

Charles Sigmond

J. Goodhue



Rev. Mr. SPRING'S

THANKSGIVING SERMON.



A  
T H A N K S G I V I N G  
S E R M O N,

PREACHED NOVEMBER 29, 1798,

By the Rev. S A M U E L S P R I N G, A. M.

PASTOR OF THE NORTH CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY IN

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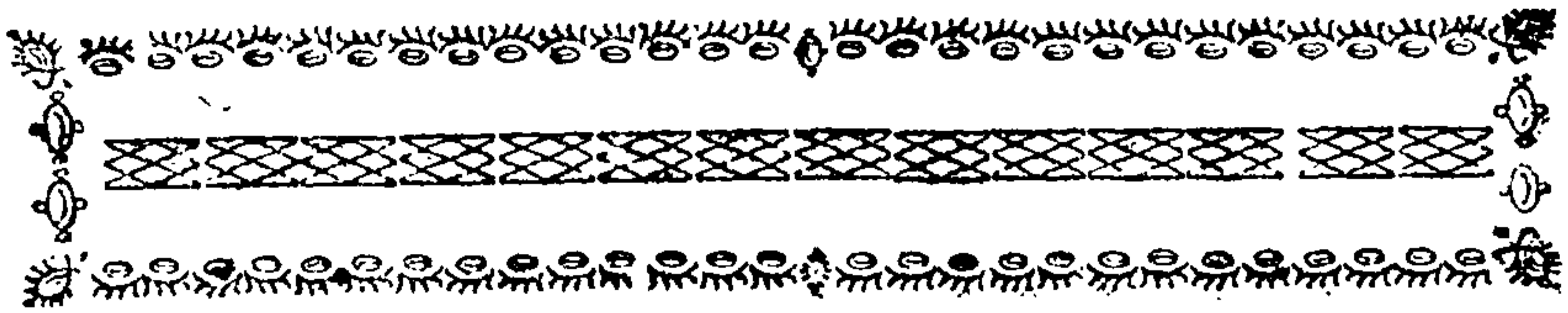
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## *Thanksgiving Discourse.*

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PSALM CI. I.

*I WILL SING OF MERCY AND JUDGMENT : UNTO THEE,  
O LORD, WILL I SING.*

**T**HOUGH judgment is styled God's strange work, yet, in the great connexion of events, it demands our approbation and praise. For the Prophet says : " Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines ; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat ; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls ; yet, I will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation." Job, that celebrated friend of God, also adds, while suddenly and awfully bereaved, by Providence, of his children and servants, and thrown from the height of prosperity into the depth of adversity : " The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; and blessed be the name of the Lord. What ? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall

shall we not receive evil?" Shall we embrace the divine mercies which we do not deserve? And shall we reject the divine judgments which we do deserve? Shall we bless God for his mercy, and curse him for his justice and righteousness?

This is the current doctrine of inspiration. And what, my auditors, is the sentiment of your hearts? Shall we, on this grateful occasion, sing of mercy and judgment both, or shall we extol the mercy of God only, and disregard his judgments? Let us then *celebrate the conspicuous mercies and judgments of God*, which we have experienced in the course of the year. For the judgments of God, as well as his mercies, are the expressions of the perfect rectitude of his nature, and, in a qualified sense, are worthy of admiration.

*First.* LET us attend to the nature of celebrating the divine mercy. Differently expressed, what is the import of celebrating the mercy of God? In general, to celebrate the divine mercy, we must impartially love God the fountain of all excellency, and bless his holy name for the numerous benefits which he graciously confers. For, it is the matchless grace of God, in and through Jesus Christ, which furnishes all the advantages which we enjoy, both to escape eternal death and obtain eternal life. But, the subject must be treated more particularly. For gospel gratitude cannot be properly described, unless we display other exercises



exercifes which are radically and essentially connected with it. Therefore,

I. LET me obferve, that to celebrate the mercy of God we must be the fubjects of deep forrow becaufe we have finned. We need the mercy of God, becaufe we are finners. If we were not the fubjects of difobedience, God would not exercife his mercy toward us, any more than toward the fpotlefs angels of light. Hence, all good men mix the exercifes of repentance, with the exercifes of gratitude. For they feel, that nothing, but the meer, fovereign grace of God prevents their falling into the depth of endless misery and diftrefs. Were it poffible for the inhabitants of heaven to be deftitute of perfect enjoyment, their blifs would be diminished, by contrafting their undeferved ftate with the deferved ftate of the reprobates. If poffible, John would be unhappy by attending to the wretched ftate of Judas. For, he, in point of law, as really deferves the wrath of God, as the traitor. Grace, not merit, has made the difference between them. And if heaven allowed pain, how would Paul, who has been the virulent perfecutor of Jefus, be diftressed to fee Simon Magus the miserable fubject of divine wrath. For Paul, in point of juftice, as really deferves the ftate of a reprobate as Simon, or any of the defpairing legions. Hence the moft fignal chriftians in the world, when they fee a malefactor led to the place of execution,

tion, are the subjects of the mixed exercises of gratitude and repentance. While penitently contrasting his condition with that of the hopeless criminals, the thankful adoring christian says, what have I which I did not receive? What am I, by nature, different from that pinioned felon, going, by the direction of justice, to the fatal block? Left to myself I should not meet a better end. We are both by nature the children of wrath. While the malefactor suffers the most shameful death for his sins, the christian repairs to his closet, mourns his own guilt, cordially accepts the punishment of his iniquity and praises God for his saving grace. In this manner, it is presumed all good men conduct while publicly celebrating the mercies of God, with which they are crowned. Repentance is the inseparable companion of thanksgiving. It is the grand basis of gospel praise. For who can be thankful for mercy which saves him from destruction, and not mourn his sins which deserve destruction? But,

2. To celebrate the mercy of God we must be the subjects of genuine humility. The magnitude of divine mercy, with which the christian is richly clothed, is a mirror which necessarily discovers his own poverty and debility. While celebrating the numerous mercies of God he, therefore, takes his place in the dust. For man, compared with the merciful Jehovah, is less than nothing and vanity. Of this humble spirit,

rit, which is invariably connected with gratitude, we have an example in the conduct of Jacob, while returning to his native country loaded with the divine blessing. When he arrived at the river Jordan, he was gratefully and humbly constrained to contrast his poverty, when he went abroad, with his opulence, as he returned home. For he said: "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant. For, with my staff, I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands." God hath dealt bountifully with me. For then I was poor, but now I am rich.

THE same humility of heart was manifested by Gideon, when God chose him to be the deliverer of his people. Upon being called from the threshing-floor of Ophrah to wield the sword of the Lord, he most humbly and diffidently said: "O Lord wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." How beautifully spoken! And how gloriously did he triumph over the enemy!

DAVID displayed the same humble, but exalted, soul at the time of his thank-offering: For he said, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, our Father for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the majesty: for all that is in the



heaven and in the earth is thine. Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee ; and thou rulest over all, and in thine hand is power and might ; and in thy hand it is to make great and to give strength unto all. Now, therefore, our God, we thank thee and praise thy glorious name; but who am I, and what is my people that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort ? For all things come of thee, and of thy own have we given thee." In this most humble manner David celebrated the mercy of God.

THE Apostle also was the subject of distinguished humility while celebrating the praises of divine mercy. For, speaking of Christ's manifesting himself after his resurrection to the Apostles and others, he humbly adds : " And last of all, he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But, by the grace of God, I am what I am." This is a specimen of the humility of the whole generation of God's people while celebrating the divine mercy. With their mouths in the dust, the children of God celebrate his praise. Humility as well as repentance is inseparably connected with thanksgiving. But,

3. To celebrate the mercy of the Lord, we must be the subjects of self-denial. For there is no gratitude  
which



which is not the fruit of self-denial. All those cheerful exercises which do not spring from the divine principle of self-denial, are but the rude and ungovernable offspring of selfishness. For no exercise is *right* which has not the best interest of the universe for its object; and it is easy to see that no moral principle harmonizes with the interest of the universe which is not congenial with self-denial. When we thank God, it is either because he favours us personally and separately, or because he invariably promotes the best interest of his eternal kingdom: for between public interest and private there is no medium. Hence Christ says, "He, that is not with me, is against me; and he, that gathers not with me, scatters abroad." And, "If ye love them that love you what reward have ye?" In one word, the good man is thankful because the favours which he enjoys clothe him with advantages to honour God, to do good and communicate. He is thankful for health, opulence and quietude, because these blessings enable him to assist the sick, to supply the poor and to console the distressed. In a peculiar manner he is the subject of gratitude for the grace of God in and through Jesus Christ. For the work of redemption involves all the other operations of the Lord. This is the glory of God, and supremely influences the heart of every good man.

WE have now before us, I trust, a just view of the  
nature

nature of celebrating the mercies of God. In a penitent, humble and self-denying tone of heart the friend of God celebrates his mercy. While contemplating the numerous blessings of heaven with which he is favoured, the christian's heart melts with gratitude, and he devoutly says : " What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits ? I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord, which my lips have uttered. I will offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call upon the name of the Lord, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. O Lord I am thy servant ; for thou hast loosed my bands. I will be thine forever. For thou art infinitely great and good. Whom have I in heaven but thee ? And there is none on earth that I desire besides thee." But,

*Secondly.* LET us attend to the nature of celebrating the divine judgments. For the Psalmist says : will sing of mercy and judgment, unto thee, O God, will I sing." What is the import of celebrating the judgments of heaven ? Is it our duty to love the judgments of God for their own sake ? Does God require us to be thankful for famine, war, pestilence, death and other evils independently of any advantage obtained or intended by them ? No : my auditors, God does not. For good and evil are very diverse from each other and must not be confounded. That which

is in its nature good, must be prized for its own sake ; but that which is evil must be prized only, for the sake of some other object. God takes pleasure neither in natural nor moral evil for its own sake : and evil would not exist, since the universe is under God's sole direction, if it did not answer some valuable purpose in the final course of events. We are not called to celebrate the divine judgments for the sake of their intrinsic advantage, but for the sake of the advantage which they are intended to produce. The fact then is this, when we celebrate the judgments of God we accept the punishment of our iniquity, and adore him for his corrective goodness and chastising justice. As the penitent, reformed, child cordially approves the discipline administered by his father, while in the hands of painful correction, and thanks him for his faithful attention ; so we ought to approve the chastising hand of God, and bless his name when he visits us for our sins and iniquities. He, who celebrates the judgments of God, approves the discipline which God administers, because he deserves nothing from the hand of God but displeasure. Like Aaron he holds his peace. Like Job he resignedly says : " Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Like Eli : " It is the Lord let him do as he pleases." With David, when pressed with the most intolerable reproach, " Let him alone ; and let him curse ; for the Lord hath bidden him : " and



Like the submissive Prophet, his heart harmonises with the righteous dispensation of heaven ; and says : “ I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause.” For, though it is absolutely impossible for the most devout character to love the judgments of God for their own sake, yet all good men love him because he glorifies his justice by punishing the wicked. Than accepting the punishment of iniquity, there is nothing more beautiful. How pleasing to the grieved parent, while reduced to the painful alternative of correcting his son, to find him submissive, and to hear him say, “ Father I have done foolishly and wickedly, and deserve much more than I suffer. The correction is painful : but not severe, because administered by the just and equal hand of the best of parents. I heartily approve your displeasure, and do not desire any abatement inconsistent with parental honour and the best interest of the family. Thus the penitent, returning, prodigal felt, who was graciously prepared to meet the melting embraces and protecting arms of his forgiving father ; and thus all other penitents feel while the subjects of the judgments and chastisements of the Lord. The hearts of those who celebrate the divine judgments, approve the manifestation of the divine displeasure against sin. They adore God while lying under the weight of his displeasure in the furnace of affliction. Though  
they

they take no complacency in pain, yet they approve God's justice; and those only, we presume, will heartily oppose the doctrine of celebrating the divine judgments, who cannot retain their dangerous and criminal quietude, but by rejecting the truth. For it corresponds and harmonizes with one of the first maxims of reason and the whole tenour of inspiration. But, of some of you, my hearers, I must hope better things, and things which accompany salvation. For, does not your experience this day teach you that it is as easy to celebrate the divine judgments as to celebrate the divine mercy? Blessed are those who love the perfections of God: For God is love, and all the displays which he makes of his perfections in creation and providence, in the salvation and even in the destruction of men, are but the perfect expressions of the infinite excellence of the divine nature.

BUT it is needless to add any thing farther on the nature of celebrating the divine judgments: For though God does not require us to rejoice in the view of evil, yet the perfection of the divine government is not more manifest, than this, that it is matter of joy that God brings good out of evil and light out of darkness. Evil, in itself considered, is matter of mourning; but good effected by it is matter of joy: And when we mourn, as though we mourned not, and rejoice, as though we rejoiced not, and use the world,

both

both in times of prosperity and adversity, as not abusing it, we shall acceptably celebrate both the mercies and judgments of God. For the Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works : and requires answerable exercises of heart.

### *I M P R O V E M E N T.*

It is evident from the nature of celebrating the mercies and judgments of God that the employment of this day is peculiarly solemn and interesting. For the course of the year has presented the most distinguished mercies and judgments. No year, since the American revolution, has been so deeply marked with mercies and judgments. We have been threatened by the divine displeasure in several respects. The rain of our land was withholden when the fruits of the earth in some places greatly needed it. The heat of the summer was intense, and protracted, while but few rains and refreshing showers were experienced ; And what was the consequence, but that parched, thirsty, state of the earth, and that drooping state of vegetables, which was so manifest in this and different parts of the union. Other consequences of the dry and ardent summer will be noticed in the sequel. The heavens over our heads were as brass, the earth under our feet as iron and the rain of our land as powder and dust, and the face of nature was gloomy and languid. What was

was



was this course of things, but the judgment of God? For he directs the clouds and governs the seasons. Drought and famine and other judgments are his instruments to punish the wicked, and they go and come at his command. But, notwithstanding the gloomy aspect of Providence which attended this and other parts of the union during the course of the summer, God has yet so mercifully ordered the season, that we are amply supplied with the bounties of the earth. Neither frost, nor drought, nor blasts, nor destroying insects, have deprived the Farmer of a needful harvest. As far, therefore, as we are dependant on the productions of the earth, we are this day called to celebrate both the mercies and judgments of God. For the cup which Providence has presented, is mingled with mercies and afflictions. At this solemn season, therefore, let us recognize the judgments of God with resignation, and his mercies with gratitude. For we must not separate, in the exercises of the day, what God in the course of his providence has connected. While we also recognize the civil and political state of the country, we are presented with conspicuous mercies and judgments. For that Gallic, disorganizing poison which has proved more fatal to Europe than a thousand plagues, has in spite of the most sovereign remedies, been very injurious to the Federal Government. Though but lately imported, it has actually

seized some of our towns, counties, districts, and even Congress itself; and strangely deranged the minds and bewitched the hearts of many Americans. For, the subjects of the infection refuse information, court disorder, despise government, speak evil of dignities, and disregard the public interest. Under the influence of the great nation of public robbers, many of the infatuated Americans have been duped to reduce, if possible, this thriving continent, this blooming heritage of freedom, to a state of poverty and intolerable servitude. For, in consequence of the delusion of Americans, the French have undertaken to manage our elections, and to direct our cabinet. While calculating on the prospect of cutting the cords of federal union, they have not only shamefully disregarded the recent bonds of amity and alliance between the two governments; but have impiously violated the sacred law of nations, by capturing our vessels and robbing us of millions and millions of dollars. The spoliations which these freebooters have committed, and the barbarity with which they have treated our seamen are without a parallel in the annals of time. In addition to these enormities, they have openly insulted and rejected our messengers of peace and reconciliation: and by intrigues and threats, as opportunity respectively offered, have laboured hard to induce them to advance LARGE MONEY for the singular privilege of becoming their dupes

dupes and slaves. But blessed be the Lord of Hosts, these French atheists, these hateful tyrants, these nefarious wretches, who have for several years drenched Europe with blood, and committed greater abominations than the Mother of Harlots herself, are not permitted to trample upon the United States. For, *the distinguished Envoys*, who will be honoured according to *their merit*, instead of basely purchasing the ruin of their country of those voracious monsters, stood gloriously in the gap and made up the national hedge. Like great rocks in the midst of the raging deep, they remained uniformly firm : for neither the gold, nor flattery, nor beauty, nor all the terrors of the great nation, could change their purpose. While our affairs in consequence of the signal fortitude of *the* able messengers, assumed a more favourable aspect abroad, heaven animated the Americans to support the vigorous measures of the President and Congress ; and to gild the prospect, recalled WASHINGTON from the sweets of retirement, once more, to put on his armour and grasp the sword in defence of his insulted country. Language cannot express the obligations conferred by these distinguished smiles of Providence. The singular advantage which then obtained, not only hushed the fears of the people, but exceeded the sanguine hopes of our wise Rulers. For that seasonable and vigorous concurrence of the numerous branches of  
national



national influence, at once turned the current of our public affairs. This, O God, give us leave confidently to mark, as the memorable æra of American deliverance from the arm of Gallic insult and robbery. For that assemblage of advantages has not only, in a short time, raised the martial spirit of the nation, but furnished several ships of war; and furnished America with full resolution to equip a respectable navy.\* The world now know that we are determined to retain our lands, to protect our trade and navigation, and to enjoy the common advantages of the ocean.

For

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\* To the honour of Newburyport, the Ship MERRIMACK, loaned to government, was raised on the 9th July, launched 12th October, sailed 7th of December, 1798—The whole time not exceeding five months from her keel being laid, till she was built, launched, rigged, manned and sailed.

*List of vessels in service.*

	GUNS.	BUILDING.	<i>guns.</i>
Frigate United States	44	Gen. Greene	24.
Constitution	44	Connecticut	24
Confellation	36	Adams	24
Ganges	24	2 at Baltimore of	18
Delaware.	20	1 at Charleston	24
Montezuma	20	1 at Salem	32
Baltimore	20	2 at Newyork	44.
G. Washington	24	1 at Philadelphia	44
Herald.	18.	1 at Norfolk	36
Portsmouth	24	1 at Portsmouth	44
Pinckney	18	1 at Middletown	32.
Norfolk	18	1 at Warren, R.I.	32
Richmond.	18	1 at Boston	36.
. Merrimack	24		
Galley Retaliation	14		
And eight Revenue Cutters, some mounting	14		
six pounders.			

For the sails of commerce are already displayed, and not only promise to reward the merchant and sailor for their exertions, but even to recompence them for past losses and perils. How different the present aspect of things, from that day when the black cloud of adversity hung over our heads? Then being constrained to lament the fate of millions and millions of Europeans who fell into French hands, we justly feared the same fate. For the French are the most deceitful, perfidious, avaricious, cruel and murderous monsters in the world. For the truth of this, I appeal to Holland, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Malta and other places, which have experienced the curse of Gallic conquest and freedom. The inexpressible fate of Europe we lamented and feared. For the armies of France were victorious. Their numerous emissaries were successful in America. Her factious clubs, and secret, intriguing associations were so influential in these States, that she confidently expected her diplomatic skill would realize the most ample success. Within a few months, France boasted of her influence, and despised our ability. But blessed be the Lord, who disappointeth the devices of the crafty, and turns the counsel of Gallic Abithophels into foolishness, the nerves and sinews of the federal government are much invigorated, and the manly courage and resolution of these States have seasonably revived the drooping spirit

spirit of Europe, and given a new tone to their governments and public measures. They highly applauded the independent and decisive measures of the Americans, and intend to check and controul the outrage of France. For these blessings of Providence, let us be deeply thankful : and let us bless God for the prospect, that the next Congress, instead of being incumbered with French influence, will vigorously harmonize in the adoption of those measures which are necessary for the permanent defence and prosperity of the country.

BUT let us not forget those judgments and mercies of a different complexion. You at once conclude, that I refer to the malignant inflammation which, within a few months, has hurried so many thousands of our fellow-citizens to the grave : and also to the mercy of God which protected us, and the people at large, from the fatal disorder. The unparalleled distress of the inhabitants of Philadelphia and Newyork, I dare not attempt to describe. For it exceeds the power of description. I shall, therefore, only remark, that though many of the citizens of Philadelphia fled at the approach of the disorder, in consequence of past alarms, yet, we are informed that 3645 died in the space of three months. The disorder this year has proved more mortal than ever before. For the city, when comparatively destitute of inhabitants, to bury more than one thousand per month, was distressing beyond  
the



the possibility of conception. There were, no doubt, many who died alone, having been wholly forsaken from the commencement of their sickness. For after the flight of so many thousands, the subjects of health, if disposed, had full employment to attend the sick and bury the dead. But how many were disabled by unfeeling hearts, and how many by distracting fear? Many of the sick and dying were probably entirely destitute of the attendance of either friends or strangers. In a word, the city was filled with distress during the operation of the malady. O Philadelphia, how hast thou been afflicted? How hast thou been chastised? How have thy citizens been scattered and distressed? And how have they been tumbled promiscuously from the cart, not into single nor double graves, but into the common pit! Newyork has been afflicted in the same manner, if not to the same degree. Other places of the continent have tasted the same cup of God's displeasure. Boston and Portsmouth we must not slide over; for they are neighbours. And shall we wink out of sight the late instances of the fatal inflammation in this town? The connexions of the departed recall the heavy strokes of Providence upon their families. That day of deep affliction, some of my hearers cannot forget. We all had reason to tremble at the repeated approach of the mortal infection. But, blessed be God, in the midst of our fears, it was checked.

ed and removed. We were graciously spared, when evidently exposed in consequence of the oppressive and protracted heat of the season. Instead of being presented with that dismal hearse, rapidly passing from house to house, to remove the dead if possible before they were cold, God granted us a high state of health. Now, I ask what shall be our exercises on this solemn occasion? Shall we indulge the thought, that we were spared because less sinful than the inhabitants of Philadelphia? God forbid such impious presumption. For, even while our fellow-citizens were dying by thousands, some of us, you remember, were not more averse from balls and assemblies, and exercises which favour of the theatre, than from occasional fasting and prayer, and the devout exercises of the sanctuary. With correspondent exercises of heart, let us then recognize that signal judgment which we escaped. And shall we not be thankful, that we are graciously spared, and have farther space for repentance? For, the most extensive charity will not allow, that we were, many of us, prepared to meet the grave.

At that gloomy season, we solemnized a fast, in consequence of several pressing judgments. Then we professedly humbled ourselves before God, and made our vows; let us now, thankfully, pay them. For, unless we are the subjects of unfeigned gratitude and other corresponding exercises, we shall but anger the  
 Lord,

Lord, and expose ourselves to his burning wrath. The feast days of the wicked God will despise, because they eat and drink to themselves and disregard his glory. In the view, therefore, of the flagrant impenitence and ingratitude of which we are, many of us, the subjects, let us this day be deeply humble and penitent: and for the numerous mercies of the year, let us be unfeignedly thankful. In a particular manner, since the boasted regeneration and illumination of Europe is but the visible darkness of Atheism, let us be peculiarly thankful for the inestimable blessings of the gospel. For the gospel is the only anchor of hope for time and eternity. Though there is no evidence of a reformation among us, let us bless the Lord for the effusion of his spirit upon some distant places. For the conversion of but one sinner fills heaven itself with inexpressible joy and delight. Let us, then, immediately comply with our obligations, and prevail with God for a reformation, which will afford opportunity to celebrate thanksgiving for a glorious victory over the adversary of Christ's kingdom.

To conclude—Since our seats will soon be vacant, like those of our departed friends who were with us last thanksgiving; and since the days of mourning for us also, will soon be past, let us without delay embrace every branch of duty, and thankfully improve the



bounties of Providence with which our tables are richly furnished.

My youthful hearers, it is hoped, will remember that the Beneficent Author of our blessings forbids vanity and folly ; and will accept no exercises which are destitute of cordial gratitude and obedience. Let then the sublime pleasures of gratitude ; the importance of religious example to others, and the honour of God, deeply influence your hearts to spend the day according to the spirit of the divine command. For life is short, but duration, beyond the grave, whether happy or miserable, is absolutely endless.

A M E N.

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