought we to be that our lot is cast under the meridian lustre of this glorious light, while a great part of the world lies wrapt in heathen darkness, ignorant of the true God, and the way to salvation, thro' Jesus Christ ? How thankful ought we to be for this distinguishing favour of Providence ?—To us are committed *the oracles of God*, faithfully translated into our own language ; we have them in our houses and hands, and are allowed the free perusal of them. And to those who diligently search them, they are as a *light shining in a dark place*. They scatter those clouds of darkness, which in consequence of the apostacy have arisen over the human mind ; they chase away the shades of night, and let in upon us a flood of day,  
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glorious beams of divine light, which are *able to make us knowing, and wise unto salvation*. By this light we are pointed to the way, wherein we may secure eternal life and glory in the world to come; and obtain an heavenly inheritance, infinitely preferable to all earthly honour and dignities, to the greatest riches & possessions of this world. What can be a greater blessing? What; tho' we were exalted to the pinnacle of earthly grandeur and dignity, and rode upon the waves of worldly prosperity? What, tho' we were surrounded with temporal affluence, and loaded with all the bounties of nature? Yet if we were destitute of this light; how miserable should we be, in comparison with what we now are, or may be, if we do not foolishly bring ourselves under that condemnation, that *light is come into the world, and we have loved darkness rather than light?* O, let us highly prize the revelation of God; which gives the most important intelligence from heaven; and brings the most comfortable news, and *glad tidings* to the sinful children of men; teaching them how they may escape the wrath to come, and obtain a crown of glory hereafter.

DID David under an humble sense of his meanness, and the peculiar favour of heaven, in giving him the sceptre of Israel, say, *who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house that thou hast bro't me hitherto?* Did he thus humbly thank the Lord for the throne of Israel? And shall not we with the most profound humility, and self-abasing ideas of ourselves, acknowledge the marvellous goodness of God, in offering us a crown of glory in heaven, and assuring us, in his word, that we may finally arrive to such exaltation, as *to sit on thrones, and be made kings and priests unto God?*—Who are we, that we should be thus exalted!

THE light of the gospel makes our land a most pleasant place, a most delightful heritage. This once  
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howling wilderness now blossoms as a rose under the cheering rays of the *sun of righteousness*, and that luxuriant growth of mental darkness, and barbarism, wherewith, not two centuries ago, it was overspread, is now destroyed by the bright beams of revelation. This light is perhaps as little obstructed and obscured by human traditions and impositions in *America*, as in any other country whatsoever. We enjoy it in its purity. It shines upon us with unclouded splendor, unless our own prejudices, and bigotry darken it, and make the way to heaven obscure, which this light makes plain.

LET us wisely improve this light, by acquainting ourselves with God, and his Son, the great saviour of men, and living as his word teaches us. This is the way to make it a blessing *indeed* unto us. It will prove a curse if we abuse it, or neglect it. Do we pity the heathen, who are perishing for lack of vision? And are not those to be pitied, who tho' they live under the light of the gospel, are in almost as great darkness as they, because they turn away their eyes from this light? Do our bowels yearn over those miserably dark and benighted people, who are without revelation? And shall we not drop a tear upon those, who tho' they be *children of the light*, yet *grope in darkness at noon day*, who, tho' they are favoured with the clear shining of the gospel, yet thro' an *evil heart of unbelief*, or a love of sinful pleasures, shut their eyes, stumble and fall into aggravated perdition? These certainly are in the most pitiful circumstances.—And therefore *we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard.*—*For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience, received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed, to us by them that heard him?*

IV. WE enjoy the most invaluable religious liberties and privileges.

OUR lot is not only fallen in a land of light, but we have the free use of the light. This is our greatest felicity. We may examine the scriptures for ourselves, and worship our maker, according to that mode and form, which we apprehend most agreeable to his will, without endangering our lives or estates. This is a liberty confirmed to *British Subjects* by the act of *toleration*, whereby they are delivered from persecution on religious accounts, if their religious principles be not manifestly subversive of government, and inconsistent with their allegiance to the King. That infernal fiend, persecution for conscience sake, which drove our forefathers out of their native land to the inhospitable wilds of *America*, and too much of the spirit of which appeared even here in the infancy of the country, is now utterly exterminated from both *Great-Britain* and *America*, and we hope and pray, that it may for ever remain in exile, and never again shew its execrable miscreated front in the *British* dominions.

HAPPY for us, that our nation has cast off the papal yoke ; that we are free from papal usurpation and tyranny, the most cruel, and impious of any. For what can be more intollerable and impious, than for a meer man to *exalt himself above all that is called God, or worshipped* ; to invade the sacred rights of conscience, and impose his *ipse dixits* upon the judgments of men, as infallible truths, not to be contested under pain of damnation ; to usurp dominion over the souls and bodies of men, and enslave *both* under a specious pretence of saving the former ? What can be more cruel and detestable, than the practice of the *Romish* clergy, in officiously locking up the scriptures from the laity, and requiring them to receive the perverted doctrines thereof

thereof from their lying lips, and to believe as they bid them, as they would avoid wracks and tortures here, and eternal torments hereafter ?

BLESSED be God, we are not under such unmerciful tyranny ; that, as *to our own master we stand or fall*, so we are allowed freely to exercise the rights of private judgment, to examine the scriptures for ourselves, to see whether the things taught us by our instructors be true, and to receive or reject accordingly, without incurring the vengeance of persecution, or offering any just occasion of offence to any man, while we are of a sober, blameless and peaceable behaviour, and allow others the same liberty which we exercise ourselves, without anathematizing them, after the manner of the pope, if they happen to dissent from us.

MAY God ever maintain for us our religious liberties ; and as we desire this favour of him, let us improve to his glory, and our furtherance in the christian knowledge, and growth in grace, the means of grace, the religious opportunities, privileges and advantages, which we enjoy ; and be careful *to walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying, but putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, and living as his gospel teaches, soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.*

AND as the rights of private judgment and conscience, are sacred, which no man, however exalted, has any authority to wrest from another, and as we are favoured with the free & open exercise of these rights, let us not break charity with any for the exercise of the same liberty. Let us exercise christian catholicism, *doing nothing thro' strife, or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.* Let us ever have bigotry in abhorrence, considering, that a man of narrow stingy principles, and of a suspicious censorious

censorious make, is destitute of that charity, which *thinketh no evil*, and putteth the best construction upon the sentiments and actions of others, and which is the brightest ornament of a christian. Those who are under the power of bigotry, are ready to make their own understanding the door of grace, and gate of heaven. They would tie us down to human schemes, systems, and formularies, and have us regard *these* as the standard of truth both doctrinal and practical, and in case we do not set them upon a par with the bible, but bring them to the test of that holy book, and judge they are in any article wrong, and so dissent, they vote us heriticks at once. They are ready to stigmatize as graceless, and doom to damnation, all whose sentiments, relative to religious truth and practice, don't coincide with theirs. Yea, with *procrustean* cruelty, they would stretch every man to the length of their bed, who is too short for it, and cut all shorter, who are too long for it.

If such men had power, we might expect nothing but persecution, fire and faggot, in case we refused to bow down and salute the papal toe of their infallibility. They want nothing but power, to make them *popes*. Had they *this*, they would wrest from us that liberty of conscience, which we now enjoy. Bigotry then is popery in embryo ; popish tyranny in-it's first principles. This is that schism-making monster, which has split the *protestant* church into violent contending parties, and sent forth a spirit of reproaching, bitterness and uncharitableness into the several sects among them, which more than any thing else, serves to keep them asunder, and prevent their dwelling together in love and unity. Let us therefore hold bigotry in detestation. Let us be thankful to God for liberty of conscience, improve it well ourselves, and not begrudge it to others. And let us be charitable towards the several denominations of professed *protestants*, who tho' they differ in various matters of opinion from us, yet *fear God, and work righteousness*, considering that they exercise but that same religious liberty, which we do, and which is one of the greatest privileges, we can enjoy in this world.

THUS

THUS I have shewn in a few instances how the text is applicable to our case and circumstances in life, and interspersed such reflections as I proposed. On these several accounts it may be said, that *the lines are fallen to us in pleasant places, &c.* And on innumerable other accounts, it may be said, that the Lord is very kind and gracious to us. Time would fail me to reckon up his countless works of love; yea, had I the tongue of angels, I should be unable to rehearse them. Their sum is beyond computation. Nevertheless it becomes us to spend this day in a grateful recollection of them. Let every particular person, reflect back, and trace the footsteps of divine goodness towards him, thro' the whole course of his past life. This will convince him that his heavenly Father has showered down upon him; an immensity of love and mercy, and has at all times afforded him copious matter of praise, and thanksgiving. *Who so is wise, and will observe the dispensations of Providence; even he shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord;* he shall see and know that the Lord has been gracious to him; in every part, and period of his life, and has caused all his goodness to pass before him.

LET us, this day; not only endeavour to refresh our memories with the unmerited favours of Heaven, but resolve that we will for the future walk closely with God, and manifest the gratitude of our hearts by the chearful obedience of our lives. His *goodness* should *lead us to repentance*, and engage us to faithfulness in his service. Let us be careful, thro' the remainder of this day, thro' the evening and night approaching, thro' the following day, yea thro' the whole future course of our lives; to behave as reasonable creatures and christians, keeping consciences void of offence towards God, and towards man. Let us *stand in awe, and set the Lord before our eyes*, and maintain a reverence for him and his laws, both when alone, and when in company we vent the gladness of our hearts in chearful conversation, or innocent amusements. Let us not riot with the kindnesses of Heaven, or waste his bounties upon our lusts, by running immediately (as it is to be feared is the practice of some) into scenes of sinful mirth, and pleasure. What avails it to offer our praises and thanks to God with outward shews of gratitude, if when we have done, we trample upon his authority, and abuse those bounties for which we have been giving thanks, to purposes of licentiousness, in rioting and revelling, to his dishonour? What avails it for us to  
offer

offer our thanksgivings to God, if we immediately run into such practices as are provoking to him ! If we do thus, our offerings will prove like *a smoke in his nose*, most odious and offensive.

WHEN we retire from the house of God to our several dwellings, and feed upon the riches of divine Providence; let us eye the hand that feeds us, and partake with sobriety and moderation. And let us also endeavour to stir up the fire of gratitude in the hearts of those, who have; this day, detained themselves from the house of God, to make provision for the regaling of our bodies; and who being *cumbered about much serving*, have not probably spent a tho't upon the goodness of their heavenly Benefactor. Let us ask them whether they have offered to God that sacrifice of praise, which he requires. Surely they are not released from their obligations of gratitude to the *Most High*; nor will their being busied in making provision for the body, excuse their neglecting to join with us; in offering an annual tribute of thanks to our Maker.

To conclude; let the prelibations of divine goodness, which we receive in this world, make us earnestly solicitous to obtain full draughts at the fountain head of all blessedness, in the kingdom of glory. God forbid, that we should receive his bounties in vain; God forbid, that our having a goodly & pleasant heritage here, should only serve as a mean of our inheriting greater misery hereafter. Let us trace those various streams of divine bounty, that are continually flowing all around us, up to the never-failing fountain of good, from whence they flow; and let us seasonably endeavour to secure an interest in the favour of God thro' repentance, and Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, that we may not be turned off with the blessings of this Life, as our only portion of happiness, and be doomed to eternal wretchedness hereafter, but that we may finally be admitted to the Realms of bliss where are superiour enjoyments, exalted delights, pure, supreme and uninterrupted pleasures, equal to the most enlarged desires and capacities, of our immortal souls.

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