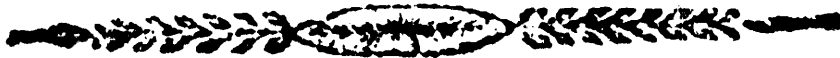


MR. LEE'S

ELECTION SERMON,

MAY 14th, 1795.



**THE origin and ends of civil Government; with
reflections on the distinguished happiness of the
United States.**

A

S E R M O N,

PREACHED BEFORE HIS EXCELLENCY,

Samuel Huntington, Esq. LL.D.

GOVERNOR,

AND THE HONORABLE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OF THE STATE of CONNECTICUT,

AT HARTFORD,

ON THE DAY OF THE ANNIVERSARY ELECTION,

MAY 14, 1795.

By **ANDREW LEE, A. M.**

PASTOR OF THE NORTH CHURCH

IN LISBON.



HARTFORD:

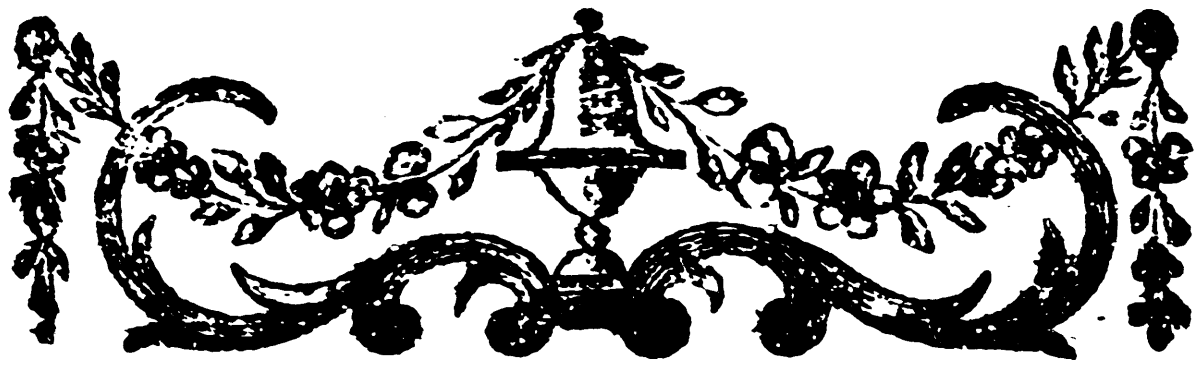
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MDCCXCV.

*At a General Assembly of the State of
Connecticut, holden at Hartford, on
the second Thursday of May, A. D.
1795.*

ORDERED, that the Honora-
ble WILLIAM HILLHOUSE,
and SAMUEL LOVETT, ESQUIRES,
return the thanks of this Assembly
to the Rev. Mr. ANDREW LEE, for
his Sermon delivered before this
Assembly at the General Election,
on the 14th, inst. and desire a Co-
py thereof, that it may be printed.

*A true Copy of Record,
Examined,
By GEORGE WYLLYS, Sec'ry.*



ELECTION SERMON.

II. CHRONICLES IX. 8.

Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on his throne, to be king for the Lord thy God: because thy God loved Israel to establish them forever, therefore made he thee king over them, to do judgment and justice.

GOVERNMENT is from God. It may be traced to the first visit he made to our world after the apostacy.* But no particular form hath an exclusive claim to be of divine origin. The first form was patriarchal. This naturally arose from the then state of the world. For a time it was sufficient. It probably continued till the deluge; but was found too weak even before that event. The "earth was filled with violence." When the world was repopled, and the life of man reduced, government gradually put on other forms.

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THE only political system expressly instituted by heaven was that of the Hebrews, which was a republican theocracy; a form in many respects diverse from every other, and to the nations in general impracticable. The change which took place in their constitution, which in process of time became a monarchy, was of themselves; permitted indeed, but not approved of God. It was reckoned of him among their rebellions.

THERE are circumstances in which monarchy may be requisite; and from the beginning the nations have been permitted of God to mould civil government into what form they pleased, in order to suit it to their state. Nor was it any part of Christ's design to make changes in the civil establishments of the nations. Christianity was intended to be the religion of the world. The time is coming when it will embrace all nations. What may then be their political state doth not yet appear.

DEEP depravity involves the principles of servitude. No people sunk in brutalizing vice can long be free. Such was the state of the Romans at the beginning of the gospel day. Civil liberty, the pride and glory of their ancestors, had expired: It's dying struggles had been violent. They had turned a large portion of the habitable globe into a field of blood. In defence of liberty, noble, but ineffectual had been the exertions of virtuous individuals. Arbitrary power was established. The gracious designs of heaven then opening on the world, required for some ages, the continuance of the empire, in all its vast

extensions, and that Syria in particular should remain a province of it.

THESE considerations enable us to account for the subjection to the Roman government enjoined on the first Christians, without our thence interfering the divine right of kings. From the temper and circumstances of every people the genius of their government naturally arises.

“THE MOST HIGH ruleth in the kingdom of men.” This is intimated in the text. When the queen of Sheba had seen the order and equity of Solomon’s administration, and the happiness of his people, she thus proclaimed her admiration of the providence of God in the elevation of so wise a prince. *Blessed be the Lord, thy God, who delighted in thee, to set thee on his throne, to be king for the Lord thy God: because thy God loved Israel, to establish them forever, therefore made he thee king over them, to do judgment and justice.*

THAT all power belongs to God, and is derived from him, is doubted only by those “who say in their hearts there is no God.* He doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; none can stay his hand.”† He makes use, however, of creatures in the government of the moral world, as he doth of second causes in the natural. Men are his vicegerents in the government of one another. But who shall hold the reins, and in what manner they shall be committed into their hands, is ordered by God’s counsel and providence. Natural causes concur and are

* Psal. xiv. 1. † Dan. iv. 35.

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made the means of raising up one and putting down another; especially of placing such in authority, as are fitted to answer the designs of the most HIGH, whether of mercy or judgment, but all are overruled of him. Without infringing on human liberty his designs are accomplished, and his purposes stand. Second causes subserve the views of the great first cause, and eventually fulfil his pleasure. The supreme ruler makes use of what instruments he pleases. In the government of nations he often employs the most abandoned of mankind. The perfection of divine wisdom in the providential government of the world will ultimately appear in overruling the wickedness of men, especially of princes, to subserve God's wise and holy purposes.

THE ways of providence often appear to us dark and confused. "We may wonder with great admiration." But why? They are only some small detached parts of the divine scheme which fall under our inspection; and of those our knowledge is partial and quite imperfect. But in God there is no darkness. With him all is order and harmony. When the mystery of God is finished, we shall see that there is no error in his administration.

FARTHER : Good civil government is a token of God's love to a people : *Because thy God loved Israel, therefore made he thee king over them.*

In the language of Scripture a king often signifies a form of government, or the polity of a nation. The requisites to good government are principally a good constitution and a good administration.

OF all national blessings none is more valuable than the establishment of a *good constitution*. Government hath generally been the result of necessity. A little attention is sufficient to shew its origin ; why the regal form hath been the most common ; and how it hath almost universally become oppressive.

WHEN, from the brevity of life and increase of population, patriarchal authority was found too weak to restrain the lusts and regulate the jarring interests of mankind, other measures for security became necessary. Then the weak took shelter under the protection of the strong. Every one found it necessary to attach himself to, and make a common interest with, some powerful leader—unless where numbers had the precaution to unite for mutual safety, electing their chiefs, and agreeing in some general rules and regulations for the common advantage. This produced republics. But few took precaution for safety beyond what the strength of their families and immediate connections afforded, till they saw the necessity of more powerful protection ; and then they resorted to the nearest chieftain, from whom they might hope for temporary security, in return for which they became in a manner necessarily the instruments of extending their authority, and otherwise gratifying their ambition or selfishness.

THUS by gradual advances have monarchies arisen which have aimed at universal dominion. Hence also those monsters called conquerors who like beasts of prey “ have devoured, and

broken in pieces, and stamped the residue with their feet.”* Never was the wrath of heaven poured on the earth by the agency of more fell destroyers. At the head of this race stands Nimrod, a first born descendant of execrated Ham. By degrees those chiefs having gained absolute power over their followers, prevailed to hand down the same to their children. Dominion they considered as an inheritance; and unwary nations tacitly admitted their impious claims, and suffered the chains of despotism to be rivetted upon them. Hereditary power, that *opprobrium* of reason hath laid prostrate the liberties of the world. This first took place when the sons of Noah had spread themselves abroad after the flood. It appeared again in Europe after the subversion of the Roman empire by the barbarians of the North.

IN most nations, however, regal power was at first restrained by formal conventions between the people and their sovereigns: but such advantages were generally put into the hands of those raised to royalty, as enabled them to burst the mounds set to guard the rights of subjects. These advantages they have seldom neglected. More have watched to enlarge their own power, and make themselves and their descendants absolute, than to make their people happy by fulfilling their own solemn engagements.

THE republics which have been the most renowned are those of Greece and Rome. These long flourished, and rose to great power and splendor. Their names are still revered. But no sooner were the people enervated by vice and

luxury, than they sunk under the influence of craft and intrigue, and were immersed with the rest of the world in the gulph of regal domination.

EVERY different species of government may have some advantages peculiar to itself : but *which* hath, in general, produced the greatest happiness to the subject, called forth most of the powers latent in the human mind, and to the highest degree ennobled the nature of man, can be doubted by ignorance alone.

It is therefore a strong expression of heaven's favor to a people when wisdom is given them to adopt a good system of government, and establish wise and equitable regulations. Such establishments are the source of order and happiness. Yea they often lengthen out the tranquility of a people, after they are so far corrupted that general wretchedness must have ensued, had not these regulations been adopted.

MUCH also depends on the character of those who are intrusted with the administration. "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice ; but when the wicked bear rule, the people mourn."* When government is corrupted at it's source, or by want of ability or faithfulness in those who are appointed to carry it into execution, "the foundations of the earth are out of course." Confusion and every evil work follow. As the providence of God is concerned in the exaltation of those who bear rule,

* Prov. xxix. 2.

when the wise and virtuous are raised to places of authority, the goodness of God towards such people appears, and demands their grateful notice. “But wo to that land whose king is a child, and whose princes eat in the morning.”

FURTHER : civil rulers are exalted to rule for GOD. *Set thee on his throne to be king for the Lord thy God.*

To *rule for God* is to rule according to his directions, faithfully adhering to the regulations which he hath given. It was required of the ruler of God's people of old to acquaint himself with his law, and make it the rule of his life and government. “When he sitteth on the throne, he shall write him a copy of this law out of that which is before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear the Lord his God; to keep all the words of this law, and these statutes to do them; that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren; and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand or to the left.” The whole universe is under the divine controul. To the supreme ruler is every created being accountable. However any may aspire to independence, “there is higher than they.” The greatest and most powerful among men should always consider themselves as subordinate rulers, who are exercising only delegated powers, and exalted to rule, not for themselves, but for him whose they are, and whose the majesty in which they shine.

BUT to do justice in any measure to our subject, it is necessary to descend a little to particu-

lars. Here a wide field opens before us. A very partial view must content us.

THAT rulers are exalted *to rule for God by doing judgment and justice* implies, first, an attentive care to see that just laws are enacted. Laws by which human rights will be secured, and free course given to commutative justice. The establishment of justice is the primary duty of those who are placed in authority. To this duty legislators are under the greatest obligation. That there are none who can call them to account, or compel them to do justly, can tempt only the basest of men to do wrong. True honor scorns to oppress the poor, or to abuse the weak and defenceless. Those whom power seduces to injustice, and converts into oppressors, are lost to all principles of honor and virtue.

“ * BESIDES the virtues that are the glory of princes as well as of private persons,” saith a great author, “ there is a dignity and decorum that particularly belongs to the supreme rank, and which a sovereign ought to observe with the greatest care. He cannot neglect them without degrading himself, and stamping a blemish on the State. Every ray that beams from the throne ought to bear the character of purity, nobleness and grandeur. What an idea do we conceive of a people, when we see the sovereign shew in public acts a meanness of sentiment with which a private person would think himself dishonored? The majesty of a nation resides in it’s rulers.” When they are lost to

honor and probity, or adopt the principles of Machiavelian policy, their infamy descends to the body of which they are the head. Such rulers deserve to be disgracefully driven from their posts.

God requires "those who rule over men to be just ruling in his fear." Rulers of a different character set up the standard of rebellion against God, and may expect to be judged as those who will not have him to rule over them. "If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall intreat for him?"†

NEXT to seeing that good laws are enacted, it is the rulers duty to see that they are carried into execution. Laws become useless, when they are neglected, and their penalties disregarded. This is often a first symptom of decay among a people who have been blessed with a good constitution: It saps the foundations of justice both public and private; consequently destroys peace and order. To see that faithful men are appointed to execute the laws, and that they are duly supported, and enabled to act effectually, is an indispensable duty in the guardians of a State.

BUT so imperfect is every thing human, that the compleatest civil code cannot reach to every case. Legislators are therefore often called to act judicially, being the dernier resort where the written law fails. In such cases the character of the ruler is exchanged for that of the judge. Here in matters of right they have no dispensing power, but are tied up to the strict

† 1. Sam. ii. 15.

rules of equity. Though superior to the laws of man, they are bound by the law of God *to do judgment and justice*. In matters which respect the public, the public weal should be their object. Services done for the community should be rewarded at the common expense, and useful inventions and improvements in the arts which may benefit society, encouraged by suitable premiums. But the good ruler doth not forget, that although justice is a public, generosity is a private, virtue. Righteous demands on the public he discharges with punctuality and honor. He doth not think himself warranted to defraud individuals, because he acts for the public; but pensions reaching to posterity, and largesses of every kind from the public treasury, he avoids with the scrupulous care of a guardian faithful to his trust.

As civil rulers are *set to rule for God*, their example is of great importance. Laws are commonly revered while rulers themselves obey them; but seldom regarded when their conduct is diverse. Rulers who maintain the dignity of character which becomes their stations, have in their example an influence more happily commanding than all the terrors of power. This renders exceedingly interesting the part they act. Every one's influence bears proportion to his consideration in the eyes of men. Obscure individuals stand in a good measure alone. To *themselves* it is of importance that they refuse the evil and chuse the good. But different is the case of those in high stations. If *they* are vicious, "many will follow their pernicious ways, and they will not perish alone in their iniquity."

FURTHER : It is incumbent on those who are *set to rule for God* to be *nursing fathers* to the cause of God. We are aware that it is not in the power of man to compel any to be religious, and that civil rulers, by interposing in behalf of religion, have sometimes injured the cause they intended to advance. This hath arisen from mistaking their duty, or taking too much upon them. Rulers have often arrogated to themselves titles which belong to God only—often taken on them to decide on articles of faith. That a large share of this absurdity hath formerly been charged on clerical influence, we do not deny; but from whatever source it proceeds, it argues great arrogance and gross ignorance of human nature. No power, except that of light and truth, hath the remotest tendency to produce conviction. One might as rationally expect by force of argument to chain up the ocean, or arrest the planets in their course, as to change the views of the mind by the terror of penal laws. Never was a soul converted to Christianity by Papal *anathemas*, or imperial mandates or proscriptions. In matters of faith every one hath an unalienable right to judge for himself: It is a right of which no one can deprive another, and for the use of which man is answerable to God alone. Each one hath also a right to worship God as his conscience directs, while he leaves others to enjoy the same liberty. Openly to profess his own sentiments, “live in all good conscience before God,” and maintain the same liberty for others, unawed by the reproaches of bigotry, is the rulers duty. If the evidences of religion are not sufficient to evince it’s divine original, it deserves no support. If it cannot commend itself

to the consciences of men as worthy of all acceptance, let it fall. But the religion of Jesus doth not fear to meet all it's adversaries on the ground of reason and evidence: Its truth is attested by a cloud of witnesses: The more they are examined the better: It needs no arm of power to crush those who deny its divine origin: It calls no fire from heaven to consume those who do not receive it. They know not what spirit they are of, who think to aid it by such means: It is worse than steadying the ark with unhallowed hands. It is like immolating human victims on the altar of Jehovah. Let true religion only be defended from external violence, and those raised to power whose lives adorn it, and it will triumph over all the sophistry of earth and hell, and spread its divine influence far and wide. Thus to defend and recommend it, is the ruler's duty.

BUT while each one judgeth for himself respecting the nature of religion, it is of importance that public worship should be kept up, and it is the duty of all, according to their ability, to contribute to its support. This is no infringement of religious liberty, while no one attempts to intrude his creed upon another, or calls on him to support a religious system not his own. A comparison of communities in which these regulations have been maintained with those in which they have been neglected is sufficient to evince their utility, and convince even the sceptic of their political wisdom. And though God is pleased to bless those means, and render them effectual to spiritual advantages, it

is on political principles that such regulations call for the civil ruler's support. For order, harmony and general happiness have, from time immemorial, been found to be their fruits.

I ONLY add here, faithfulness to God and to their constituents requires those in authority to patronise the interests of literature. Ignorance next to vice is baleful to liberty and happiness. Vice and ignorance often go together, and the glory of every people falls before them. But deeply sensible are this people of the importance of early instruction, and such hath been the generous care of their rulers, both to encourage private schools and support the university, from which the state hath long received distinguishing advantages, that the propriety of enlarging on the subject is precluded.

FINALLY, God's end in giving a good constitution and good rulers to a people is *their establishment*. "Because thy God loved Israel to establish them forever therefore made he thee king over them."

WHEN the form of government is essentially defective, or the administration devoid of the qualifications which constitute the good ruler, numbers and resources are of no avail: they afford neither tranquility within, nor security against violence from without. Almost every age affords examples which confirm this observation—the present in particular. One of the kingdoms of Europe,* to which in nature nothing was wanting to have rendered it a match for the

* Poland.

most powerful of its neighbors, hath long been the scene of anarchy and wretchedness from defects in its polity. It was a few years ago formally divided among some of the powers bordering upon it, and is now, with feeble, unavailing resistance seized by the ruthless tool of a Northern despot : its cities laid in ashes, and its fields drenched in the best blood of its inhabitants ; because they dared to assert their undoubted rights.

THESE States, now so happy and respectable, had well nigh afforded another instance of a gallant people ruined through the deficiency of their national government. When congress was only entitled to apportion and ask the supplies necessary to the common welfare, every one knows how irregular, unequal and deficient they were found, even during the struggle for national existence. All those evils increased after the arduous contest was ended. Public credit was lost, honest industry discouraged, and barefaced injustice and oppression prevailed. We remember the well meant endeavors of our faithful rulers to avert the evils, and establish this infant empire. But all was unavailing, till the source of our distress was removed in a new organization of the general government.

GOOD rulers are no less necessary to the establishment of a nation, than good rules. When weak or wicked men are exalted, the best constitution is in vain. Debility in the head extends to the members of the body politic. Wicked, designing rulers are still worse than weak ones. What encroachments on the rights

of a people hath a single reign often produced? Weak or luxurious princes have often enervated the arm, and destroyed the source of national power, and yielded great and respectable States a prey to enemies they before despised. Wicked ones often destroyed their liberties, and caused them to cry out by reason of those who ruled over them. But good forms of government, and wise and faithful men holding the reins, render small States happy and secure: and, when continued for a few generations, generally raise them to national greatness.

Few have been permitted to chuse, either the form of their government, or the persons to exercise it. To the United States both have been refered by the distinguishing goodness of God. Freed from foreign dominion, it was given us, deliberately to adopt what civil constitution we pleased. In an enlightened age, with the history of the whole political world before us, we have chosen for ourselves. Hitherto we approve our choice. Happily the power of amendment is retained. Whenever defects appear, they may be rectified, without violence or tumult. With what other government is this the case? In some countries where they make their boasts of liberty prescription is often pleaded in justification of abuses and against amendments!

At the pride and folly of those of old whose laws were irreversibile, the present age wonders. Yet similar traits appear in most modern constitutions. Strong clauses to prevent improvements; by which they are bound never to grow

wiser ! Or if not, custom hath in this respect all the force of law ! On every emergency, or uncommon incident, the annals of their history are ransacked for precedent ; and the decisions of less enlightened, perhaps of barbarous ancestors, give law to a thousand generations ! As though wisdom had perished with the ancients ; or the moderns were forbidden by penal statutes, to correct any of their mistakes, or interdicted of heaven, to think or act for themselves in matters of government. Different are our views in this respect. Unfettered by custom, or the opinion of less privileged ages, full scope is given for all the improvements in civil policy, which the experience of former times, and the wisdom of the present, may suggest. This advantage is more to be valued than all the political knowledge of the East.

OUR rulers are of ourselves, and freely elected. In giving our suffrages, we are neither awed by power, nor affected by influence. This day speaks us possessed of privileges which all have desired, but very few enjoyed. What more or better can we wish ? *Because God loved our Israel, unworthy as we are, therefore hath he bestowed these blessings upon us to establish us forever.*

THESE considerations suggest to us the duty of a people so highly favored of heaven. A people proved with mercies should make the returns of love and obedience. "The goodness of God leadeth to repentance." And as much depends on the character of rulers, it highly concerns those who are permitted in providence to chuse

their own, "to provide out of all the people able men; such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness to be rulers over them."* If a free people "call the proud happy, and set up the workers of iniquity,"† they begin the revolt from God, "rejecting the Lord that he should not reign over them," and implicitly declaring that they "will be like the nations."‡

It is the great privilege of free governments, that in them neither weak nor wicked rulers are necessary. Where hereditary power is established, the case is different: there the fool or the man of Belial may be their king. Yea, the one or other hath generally happened. But where rulers are called to office by the suffrages of the people, the wise and good may be exalted, and all the blessings of good government secured.

FINALLY; the character of a free people is commonly apparent in that of their rulers. Electors wish to promote those like themselves. Men of principle give their votes for men of principle: those averse to its restraints, for those whose vicious indulgencies may keep them in countenance.

THERE are times, indeed, in which, through the deceptious influence of designing men, those of opposite principles unite in calling to office, men whom in other circumstances, they would all despise or abhor. But time develops characters and views. When cool reflection succeeds to party heat, or the occasion of the

* Exod. xviii. 21

† 1 Sam. viii. 7.

‡ v. 66

moment is no more, general character is again considered, and those advanced to power whose views are consentaneous to theirs on whom their elevation depends.

THE occasion of this solemnity authorizes an address, first, to the chief magistrate of this State.

SIR,

AT a period critical and interesting to the liberties of your country and of mankind, you was called by providence into public life. Had Britain triumphed, the cause of America had been deemed rebellion, and the assertors of her rights had died with infamy. Not ignorant of the danger, yet trusting in him who loveth our Israel, you joined the patriots who broke the servile yoke and raised us to rank among the nations. Then was laid the foundation of our future greatness and felicity, and the foundation of two revolutions in Europe, both highly important, which have already taken place, and perhaps the foundation of more, yet in the womb of providence.

SENSIBLE that the rise and fall of empires proceed from God, the good ruler's eye is raised to him for direction, and for a blessing on his faithful endeavors, to serve God and his generation. We assure ourselves that your excellency will never lose sight of republican principles, or set the example of forsaking republican manners. To be the first servant of a free and grateful people, you esteem more honorable, than to glitter in all the tinselled toys of royalty, or by a nod give law to myriads of slaves. The

pageantry of monarchy, like the infants rattle, pleases little minds, and is suitable to the capacities of most of those who, born to empire, are surrounded with flatterers from their earliest days. Nobler objects employ the mind of him who is worthy to rule over freemen. To govern with equity and honor, and seek the wealth of his people, is his highest ambition and the joy of his heart.

WHILE the wise and faithful civil ruler is respected, beloved and obeyed, he is not unmindful of the duties due to *him* who is over all. He is careful to “render unto God the things that are God’s;”^{*} careful, by a bright example of every virtue, to recommend religion, that others may learn of him to glorify God. Godliness promotes order and harmony, and gives strength and honor. “Righteousness exalteth a nation.” It hath been the distinguished happiness of this State that such have been her chief rulers.

WE offer up prayer for your Excellency, that you may be enabled to acquit yourself with honor in the discharge of every remaining duty as a dignified christian ruler—that when you shall have “served your generation according to the will of God,” you may retire with an approving conscience; meet an approving judge; and receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

THE address now turns to the other branches of the legislature.

* Mat. xxii. 21.

GENTLEMEN,

INTERESTING is the trust reposed in those who are called to defend the rights and regulate the public concerns of freemen. In their wisdom, prudence and fidelity do the multitude of their brethren confide. To them do they look up for justice, order and tranquility.

FROM no source have greater calamities arisen than from errors in the form, and abuses in the administration of government. Many are the ways in which offended heaven hath scourged the wickedness of men; but in few more severely than in monarchical establishments; in none more terribly than by “setting up over them the basest of men,”* and yielding them a prey to those “whose tender mercies are cruel.”†

TYRANTS were foretold, under the symbolical representation of beasts of prey.‡ They have “turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock,”§ not only among those under their dominion, but also in surrounding nations. “To them it hath been given to take peace from the earth, that men should kill one another.”|| What is said of the tongue is applicable to them—“They set on fire the corner of nature, and are set on fire of hell.”¶ The wars, which have depopulated the world have mostly originated in regal pride, passion, and lust of power. The end of these distresses is not yet.*

* Dan. iv. 17. † Prov. xii. 19. ‡ Dan. vii. 3.
§ Amos vi. 12. || Rev. vi. 4. ¶ Jam. iii. 6.

* THAT the latter day glory, so often foretold in scripture, is to be preceded by great desolations, especially by bloody wars, hath been the expectation of those who have attended to the prophecies: but the occasion of those wars, we apprehend

THESE destroyers have nevertheless, had their penegeyrist^s to blazon their fame. But smoking kingdoms and desolated realms have witnessed

hath been mistaken. That they will be of the religious kind, hath been the general opinion. But it might be easily shewn from the word of truth, that after the decline of Roman superstition, infidelity will “run and be glorified”—the earth filled with scoffers, and that faith will scarcely be found upon it, “when the son of man cometh.”* The wars then, which are to depopulate the world, must arise from some other source. That they will be occasioned by struggles between power and liberty, is at present, the most probable conjecture. That “the thrones are to be cast down,”† and all birds of prey “filled with the flesh of kings”‡ and their partizans and helpers, we are taught in prophecy. The same is probably intimated, by “the sun and moon, being darkened, and the stars falling to the earth.”§

THAT monarchy should contend earnestly for the powers and prerogatives it possessed in the dark ages, when resisting a king was thought to be, in every instance, “resisting the ordinance of God,” hath nothing in it surprising. And that such are its connections and dependencies as to occasion severe and bloody contentions, an acquaintance with the political world gives us reason to expect: and the ways of providence at this day, seem to confirm these expectations. For the contest is already begun. “The thrones begin to be cast down, and birds of prey to feed on the flesh of kings, and their adherents. Here the struggle commenced, when these States resisted the tyranny of Britain. And its progress is retrograde to that of despotism, which began in the East.

To those who occupied the political horizon of Europe|| “the cloud which appeared in the West soon after the conclusion of the war in 1763, was scarcely visible. It appeared like that seen by the servant of Elijah, no larger than a man’s hand, and was despised as what could no more disturb the repose of nations, than a drop could ruffle the ocean.” But it soon brought on a tempest which shook the British empire to its centre. And lo! the heavens are now black with clouds and wind. The whole eastern hemisphere is darkened. A storm gathered which will probably continue, “till the stars fall from heaven and the powers of heaven are shaken”—till mighty revolutions are accomplished—regal pride and power every where laid in the dust! God grant, that “the tribulations of these days may be shortened” But so vast and extensive are the changes to be made that they bid fair to continue for ages.

* Luke, xviii. 8. † Dan. vii. 9. ‡ Rev. xix. 17.
§ Mat. xxiv. 29. Rev. vi. 13. || Watson, bishop of Landaff.

their more than brutal enormities. The groans of bereaved parents, the cries of helpless orphans, the shrieks of ravished matrons and virgins, and the wailings of oppressed millions who have had no helper, have ascended to heaven and held them up as objects of horror and execration. Had the nations retained their liberties, formed laws for themselves, and suffered none to rule over them who were not of their own election, chosen for short terms, all these evils had been prevented.

In free states, public trusts are honorable, they are the supposed badges of ability and virtue. The case is different in hereditary governments. In them the lowest servant is often wiser and better than he who is lord of all. The meanest officer of a free people deserves more respect, than is due to the prince who struts in purple, and swells beneath a diadem. Dignity of soul is requisite in those honored with public confidence. Weak or trifling characters are exposed by elevation. "Folly set in great dignity" appears but the more contemptible.

To those who rule well honor and obedience are due; and they are seldom denied to the judicious ruler, who makes it his concern to answer the reasonable expectations of his constituents. They, in general, look to him as a father, and respect him as a benefactor. Some uneasy men there are in every state, but the body of the people do not often complain without reason, of those who rule over them. They commonly honor and confide in those who have virtue and courage to act honestly, steadily pursuing the public weal, unmoved by party applause or censure.

DUTIES due to God call also for the attention of those in authority. They are exalted to rule for him. He requires them to defend religion by their laws, and recommend it by their example. True religion is excellent in itself, however the great may affect it. But the multitude are much influenced in their opinion of it, by the respect it receives, from those in high stations. These may do much to recommend it, and spread its salutary effects. In so doing they honor themselves, and God will honor them. Godliness secures the smiles of indulgent providence to rulers and subjects. The righteous are the salt of the earth, who preserve the world from the putrefactions of vice, give health and strength to the body politic, and draw down the blessing from above upon it.

RULERS are in a sense, federal heads to those under their government. The people derive from them a relative holiness or guilt. David's piety blessed his family and people for many generations. Manasseh's sin God would not pardon, but punished with sore calamities upon Israel, even after that prince lay mouldering in the dust. Those in authority who remember that *they sit on God's throne*, and are exalted to *rule for him*, will be careful to advance his honor and interest. Such have been, and we trust will be, the rulers of this people. Should this cease to be their character, then would "the ways of Zion mourn." Should "a scoffer, walking after his own lusts," or an infidel, "denying the Lord that bought him," unawares creep in among them, mischievous would be his influence, like that of an intruder of old among

the sons of God.* Regard to religion and literature have hitherto done no less honor to the legislature of this State, than their zeal to maintain our civil rights.

OUR eyes, gentlemen, are now turned on you. We expect from you like faithfulness to God and to your constituents. We trust that you will honor yourselves, and prolong our happiness, by your wisdom, prudence and fidelity—that neither your private interests, nor those of separate districts, will affect the public councils—that no party cabals will divide this virtuous state representation—and that particular, will not supersede general laws, except in cases very extraordinary.

MAY you have wisdom equal to the important trust reposed in you; be faithful in the discharge of every duty public and private; and when you shall have finished your work, may you find mercy with *him*, at whose bar you must stand in common with your brethren.

MY FELLOW SERVANTS IN THE GOSPEL MINISTRY.

WHILE good rulers strengthen our hands, it behoves us to return the benevolence, and “put our people in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates and be ready to every good work.”† The irreligion which hath disgraced an European kingdom, amidst her struggles for liberty, is for our admonition.

* Job. i 6.

† Tit. iii 1.

Have we no reason to apprehend that it may prevail among us? Should this be the case, persons of different character from *most* of our present rulers may be raised to places of honor and trust. May merciful heaven avert the impending evil. May we labor and not faint, in defence of the best religion and in the cause of the best master, whatever conflicts may be before us—encouraging ourselves in his promise: “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”†

FELLOW CITIZENS of this numerous, and very respectable audience.

HAPPILY hath God made us to differ from our brethren of other nations. Let us for a moment reflect upon it.

FRANCE long enslaved, hath lately broken her bands and now asserts her rights. What wonders doth the spirit of liberty produce? while under a monarchy, aided by a family compact, she was spoiled and kept under by a northern neighbor. But upon her assuming a republican form, she hath singly baffled the councils, and with her soldiers of a day, vanquished the forces of all the surrounding nations.

HER late adoption of a mild and just system has contributed to lessen her internal convulsion and danger. While past atrocities are to be de-

† Rev. iii. 10.

ploded, much is to be attributed to the external force that surrounded her, and the attempts to seduce her citizens. Though her enemies are weakened by repeated defeats, they yet continue to break her rest and prevent her enjoying the blessings of liberty in tranquility.

THE Dutch united provinces have now the prospect of happiness. Wisdom and moderation have marked every part of their public conduct, since the tyrants who oppressed them have been driven away. But their felicity is not yet secured. Calamitous must be their situation while their country continues the theatre on which contending nations are struggling for the mastery.

BRITAIN hath long made her boasts of liberty.* If she enjoys it may she long enjoy it by us unenvied. Let her glory in the strength of her constitution.—If strong by nature, it hath a consumption preying on its vitals, and already wears a sickly countenance. At this day, what is her government, but intrigue and influence? Long after Roman liberty was lost, the forms of their ancient government were kept up, and the simple vulgar thought themselves free. Little different is the present State of our British brethren.

* WHAT is the foundation of this boasted liberty? *Magna Charta*. What is this *Magna Charta*? A grant of certain privileges, made to the nation by one king John, a most contemptible character. Is not the divine right of this same John to the plenitude of power claimed by despots conceded in the very acceptance of this grant? But how was this ennobling boon obtained from the said John? If by force, these boasted privileges are the fruit of rebellion and robbery. If by prayers and humble intreaties, acquitted of guilt it becomes a beggarly distinction. Should American rulers proffer like grant to her free born sons, they would spurn from office such assuming chiefs.

Their commons are the only part of their legislature so much as nominally chosen by the people. These they consider as the bulwark of their liberty. How and by whom are they now chosen? They are but a mockery of representation. The forms however, of their free government are continued, and the nation pleased with the name of liberty. Connected with that kingdom by a thousand ties, she might have dragged us down to servitude, had not her cruel policy torn these ties asunder, and left her to sink alone. While we execrate her views, and shudder to recollect the dangers we have escaped, let us shout the praises of HIM “who doth great things and unsearchable, and marvellous things without number.”†

POLAND whose arms formerly repelled* the all conquering Turk, weakened by internal discord, hath been parcelled out among her unprincipled, ambitious neighbors, and is now barbarously seized by one of them, and a despotism, probably erected on the ruins of her intended liberties.

* SOBIESKI, king of Poland, in 1683, defeated the Turks, with great slaughter, and obliged them to raise the siege of Vienna: thereby saving the metropolis and probably the Germanic empire itself, which is now leagued with two other powers to divide among themselves that unhappy kingdom. In that kingdom the genuine nature of arbitrary power now appears. There America may see, what she had long since felt, had humane Britain triumphed in the year 1775. In India still greater cruelties have been practised by Englishmen: and all attempts to bring those monsters to justice have been defeated by the fascinating influence of gold. Gold extorted from the defenceless, regardless of the tears. Yea, if a * prelate of their own, is to be credited, regardless of the dying groans of murdered millions!

† Job v. 9.

* Bishop of St. Asaph.

THE vast residue of the East with few exceptions, groans under the iron yoke of arbitrary sway. When we turn a thought on those miserable millions, doth not the tear of pity steal down our cheek? But viewed as nations, is not all this wretchedness voluntary? Did they will the downfall of tyranny, would it not fall to rise no more? If “they plainly say we love our masters, and will not go out free,” we must leave them to hug their chains—to lick the hand that rises all their comforts, and is often raised to shed their blood. We must leave them to adore the idol their folly hath set up—the Diana of arbitrary power, “whom all Asia and the world worship.” May America, which is said to “degenerate animal nature, and be little man,” † forever refuse to bow to the golden image of royalty, and think herself happy in being free. Such are her present views.

PERMIT me, therefore, to call up your gratitude to the author of all good, by observing, agreeably to our present apprehensions, that “the lines are fallen to us in pleasant places, and we have a goodly heritage.* God hath not dealt so with any nation.” † No people equally privileged is to be found on earth. Heaven’s distinguishing goodness, beams upon us from every quarter.

WE are blessed with a country productive not only of the necessaries, but sweets of life. The variety of productions is greater in this, than in almost any other land. What was said of Ca-

† Buffon.

* Psal. xvi. 6. † cxlvii. 20.

naan, will apply to these States. "It is a land of hills and vallies, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven: a land which thy God careth for: the eyes of the Lord thy God are upon it, from the beginning of the year, even unto the end of the year."† But the crown of all is freedom. Our possessions are our own. No proud master can command our persons, or violate our property. Nor is it the least of our advantages, that we are so far removed from those who could do us essential injury. It was part of Israel's blessing, that they "should dwell alone, and not be reckoned among the nations."§ The same was our security, and the means of our deliverance from the mad rage of Britain. God grant that the ocean may forever guard us against the violence, and separate us from the vices, follies and politics of Europe.

BOTH in our national and state capacities we are blessed with the happiest constitutions, together with the power of making alterations, as our change of circumstances may require. If any chosen to rule over us are found unfaithful or unskilful, they may soon be removed, and others advanced to fill their places. Here no one claims *a divine right to do wrong*. Nor is it pretended, that there are any *who can do no wrong*.|| Here none claim authority who are not invested with it by the suffrages of their brethren; to

† Deut. xi. 11, 12. § Numb. xxiii. 9.

|| According to the maxims of a certain European kingdom, the king can do no wrong and never dies. We should suppose, that Prayer, "O king live forever,"¶ was there heard and answered. A very proper prayer, where kings can make laws, which never need to be altered.

¶ Dan. vi. 6.

whom they confess themselves accountable for their conduct in administration. That rulers are ordained for the people, and not the people made for them, is universally conceded.

This doth not derogate from the honor of those who rule well. They are deserving of double honor. To them it is given to do more for the benefit of mankind, than to most others; and to be useful is the greatest honor—To do good is God-like.

It highly concerns us to be careful whom we raise to power, and to be watchful of their conduct. The representatives of the united Netherlands, who freed that people from the yoke of Spain, became long since, *their High Mightinesses, independent of the people, and for some time, with an hereditary Stadtholder at their head,* till he was lately driven away by the victorious arms of the French republic.

SPAIN now one of the most despotic monarchies in Europe, was formerly a land of liberty.* No symptom, threatening to our rights yet appears, but care and watchfulness, only can se-

* The following is the oath of allegiance taken, during the sixteenth century, by the inhabitants of Aragon, at the accession of their kings to the throne. "We who are each of us as good, and who are altogether more powerful than you, promise obedience to your government if you maintain our rights; but if not, not." Conformably to this oath, they established it as a fundamental article in their constitution, that if the king should violate their privileges, it was lawful for the people to disclaim him as their sovereign, and elect another in his place." In Castile, the other principal kingdom in Spain, the crown was elective, the royal prerogative extremely limited, and the same spirit maintained, as in Aragon.

Robertson's History of Charles V. Vol. i. page, 157.

cure their continuance. The eastern continent, that world of slaves, was once inhabited by freemen. The general character and views of rulers are matters of the utmost importance. The wise, the good, the virtuous, men who fear God and love peace, whose benevolent minds wish liberty and happiness to the whole human race, should be carefully sought out, and elected to office. When free states chuse weak or wicked men to rule over them, they expose themselves to the evils attendant on hereditary power. When the former are elected, the ends of government are frustrated; when the latter, they often fasten those evils upon them, and bind them with cords which are not easily broken. Men of lax principles, men of no principles, and men of vicious manners, are unfit to be trusted with the concerns of the public. They who are allowedly unfaithful to God will not be faithful to men. The ties of honor are weak, where the fear of God and the ties of conscience are lost. To offer unprincipled men the oath of God, is trifling with religion, and affronting the majesty of heaven. “With such chains can no man bind them.”

BEWARE the ambitious, who indecently court promotion, who cannot contentedly wait, till those who bid them, unsolicited, say to them, “friends go up higher;”* but seek, by undue measures, to foist themselves into the chief seats—Who artfully raise popular prejudices, and catch at every vulgar mistake, saying to every one, “see thy matters are good and right;”† their opinions veering with every wind. Men who

* Luke xiv. 10.

† 2 Sam. xv. 2.

are fit to be intrusted with public offices, who are worthy of public confidence, are men of discernment, and men of stability. Such, if called into public life, will steadily pursue that line of conduct, which to themselves appears most conducive to the public good. They are incapable of sacrificing their own judgments to popular clamors, raised by the low intrigues of designing men. If their measures offend, they retire with dignity into private life; and leave the world to estimate their value, by a comparison of their administration with that of their successors.

THAT the vile practice of electioneering, in all its forms, should be forever excluded, is a matter of the last importance. It hath degraded every free state into which it hath found admittance, and deeply wounded or destroyed their liberties. Should it creep in among us, it would doubtless draw after it like fatal effects. No principle can restrain the venal wretch who in any manner buys an office, from prostituting the same to his private emolument. Blessed be God, such is not the character of our rulers. Should they become such, our happy constitution would avail us little. From the dignity of freemen, we should sink into servitude. But when electors are wise and prudent, improper persons seldom make their way to power. If they chance to rise, they commonly soon fall again, and sink into deserved contempt.

WHILE we are careful to elect wise and virtuous rulers, we may safely confide in them. And to the united wisdom of our assembled legislature should every matter of public concern be

referred. In our retirements we have not those means of information which they enjoy. The particular members whom we elect are sent to participate in that information, and act under the influence of it. Unreasonable therefore and affrontive is the practice of binding their hands by instructions, which reduce them to the post boy's insignificance.

WOULD we continue happy and respectable, we must render to all their dues—to God—to civil rulers—to all men. To this leads that religion which is from above. The doctrine that weakens the ties of virtue, saying “to those who despise God, ye shall have peace, and to those who walk in the imagination of their own heart, no evil shall come upon you,” having a contrary tendency, is from beneath, and leads down to ruin.

WHILE we feel ourselves interested in the peace and happiness of society and the preservation of our rights, let us not forget, that still higher and more valuable interests demand our principal attention. This is but our entrance on existence. The whole depends on the manner in which we here act our parts. We act under an omniscient eye. Our temper and conduct, yea our views and desires, are registered in heaven, and will one day be brought into judgment.

MAY such considerations always abide with us, and may we live continually under a deep sense of their reality. Nothing besides hath an equal tendency to render us blessings in our generation, and train us up for eternal blessedness. *AMEN.*