

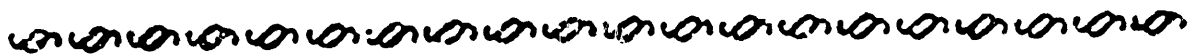


MR. BUCKMINSTER'S

SERMON.

PREACHED

FEBRUARY 28, 1796.



THE DUTY OF
REPUBLICAN CITIZENS,
IN THE
Choice of their RULERS.

THE SUBSTANCE OF TWO
DISCOURSES
DELIVERED IN THE FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST
IN PORTSMOUTH :

FEBRUARY 28, 1796.

BY JOSEPH BUCKMINSTER, A. M.

WHEN THE RIGHTEOUS ARE IN AUTHORITY,
THE PEOPLE REJOICE :—

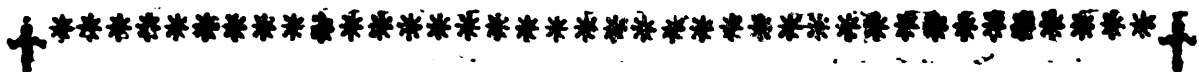
KING SOLOMON.

DULCE ET DECORUM EST PRO PATRIA MORI.

PORTSMOUTH, NEW-HAMPSHIRE :

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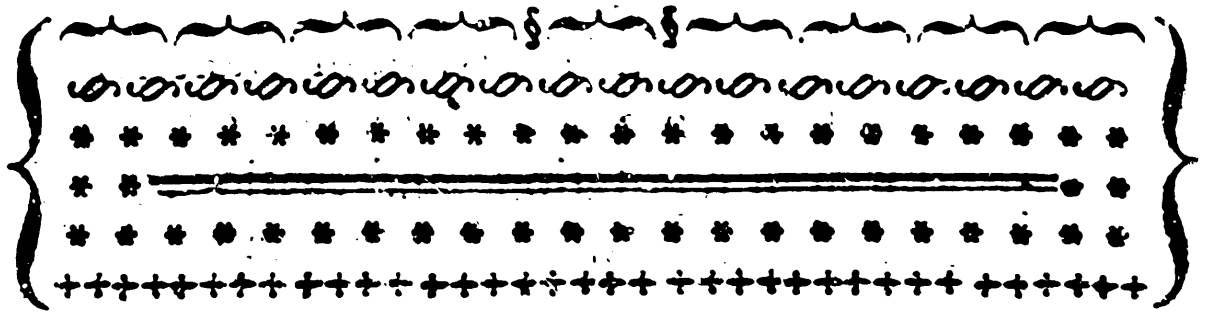
1796.



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THE following discourse was not written with the most distant idea, or expectation of its being made more public than its delivery from the desk : but as the candor and partiality of the hearers have so far appreciated its merit, as to think that it may be useful, in a more extensive sphere; and have, for that purpose, solicited a copy for the press, the Author readily grants it ; hoping its usefulness will exceed its merit, and equal the wishes of its patrons.

To those who heard the subject considered, it seems proper to remark, that as it was then in the form of two discourses, and is now reduced to the form of one, it was necessary to make some alterations in the arrangement, and abbreviations of the matter ; but the Author presumes there is nothing omitted, in the sentiment or diction, that had the remotest influence in producing its publication.



THE DUTY OF

REPUBLICAN CITIZENS,

IN THE

CHOICE OF THEIR RULERS.

THE SUBSTANCE OF TWO

DISCOURSES.

PSALM ci. 6.

Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me; he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.

THIS Psalm is pertinently intitled, a Psalm for a Magistrate, and for a Master of a family. It contains sentiments and resolutions highly deserving their serious consideration; a sacred observance of which, as far as possible, in existing circumstances, would very much contribute to their own reputation and comfort, and to the reputation and comfort of all, who are interested in the sphere in which they move.

The

The Psalm was penned by David, in whose reign, the children of Israel greatly triumphed over their enemies, and rose in reputation, and national prosperity. But whether it was before he came to the throne; after he was received by the tribe of Judah; or when he reigned over the twelve tribes united, is uncertain; could we determine this with precision, it would shed no influence upon the merit of the Psalm.

Separate from all circumstantial considerations, the Psalm contains an excellent plan and model, for the governing and ordering of a court or family; or of any society, whether political, civil, or social, with a view to preserve their peace, piety, reputation and privileges.

After some effusions of devout acknowledgement, which speak the piety of the Psalmist's heart; he first resolves respecting his own conduct, "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way; O when will thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will let no wicked thing before mine eyes." It is of high importance, that Magistrates, heads of families, and rulers of every description, first regard their own conduct, and see that it comport with the spirit of their office, and countenance such conduct, as they wish in those, who are under their care. They who teach others, ought themselves first to be taught, and they who rule and direct others, ought to exercise the most exemplary self-government. Example has a very great influence upon all; but with those who are destitute of governing principles of their own, it is almost the only thing that will command any attention. How ungraceful would it be, in a master of a family, to be a living contradiction to those lectures of industry, œconomy, morality and religion, which he gravely reads to his children and domestics?

tics ? How uncourtly in a Magistrate to exhibit himself chargeable with those very transgressions, which, by the oath of office, he is bound to punish in others ? And how unprofitable for rulers to enact laws and statutes, which they never mean to observe themselves ? such inconsistency and carelessness tend directly to anarchy ; and pave the way to the grossest tyranny.

The Psalmist, having resolved, respecting his own conduct, resolves that he will not have about him the unprincipled, the deceitful, and wicked ; but will do his endeavor, that such be punished with condign punishment : “ I will early destroy all the wicked of the land ; that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord.” Magistrates, and all in authority, whether superior or subordinate, should be “ a terror to evil doers, and a praise and encouragement to them that do well.” They are clothed with power and authority, from him who is the supreme Ruler ; and they are virtually his ministers, “ avengers to execute wrath upon them that do evil :” “ Evil communications corrupt good manners.” One vicious member of society, is capable of doing inconceivable injury to the whole fraternity, for “ one sinner destroys much good.”— And one vicious, unprincipled, subordinate ruler, may do great mischief in the body politic ; and counteract, or embarrass, the motions of the political machine. The wise, and prudent patriot will, therefore be concerned to remove such, as far as possible, from his person, and his service ; and speedily execute deserved punishment upon all, who are perversely set to work wickedness, that transgressors may hear and fear, and learn wisdom. Then, in the words of the text, the Psalmist declares who they were that should be nigh to him, and what characters they were that should serve him. “ Mine eyes shall

shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me ; he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.”

If in other parts of the Psalm, the writer has mingled the characters of Magistrate, and master of a family ; in this verse, he is to be viewed rather in the former character, and we must contemplate him as the king of Israel ; declaring what officers of government he would endeavor to have under him ; and the declaration breathes the parental spirit of a wife, a pious and patriotic prince.

In governments that claim the title of monarchical, whether limited or absolute, almost all the power and appointments are vested in the sovereign. He is not merely the organ, but the life and soul of the government. Nothing can be, with him, a more interesting object, if he has at heart the welfare and prosperity of his people, which, however uncommon, is not impossible, than the characters of his subordinate officers, by whom he administers his government, in its various departments ; and nothing can be wiser than the resolution in our text. Let us briefly consider it—

First. David determined that the appointments of his officers should be a subject of reflection and deliberation, in which he would see, and be satisfied himself. This is fully implied in the expression, *Mine eyes shall be upon*—He would not appoint persons of whom he had no knowledge ; neither should it be a sudden and transient glance that should be sufficient to justify him. It should not be a slight acquaintance, a party recommendation ; but he would be himself satisfied, by having his eyes upon them, before they were appointed ; and, as the phrase, I think, imports, before they were apprized of any appointment awaiting them. The expression intimates that he would not be forward to put
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into office those who were seeking office, or whose eyes and addresses were to him; which is often the graceless practice of corrupt governments, and appointments go to the highest bidder, but he would search for modest worth, that would not seek to blazon, but to be useful, and, by the faithful discharge of the duties of office, give occasion to many to rise up and call them blessed. But

Secondly, He would confine his researches to the land of Israel. "Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land"—He would not go into foreign countries to inquire for officers of his government; nor search the neighbouring nations to furnish him with characters; but he would have Israelites indeed.

Unhappy must be the situation of that people, who cannot furnish of their own sons, a sufficient number, to guide their political and civil concerns; and very unwise must it be in any ruler, where this is the case, to impose foreigners upon them. Nothing can more directly awaken jealousy, and excite commotion. It is spoken of as a mark of glory to a people, and a token and mean of national prosperity, when their Governor is from the midst of them, and the subordinate officers from among themselves.—And, in ordinary cases, it is very unwise to deviate from this line of prudence. But is it enough that rulers should be natives of the county in which they rule? Alas! no climate is so happy as to produce virtuous characters only; no region is so pure, as not to nourish in its bosom dishonest and unprincipled men. The Psalmist therefore resolved

Thirdly, That his eyes should be upon the FAITHFUL of the land.

As no land is so pure as to contain only faithful citizens; so, it is presumed, none is so corrupt as to be wholly destitute of them; but a sufficient num-

her may be found, by the eye of candid patriotic inquiry, to fill the offices of government in its various departments. By faithful men are intended men of principle, possessing minds independent of every thing but truth and duty ; incapable of corrupting, or of being corrupted : men who are not governed by selfish, sinister, and party views and motives ; who will not sacrifice every thing at the shrine of popularity, nor descend to mean compliances to accomplish a favourite object. The faithful man “ exercises himself in this, to keep always a conscience void of offence, both towards God and towards man.” He may err in judgment, he may mistake, but he will not do what he knows is wrong, nor sacrifice his principles to his passions. He will not betray the trust reposed in him ; but, to the utmost of his power, answer the reasonable expectations of those that confide in him. Such faith the Psalmist shall dwell with me. He would have them for his courtiers and counsellors. The faithful who will neither flatter nor deceive. Happy the ruler who is ambitious of such characters ; and is proof against the pestilential breath of flattery, which has so often withered the laurel on the brow of princes.

But how are these faithful characters to be known ? May we confidently depend upon their own professions, and because they proclaim their integrity, rest satisfied in the proof ? He must be a stranger in society, and, a novice in the science of human nature, who puts any dependance upon such professions ; does not rather consider them probable tokens of treachery and deceit. The faithful man, conscious of his integrity, instead of proclaiming his own glory, which is no glory, will leave it to others, to trace his character in his general conduct. He who is faithful in that which is least, we have reason to presume will be faithful in much . but he who

who is unfaithful in that which is least, gives us no ground to calculate upon his integrity in interesting concerns. As the best rule to guide in this inquiry, the Psalmist resolved,

Fourthly, That his eyes should be upon those that walked in a perfect way. He that *walketh in a perfect way*, he shall serve me.

Mistake not the royal statesman, my brethren, nor think that he expected to find perfect characters for the administration of his government. David was too well acquainted with the effects of the apostasy, and the state of mankind, to imagine that such characters could be found; in his, or in any other land; if they could, they would have eclipsed their sovereign, and sullied the lustre of his throne, tho' covered with the man after God's own heart.—

“There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not,” and he that pretendeth perfection, proves himself perverse. Yet there is a perfect way, in which men may habitually walk, who have many imperfections. The way of truth is a perfect way, in all the extensive import of the term, he who conscientiously regards, religious, moral, and political truth, walks in a perfect way. The way of purity is a perfect, especially, when connected with the way of righteousness, and he who keeps himself pure; and is willing, in all things, to live honestly, walks in a perfect way. To say all, in one word, the way of *religion* is a perfect way. “This is that high way;” of which the prophet Isaiah speaks, “which is called the way of holiness,” and it is thus celebrated in the sacred page. “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The testimonies of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; more to be desired are they than gold, yea than

than fine gold ; sweeter also than honey, or the honey-comb. They who walk in this way, who have, indeed, the fear of God ; and pay a sincere regard to his laws, statutes, and testimonies, walk in a perfect way. Though they may have imperfections attending them ; yet they are the excellent of the earth ; the faithful among men. These are the characters, I conceive, embraced by the resolution of the text, whom David would have the officers of his government, and the instruments of disseminating its blessings through his happy realm.

But, are you ready to say, what have we to do with the resolutions of Monarchs ; or with the practices and regulations of the courts of Princes ? We have renounced all dependence upon them, and the high-swelling sounds of vanity grate upon our ears. For this very reason, my brethren, you are interested in the resolutions of the text ; were you subject to monarchical governments, or under the tyranny of despotic sway : the search of your eyes would have very little influence in civil appointments ; But since you are free and independent ; and the power that is vested in *regal Majesty* ; is with you vested in the *Majesty of the People* ; it becomes you to be animated by the same spirit that warms the breast of the most patriotic prince ; and to adopt those resolutions that govern the conduct of the wise sovereign, who deserves the title of THE FATHER OF HIS PEOPLE.

The spirit of patriotism, the *Amor Patriæ* has been justly celebrated, by poets, and politicians, by philosophers and divines, in all civilized nations, and ages of the world. Where this passion really exists, in the breasts of citizens, it will inspire with a noble ardor, and excite to every care, and every exertion, to secure the peace and prosperity, the reputation and glory of a country.

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Though men are born free and equal, in point of civil right and privilege ; yet they are greatly diversified, by their divine creator, in bodily and mental abilities, and in external relations and capacities ; and a difference, in civil right and privilege, must take place in the course of divine providence. For, as order is heaven's first law, and civil government is become absolutely necessary to the well-being, and even existence of Society, in the present moral state of man ; so some must be clothed with power and authority to administer government : and others are bound to be subject to its regular administration, " not only for wrath, but for conscience sake."

As no men are born rulers, or can have any native right to usurp authority over their equals, it is undeniably evident, that the source of power is with the people, that all authority originates with them ; and they have a right to put themselves under what form of government they please, though, if they would act consistently, it must be that, which in existing circumstances, they judge will best secure their interests, and promote their prosperity.

The native equality of men seems to dictate a democratic, or republican form of government ; a government similar to that into which Jethro led the children of Israel, when he directed, them " to choose out of all the people, able men, men of truth, such as fear God, and hate covetousness," and to appoint them to be rulers, with different, though harmonious authority, in the different departments of the great family. But the children of Israel were tired of this form of government, and, in their pride and vanity, would have a King to rule over them ; and though we, upon the surest ground, charge them with folly, yet we cannot dispute their right to change.

Forms of government will not, of themselves, secure the prosperity of a people, or make them happy. The virtue and patriotism of the rulers and citizens shed a much higher influence upon this subject. In monarchical and aristocratical forms of government, great tranquillity and prosperity may be enjoyed, where the rulers are, indeed, faithful men ; whose breasts glow with the true spirit of patriotism, and who answer the expressive title of the *fathers of the people*. Wretched is the situation of a people under such forms of government, if the reverse be true, from the difficulty of removing bad men from office. “Wo to the land whose king is a child, and whose princes eat in the morning.” “When the wicked bear rule, the people mourn.” In republican forms of government, where the delegated authority is frequently reverting to the people, the source from whence it springs, the virtue and patriotism of the people are their security. Integrity and uprightnes preserve republics. It is only by virtue and righteousness that they can live.

We, in this country, glory in republican forms of government : the well earned fruit of our toil & labor, under the smiles of approving heaven. We are in the enjoyment of civil rights and privileges, which other nations know nothing of ; or discern only at a distance, to excite their envy and admiration.— We have constitutions of government framed and adopted by ourselves—administred by men of our own choosing, whose delegated authority soon expires, and calls us to the exercise of our high prerogative ; to renew our confidence, or change the object. We, above all people, ought to have our breasts glow with the noble spirit of patriotism, and feel the united demand, from God and our country, to perpetuate the exalted civil and religious privileges of which we are in possession. Nor is this
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the duty of a few—the virtuous yeomanry of America, every voting citizen, ought to feel the obligation, and to act with as much care and caution, as much uprightnes and impartiality, as if the fate of his country was suspended on his suffrage.

The danger of this country, if I have any spirit of discernment, will arise from the want of principle and virtue in her citizens ; from their carelessness and supineness in the choice of their civil rulers ; or suffering themselves to be duped, by the clamor and rage of party, so far, as to mistake party spirit for patriotism, and partizans for men of principle.

Good forms of government, though a great safeguard to liberty, must be administered by men of principle to compleat the palladium ; for though the season of their rule, or the term of their election, may be comparatively short, yet there can scarcely, be a season so short as to prevent vicious men doing mischief ; the shortness of the season will add zeal to their exertions. People therefore ought to be very cautious, they ought to proceed with wisdom and foresight, with deliberation and prudence, in the choice of those to whom they commit their important interests ; according to the resolution of the text, they should have their eyes upon proper characters. This is the more necessary in republican governments, as the very nature of such governments opens a wide field to the ambitious and designing to display their talents, and affords frequent opportunities to offer their incense & adulation at the shrine of the public. In monarchical or aristocratical governments, this incense is offered at the feet of the prince, and nobles, who have honors and preferments in their gift : and the seekers may be seen dancing attendance—paying fustian adulation—exhibiting mean compliances—presenting scandalous
offers

offers, and stooping to any thing to secure favor.— In republics, the address is to the people, who have the power of election, and as the object is too great, directly to flatter, or to bribe ; they must attempt their design by other means. They must address the more popular passions, and play on strings that particular circumstances, or events, have attuned to their purpose, or that vibrate more in unison with the public pulse. But a people enlightened and informed, jealous of their rights, should be superior to such designs, and, with a noble independence, act for themselves, and have *their eyes out in quest* of proper characters.

True merit is, generally, modest and reserved, it feels an awkwardness in offering itself to public notice, nor are those, always, the best qualified for places of trust and confidence, who are most desirous to obtain them. It is rather a presumptive evidence against, either the qualifications, or the designs of Candidates, when they are very solicitous to obtain suffrages, and to be hailed, *the servants of the people.*

You should therefore, my brethren, free electors, of a free country, make the exercise of your high privilege, in choosing persons to office, a matter of serious concern, of prior deliberation. Let your eyes be looking for proper characters ; leave it not to the day of election, and then receive any votes that may be presented you.

But the question returns—Upon whom should your eyes be placed ? Who are the men you should be seeking after ? The answer of the text is upon the
FAITHFUL OF THE LAND.

Our constitutions, both general and particular, wisely provide certain qualifications as necessary pre-requisites for eligibility to office. Foreigners are not eligible, and they who have acquired the
right

right of citizens must have a specified term of residency. Though we would encourage liberality of sentiment, and study to fraternize with the deserving of all nations; yet our text rather directs our inquiry to natural born citizens. Other things being equal, it is, doubtless, most prudent that rulers should be of this description; that they should grow up with the people, whose interests they are called to guard. That they should imbibe, from early life, their taste and customs, know their prejudices and prepossessions, their improvements, and modes of thinking. National and local prejudices are commanding principles; they are too strong, and too secret, not to have some influence, even in liberal minds, who endeavor to divest themselves of them. Rulers, of the impleaded description, will more naturally care for the state of the people, and be more likely to adjust such a train of measures as shall secure peace, and diffuse prosperity.

But this, my brethren, though a matter of some moment, is not so important as the personal qualifications of your rulers. See that your eyes be upon the *faithful* of the land. Upon men of principle and integrity. Men who are governed in all their conduct, by the eternal rules of justice and righteousness; who will not betray the confidence reposed in them; who will not shrink from the frowns of the great, nor waver at the clamors, or the flatteries of the many. Men, who “exercise themselves in this, to keep a conscience void of offence, both toward God, and toward man;” and who esteem not their lives dear to them if they may finish their course with joy, and meet the smiles of approving heaven.

To select such persons for office, in the different departments of government, is of greater impor-
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tance

tance than to select persons of brilliant genius, or shining abilities. It is acknowledged, that, in those who manage the important affairs of government, genius and learning are desirable qualifications.— It is necessary that they should be capable of understanding the nature of government ; of comprehending the necessary, or probable consequences of measures ; of discerning and counteracting the designs of the designing. They should be capable of conveying their ideas, and of elucidating and explaining difficult questions, or of forming an opinion upon them, when explained : But this, though a desirable, is not the first qualification : nor is it, by any means a compensation for want of integrity or principle. Jethro enjoins that the able men, whom he recommends, should be men of *truth*, such as fear God and *hate covetousness*. And, unless these are concomitant qualities of genius and ability ; genius and ability only render the person a more improper object of public confidence, a more dangerous member of civil society. This I rather mention, and enlarge upon, because it seems to have too great an influence in recommending persons to public notice ; and the public eye, if directed in inquiry at all, is after persons of showy talents, of shining abilities, after those, who, from nature, or habit, can talk readily upon subjects, and by the powers of eloquence can have commanding influence. We bow to such talents, where they are connected with an honest heart, and consecrated to truth and virtue ; but where they are connected with a vicious heart, and stand for sale to the highest bidder, the more distinguished they are, the more dangerous, the better able, are those that possess them, to cover their designs, to impose upon their constituents, and prosecute measures dangerous to liberty. It is surprising that

men

men should intrust their high political interests, the guardianship of their rights and privileges, to those with whom they would hardly intrust any private concerns ; or transact any of the common busineses of life.

A principle of honor, a high sense of dignity, is pledged by some as security for such characters ; and thought, a sufficient substitute for the obsolete principle of integrity, which has been so much celebrated. But, What is this principle of honour ? Except in some particular instances of conduct, some punctilios of etiquette, established by common consent, among those that glory in it ; it is a mere non-entity. It may secure the payment of what are stiled debts of honor ; but does not, always, influence the payment of honest and laborious creditors ; nor secure your life from the hazard of a duel, if you should chance to offend against some of its arbitrary rules. A principle of honor, in its usual acceptation, is vague, indefinite, uncertain ; changing with the customs and manners of times, and places, and is a very improper principle of public confidence. It is, essentially, different from a principle of integrity, which is uniform and consistent, which has for its basis, immutable rectitude, and is, therefore, the same in all times and places.

Look out then, my brethren, for faithful men ; and let no qualification recommend a person, as the object of your choice, where you are conscious this principle is wanting.

But how shall we know who are these faithful men ; you may be ready to inquire ? and where shall we find them ? Our text furnishes another particular, which, in some measure, answers the inquiry, and deserves attention. “He that *walketh* in a perfect way, he shall serve me.” We have already remarked, that the way of truth, purity, and righteousness

righteousness, are perfect ways; look then for men that walk in those ways; that can produce, not only, some defactory instances of conduct, which appear to have sprung from those principles; but that some splendid actions, that have been the result of them, but that pay habitual homage to them; that in the common concerns of life, regard them; and are in the habit of rendering to all their dues, and honoring the confidence that is reposed in them.

How vain is it to think, that a place of power, or trust, will inspire that man with principle, who has discovered himself destitute of it, in the private walks of life? The annals of civil society do not furnish many instances of such happy conversion. They are more than balanced by instances of the reverse, of persons, who seemed to think themselves justified in measures in a public station, which they would have condemned in private life.

But the ways of truth, purity, and righteousness, are but pure branches that communicate directly with, and are perfected in, that *most perfect way*, the way of real religion. This is the way that perfects the character of the faithful man.

I am far, my brethren, from reviving, or defending, the ancient exploded doctrine, that "dominion is founded in grace;" or that persons, in order to a right to rule, should, in a judgment of charity, be gracious persons: as far would I be from setting up one denomination of christians above another, and saying that our choice ought to be confined to them—Those constitutions which admit of religious establishments, while they infringe liberty, have an unfriendly aspect on religion itself; the enlightened policy of America has excluded these; but did it mean to exclude a general principle of religion? there is nothing upon which to found so gross a reflection

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It is of the highest importance, that they, who are called to rule over others, should speculatively believe, and practically regard, those general principles of religion which, if they are not necessary to the existence of society, shed a most benign influence upon its interests. They who are gods, on earth, should adore the God who is above. They should believe his being, and providence; they should acknowledge him the moral, as well as natural, Governor of the world; and, in this character, bound to regard the actions of men, to call them to account, and to punish and reward, according to their deeds.

Unless persons believe these general truths, and are possessed of these principles; of what advantage are the oaths of office, that are, almost invariably, appointed and enjoined? What security do they give? How do they have any commanding influence upon the man, who denies the being and providence of God? Who scruples his interesting himself in the affairs of men; or who rejects the idea of a future state, and season, of rewards and punishments? To say that God rewards and punishes, civil rulers, in this life, is a position that may be disproved, by the worldly glory of many traitors and tyrants; and by the sighs and groans, of as many patriots: If then, there be no future state of rewards and punishments, there is little to be feared from the violation of an oath; and, they *who believe* there is no such state, will fear nothing from its violation, where it can be done without human punishment or discovery.

As persons denying the first principles of religion, or being destitute of them, destroys all the restraint of the solemn qualification for office, so their indulging practices, inconsistent with those principles; or their neglecting duties, that are the plain result of them, must weaken that restraint. Habitual

bitual profaneries—the light and trifling use of the name of God, on trivial occasions; or the more gross abuse of it in impassioned moments, must greatly lessen the respect due to that “great and fearful name;” when called to attend to it in the solemnity of an oath. And they, who pay nothing of that worship and homage to the divine being, which the light of nature and reason proclaim his due, give reason to suspect that they have no great regard to him, and that, when they swear by his name, it must be some other principle, than a religious fear of him, that must influence them to keep their oath. But the consideration that oaths lose much of their power over irreligious and profane men, though an important one, is not the only reason, why you should be cautious of selecting such for civil rulers. If God, in his estimation of nations, and civil societies, and in the adjustment of the train of his dealings with them, regards rather the character of their rulers, than that of the nation at large, which is clearly the instruction of the sacred scriptures, then by raising unprincipled characters to the titles of gods on earth, a people expose themselves to judgments, which rulers of a contrary character would have averted. “When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when the wicked bear rule, the people mourn.” “When they who rule over men are just, ruling in the fear of God,” through the approving smiles of heaven, they will be to the people, “as the light of the morning, when the sun ariseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth, by the clear shining after rain.” If then, my brethren, you would have faithful men for rulers, such as shall be the medium and instruments of national prosperity, seek for them among those that walk in a perfect way, who are possessed with a veneration for JEHOVAH, and fear his name;

who

who acknowledge him the present instructor and the future judge of their conduct. . . . That persons who have their doubts and scruples, respecting the authority of the scriptures, or the truth of the christian religion, may not make false, and respectable, civil rulers, it would be too much to say; especially if they are possessed of principles of natural religion, and venerate a moral governor and judge of the world: But it is a little strange, that they, who acknowledge the superior excellency of this revealed system, should be so indifferent about the qualification of their rulers; as they must know that such persons must want some of the best rules of moral conduct, and some of the most forcible motives to the discharge of duty.

Thus, my brethren, I have freely delivered my sentiments to you, upon a subject, that ought not to be considered uninteresting, or unimportant, and endeavored to point out the duty of republican citizens in the choice of their civil rulers. I have done it from an apprehension of duty, and used that plainness of speech which becomes my station, and my country; I have no design to serve, but the good of this land, the honour and happiness of this people: It would have been more agreeable, had an opportunity presented for this address; on a day less devoted to the mysteries of our holy religion; but so far as conscience is concerned in civil affairs, so far they may be, consistently, attended to at any time, and in no other point of view are they a proper subject for the sacred desk, or deserving the professional attention of the minister of the gospel.

The civil privileges of this county ought to be dear to every citizen; they have been procured at too dear a rate to be trifled with, or neglected; they have been committed to us, as a sacred depositum,
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by our Fathers; they have been sealed by the blood of Heroes and of Patriots; and they are so closely connected with our religious privileges, that they must stand or fall together. If they are lost, or hazarded, the probability is, that it, will be, by their being intrusted to the hands of faithless and unprincipled men, through the supineness, or party zeal, of citizens, in choosing to office, or suffering those, who fear not God, nor regard man, to rise to places of trust and importance. It is the duty, therefore, of every one who has any concern in the choice of civil rulers, to exercise his right in the fear of God, and with a just concern for the good of his country. He should be superior, to party, and prejudiced views and feelings; have "his eyes upon the faithfulness of the land," and promote such to honor, "as walk in a perfect way."

The higher the station—the more important the office,—the greater care and concern we should exercise in our choice: But it is not a matter of indifference with whom the inferior offices are filled; every degree of elevation gives a proportional degree of influence, and is a step to farther advancement. Seek therefore for faithful men to fill every office, and conduct the various affairs of this highly favored Land. If through the favor of indulgent heaven, in the course of providence, and its secret influence upon the minds of men, the various affairs of this country should be committed, only, to the hands of faithful men; and if they who from time to time rule over us, are just, ruling in the fear of God; in all human probability, our Liberties will be long preserved, and our nation rise in reputation and glory among the nations of the earth. For this let us devoutly pray.

AMEN.