

**THE IMPORTANCE OF VIRTUE AND PIETY
AS QUALIFICATIONS OF RULERS :**

A

D I S C O U R S E

DELIVERED

March 31, 1805.

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PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

.....
**A foe to God was ne'er true friend to man :
Some sinister intent taints all he does.**

YOUNG.

.....

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1805.

TO THE SERIOUS AND REFLECTING,

OF WHATEVER POLITICAL OPINIONS,

WHO MAY HONOR THIS DISCOURSE

WITH A PERUSAL,

THE HINTS IT SUGGESTS

ARE RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY

THE AUTHOR.

2 SAMUEL, XXIII. 3.

The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me: He that ruleth over men, must be just, ruling in the fear of God.

AT a period of political agitation, like the present, the bare naming of a text like this, may possibly excite feelings which should be forever banished from the house of God. If, my brethren, I have any acquaintance with my own heart, every thing of this kind is far from my intentions. 'The gospel breathes peace and love : and so should every minister. For such an one to be a warm and angry disputant on politics, even in private, is to degrade himself, and dishonor his office. To render the *pulpit* an engine of exciting unhallowed and malignant passions, and blowing up the flame of party spirit, is a prostitution still more inexcusable. At the same time, it is obvious that the bible exercises a commanding authority, and claims a controlling influence, over all our conduct, not only as men, and Christians, but as citizens ; as subjects or administrators of civil government. It is a perfect and universal rule, not only of

faith, but of practice ; and this, in each condition and relation in which the providence of God has placed us. It is equally obvious, that it is the minister's duty to *declare the whole counsel of God*, to *keep back nothing which may be profitable* to his hearers, but *distribute to each a portion in due season*. Whatever tends to give a salutary moral direction to their conduct, and promote their best interests, he must endeavor to inculcate. Permit me then to declare, that it is a sense of duty which impels me to offer something, in the present crisis, relative to the qualifications of civil rulers : something which may of course assist us to the prudent and Christian use of that invaluable privilege which the inhabitants of this Commonwealth will be called to exercise, on the coming day. I am not insensible, that the subject, considered in its nature and connexions, is delicate. Yet, conscious as I am, of having no object but the cause of truth ; no interests distinct from yours, and those of our dear Country ; why should I a moment suspect that you will not bear me with your usual candor ?---especially when I add my sincere and sanguine hope, that as nothing will be said wantonly injurious to the feelings of any, so nothing will be said which every unprejudiced and serious mind will not, in theory, at least, admit.

The text was uttered by *the man after God's own heart* ; and this, near the close of life. Of course, it may be considered as the dictate, at once of divine Inspiration, of full conviction, grounded on long observation and experience, and of a heart glowing with love to God and man. “ David, the son of Jesse, said, and the “ man who was raised up on high, the anointed “ of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist “ of Israel said : The Spirit of the Lord spake “ by me, and his word was in my tongue. The “ God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake “ to me : *He that ruleth over men, must be just, “ ruling in the fear of God.*” The Most High is here styled not only the *God* of Israel, his ancient, peculiar people, but their *Rock* : that is, their strength and protection. The inspired declaration here uttered respecting the qualifications and duties of civil Rulers, is very comprehensive ; alluding to the two tables of the divine law, and prescribing *reverence of God, and righteousness toward man*. There is likewise an obvious intimation of a *connexion* between these two branches of character ; and that justice in a magistrate, in order to be substantial, thorough and universal, must be erected on the broad basis of piety. The sentiment inculcated in the text, is then simply this : that

Virtue and religion are most important qualifications of a civil Ruler.

The precept of the text is doubtless binding, in its most unlimited extent, on every public magistrate. All such are under powerful and distinguishing obligations to act in the fear of God, with a habitual and governing regard to his glory, and from motives of justice and benevolence to their fellow-creatures. The passage is likewise designed as a guide to those who elect or appoint civil magistrates ; and exhibits those qualifications which they should sacredly and invariably regard. It does not necessarily imply that in no case, public offices can be warrantably intrusted to any but persons of undoubted piety. But it does intimate that *real religion*, as well as pure morality, is a most desirable quality in a magistrate ; that no ruler can be considered as completely accomplished without it ; that in those of the most exalted stations, it is peculiarly important ; and that a flagrant destitution of religious and moral principle, is an utter disqualification for every public office.

If on this subject, so plain in itself, any illustration be needful, let the following suggestions receive a deliberate and impartial attention.

FIRST. All must acknowledge that *good laws* are most essential to the welfare of a community and tend greatly to its promotion. Were it not for the restraints imposed by wholesome statutes and regulations, the world would be filled with violence, confusion and misery. Mankind would degenerate into a savage state, and continually prey on the property and peace of one another. But by the influence of salutary laws, the selfish and cruel passions of men are coerced, the unruly kept in order, and the weak guarded against the violence of the strong. Now it is evident that such institutions can be rationally expected of those legislators only, who are men of virtuous principle ; who feel a horror at vice, and an impartial desire to promote the cause of truth and goodness. At least, such only can be expected to befriend the best interests of society with zeal, with uniformity and perseverance. Can the immoral man be duly concerned to prevent and punish immorality ? Will the impure effectually oppose and discountenance impurity ? Will those who eat the bread of dishonesty, be engaged to suppress every form of injustice ? Will the steeled infidel, who tramples with contempt on the divine SAVIOR, and his gospel, indignantly frown on the violation of the sabbath ? It cannot be imagined.

Such rulers may be expected, whenever they can do it with impunity, to establish iniquity by a law, and to prostrate every institution which either reproaches their licentiousness, or opposes a barrier to their iniquitous desires.

SECONDLY. The best laws will be useless, unless *executed* in their true spirit, with vigor and impartiality. If, like a sword in its scabbard, they lie neglected and forgotten, where will the virtuous find protection ; or the wicked, their merited punishment ?---One of the ancient philosophers compared laws to *spiders' webs*, in which the small flies are entangled and perish, while the larger ones break through and escape. Such they are indeed, where the civil magistrate is destitute of the fear of God. Justice will too probably be bought and sold. The oppressor will either elude detection, or bid defiance to punishment. Perhaps the very enormity of his crimes will constitute his security. Vice will stalk through the land, unblushing, unappalled : while innocence, neglected and oppressed, will languish in penury. In a word, rulers will, in such a case, be the very reverse of what they ought---an *encouragement to evil doers*, and a *terror to such as do well*.---Nay more, not only may the most salutary written laws be rendered useless, by the wickedness of rulers, but the best

constitutions of government which human wisdom can devise, may fall before it. All history, all experience proves that these oppose but a feeble barrier to the designs of ambition, to the encroachments of arbitrary power, or to the intoxication and madness of party spirit, unchecked by virtuous principle. Would we effectually secure wholesome laws, and excellent political institutions, against the most flagrant neglect or outrage, we must commit them to the guardianship of men who fear God and an oath; who have a conscience; an unshaken attachment to truth, and abhorrence of iniquity.

THIRDLY. Civil rulers, those especially in high stations, have the power of *filling various other offices* of trust and importance. And it may generally be expected that they will thus elevate those whose characters are correspondent with their own. This is perfectly natural; though it may not take place in every particular instance. An unprincipled ruler may sometimes, through mistake, or from some interested motive, confer an office on a worthy man. A good ruler, through misinformation, may clothe with authority a very undeserving character. But generally speaking, elections and appointments are a faithful index of the characters of

those by whom they are made. They bear their moral complexion, and exhibit their virtues or defects. How important is it then, that those who occupy the most elevated stations, and who, of course, have it in their power to bestow honors and offices on great numbers, should be men of correct sentiments and morals: men who fear God, and feel for the best, the dearest interests of human society: men disposed to say with David: "My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, shall serve me." If the fountain of honor be thus pure, the streams will be uncorrupt and salutary. But if it be contaminated, pollution and poison will flow in a thousand currents through the land, till the body politic become one mass of putrefaction.

FOURTHLY. The *dignity* and *prosperity* of a government depend much on the virtue and piety of those who administer it. There is something nobly commanding in the attitude assumed by those rulers who have maintained a pure conscience, and an unshaken integrity of conduct. "Their witness is in heaven, and their record is on high." And they will be held in lasting veneration by the virtuous and discerning on earth. On the other hand, there is a meanness indissolubly attached to vice. Nor

are the artifices of the statesman, however temporarily successful, at all more honorable than any other species of low cunning, and dishonest contrivance. On this subject, the sentiments of an eminent divine of our own country, are worthy to be written in letters of gold. “Alas! “for that people whose rulers think it can be “good policy to break over the sacred rules of “justice.” “That corrupt craft, and those cunning contrivances which politicians have often “had recourse to in state affairs, when resolved “to carry a favorite point at any rate, have been “the disgrace of policy, and the pest of states. “They who turn aside into these crooked ways, “will soon find themselves in a perfect labyrinth.” “*Unfair artifices are an insult upon the moral government of God.*” “If our country, nay, if the “world can no otherwise be preserved, than by “violating the rules of truth and righteousness, “IN THE NAME OF ALL THAT IS SACRED, LET “IT SINK. But while the throne of God “stands unshaken, we may trust in him, and not “fear that we shall ever be losers by our fidelity and obedience to his laws.”*

FIFTHLY. The *example* of rulers has an unspeakably important influence in forming the

* See the Rev. Dr. HEMMENWAY'S Election Sermon, 1784.

public morals and manners, and in disseminating virtue or vice through the community. Those must have little acquaintance with human nature, who are ignorant of the power of example. It is immense and incalculable. It seizes with peculiar force on the young, and carries them away with a kind of resistless influence. Rulers, as they occupy a more conspicuous place in society than others, and as the honors with which they are invested are calculated to attract attention, are much more carefully observed than other men. In them, it is natural and just to expect a peculiar purity and excellence of character. For why, otherwise, are they exalted above the level of their fellow-men? Those especially, who are clothed with supreme power, should be models of every public and private virtue. In this case, the tribute of respect and honor which their stations claim, will be the tribute of the heart. And like *mercy*, it will carry a twofold blessing in its bosom. While it will gently sooth, and sweetly recompense the anxieties and toils of office, it will diffuse a meliorating, purifying influence through the whole community. All ranks, all characters will feel the effect, in a greater or less degree. Much reason has our favored country to bow the grateful knee to that BEING who, in some of

her greatest warriors and statesmen, has furnished her with the purest models of virtue, and the brightest examples of moral excellence. Should these ever be forgotten-----but I recall the thought. It is impossible, so long as virtue has an admirer on earth, or gratitude a place in the human bosom. One thought, however, occurs on the subject, which, though painful and alarming, must not be omitted. While eminence of station exhibits virtue and goodness in its most attractive light, it is but too apt to conceal the odiousness of vice. The *discerning* mind, indeed, is not deceived. It can penetrate the thin veil of earthly honor, and contemplate the naked character of him who wears it. It can perceive and detest the deformity of vice, amidst all its incongruous decorations. It can even despise it the more, for *presuming to wear an undeserved dignity*. But alas ! the superficial observer (and such is the great multitude of observers) is dazzled by the splendor of power and station ; and imperceptibly reconciled to baseness itself, when thus embellished. Nothing is more calculated to debase and degrade a people, than to become familiar with such spectacles. It is thus that an irreligious, profane, impure magistrate becomes one of the direst of public calamities. The greater his elevation, the more effectually will

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 he diffuse the noxious influence of his opinions and example. One such magistrate, clothed with high authority, may be enough to poison the morals, and pollute the hearts of a whole community.

SIXTHLY. The *prayers* of pious rulers are of incalculable importance and advantage to the people over whom they are placed. To deny the efficacy of prayer with the Almighty, would be to commence infidels and atheists at once. Can we read those gracious intimations: “In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths:”---“If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him:”---can we read this, and yet doubt whether those who humbly seek the divine guidance, are actually blest with it, and thus secured from error, even in the most difficult and perplexing scenes?--Many of the *greatest*, as well as of the best of men, have affirmed this consoling truth, as the result of their own happy experience. Let me instance in the case of that eminent civilian Sir MATTHEW HALE, who thus expresses himself on the subject. “Those who truly fear God, have a secret guidance from a higher wisdom than what is barely human; namely, the SPIRIT OF TRUTH AND WISDOM, that doth

“really and truly, but secretly, prevent and di-
 “rect them. Any man that sincerely fears Al-
 “mighty God, and calls and relies upon him for
 “his guidance and direction, hath it as really as
 “a son hath the counsel and direction of his
 “father : and though the voice be not audible,
 “nor the direction always perceptible to sense,
 “yet it is equally real as if a man heard the voice
 “saying, This is the way---walk in it.—And
 “though this secret direction of Almighty God
 “is principally seen in matters relating to the
 “good of the soul, yet it may also be found in
 “the concerns of this life, which a good man,
 “that fears God, and begs his direction, shall
 “very often, if not at all times, find. I can call
 “my own experience to witness,” adds this pious
 man, “that even in the external actions of my
 “whole life, I was never disappointed of the
 “best direction, when I have in humility and
 “sincerity implored the secret direction and
 “guidance of the divine wisdom.”

If then, my brethren, we love our country ;
 if its great and momentous interests lie near our
 hearts ; let us be solicitous to commit them to
 those who, conscious of the immense weight of
 the trust, and of their own insufficiency, will
 humbly repair for aid and direction, to that
WONDERFUL COUNSELLOR on whose shoulders

is the government of the world. To such men, we may rationally hope that the gracious and infallible guidance of Heaven will be imparted. How truly great and dignified, as well as pious and humble, does SOLOMON appear, when, called to the throne of Israel, he feels as insufficient as a *child*, and earnestly implores of God *a wise and understanding heart, that he might discern between good and evil, and know how to go out and come in, before so great a people !* And he obtained of a prayer-hearing God, that divine wisdom and understanding. So will every humble, praying ruler obtain it. While the self-sufficient, and the prayerless may expect that the curse of Heaven will blast their designs, and *turn their counsels into foolishness*. Eternal shame be his portion, who is too proud to bend before the throne of DEITY !---who, though he may meanly cringe to his fellow-creatures, lives in practical contempt and defiance of his Creator ! Such an one may plume himself on his philosophy ; but he is *no* SOLOMON. The cheated opinion of the world may give him a temporary elevation : but in the end, he will but sink the lower in the abyss of infamy.

Farther, the prayers of pious rulers have sometimes in a more direct way brought down the blessing of Heaven on their country. How ef-

ten did the fervent intercessions of **MOSES** interpose with prevalence and effect, between the flaming wrath of a just God, and his provoking people ! The same high honor was bestowed on **JOSHUA**, on **DAVID**, on **ASA**, on **JEHOSHAPHAT**, on **HEZEKIAH**. Illustrious men ! who were eminently the *Fathers* of their people ; and who shewed how tenderly they loved them, by carrying them in the arms of faith and prayer, to **HIM** who is Almighty to bless and save ! Who can tell how much **AMERICA** owes, not only to the counsels and valor of many of her worthies, but to their devout intercessions ? May we never want a succession of such pious patriots, nor wisdom to prize them as we ought !

FINALLY : may it not be rationally apprehended that the *wrath of Heaven* will fall with signal and overwhelming weight, on a people who, favored with the light of the gospel, the blessings of civil liberty, and the inestimable privilege of electing their own rulers, are yet regardless of *their* moral and religious character ? Indeed the *natural* connexion between such inexcusable negligence, and almost every misery which can afflict society, is but too visible. Hence the wise man notes it as one of the most melancholy objects, even in such a disordered

world as this : that *he saw the place of judgment, that wickedness was there ; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there.* Hence he likewise declares, that *when the wicked rise, men hide themselves, (the best of men, not unfrequently ;) but when they perish, the righteous increase.* As a counterpart to this, the pious and observing DAVID remarks that “ *the wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted :*” an expression strikingly descriptive of the comfort, the animation and the self-importance which vicious and profligate men feel, when wretches of the same cast are seen in places of authority and power.-- It is remarkable, that among the statutes which the MOST HIGH was pleased to deliver to the Israelites respecting their future King, one was this : that when he should have come to the throne, *he should write out a copy of the law in a book ; that it should be his constant companion ; that he should read in it all the days of his life, that he might learn to fear the Lord his God, and keep, and do all the statutes of his law.** If so, a CHRISTIAN nation cannot surely be less bound to elect magistrates who will pay a sacred regard to that HOLY BOOK which is the charter of their best privileges, and the only complete and infallible rule of personal, social and civil

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* Deut. xvii. 18, 19.

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 duty. Should they elect such as, instead of reverencing this inspired volume, treat it with open contempt ; such as, if possible, would rather write it *down*, than “ write it out,” they would be criminal and inexcusable indeed. Such conduct would be little short of apostasy from God and religion, and must be expected to meet a correspondent and dreadful punishment.

Let it not be said, that religion and politics being entirely distinct from each other, rulers have therefore nothing to do with religion ; and that a bad man may be a good magistrate. This would be to oppose the first principles, not only of Christianity, but of reason and common sense. The man who is unfaithful to God and his own soul, can give no adequate security that he will be faithful either to the future, or the temporal interests, of his fellow-creatures. He wants the best guide, motive and support to a truly upright and patriotic conduct. He may, for a time, appear to serve his country, while he is in fact but serving himself. And when a favorable moment, or a strong temptation arrives, he may, like the infamous ARNOLD, betray it.---Besides, the scriptures of truth, while addressing words of consolation to the people of God, speak of a time when *their officers shall be peace, and their exacters righteousness ; and when kings shall be*

nursing fathers, and queens nursing mothers to the Church : expressions which undoubtedly imply, not only that pious magistrates are a great blessing to a people, and earnestly to be sought by them ; but likewise that it is the duty of rulers at large, to exercise an affectionate and fostering care over the Church ; to promote her interests, to guard her institutions, to discountenance her enemies, and comfort her friends.

A few additional reflections shall close the subject.

First. It directly results from what has been said, that Christianity has a most benign aspect on a *republican* government, and its institutions. In a government of this kind, as the people are the original fountain of all power, so their happiness, and not the aggrandizement of one, or of a few, is, or ought to be, the object of all the laws, and public institutions. To secure the accomplishment of this object, it is necessary that the people have wisdom enough to choose men of sound hearts and pure morals for their rulers. It is likewise necessary that those in power should feel a cordial regard for their best interests, and a governing concern to promote them. In short, the people's good should be their object ; and the public happiness, their own. Now the gospel, far more than any other system, either of morals or religion, is directly calculated to ex-

cite such sentiments, and produce such a conduct. By leading the people to consider religion and virtue as the noblest distinctions of man, and every other qualification as poor without these ; by leading them too, to expect no prosperity but from the divine blessing ; and no divine blessing, but upon upright measures, and men who pay homage to the Deity ; it turns their eyes, of course, to *the faithful of the land*---men of disinterested spirit, of uniform and exemplary goodness---men who give this best pledge of their fidelity to the people's interests : that they fear God. The gospel, likewise, as it inspires rulers with the sentiments of unfeigned benevolence and self-denial, prepares them to seek with ardor, with uniformity and perseverance, the public good ; to make every private interest yield to it ; to submit to sacrifices of profit, of comfort and reputation ; and this, though the ingratitude of the weak and wicked, are a principal part of their present reward. The man who in the school of CHRIST, has learned to place his chief pleasure in doing good, and to expect his dearest recompense in another world, is capable of all this. But it would be a miracle indeed, to find an irreligious man not falling immensely short of it. Let then the gospel ; let the holy and benevolent religion of Jesus, be acknowledged as the

best friend, the protecting angel, of republican government. And let us be cautious of believing that without this aid, it can exist in any degree of purity or vigor. This leads us to

A second remark. In proportion as vice and irreligion prevail among a people, they become of course incapable of self-government. If a sense of moral obligation be relaxed ; if licentiousness in principle and practice pervade all classes in the community ; if infidelity spread its poison in every circle ; if religion, and its institutions be treated with open disregard and contempt ; if the young grow up without instruction, and without virtue---what is the inevitable consequence ? The best men, wearied with a fruitless struggle against corruption, will retire from the public service in despair, or be violently thrust from office. Unprincipled, selfish and ambitious spirits will seize the reins of power. The most precious institutions which the wisdom of man has devised, will gradually moulder away. And the liberties of such a people, after being awhile the sport of a few artful and daring leaders, fattening in succession on their spoils, will finally fall a sacrifice to some ambitious chief, more successful, and probably more abandoned, than the rest. Such is the progress---a sure and short one, and but too easily traced---from public corruption to

public slavery and ruin. . . . O my country! would to Heaven thou wert aware of thy danger! Would to Heaven thou mightst *know the things of thy peace*, before they be forever *hidden from thine eyes*!

Thirdly. Our subject intimates that the privilege secured to us by our constitutions of government, of electing our own rulers, is a highly important privilege, and should be wisely and conscientiously used. In this respect, we are favored above every other nation on which the sun looks down. It must, at the same time, be remembered that, as the best things, when perverted, become the worst; so this inestimable privilege, if abused, may turn to the bitterest of public evils. Let us then feel, my brethren, that we have an important part to act: and let none of us think so meanly of our birthright as Americans, as to let opportunities of exercising it pass neglected.---The elections of the ensuing day are confessedly of high importance. All pretensions to dictate to you the particular objects of your suffrages, I perfectly disclaim. Still, what properly belongs to my subject, and to a faithful discharge of ministerial duty in this connexion, I must not, I dare not suppress. Let me then remind you, that in the transaction contemplated, you will be as really and solemn-

ly accountable to God, as in any other of your lives. His word has informed you who are the rulers approved by him, and what are the qualifications which give rational hope that their possessor will prove a public blessing. It informs you too, on whom he will frown, and what is the administration which must be esteemed a public calamity. Open your hearts to the peculiar exigencies of the time. Attend to the imperious claims of this beloved country. Feel her interests as your own : and commit them to men of *principle*---of exemplary purity in private life---of open, unsuspected regard to religion---and whose patriotism appears less plausible and flattering* professions, than

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* There never was yet a flatterer of *the people*, who had not some selfish purpose to serve. And *the people* may rely on it, that none hold their understandings in more sovereign contempt, none are more completely indifferent to their interests, than their most abject flatterers. That flaming patriot JOHN WILKES is a striking instance of the truth of this remark. "I have," says he, "a real pleasure in finding out, and following the opinion of the people. I will through life be faithful to their cause. I firmly and sincerely believe *the voice of the people to be the voice of God* : I wish always to hear it clear and distinct. When I do, *I will obey it as a divine call*, with spirit and alacrity, fearless of every consequence, and *dutifully submitting my own private opinion*." Yet this adorer of the people is well known to have frequently remarked among his intimates, *that the public was a GOOSE, and that a man was a great fool not to pluck a feather*.—Accordingly, by a course of adulation and artifice, he possessed himself of a very lucrative

costly sacrifices, and substantial services. In short, manifest your affection and fidelity to your country, by confiding her momentous concerns to the same hands to which you could cheerfully trust your properties, yourselves, your wives and your children. Remember, my dear brethren, that as our elections are important tests of national character, so they are fertile sources of public prosperity or ruin. If they are preserved pure, our nation will still be blest. If they are contaminated, the period cannot be distant, when this fair and favored land will be deluged with irreligion and licentiousness, with injustice and confusion, and with the awful indignation of a righteous God. Be intreated then, so to act, in the case under consideration, as that you can confidently supplicate and ex-

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office in the city of London; from which period, his professions and the people were equally forgotten. He lived and died a supporter of the very men and measures he had formerly decried and opposed. Such are the detestable arts by which thousands have raised themselves over the heads of an abused and degraded people. The great Master of the human heart has painted such parasites to the life.

—Lowliness is young ambition's ladder,
Whereto the climber upward turns his face;
But when he once attains the upmost round,
He then unto the ladder turns his back,
Looks in the clouds, scornning the base degrees
By which he did ascend.

pect the blessing of Heaven on your conduct. Act as though you were sure it would be the last action of your lives ; as though you were certain of passing immediately to your final account, and to the retributions of eternity. And act under the solemnizing, the inspiring idea, that millions yet unborn may feel the effects of your conduct.

To conclude ; I have addressed you, at this time, my brethren, on a subject at once delicate, and highly important. Observations have been offered, which to me appear most deeply, and most extensively interesting to our common country. But they have been all of a *general* aspect. I have made no applications. These I leave to your own minds and consciences ; and I trust they will be faithful. Permit me likewise to appeal to all who now hear me, and ask, whether the things which have been imperfectly suggested, are not such as meet the assent of every impartial mind ; and such as are amply warranted by explicit and repeated declarations of the sacred Scriptures ? Nay further, are they not so obviously important to the honor of God, to the dearest interests of human society, and especially to those of our own country, that to pass them in entire silence, would, in a minis-

ter of the gospel, be criminal neglect ? If they are not, let them have no weight with you. Let them *pass by you like the idle wind which you respect not*. And let *me* bow to the just and heavy censure which belongs to him who mistakes his place, and his duty. But if otherwise, let me hope they will meet your deliberate attention now ; and have their proper influence, in all future time. This last I request the more earnestly, because it is far from agreeable to me frequently to discuss those subjects which, whatever may be the intention of the speaker, will be apt to disturb the feelings of some, at least, of the hearers. Heaven forbid that I should exasperate those party feelings and prejudices which have so long embittered mutual intercourse, and made such sad waste of our social enjoyments. But important truth must not be concealed. I close with commending this attempt to your candor, and to the blessing of Almighty God : praying that his own infallible Spirit may guide each of us into all truth, and all duty ; supplicating too, that if it consist with his infinite wisdom, the happy period may soon arrive, when, in whatever pertains to the public good, we shall all be of one mind, and of one heart. To him be glory forever,