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Mr. *Gordon's*

THANKSGIVING

DISCOURSE.

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A  
DISCOURSE

P R E A C H E D

December 15th 1774.

BEING THE DAY RECOMMENDED

By the Provincial Congress ;

And *Afterwards at the* BOSTON LECTURE.

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B Y

WILLIAM GORDON.

PASTOR OF THE THIRD CHURCH IN ROXBURY.

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“ And the King consulted with the old men that stood before his father, while he yet lived, and said, how do ye advise, that I may answer this people? And they spake unto him, saying, if thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, *then* they will be thy servants for ever.” 1 Kings. 12. 6, 7.

“ I ardently wish that the common enemies to both countries may see to their disappointment, that these disputes between the Mother country, and the colonies have terminated like the quarrels of lovers, and increased the affection which they ought to bear to each other.”

Governor Gage's Letter to the Hon. Peyton Randolph, Esq.

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B O S T O N : Printed for, and Sold by THOMAS LEVELETT, in Corn-Hill. 1775.

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A  
DISCOURSE

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F R O M

Lam. III. 22.

*It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.*

**T**H E pulpit is devoted, in general, to more important purposes, than the fate of kingdoms, or the civil rights of human nature; being intended, to recover men from the slavery of sin and satan—to point out their escape from future misery, through faith in a crucified Jesus—and to assist them in their preparations for an eternal blessedness: But still, there are special times and seasons when it may treat of politics. And surely, if it is allowable for some who occupy it, by preaching up the doctrines of non-resistance and passive obedience, to vilify the principles, and to sap the foundations of that glorious revolution, that exalted the house of *Hanover* to the *British* throne; it ought to be no transgression in others, nor be construed into a want of loyalty, to speak consistently with those approved tenets, that have made **GEORGE** the third, the first of *European* sovereigns, who otherwise, with all his personal virtues, might have lived an obscure Elector.

Having

Having then, the past morning of this provincial thanksgiving, accommodated the text to the case of individuals, I shall now dedicate it, according to its original intention, to the service of the public, the situation of whose affairs, is, both *distressing* and *alarming*.

THE capital of the colony is barbarously treated, pretendedly for a crime, but actually, for the noble stand she has made in favour of liberty, against the partisans of slavery. She has distinguished herself by an animated opposition to arbitrary and unconstitutional proceedings; and therefore has been markt out, by ministerial vengeance, to be made an example of, whereby to terrify other *American* cities into a tame submission. She is an example—and, thanks to heaven! an example of patience and fortitude, to the no small mortification of her enemies, whose own base feelings led them to imagine, that she would immediately become an abject suppliant for royal favour, tho' at the expence of natural and charter'd rights. May some future historian, the friend of mankind and citizen of the world, have to record in his faithful and ever-living page, that she never truckled, though *British* sailors and soldiers, contrary to their natural affection for the cause of liberty, were basely employed to intimidate her; but perseveringly held out, through the fiery trial, 'till a revolution of men and measures brought on her deliverance!

But it is not the capital alone that suffers. The late venal Parliament, in compliance with the directions of administration, have, under the false colour of regulating the government of the colony, mutilated its charter, and conveyed dangerous

rous powers to individuals, for the enforcing and maintaining those encroachments, that they have ventured, in defiance of common equity, to make upon the rights of a free people.—And had not the calmness and prudence of others supplied their lack of wisdom, the country might by this time have become an *Aceldama*. \*

UPON the principles, which the British legislature have adopted in their late extraordinary proceedings, I see not, how we can be certain of any one privilege—nor what hinders our being really in a state of slavery to an aggregate of masters, whose tyranny may be worse than that of a single despot—nor that a man can with propriety say, *his soul's his own*, and not the spring to move his bodily machine, in the performance of whatever drudgery his lords may appoint—nor that the public have a permanent and valuable constitution. If the British legislature is the constitution, or superior to the constitution, *Magna Charta*, *the bill of rights*, and *the protestant succession*, these boasts of Britons, are toys to please the vulgar, and not *solid securities*.

THE operation of the late unconstitutional acts of the British Parliament, would not only de-

prive  
\* I take this opportunity of making my public acknowledgments to his Excellency the Governor, for not having precipitated the country into a civil war—an event, which as, appears by his letter, he ardently wishes may never exist. Should the continent be exercised with so great an evil, I promise myself from the known humanity, the constant attendant of true bravery—the known humanity of the British officers and troops, that they will not add barbarity, to the unavoidable calamities of war: But should any hellish policy order its being done, the colonies, 'tis to be supposed, will dread all, less than slavery to those cruel masters that can inflict such savage edicts.

prive the colony of invaluable privileges, but introduce a train of evils, little expected by the generality, and give the British ministry such an ascendancy in all public affairs, as would be to the last dangerous. \*

## THE

- \* In support of this paragraph, I shall quote the following passages, from the protest of the Lords against the regulating Act, *viz.*
- “ The new constitution of judicature provided by this bill is  
 “ improper, and incongruous with the plan of the administration of justice in Great Britain.
- “ The Governor and Council thus instituted with powers,  
 “ with which the British constitution has not trusted his Majesty and his Privy-Council, have the means of returning  
 “ such a jury in each particular cause, as may best suit with the gratification of their passions, and interests. The lives,  
 “ liberties and properties of the subject are put into  
 “ their hands without controul; and the invaluable right of trial by jury, is turned into a *snare* for the people, who  
 “ have hitherto looked upon it as their main security against the licentiousness of power.
- “ We see in this bill the same scheme of strengthening the authority of the officers and ministers of state, *at the expense of the rights and liberties of the subject*, which was indicated by the inauspicious act for shutting up the harbour of Boston.
- “ By that act which is immediately connected with this bill, the example was set of a large important city (containing vast multitudes of people, many of whom must be innocent and all of whom are unheard) by an arbitrary sentence deprived of the advantage of that port, upon which all their means of livelihood did immediately depend.
- “ *This proscription* is not made determinable on the payment of a fine for an offence, or a compensation for an injury; but is to continue until the ministers of the Crown shall think fit to advise the King in Council to revoke it.
- “ The legal condition of the subject (standing unattainted by conviction, for treason or felony) ought never to depend upon the arbitrary will of any person whatsoever.”
- I would add also. The clause in the regulating act, respecting town meetings, leaves it in the power of a Governor, to prevent them all at pleasure, those only excepted for the choice of

# DISCOURSE. 9

THE spirited behaviour of the country under these innovations, has charm'd, and affrighted, numbers: And, should it be continued, with prudence unremitted zeal and true fortitude, will produce monuments of praise more lasting than brass; even though it should not prove successful, which is scarce supposable.

B

THE

of town officers in March, and for the choice of Representatives. Neither the most trifling, nor the most important business can be legally transacted, so as to be binding upon the inhabitants, even in the most distant towns of the government, *without leave first had and obtained of the Governor in writing, expressing such special business*, though it should happen that if not done, within less time than necessary for the obtaining of that leave, it cannot be done at all. The town's-men can neither lay out a new road, nor raise monies for mending an old one: nor can they settle a minister, without obtaining the express written leave of the Governor. Yea, they are forbid so much as to talk, for they are not to *treat*, of any other matter at their March meeting, *except the election of their officers, nor at any other meeting, except the business expressed in the leave given by the Governor, or in his absence by the Lieutenant Governor*. If this is not to establish slavery by legislative authority, I beg to know what is? The arbitrary mandates of the Grand Monarch enjoining his slaves silence, when state affairs are disagreeable to the public, will scarce be thought by many, so great an attack upon the rights of mankind, as an attempt to perpetrate something of the like nature by a permanent law. Should the favourite of a Governor have embezzled the towns-money, how shall a meeting be obtained to vote and order a prosecution against him? Should a candidate be reported as a warm friend to the liberties of the people, how shall leave be had for his being settled, though unanimously approved of, and admired? Should an oppressed town be desirous of stating its grievances, and praying a redress, how shall the inhabitants do it in a corporate capacity, should the Commander in chief be prejudiced against them? Should the electors be inclined to instruct their representatives upon matters of the highest concern to them, how shall they do it without violating the law, when  
the

## A Thanksgiving

THE *distresses* that the late acts have already occasioned, are many and great; and too well known to require an enumeration: And yet, could we be secure of a speedy relief, in the permanent redress of our grievances, we should soon forget them. But we have our fears, lest they should be only the beginning of sorrows; and are in doubt, whether we may not be called to experience the horrors of a civil war; unless we will disgrace our descent, meanly submit to the loss of our privileges, and leave to posterity—the many millions that shall people this continent, in less than a century—*bonds and fetters.*

The

the Ruler's interest prevents his giving them leave? A thousand other events are made to depend upon the *arbitrary* will of a Governor, by the clause before us. And why are all the towns of the colony to be reduced to such a slavish dependance? Because, as the British legislative asserts, “a great abuse has been made of calling town meetings, and the inhabitants have, contrary to the design of their institution, been *mised* to treat upon matters of the most general concern, and to pass many dangerous and unwarrantable resolves.” O! abominable! That a people should be deprived of their precious and long enjoyed liberties, not for any wilfully perverse known crime, but because of their being foolishly *mised*. Why did not the *wise* ministry ease themselves of the opposition given them by the city of *London*, by a like regulation of their charter, upon the ground of the citizens having been *mised*? Why do they not, upon the same ground, prevent all corporation and county meetings in *Great-Britain*, that so they may not be pester'd with any future petitions or remonstrances? But, should the operation of the regulating act be secured, who can tell, how long it will be, ere the British legislative will assign the *solid* reason of *having been misled to treat upon matters of the most general concern, and to pass many dangerous and unwarrantable resolves*, for suspending all the American assemblies, or at least for reducing the members of each, to the more convenient number of the *Yorkers*?

I decline as wholly unnecessary, all remarks upon the mis-called act for the *impartial* administration of Justice &c.



# D I S C O U R S E. II

The important day is now arrived, that must determine whether we shall *remain* free ; or, alas ! be brought into bondage, after having long enjoyed the sweets of liberty. The event will probably be such as is our own conduct. Will we conform to the once exploded, but again courtly, doctrines of passive obedience and non-resistance, rather than hazard life and property, we may have the honour of burning under the heats of summer, and freezing under the colds of winter, in providing for the luxurious entertainment of lazy, proud, worthless *pensioners* and *placemen*. \*

## WILL

\* There are *some* honourable exceptions to this general intimation ; but they are so *few* that they can save *themselves only* and not the *list* from deserved reproach.

In the year 1697, the pensions amounted only to seven thousand and seventy seven pounds sterling ; but in the year 1705, they amounted to eighteen thousand one hundred and eleven pounds. Since then they have increased to a most enormous sum. A late publication informs us, that, about ten years back, there was a million of debt contracted on the 6d per pound tax laid on pensions. The interest of a million at 4l. per cent, being forty thousand pounds per annum, the pensions, to have answered for it, must have amounted to one million six hundred thousand pounds per annum ; if at 3l. per cent to one million two hundred thousand. There might possibly have been a deficiency in this fund, but it cannot be thought that the financier would have proposed it, had it been very considerably deficient.

I heartily wish that some, who have leisure, and can procure the necessary materials, would inform the public, as near as possible, what sums are exhausted by places and pensions. As to the numerous expenditures in the secret services of rewards, bribery and corruption, jobs and contracts, they must remain among the *arcana imperii*. But was a virtuous patriotic administration to close all those unnecessary drains, whereby the wealth of *Great-Britain* is carried off, they would in a few years of peace, greatly reduce the national debt, and have no temptation to gull the people, under a pretence of easing them by American taxes, when they design only to provide for their numerous dependants, and to increase the power of the crown, alias the ministry.

WILL we make our appeal to heaven against the intended oppression ; venture all, upon the noble principles that brought the house of *Hanover*, into the possession of the *British* diadem ; and not fear to bleed freely in the cause, not of a particular people, but of mankind in general ; we shall be likely to transmit to future generations, though the country should be wasted by the sword, the most essential part of the fair patrimony received from our brave and hardy progenitors, the right of possessing, and of disposing of, at our own option, the honest fruits of our industry. However, it's *alarming* to think, that, through the mistaken policy of *Great-Britain*, and the absurd notion of persisting in wrong measures for the honour of government, we may be obliged to pass through those difficulties, and to behold those scenes, and engage in those services that are shocking to humanity, and would be intolerable, but for the hope of preserving and perpetuating our liberties. Our trade ruin'd, our plantations trodden down, our cattle slain or taken away, our property plundered, our dwellings in flames, our families insulted and abused, our friends and relatives wallowing, and our own garments rolled, in blood, are calamities that we are not accustomed to, and that we cannot realize but with the utmost pain : And yet we must expect more or less of these, should we be compelled to betake ourselves to the sword in behalf of our rights. 'Tis not a little grievous to be alarmed with the apprehension of such severe trials, unless we will in our conduct resemble those simple ones, that for the sake of indulging themselves in present ease

and

and plenty, barter away their whole interest in future happiness. \*

BUT though the situation of public affairs is both *distressing* and *alarming*; it is by far better than we have deserved, from the Sovereign of the universe. It would have been much worse had we been dealt with according to our demerits. *It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.* Some may at first hearing object against this, as being too strong an expression, and may think, considering the morals of the people when compared with the inhabitants of other places, that it is mis-applied. I am ready to allow, that the morals of this people, taken collectively, are superior to those of other places (Connecticut excepted, where I suppose they are nearly the same) whether in the new or the old world, all things considered; and I cannot but view, as a strong proof hereof, the order that prevails through the country, now that the execution of the laws, because of the peculiarity of the times, is suspended. And yet after all, I must hold to the text; and, that we may be fully convinced, and be duly affected with the truth of it, shall make some remarks upon this people, considered as the subjects of God's moral government.

I. IN

\* It may be objected, that the points in dispute are too trifling to justify the hazard of such severe trials. It will be answered, that 'tis the *principles* the continent is opposing, in it's attempts to prevent the establishment of precedents. The real dispute is, whether the long enjoyed constitution of these American colonies, when they are not consenting to it, shall be liable to every alteration, that a legislative, three thousand miles off, shall think convenient and profitable to themselves—and whether a house of commons at that distance, to which they neither do, nor can send a single representative, shall dispose of their property at pleasure. *Obsta Principiis.*

1. IN the first place I remark, that the prevalence of any vices and immoralities among this people, must be peculiarly provoking.

Circumstances aggravate or alleviate the crimes of societies, no less than of single persons; and far more and other is expected from some, than from many others in a very different situation and condition.

Now it should be remembered, that this is but a *young* people, not a hundred and fifty years old; for, they were not a *people* for the few first years of their settlement in this wilderness, no more than a small company, who must have soon perished by the hands of the native *Indians*, had not God interposed. Their youth is an aggravation to the crimes committed by them. For a young person to be given to vice, though he has a corrupted nature the same as others, is highly offensive. We look for a decent, modest, and orderly behaviour in *h.m.*

IN like manner, a *young state* should be pure in its morals; should be addicted to no particular vices; should observe the utmost regularity of behaviour; and should not even think of, much less practise, the crimes too generally to be met with in countries of long standing, when attained to their height in power and affluence. There is an utter unfitness in the former's attempting to imitate the latter. Can we say, that this rising young state is clear as to this matter; that it has not copied the corrupt manners of its aged parent; and that it hath not its particular vices that are a reproach to it? However willing we may be, thro' self love and native fondness, to apologize for it; we cannot conscientiously pronounce it *not-guilty*, while we know how notorious, intemperance, uncleanness, luxury and irreligion are among us.

# DISCOURSE. 15

BUT another thing that makes the vices and immoralities of this people peculiarly provoking, is, their descent and education. The sins of a youth descended from pious parents, who has had good examples set him, and who has been carefully educated, are worse than those of a common youth, that has not enjoyed such advantages.

Now the ancestors of this people were eminently godly. It was the strength of their zeal for true unadulterated religion, and the ardour of their love to God and Christ, that prevailed upon them to venture over the great deep, and to seek an abode in this then inhospitable and dangerous country; and that reconciled them to the numberless difficulties, that they had long to encounter, without ever attaining to the various comforts that we enjoy. They were concern'd to perpetuate the same spirit of piety which they were actuated by; paid great attention to the rising generation; and wisely provided for the good instruction of succeeding ones. Wherein can we charge them with want, either of wisdom, or faithfulness to posterity? Do we not still reap the fruits of their contrivance and foresight, though not in so ample a manner as might be, through our own faultiness? Judge ye, what could have been done more, through their instrumentality, for this part of the Lord's vineyard, than what hath been done? Wherefore then, hath it brought forth so many wild and bad grapes, when it should have yielded the choicest fruit? Is not this people strangely degenerated, so as to possess but a faint resemblance of that godliness, for which their forefathers were eminent! And, could these last  
appear

appear for a while, again in this colony, with the common passions and sentiments of human nature, would they not stand amazed at the sinfulness of the present generation, and be ready to disown them for their posterity ! Is it not another generation of professors, very different both as to sentiments and practice, from that which by their emigrations for conscience sake, first planted the gospel in New-England ; would not the like zeal for the leading doctrines of christianity, and the like strictness in morals, that prevailed in the first settlers, be severely censured and be stigmatized by some reproachful epithet, as in their day, by the generality among us, though through the spirit of the times, the persecution might not be more than that of the tongue. They that will divest themselves of prejudice, and judge impartially, will be obliged, I apprehend, to acknowledge that this people do not answer to the honourableness of their descent ; any more than to the care that was taken by their predecessors, for their being well-educated in the principles and practices of religion ; the *full* benefit of which care, though they may not enjoy, through the censurable faultiness of some in neglecting their duty, yet is so far enjoyed, as that people in general, including all ranks, are not better instructed and educated any where, it is probable, than in this country. But certainly the more honourable their religious descent, and the better their education, the more provoking must their vices and immoralities be ; and nothing can be more worthy of their particular consideration, especially in these threatening times, than those words in the 3d of *Amos* 2d. wherein the Lord addresses the children of Israel saying, *You only have I known of all*  
*the*

# DISCOURSE. 17

*the families of the earth ; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.* I might add more particulars to this first remark, but chuse to make them distinct ones of themselves.

2. I therefore proceed to mention in the second place, that the obligations this people are under to holiness, are special, from the many appearances of God in their favour, and his having so multiplied and exalted them.

How oft has the supreme Governor of the universe wonderfully, next to miraculously, interposed for their deliverance, when in the utmost danger! Their enemies expected to swallow them up, and were upon the point of doing it, when providence hath critically interposed, so that they have escaped, like a bird out of a snare that has been thrown over it. When their eagerness to co-operate with the parent state, in reducing the power of the common enemy, led them into a bold and dangerous enterprize, in which if they had miscarried they would have been subject to an almost irreparable damage, and which must have miscarried according to the usual course of human and military affairs, had not special events, carrying in them the evident marks of providential appointment, though in the account of the unbeliever purely casual—I say, which must have miscarried, had not special events turned up; it pleased God to order the existence of them, and, by crowning the expedition with success, not only to avert the train of evils that must otherwise have followed, but to give this people, then indeed in their infancy, a NAME among the warlike veteran states of *Europe*, and to show the world, what a few raw provincials could do, under the smiles and care of heaven, against fortifications and batteries really strong, and defended

by regulars, though not by Britons. May they never lose *that* NAME, nor blast the laurels gained at *Louisbourg*, by any future cowardly conduct, when it is not conquest, but liberty and property that are at stake!

GOD hath not only appeared for this people, but hath greatly multiplied and exalted them. They were at first a few men in number, yea, very few and strangers in the land. They came from a well cultivated kingdom to a savage people and a wild country, enough to discourage the stoutest. However they ventured to take up their abode in it, and, through the original blessing of heaven upon them, which perhaps never displayed itself and wrought more effectually, except in the instance of the Jews, they are become a considerable nation, possess a tolerable share of wealth, and would enjoy much public happiness, were the painful disputes between them and the parent country comfortably terminated. The face of the colony is not less changed for the better since first settled, than what is set forth in the language of *Isaiah's* prophecy, *the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing, the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God. Isa. 35. 1, 2.* These enumerated, are *special* obligations on this people to holiness. But does their holiness correspond with them? Are the fruits yielded by them suited to such benefits? Are they that manner of people, that might have been expected; and that they engaged to be when under difficulties, and in great perplexity through threatenings appearances? Or  
have



have they not, like the Jews of old, after singing the divine praises, forgot the works of God, and the wonders he hath showed them? And hath not the cast of their after-conduct evidenced, that, in renewing their engagements with him in the day of their affliction, *they did flatter him with their mouth, and lied unto him with their tongues; and that their heart was not right with him; for, they have not been stedfast in his covenant, have not walked agreeable to the design and purport of God's covenant of grace, with which they have in much mercy, been made acquainted.*

3. I shall now remark in the third and last place, that though the appearances of religion among this people, are great and many, yet it is to be feared, that real religion is scarce, that the power of godliness is rare, and that while there is much outward show of respect to the Deity there is but little inward heart conformity to him.

Individuals are justly entitled to the benefit of an exception, notwithstanding which it may be applied with too much truth to the community as a body, *this people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.* Math. 15. 8. What is religion with the generality, more than being baptized, attending public worship stately on the Lord's day, owning the covenant, coming to the Lord's table, and then being orderly in the outward deportment! If, besides all now mentioned, there is a strict attendance upon private prayer, and the further addition of family, though the prayer shall consist of nothing more than the repeating of a certain set of words that the tongue has been habituated to, the goodness of such religion must not be questioned; though not proceeding from a  
work

work of regeneration—not produced originally by any special influences of the holy Spirit—not accompanied, with any saving illuminations from above, with any spiritual view of the divine glories, any true hatred to sin, any sense of the beauty of holiness, any soul-sanctifying love to God and the Lord Jesus. Is there not a great, though unhappy affinity, between the case of this people religiously considered, and that of the *Laodicean* church, as described by the Alpha and Omega in Rev. 3. 15-18.

THE above remarks upon this people, considered as the subjects of God's moral government, being duly weighed, shall we not be brought to own with humility and gratitude, that *it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassion fail not.* As yet we are not consumed.

Though, when we look down from the adjoining hills, and behold the capital, we cannot but lament saying, “How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! how does her port mourn, because her shipping come not to her as formerly: all her wharfs are desolate! how is she possessed and surrounded by an armed force, as though in the hands of an enemy! Yet, blessed be God! she doth not sit solitary; she is full of people: she is honourable among the nations: she is as a princess among the provinces, seeing that she hath not meanly become tributary. She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks: but, like beauty in distress, she is the more engaging. She hath many lovers to comfort her; and her friends have not dealt treacherously with her, so far from having become her enemies. Her inhabitants are suffering, but not starving. Her  
priests

# DISCOURSE. 21

“ priests and her elders have not given up the  
“ ghost, while seeking meat to relieve their soul.  
“ The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth not  
“ to the roof of his mouth for thirst. The young  
“ children ask not bread, without any man’s of-  
“ fering to break it unto them. We see not her  
“ dwellings and public buildings, both civil and  
“ sacred, in flames ; and the whole becoming, by  
“ a speedy destruction, an horrid heap of ruins. ”

Though, when we survey the country, we be-  
moan the attempts that have been made upon the  
ancient foundations of its civil government, which  
if successful, will in all probability, after a time,  
undermine and destroy it’s religious liberties ; yet  
we are thankful, that no dwelling has been de-  
stroyed—that none of any party, have as yet pe-  
rished, by the shocks they have occasioned in the  
state—that the sword hath not been commissioned  
by heaven to destroy, and the way to an accommo-  
dation been rendered still more inaccessible, thro’  
the shedding of blood. We adore the goodness  
of God, which has kept us from being consumed  
by the ravages of war. *It is of the Lord’s mercies  
that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail  
not.* And much more so, that, in the distressing  
and alarming situation of our public affairs, there  
have been so many favourable circumstances to  
preserve us from fainting, to hearten us up, and  
to encourage our hopes, in expecting that we shall  
at length, in the exercise of *prudence, fortitude, and  
piety*, get well through our difficulties.

HERE allow me to run through a brief summa-  
ry of these favourable circumstances, composed  
of the following particulars—The rising and  
growing consistency of sentiments in the friends  
of liberty, which hath led one assembly and ano-  
ther

ther on this continent, to attempt preventing the further introduction of slaves among them, tho' herein they have been counter-acted by governors, and which the American Congress hath with so much wisdom and justice adopted—The increasing acquaintance with the rights of conscience in matters of religion, as belonging equally alike to men of all parties and denominations, while they conduct as good members of civil society, without endeavouring to injure their neighbours of different or opposite sentiments—The blundering policy of the British ministry, in giving so cruel a cast to the Boston Port-bill, taking away by it private property and subjecting it's restitution to the pleasure of the Sovereign ; in following that so hastily with other acts, equally unjust and more extensively pernicious, affecting the whole colony, and built upon principles and claims, that rendered every dwelling plantation and right through the Continent precarious, dependent on the will of the parliament, or rather of the junto or individual, that hath the power of managing it ; in declaring openly while supporting the bills, that their design was not against a single town or colony, but against all America ; in presuming, that the other towns and colonies, upon receiving the dreadful news, would turn pale and tremble, conceal their spirit of resentment and opposition, in sneaking professions of tame submission and abandon the distressed, though their own ruin must have followed upon it, however slowly ; and, upon such presumption, neglecting to divide in time, the different colonies, by flattering promises suited to their several situations, and by secret purchases, ere they could form a general union—The re-establishment of arbitrary power and a despotic government, in a most extensive and purposely en-  
larged

larged country, contrary to the royal declaration given a few years before, qualified somewhat to the inhabitants, by that formal security of their religious liberty, which was no ways wanting ; but as is generally, I fear justly, thought, with the base diabolical design of procuring their assistance, if required, in quelling the spirit of freedom among the *natural* and loyal subjects of *Great-Britain*— \*

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\* I have no objection to the *Canadians* being fully secured in the enjoyment of their religion, however erroneous and anti-christian it may appear to me, as a protestant : But to the British legislative's not having given an *universal establishment* to the rights of conscience among them. The *rights of conscience* are too sacred for any civil power on earth to interdict, wherein they produce not *covert* acts against the necessary and essential rights of civil society — I say, *necessary* and *essential*, to guard against the reasonings of interested designing priests of every denomination, who are for forming unnatural alliances between church and state, the sword of the Spirit and the sword of the magistrate. Arguments drawn from the ancient Jewish Theocracy, are of no avail, 'till the existence of a *christian Theocracy* is proved, in direct opposition to the words of our great Leader, who hath said *My kingdom is not of this world*.

Should the necessity of our affairs convene another Congress, hope among other things, it will be agreed upon, as the proper solid basis for the firmest and most extensive union, that every colony should retain, while the majority of it are so pleased, whatever is it's prevailing form of religion, and admit of an universal toleration, to all other persuasions, whether professors of christianity or not.

'Twas a special pleasure to me, on my first arrival in America among the friendly Philadelphians, to observe how Papists, Episcopalians, Moravians, Lutherans, Calvinists, Methodists and Quakers, could pass each other peaceably, and in good temper, on the sabbath, after having broke up their respective assemblies—which I could not but take notice of, in an early letter to my native country.

It may be said, that notwithstanding this apparent regard for the rights of conscience, I am really unfriendly to them, unless I will admit of an American episcopate. Though some may be prejudiced against it, from the sipping, rancorous

—The speedy arrival of the Port-bill in the common way of conveyance, whereby some difficulties were avoided and some advantages enjoyed, while administration was not so merciful, as to attempt giving us the earliest intelligence of what had been done—It's arrival at *Boston, New-York* and *Virginia*, nearly

rous and abusive opposition that certain D. D's are continually making to measures for preserving the civil rights of this continent, (whose conduct I can easily account for, and who have doubtless received intelligence, as well as myself, that *the design of sending a Bishop to America, as soon as circumstances will admit, is certainly kept in view*; and that — — — — — is intended for the see: And men, whose ambitious hopes of a deanery, arch-deaconship, or crozier, are likely to be disappointed by the public manoeuvres in favour of liberty, will be out of humour, and should be patiently born with, though they vent their spleen against liberty itself.) Yet, the rights of episcopalians are not thereby forfeited: and whenever the majority of them, laity included, (and not a few of the leading clergy, who are for more homage than the present equality admits) are desirous of an American episcopate, and will see to it's being with security, that the Bishop and every other dignitary, shall be confined purely to spiritual matters—shall have no more rule in civil concerns, than the parochial priest—shall be maintained by no kind of tax, but by voluntary contributions, or from legacies given a full year before the death of the testator, when coming out of a real estate—and shall be deprived of all power to injure or interrupt other denominations, let them be gratified. It will have a good effect, and will prevent our young men's making a trip to *England* for orders, which generally proves dangerous—to their love of freedom. But it will be long enough, 'ere some who have been arduously labouring to accomplish a protestant American episcopate, will, with all their conscientious attachment to, and zeal for it, agree to it's existence in this new world upon such equitable conditions; as may be inferred, from the little attention paid to what L--d S---g mentioned to them, at or in the neighbourhood of *Amboy*.

As to the *civil* establishment given to the Canadians by the *Quebec* bill, the slavery of it has been admirably exposed in the address of the Congress; and yet, was it a fact, that the body of

# DISCOURSE. 25

nearly at the same time—The firmness that the Bostonians showed upon the occasion—The indignation with which it was received, as the news flew through the continent—The spirited behaviour of the noble Virginian Assembly, \* whereby they hastened their own dissolution—The accounts from different places and colonies, forwarded to the capital for her encouragement under her distress, and to assure her of assistance and support, and that they considered her's in the true light of a common cause; not in consequence of, but ere they had received, her applications for advice and direction, with the state of her situation—The forwardness, which showed itself every where, to contribute to her relief, and to adopt measures that might, in the issue, recover and secure the

D

liberties

the French inhabitants preferred it to every other form, I am of Lord Littleton's opinion, that they should have it while they requested it; we have reason however to believe, that the mode of trial by juries was desired by the bulk of the people, and that it was taken away to gratify the *petty noblesse* of the country, who were for enjoying, as when under *France*, the power of oppressing their inferiors. But surely care ought to have been taken by provisos in the act, that Britons should not have been shut out from settling in a country, for the conquest of which they did and do contribute, without giving up their liberties and commencing slaves: And that a British Gentleman, was he pleased to make the tour of *Canada*, might not be exposed to an imprisonment by a letter de cachet from a Governor, in consequence of secret instructions from home, should he have unhappily fallen under the high displeasure of a British ministry.

\* Many political ministerial writers have, with a malicious cunning, attributed to the *Massachusetts* more merit in opposing the attempts against American rights, than it's entitled to. The episcopal colony of *Virginia* bravely led in the movements at the time of the Stamp-Act; and was the first, that, by their assembly, declared against the *Boston* Port-bill, in the strongest terms of an honest indignation.

liberties of this and the other colonies—The surprising agreement in opinion, that has prevailed in persons at a great distance from each other, while consulting for the general good, whereby they have been led to transmit by letters, nearly the same proposals to each other, as though the inspiration of the Most High gave them the like understanding—The fixing upon a general Congress, and chusing delegates, altho' in several places, governmental chicanery was used to prevent it—The tender compassionate feelings that every delegate of whatsoever denomination, without regard to party distinctions, discovered for the Bostonians, under the free and affecting prayer of a worthy episcopalian\*, when at the opening of the congress they had been alarmed with the false rumour that *Boston* had been attacked by the military and navy—The amazing consequences that this false alarm did, and continues to, produce. It proved the means of showing that the colonists were not to be intimidated, though martial appearances were to terminate in actual hostilities; that they would be volunteers in the cause of liberty; and that they meant not to avoid fighting, whenever it became necessary. It put many thousands upon boldly betaking themselves to arms, and marching forward, as they apprehended, to the assistance of their oppressed fellow subjects. It kindled a martial spirit, that has spread through various colonies, and put the inhabitants upon perfecting themselves in the military exercise, that so they may be early prepared for the worst. To that it has been owing, in a great measure, that the continent has put on such a warlike appearance; that companies have been formed, and are continually

\* The Rev. Mr. Ducké.



continually training, as far down as to, and even in *Virginia*, if not further \* ; and that they will be better prepared, than was ever before the case, to repel all invasions, that may be made upon their natural and constitutional rights, even tho' supported by a British army. Should British officers and troops, wrongly imagine, that their commissions and oaths oblige them to act, tho' in opposition to those very principles of the constitution that supports them, and empowers the King to give them their commissions, instead of recollecting, that all obligations entered into, must necessarily be attended with this proviso, that they are not contrary to and subversive of the constitution, and that it is a reverence for, and love to the constitution that distinguishes the *soldier* from the *mercenary*: Still, they would have no inclination to fight with fellow subjects, whose only fault was an excessive love of freedom, and a fixed determination not to submit, to what they really believed, were designed attacks upon their most precious liberties. In such circumstances, may we not hope, that the former would rather wish to escape with honour, than to disgrace themselves with conquest, and that *the men of might would not find their hands*. But should it be otherwise, and their native bravery be sacrificed in support of a bad cause; yet it might be too hard a task for them to subdue their brethren, when fighting *pro aris et focis*, for all that is dear; and who almost universally excel in the art of striking a mark, by which the waste of ammunition

\* We are informed of the like in *South Carolina*.

nition will be greatly prevented \*, the want of field artillery will not be much, nor long felt, under a commander that has skill to avoid being attacked, and to chuse his ground for attacking, in a country with which he is perfectly acquainted, and where every inhabitant, even the children, are standing spies upon all the motions of an adversary. But as I earnestly beg of heaven, that the redress of our grievances may be obtained without fighting; I shall not dwell longer upon this point, and proceed to mention those other favourable circumstances of a pacifick kind, that remain to be specified; such as, the generous donations made for the poor of Boston, the union of the colonies, the prevailing harmony and unanimity among the individuals composing the Grand Congress, their approbation of the opposition giving by this colony to the acts for altering it's ancient forms of government, their association respecting trade and the like †, the readiness of the people to conform to it, and the intrepid

\* Mr. Knoch, Lieutenant in the first regiment of *Orange-Nassau* in a treatise on "the insufficiency of fire-arms, for attack or defence demonstrated from facts, &c." wrote in about 1759, proves "that, at a medium taken from any number of battles fought somewhat before that period, not more than one man could have been killed or wounded, by eighty shot discharged".

† The right of an embodied people, in a contest for liberty, when the voice of the majority has been fairly obtained, to interdict, and where necessary, forcibly to prevent, a trade, that would ruin the common cause, and cannot be carried on without subjecting them to slavery, notwithstanding the great injury it may occasion to individuals, I apprehend, will, on the same principles that justify a proscribing a traffic that would hazard the introduction of the pestilence, admit of as much stronger a vindication, as slavery is the greater plague.

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intrepid conduct of the southern inhabitants in preventing the introduction of any more teas among them—These are favourable circumstances, beyond what the most sanguine friends of liberty expected ; that appear to be of the Lord's doing, and are marvellous in our eyes ; that, if foretold, would have been deemed morally impossible, by those who are still inimical to them, though evidencing a wonderful interposition of providence ; and that may justly *encourage* us, as well as keep us from fainting ; especially when taken in connection with that spirit of prayer and humiliation, which has discovered itself in different places on occasion of the times. Would to God, there was more of this ! Did it abound universally, we should have greater ground of encouragement by much ; for the fervent prayers of the humble, penitent, and returning, avail with God, thro' the mediation of the Lord Jesus. However, from what there is, and the other favourable circumstances we are warranted to expect, that at length, in the exercise of *prudence, fortitude* and *piety*, we shall get well through our difficulties.

We must *prudently* fall in with the measures recommended by the Congress, that so we may not be reported to other colonies as disregarding of them, whereby, first a jealousy may be produced, and then a disunion effected. We must promote unanimity among ourselves, peace and good order, that we may not be represented as desirous of confusion, in hopes of making an advantage of it. We should let the laws of honour and honesty have their full weight with us, that we may fall under no reproach, for abusing the present suspension of human laws. We should

should diligently provide for the worst ; and be upon our guard, that we may not be suddenly stripped of those appertenances, the loss of which will be severely felt, should we be called upon by a dire necessity to make our appeal to heaven.

I have been ready at times to infer, from that military spirit that hath spread through the continent, that though we are to be saved, it is not to be without the sword, or at least the strong appearance of it ; unless infinite wisdom (which we shall heartily rejoice to find is the case) should be in this way preparing the colonies, for cooperating with the parent state, after that matters in dispute have been settled to satisfaction, in some important struggle with a common enemy ; and therein, by giving her effectual assistance, for wiping away the reproaches that interested calumny and malice have thrown upon them, and for confirming an eternal friendship. But is it the awful determination of heaven, that we shall not retain our liberties without fighting, let no one despair. The continent, after having discovered consummate wisdom, can never conduct so absurdly, as to leave a single colony alone in the dispute ; their own security will constrain them to support whichever is attacked ; they will rather act at a distance, than have a war upon or within their own borders, and will be sensible that whoever fights on the side of American liberty, hazards *his* life in *their* battles. Should it be allowed, for argument's sake, that some one province or other, through selfishness or timidity, should basely flink from the common danger ; yet would the rest have greater probability of succeeding, than

than had the Dutch, when they began to emerge from slavery, and to acquire their liberties\*. Let us be but *brave*, and we may promise ourselves success, do we join *piety* to our prudence and fortitude. Do we confess and repent of our sins, justify God in his so trying us, accept of our punishment at his hands without murmuring or complaining; Do we humble ourselves, amend our ways and doings, give up ourselves to God, become an holy people, and make the most High our confidence, we may hope that He will be on  
our

\* “ The whole country of the seven *United Provinces* is not as large as one half of *Pennsylvania*; and when they began their contest with *Philip* the second for their liberty, contained about as many inhabitants as are now in the province of *Massachusetts-Bay*. *Philip's* empire then comprehended in *Europe*, all *Spain* and *Portugal*, the two *Sicilies*, and such provinces of the *Low Countries* as adhered to him—many islands of importance in the *Mediterranean*—the *Milanese* and many other valuable territories in *Italy*, and elsewhere—In *Africa* and *Asia*, all the dominions belonging to *Spain* and *Portugal*—In *America* the immense countries subject to those two kingdoms, with all their treasures, and yet unexhausted mines, and the *Spanish West-Indies*. His armies were numerous and veteran, excellently officered, and commanded by the most renowned generals. So great was their force, that during the wars in the *Low Countries* his commander in chief, the prince of *Parma* marched twice into *France*, and obliged that great general and glorious king, *Henry* the fourth, to raise at one time the siege of *Paris*, and at another that of *Roan*. So considerable was the naval power of *Philip*, that in the midst of the same wars, he fitted out his dreadful armaments to invade *England*. Yet seven little provinces, or counties, as we should call them, (says that eminent *Pennsylvanian*) inspired by one general resolution—“ to die free, rather than live slaves ”—not only baffled, but brought down into the dust that enormous power, that had contended for universal empire, and for half a century was the terror of the world. Such an amazing change indeed took place, that those Provinces afterward actually PROTECTED *Spain* against the power of *France*. ”

our side : And if the Lord is for us what can men do unto us ? Have we the God of hosts for our ally, we might bid adieu to fear, though the world was united against us.

LET us then be *pious, brave and prudent*, and we shall, some of us at least, have room for thanksgivings, not merely for promising appearances, but for *actual deliverance* out of present difficulties, though it should not be till we have been conversant with the din of arms and the horrors of war. But should the country be wasted for a few years, and numbers of it's inhabitants be destroyed, ere the wished for salvation is granted, how soon, after having secured it's liberties, will it regain it's former prosperity ; yea, become far more glorious, wealthy and populous than ever, through the thousands and ten thousands that will flock to it, with riches arts and sciences acquired by them in foreign countries. And, how will the surviving inhabitants and their posterity, together with refugees, who have fled from oppression and hardships, whether civil, or sacred, to our American sanctuary, daily give thanks to the Sovereign of the universe, that *this general asylum* was not consumed ! How oft will they, with raptures think upon that noble exertion of courage that prevented it ; celebrate the praises of those that led and suffered in the common cause ; and, with glowing hearts, bless that God who owned the goodness of it, and at length crowned it with success ! Hallelujah, The Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

**T**HE way to escape an attack is to be ready to receive it. While administration consists of those that have avowed their dislike to the principles of this continent and the known friends of America are excluded there should be no dependance upon the fine speeches, or actual promises of any, but the colonies should pursue the means of safety, vigorously as ever, that they may not be surprized. 'Tis the most constant maxim of war that a man ought never to be more upon guard, than whilst he is in treaty. For want attending to it, King Edward the 4th was suddenly attacked, defeated, and made prisoner, the Earl of Warwick in 1470.