

THE
CONSTANCY AND UNIFORMITY
OF THE
DIVINE GOVERNMENT,
ILLUSTRATED AND IMPROVED
IN A
S E R M O N,

Preached in *Spring field*, April 7, 1803,

which was a day of

PUBLIC FASTING AND PRAYER.

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The thing that hath been is that which shall be, and that which is done, is that which shall be done ; and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there any thing, whereof it may be said, see, this is new ? It hath been already of old time, which was before us.

“ **N**O new thing !—How shall we understand the preacher ?—We often see new things. There are new discoveries in the natural world ; new inventions in the mechanic arts ; new improvements in science, government and morals.” This doubtless is true. But the preacher is speaking of things as they are in themselves, or of the method of the Divine Government ; not of human discoveries, inventions and improvements. We may discover things which were once unknown ; but the things discovered are not new : They existed before. We may invent new arts ; but arts are only particular ways of applying the powers of nature ; and these powers were always the same. We may have such knowledge of moral and political truths, as many in former ages had not, and some have not in the present age ; but there are no new truths. What is true in morals now, was true from the beginning of the world.

Whatever difference there may be among mankind with respect to knowledge, virtue or liberty, the Divine Government is the same ; it is steady and uniform ; and in respect of this it is true, and in respect of this Solomon says “ The thing which hath been is that which shall

be, and that which is done, is that which shall be done, and there is no new thing under the sun." This observation the wise man applies both to the *natural* and the *moral* government of GOD ; and in reference to both we will consider it.

1. He, in our text, applies the observation to the course of nature, or GOD's government of the natural world ; and for the illustration of it he adduces several examples.

" One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh ; but the earth abideth forever." The earth abides in the place first assigned it, and it is still peopled by the race of beings which first occupied it. But the individuals are daily changing. The same persons cannot long possess it. Those who are on it now must pass off to make room for others. And these in their turn will retire like the former. So it ever has been, and so it will be. When we see men die and return to the dust, we see a solemn event : but nothing new ; every age has seen the same. We who are advanced in years, have seen the inhabitants of the world almost entirely changed, since we came into it ; and old men, who lived a thousand years ago, saw the same. " What profit then hath a man in all his labor ? All is vanity."

" The sun ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and he hasteth to the place whence he arose." There he ariseth again as he arose before. And this change of day and night has been continued ever since the sun was placed in his sphere. The sun, by his alternate declension to the south, and approach to the north, makes the vicissitude of the seasons : but this is not new ; it has been the same from the beginning.

There is a variety in the course and strength of the *wind* ; but it is directed by the same laws which have always governed it. We know not whence it comes, nor whither it goes ; but we know it will not always come from the same point, nor rush with the same violence. The calm atmosphere which we enjoy to day, will by and by be roused into a tempest, and the howling tempest will soon sleep in silence. The shifting current will return to its former course, then shift again and take a new direc-

tion. “ The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about toward the north ; it whirleth about continually, and returneth again according to its circuits.”

The preacher says the same of the *waters*. “ All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full. Unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.” By the ascent of vapors from the sea, clouds are formed in the air, and waters are collected in the clouds : which, wafted by winds over the lands, there deposit their burdens. Thus the rivers return to the places, from which they came. Their sources are supplied by waters drawn from the sea, and their streams supply what the sea has lost.

“ All things are full of labor ; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.” The earth, warmed by the sun, watered by the clouds, and cultivated by man, brings forth herbs meet for him by whom it is dressed ; and so it always has done. But though it supplies the wants, it never satisfies the desires of men. How much soever they have acquired, still they labor to increase their stores.—And who can say, “ This is new ?”

By the culture of the husbandman the earth yields a competence for its inhabitants. All seasons are not equally productive, but the general produce, by an equitable distribution, is sufficient for all. In some seasons, there are severe droughts, in others, redundant rains. In certain regions there are alarming earthquakes, pestilential diseases, and destructive storms ; and, at another time, there may be similar phenomena in other regions. But these things are not new. They have appeared in ages past, and will appear in ages to come. The general course of nature is the same. This circumstantial variety, as well as the general uniformity of the seasons is agreeable to the settled plan of the Divine Government. The uniformity is such as shews us our course of duty, and insures the success of our industry : But there is so much variety as may teach us the government of Providence, and remind us of our dependence on an invisible power. If every season was wholly new, we should always have our business to learn, and never would form a successful plan of husbandry. If there was no diversity,

we should forget the GOD who is above, and trust to our own wisdom and industry.

As the natural, so,

2. The *moral* government of the world is in all ages the same, and there is in it no new thing. This Solomon asserts in the 3d chapter of this book. "To every thing there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven. And GOD hath made every thing beautiful in his time. No man can find out the work of GOD from the beginning to the end. Whatsoever GOD doth, it shall be forever. Nothing can be put to it and nothing taken from it, and GOD doth it, that men should fear before him. That which hath been is now, and that which is to be hath already been, and GOD requireth the thing which is past."

The preacher here teaches us, that GOD's government is adapted to impress men with the fear of him. Though they cannot comprehend his vast and eternal plan, yet they may see enough to learn, that their safety depends on submission and obedience to his will. And whatever variety there may be in his dispensations, they are all directed to the same end, to make men pious, virtuous and happy. Such ever has been, and ever will be the design and tendency of his government over intelligent beings. He governs them now as he ever has done ; and will govern them in future, as he does now. That which is to be, hath already been, and that which hath been, is now.

We see a connection between virtue and happiness, and between vice and misery. This connection is a permanent establishment. There never has been, and never will be a time when vice will make men happy, or virtue make them miserable. Industry procures competence ; sobriety contributes to health ; justice, truth and integrity, ensure mutual confidence ; and the contrary vices produce opposite effects. No man grows rich by idleness and dissipation ; or prolongs life by debauchery and intemperance ; or commands the confidence of his neighbors by fraud and dishonesty.

As it is with particular persons, so it is with communities. "Righteousness exalts a nation, and sin is a reproach to any people." Where religion has its influ-

ence among a people, there will be justice, peace, kindness and good order : There will be a mild and equitable government, and quietness and contentment under it. There will be industry, frugality and temperance in private citizens : And, as the result of these virtues, there will be national happiness. When irreligion and vice abound, there will be the contrary effects. And who can say, This is new ? The same has been the method of God's government, ever since men existed ; and the same it will continue, as long as men shall exist.

We sometimes see national calamities, which we call new. But if we could trace them to their moral cause, we doubtless should find, that they originated, where such calamities always originate, in national vice and corruption. If the calamities themselves are unusual, yet God's government is the same. As it ever has done, so it does still punish the sins of men by leaving their sins to fall upon them. The manners of mankind may change ; and, in different periods, different vices may prevail, and produce different calamities ; but still the calamities are consonant to their causes.

In late years there have been among the nations of the earth some terrible events ; and we call them new, because they have not ordinarily occurred. But they are the effects of certain moral causes, which have been for some time operating, and have now come to their crisis. The horrible massacres and conflagrations, which have been seen in some of the West-India Islands, are such events as seldom appear. But they are the judicial and natural consequences of an inhuman and barbarous traffic in the bodies and souls of men, and of a cruel and unrelenting tyranny of unprincipled and unfeeling masters over rational beings, whom they call their slaves. The insurrections of slaves have not been unfrequent in times past : but a concurrence of circumstances has, at this time rendered them more general, violent and destructive. We have heard of strange revolutions, and awful devastations among the nations of Europe. We call them new ; and such they may be in their extent and degree, though not in their kind. But they are all the fruits of men's follies, impieties and vices. There have been in Europe for some years past, such efforts of atheism and anarchy, as the world has seldom

witnessed before : There have been unusual arts and intrigues among the rulers of those nations to subvert each other's government, and to detach people from the authorities under which they were placed. And if the events, which have been seen, are new in appearance, they are not new in their connection. They proceed from causes, which, if brought into operation, would, under similar circumstances, always have produced similar effects. GOD's Government is the same. If his judgments appear new, it is because men have found new ways of offending him, and of plaguing one another, and therefore need new restraints and punishments. If the calamities of mankind have been more extensive and distressing than usual, it is because iniquity and impiety have unusually abounded.

Solomon's observation on the Divine Government in general, may be particularly applied to *revelation*. This, in substance, has always been the same. From age to age it grew more clear and full, until the gospel came. But in its nature and design, it all along continued, and still continues the same. The great object of it ever was, and now is to make men happy in a way of humble obedience to GOD—to encourage their obedience by the discovery of pardoning mercy, and the promise of a glorious immortality, and to deter them from wickedness by the threatnings of wrath to come. The laws which GOD has prescribed, and the duties which he has required, have been in substance the same. The external means of knowledge, and assistances to virtue have been various ; but moral obligation has never changed. 'Till heaven and earth pass away, GOD's word and law will remain.

When GOD incorporated the seed of Abraham into a political state, he gave them a civil, as well as religious constitution, and, with it, a code of laws for their national government. Legislation was no part of the work of rulers, for the necessary laws were divinely formed, and wrought into the constitution. These laws were always the same. They were, at first, well adapted to the condition of the people, and needed no alteration. The people always knew, or might know their duty ; and when they did it they were always happy.

GOD has given us the gospel, as well for the direc-

tion of our moral conduct, as for the encouragement of our faith and hope. This contains the substance of all preceding dispensations ; and it is a kingdom which cannot be moved. Some may have a more perfect understanding of it, than others have : But its doctrines and precepts admit of no change. No new ones will be added, nor will those which it contains ever be expunged. If, having set your face for heaven, you enquire, which is the way ? Go on, take the old path ; this is the good way ; walk in it, and you will find rest to your soul.

Having illustrated the meaning of the text, and shewn the constancy and uniformity of the Divine Government, we will now attend to the improvement of our subject.

I. We have reason to rejoice, that we are under such a perfect and stable government. “ The LORD reigns ! let the earth rejoice ; let the multitude of the isles be glad.” Whatever errors we may see in human governments, we are sure, that GOD’s ways are perfect : he is a GOD of truth and without iniquity : just and right is he. Under his government we may always know, what is our duty, and where is our safety.

As the course of nature is steady and uniform, from age to age, we can easily judge, how to project and pursue our secular business—when to sow our seed—in what manner to cultivate our fields—at what time to expect a harvest. But if the seasons were confounded—if the opposite hemispheres should be frequently inverted, and summer and winter change places, human industry, prudence and foresight would be at an end, and the race of mortals would soon be extinguished.

GOD’s moral, like his natural government, is steady ; and this is our security and happiness. If its laws were often changed, old ones abolished, and new ones substituted ; if what was virtue at one time, was vice at another ; if the way to Heaven in one age, was shut up in the next, and a new one opened, soon to be closed, that a third might succeed ; we should all be in the same miserable state, in which the fickle and inconstant always are, “ ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” But as the rules of virtue, the precepts of Religion, and the terms of salvation, are always the

same, the knowledge of our duty, and of the way to Heaven is easily obtained ; parents can instruct their children ; the scriptures will lead us to eternal life ; public teachers can declare the whole counsel of God ; private reading, family education and stated preaching, are useful means of religious knowledge, and to this purpose they may be successfully applied.

You think, perhaps, to find a new kind of Religion, which will more easily lead you to happiness, than that which you have been taught ; or you imagine, that you can do as well without any religion at all. But consult experience. Can you be happy at present, in your own feelings, or in your social connections, without integrity of heart—without benevolence to men—without the government of your passions—without sobriety, temperance and industry ? Or can society be happy without justice, peace, honesty and mutual confidence ? If experience teaches you the contrary, then you know, that Religion, in its nature, is necessary to happiness. And if it is so in this world, it will be so in the next ; “ for the thing which hath been, is that which shall be, and whatsoever God doth, it shall be forever.” If you can get safe to heaven in a way of sin, and be happy with all your sins, when you get there, then, on your arrival, you may say “ See this is new.”

You are well pleased with some new scheme of religion proposed to you. But what is this new scheme ? Does it teach repentance of sin, faith in a Divine Redeemer, purity of heart, humbleness of mind, charity, peaceableness and condescension to your neighbors, and all the virtues of a good temper and life ? Go, take and use it. But remember, it is no new scheme. It is the same that hath been. If it leaves out any of these things and teaches the contrary, forbear : It is not a scheme of religion, but of licentiousness. It is not new, however ; for men have always been contriving some way or other to quiet their consciences in the practice of wickedness, and to get to heaven without being fit for it.

Perhaps you think best to withdraw from the religious society, with which you are in covenant, and join yourself to another. But do you there find a new gospel, and a new way to heaven ? What then do you think of

those, who died in faith and hope, long before your favorite society existed? If this has investigated the only path to heaven, then they who lived in former ages are all lost. There is, my friend, no new way to heaven—no new scheme of real religion. That which hath been, is now. There were, in ancient times, many who by faith and patience inherited the promises. Be a follower of them, and thus give diligence to the full assurance of hope. If the society to which you would go, has no new religion, but only the old one with a new name; then, tell me, where is the advantage in violating your sacred vows to form a new relation? I would take the liberty to ask, What opinion have you of yourself? Are you in a state of sin? Then you are forming your new relation as a wicked man; and it becomes you to examine, whether you are not doing it with a wicked aim, to acquire the comforts of hope without complying with the terms of the gospel. Or do you view yourself as a saint—a real convert? Then you have obtained grace from GOD in your attendance on the means already enjoyed. And will you forsake the very means, which GOD has owned and blessed for your conversion? Will you reject that, which GOD has received? Will you withdraw from the place where GOD has met you? Apply the Apostle's advice; "Remember them who are your guides, and who have spoken to you the word of GOD, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. JESUS CHRIST the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines: For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, not with meats," with names & forms, "which have not profitted those, who have been occupied therein."

2. Our subject naturally leads us to reflect on the importance of steadiness and uniformity in human government: Thus only can it approach to a resemblance of the Divine Government, in the beauty of its form, the justice of its administration, and the happiness which it imparts to its subjects.

Family government ought, in this respect, to resemble the Divine; for thus only can it preserve its dignity and command respect. If the heads of a family, contending for superiority, controul each other's orders, and undermine each other's authority—if what is required at once

time, is condemned at another—if commands are issued in such number and variety, that they can neither be understood, remembered, nor observed, the house soon becomes a scene of anarchy and confusion. It is only the calm, rational and consistent government, which can be administered with an easy energy, and will be obeyed with promptitude and cheerfulness.

As in families, so in larger communities, government is then most beautiful, and efficacious, when, in conformity to the Divine pattern, it is administered with a gentle and steady hand.

Human beings cannot look into distant futurity, nor extend their views far around. Government formed by such beings, imperfect in itself, cannot provide against all necessity of change. But the great principles of all good government are ever the same ; for these are the principles of morality, which can never change. It will always be important, that the members of society maintain justice, integrity, truth and all the relative virtues in their intercourse with one another ; and that societies do the same in their intercourse with other societies. And every government should have these virtues wrought into its constitution and laws, and preserved in its administration. Thus far, like the Divine Government, it should always be the same.

It has sometimes been asked, Whether government and religion have any thing to do with each other. If you suppose, they have not, then you must suppose, that *morality* belongs not to religion, or belongs not to government ; for if it belongs to both, they unavoidably run into each other, and cannot be separated. Now, from which will you exclude morality ?—Surely from neither. For without this, religion is mere speculation or superstition ; government is only intrigue, oppression and despotism ; society is discord, violence and warfare.

They who imagine, that if religion and government, in the present state of things, were wholly separated, both would be more perfect ; may as well go a little farther, and say, “ If, in such a world as this, body and soul were separated, both would live much better—the soul would labor better without a body, and the body would reason

better without a soul." If a separation be made, the soul, indeed, will live ; but it will pass away, and carry with it all that is rational ; and the body will be left a mass of corruption, the food of worms. If from government you banish religion, the latter will live ; but it will take with it all that is amiable and excellent ; and government will be like that putrid carcass. It may breed and nourish some odious vermin, but to those who have their senses, it will be an object of disgust and horror. Religion is connected with government by the principles of morality, as the soul is connected with the body by the principles of animation ; and in both cases, a separation, though it will not extinguish the former, yet will be death to the latter.

It has sometimes been said, and often said of late, that the teachers of religion ought not to concern themselves in matters which relate to civil government.

The meaning, I suppose, is, that they ought not to make these matters the *ordinary* subjects of their *preaching*. For, surely, none will say, that a minister, in his private character, is excluded from the common rights of citizens, or that he has not the same liberty, which others have, to form, or speak, or publish his opinion on civil matters, to write a history, or a dissertation. It may as well be said, he has no right to hold property, to claim a compensation for his labor, to demand the fulfilment of a contract, or even to eat and drink.

To say, at large, that a minister ought not to *preach* on matters of government, certainly is not just, unless the expression be much qualified. For, taken in its full latitude, it will import, that he may not teach morality, or may not shew its usefulness to society—may not state the principles of government, the social obligations, the relative duties, those which rulers owe to the people, and the people to their rulers and to one another—may not give warning of impending dangers and of divine judgments—may not bear testimony against the sins which cause, or mention the signs which forebode national calamities—or, in a word, that he may not preach, as Jesus preached, and the Prophets before him, and the Apostles after him. This is more than any will presume to say.

But if the meaning be, that the pulpit is not the

proper place to frame constitutions, settle forms of government, review the doings of legislatures, decide on the comparative merits of candidates for office, the wisdom of national treaties, and other high acts of government, it is justly said ; but spoken too incorrectly and loosely.

Or if the meaning be, that the pulpit is not the place, from which to sound the trumpet of sedition against lawful authority—to excite a spirit of discontent and faction under a wise administration—to scatter the seeds of anarchy and revolution—to defame the characters of worthy men in places of power ; this is also true ; and it is true of a court-house, a tavern, and every other place, as well as of the pulpit.

Or if the meaning be, that a minister ought not to neglect the duties of his profession for political objects—ought not to exercise himself in matters, which he does not, and cannot understand, but be quiet and do his own business—ought not, in times of party heat, to inflame one party against another, but exemplify and recommend moderation and candor—ought not to take up matters hastily, and affirm them rashly, but judge with calmness, and speak with caution on the doings of government : This is also true ; and it is as true of every other man, as of a minister.

If this is all that men intend, when they say, “ A minister should not interest himself in the affairs of government,” it is presumed, few ministers will be found, in the present day, who have passed the line of their duty.

Whence, then, the complaint against them ? It proceeds from the same cause, from which it ever has proceeded. For it is the same, that has been. It is no new thing under the sun. Whenever any remarkable opposition has appeared against the religion of God, attacks have been made on the standing and regular teachers of this religion. And if they could not be reproached for their bad morals, they have been accused of meddling with politics.

Righteous Lot, grieved with the filthy conversation of the men of Sodom, warned them of their danger, and exhorted them to amendment. And what was the consequence ? They said, “ This fellow will needs be a *judge* ;” and had they not been providentially restrained, they would

have broken down his house, and done violence to his person. When Jeroboam, at the head of the ten tribes, withdrew from the house of David, and erected a separate kingdom, he, on motives of policy, instituted the worship of idols. The regular priests, adhering to the institutions of God, refused to comply with the impious innovation. And because they would not be the tools of this wicked policy, he deemed them enemies to him and his government. And they were compelled to quit their houses and possessions, and take refuge in the kingdom of Judah. And the king, from the lowest of the people, made him priests, who were ready to sacrifice religion to his political designs. Ahab introduced an idolatry more gross than that of Jeroboam, and corrupted the nation more than all the kings, who had been before him. The prophet Elijah, with a laudable fortitude and zeal, labored to reclaim them from their corruptions to a pure and rational religion. For this the king called him *his enemy*, and a *troubler of Israel*. Jeremiah, who lived in an idolatrous period, faithfully discharged his prophetic office, in calling all classes of people to repentance and amendment, as the only means of preventing national ruin. Hence he was called an *enemy* to the existing administration, and a *confederate* with the Chaldeans, who were invading the country. When Amos bare testimony against the wickedness, and especially against the idolatry of the Jews, and pressed upon them the necessity of religion and virtue to avert impending judgments, Amaziah, the king's idolatrous chaplain, complained to the king; "Amos hath *conspired against thee*, in the midst of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words." He says to the prophet, "Flee to the land of Judah—prophecy not in Bethel. It is the king's chapel; it is his court." When our Savior reproved the Jews for their iniquities, and warned them of approaching destruction, they complained, that he interfered in matters of government, perverted the nation, called himself a king and forbade to give tribute to Cesar. The Apostles preached the gospel of their divine master, taught the pure worship of one God, condemned the corruptions of Jews, and the superstitions of heathens, recommended all the social virtues, and particularly obedience to magistrates, and peaceableness under government. But there were often upstarts against them, as

men who changed established customs, and turned the world upside down. As it was in the days of CHRIST and his Apostles, so, St. John foretold, it would be in future times ; “ The beast,” so called, “ would make war upon the witnesses, while they are performing their testimony.”

From these examples and observations it appears, that, in times of prevailing corruption, it ever has been, and ever will be the complaint of infidels, that the teachers of religion disturb the general tranquility by interfering in national concerns, when their great offence is, that they support the truth and oppose licentiousness without a partial respect to persons : Thus, “ They torment them who dwell on the earth.”

Such complaints, therefore, whenever they exist, lead us to these two conclusions : First ; that the *morals* of ministers generally are irreproachable ; for, otherwise, they would be attacked on the ground of their immorality, where the charge could most easily be sustained : And, secondly, that there are *some*, who bear no good will to religion ; for its real friends, while they reprobate unworthy characters in the order of religious teachers, will honor and support the *order itself*, and will not vilify it *in the gross*, for a *few unworthy* men, or a *few imprudent* actions of worthy men, who belong to it. We may argue here, as we do in other similar cases. We suppose, that a peaceable citizen may have cause to speak in terms of disapprobation concerning particular men in office : But if we hear a man censure and condemn *all* officers of government, as dishonest, and *all* their measures as corrupt, we conclude, that this man is an enemy to government itself. Such indiscriminate abuse against religious, or civil characters, of which there has been too much in our day, may probably proceed from a few persons of low and vulgar minds. I know, the clergy *in general* disapprove of aspersions on government : And I recollect nothing from men in high office reproaching religion or its ministers. And it requires neither numbers nor talents to fill newspapers with abuse and scurrility.

If religion and government are connected by moral principles, the prudent minister, by inculcating and exemplifying the duties of morality, does essential service to government and society, as well as to men’s souls.

There are things in religion, which do not essentially belong to civil government, though they are all friendly to it; and there are prudential matters in government, which do not essentially belong to religion, though they are not inconsistent with it. But morality belongs to both. And government, so far as it relates to virtue and righteousness, ought not to change. Its prudential laws may require alterations, as circumstances vary; but they ought not to be unnecessarily changed, or multiplied, lest our civil duties should become too numerous and uncertain, discontents and complaints should be excited, and those good habits of order, on which the efficacy of government depends, should lose their influence. If laws are so multiplied that we cannot learn them, or so often altered that we cannot tell when we have learned them, we never feel that calm security, which government ought to yield to virtuous citizens. The efficacy of government depends as much on habit in the people, as on the wisdom of its laws. By frequent alterations, it remains always new; always weak; always injurious to some, and inconvenient to many. Versatility in government, like irregularity in the seasons, baffles our calculations, and disconcerts our measures. A wise people, under an equitable and easy government, will wish, that this, like the government of heaven, may remain steady and uniform.

3. If that which has been, is that which shall be, then we know, by what means the happiness of our country may be preserved. Let us only consider, how it has risen to its present glory, and we shall learn, how this glory may be continued and extended.

That we have in years past been in a prosperous state, none will deny. We now suffer no national unhappiness, except what proceeds from our irregular passions and corrupt manners. And even these, from the influence of religion and government are under such restraint, that they cannot produce the horror and misery, to which they naturally tend. It is worth the while to look back and see, how we have risen to our distinguished prosperity and felicity.

The first settlers of this country were, in general, as wise and pious a set of men, as ever emigrated from an

old to a new world. In a school of sufferings they had formed as just sentiments of a free and rational government, and of the means of supporting it, as perhaps any people ever had. They, indeed, discovered a degree of religious intolerance ; but this was a common imperfection of the age. And penalties by the civil hand were rarely, if at all, inflicted, merely for a dissent in religious opinions ; but chiefly where this dissent was accompanied with a turbulence of spirit and conduct, which was judged dangerous to the state. They, as soon as it was possible, instituted a government of their own on liberal, but moral principles. They associated in religious societies, and chose for their public instructors men of eminent learning and exemplary piety. They founded colleges and subordinate schools for the education of youth, maintained religion in their houses, and trained up their children in habits of industry, virtue and sober morals. They selected for their rulers those whom they esteemed able men—men who feared God and honored religion. The civil and religious institutions, which they introduced, were transmitted to their children, and their children's children, and have reached down to us. We enjoy them, and we experience the happy effects of them.

Had our fathers lived, like hordes of savages, without government, schools and social worship, we should not, at this day, have existed as a nation, or should have been in a state of ignorance, barbarism and bondage. Religion, which with them was a governing object, extended its benign influence into all their private and public concerns, and meliorated the condition of society in all its grades. Even the wicked and unprincipled members partook of the social blessings, which religion diffused. Their evil propensities were restrained by virtuous examples, their manners were corrected by the public exercises of devotion, on which common usage induced them to attend, and their knowledge was increased and their minds improved by the means of education, which they enjoyed in common with others.

In times of public danger, the people, realizing their dependence on God, fled to his throne for protection, and experienced such gracious and seasonable interpositions, as demonstrated, that fervent and united prayers

avail much. Some now living can remember, what a spirit of prayer spread through New-England in the time of the important expedition to Louisbourg ; and in the year following, when our coasts were threatened with general destruction from a formidable fleet and army of the French ; and how visibly the hand of God appeared in our favor. Many can recollect, how a similar spirit was awakened in the time of our revolutionary war. Fasts were solemnized in all the States, and through the Union ; prayers were offered in every sanctuary, in all the dwellings of the pious, and in the associations of Christian neighbors. The issue and result we all know. A respectable minister in Britain, hearing of the religious zeal in America, was led publicly to say, " Britain trusts in her fleets and armies ; she thinks them omnipotent ; she laughs at resistance ; she forgets the divine overruling hand. America, feeling her comparative weakness, but conscious of the justice of her cause, lies prostrate at the throne of God. The pride of Britain will be humbled ; the prayers of America will be heard." His prediction has been verified. God will still be enquired of ; he is still a God who heareth prayer.

We have seen, in what way, and by what means, our nation has risen when it was small, and lived, when it was in danger. If God's government is uniform, then we know, in what way, and by what means our national freedom and happiness may be secured and improved.

If a philosopher should tell us, that literary and religious institutions are a useless trouble and expense ; that human nature and civil society, left to themselves, tend to perfection, and will soon reach it, whenever those institutions are laid aside ; we may give him the same answer, as we would give a theorist in husbandry, who should tell us, that the clearing, cultivating and manuring of our ground, and the sowing of seed upon it, are all but needless labor and cost ; that the soil in its nature, tends to perfectibility, and, left to itself, will spontaneously produce all the necessaries and comforts of human life. In both cases, we may reply, The theory is contrary to all experience ; we and our fathers have found it otherwise in time past, and the thing which hath been is that which shall be.

If we wish still to maintain the national liberty and happiness, which we inherit from our fathers, we must, in imitation of their example, attend to the interests of learning and religion, cultivate the social virtues, and those principles of piety, on which the social virtues depend, and pay a devout regard to the divine institutions, which are the means of piety, such as the sabbath, the preaching of the word and the forms of social worship. If we imagine, that we can be happy as a people, when religion is treated with contemptuous neglect, we must suppose, that the plan of the Divine Government has lately been changed, and that the thing which has been, is that which shall not be.

If in this happy land the time should ever come, and God grant, it never—never may, when the virtuous and pious education of children is neglected as a foolish and superstitious usage—when the holy scriptures are despised as the legends of idle dreamers, or the frauds of designing impostors—when the sabbath loses its distinction from other days, and is prostituted to secular business and vain amusements—when social worship is repudiated, as a silly and useless ceremony—when the Divine Moral Government and a future retribution are no longer revered, or even believed by the body of the people—when consequently oaths are laid aside, or considered as mere formalities of office, without a binding efficacy—when, in the election of rulers, no discrimination is made between them who fear God, and those who fear him not—between the men who revere, and the men who condemn religion—If such a time should ever come, the glory and happiness of America will depart, and miseries hitherto unexperienced will ensue. In such a state of society, all security will be lost ; for government will yield to anarchy, or become a tyranny. A government both *liberal*, and *efficient* never was, never will be, never *can* be long maintained without the influence of religious principles.

As we profess to regard the interest of our country, and our own and the common salvation, let us do all in our power to support those religious institutions, which our fathers honored, and which were so beneficial to them, and which hitherto have been, and still may be highly

useful to us. Let us maintain religion in our families; regard the LORD's day and attend on the worship of his house. Let us cultivate peace and harmony in society, encourage virtue, and testify against vice, hold in just abhorrence the principles, which tend to vitiate the morals of mankind, and disorganize civil society. Let us pray for the spread of the gospel in the world, and especially in the unenlightened parts of America, and contribute our aid to its diffusion and success. Above all, let each one see that the gospel has its proper influence in his own heart. Thus will his light shine before men, and many, seeing his good works, will glorify God : And whatever changes, adversities and dangers he may see in this corrupt and guilty world, he will be safe under the divine protection, and in due time be exalted to that better state, where is fulness of joy and everlasting pleasure.

FINIS.