

Dr. LANGDON

SERMON

Preached before the CONGRESS

1775

*Government corrupted by Vice, and recovered by
Righteousness.*

A

S E R M O N

P R E A C H E D

B E F O R E T H E H O N O R A B L E

C O N G R E S S

O f t h e C o l o n y

O f t h e *Massachusetts-Bay*

I N N E W E N G L A N D,

A s s e m b l e d a t *W A T E R T O W N*,

O n W e d n e s d a y t h e 5 t h D a y o f *May*, 1775.

B e i n g t h e A n n i v e r s a r y f i x e d b y C H A R T E R

F o r t h e E l e c t i o n o f C O U N S E L L O R S.

B y S A M U E L L A N G D O N, D. D.

P r e s i d e n t o f H a r v a r d C o l l e g e i n C A M B R I D G E.

A s a r e a r i n g L i o n a n d a r a n g i n g B e a r, s o i s a
w i c k e d R u l e r o v e r t h e p o o r P e o p l e. *Prov. 28. 15.*

W A T E R T O W N:

P r i n t e d a n d S o l d b y B E N J A M I N E D E S,
M D C C L X X V.

IN PROVINCIAL CONGRESS,

Watertown, May 31, P. M. 1775.

ORDERED, That Mr. Gill, Dr. Whiting, Mr. Pitts, Mr. Jewet, and Col. Lincoln, be a Committee to return the Thanks of this CONGRESS to the Rev. Dr. LANGDON, for his excellent Sermon delivered to the CONGRESS in the Forenoon, and to request a Copy of it for the Press.

A true Extract from the Minutes,

SAMUEL FREEMAN, Sec^y

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S E R M O N.

I S A I A H 1. 26.

And I will restore thy Judges as at the first, and thy Counsellors as at the beginning : afterward thou shalt be called the City of Righteousness, the faithful City.

SHALL we rejoice, my Fathers and Brethren, or shall we weep together, on the return of this Anniversary, which from the first settlement of this Colony has been sacred to Liberty, to perpetuate that invaluable privilege of chusing, from among ourselves, wise men, fearing God, and hating covetousness, to be honorable Counsellors, to constitute one essential branch of that happy government which was established on the faith of royal Charters ?

On this day, the people have from year to year assembled, from all our towns, in a vast congregation,

gation, with gladness and festivity, with every ensign of joy displayed in our Metropolis, which now, alas ! is made a garrison of mercenary troops, the strong hold of despotism. But how shall I now address you from this Desk, remote from the Capital, and remind you of the important business which distinguished this day in our Kalendar, without spreading a gloom over this assembly, by exhibiting the melancholy change made in the face of our public affairs ?

We have lived to see the time when British Liberty is just ready to expire ;—when that constitution of government which has so long been the glory and strength of the English nation, is deeply undermined and ready to tumble into ruins ;—when America is threatened with cruel oppression, and the arm of power is stretched out against New-England, and especially against this Colony, to compel us to submit to the arbitrary acts of legislators who are not our representatives, and who will not themselves bear the least part of the burdens which, without mercy, they are laying upon us. The most formal and solemn grants of Kings to our ancestors are deemed by our oppressors as of little value ; and they have mutilated the Charter of this Colony in the most essential parts, upon false representations, and new invented maxims of policy, without the least regard to any legal process. We are no longer permitted to fix our eyes on the faithful of the land, and trust in the wisdom of their counsels, and the equity of their judgment ; but men in whom we can have no confidence,—whose principles are subversive of our liberties,—whose

aim is to exercise lordship over us, and share among themselves the public wealth :---men who are ready to serve any master, and execute the most unrighteous decrees for high wages,---whose faces we never saw before, and whose interests and connexions may be far divided from us by the wide atlantick,---are to be set over us as counsellors and judges, at the pleasure of those who have the riches and power of the nation in their hands, and whose noblest plan is to subjugate the Colonies first, and then the whole nation to their will.

That we might not have it in our power to refuse the most absolute submission to their unlimited claims of authority, they have not only endeavored to terrify us with fleets and armies sent to our Capital, and distressed and put an end to our trade, particularly that important branch of it, the fishery ; but at length attempted, by a sudden march of a body of troops in the night, to seize and destroy one of our magazines, formed by the people merely for their own security ; if, after such formidable military preparations on the other side, matters should be pushed to an extremity. By this, as might well be expected, a skirmish was brought on ; and it is most evident, from a variety of concurring circumstances, as well as numerous depositions both of the prisoners taken by us at that time, and our own men then on the spot only as spectators, that the fire began first on the side of the King's troops. At least five or six of our inhabitants were murderously kill'd by the Regulars at Lexington, before any man attempted to return the fire, and when they
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were actually complying with the command to disperse : and two more of our brethren were likewise kill'd at Concord-Bridge by a fire from the King's soldiers, before the engagement began on our side. But whatever credit falsehoods transmitted to Great-Britain, from the other side, may gain, the matter may be rested intirely on this,-- that he that arms himself to commit a robbery, and demands the traveller's purse, by the terror of instant death, is the first aggressor, though the other should take the advantage of discharging his pistol first and killing the robber.

The alarm was sudden ; but in a very short time spread far and wide : the nearest neighbours in haste ran together, to assist their brethren, and save their country. Not more than three or four hundred met in season and bravely attacked and repulsed the enemies of liberty, who retreated with great precipitation. But by the help of a strong reinforcement, notwithstanding a close pursuit, and continual loss on their side, they acted the part of Robbers and Savages, by burning, plundering, and damaging almost every house in their way, to the utmost of their power, murdering the unarmed and helpless, and not regarding the weaknesses of the tender sex, until they had secured themselves beyond the reach of our terrifying arms. *

That

- * Near the Meeting house in Menotomy two aged helpless men who had not been out in the action, and were found unarmed in a house where the Regulars enter'd, were murdered without mercy. In another house in that neighbourhood a woman in bed with
a new

That ever memorable day, the nineteenth of April, is the date of an unhappy war openly begun, by the Ministers of the King of Great-Britain, against his good subjects in this Colony, and implicitly against all the colonies.----But for what?----Because they have made a noble stand for their natural and constitutional rights, in opposition to the machinations of wicked men, who are betraying their Royal Master, establishing popery in the British dominions, and aiming to enslave and ruin the whole nation, that they may enrich themselves and their vile dependents with the public treasures, and the spoils of America.

We have used our utmost endeavors, by repeated humble petitions and remonstrances,---by a series of unanswerable reasonings published from the Press, in which the dispute has been fairly stated, and the justice of our opposition clearly demonstrated,---and by the mediation of some of the noblest and most faithful friends of the British constitution, who have powerfully plead our cause in Parliament,---to prevent such measures as may soon reduce the body politic to a miserable, dismembered, dying trunk, thought lately the terror of all Europe. But our King, as

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a new born infant, about a week old, was forced by the threats of the soldiery, to escape, almost naked, to an open outhouse; her house was then set on fire, but soon extinguished by one of the children which had laid concealed till the enemy was gone. In Cambridge a man of weak mental powers, who went out to gaze at the regular army as they pass'd, without arms, or thought of danger, was wantonly shot at and kill'd by those inhuman butchers, as he sat on a fence.

if impelled by some strange fatality, is resolved to reason with us only by the roar of his Cannon, and the pointed arguments of musquets and bayonets. Because we refuse submission to the despotic power of a ministerial Parliament, our own Sovereign, to whom we have been always ready to swear true allegiance,---whose authority we never meant to cast off,----who might have continued happy in the cheerful obedience of as faithful subjects as any in his dominions,----has given us up to the rage of his Ministers, to be seized at sea by the rapacious commanders of every little sloop of war and piratical cutter, and to be plundered and massacred by land by mercenary troops, who know no distinction betwixt an enemy and a brother, between right and wrong ; but only, like brutal pursuers, to hunt and seize the prey pointed out by their masters.

We must keep our eyes fixed on the supreme government of the ETERNAL KING, as directing all events, setting up or pulling down the Kings of the earth at his pleasure, suffering the best forms of human government to degenerate and go to ruin by corruption ; or restoring the decayed constitutions of kingdoms and states, by reviving public virtue and religion, and granting the favorable interpositions of his providence. To this our text leads us ; and though I hope to be excused on this occasion from a formal discourse on the words in a doctrinal way, yet I must not wholly pass over the religious instruction contained in them.

Let us consider----That for the sins of a people God may suffer the best government to be
corrupted,

corrupted, or entirely dissolved ; and that nothing but a general reformation can give good ground to hope that the public happiness will be restored, by the recovery of the strength and perfection of the state, and that divine providence will interpose to fill every department with wise and good men.

Isaiah prophesied about the time of the captivity of the ten tribes of Israel, and about a century before the captivity of Judah. The kingdom of Israel was brought to destruction, because its iniquities were full ; its counsellors and judges were wholly taken away, because there remained no hope of reformation. But the sceptre did not entirely depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, till the Messiah came : yet greater and greater changes took place in their political affairs ; their government degenerated in proportion as their vices increased, till few faithful men were left in any public offices ; and at length, when they were delivered up for seventy years into the hands of the king of Babylon, scarce any remains of their original excellent civil polity appeared among them.

The Jewish government, according to the original constitution which was divinely established, if considered merely in a civil view, was a perfect Republic. The heads of their tribes, and elders of their cities, were their counsellors and judges. They called the people together in more general or particular assemblies, took their opinions, gave advice, and managed the public affairs according to the general voice. Counsellors and judges comprehend all the powers of that government ; for there was no such thing

as legislative authority belonging to it, their complete code of laws being given immediately from God by the hand of Moses. And let them who cry up *the divine right of Kings* consider, that the only form of government which had a proper claim to a divine establishment was so far from including the idea of a King, that it was a high crime for Israel to ask to be in this respect like other nations ; and when they were gratified, it was rather as a just punishment of their folly, than that they might feel the burdens of court pageantry, of which they were warned by a very striking description, than as a divine recommendation of kingly authority.

Every nation, when able and agreed, has a right to set up over themselves any form of government which to them may appear most conducive to their common welfare. The civil Polity of Israel is doubtless an excellent general model, allowing for some peculiarities ; at least some principal laws and orders of it may be copied, to great advantage, in more modern establishments.

When a government is in it's prime, the public good engages the attention of the whole ; the strictest regard is paid to the qualifications of those who hold the offices of the state ; virtue prevails ; every thing is managed with justice, prudence, and frugality ; the laws are founded on principles of equity rather than mere policy ; and all the people are happy. But vice will increase with the riches and glory of an empire ; and this gradually tends to corrupt the constitution, and in time bring on it's dissolution. This may be considered not only as the natural effect of vice, but a righteous judgment

judgment of heaven, especially upon a nation which has been favor'd with the blessings of religion and liberty, and is guilty of undervaluing them, and eagerly going into the gratification of every lust.

In this chapter the prophet describes the very corrupt state of Judah in his day, both as to religion and common morality ; and looks forward to that increase of wickedness which would bring on their desolation and captivity. They were *a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that were corrupters, who had forsaken the Lord, and provoked the holy One of Israel to anger.* The whole body of the nation, from head to foot, was full of moral and political disorders without any remaining soundness. Their religion was all mere ceremony and hypocrisy , and even the laws of common justice and humanity were disregarded in their public courts. They had Counsellors and Judges, but very different from those at the beginning of the common wealth. Their Princes were rebellious against God, and the constitution of their country, and companions of thieves, giving countenance to every artifice for seizing the property of the subjects into their own hands, and robbing the public treasury. Every one loved gifts and followed after rewards ; they regarded the perquisites more than the duties of their office ; the general aim was at profitable places and pensions ; they were influenced in every thing by bribery ; and their avarice and luxury were never satisfied, but hurried them on to all kinds of oppression and violence, so that they even justified and encouraged the murder of innocent persons to support their lawless

lawless power, and increase their wealth. And God in righteous judgment left them to run into all this excess of vice to their own destruction, because they had forsaken him, and were guilty of wilful inattention to the most essential parts of that religion which had been given them by a well attested Revelation from heaven.

The Jewish nation could not but see and feel the unhappy consequences of so great corruption of the state. Doubtless they complained much of men in power, and very heartily and liberally reproached them for their notorious misconduct. The public greatly suffered and the people groaned, and wished for better rulers and better management. But in vain they hoped for a change of men and measures and better times, when the spirit of religion was gone, and the infection of vice was become universal. The whole body being so corrupted, there could be no rational prospect of any great reformation in the state, but rather of its ruin ; which accordingly came on in Jeremiah's time. Yet if a general reformation of religion and morals had taken place, and they had turned to God from all their sins ; if they had again recovered the true spirit of their religion ; God, by the gracious interpositions of his providence, would soon have found out methods to restore the former virtue of the state, and again have given them men of wisdom and integrity, according to their utmost wish, to be Counsellors and Judges. This was verified in fact, after the nation had been purged by a long captivity, and returned to their own land humbled, and filled with zeal for God and his law.

By all this we may be led to consider the true cause of the present remarkable troubles which are come upon Great-Britain and these Colonies ; and the only effectual remedy.

We have rebelled against God. We have lost the true spirit of christianity, tho' we retain the outward profession and form of it. We have neglected and let light by the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and his holy commands and institutions. The worship of many is but meer compliment to the Deity, while their hearts are far from him. By many the gospel is corrupted into a superficial system of moral philosophy, little better than ancient Platonism. And after all the pretended refinements of Moderns in the theory of christianity, very little of the pure practice of it is to be found among those who once stood foremost in the profession of the Gospel. In a general view of the present moral state of Great Britain it may be said---*There is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, their wickedness breaks out ; and one murder after another is committed, under the connivance and encouragement even of that authority by which such crimes ought to be punished, that the purposes of oppression and despotism may be answered. As they have increased, so have they sinned ; therefore God is changing their glory into shame. The general prevalence of vice has changed the whole face of things in the British government.*

The excellency of the constitution has been the boast of Great-Britain, and the envy of neighbouring

bouring nations. In former times the great departments of the state, and the various places of trust and authority, were filled with men of wisdom, honesty, and religion, who employed all their powers, and were ready to risque their fortunes, and their lives for the public good. They were faithful counsellors to Kings ; directed their authority and majesty to the happiness of the nation ; and opposed every step by which despotism endeavoured to advance. They were Fathers of the people, and sought the welfare and prosperity of the whole body. They did not exhaust the national wealth by luxury and bribery, or convert it to their own private benefit, or the maintenance of idle useless officers and dependents ; but improved it faithfully for the proper purposes, for the necessary support of government, and defence of the kingdom. Their laws was dictated by wisdom and equity ; and justice was administered with impartiality. Religion discover'd it's general influence among all ranks, and kept out great corruptions from places of power.

But in what does the British nation now glory ?---In a meer shadow of it's ancient political system ?---In titles of dignity without virtue ?---In vast public treasures continually lavished in corruption, till every fund is exhausted, notwithstanding the mighty streams perpetually flowing in ?-----In the many artifices to stretch the prerogatives of the crown beyond all constitutional bounds, and make the king an absolute monarch, while the people are deluded with a meer phantom of liberty ? What idea must we entertain of that government, if such an one can
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be found, which pretends to have made an exact counterbalance of power between the sovereign, the nobles and the commons, so that the three branches shall be an effectual check upon each other, and the united wisdom of the whole shall conspire to promote the national felicity ; but which, in reality, is reduced to such a situation that it may be managed at the sole will of one court favorite ? What difference is there betwixt one man's *choosing*, at his own pleasure, by his single vote, the majority of those who are to represent the people ; and his *purchasing* in such a majority, according to his own nomination, with money out of the public treasury, or other effectual methods of influencing elections ?---And what shall we say, if in the same manner, by places, pensions, and other bribes, a minister of state can at any time gain over a *nobler majority* likewise, to be intirely subservient to his purposes ; and moreover persuade his *royal master* to resign himself up wholly to the direction of his counsels ? If this should be the case of any nation from one seven years end to another, the bargain and sale being made sure for such a period, would they still have reason to boast of their excellent constitution ?---Ought they not rather to think it high time to restore the corrupted dying state to its original perfection ?---I will apply this to the Roman senate under Julius Cæsar, which retained all its ancient formalities, but voted always only as Cæsar dictated. If the decrees of such a senate were urged on the Romans as fraught with all the blessings of Roman liberty, we must suppose them strangely deluded, if they were persuaded to believe it.

The pretence for taxing America has been, that the nation contracted an immense debt for the defence of the American Colonies ; and that as they are now able to contribute some proportion towards the discharge of this debt, and must be considered as part of the nation, it is reasonable they should be taxed, and the Parliament has a right to tax and govern them, in all cases whatever, by it's own supreme authority. Enough has been already published on this grand controversy, which now threatens a final separation of the Colonies from Great-Britain.----But can the amazing national debt, be paid by a little trifling sum, squeezed from year to year out of America, which is continually drained of all its cash by a restricted trade with the parent country, and which in this way is taxed to the government of Britain in a very large proportion ? Would it not be much superior wisdom, and sounder policy, for a distressed kingdom to retrench the vast unnecessary expences continually incurred by its enormous vices ?---To stop the prodigious sums paid in pensions, and to numberless officers, without the least advantage to the public ?---to reduce the number of devouring servants in the Great Family ?---to turn their minds from the pursuit of pleasure, and the boundless luxuries of life, to the important interests of their country, and the salvation of the common wealth ?---Would not a reverend regard to the authority of divine revelation, an hearty belief of the gospel of the grace of God, and a general reformation of all those vices which bring misery and ruin upon individuals, families and kingdoms, and which have provoked heaven to bring the nation into such perplexed and dangerous circumstances,

ces, be the surest way to recover the sinking state, and make it again rich and flourishing? Millions might annually be saved, if the kingdom were generally and thoroughly reformed; and the public debt, great as it is, might in a few years be cancelled by a growing revenue, which now amounts to full ten millions per annum, without laying additional burdens on any of the subjects. But the demands of corruption are constantly increasing, and will forever exceed all the resources of wealth which the wit of man can invent or tyranny impose.

Into what fatal policy has the nation been impelled by its public vices! To wage a cruel war with its own children in these colonies, only to gratify the lust of power, and the demands of extravagance! May God, in his great mercy recover Great Britain from this fatal infatuation; shew them their errors; and give them a spirit of reformation, before it is too late to avert impending destruction. May the eyes of the King be opened to see the ruinous tendency of the measures into which he has been led, and his heart inclined to treat his American Subjects with justice and clemency, instead of forcing them still farther to the last extremities! God grant some method may be found out to effect a happy reconciliation, so that the colonies may again enjoy the protection of their Sovereign, with perfect security of all their natural rights, and civil and religious liberties.

But, alas! have not the sins of America, and of New-England in particular, had a hand in bringing down upon us the righteous judgments of heaven? Wherefore is all this evil come upon us? Is it not because we have forsaken the Lord? Can

we say we are innocent of crimes against God ? No surely ; it becomes us to humble ourselves under his mighty hand, that he may exalt us in due time. However unjustly and cruelly we have been treated by man, we certainly deserve, at the hand of God, all the calamities in which we are now involved. Have we not lost much of that spirit of genuine christianity, which so remarkably appeared in our ancestors, for which God distinguished them with the signal favors of providence when they fled from tyranny and persecution into this western desert ? Have we not departed from their virtues ? Tho' I hope and am confident, that as much true religion, agreeable to the purity and simplicity of the gospel, remains among us, as among any people in the world ; yet in the midst of the present great apostacy of the nation's professing christianity, have not we likewise been guilty of departing from the living God ? Have we not made light of the gospel of salvation, and too much affected the cold, formal, fashionable religion of countries grown old in vice, and overspread with infidelity ? Do not our follies and iniquities testify against us ? Have we not, especially in our Seaports, gone much  far into the pride and luxuries of life ? Is it not a fact open to common observation, that profaneness, intemperance, unchastity, the love of pleasure, fraud, avarice, and other vices, are increasing among us from year to year ? And have not even these young governments been in some measure infected with the corruptions of European Courts ?---Has there been no flattery ; no bribery ; no artifices practised, to get into places of honor and profit, or

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carry a vote to serve a particular interest, without regard to right or wrong? Have our Statesmen always acted with integrity? And every Judge with impartiality, in the fear of God? In short, have all ranks of men shewed regard to the divine commands, and joined to promote the Redeemer's kingdom, and the public welfare? I wish we could more fully justify ourselves in all these respects. If such sins have not been so notorious among us as in older countries, we must nevertheless remember, that the sins of a people who have been remarkable for the profession of godliness, are more aggravated by all the advantages and favors they have enjoyed, and will receive more speedy and signal punishment; as God says of Israel---*You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities.* *

The judgments now come upon us are very heavy and distressing, and have fallen with peculiar weight on our Capital; where, notwithstanding the plighted honor of the chief Commander of the hostile troops, many of our brethren are still detained as if they were captives; and those that have been released have left the principal part of their substance, which is withheld by arbitrary orders, contrary to an express treaty, to be plunder'd by the army. †

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* Amos 3. 2.

† Soon after the battle at Concord, General Gage stipulated with the Select Men of Boston, that if the Inhabitants would deliver up their arms, to be deposited in Faneuil-Hall, and return'd when circumstances would permit, they should have liberty to quit the town, and take with them all their effects. They readily

Let me address you in the words of the prophet---O Israel, *return unto the Lord thy God. for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity*---My brethren, let us repent and implore the divine mercy. Let us amend our ways, and our doings ; reform every thing which has been provoking to the most high, and thus endeavor to obtain the gracious interpositions of providence for our deliverance.

If true religion is revived by means of these public calamities, and again prevails among us ; if it appears in our religious assemblies,---in the conduct of our civil affairs,---in our armies,---in our families,---in all our business and conversation,---we may hope for the direction and blessing of the Most High, while we are using our best endeavors to preserve and restore the civil government of this Colony, and defend America from slavery.

Our

readily complied ; but soon found themselves abused, With great difficulty, and very slowly, they obtain passes ; but are forbidden to carry out any thing besides household furniture and wearing apparel. Merchants and Shopkeepers are obliged to leave behind all their merchandise, and even their Cash is detained. Mechanics are not allowed to bring out the most necessary tools for their work. Not only their family stores of provisions are stoppt ; but it has been repeatedly and credibly affirmed, that poor women and children have had the very smallest articles of this kind taken from them, which were necessary for their refreshment while they travelled a few miles to their friends ; and that even from young children, in their mothers arms, the cruel Soldiery have taken the morsel of bread given to prevent their crying, and thrown it away. How much better for the Inhabitants to have resolved, at all hazards, to defend themselves by their arms against such an enemy, than suffer such shameful abuse !

Our late happy government is changed into the terrors of military execution. Our firm opposition to the establishment of an arbitrary system is called *Rebellion*, and we are to expect no mercy but by yielding property and life at discretion. This we are resolved at all events not to do ; and therefore, we have taken arms in our own defence, and all the Colonies are united in the great cause of liberty.

But how shall we live while civil government is dissolved ? What shall we do without *Counsellors* and *Judges* ? A state of absolute anarchy is dreadful. Submission to the tyranny of hundreds of imperious masters, firmly embodied against us, and united in the same cruel design of disposing of our substance and lives at their pleasure, and making their own will our law in all cases whatever, is the vilest slavery, and worse than death.

Thanks be to God, that he has given us, as men, natural rights independent on all human laws whatever ; and that these rights are recognized by the grand Charter of British Liberties. By the *law of nature* any body of people, destitute of order and government, may form themselves into a civil society according to their best prudence, and so provide for their common safety and advantage. When one form is found, by the majority, not to answer the grand purpose in any tolerable degree, they may by common consent put an end to it, and set up another : only as all such great changes are attended with difficulty, and danger of confusion, they ought not to be attempted without urgent necessity, which will be determined always by the general voice of the wisest and best members of the community.

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If the great servants of the public forget their duty, betray their trust and sell their country, or make war against the most valuable rights and privileges of the people ; reason and justice require that they should be discarded, and others appointed in their room, without any regard to formal resignations of their forfeited power.

It must be ascribed to some supernatural influence on the minds of the main body of the people through this extensive continent, that they have so universally adopted the method of managing the important matters necessary to preserve among them a free government, by corresponding committees and congresses, consisting of the wisest and most disinterested patriots in America, chosen by the unbiaſed ſuffrages of the people aſſembled for that purpoſe, in their ſeveral towns, counties and provinces. So general agreement, thro' ſo many provinces of ſo large a country, in one mode of ſelf preſervation, is unexampled in any hiſtory : and the effect has exceeded our moſt ſanguine expectations. Universal tumults, and all the irregularities and violence of mobish factions, naturally ariſe when legal authority ceases. But how little of this has appeared in the miſt of the late obſtructions of civil government ! Nothing more than what has often happened in Great-Britain and Ireland, in the face of the civil powers in all their ſtrength : nothing more than what is frequently ſeen in the miſt of the perfect regulations of the great city of London : And, may I not add, nothing more than has been abſolutely neceſſary to carry into execution the ſpirited reſolutions of a people too ſenſible to deliver themſelves

selves up to oppression and slavery. The judgment and advice of the Continental Assembly of Delegates have been as readily obeyed, as if they were authentic acts of a long established parliament. And in every colony, the votes of a congress have had equal effect with the laws of great and general courts.

It is now ten months since this Colony has been deprived of the benefit of that government which was so long enjoyed by charter. They have had no general assembly for matters of legislation, and the public revenue. The courts of justice have been shut up ; and almost the whole executive power has ceased to act. Yet order among the people has been remarkably preserved ; few crimes have been committed punishable by the judge ; even former contentions betwixt one neighbour and another have ceased ; nor have fraud and rapine taken advantage of the imbecility of the civil powers.

The necessary preparations for the defence of our liberties required not only the collected wisdom and strength of the colony, but an immediate chearful application of the wealth of individuals to the public service, in due proportion ; or a taxation which depended on general consent. Where was the authority to vote, collect, or receive the large sums required, and make provision for the utmost extremities ? -- A *Congress* succeeded to the honors of a *General Assembly*, as soon as the latter was crush'd by the hand of power. It gained all the confidence of the people. Wisdom and prudence secur'd all that the laws of the former constitution could have given. And we now observe

observe, with astonishment, an army of many thousands of well disciplined troops suddenly assembled, and abundantly furnished with all necessary supplies in defence of the liberties of America.

But is it proper or safe for the colony to continue much longer in such imperfect order? Must it not appear rational and necessary, to every man that understands the various movements requisite to good government, that the many parts should be properly settled, and every branch of the legislative and executive authority restored to that order and vigour on which the life and health of the body politic depend? To the honorable Gentlemen, now met in this new Congress as the Fathers of the People, this weighty matter must be referred. Who knows but in the midst of all the distresses of the present war to defeat the attempts of arbitrary power, God may in mercy restore to us our Judges as at the first, and our Counsellors as at the beginning.

On your wisdom, religion, and public spirit, Honored Gentlemen, we depend, to determine what may be done as to the important matter of reviving the form of government, and settling all necessary affairs relating to it in the present critical state of things, that we may again have law and justice, and avoid the danger of anarchy and confusion. May GOD be with you, and by the influences of his spirit direct all your counsels and resolutions for the glory of his name, and the safety and happiness of this colony. We have great reason to acknowledge with thankfulness the evident tokens of the divine presence with the former congress; that they were led to foresee present exigencies, and make such effectual provision
for

for them. It is our earnest prayer to the Father of Lights, that he would irradiate your minds, make all your way plain, and grant you may be happy instruments of many and great blessings to the people by whom you are constituted, to New-England, and all the united Colonies.

Let us praise our God for the advantages already given us over the enemies of Liberty ; particularly, that they have been so dispirited by repeated experience of the efficacy of our arms ; and that in the late action at Chelsea, when several hundreds of our soldiery, the greater part open to the fire of so many cannon, swivels, and muskets from a battery advantageously situated, from two armed cutters, and many barges full of marines, and from ships of the line in the harbour, not one man on our side was killed, and but two or three wounded ; when, by the best intelligence, a great number were killed and wounded on the other side, and one of their cutters was taken and burnt, the other narrowly escaping with great damage.*

If God be for us, who can be against us ? The enemy has reproached us for calling on his name, and professing our trust in him. They have made a mock of our solemn Fasts, and every appearance of serious christianity in the land. On this account, by way of contempt, they call us *saints* ; and that they themselves may keep at the greatest distance from this character, their

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mouths

- * This action was in the night following the 27th current, after our soldiery had been taking off the castle from some islands in Bolton harbour. By the best information we have been able to procure, about 105 of the King's troops were killed, and 160 wounded in the engagement.

mouths are full of horrid blasphemies, cursing and bitterness, and vent all the rage of malice, and barbarity. And may we not be confident that the Most High, who regards these things, will vindicate his own honor, and plead our righteous cause against such enemies to his government as well as our liberties. O, may our Camp be free from every accursed thing ! May our Land be purged from all it's sins ! May we be truly a holy people, and all our towns cities of righteousness ! Then the Lord will be our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble ; and we shall have no reason to be afraid though thousands of enemies set themselves against us round about -- tho' all nature should be thrown into tumults and convulsions. He can command the stars in their courses to fight his battles, and all the elements to wage war with his enemies. He can destroy them with innumerable plagues, or send faintness into their hearts, so that the men of might shall not find their hands. In a variety of methods he can work salvation for us, as he did for his people in ancient days, and according to the many remarkable deliverances granted in former times to Great-Britain and New England, when Popish machinations threatned both countries with civil and ecclesiastical tyranny. *

May

* When we consider the late Canada Bill ; which implies, not merely a *toleration* of the Roman catholic religion, (which would be just and liberal) but a *firm establishment* of it through that extensive province, now greatly enlarged to serve political purposes ; by which means multitudes of people, subjects of Great Britain, which may hereafter settle that vast

May the Lord hear us in this day of trouble, and the name of the God of Jacob defend us ; send us help from his sanctuary ; and strengthen us out of Zion. We will rejoice in his salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners ; let us look to him to fulfil all our petitions.

vast country, will be tempted, by all the attachments arising from an establishment, to profess that religion, or be discouraged from any endeavors to propagate reformed principles ; have we not great reason to suspect, that all the late measures respecting the Colonies have originated from popish schemes of men who would gladly restore the race of Stewart and who look on popery as a religion most favorable to arbitrary power ? It is plain fact, that *Despotism* has an *establishment* in that province equally with the Roman-catholic Church. The Governor, with a Council very much under his power, has by his commission almost unlimited authority, free from the clog of Representatives of the people. However agreeable this may be to the genius of the French, English Subjects there will be discouraged from continuing in a country, where both they and their posterity will be deprived of the greatest privileges of the British constitution, and in many respects feel the effects of absolute monarchy.

Lord Littleton in his defence of this detestable Statute, frankly concedes, that it is an *establishment* of the Roman-catholic religion, and that part of the policy of it was to provide a check upon the New England Colonies. And the writer of an Address of the people of Great Britain to the inhabitants of America, just published, expresses himself with great precision when he says, that Statute 'gave toleration to ENGLISH Subjects.'