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MR. PACKARD'S

Thanksgiving SERMON.

FEBRUARY 19, 1795.



The plea of patriotism.

A

S E R M O N,

PREACHED IN

CHELMSFORD,

ON THE DAY OF

General Thanksgiving,

February 19, 1795.

BY HEZEKIAH PACKARD, A. M.
MINISTER OF CHELMSFORD.

Teach them to thy sons and to thy sons' sons.

Them that sin rebuke before all, that others may fear.

MOSES.

ST. PAUL.



B O S T O N,

PRINTED BY WILLIAM GREENOUGH,

No. 42, Cornhill.—1795.

TO THE

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY

IN CHELMSFORD,

THIS DISCOURSE

IS INSCRIBED,

By their sincere and

affectionate friend,



The Author.



A

S E R M O N

2 CHRONICLES xx. 30.

“So the realm of Jehosaphat was quiet; for his God gave him rest round about.”

IN periods of remarkable peace and prosperity we ought to cultivate *affectionate gratitude* to the God of peace, and Father of mercies. When public tranquillity and happiness obtain in a high degree, it becomes us to recognise with reverence and approach with homage the *great Ruler of nations*. To him, who is the fountain of intelligence and happiness, and the source of order and harmony, should our hearts aspire, and our praises ascend. We, who are now assembled in this sanctuary, have an happy opportunity to call forth the feelings of gratitude, and to *offer unto God thanksgiving and praise*. When rulers and subjects, when ministers and people are invited to recount national blessings, and to contemplate the happy condition of our country, the scene opening upon the mind is adapted to excite religious joy, and to inspire holy transports.

Our

Our beloved president, being an enlightened spectator of distant scenes, beholds the ball of empire rolling from place to place. He sees the vast commotions in the political world; some nations struggling for the sweets of liberty, and others panting for dominion. He views at a distance one part of mankind engaged in the cause of freedom, and eyes them with deep concern on their way to republican empire. And he looks with a reproving countenance upon another part, who are elated with national pride, who are grasping at the sceptre of arbitrary power, and are fighting the battles of vain ambition. With these various spectacles before him he feels anxious for his native land. He is unwilling to trifle with the blessings of national peace, which were obtained at the expense of so much blood and treasure. Instead of listening as some do to hear the harsh trump of war, he wishes to entertain the people with the soft clarion of peace while he can give it breath. Having gone through the hazards and hardships of a bloody contest, he well knows the price of our liberties, and wishes to preserve them. And having obtained help from the *Great Sovereign* of the world, he is desirous of giving *Him* the glory due to his name.

Deeply penetrated with a sense of divine protection and favor, he solicits the American people to unite in rendering to God a voluntary tribute of gratitude and praise. Considering the diversity of political opinions, the jarring interests of statesmen, and the conflict of nations, the blessings of peace and tranquillity, which now brighten the complexion of our national affairs, naturally rise in our estimation. In possession of these, our situation is evidently marked with indications
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of divine benignity, and calls for songs of joy and oblations of praise.

In compliance then with the official requirements of our beloved and patriotic *Washington*, and in conformity to the feelings of every grateful heart, let us now recount some of the signal favors bestowed upon our happy nation. And I think that a lively sense of human dependence, and contemplation on our national advantages and prosperity naturally lead to those very exercises, in which this day calls us to engage. The idea, that all religious societies and denominations of christians throughout the union meet together for the same purposes, has a tendency to enliven the devotion, and animate the praises of every religious assembly. The recollection that millions this day conspire in offering thanksgiving to God must, I think, invigorate the mind, and affect the heart of each individual. Considering the social enjoyments, religious privileges and national dignity of the American people, insensible indeed, must be that mind, which remains unmoved on this interesting occasion, and flinty must be that heart, which does not feel some tender emotions.

The Lord of heaven and earth, who judgeth among the gods, hath favored us with manifold and "*signal mercies which distinguish our lot as a nation.*" We have peace in our borders. Our empire is in a good degree quiet. God hath been pleased to give us rest round about.

The state of Judah, at the period to which our text refers, was similar in some respects to the present situation of united America. Under the reign of Jehosaphat, the liberties of Judah were in eminent danger. The children of Ammon and the children of Moab, together with the inhabitants

habitants of Mount Seir, invaded the land of Judah, and resolved to reduce it to tame subjection. Sacred history informs us, that these nations intended to give laws to Jehosaphat and subjugate his people. In like manner, Great-Britain a few years since invaded our rights, and attempted by her arbitrary and hostile measures to impose upon us the galling yoke of servitude. She let loose her voracious and blood thirsty lions upon the defenceless inhabitants of our country.

When the king of Judah discovered the impending dangers, which overspread his empire, he earnestly besought the Lord to espouse his cause and to direct his counsels. He proclaimed a fast. *“And all Judah stood before the Lord with their little ones, their wives and their children.”* In like manner, when British insolence and valor were directed at the vitals of our country, we unitedly besought the Lord. By fasting and prayer we intreated the God of armies to give us wisdom ~~and~~ understanding, courage to assert, and prudence to preserve our rights. The prayers and supplications of Jehosaphat and his people were graciously heard. They were made to triumph over their enemies, and were laden with the richest spoils. And on the fourth day they assembled in the valley of blessing, and gave united thanks to the God of Judah, who made them rejoice over their enemies. They repaired to the house of the Lord with psalteries, and harps, and trumpets, and worshipped the Preserver and Guardian of Israel. *So the realm of Jehosaphat was quiet; for his God gave him rest round about.* In a remarkable manner also did the *great Ruler* of nations appear in our behalf when our enemies rose up against us. With a propitious eye did he look down upon
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our injured country. Some of us can remember, and some of us did witness signal victories which He obtained for us. Under his patronage and by his assistance we made our way to liberty and independence. And to Him are we indebted for all our past successes, and national prosperity. Sing O Heavens! For the Lord hath done it; rejoice O America! For the Lord hath done for thee great and wonderful things!

At a period like the present, rendered illustrious by the triumphs of freedom, it is highly proper for the United States, as on this day, to devote themselves to religious joy, grateful solemnities and public thanksgivings. The annals of the world cannot exhibit many pages more interesting, than that, which traces the causes, marks the crisis, and enumerates the subsequent advantages of the American revolution. Since the bright orb of day began its course, there have not happened many events more replete with importance, than those, which ought this day to rise to our grateful remembrance. Several years, it is true, have elapsed since our independence was declared, and since our federal government has been established upon lasting foundations. But the privileges and blessings hereby chartered to us, do not pass away with the lapse of time. Instead of diminishing, they are increased by being preserved. This we cannot doubt, if we consider those circumstances which once cast a threatening aspect upon our national affairs. At the close of the war, our country labored under many embarrassments. Our national government was in a feeble and unsettled state. Bold attempts were made upon our domestic and federal harmony. Under the cumbersome load of our national debt and somewhat

jealous of each other, the United States appeared to be in a retiring posture. The political wisdom of each state was directed to objects within its own limits. Federal ideas, not being naturalized to Americans, were not for a while zealously cherished, and of course did not fast ripen to maturity. And our national character in its rising progress, met with many obstructions. Local prejudices almost destroyed the remaining power of federal attraction. Though a national body was in existence, it was extremely feeble, and its movements were slow and ineffectual. Its strength was weakness; its authority was merely nominal, and its decisions often proved abortive. At length for want of strength, and for want of supplies, it fell into a fatal decline and *gave up the ghost of empire*. Things being in this unpromising state, our most firm and enlightened patriots felt anxious for their country. They dreaded the power and influence of foes without and foes within. They sensibly felt the force of the tried maxim, "United we stand, divided we fall." But after frequent attempts and a series of well directed endeavors, a prospect of national union again opened. The *collected wisdom* of America conceived another constitution of government which was proposed to the several states. This mighty temple, erected for the residence of peace and from which she was to hand heavenly blessings to the people, could not stand without pillars to support it. Of these, nine were the least possible number, which could firmly sustain it. And it was agreed that each of these supporting pillars should be reared by a particular set of laborers. The several companies to which this work was assigned had formed themselves for
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other purposes. Some supposed that such an undertaking would be injurious to the respective companies and totally subvert their own plans of operation ; but others more wisely thought that such a work would concentrate the interests of the whole, and be of real advantage to each particular company. The work, however, was soon begun. Some of the pillars were soon raised to their proper places ; but others, through the indolence and party contentions of the workmen, were a long time upon the poise of uncertainty. Some of the men were so unfortunate as to lose their foot hold ; others, being more accustomed to a lubber lift, applied their strength the wrong way, and a few were not inclined to do any thing. So that spectators, who had no right to assist, felt doubtful of the consequences. And there was one circumstance which raised the anxiety and alarmed the fears of many, who had manfully performed their own part. They were apprehensive that, if any set of laborers failed of raising the pillar allotted to them, or if they should let it fall when partly reared, there would be danger of having the others come tumbling after. But much to the joy and to the honor of the principal managers, the necessary number was at length supplied. And had the other companies been sufficiently acquainted with the principles of *such architecture*, they as well as the rest would have accomplished the part assigned them. When this magnificent temple was completed and furnished with proper lights and ornaments, celestial peace took up her residence in it, and under the patronage of Heaven has ever since been shedding her smiles and blessings over the land.

Our

Our national government has already produced so many happy effects, and has so dignified and exalted our national character, that it has justly excited the admiration of the world. *American citizenship has been said to be the highest civil dignity of man.* We are sensible that the wisest civil and political institutions, as well as every thing else formed by man, may carry with them marks of imperfection. The most excellent system of national government, and most prudent and learned administrations may be in some points deficient. The wisdom of the wisest is limited; the power of the strongest is uncertain in its operations; the conduct of the most upright and judicious is liable to error. The best formed societies need the inspection and influence of the great *Governor* of the world. To conduct with success the laboring plan of state, there must be afforded from on high a discerning spirit and a directing power. Without these, the bands of society would soon burst asunder. But we may venture to assert, that there is no system of national government which so nearly coincides with the greatest civil liberty, as *that* of the United States. We cannot name any other constitution which is so extensive in its operation, and which is at the same time such a full charter of national security and freedom. All parts of it conspire to the great purposes of its establishment, *the welfare and happiness of United America.* It encourages the industrious citizen to continue his honest pursuits. It patronises genius and vindicates the cause of virtue. It possesses a vital energy, and invites the ablest men to assist in its administration. In such a constitution and in the privileges attending it, we are this day permitted to rejoice.

joice. For such a government and for all the blessings which flow from it, we are ultimately indebted to the supreme Arbiter of the world. The same glorious being who gave rest and security to the pious king of Judah, and to all under his dominion, hath done excellent things for us whereof we are glad.

When we view the calamities of other nations, our condition certainly affords matter of consolation and joy. By casting an eye across the Atlantic, we behold the extended arm of violence and the mighty conflict of nations. While under the protection of an happy government and with the splendid torch of freedom in our hands, we can read and lament, that many of our fellow creatures still wear the chains of servitude, and that others are obliged to take their course to liberty through warm contentions and seas of blood. Though some earthly thrones have fallen to ruins and kings have been slaughtered by their own subjects, we have enjoyed and still possess many of the sweets of national peace and tranquility. And while other kingdoms carry strong symptoms of decay, and seem to be tottering to their fall, we are favored with "*constitutions of government which happily unite, and by their union establish liberty with order.*"

Among the causes of our present state of peace and prosperity, we ought to name congressional influence and measures. We cannot suppose that the members of congress are wholly exempt from partial views and local prejudices. This would be too much to expect even in the halcyon days of the *millenium*. But it is evident that our federal government has been instrumental in uniting the interests of separate States, and in making them

them move on together in the common concerns of the whole. And had it not been for the discerning wisdom and pacific measures of Congress, Mars with his bloody train would before now have overspread this tranquil land with the calamities and horrors of war. Since the commencement of hostilities in Europe and depredations of American property, many influential men have without prudence or policy urged the necessity of making reprisals, and of denouncing vengeance from the cannon's mouth. But through the *enlightened* policy of congress, and especially through the well directed exertions of the President, peace has been preserved. Rescued from alarming dangers we may exult with thankfulness in the blessings of public tranquillity. "*The snare is broken and we are escaped.*" His excellency, in his speech at the beginning of the present session of the general court, may have reference to the wise and prudent measures of the *President*, and to the favorable decisions of congress. For he is "led to hope that under the continued smiles of Heaven, our peace and tranquillity will be firmly established." Taking into view all the repeated injuries done us and all existing circumstances, he seems to consider national peace as highly important to our rising republic. And the two branches of the *legislature* in their respective answers to his excellency's speech, appear to have an eye at the proceedings of our federal government. They consider our exemption from a foreign war; "while Europe is bathed in blood," as a token of divine protection and favor. In the season of peace we have a fair opportunity to adjust the energies of law, to balance and settle the scale of authorities and to direct our
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public movements to the common interest of the American people. So that we have reason to rejoice with gratitude that the United States have regarded, *on their part*, the obligations of existing treaties, and adhered to the principles of neutrality. In this way we have preserved our national honor and dignity, and realized many important benefits.

To some of my hearers, a brief illustration of the idea of neutrality may be of use. When two parties are opposed to each other, a wise man, if circumstances admit, will shew, respecting the matter in dispute, a practical indifference. Instead of taking a side and becoming a partisan, he will endeavor to shew himself friendly to both parties. Instead of increasing the quarrel between them, he will endeavor, in suitable ways to put an end to it. By this method he acts an honest and upright part, and can enjoy the privileges of a neighbor and a friend to each. Things may be so arranged, that to say and do nothing respecting the bone of contention, would discover his integrity, wisdom and policy. The same principles apply to national concerns. When two nations are at war, any separate government, especially when interest and existing treaties conspire, may and ought to proceed upon the line of neutrality. A deviation from such a line would be likely to raise the indignation of the contending parties. But while the third nation declines hostile measures, it may share the confidence of both, and may do many things which have a tendency to bring them to terms of peace. And apart from the ideas of national justice and equity, the benefits of such a mild behavior may be greater than any attainable with the sword. This was a little
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the case with the kingdom of Judah. Without losing a man or striking a blow, Jehosaphat obtained the object of his wishes. “*He stood still and saw the salvation of the Lord.*” His enemies engaging in their wicked enterprize with rash and precipitate zeal, as mankind too often do, violently attacked, and miserably destroyed each other. And the peaceable Jehosaphat witnessed the havoc which was made, traversed the field of blood and returned with the richest spoils. *And the realm of Jehosaphat was quiet; for his God gave him rest round about.* Similar consequences we trust will not result from the present madness of the hostile nations; but we devoutly wish that knowledge and liberty, religion and happiness may pervade the *European world.* Yet by declining a foreign war we have already experienced many advantages. We learn from good authority, that proud and imperious Britain is obliged to be just to injured America; that our commerce will soon be upon a more advantageous footing; that tribes of Indians, once hostile, are now disposed to be at peace. Almost every thing which could be obtained by a war, we now have a prospect of securing without it. These pleasing circumstances have arisen from the pacific measures of the executive of the United States. The *Great Ruler* of nations hath directed our councils to the adoption of these measures and continued peace in our borders. We ought then to come before him with thankful hearts and sing in his presence songs of praise.

The proclamation requires us to notice with *affectionate gratitude* the seasonable control given to a spirit of disorder, which lately raged in a remote part of the union. For a part of our countrymen

trymen to take up arms against the constitutional laws of the whole is matter of serious regret, and has a very pernicious tendency. The farther we trace the causes of such an outrageous spirit, and the more we inquire into the characters of the principal fomentors of it, the more rash and criminal will their conduct appear. An envious disposition, immoderate jealousy, and a gross perversion of liberty, lead on to disorder, faction and anarchy. These, when combined, are sufficient, without accomplices from the infernal regions, to spread havoc and desolation over the earth, and these we may place among the principal causes of the late insurrection. There are perhaps some men, who are unfriendly to our national government, because they have no share in its administration. There may be others, who oppose its salutary laws, because these laws happen to be unfavorable to their particular interests. And there are many, who for want of information and for want of virtue are easily persuaded to take any side of a question. Through the influence of a designing few, they may be prevailed on to oppose the most salutary measures, to defame public characters and to scatter falsehood and slander. And numbers, who are real friends to their country, have been in many instances grossly deceived. Attentive to the common affairs of life, and pursuing with honesty their respective occupations, they are not suspicious of other men. To such honest and well meaning persons the artful and designing may appear fair and upright, while their real course is, like the folds of the serpent, winding and crooked. These remarks, my brethren, teach us the lesson of caution. They shew us the importance of repairing to all proper sources of information,

information, with regard to characters and measures. Considering the disadvantages of many honest citizens, and the *combined* influence of a few political *impostors*, we cannot expect that the community will be kept in perfect harmony. Such combinations of men in a republican government, and in a season of peace, are I conceive very pernicious. By setting themselves up as a check upon government, they disturb and agitate the public mind. They breathe the very spirit, which they pretend to oppose. And they raise themselves above others to prove that all are upon the floor of equality. We wish that such men would display in practice what they affect to pursue, republican principles; and that they would evince the genuineness of their political faith by doing the proper works of citizens.

When we consider the threatening aspect, which our public affairs have at times assumed, we may felicitate ourselves on our present prosperous condition. The spirit of insurgency, which has several times broken out and violently raged, is now evaporated. As formerly in Judah, things in general go well in America. Those very attempts, which were made to trample on the constitutional laws of our country and to destroy the executive forces of government, have in reality strengthened the bands of our union. Instead of weakening the nerves of delegated power they have given them additional vigor and energy. And we may confidently predict, that any unlawful and wanton attempts against our general or local constitutions would in like manner be defeated. But we hope and trust in the God of order that no such violent outrages will again be meditated.

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The proclamation now calls our attention to “*the prosperous state of our affairs public and private.*” Our lot as a nation compared with foreign kindoms forms a striking contrast. While the nations of Europe are draining each other’s treasures, wasting each other’s strength and destroying each other’s lives, the people of this land increase in wealth, numbers and respectability. And while those nations are forming instruments of death and are obliged to cultivate the arts of war, the American people pay an increasing regard to literary institutions, and aid the progress of those arts and sciences, which are highly useful in civilized life. Under the smiles of Heaven, wisdom and knowledge are becoming more and more the stability of our times. For these important advantages, we ought to render our sincere and united thanks to the Father of lights. Our public and personal virtues should be a perpetual testimony of our gratitude for public and personal blessings. As the flame of liberty shines clearer and brighter in America than in any other quarter of the globe, more is required of us as citizens. And as we are favored with the christian system we are under additional obligations to regard the laws of truth, righteousness and virtue, and ought to yield a willing obedience to that omnipotent *Governor*, whose aim is the safety, welfare and happiness of his subjects. To be in favor with such a *Ruler* is the happiest state in which an intelligent creature can be placed. In such a case the province of the mind must be quiet. A person arrived to such an attainment has rest and peace round about him.

To perpetuate the blessings of peace and secure the smiles of heaven we must, as a people, regard
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the laws of nations, be careful of our civil rights and cultivate our religious privileges. Those, who leap the barriers of national compact, cannot be true patriots. Those, who without cause speak evil of dignities and oppose good and wholesome laws, cannot be good citizens. Those, who practically deny their Lord and Master by neglecting the virtues of the christian life, cannot be his real disciples. Without a steady regard to the constitutional laws and to the administration we cannot expect the continuance of freedom and peace. Without fixed attention and intentional obedience to the doctrines and maxims of the gospel we have no reason to expect the rewards of faith. If the subjects of any government be inattentive to their political rights and neglect their duty as citizens, improper and unqualified rulers may be introduced and some destructive contagion seize the constitution itself. It is the peculiar right of the people, where the sovereignty lies, to form their constitution of government and to chuse men to effectuate and enforce its laws. But if this right be abused and perverted, they lose their main pillar of support. To preserve the blessings of peace and to render them permanent, there must be not only good laws and good rulers, but good subjects. People at large must be careful of their rights, if they mean to preserve them. In the lap of security they easily fall asleep. Much depends upon their prudence and caution at free and popular elections. Many honest and good citizens can not easily discern the evils, which may attend such elections. A few votes, inconsiderately thrown into the box, may occasion many and lasting evils. Every man, allowed to give his suffrage, ought to bear in mind that when the
unskilful,

unskilful, intriguing and wicked bear rule, the liberties of the subject are at hazard, and the people have reason to mourn; and that when the judicious, learned and righteous are in authority, these liberties are secure and the people may rejoice. When we undertake the business of electioneering, we ought to consider *first*, what office is to be filled; *secondly*, the literary and other qualifications necessary to fill it with dignity and usefulness; and *thirdly*, the real characters of candidates.

In the higher departments of government higher qualifications are requisite. We are not only to inquire what a man has been, but what he really is. If he do not possess qualifications which enable him to answer the reasonable expectations of the people, he ought not to hold the office. There are many true patriots and tried friends to their country, who are now unfuitable to fill places of important trust. In connexion with literary qualifications we should consider the real characters of the candidates for any office. This becomes more important in the higher ranks of civil authority. To find out a man's real character we must not place too much dependence on newspaper scribblers, nor on vulgar reports. Forgetting the things that are behind, we may expect of a *Centinel*, that he will always be on his guard and keep a good look out, but he may sometimes neglect his duty. And an *impartial Chronicle* we consider as a true record of real facts; but it may be sometimes the vehicle of falsehood and personal abuse. The *Federal Oracle* has not yet completed a revolution, but we hope, and trust its movements will be regular; that it will be subject to no unnecessary eccentricities,

ities, and that it will escape the disturbing influence of comets, which for a while astonish and then disappear. In consequence of examining some particular newspaper, as the messenger of truth to the public, many of our worthy fellow-citizens have been led into error. There have been things said concerning characters in this commonwealth and some members of congress, which had nothing to recommend them but the ingenuity of the inventor. And had not ingenuity at length failed, more severe invectives might have been expected. In several instances a true statement of real facts would lead us to approve and admire measures, which, by being misrepresented, have been censured and rejected. And men belonging to our national government, who have dignified their office and done honor to their country, have been wantonly condemned and stigmatized by persons no better than they should be.

These remarks are made not to abridge the rights of my fellow-citizens, but to make them more cautious in guarding and securing them. The *proclamation*, you may remember, exhorts us to implore divine protection and aid, that we may not hazard our rights and privileges by artful intrigues and *delusive pursuits*.

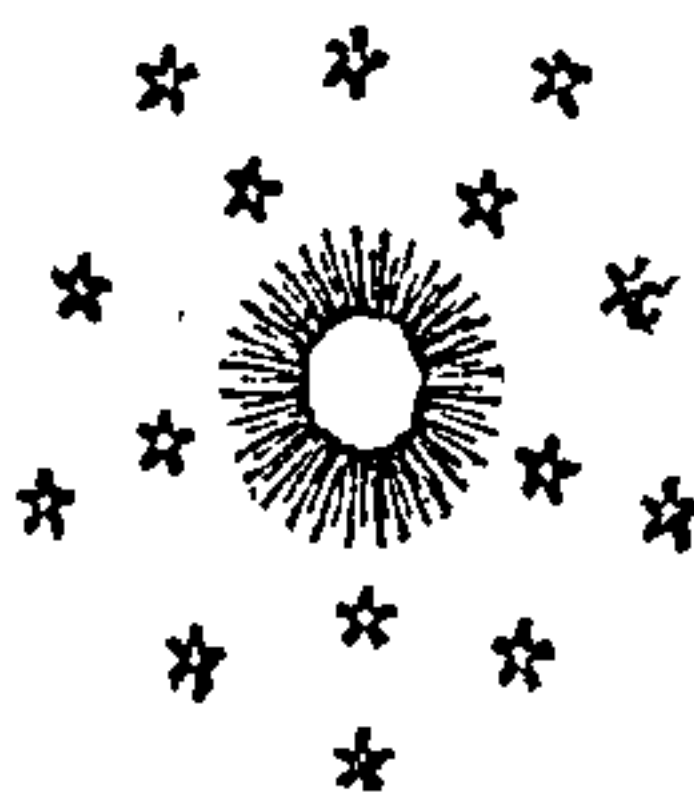
Let us then consider the high and happy privileges we enjoy, and endeavor rightly to estimate and wisely to improve them. By attending to the common interests of our country and exercising our rights in a suitable manner, we may hope for the continuance of public blessings. By taking suitable methods to acquire and diffuse useful knowledge and political information we shall rise in prosperity and national importance. By attending

tending to the education of youth and instilling into their minds the first principles of civil government and of our holy religion, we may confidently hope that our liberties, guarded by Providence, will descend as a fair inheritance to the latest posterity. And we ought to be careful that such legacies, kept in reversion, be not diminished by mismanagement. The appointment of this day, of general thanksgiving will be preserved in the annals of our country as a *standing memorial* of the rights and privileges, laws and religion now in our possession. Such a day has been justly called “*a pillar of remembrance*, to revive and preserve a sense of our obligations to heaven.”

In this period of national peace and prosperity the inhabitants of this land are under manifold obligations to aid the progress and extend the triumphs of the gospel, and to cultivate “habits of order, morality and piety.” In the breasts of Americans religion and virtue should be deeply planted, and shoot forth in large and extensive branches, and bear nourishing and permanent fruits. Then would this favored land be a “*safe and happy asylum for the unfortunate of other countries.*” Then would all ranks of citizens exert themselves to increase the influence of every virtue. Then would America become the joy and glory of the earth. And this happy era appears now to be in embryo. As a people may we cultivate these virtues, arrive to this national dignity, and experience and transmit to future ages these distinguishing blessings. And God Almighty forbid, that any *spirit of disunion or disorganizing power or necessarian influence* should interrupt these wishes and prayers in their progress to heaven and prevent their efficacy at the throne of grace!

And

And we implore the *Great Ruler of nations* to impart the blessings of civil liberty and religious freedom to the whole family of mankind. May every nation groaning under the weight of arbitrary power be raised to the privileges of a mild and peaceful government. May the dark abodes of ignorance and superstition be enlightened with the beams of useful science and revealed truth. And may the whole brotherhood of man soon unite in the pure and exalted worship of the only living and true God, that his will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.



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