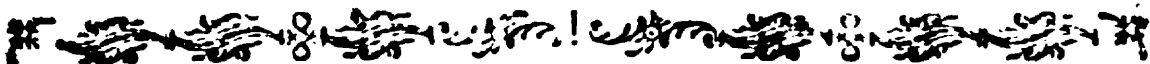

MR. BRIDGE'S
ELECTION
SERMON.

MAY 27, 1789.



COMMONWEALTH *of* MASSACHUSETTS.

IN SENATE, MAY 27, 1789.

ORDERED, That *Ebenezer Bridge*,
Cotton Tufts, and *Benjamin Austin, jun.*
Esq's. be a Committee to wait on the Rev.
JOSIAH BRIDGE, and thank him in the name
of the *Senate*, for the SERMON delivered by
him this day, before his Excellency the Go-
vernour, the Council, and the two Branches
of the General Court ; and also to request
of him a copy thereof for the Press.

Attest.

SAMUEL COOPER, Clerk.



A
S E R M O N

PREACHED BEFORE

His EXCELLENCY JOHN HANCOCK, Esq.

GOVERNOUR;

His HONOR BENJAMIN LINCOLN, Esq.

LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOUR;

THE HONOURABLE THE

COUNCIL, SENATE AND HOUSE OF

REPRESENTATIVES,

O F T H E

COMMONWEALTH OF

MASSACHUSETTS,

MAY 27, 1789.

BEING THE DAY OF

GENERAL ELECTION.

BY JOSIAH BRIDGE, A. M.

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN EAST-SUDBURY.

B O S T O N :

PRINTED BY ADAMS & NOURSE,

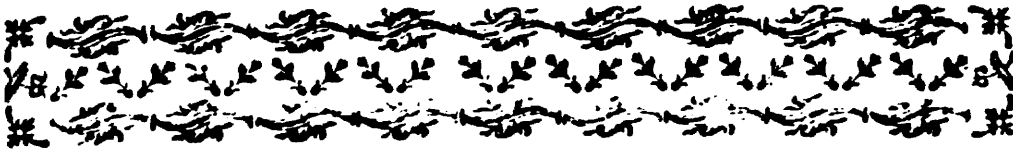
PRINTERS TO THE HONOURABLE GENERAL COURT.

M, DCC, LXXXIX.



N. B. Several passages, omitted for the sake of brevity, in the delivery of the ensuing discourse, are inserted in the publication.





A N

Election S E R M O N.

P S A L M LXXXII. VERSE I.

*GOD standeth in the Congregation of the Mighty :
He judgeth among the GODS.*

THIS passage of inspired scripture may well possess the minds of this numerous and respectable audience, with reverence and a sacred awe, before him, who is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints ; and who will be sanctified in all them that come nigh him : It is particularly adapted to arrest the most serious attention of our honoured Rulers ; at whose invitation we are assembled in the House of God on this auspicious anniversary,—to supplicate the Divine Presence with them, and his smiles and blessing upon the special business of the day ; and their administration of government the ensuing year ; and to enquire of him from his word, agreeable to the laudable practice of our pious Progenitors, from the first settlement of the country, to the present period.

O U R

OUR text has a primary reference to the Rulers of God's ancient covenant people. But as this passage of scripture is of no private interpretation, it will as fitly apply to our civil fathers now before God, as to the *Jewish Sanhedrim* of old.

THE words before us, will naturally lead us—
 ‘ To make some brief and general observations on government.’—The propriety and usefulness of an *assembly*, for conducting the important affairs of it.—The sublime characters rulers sustain.—The Supreme Ruler present with them, as an observer, and judge ; ready for their assistance and support, when acting up to their character ; and carefully noticing whenever they lose sight of the great end of their appointment : And the powerful influence, the consideration of his presence and inspection must have, to engage them in a conscientious discharge of the duties of their exalted stations. May I be indulged your serious and candid attention, while I attempt to dilate a little, upon these several particulars ; all obviously contained in, or easily deducible from our text. *GOD standeth in the Congregation of the Mighty : He judgeth among the Gods.*

THAT our text applies to the supreme government of a community, and involves the various departments

departments of it, is readily seen by looking into the Psalm before us ; where we find this congregation of the mighty, reprov'd for the improper use of their power, and a different mode of conduct enjoined upon them. “ How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked ? Defend the poor and fatherless : Do justice to the afflicted and needy : Deliver the poor and needy, rid them out of the hand of the wicked.”

CIVIL government is both a dictate of nature, and revelation ; and is accordingly indifferently denominated, *the ordinance of God, and the ordinance of man*. Man was originally formed for society, and furnished with faculties adapted thereto : Faculties for the improvement of which social intercourse is indispensably necessary. Some of the most important duties, and refined delights of human life are of the social kind.

IN order to obtain the benefits of society, civil rule is essentially requisite. Those lusts of men, from whence come wars and fightings, are so prevalent in this apostate world, that they are obliged to form compacts and combinations, for mutual assistance and support. And there is perhaps no people no earth, however uncultivated and barbarous, but who have adopted some kind of civil polity.

THE light and law of nature, which uniformly urges to this mode of procedure, may well be accepted, as an expression of the divine will : For God addresses the human mind in divers manners ; and he does it by the voice of reason, as well as revelation.

THE providence of God is particularly concerned, in elevating man to post of honour and dignity ; and giving them a seat among the congregation of the mighty. “ For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south : But God is the judge : He putteth down one, and sitteth up another.” “ By me (says wisdom, or that glorious Being who is the wisdom of God) by me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule and nobles, even all the judges of the earth.” And in the New-Testament, we have the same idea held up, in terms equally express. “ Let every soul be subject to the higher powers ; for there is no power, but of God. The powers that be, are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.” Again, “ submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord’s sake ; whether it be to the King, as supreme, or unto Governours,

as unto them that are sent by him, for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God.”

THESE declarations apply to civil government in general, which is indispensably necessary to social felicity and safety. But they are by no means to be extended to every mode of government that has obtained among mankind : Not certainly to a despotic and lawless domination. This is not the ordinance of God. Nor indeed any other government, but such as protects the subjects in the peaceable possession of their just rights, properties and priviledges.

THE particular form of government and mode of administration, that shall obtain among the various nations of the world, heaven has not seen fit to prescribe. This seems to be referred to the wisdom of each community to determine for themselves. And a great variety has in this respect, actually taken place ; in consequence of the different genius, sentiments and situation, of different people, in different ages and climes.

In some constitutions, the supreme authority hath been vested in one man. In others, a few

are selected for the purpose. Others still have submitted it to many. The particular mode of government that has obtained the preference with the people of this land, directs our attention to the latter of these three. And so does our text. *The congregation of the mighty.*

THERE seems an evident propriety in committing the management of the interesting and important affairs of government, to a number selected from the whole.

POWER is of an intoxicating quality ; and for a single individual to be vested with sovereign rule, is subjecting him to a temptation too strong for human virtue. A desire of pre-eminence is a natural passion, and when properly restrained, may prove highly beneficial to society. But when it has a full free course, and attains the summit of its wish, and feels itself without controul ; the subject of this undue elevation, is apt to be puffed up with pride, to become intolerably supercilious and tyrannical ; and to trample upon those rights of the community, and individuals, which it is the prime design of government to protect.

WHEREVER the will of a despot is the supreme law, the great end of government is usually perverted.

verted. This is sufficiently attested by facts: And it is no other than what might justly be expected from the nature of man.

THERE are, it is true, advantages arising from vesting the administration in the hands of one man, or a few; when they are well furnished with wisdom and fidelity; advantages from the decision and dispatch, with which affairs of State may be transacted; and which in particular emergencies, may be peculiarly beneficial. But they are so counterbalanced by the ills that result from arbitrary rule, on the one hand, and the safety that arises from good advice on the other, that there seems a manifest propriety that a number should be selected for the business.

“WHERE no council is (says the wise Solomon) the people fall: But in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.” So limited is the human mind in all its perceptions and operations, and so diffuse, difficult, and many times perplexed are human affairs, especially the important ones of government, that they elude the comprehension of an individual; and demand the combined wisdom of a number, to conduct them with propriety. In free and judicious debates, there is frequently
much

much light reflected upon intricate subjects. What escapes the observation, or recollection of one, may occur to another ; and the minds of all be ripened for a result, by means of the light mutually reflected in their consultations. Affairs of State, thus carefully canvassed, may doubtless be conducted with greater propriety, by an assembly of the wisest and best men in a community, than by a single individual, however improved and judicious he might be.

SUCH further is the immense weight of government, that it is too heavy for the shoulders of an individual : A congregation of the mighty, will find the burden equal to their united strength. Thoughtless and inconsiderate people, may fondly conceive, that the business of a Ruler is as easy as the character is honourable. But those who know the circle of their duty, and the various difficulties that attend it, are fully sensible, that it is an office, laborious, extensive, and greatly exercising to all the powers of the body and mind.

WHATEVER refers to the public safety and happiness, demands their attention. The good and wholesome laws, that are in being, are faithfully

fully to be executed ; and proper persons sought out to carry them into effect. Laws unexecuted, however good in themselves, and beneficial in their tendency, answer no valuable purpose ; and may really prove injurious, by lowering the general influence of authority. If men may violate one law without any animadversion ; why not another ? There is nothing inspires the public mind with so general a veneration of government, as an undoubted expectation, that every penalty incurred, shall be inflicted. New laws are from time to time to be framed, accommodated to the temper, genius and circumstances of a people, and the exigencies of state : And to be so framed that it may not be easy to elude their meaning, or evade their force. Justice, *distributive, penal,* and *commutative*, must have a free uninterrupted course in a community : This seems to be the very corner stone of its happy existence. Useful literature is to be encouraged, that youth may be trained up in knowledge and virtue, and fitted to serve God, and their generation, according to his will. Religion pure and undefiled, before God and the Father, so indispensably necessary to secure the favour and blessing of heaven, is particularly to be patronized. They must guard with a vigilant eye, against the numerous evils

evils which threaten the body politic, whether from external violence, or internal convulsions ; and attend to whatever serves to promote public prosperity. The commerce, agriculture, and manufactures of a people should particularly be put under the most judicious regulations ; to encourage honest industry, and banish idleness : The former as beneficial, as the latter is baneful. The one, continually prompting to vice and sedition ; the other engaging to a quiet and peaceable life.

GREAT and arduous is the labour requisite for so extensive a sphere of action as this ; some outlines of which, we have but hinted at. And the difficulties of it are sometimes greatly enhanced, by the peculiar embarrassments in which a people are involved. The *cumbrance* of a great community is hard to be borne ; but their *strifes* render the burden still more grievous.

WHEN Jethro, that wise Prince, and priest of Midian, observed Moses attending this duty from morning to evening, he makes this just remark.—
 “ The thing that thou doest is not good : Thou wilt surely wear away : This thing is too heavy for thee : Thou art not able to perform it thyself alone.” And the excessive labour and fatigue, and various

various vexations of the service, effectually convinced Moses of the propriety of his observation. Though he was eminently furnished with every qualification requisite for a good ruler, and successful administration ;—such as learning, wisdom, meekness, patience, and the most perfect patriotism ; yet worn down with painful services, and ready to sink under the burden, we find him pouring out his complaint to God, in these expressive terms,—“ Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant ? And wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me ? Have I conceived all this people ? Have I begotten them, that thou shouldst say unto me,—carry them in thy bosom as a nursing father carrieth the sucking child.—I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me.”

UPON this earnest application to heaven, God was pleased to alter their form of government. Moses is directed to select out of all the people, seventy men of their first characters : Men known and noted as such, to be joined with him in the administration. These composed the great *Sanhedrim*, and are *that Congregation of the Mighty*,—those earthly GODS, to whom our text most probably hath a primary reference.

It is a divinely glorious character they sustain. *The mighty*, and according to the Hebrew dialect; *Gods*. These terms express their dignity, and point out the necessity of suitable qualifications for the discharge of the duties of their station.

THE dignity of rulers, has by some been improved, as a subject of flattery; and their minds have been immoderately puffed up, by the high strained compliments of fawning sycophants; till they have conceived themselves something above human. But they bear the image of God's authority, and are illustrious by the rays of his majesty, for a very different purpose:—That they might imitate the justice and beneficence of that glorious Being they represent; and exercise the authority with which they are vested in providence, to the great and good ends, for which they are raised above their brethren. When the public good engrosses their attention, and engages their unwearied exertions: When they lay themselves out for the encouragement of whatever is virtuous, commendable and praise worthy, and for the suppression of every thing of a contrary nature and tendency: When they improve all the powers of their minds, and all the advantages of their preferment to these ends:—Then do they

act up to their honourable character ; they fill with dignity their exalted stations, and may be fitly denominated *Gods*, and workers together with God.

To be equal to this important character and employ, it is necessary that they be persons of good natural abilities, and acquired accomplishments. The former of our bodies and the father of our spirits, has been pleased to exercise, both his “wisdom and sovereignty in the different make of men. To some he giveth wisdom and understanding exceeding much; and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore,” whereby they are able to discern both time and judgment, and are ready for every emergency. The powers of others seem formed upon a lesser scale, and evidently point them to a lower line of duty. Education serves to keep up the natural diversity in the human composition. The situation and circumstances of some, in the course of providence, is peculiarly favourable for improvements in those useful sciences which enlarge and ennoble the mind, and qualify it for extensive usefulness : While others are necessarily destitute of those advantages, and consequent improvements. Provi-
C
dence

dence, as with a sun-beam, points out the former of these, as persons proper to be vested with ruling powers, in preference to the latter. Their qualifications bespeak it ; the public good demands it ; and the word of God directs to it. “ Provide out of all the people *able men*, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness, and place such over them.” *Able men*—men possessed of wisdom and knowledge ; of sense and substance, of fortitude and firmness ; neither enervated by debauchery, or effeminated by dissipation, equal to the cares, fatigues and burden of government ; and of “ attending continually on this very thing.” Their religious and moral qualifications are directly subjoined, and are equally desirable, in those who rule over men. *Such as fear God*, are really religious, in principle and practice ; *Men of truth*,—of inviolable integrity ; who maintain a sacred regard to their engagements : *Hating covetousness* ; not only free from that turbid source of corruption ; but detesting the low principle that centers wholly in itself.

SUCH characters collected from a large community, for the purpose of conducting its important public concerns, compose a truly respectable assembly : *A Congregation of the Mighty* : God’s vicegerents.

vicegerents. They exhibit a faint resemblance and representation of the source of all power ; and are ministers of the providential government of the great Supreme.

OUR text represents the great *Jehovah* as present with them ; and taking cognizance of their conduct. *God standeth in the Congregation of the Mighty : He judgeth among the Gods.*

INFIDEL minds, and those who by their conduct, have made it for their interest, either that there should be no God, or that he should be regardless of their behaviour ; have sometime flatly denied his superintending human affairs. At other times endeavoured to argue themselves into scepticism upon the subject. The ancients of Israel, in the days of *Ezekiel*, had the confidence to assert, that “The Lord had forsaken the earth.” Others of a still more ancient date are represented as querying—“Is not God in the height of heaven ? And behold the height of the stars, how high they are—How doth God know ? Can he judge through the dark cloud ? Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not, and he walketh in the circuit of heaven.” Others still have said in their hearts, secretly whispered to themselves, when rebuked by their consciences for their
criminal!

criminal conduct ; not daring to utter aloud the impious thought : “ God hath forgotten, he hideth his face ; he will never see it.”

OUR inward feelings revolt at such blasphemous suggestions, and assertions. And the word of God throughout, reprobates the shocking imagination ; and represents it, as the fruitful source of all the over-flowings of impiety and immorality, which prevail, in the most degenerate places and periods of time.

THE most high God, the possessor of Heaven and Earth, is uniformly revealed in his word, as an immense, an infinite Being ; omnipresent and omniscient. His universal presence and inspection, are necessary to the administration of his providential government now ; and to a righteous distribution of rewards and punishments, in the judgment of the great day.

HE is present in the Congregation of the Mighty as an attentive observer :—A powerful assistant : A righteous Judge.

THOUGH he has given the earth to the children of men, and imparted of his authority to his Vice-gerents below ; yet he still holds the reins in his own hands, and hath the government on his shoulders ; and critically observes the conduct of those, who by being exalted to rule, are brought especially nigh to himself.

He beholds with approbation those wise and faithful servants who conform to the moral character of the Supreme Ruler, and make his administration the pattern and standard of theirs. He observes their unwearied endeavours to possess their minds with political wisdom, that they may fully comprehend the duties of their station ; and their uncorrupted fidelity for the discharge of them ; their careful attention for the removal of every needless burden, and the redress of every real grievance. He sees their solicitude to remove whatever obstructs the free course of justice ; their assiduous endeavours, that it may be impartially administered, to all of every rank, and in every part of the community. He observes the firmness and fortitude with which they oppose themselves against evil doers, and the workers of iniquity ; with what zeal and ardour, they labour for the suppression of vice and immorality, so utterly ruinous, both from its natural tendency, and the righteous judgment of God. He regards their meekness, self-denial and patience, their prudence, paternal affection and public spirit ; and that philanthropy and God-like benevolence which animates to the noblest exertions for the publick good.

HE particularly notices the serious reference they cultivate to his all seeing eye ; and the habitual influence this has upon the temper of their hearts, as well as the discharge of the duties of their exalted stations.

A LIVELY sense of an ever present God, must powerfully arrest every mind that is the subject of it ; and beget that fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom : Which is so essential and important a branch of religion, as to be frequently substituted for the whole of it. This important principle is indispensably necessary, for every man, who wishes to approve himself to God. It is the greatest ornament to a christian Ruler ; and of the happiest influence to the uniform discharge of every incumbent duty. Whenever it exists and exerts itself, Heaven regards it with approbation. It renders the services and sacrifices of all who possess it acceptable, and well pleasing in his sight. The Congregation of the Mighty thus qualified, disposed and employed ; will secure and enjoy the approbation of the Supreme Ruler.

BUT the great God not only takes notice of all their exertions for the honour of his name, and
the

the good of society ; but is present with them for their assistance and support.

CIVIL Rulers are honoured as ministers and instruments of his providential government ; and they are favoured with his providential presence, that the ordinance of Heaven in this respect, might not be rendered void ; but that they may accomplish that which the Supreme Ruler pleases ; and prosper in the station which he has assigned them.

WHEN God has such a favour for his people, as to afford their Rulers his gracious presence ; his right hand and the light of his countenance will do great things for them, and cause all things to go well with them.

ARE they involved in darkness, or embarrassed with difficulties ? The fountain of light, will illuminate their minds, and irradiate their paths, and make their duty plain before them.

ARE they beset with threatening dangers ? He that is with them, is more, and mightier, than all that are against them ; and can easily deliver from the strivings of the people within ; and external violence from abroad.

THE presence of the Supreme Ruler, in the congregation of the mighty, as a sun and a shield for their direction and defence, is at all times desirable; and upon some emergencies of the highest importance. Such difficulties may perplex their minds, and embarrass their paths, as that they may really *not know what to do*. But the Father of light, if graciously present with them, can easily point out to them, the path of duty and safety. He has an immediate access to the human mind, and an entire command of it. As the rivers of water, he turneth it which way soever it pleaseth him. He can suggest such a train of thought, and mode of conduct, as shall lead them out of the labyrinth, set their feet upon a rock, and establish their goings.

DOES a spirit of sedition arise, and the contagion catch from breast to breast; do the clouds collect and blacken, the clamor wax louder and louder; and direct its course, against the constitution and guardians of the State: Is it ready to burst out in contention, confusion, and every evil work? Oh how desirable is the gracious presence and powerful influence of the Supreme Ruler, at such a period, with those who act under him.

SUCH seasons of danger and distress are not ideal. They have been realized under every form of government ; though more frequently perhaps under those of the most liberal complexion. It is not the best system of civil rule ; or the most faithful and judicious administration, that is a certain security from such evils.

UNDER the *Jewish theocracy*, where God himself condescended to be their King ; enacted their laws, civil as well as sacred ; resided among them, exhibiting continually, a visible appearance of his presence ; conducting the affairs both of Church and State, by the ministry of Moses ;—of whose appointment to office by Heaven, his qualifications for it, and fidelity in it, they had the most undeniable proofs. Yet under all these advantages for a quiet administration, and obligations to a due submission ; Korah and company, had the address to effect a most dangerous insurrection. They first attach to their interest, a number of leading characters ; then raise their *posse*, and prepare their charge.

BUT what charge could hold, against so eminent a Ruler as Moses ? Whom has he defrauded, or oppressed ? Not a single individual. He de-

clares before the heart-searching God, he had not. “Respect them not (says he, in his solemn address to the Diety) I have not taken one as from them, neither have I hurt one of them.”

WHAT is the terrible grievance, or pretended grievance, that enables these sons of sedition, to raise the whole Congregation against Moses and Aaron? It is pride and imperiousness. Strange that this of all things, should be the charge, when we are assured, from sacred record, that “the man Moses, was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.” But what of that? The charge takes, and that answers the purpose. “Ye take too much upon you, (they complain) seeing all the Congregation are holy, every one of them: Wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the Congregation of the Lord?”

THIS daring rebellion was severely rebuked by the righteous Governour of the World. The authors of it, and leaders in it, were partly consumed by fire from the Lord: And for the rest, the earth opened her mouth, and they went down quick into the pit.

BUT such a malignant effect had this insurrection upon the minds of the people, that even this
awful

awful interposition of the great God of Heaven, was not sufficient to quell it. The very next day there is a fresh rising, and a new charge exhibited. Moses and Aaron are impeached with killing the people of the Lord.

GRACIOUS Heaven! Is it possible, that when those sinners against their own souls, were cut off by the hand of God, in the open view of thousands and ten thousand witnesses; and by his creating a new thing too; causing “the earth to open and swallow them up, with all that appertained to them,” that the whole Congregation should directly charge Moses and Aaron, with the murder of those pious good people?

THIS was too much for infinite patience to endure. “Get ye up from this congregation (says the Lord to Moses, prostrate before him as an humble fervent intercessor for them) that I may consume them in a moment.” And though Moses and Aaron stood in the gap, and at length turned away the anger of God: Yet it was not till fourteen thousand seven hundred, were made monuments of the divine displeasure; besides them that died about the matter of Korah,

THESE things happened to Israel of old for examples; and they are written for our admonition
on

on whom the ends of the world are come, and they admit of a profitable improvement. We do not indeed in the present age expect miraculous interpositions; yet when God is graciously present with his servants, he does sometimes by a surprizing coincidence of events, work out their salvation: So that “ whoever is wise and observes them, may understand the loving kindness of the Lord.” To proceed with our subject.

THE great Governor of the world, is not only present with those in authority, as an observer of all the good they do for his people; and to afford every assistance and support, as circumstances require:—But as a righteous judge, who critically observes the deportment of the whole, and of each individual, and takes cognizance whenever they lose sight of the great end of their appointment. *He judgeth among the Gods.*

THAT all-piercing eye which pervades the universe, and penetrates every disguise, sees who constitute the Congregation of the Mighty. He perfectly knows the various views they have; and the different improvement they make of their talents and opportunities. They are raised above their brethren; not that they may shine in affluence, and fare sumptuously every day;
much

much less, that they may indulge to inglorious ease and sloth ; and least of all, that they should pervert judgment and justice ; but that having a more extended circle of duty, they may be more extensively useful. If however there are any who neglect the business of their station, who permit their talents to lie by them useless, as though folded up in a napkin, if content with the honors or profits of preferment, they leave the duties to be performed by others : He who stands in the midst of their assembly observes it. If through their delinquency, “ judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off : If truth falleth in the street, and equity cannot enter,” the Lord sees it. “ If they forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to perish ; if they say, behold we knew it not : Doth not He that pondereth the heart consider it ? and He that keepeth their soul, doth He not know it ? and shall He not render to every man according to his works ?”

WHATEVER pleas any may substitute for the neglect of their duty, every omission is noticed by the righteous Judge ; and noted down in the book of his remembrance. The abuse of their trust, exposes them to the just resentments

of those, who have confided their interests to their care ; and to the present rebukes of that God who judgeth in the earth. But whether they fall under the effects of these now, or not—a severe reckoning and an awful doom awaits them at the great day : “ Cast ye the *unprofitable* servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

AND if mere indolence and inattention to duty, be thus resented by the Supreme Ruler ; those who are chargeable with direct and positive breaches of their trust, will not escape his observation. If they judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked : If mischief be framed by a law, in effect and constructively, however covertly done, and men are turned aside from their right—He who is higher than the highest regardeth such violent perversion of judgment and justice. When this is the case, “ all the foundations of the earth or land, are out of course,” as it is expressed in our context : For when justice is perverted, what good can be expected ? “ The omniscient God sees, and shall he not avenge such injustice as this ? Hear that declaration of our blessed Lord, which will apply to the point, and deserves the serious attention of those who abuse their trust ;

“ But

“But if that evil servant shall say in his heart, my Lord delayeth his coming ; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken ; the Lord of that servant shall come, in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites.”

AND now will not the consideration of the divine presence in the assembly of political rulers, most powerfully engage them to a conscientious discharge of the duties of their exalted station ? If their minds are possessed with a lively sense of his immediate inspection ; they will, they must attend to the important affairs that come before them, with great solemnity of spirit.— Every matter that is suggested, or submitted to their consideration, will be impartially examined ; and nothing suffered to pass merely upon the account of its plausible appearance. In every debate the enquiry will be, not what measure will most contribute to my popularity ; to secure my present station ; or advance me to an higher ? Nor, what will be most for my personal interest, or the advantage of those with whom I am particularly connected ? But what is fit, and right in itself ; and in the view of my most calm and retired thoughts,

thoughts, divested as much as possible of passion and prejudice ? What will stand the awful trial of the Supreme Governour, and meet his final approbation ?

A LIVELY sense of an ever present God, habitually impressed upon the mind, will happily influence the general temper and conduct ; and it will prove peculiarly beneficial in pressing public emergencies : It will raise above that fear of man which bringeth a snare ; and lessen, if not utterly destroy the force of temptation, from whatever quarter it originates. It will make them stedfast, immovable, abounding in the work of the Lord. It will expand the human heart, and inspire with a laudable ambition, to secure his sacred sanction. In short it will form a principle of action, which viewed in its proper connexion and extent, is one of the noblest and best that can possess the Ruler's breast.

THERE are it is true, other principles that have their use, and are often improved by Providence to produce good effects : Such as a benevolent disposition :—A quick sense of honor :—ambition of being distinguished as of consequence in the State ; and the like. But the influence of all these lower principles, is very uncertain, especially in times of great trial and temptation. If present interest,

interest, and present duty interfere, as they some times may ; what is there but a serious reference to the invisible God, that will enable the ruler to hold fast his integrity ? This indeed will engage him to go through honor and dishonor, good report, and evil report ; resolutely to surmount, or charge through every difficulty and opposition that he meets with in the line of duty. The testimony of his own conscience affords him a constant support, a continual feast. “ The work of righteousness shall be peace ; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.”

FAITHFUL Rulers, acting uniformly under the influence of this most excellent principle, have the fairest prospect of securing the acceptance and approbation of their fellow-citizens ; and thereby of protracting the period, and enlarging the sphere of their usefulness. But whatever returns are made them, by an ungrateful world or perverse generation ; God is not unrighteous to forget their work and labour of love. That peace of his which passeth all understanding, shall possess their hearts, and prove their support under every present pressure. And in the nearest views of dissolution, the testimony of their consciences, that they have walked before God, with a perfect

heart, and have done that which was right in his sight, will inspire a hope sure and steadfast. And great shall be their reward in Heaven.

WILL not the subject, thus considered, naturally lead us to reflect, with the most pleasing sensations, and sincerest gratitude to Heaven, upon our own happy constitution of civil government. Emancipated from British domination, freed from that exorbitant claim to a right to bind us in all cases whatever ; which like a horrid vortex threatened to swallow up all that was dear and sacred in our view ; and to reduce us to a state of absolute servility : Freed from these evils, we have had the singular privilege of forming and establishing a frame of government for ourselves : And, to render it the more perfect, of availing ourselves of the examples and maxims of the sacred writings, as well as the wisdom of all preceding ages. The thought that it is *our own* is a pleasing recommendation. The treasure and the blood we have been obliged to expend in order to its acquisition, must enhance its value. But especially the broad basis it lays for equal liberty, civil and religious ; the security it gives to all our rights as men, and christians ; the favourable aspect it has upon our peace and prosperity in this life ;

life ; and the advantages it affords of securing a good foundation against the time to come ; all conspire to raise our esteem even to veneration. Strangers are not permitted to rule over us. "Our nobles are of ourselves : And our Governour proceeds from the midst of us." Our best characters, it is our privilege and our duty to select, out of all the people, and from every part of the Commonwealth, to conduct our interesting affairs : And, not by will or caprice, but fixed fundamental rules, which they are under the oath of God to maintain sacred and inviolable. And if experience should convince us that amendments or alterations, are eligible, or necessary ; a constitutional mode is pointed out, in which they may be effected, without exposing us to those intestine jarrs and convulsions, which usually attend alterations, and especially revolutions in other States. Happy, thrice happy people, have we but wisdom to know, and virtue to improve, so excellent a system.

WHAT thanks should we render to God most high, to God who performeth all things for us, for the favourable dispositions of his providence, which opened the way for, and has enabled us to secure so excellent a constitution ! Our present situation is by no means the result of chance. The
 revolution

revolution that introduced it was replete with brilliant events ; such as engaged the attention and admiration of distant nations ; and will shine with distinguished lustre in the faithful page of history. The hand of Heaven has been conspicuous, in raising up eminent characters for council and war, in uniting so extensive a territory in a common cause ; in giving us favour in the eyes of foreign powers, and influencing them to afford us essential aid ; and especially in a variety of marvellous interpositions of his providence, in periods of greatest perplexity, darkness and danger. How did the Supreme Ruler ride forth upon the Heavens for our help ; and in his Excellency upon the skies ! How often did he make bare his arm on our behalf, and exert the saving strength of his own right hand, till we obtained the completion of our wishes ; peace with established independence ; upon terms too, as honorable to America, as they were humiliating to Britain.

To hint at these interesting events, will not be deemed improper at this time, as it serves to touch the secret springs of gratitude, and draw forth our whole souls in love to him, to whom we are so infinitely indebted. And at the same time, may remind our civil Fathers of the confidence the
community

community repose in them, by committing the Supreme powers of the constitution, both Legislative and Executive, to their care : And the sacred obligations they lay themselves under by accepting the trust.

His Excellency will consider his renewed call to the first seat of government in this Commonwealth, by the voice of the people, as a decided proof of their continued attachment to his person, and grateful acceptance of his past services : And the confidence they still repose in his abilities and disposition for future exertions in their favour.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governour elect : The Honourable the Senate, and the Honourable House of Representatives, advanced to their respective important stations by the suffrages of their fellow-citizens, have now an happy opportunity of improving the large share of public confidence they possess, in contributing to the peace, order and felicity of the whole community. To this great end, they will direct their united attention and exertions.

In filling up the vacancies in the Legislature, and furnishing out a Council, for the Supreme
Executive,

Executive, their eyes will be upon the faithful in the land, upon men of known and tried abilities.

IN all the business that comes before our Honoured Rulers, they will keep in view the public good, as the great end of their appointment to office. By a strict conformity to the principles of the constitution, they will if possible, cut off all occasion for murmuring and complaint : And where any really exists, effectually and expeditiously remove it.

THEY will keep a vigilant eye upon those restless spirits, who either from an aversion to the necessary restraints of government, discontent at their own situation, or embarrassments in their personal interest, through their own folly, extravagance or unsuccessful speculations, are continually plotting mischief, exciting the fears and jealousies of honest people, insinuating that their liberties and privileges, are invaded, or in danger, &c. Such men are the pests of society : They should be narrowly observed, and whenever their factious disposition discovers itself by overt acts, seasonably and severely animadverted upon ; that others may avoid their crimes as they would their fate. Inattention to evils of this kind in their rise is dangerous, and may prove fatal.

To contribute to public happiness our civil Fathers will give every encouragement to industry, so indispensably necessary to bring forward to our aid, the numerous resources with which our country is blessed. By good laws and proper encouragements, they will endeavour to improve our agriculture, fisheries, commerce, arts and manufactures. These extensive fields will furnish out full, and profitable employ for all parts of the community. And industry in the improvement of these advantages, attended with proper economy, would enable us to emerge from our embarrassments, discharge our debts, feel our independence, and appear to advantage upon the great Theatre of the world.

To answer the great end of their appointment, our Rulers will patronize learning and the liberal arts. They will encourage our Schools and Academies, and especially our University, so illustrious for the renowned characters it has already produced : And to which the Commonwealth will still direct her eye for “strong rods for the sceptre of them that bare rule ;” to her own sons nurtured in that seat of learning, will she look for prophets, and to her young men for Nazarites, to take her by the hand, and lead her in the way she ought to go.

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THEY will moreover endeavour the impartial distribution of justice and judgment. “The God of Israel said, the rock of Israel spoke : He that ruleth over men, must be just.” Would they approve themselves to the Supreme Ruler or answer the prime design of government ; they must conscientiously attend to this cardinal virtue. All their acts and laws must be founded upon this sure basis. And all their promises and engagements, held sacred and inviolable.

THEIR promises, their plighted faith for the payment of the public debt, does in a particular manner solicit their most serious attention. The creditors of the public, attached to the interest of their country, in the most critical juncture, cheerfully stepped forward, and exposed both their persons, and their fortunes, to the most threatening dangers, on her behalf. While some jeopardded their lives in the high places of the field, and endured all the fatigues of a severe and long continued war ; through various perils, many times in cold and nakedness, hunger and thirst, yea “in deaths oft.” Others risked their interest at the earnest call of their country, in the support of the common cause, relying upon the public faith. Have they forfeited their right to their interests,
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either from loan, or services performed ? Britain perhaps, had her arms been successful, might determine they had ; for their treasonable attempts against her authority. And those among ourselves, who have been uniformly inimical to the American cause, may be pleased with the cruel mortification to which they see them subjected. But is there an individual friendly to the revolution, and possessed of the most moderate share of judgment and integrity, who does not view them as highly meritorious ?

THE decided part they took in favour of their much injured country, and in periods too of its utmost perplexity and danger, is greatly to their honor. They asserted her rights and supported her cause, not by a mere profusion and flourish of words ; but by actions, which admitted of no duplicity of sense or meaning. They risked their dear-earned interest, and their still dearer lives for the freedom of their country. Heaven directed and assisted the noble exertions, and crowned the arduous attempt with glorious success. Had they not a right to expect, that government would honor themselves, by paying a sacred regard to their engagements ? Did not sound policy, justice, honor, gratitude and every ingenious principle which actuates the human mind,

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urge to this? Can specious promises, under the names of certificates, indents, facilities, due-bills, &c. couched in the fairest terms, while covering the grossest deception, be considered as a honorable discharge of the public engagements? Is this class of citizens, to look and expect till their eyes and hearts fail them with waiting? Have not many already been as effectually ruined by their dependence upon the public faith, as if their substance had been consumed by the flames? Have not many, urged by sad necessity, been obliged to part with their public securities, for a very trifling consideration? And must not more directly share their severe fate, unless the justice of government interpose? Some appear averse to this interposition, because it must now come too late with respect to many. But if through the delinquency or delay of the public, many of her faithful and tried friends, who have rendered her the most essential service, are ruined; is this a good reason why they should make thorough work, and dispatch the whole body of them?

“To turn away a man from his right, or subvert him in his cause, the Lord approveth not,” in any case whatever. But are there not in the case before us some circumstances, which give a peculiar colouring to the injustice done, to a part at least, of the public creditors, by with-holding their due?

WHEN David while in the strong hold, exclaimed,—“ O that one would give me water to drink out of the well of Bethlehem ; and three of the thirty chief, break through the host of the Philistines, and drew it, and brought it to him ; he would not drink of it. My God forbid it me, that I should do this thing (says he.) Shall I drink the blood of these men, that have put their lives in jeopardy ? For with the jeopardy of their lives they brought it.” In this view of the case, and as far as it will fairly apply to our army,—is there an individual, who would withhold from them their due ; and deprive them of that bread they have acquired a righteous claim to, at the peril of their lives ? Again.

THE aged and helpless, and particularly widows and orphans, may be viewed as another class of public creditors. These, incapable of vindicating their rights, have a special claim to the patronage and protection of authority. Injustice offered to these, and especially to the latter, is ever considered as greatly aggravated. And some of the most pointed threatenings in the whole book of God, are directly levelled against this sin. Says the Supreme Ruler of the universe,—Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me ;

I will surely hear their cry, and my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.”

THERE is other property, of which the community have availed themselves in the late contest, the with-holding of which, and especially the perversion of it, from its original design, is perhaps carrying injustice to its highest pitch. I mean that which has been devoted to God : Consecrated to charitable uses : The pious donations to our University : The funds for the benefit of Churches, and other societies : The provision made in one place and another, for the relief of the aged and necessitous, the widow and orphan. What is an invasion of this kind of property, but down-right *sacrilege* ? A crime that scarce admits of excuse or extenuation. “ If one man sin against another, the Judges shall judge him : But if a man sin against the Lord, who shall plead for him ? ”

SHALL these claims upon the public be still suspended to give scope for speculation ? Shall they be vacated, or in any degree mutilated, because the discharge of them is not to be effected, without laying a burden upon the community ? And this when we are assured, they are entirely
competent

competent to the annual discharge of the interest, and lowering the principal, with a tax no heavier in proportion to the present number, than was commonly paid before the war? Would such pleas avail between man and man? Would they with good men and true, in a Court of Justice? Should an individual endeavour to get rid of his debts by such means, would it not consign his character to perpetual infamy? Can any plead for it then in a community; especially when the example it exhibits is so detestable in itself, and so destructive in its tendency, and abominable in the eyes of a righteous God, who declares, "I hate robbery for burnt sacrifice."

PERMIT me only to add here, Our honoured Rulers among all their other exertions for the good of the Commonwealth, will pay a particular attention to the interest of Religion. Is it their governing aim to approve themselves to God? They must personally think of, and practise, the graces and virtues of the Christian character, without which it is not possible to please God. If they have the interest of religion at heart, they will give it their determined support: Not by instituting articles of faith, or forms of worship, or in any manner infringing the rights of conscience; but by promoting

moting none to places of power and trust, but persons of good moral characters ; by countenancing and encouraging the ministers of religion ; by a faithful execution of the laws for the suppression of profaneness, immorality and impiety ; and especially by an exemplary attendance upon public worship, and gospel institutions. Examples, and particularly of those in higher life, have a prevailing victorious force ; and by them good Rulers may eminently subserve the interests of piety and virtue.

“ GODLINESS is profitable to all things ; having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” It insures the favour and blessing of heaven. It contributes to public happiness, by engaging all orders of men to an upright discharge of their several duties. Rulers possessed of religious principles, will approve themselves “ Ministers of God for good,” to their people. And subjects under similar influences, will yield due obedience ; not merely for wrath, or through fear of punishment ; but from a far nobler principle,—“ for conscience sake.” Religion in this view is so far from being a vain thing, *that it is our life.*

To these articles, and indeed to the whole circle of the duties of their elevated stations, our honoured

noured civil Fathers will view themselves as under sacred obligations to attend. It is fit and reasonable in itself, that you do so. Heaven requires it of you ; and the public good, in which your own private happiness, and that of your dearest connections is involved, demands it. But there is no consideration can have a more commanding force, than that which our text holds up to view. May you all feel its fullest effect. *God standeth in the Congregation of the Mighty.* The Supreme Ruler, before whom the most exalted intelligences of the upper world, prostrate with veiled faces, is present with you. He knows you all by name. Your principles, your views and the inmost recesses of your souls, are all naked and open to his inspection. He is at hand for your assistance. If you devoutly implore it, he will graciously afford it. And if you have it, and improve it ; we may hope for clear evidence, from your happy and successful administration, that *He is with you of a truth.—He judgeth among the Gods.* He carefully notices your conduct, with a view to a righteous retribution. “ Though you are called Gods, yet you must die like men ;” and like your brethren of the dust appear before his dread tribunal, without any remains of your present civil distinctions. Actuated by this solemn thought ; conducting with a
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serious reference to the broad eye of heaven, and the recompence of reward ; you will have the fairest prospect of acquitting yourselves with honour, of being approved of God, and accepted by the multitude of your brethren. Yea, it will give you boldness in the day of Christ Jesus. Having been faithful in a few things, he will make you rulers over many ; and admit you to the joy of your Lord.

How solicitously concerned does it become us all to be, that we avail ourselves to the utmost of our present inestimable advantages ; and especially that we do not forfeit and forego them, by our own folly and perverseness !

OUR advantages are much every way. The lines are fallen to us in pleasant places ; and we have a goodly heritage. The land we possess, like the chosen residence of God's favourite people of old, is " a land of hills and vallies, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven. The eyes of the Lord our God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year." It amply repays the toils of the industrious husbandman ; yielding a rich supply of the necessaries, and most substantial articles of life ; and a good surplufage for the purposes of commerce.

merce. Our fields, the uncultivated wilderness, the fisheries, the trade, and numerous arts and manufactures, offer business and bread, to every industrious individual ; business suited to every different genius ; and a decent support, and what in other countries would be called luxurious living.

OUR land is a “valley of vision.” We are blest with the bright beams of gospel light and grace, which afford the highest advantages, for securing an inheritance in a better, in a heavenly country, when our connections with this are over.

THE establishment of the new federal system, so favourable to a *firm*, and at the same time *free* government ; so well adapted to brace the nerves of civil authority, through the whole frame ; “to establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity :” The consideration which our firm bond of union will give us among the nations of the earth : The bright and pleasing prospect of enjoying the fruits of all our exertions and expence for liberty and independence, under the wise councils, and judicious regulations, of those eminent patriots, from the various parts of the

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union, which compose our national government ; and especially under the presidency of that illustrious Chief, in whom we all concentrate our views with an unanimity as desirable, as it is unexampled.

THESE advantages we now possess, are great in a separate view ; but combined, are they not singular, and unparralleled, by any part of the whole habitable world ? May I not with the utmost propriety, as well as warmest emotions, congratulate our honoured Rulers, this respectable audience, and our whole land, upon our present promising situation ? More particularly upon the new æra so happily, so auspiciously commenced. The tranquil easy advance to this new stage of political existence ; and all the pleasing scenes which providence is opening to our view. Have we not the most flattering presages of realizing all that felicity so beautifully pictured out by the sweet Psalmist of Israel ? “That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth ; that our daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of 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 ; that our oxen may be strong to labour ; that there be no breaking in or going out ; no complaining

complaining in our streets." Happy is the people that is in such a case ; yea happy is that people whose God is the Lord.

SAYS an ingenious foreigner with respect to these United States ;—“ It is impossible not to wish ardently, that this people may attain to all the prosperity of which they are capable. They are the *hope* of the world. They may become a *model* to it. They may prove the fact, that men can be free, and yet tranquil. They may exhibit an example of *political* liberty, of *religious* liberty, of *commercial* liberty, and of industry. The asylum they open to the oppressed of all nations, should console the earth. The ease with which the injured may escape from oppressive governments, will compel Princes to become just and cautious. And the rest of the world will gradually open their eyes upon the empty illusions with which they have been hitherto cheated by politicians.”

WITH all these advantages, greater perhaps than providence has ever committed to any one people “ since the transgression of the first pair ;” with all our own raised expectations, and that of others ; should we through our folly and perverseness, miscarry, alas how contemptible shall we appear ! How criminal and wretched shall we be !

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AND is there not really danger sufficient to suggest the idea? To put us upon our guard, if not to alarm our fears? Virtue is justly represented, as the *spirit* of a republican government. Have we a sufficiency to animate ours? If the spirit be departed the form will be of but little worth. Had the people of these States, in fact, possessed those measures of public and private virtue, which the confederation gave them credit for; *that* might have proved a foundation for many generations. Experience has given the most unequivocal proofs, that it did not possess energy sufficient for us. And though we promise ourselves much from the National Constitution, so happily effected, organized and commenced; yet we may by no means expect to be happy under it, without our own consent and co-operation too.

If we are not prudent and cautious in our elections to important public offices: If we are impatient of the necessary restraints and expence of good government: If we indulge to mean groundless jealousies and suspicions of those in authority; and give a loose rein to the vices too prevalent in the present day; and especially if we get beyond the restraints of religion, and bid adieu to the fear of God: Have we not every reason to expect, that our most pleasing prospects will

will be soon closed, and succeeded by the deepest gloom ?

MAY we unite in guarding against this danger ; and exert ourselves for the support of order, peace and good government ; which is really no other than our own support, and that of our nearest and dearest interests. Let us endeavour to derive a blessing upon the administration of government, by addressing ardent prayers, supplications, intercessions and thanksgiving, to the throne of Grace, for all who are in authority. Let us cultivate a condescending, benevolent, pacific and public spirit : And especially by repentance and reformation, and a careful practice of the various graces which constitute the christian character ; let us strive to conciliate the favor of Heaven. This will have the happiest aspect upon our tranquility. “ If God giveth quietness, who then can make trouble ? But if he hideth his face, who can behold him, whether it be done against a Nation or a man only ? ”

To conclude, let us all of every character, seriously remember, that the all-seeing eye of the Supreme Governor and Righteous Judge of the world, is not confined to the congregation of the Mighty. It runs to and fro through the whole earth,

earth, beholding the evil and the good. It critically observes the temper of our hearts, and the tenor of our lives : how we conduct in our several stations ; whether we improve, or neglect, the talents committed to our trust ; whether we make his approbation our governing principle, or live as without God in the world. We have each our station and work assigned us by our common Lord ; and are under a sacred injunction to occupy till he comes. *Come he most certainly will ;* and every eye shall behold him : And every one receive an irreverfible award from his mouth, according to the deeds done in the body. Let this folemn awful thought have its due weight on all our hearts, and it will have the beft effect. It will make us fuch manner of perfons as we ought to be in all holy converfation and godlinefs. Thus may we pafs with improvement the varying fcenes of this mortal life ; and finally be admitted to a kingdom that cannot be moved ; to a city that hath foundations whose maker and builder is **GOD.**

A M F N.

