

## S E R M O N

Preached at the PARISH-CHURCH of

BLECHINGLEY in *SURREY*,

On *Tuesday April 25th, 1749.*

Being the Day appointed by his MAJESTY for a  
GENERAL THANKSGIVING,

On Account of the PEACE.

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By *J O H N T H O M A S*, L. L. D.

Rector of *Bleckingley*, and Chaplain in Ordinary to his Majesty.

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L O N D O N :

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M.DCC.XLIX.



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P S A L M cxliv. ver. 15.

*Happy is that People that is in such a case ; yea  
happy is that People whose God is the Lord.*

Or, as it is in the older Version,

*Happy are the People that are in such a case : yea  
blessed are the People who have the Lord for  
their God.*

 HERE is nothing more difficult to ascertain than our Notions of human Happiness ; because they change with Circumstances, and vary with the Desires that want to be gratified : And though the Happiness of any particular Person may, in a great measure, depend upon himself, (as there is little else wanting to acquire it, than a Temper and Disposition suited to the Circumstances of Life in which he is placed ;) yet when we pronounce a whole Nation happy, we must clearly perceive a Concurrence of so many, and so great, Events ; as could hardly be accomplished by human Means alone,



alone, without the Assistance and Direction of that supreme Being *whose Kingdom ruleth over all*; and who not only *delighteth in the Prosperity of his Servants*; but, *when he giveth Quietness, who then can make Trouble?* whether it be done against a Nation, or against a Man only. Job xxxiv. 29.

If we apply this Observation to the happy Occasion of this Day's Solemnity, how high should we rise in our Expressions of Thankfulness, to bear a due Proportion to the Mercies and Deliverances we have received: especially when the Authority and Example of our Sovereign excites us to this Duty; when the general Observance of Nations provokes our Emulation; and the God of Peace himself is present, and we humbly hope propitious, to those Praises and Thanksgivings we have now offered unto him, for mercifully delivering us, in his good time, from a tedious, expensive, and destructive War. It remains only, to complete the reasonable Service of this joyful Festival, that I recommend to your Attention some further Considerations on this Subject; principally drawn from the pious Writings of one, who had equal Experience of the Calamities of War, and the Blessings of Peace, *the Royal Psalmist*. It was his peculiar Happiness, not only to be empowered to *execute* the wonderful Works of God, but inspired also to *celebrate* them: Accordingly  
his



his Compositions are as much distinguish'd by the *Praises*, as his Life was by the *Mercies*, of the Almighty. The sublime and beautiful Psalm, from whence the Text is taken, will, of itself, justify the Truth of this Observation. Whatever Circumstances of his Life gave occasion to it, whether some signal Advantage gained over his natural, and implacable Enemies the *Philistines*; *those strange Children whose Mouth talked of Va-* ver. 8.  
*nity*, and whose *right Hand was a right Hand of Falshood*: or whether it was intended to shew forth his grateful Sense of the divine Assistance, in reducing his disaffected and rebellious Subjects to their Obedience, implied in the Words, *who sub-* ver. 2.  
*dueth my People that is under me.* — Whether, I say, one, or both, of these great Events produced this particular Composition, — This at least is obvious, that he not only ascribes his own Safety and Advantages in War to the *Power* of that Almighty Being, *the Lord his Strength, who taught* ver. 1.  
*his Hands to war, and his Fingers to fight*; but relies also on the divine *Mercy* and *Goodness* for the future Prosperity of those Kingdoms, over which his Providence had appointed him to preside. This he makes consist in a numerous and well-ordered Offspring, in a plentiful Supply of the Necessaries and Conveniencies of Life; in a Security from foreign Invasions, and a Prevention of intestine Tumults. *Bow thy Heavens, O Lord,* ver. 5.  
says



says he, *and come down, touch the Mountains and they shall smoke*; i. e. Let the happy Influence of thy Providence descend upon these Kingdoms; touch the proud Hearts of my aspiring and ambitious Adversaries with a desire of Peace, and all their lofty Thoughts shall vanish like Smoke. Then will the happy Time come, (as it follows in the

ver. 12. Verses preceding the Text) *That our Sons may be as Plants grown up in their Youth; that our Daughters may be polished after the Similitude of*

ver. 13. *a Palace. That our Garners may be full, affording all manner of store; that our Sheep may bring forth thousands, and ten thousands in our Streets:*

ver. 14. *that our Oxen may be strong to labour; that there be no breaking in, nor going out, and no complaining in our Streets.* A People distinguished by such prosperous Circumstances as these, may justly be pronounced a *happy People*; which the pious Author does very emphatically in the Words before us: *Happy is that People that is in such a case: yea, happy is that People, whose God is the Lord.*

As, therefore, these strong and expressive Characters of national Happiness, are, upon this solemn Occasion a very proper Subject for our Attention; I shall beg leave to enlarge upon them in the Order here laid down: And as they seem to include such Advantages as can only be derived from a State of Tranquility, we must naturally be  
led



led to praise, and adore the Goodness of God, for putting us in a Condition to procure these Blessings, by the means of a *Just* and *Honourable*, and, if we make a proper use of it, a *Lasting* and *Advantageous* Peace.

The first Object then of the Royal Psalmist, in a State of Tranquility, is to implore the Creator, and Preserver of all Mankind for the fruitful Increase, and well-ordered Discipline of his People ; that their *Sons* might be *as Plants grown up in their Youth*, and their *Daughters as the polished Corners of a Temple*.——Endowed with all the fine Abilities of a Statesman, in conjunction with those of a great, and experienced Commander, he knew that the Power, and Greatness of a Kingdom was not to be estimated by the vast Extent of its Dominions ; but by the Number, and Strength of its Inhabitants. These, as they must necessarily be diminished by the Havock, and corrupted by the almost unavoidable Irregularities, attending on War ; could only be restored, and modelled by the good Order, and Policy, which form one of the principal Blessings of Peace. When the Father of his Family, happily disengaged from the honourable, but hazardous Attendance on his military Function, is at leisure to look to the pleasing Duties of a social and domestick Life ; and the Children, no longer fretted with anxious Fears  
for



for the Safety of him, on whom depends their own Welfare, can procure such Advantages from his Bounty, as they will improve from his Example, and Instruction. It is then *Our Sons* will best *grow up*, and be trained under the Hand of Care *as the young Plants* ; and *our Daughters*, under the Eye of Prudence, *be as the polished Corners of a Temple* ; adorned with all the Graces of Purity, and Devotion.

The Progress, and Culture of the human Powers are here aptly compared to those of the vegetable Kind ; or the Stone taking its Form, and Proportion from the ingenious Hand of the Sculptor. It would be but a very imperfect Wish for a numerous Progeny to flourish only in Health, and Vigour of Body ; Endowments in common with mere Animal Nature : The skilful Hand of *Discipline* is to be applied to their early and tender State, to train them into Order and Regularity ; to bend, and subdue the stubborn Shoots of *Passion* ; to prune away the Luxuriances of immoderate *Desires* ; to graft upon them the steady Principles of *Piety* to God, *Loyalty* to their King, and *Love* to their Country. Thus disposed and cultivated, the human Plants will bloom with all the Sweets of *Innocence* ; and, in time produce the lovely Fruit of every *Virtue* : whilst the venerable Father of his People, surrounded



rounded by the flourishing Sons of Liberty and Valour, remains unruffled at the popular Blasts of domestick Faction; unshaken by the menacing Storms of foreign Invasion.

Again; As the Demands for the Neccessaries, and Conveniencies of Life must rise in proportion to the Increase of the People, the Psalmist very properly subjoins a Petition to the gracious Giver of all Things, that, *Our Garners may be full and plenteous with all manner of store; that our Sheep may bring forth thousands, and ten thousands in our Streets.* The more numerous any People are, the more they see the Necessity, as well as furnish the Means, for the plentiful Accommodations of Life. Agriculture, and Commerce, are the principal Sources from whence all the Supports, and even Superfluities, of Life are derived: But these must be supposed to fail much of their wonted Success, whilst the watchful Projects of an Enemy will be ever aiming to intercept the Views of the one; and the Destruction, or Avocations, of War, must take off many useful Hands from both. Indeed the simple and bounded Desires of the *Jewish* Nation at this Period, had not yet opened those gainful Views of Traffick, in which they afterwards made so considerable a Progress. *Their* Attention was chiefly directed to the primæval Arts of Pasturage and  

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Tillage;



Tillage ; but so dignified by the personal Application of the most Illustrious among their Tribes ; that Indolence itself must be roused by the Force of such high Example ; till their *Vallies* on every side would *stand so thick with Corn*, and *their Flocks and their Herds be so multiplied* ; as not only to fill their Garners with Plenty, but enable them also to exchange the Superfluity of their own Produce, for the various Supplies of more commercial Nations.

Acts xvii.  
25.

But with respect to ourselves, we are more particularly interested in the Success of this Petition. That good Providence, who *hath determined the Bounds of the several Habitations of Men*, hath, as it were, with his own right Hand pointed out the natural Object of our Employment ; by making the very Ocean, which *circumscribes* our Country, the happy Means of *uniting* it to the most distant Limits of the Earth. To enable us to execute this wonderful Work, He hath particularly blessed us with a Staple-Commodity, the Improvement whereof is equally advantageous to ourselves, and necessary to the rest of the World. Happy as we are in this invaluable Treasure, (which, the true Lovers of their Country, will look upon as the Property of the Publick) every *Fleece* shou'd be secured by as watchful a Guard as was that of fabulous Antiquity.



quity. To this end, the Wisdom of the Legislature have ranked every *fraudulent Alienation* of it among Crimes of the deepest Dye; and given up those worst of Enemies, to the Rigour of Justice, when they could not be reclaimed by more gentle Methods. There is therefore a peculiar Propriety in our joining with the Royal Psalmist, *That our Sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our Streets*: especially, as by the rich Returns they will procure us, *our Garners will be full and plenteous, affording all manner of Store*: affording as well the necessary Supports of Life, *to strengthen Man's Heart*; as the more refined Accommodations of it, *to make him of a chearful Countenance*.

I should not here pass by that Part of the Petition, wherein the pious Author prays, *that our Oxen may be strong to labour*; or, as the Passage is perhaps more properly translated, *that our Cattle may be fruitful, and not cast their Burdens*†. Or, shall I not by this, call forth such painful Reflections as ought not to mix with the pleasing Sense of this joyful Festival? The heavy Calamity which we, together with other Nations, have long laboured under, is not the necessary Attendant on War; but the happy Removal of it

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† Voyez Projet d'une nouvelle Version Françoisé de la Bible, par Le Cene, pag. 410.



it will greatly enhance the *Blessings of Peace* : and therefore, since it has hitherto eluded the Art of the most *skilful*, and the Precaution of the most *prudent*, Means ; we must at last fix our only Hopes of Relief on an humble Acknowledgment, that *the Hand of the Lord is upon the Cattle* ; and that when such *Judgments* as these are abroad, *the Inhabitants of the Earth will learn Righteousness*. If our Behaviour be duly regulated by this Sense of Things, Then *will the Lord be intreated for the Land* ; will bless this Part of our *Victuals with Increase*, and suffer not our Cattle to decay.

But further ; Even Plenty and Abundance lose their Power to bless, when not secured by a peaceable and unmolested Enjoyment. The pious Monarch therefore concludes his Petition to the Author of Peace and Concord, *that there may be no breaking in, nor going out ; and no complaining in our Streets*. The sudden Irruption of an ambitious Nation, and the Defection of a seditious discontented People, are here implied by the simple Expressions *of breaking in, and going out*. The good King *David* had fully experienced the Distress of both these political Evils. His insolent, and implacable Enemies the *Philistines*, whose Ambition could only be supported by their Perfidy ; (*for their right Hand was a right Hand of Falsehood*)



*Falsehood*) had often broke through the most solemn Engagements, to seize on any Opportunity of attacking him at a Disadvantage : and the restless, capricious Temper of his own Subjects, (often rebellious without reason ; and disaffected because they would be displeased) had rendered the Regal Dignity equally burthensom, and precarious. So *burthensom*, that, literally speaking, it was at best but a *Weight of Glory* : so *precarious*, that it was not till God had *subdued his People that was under him*, that he could say, *do I not know that I am this Day King over Israel ?*

We need not make a particular Application of what has been observed on this Head : The Annals of all Nations will teach us, that popular Discontents, blown up by misleading Arts into civil Distraction, have rather been a general Evil in all Governments, than the Misfortune only of a few. Good or ill Conduct in a State is commonly estimated by the different Turn and Temper of the People.—*Success*, with some, sufficiently justifies every Measure : *Disappointment*, with others, converts even Wisdom itself into Ignorance, and Folly. The Interests too of Mankind vary so much from each other, as to make the whole irreconcilable : and any Obstruction to private Views, is too apt to make Men blind and insensible to the publick Welfare.—But tho' the



the Seeds of Discontent, which generally spring up into Faction, be said to lurk in every Government; yet they certainly take *deepest Root in the best*. No wonder then it should be the Production of a *British Soil*: where the Temperature of our Constitution is not so rigorous as to check it in the *Blade*; or rather, the indulgent Spirit of our Liberty tends to promote its *Growth*. But yet, why should it be thought that a weak, unavailing Faction rather adds to the *Vigour*, than obstructs the *Operations*, of Government? The wisest of Men hath told us, that *the Beginning of Strife is as when one letteth out Water*. Small as the Vent at first may appear, it will insensibly widen its Way; till the Mounds and Fences of Authority may be broken down; and then no one knows how far the Inundation may spread. We have seen the *neglected Springs of Faction* increase at last to a Torrent of *Rebellion*: but, blessed be God, we have also seen those *deep Waters of the Proud*, which threatned to overwhelm us, stop'd in their impetuous Progress; and afterwards producing this happy Effect, in common with natural Floods, that though they broke in upon a Land of *Liberty*, they caused it also to yield a more plentiful Harvest of *Loyalty*. Thus what appeared to be the *Chastisement* of Heaven, is found by the Event to have been intended as a *Mercy*. *Happy art thou*



*O People! who is like unto thee, saved by the Lord; Deut.  
the Shield of thy Help, and who is the Sword of thy xxxiii. 29.  
Excellency! Thine Enemies have been found Liars  
unto thee, and thou hast trod upon their high Places.*

Now, should it occur to any one, that many, nay most, of these Characters of national Happiness, drawn from the Plan laid down by the royal Psalmist, may be evidently found in a Review of our own Circumstances; yet why should this Consideration render us less sensible of *the Blessings of Peace*? should it not rather point out additional Motives to praise, and adore the Goodness of God, for preserving to us the Enjoyment of so much Happiness, during the Course of a tedious and expensive War? The Continuance of it could not be justified upon *Christian Principles*; and the Knowledge of the Event was beyond the Discernment of *Human Policy*. Even a more favourable Crisis, (which was more than we could be sure of) must have increased the *Burthens*, and multiplied the *Losses* of many private Persons; and perhaps additional Incumbrances might not have been balanced by our publick Acquisitions. Add to this, that *War* in itself, is productive both of *natural* and *moral* Evils. It often perverts the Powers of *Reason*, to facilitate the Means of *Oppression*: turns Sincerity into Guile; open Dealing into Stratagem. It multiplies the Shafts of  
*Death,*



*Death*, and gluts the *Grave* with repeated Victories ; tramples upon the Beauties of the Creation, and spreads Ruin and Desolation over the Face of the Earth. It is indeed accounted one of those just Judgments in the Hand of the Almighty, with which he sometimes visits the Nations : but it is rather permitted by him, as the Effect of their own ungovernable Lusts and Passions ; and, to convince them of their pernicious Tendency ; then as an Act of his over-ruling Power, and vindictive Punishment. When the unsearchable Ends of his Providence are served by it, *and Men are sufficiently plagued because of their Offences*, he then *maketh Wars to cease in all the World* : He *turneth the Hearts of Princes as the Rivers of Water* ; restrains the Violence of their Passions with the calm Suggestions of right Reason ; and speaks to their Hearts in the Language of Omnipotence itself : *Be still, then, and know that I am God : I will be exalted among the Nations, and I will be exalted upon the Earth*. To what else can we ascribe that sudden Impulse to a pacific Disposition among the several contending Powers in the late War ? To what can we impute the voluntary Concessions of *some*, and the speedy Adjustment of the respective Claims of *all* ? but to the secret, over-ruling Influence of the God of Peace ; *who spake, and it was done ; who commanded, and they were obedient unto his Word*.

Pf. xlvii.  
10.

Should



Should some few among us still be of Opinion, that, because they saw us possessed of many national Advantages, superiour to those of our Enemies, we were, therefore, able to prosecute the War with *Vigour*, and conclude it with greater *Success* : Yet these should learn to acquiesce in the general Sense of good, and considerate People ; to be thankful for the present Security of our national Blessings, lest they should too soon be exposed to the Hazard of a more unprosperous Issue. If they saw *our Youth* so grow up, and *our Quiver* so full of them, that we needed not *be ashamed to speak with our Enemies in the Gate* : If they saw us happy in a numerous Royal Progeny, which may increase the future Glory, as much as they add to the present Lustre, of these Kingdoms : If, notwithstanding the great Consumption of War, the Nation be yet so populous, as to be able to stock a more uncultivated Land, and transport the *British* Name into distant Regions, *where they may build them a City to dwell in* : We ought to remember, that it is God alone who *multiplieth his People exceedingly*, and that *Children are an Heritage and Gift that cometh of the Lord*.——If again, *our Garners* have been *so full and plenteous with all manner of store*, that we could not only supply the Wants of our Allies, but also generously relieve the Necessities

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of



of our very Enemies ; we should *praise the Lord for this his Goodness*, and gratefully acknowledge, that *though we sow the Land*, it is he only that *yieldeth Fruits of Increase*.—If lastly, there was *no breaking in, nor going out, and no complaining in our Streets*, but what only served to awaken us to a Sense of our Happiness, and to unite our Hands, and Hearts against those who wanted to disturb it ; we should ever thankfully confess, that it is the Lord also *who maketh Men to be of one Mind in an House*, and knitteth the Bands of Society together, so that they shall not easily be broken.

Whether these extraordinary Instances of divine Favour (for such they ought to be accounted, if compared with the Circumstances of the Nations around us) are to be ascribed to the Justice of our Cause, and our Honour, and Generosity in supporting it ; is what we rather humbly hope, than presume to assert. But if the Maintenance of the Rights and Privileges of a free People, or a Performance of the solemn Faith plighted to our Allies, be deemed equitable Motives ; it is as certain that we entered into the War with *Justice*, as that we supported it with *Generosity*. It was not with a View of enlarging our own Dominions ; these were bounded by Contentment : It was confessedly to secure those of our Allies ; for  
they



they were grasped at by the Hand of Ambition. We used no unjustifiable Arts to increase the Havock of War; true Valour disdains such ungenerous Practices: No unconstitutional Methods of providing for the Charge of it; our Bounty at home was as much admired as our Courage in the Field; and the Vigour of both was equally felt and acknowledged by our Adversaries. — And if Victory was less constant to us by Land; (though there she balanced all our Losses by crowning the Royal Banners with a most important, and ever-memorable Success) she seemed however delighted to side with us in a more unstable Element; where the Wealth, accruing from our Naval Triumphs, could only be exceeded by the glorious Atchievements by which it was acquired.

But it will not become us to give way to the Impulse of national Vanity. Whatever Advantages we have gained, or whatever Dangers we have escaped, should be ascribed to the proper Author; and improved by a subsequent Behaviour. If *Pride*, *Ambition*, and *Impatience*, generally prove the Fore-runners of War; *Humility*, *Temperance*, and *Contentment* should be the constant Attendants on Peace. These will teach us to compose our Passions which have been exasperated, and inflamed by a long Series of Violence



and Contention : to restrain that immoderate Spirit of Luxury and Extravagance so prevalent among us : to regulate our Expences, not by the fashionable Vanity of People in a supposed Equality of Condition ; but by an impartial Estimate of our own real Circumstances. It is, I hope, rather a strong Presumption of the collective Wealth of the People in general, than of the particular Folly of Individuals ; that whilst the Publick was maintaining a foreign War with almost *unexam-pled*, but *necessary*, Appointments ; the high Gratifications of private Life should abate nothing of their Demands ; but rather rise still higher upon People of every Rank and Condition among us.— But if the Entanglements of Pleasure, and Inattention to Affairs, have long kept the Account open, and unstated ; it is now time to inspect, and balance it with a most accurate Exactness : to consider how much we are become Debtors to Prudence ; and to make due Allowance for the Share we must take in the publick Incumbrances : And, if we have any true Love for our Country, any just Regard for the Maintenance of its Credit ; or any grateful Sense of the Blessings we enjoy under our happy Establishment ; now is the Time to act as People entirely convinced, that, *Unanimity* in our Counsels, and *Oeconomy* in our Conduct, are the only Stays that can support the Weight



Weight of our present Burthens, and secure the *Freedom* and *Independency* of these Kingdoms from the future Attempts of any ambitious and aspiring Nation.

But still *one thing is needful*; and we must remember to chuse *the better part*, because that is connected with the whole of our Happiness: for *blessed is the People who have the Lord for their God*. The royal Psalmist was justly led to this Conclusion, as well from the repeated Evidences he himself had of the signal Interposition of Providence in favour of his People; as from their being distinguished by the only Revelation of the divine Will till then vouchsafed to Mankind.—But a much *happier People are we in such a case*: We have the Lord for our God; not in the terrible Denunciation of Judgments, or the rigid Ceremonial of the *Jewish Dispensation*: not in the corrupted Traditions, and uncharitable Censures of the *Romish Faith*; but in the pure, unalterable Voice of Truth, and the unbounded Spirit of Benevolence.—We have the Lord for our God; not in the Tortures of an Inquisition to rack the *Body*; not in the artful Sophistry of human Refinements to perplex the *Mind*; but in a truly Christian Liberty of Conscience, as to the *Mode* of Worship; and the plain Direction of Revelation as to the *Spirit* of it. The whole Tendency of the Precepts of  
our



our Religion is directed to exalt our national Happiness; for the Duties of *Justice*, *Temperance*, and *Peaceableness* are certainly productive of it: And, to the Christian Graces which the same Religion displays to us, is annexed the Promise of eternal Happiness; for our *Faith* will direct, our *Hope* will animate, and our *Charity* (the unparalell'd Charity of the present Age) will recommend our Endeavours towards the Attainment of it.

Let nothing then, come in Competition with the absolute Certainty, or even the bare Possibility, of these high Claims of Piety and Virtue. Let not Affluence and Plenty, instead of furnishing Occasions of enriching the Mind with valuable Acquirements, relax, and soften it into a most criminal Indolence: let not Indigence and Pain, whether real or pretended, instead of rousing the Powers of the Soul to procure a suitable Remedy, have recourse to nothing but Amusement; which, while it seems to protract, is really hastening the Approach of, Misery. If Pleasure must have its *Days* of Vanity, let the Pursuit be rational and limited; but let Piety also have its *Hours* of Devotion. Let us, at least, allow it that Portion of Time which both divine and human Laws have assigned it: for then we may hope that our *Piety* may *justify* our *Pleasure*; as a due Compliance with their respective Claims, will make the one *Innocent*, and the other *Amiable*.



*Amiable.* In a Word, let us seriously consider how much our very Being, as a People, depends upon an active Observance of the Rules of Virtue and Religion. These, by the natural Order of Things, must greatly contribute to support the Power, and extend the Influence, of any Nation. They promote good Order, fair Dealing, and Submission to the Laws at home: They procure Respect, enlarge our Credit, and recommend our Alliance abroad. —Even the *Nations that knew not God*, (in the *Times of Ignorance which he winked at*,) by their strict Adherence to the natural Dictates of Virtue, and the *Law of Morality written in their Hearts*, raised themselves to such a Pitch of Glory as would be a Reproach to more enlightened Times; had they not also left us an Example, that the Down-fal of their *Power* was principally occasioned by the Dissolution of their *Manners*. We are yet, blessed be God, more brave and powerful than to be ruined by other People; and, I trust, more prudent and wise than to be undone by our own Follies. The Privileges of a *British* Subject are too valuable to be wantonly thrown away: His Property is secured by *Justice*, his Liberty by *Law*, and his Religion by *Truth*. And, I may venture to affirm, that, as our Liberty was never fully *recognized*, till our Religion was thoroughly reformed; so, whilst we *stand fast in the constitutional* Liberty procured



procured for us by our Fore-fathers; and in the  
*spiritual Liberty, wherewith Christ hath made us*  
*free; whilst we have the Lord for our God, whose*  
 Gal. iv. 1. Service is perfect Freedom, we shall not be entan-  
*gled again in the Yoke of Bondage.*

**F I N I S.**