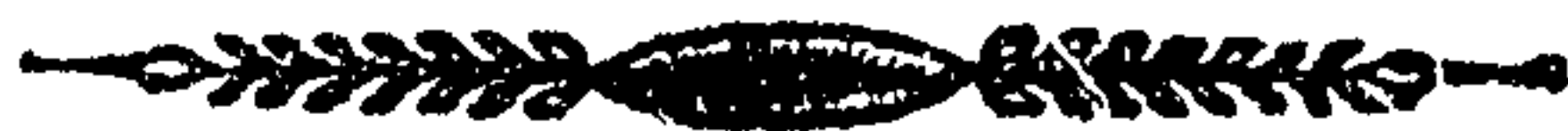


For the Rev Benjamin Boardman



DR. LEWIS'S
ELECTION SERMON,

MAY 11, 1797.



THE POLITICAL ADVANTAGES OF GODLINESS.

A

S E R M O N,

PREACHED BEFORE HIS EXCELLENCY THE

G O V E R N O R,

AND THE HONORABLE

L E G I S L A T U R E

OF THE

S T A T E O F C O N N E C T I C U T,

CONVENED AT HARTFORD

ON THE

ANNIVERSARY ELECTION.

MAY 11, 1797.

By Isaac Lewis, D. D.

PASTOR OF A CHURCH IN GREENWICH.



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*At a General Assembly of the State of
Connecticut, holden at Hartford on
the second Thursday of May, Anno
Domini 1797.*

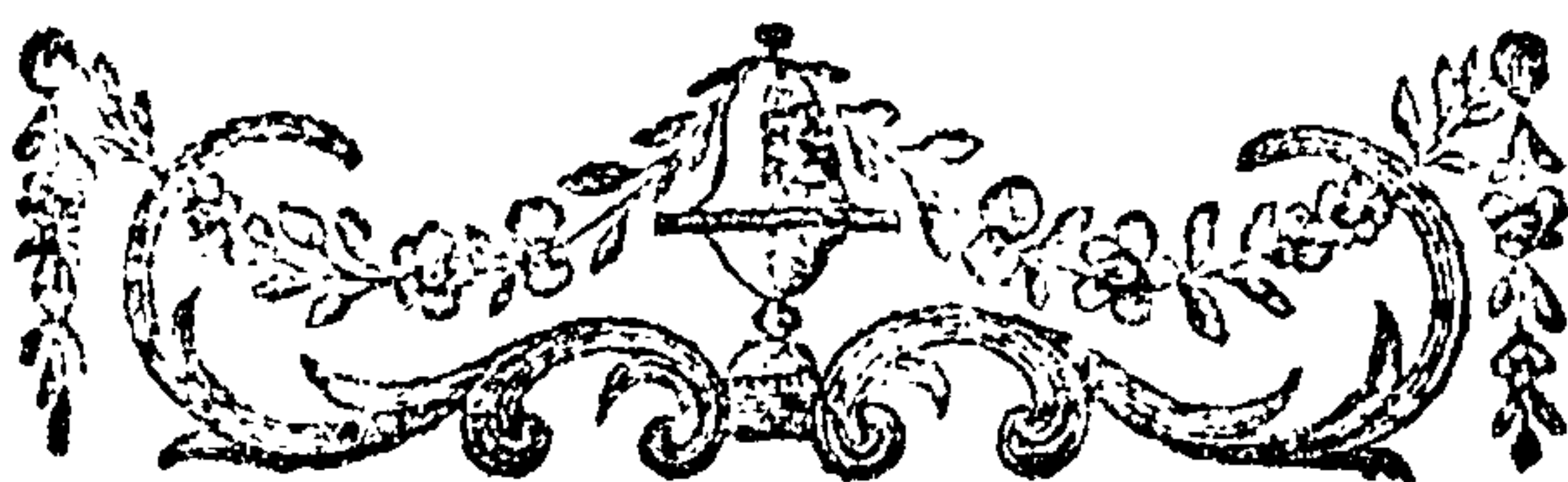
ORDERED, That the Hon. JOSEPH P. COOK and Col. EBENEZER MEAD present the Thanks of this Assembly to the Rev. ISAAC LEWIS, D. D. for his Sermon, delivered at the anniversary Election, on the 11th of May, instant, before the General Assembly, and request a Copy thereof that it may be printed.

A true Copy of Record,

Examined,

By SAMUEL WYLLYS, Sec'ry.





ELECTION SERMON.

I TIMOTHY iv. 8.

—*GODLINESS is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*

IN all situations and conditions of life, true religion is of the first importance. It is the solace of those, who are placed in the vale of poverty and affliction ; the sweetener of all the unambitious enjoyments, of the middle walks of private life ; and the highest ornament to the persons, and characters of the rich, the honorable, and the great. Without it, no man can be either truly, or lastingly happy. Were this divine guest to be banished from the society of men, this world would become but the abode of folly and wretchedness ; and man, with all his boasted reason and superiority, inferior, in point of real enjoyment, to the herds who graze the fields.

THE sentiments of St. Paul on this subject, are clearly expressed in our text and context. After cautioning Timothy to avoid perplexing himself and

others, with the fabulous traditions of the Jews, and their endless genealogies, and exhorting him, like the athleticks in the Grecian games, to exert his uttermost labor and diligence, in pursuing and promoting the doctrines and duties of true piety, as an argument to enforce the whole, he introduces the words of our text. *Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*

THESE motives to godliness, though first addressed to Timothy, apply with equal force and propriety to all men, of every age and condition. The import of the text is briefly *this*, “Godliness is every way advantageous. Whoever shall experience the power of it, will thence derive a rich harvest of gain. Beside the crown of immortal glory, which it infallibly secures to its possessor, it will produce the highest satisfaction, of which the human mind is capable, in the present state of existence. Its advantages are eminent in all stations, and situations, and in the prosecution of every business, proper to engage the attention of mankind.”

If then godliness have promises of good to be enjoyed in this life, as well as in that which is to come, if it be profitable unto *all things*, we may doubtless with safety conclude, that effectual aid may be derived from it, in the administration of civil government; and that, if generally and faithfully practised, it would most essentially contribute toward obtaining for, and securing to a community, all the important ends of its institution.

To illustrate *this observation*, is the proposed object of the present discourse. Preparatory to which, a concise view of the nature of godliness, and of the ends of civil government will first be taken.

GODLINESS is a term used in two senses; the one limited, and the other more general. In its limited sense, it includes only the duties of piety toward God. In its general sense, it comprises all the duties prescribed by the christian religion; those which we owe to our fellow-men, and to ourselves, as well as those which we owe to God. The apostle, in our text, uses the term in its most general sense, as appears from the extensive benefits, which, he assures us, will flow from a faithful practice of its various duties. These duties cannot now be minutely detailed. It may however be proper to observe in general, that they may be divided into four classes, the duties we owe to God, to Christ, to our fellow-men, and to ourselves.

In the first of these, are comprised supreme love to God, a fixed dependance on, and a humble trust in him, a cordial submission to his providential dispensations, together with conformity to his revealed will.

In the second, are included faith in the mediator, accompanied with a daily and sincere attention to him, considered as our teacher, our example and law-giver, our advocate and intercessor with the father.

In the third, are contained universal love to mankind, mercy, justice, beneficence, truth and the forgiveness of injuries.

THE fourth, comprehends the graces of humility, meekness, prudence, fortitude and self-government.

ALL the before mentioned virtues are briefly comprehended, by our divine master, in the following expressive words. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself.” *These* unitedly constitute that godliness, which

is urged on us in our text, as being every way conducive to the advancement, of all the important interests of mankind.

BUT in order to determine, how far godliness contributes to the obtainment of the great ends of civil institutions, it will be necessary to enquire what those ends are? Or what are the great objects, all governments ought to pursue, and which all good governments actually do pursue, though with different degrees of success? These, it is supposed, may be all comprehended in the following particulars.

1. THE primary object of civil institutions is to prevent those evils, which, considering the depravity of mankind, would certainly result from a state of nature.

SELFISHNESS is the predominant principle of fallen man. This, by being supreme, necessarily excludes the fear of God, and benevolence to our fellow-men. And among a number of individuals, ununited by any social compact, would produce a state of constant mutual hostility. In such a situation, jarring interests would at once enkindle the fire, and constantly fan the flame of discord; and of course banish peace and security. No protection, except what may be derived from personal prowess, can be obtained by individuals, in a state of nature. Life and property are equally insecure. Indeed without some kind of civil association, the last must be extremely limited. The power of an individual, unassisted by those arts, which flourish only under the protection of civil government, is wholly incompetent to the acquisition of more property, than a bare sufficiency for a scanty subsistence. But admitting the possibility of acquiring considerable property in a state of nature, still it would only serve to invite plunder, and lawless invasion. The more one pos-

feſſed, the greater would be his danger. And if his ſtrength ſhould prove ſufficient, to reſiſt a ſingle invader, it muſt unavoidably yield to the ſuperior force of a combination of thoſe, who would chooſe to live by rapine, rather than ſubmit to the toils of daily labor.

THE evils to which men would unavoidably be expoſed, in a ſtate of nature, we may learn from thoſe, which have ever been attendant on revolutions. During ſuch changes there is ever a period, in which laws loſe their influence, and licentiousneſs prevails. This reign of anarchy is at its moſt alarming criſis, in that ſtage of a revolution which intervenes, between the deſtruction of the old, and the eſtabliſhment of new principles and maxims of government. It is probable that no revolution was ever effected in any country, with leſs of theſe evils, than the recent one here in America. In our own State, very few diſorders appeared; owing perhaps principally to the inconfiderable alterations, which the revolution produced. But in ſome parts of the union, the moſt fatal evils were experienced. Law was no longer a reſtraint, right no longer regarded, property was invaded, virtue insulted, chaſtity polluted, and life ſacrificed, by abandoned ruffians, who, having broken over every reſtraint, rioted on the ſpoils of their innocent neighbours. Under an in-expreſſibly more dreadful experience of theſe, and many other ſimilar evils, it is well known, one of the principal kingdoms of Europe, has for ſeveral years been groaning.

THESE things have been mentioned, ſolely with a view of exhibiting a ſpecimen of what may be expected from a ſtate of nature. To prevent their exiſtence, as far as poſſible, to ſecure to individuals the peaceable poſſeſſion of life, liberty and property,

is a primary object of civil government. And its tendency to accomplish this purpose, undoubtedly wrought a conviction of its absolute necessity, in the minds of men, in the early ages of the world.

2. ANOTHER object worthy of the pursuit of government, is the promotion of the greatest good of the whole community, so far as that may be effected, without injury done to others.

PRIVATE interest, or the good of an individual, farther than it may be considered as involved in the good of the whole, ought not to be, and cannot consistently be the object of the social compact. As the whole is greater than its parts, so the good of a community is greater than the private interest of any individual. And to cause a greater interest to suffer, for the purpose of advancing a less, is a violation of the order of nature, and of the laws of equity and reason. A community is but one great family; in which, every member ought to consider his own interest, as involved in that of the whole; and this whole ought to swallow up every private or detached interest. As no private family can be happy, where each member is actuated solely by a principle of self-gratification; as such a line of conduct will produce a constant clashing of interests, which will unavoidably issue in contention and animosity; so no state can enjoy political happiness, where the public good is neglected, and an attachment to private, becomes the ruling passion. Hence cabals are always injurious, and ought to be opposed and even despised, as destructive of the great ends of civil society. They invariably have for their object, some party design. And the setting up of such an interest as the principal object of pursuit, is in the nature of it, hostile to public good. Private emolument cannot be set in competition with public, without endangering the latter. And to endanger the

public good, for any private advantage, is always to sacrifice the greater interest to the less.

FROM these observations it appears, that the good which ought to be the object of government is the public good ; and that in competition with it, no private or party interest ought ever to be placed.

BUT it is further to be observed, that although the greatest good of a community, ought to be the leading object of its government, yet even *this* is not to be pursued, by such measures as are injurious to other communities. Although the interest of an individual may be sacrificed, where it is absolutely necessary to promote the greatest good of the public, of which he is a member ; yet it by no means follows, that a state or kingdom, in order to promote its own advantage, possesses a right to adopt such measures, as are injurious to a sister state. It is as inconsistent with every rule of moral obligation, for one state to commit injustice against another, as it is for an individual to rob or plunder his neighbour. All mankind are brethren, the children of the same common parent. Different states are correlatives of each other. The great christian law which prescribes our duty toward our neighbours, considered in our individual capacity, will, if observed, regulate the conduct of states toward each other.

ALTHOUGH politicians have burdened the science of government, with many intricacies, which may, not improperly, be called the chicanery of courts ; yet, if inexperience may be permitted to risk an opinion, we should say that it is reducible to a few plain principles. To love our neighbour as ourselves—To do to others as we would that they should do to us, are rules of moral conduct as applicable to communities, as to individuals. Nor can

any reason be assigned in justification of fraud, injustice, oppression, or cruelty in a body of men, more than in a single person. On the contrary, where a body of men practise injustice, the crime is far greater, than a similar act of injustice performed by an individual : because in the one case, the guilt is confined to a single subject, and in the other, it extends to a whole community ; and because the evil consequences of public injustice, and the injuries done by it, are far more extensive, than those of private. When one nation is guilty of injustice towards another, thousands and millions may feel the injury. It is not in human power to calculate the evils, which will follow one deliberate act of such injustice. It will be readily granted, that the evils of private injustice are many. Among these may be enumerated expensive law-suits, the disaffection of families to each other, and all the usual consequences of private hatred. Yet admitting the worst that can follow, the civil law is a barrier, which will always check and restrain these evils, and confine them within certain limits. But when one nation practises gross injustice against another, there is no common arbiter, either to decide the contention, or to control its destructive effects. War commonly bursts forth like a sweeping deluge, overwhelming and confounding the innocent with the guilty ; and inflicting on whole countries greater, and more durable calamities, than any of the usual scourges, by which heaven corrects the madness of mankind.

THE foregoing observations sufficiently prove, that national injustice is far more criminal in itself, and far more fatal in its consequences, than private. And of consequence, that the same moral rule of righteousness, which the scriptures have prescribed to individuals, and by which they are bound to regulate their conduct, ought to be adopted by nations, and faithfully adhered to, in all their treatment of

each other. Hence will appear the justice of the remark before made, that although the greatest public good of a community, ought to be the end of its government, yet even that object, great and important as it is, ought never to be pursued, by means, which involve in them, a violation of the rights of other nations.

BUT notwithstanding the evident truth of this remark, it is to be lamented, that a policy directly repugnant to the rules of moral justice, has been too prevalent among all nations. The Roman love of their country, so much the boast of her citizens and so highly celebrated by her best writers, even in the purest days of that republic, was but a selfish contracted principle. Its object was the aggrandizement of their commonwealth, not only without any regard to the happiness of other nations, but at the expense of their liberties, privileges and independence. Their love of their country, led them to destroy, or at least to subjugate every neighbouring state, which stood in the way of the enlargement of their empire, or whose interest was inconsistent with their own ambitious views. Justly were they characterized by the spirit of prophecy as *a beast dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; as devouring and breaking in pieces, and stamping the residue with their feet.*

It is with the deepest regret, that truth obliges us to confess, that too similar to this detestable example, has been the policy of modern, as well as ancient nations. While the rulers of kingdoms have been careful to inculcate mutual justice among their subjects, by wise and salutary laws, they appear to have forgotten that national justice is a virtue; or not to be sensible, that there is any thing criminal in injuring a neighbouring state, where the power of doing it is possessed, and an opportunity offered.

While the private robber, who forces from an individual a small sum, must expiate his crime on a gibbet, it has been but too common for one nation to rob another of whole provinces, not only without censure, but with a tribute of praise for their martial achievements. To this fatal source, the injustice of nations toward each other, is to be attributed the awful scourge of war, with all its dreadful calamities. If the cause could once be suppressed, the effect would cease; and the prophecy of universal peace, so frequently repeated in the sacred writings, meet with an immediate accomplishment. The instruments of war would then be converted into implements of husbandry; nation would not lift up sword against nation, nor would they learn war any more,

THESE few remarks on national injustice have been made, to call to the minds of this audience, the evils, which must necessarily result from the prevalency of that unjust policy, which leads a nation to advance her own interest, by acts of injustice done to others. And likewise for the purpose of explaining in what sense, the public good ought to be the object of political institutions. To avoid the evils of a state of nature, and to promote the greatest national happiness, have been mentioned as the proper ends of government. These, are considered as including not only the particular objects, which have been brought up to view in what has been said, but whatever tends to the prosperity of a nation.

WE will now proceed to enquire, what advantages, in the pursuit of these ends, may be derived from the practice of godliness.

1. GODLINESS will be productive of national felicity, by securing the fidelity of rulers.

THAT national happiness and misery, are closely connected with the character and conduct of those who hold the reins of government, approaches nigh to a self-evident proposition. At least it is a truth which a very little argumentation will support, and which has been fully confirmed by all history, both sacred and profane. The government of an Ahab, and a Manasseh, of a Nero and a Caligula, afford unequivocal proofs of the misery of a people, destined to endure the scourge of wicked and tyrannical rulers. “When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice, but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.” An unprincipled magistrate is regardless of the public good, and wholly under the influence of selfish and mercenary views. In such hands neither the property, the liberty nor the life of the people are secure. *These* may, and most probably often will be sacrificed to the lust, the ambition, the avarice, and even the caprice of the tyrant. The public good is unspeakably too precious a deposit, to be trusted to such men. He who disregards the obligations he is under to his God, cannot be supposed suitably to feel those which he is under to his fellow men. He will rather be led to consider his exaltation to office, as raising him above the restraints, laid upon his unofficed brethren, and as affording him an opportunity for indulging with impunity, the selfishness and wickedness of his heart. A ruler destitute of virtue, will without doubt in a greater or less degree be guilty of malepractice. And a government badly administered, will produce evils introductory, both to public and private infelicity. There is an inseparable connexion between the moral character of rulers, and their administrations. If the former be vicious, corruption will appear in the latter, and a corrupted administration militates against the very ends of the social compact. And of course is inconsistent with the happiness of a community.—

The liberties of a nation are always extremely unsafe, in the hands of vicious rulers; and the miseries which nations have suffered under the government of such characters, are to be ranked with the heaviest of divine judgments.

If then vice in authority be destructive of public felicity, it is but rational to conclude that virtue exalted to power, must be productive of directly contrary effects; and that a pious magistracy must afford the most encouraging prospect, of national happiness. The magistrate, who to the natural and acquired abilities necessary to prepare him for office, adds the fear of God, a reverence for the dictates of his own conscience, and that love to his fellow-men, implied in true godliness, will not fail to make the good of his constituents, the ultimate object of his political pursuits. His example will uniformly be in favor of virtue, and his abilities steadily exerted to support and maintain that "righteousness which exalteth a nation, and to discountenance and suppress that vice which is a reproach to any people." As a legislator, he will disregard local prejudices and party views, and ever give his voice in favor of such laws, as he believes to be founded in justice and public utility; and oppose with firmness, and uncorruptible integrity those of an opposite tendency. As a judge, his decisions will be guided by law and equity, without partiality for, or prejudice against any man. In whatever station he is called to serve his country, he will remember that he is accountable for his conduct not only to his fellow citizens, but to the supreme ruler of the universe; that he has a most important trust committed to him; that he is a minister of God, for good to his people; that the primary design to his honorary appointment, was to capacitate him to employ all his talents, in promoting and diffusing happiness through the community; and that he

answers the great end of his being called into office, only so far as he steadfastly pursues this grand object. And that a greater proportion of happiness will be enjoyed by a people, where their rulers are actuated by such disinterested motives, than where they are influenced by selfishness, is too evident to need proof. It is as unnecessary to prove, that men of piety are not only the most likely to pursue the public good, but the only characters, from whom we have reason steadily to expect, such disinterested conduct. Nothing can afford so great a security for the fidelity of rulers, as godliness. Other motives may for a time produce unexceptionable conduct. But the influence of these other motives will be ever uncertain, and at best subservient to selfish views. The public good will always be abandoned by such a mind, whenever it is considered as directly opposed to private interest.

No men, in any situation or employment, are so sensible of the obligations they are under to fidelity as the truly religious. No others so fully perceive its importance, or are so deeply impressed with a conviction of its necessity. Religion is a crown of glory to all who possess it. It does not of itself prepare men for office, either in church or state. But where they are otherways prepared, the addition of true religion, above every thing, contributes to their fidelity and usefulness. This observation applies with as much propriety, and force to the civil magistracy, as to any official characters. Fidelity in that office, is essential to national prosperity. So that godliness, when it lives and reigns in the hearts and lives of the magistrates of a country, contributes directly, and most essentially to the public happiness.

2. GODLINESS is no less salutary to a community, by the influence, which it has on the great body of the people.

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As it secures the fidelity of rulers, so it makes good citizens. If its practice could once become universal in a nation, it would produce such a conduct in all ranks, as would issue in general prosperity. So far as national happiness depends, on the promotion of the social virtues—on the cultivation of benevolence, kindness, justice and charity—on the prevalence of harmony and tranquillity, the practice of godliness has a direct tendency to its advancement. Godliness teaches us to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with God. To owe no man any thing, but to love one another. To render to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor is due. And, to comprehend the whole in few words, to love our neighbour as ourselves. So far as these virtues promote public happiness, or are any way conducive to the prosperity of a nation ; so far the salutary influence of godliness is indisputable. As it respects the duties of the second table of the law, it consists in the exercise of these very virtues. And how far the practice of them actually does contribute to national prosperity, we may learn from the evils which their opposite vices never fail to produce. Fraud, injustice, anger, wrath and hatred are most evidently the bane of social happiness ; and in proportion to their prevalency, are invariably productive of misery. The practice of these virtues then, and consequently of true godliness, has a direct tendency to promote the public good.

AGAIN, so far as national happiness depends on a suitable conduct in the members of a community, toward each other, it is directly promoted by godliness. The circumstance last mentioned, it is well known, has great influence on domestic happiness. It is essential to the prosperity of a private family, that the conduct of each member be regulated by

the strictest rules of propriety—that the heads conduct with a dignity becoming their station ; equally remote from unreasonable austerity on the one hand, and trifling familiarity on the other—that children and servants, constantly exhibit reverence and respect, by an unreserved and cheerful obedience. Imprudence and folly in the governors of a family, and obstinacy and disobedience in the inferior members, are utterly destructive of domestic felicity. And why should not the case be the same with larger communities ? The happiness of a nation is composed of similar ingredients with that, of a private family. And as the conduct of the several members of the latter, toward each other, has so evident an influence on their happiness, why must not the prosperity of a nation be greatly affected, by the mutual conduct of its rulers and ruled ? If so, godliness must certainly promote national felicity. For it influences rulers to rule in the fear of God, and unofficered citizens to reverence and respect the magistrates of their country, as ministers of the Most High, appointed for the good of his people. So far as it extends, it leads every man to conduct agreeable to his station ; to abide in, and faithfully to discharge the duties of his particular calling, and thus to contribute to the advancement of the general felicity.

BUT I take the liberty of farther observing, that godliness promotes national prosperity, as it contributes to an increase of wealth. If any should call in question the truth of this observation, let me desire him to remember, that there are few vices but what are luxurious ; that they are expensive, and even prodigal both of time and money ; and that those which are most corrupting, which spread their contagion the most rapidly, which ever have and ever will prevail where godliness is neglected, are not only such as devour property, but such as introduce

disease, debility, idleness, and even an aversion to every species of labor, and thus dry up the very sources of national wealth.

ON the other hand, godliness leads to temperance, health, industry and frugality. It not only retrenches the expenses of extravagance, but it adds to the stock already possessed, the daily gains of diligence. From the command and example of her divine teacher, she gathers up the fragments, and suffers nothing to be lost.

IF, after considering these particulars, any should still be disposed to doubt, whether a general diffusion of godliness through a nation, would contribute more to the increase of its wealth, than the unrestrained reign of vice, let him compare the expenses of the several virtues included in true godliness, with those of their opposite vices. Let him for instance compare the expenses of humility, temperance and frugality, with what would be necessary to support pride, luxury, intemperance and prodigality, and the comparison will convince him, that it is vice which drains a nation of her wealth. We venture further to offer it as a decided opinion, that if such a person should judge with impartiality, he would meet a conviction, that the fashionable vices of the present day, are far more expensive than the support of government, together with all the public and private means of literary, moral and religious instruction. The universal spread of godliness among us, would save this enormous expense, and thus increase the pecuniary advantages of our nation. So true is it that godliness is profitable unto *all things*, having promise of *the life that now is*, and of that which is to come.

BUT permit me to add, that godliness, above every other principle that can be named, gives efficacy

to the laws of a nation. Among many other ingredients, necessary to the happiness of a people, a good code of laws will doubtless be included. But simply the existence of such a system of laws, will be but of little advantage, unless they are sacredly regarded—unless they possess a commanding influence on all ranks of citizens. Laws, that have lost their influence, neither afford protection to the virtuous, nor lay restraint on the excesses of the vicious. And laws disregarded and trampled on with impunity will ever lose their influence. Of consequence, the support of law, by giving it as extensive an obedience as possible, and by putting its penalty in execution on delinquents, must be of high importance to national prosperity. And yet no part of civil government is attended with more, or greater difficulties. Men of true piety will see, and feel the importance of giving efficacy to laws, and from the purest motives, throw their whole weight into that scale.—They will obey the ordinances of man for the Lord's sake. But the vicious part of every community are always impatient under the restraints of law; and ready to violate it, whenever they can flatter themselves of doing it with impunity. Hence the well known fact, that laws are trampled upon, in proportion to the increase of vice. The more gross wickedness prevails, the more are all laws divine and human disregarded. The inference from this fact is plain, that no principle can give such an efficacious influence to the laws of a nation, as true godliness. There is a close connection between fidelity to God, and fidelity to man; he who possesses the former will not neglect the latter. Consequently the diffusion of true religion through a nation, would in this respect, be attended with a most happy influence.

BUT it is worthy of further remark, that godliness not only contributes to the maintenance and

support of law, by its influence on the hearts and lives of its true friends ; but the doctrines of revealed religion, have a happy political effect on all who believe them, even with a speculative faith. The corruptions of mankind, it is believed, are far more restrained, from an apprehension and dread of future punishment, than from all the penalties, which sanction the several codes of human laws. Revealed religion denounces future wrath, not only against persons guilty of impiety toward God ; but against murderers, thieves, adulterers, perjured persons, and all who commit crimes against society. So far as divine revelation is believed—so far as it gains even an historical assent from mankind, the idea of this future punishment, must operate as a forcible check to human corruptions. These penalties, admitting the authenticity of the scriptures, are known by the impenitent to be unavoidable, and therefore affect the mind as realities. No concealment, no fraud, no flight, can protect the offender from the vengeance of the judge. If the sinner dies in impenitency, he must unavoidably suffer the dreadful consequences. But men can easily escape the penalties of human laws. Under the best executed government, the probability is that they are actually avoided in more instances, than suffered by transgressors. The means of escaping civil punishments are very numerous, and perfectly known to the most vicious part of every nation. So that human laws are always transgressed with a hope of impunity. If then all dread of future punishment were totally annihilated, the strongest support of civil law, would be removed, and very little be left to restrain the corruptions of the vicious. And the consequence might be an absolute impossibility of supporting civil government.

FROM the foregoing observations we may at least conclude, that godliness is not only highly advanta-

geous, but that, a belief of its doctrines, and especially those which respect the divine character and future rewards and punishments, are essential to the well being, if not to the existence of civil society. And it is a well known fact that all antiquity were in favor of a similar sentiment. Not a single legislator has ever attempted to enforce obedience to his laws, solely on the foundation of civil sanctions. They universally perceived the insufficiency of these motives, unassisted by those derived from religion. And as they were strangers to divine revelation, they formed a substitute, and adapted it, as well as they could, to the circumstances, the genius, and the prejudices of their people. Lycurgus, Solon, Numa Pompilius, Capac, and every legislator, at all famed for the wisdom of his institutions, found it necessary to have recourse to religion; and, in fact, derived from that source, the principle motives to enforce obedience. This shows, that in the judgment of these eminent men, the belief of a supreme Being, and the practice of some religion, are of great importance to the support of civil government; and that it is in vain to expect that a system of laws can be maintained for any considerable period, independent of all assistance of this kind. An opinion, as is confidently supposed, founded in a very accurate, and extensive knowledge of human nature, and which, we cannot but presume, will be ever found true, as long as sinful passions and affections possess such an influence on mankind.

If then some religion has ever been found necessary to the existence of civil government; if where the true religion has been unknown, the ablest legislators have thought it necessary to invent a substitute; if even an historical belief of the doctrines of revealed religion, have so direct a tendency to support civil institutions; certainly the reality itself, the general spread of true piety among all ranks in a

commonwealth, must be attended with the most salutary effects. Its influence on the order, the regularity, the peace, and the harmony of a community, cannot fail of augmenting its felicity.

WE see then, that beside the spiritual and eternal advantages of true godliness, which the design of this discourse will not admit of our considering, there are important benefits to be derived from it in the administration of civil government; and if generally and faithfully practised, it would most essentially contribute toward obtaining for, and securing to a community all the valuable ends of such an institution.

IF the preceding observations be just, then to maintain, that godliness is of no importance in a civil point of view—that gentlemen may be every way as well qualified, to act in any official character, in the government of a nation without, as with religion—that it is a matter of no consequence to the political happiness of a people, what religious system, or whether any at all prevails among them,—to support these, and similar sentiments, not only tends to the encouragement of immorality, but to the propagation of political heresy. And in proportion to their prevalence, must be productive of the most dangerous consequences. Without religion, a sense of moral obligation can never be preserved. And once destroy a sense of moral obligation, and you strike a deadly blow at the root of all mutual confidence between the different members of the community, and invite the spread of those vices, which are most hostile to the political as well as eternal interest of mankind.

I FEEL a peculiar happiness on this occasion, in being able to confirm these sentiments, by the authority of that most excellent MAN, that ~~BEST~~ OF

PATRIOTS, whose distinguished talents and eminent abilities, faithfully consecrated to his country's service, have not only in an unexampled manner endeared him to his fellow-citizens, but rendered him the object of the veneration of the world. From that valuable legacy of political experience and sentiment, which he bequeathed to his country, in his address accompanying his resignation, I gladly introduce the following passages:

“ Of all the dispositions and habits, says he,
 “ which lead to political prosperity, religion and
 “ morality are indispensable supports. In vain
 “ would that man claim the tribute of patriotism,
 “ who should labor to subvert these great pillars of
 “ human happiness, these firmest props of the du-
 “ ties of men and citizens. The mere politician
 “ equally with the pious man ought to respect and
 “ to cherish them. A volume could not trace all
 “ their connections with private and public felicity.
 “ Let it simply be asked, where is the security for
 “ property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of
 “ religious obligation desert the oaths, which are
 “ the instruments of investigation in the courts of
 “ justice? And let us with caution indulge the
 “ supposition, that morality can be maintained
 “ without religion. Whatever may be conceded
 “ to the influence of refined education on minds of
 “ a peculiar structure; reason and experience both
 “ forbid us to expect, that national morality can
 “ prevail in exclusion of religious principle.

“ It is substantially true, that virtue or morality
 “ is a necessary spring of popular government.
 “ The rule indeed extends with more or less force
 “ to every species of free government. Who that
 “ is a sincere friend to it, can look with indifferency
 “ on attempts to shake the foundation of the fa-
 “ bric ?”

I CANNOT conclude this extract, without observing that the sentiments it contains, in the view of every wise and good man, must add a lustre to a character, already enrolled on the records of deathless fame, and the subject of a more universal admiration, and more extensive esteem, than any which the world hath hitherto produced. May America preserve in everlasting remembrance his political counsels—may they continue, through all succeeding generations, the fundamental maxims of their government—may his successors be all animated by the same spirit of wisdom, patriotism, firmness, and uncorruptible integrity—may he in the shades of retirement be constantly blessed with the special tokens of the divine favor—may self-approving reflections on the part he has acted, and the spiritual joys of communion with God and Christ repay the ceaseless toils and anxieties of his public life—and when heaven shall call him from his earthly abode, may he be admitted to a distinguished seat in the paradise above.

PERMIT me to add, that if any thing can console us under the painful idea that WASHINGTON, no longer directs the helm of our government, it is the pleasing reflection that we have for his successor, a gentleman, not only of the first character for literary and political merit, wisdom, firmness and independency of sentiment, but one, who in the very moment of his inauguration, and in the presence of both houses of our national legislature, and a most crowded assembly of all ranks of spectators,* had the fortitude to avow his attachment to the christian religion, and his fixed determination to consider a decent respect for christianity among the best recommendations for the public service.

* See President ADAMS's speech at his inauguration.

BUT we suspend these pleasing reflections, and proceed to remark, that if the observations which have been made be just, the importance of supporting christianity is undeniable. All the political benefits, which can be rationally expected from any religion ever taught in this world, may certainly be expected from the christian, and in a much higher degree than from any other, in proportion to the superior excellency of its moral precepts. The candid enemies of our faith confess, that the morality taught in the gospel is the most pure, and the best adapted to the purposes of social happiness, of any moral system ever published to men. If then some religion be necessary to answer the purposes of civil government, christianity even on political views ought to be preferred to all others, as it possesses far the greatest tendency to promote the important designs already mentioned. If its morals are the purest, its tendency to promote social happiness is the greatest, and therefore good policy requires its support.

IT is not however our wish that any thing similar to the religious establishments of Europe, should be introduced into our country. We hope never to see our magistrates employed, in prescribing articles of faith; nor in the exercise of the least coercive power to compel men to adopt this, or that creed, or submit to any one mode of worship in preference to another. May liberty of conscience, in this land, be never violated. But if there be important political advantages to be derived from christianity, which cannot be so effectually secured by any other means, as appears evident from the preceding observations, then is it as much the duty of government to endeavour its preservation, as in any other way to seek the public good. If every individual be left to choose for himself both with respect to doctrines, and modes of worship, laws made for the support of public instruction, and the religious ob-

—
fervation of the sabbath, cannot in any proper sense infringe on liberty of conscience.

If religion then has a just claim to the protection of government, it must be peculiarly important to official characters. The more exalted gentlemen are in office, the more public and extensive their sphere of action, the more necessary is it, that their whole conduct should exhibit undeniable evidence of their attachment to religion. The great body of the people look up to them, not only for examples in every virtue, but for that legislative encouragement to the cause of religion, on which its general prosperity under God must in a great measure depend. If godliness be profitable unto all things, if its political advantages be as great as has been represented, good policy will certainly lead to a preservation of the laws for the support of morality, to a maintenance and if need be, to an enlargement of the statutes for the suppression of vice, and to the appointment of such men to fill the several offices under our government, as are known to be at least men of unblemished morals. A steady adherence to this rule would disappoint the hopes of the wicked, and proportionably encourage those of the virtuous. It would make our legislature a terror indeed to evil doers, and a praise to them who do well. Much depends on the conduct of rulers. To support religion, law and liberty, is theirs. We live in a day when each of these have many foes. When the advocates of infidelity are loudly boasting of the increase of their numbers—When licentiousness is alarmingly prevalent, and when the federal constitution, the great palladium of our liberties, has been violently attacked. That amidst all these internal evils, and the dangers which arise from foreign insults and depredations, our rulers may be directed by unerring wisdom—that they may ever possess that firmness and fidelity, which the arduous

duties of their station, and the peculiar difficulties of the day require, is the ardent prayer of all their pious constituents. And supported by so important an encouragement, it is hoped, and expected that they will disregard the unfounded clamours, of the enemies of religion and our country.

BUT besides the support which christianity has a right to expect from government, it is of the highest importance, that it receive all encouragement from every class of citizens. In this business all should be united, and extend as far, and as generally as possible the practice of true piety. If there were no futurity, if the race of men had been made only for this world, still the universal practice of godliness would be a most desirable object, and as such must meet the sincere approbation of every friend to his country. And if so, how inconceivably important indeed is it, when we are assured by a well authenticated revelation from heaven, that we are all acting not for time only, or principally, but for the rewards, or the punishments of an eternity. The motives to the choice and practice of godliness are immensely great. Both temporal and eternal benefit, the promise of this life and of that which is to come, are all presented to our view, and placed in a very conspicuous light before our eyes, and nothing but the grossest stupidity can prevent our feeling the force of them.

THIS subject leads me further to remark, that although the laws of our land have excused clergymen from the burdens of civil functions, and left them at liberty to devote their whole time to the business of their peculiar profession, yet no body of men are more deeply interested in the prosperity of their country, or under greater obligations to constant exertions for that purpose. And happily their duty as christian ministers, and as members of civil socie-

ty perfectly coincide. In the former, which is the principal capacity in which they are called to act, they are pointedly commanded by their divine Master, to become *ensamples to the whole flock over which the Holy Ghost has made them overseers, and to teach, rebuke and exhort with all long suffering and doctrine.* The first object of their labors is to prepare men for the kingdom of heaven. This they are to attempt by explaining to them the nature, and enforcing on them the importance of true godliness, and by persuading them, if possible, to a faithful practice of it in all its branches. If they can effect this great purpose, they will not only benefit the souls of men, and advance the kingdom of the Redeemer in the world, but do a most important service to civil society. If they can become the happy instruments of leading those among whom they labor, to forsake sin, to embrace the gospel, to love God and practise every branch of true piety; they will no doubt obey magistrates, and submit themselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake. The more we promote the interest of religion, the more shall we advance that of civil society. The more spiritual good we do the souls of men, the more effectual aid shall we afford to the rulers of our land. Ministers have every argument set before them, to excite them to diligence and fidelity, drawn from the temporal, and the eternal interest of men. And in addition to all this, they are further animated, by a consideration of that future account which they must give of themselves, before an assembled universe. Though the stupidity of this infidel age, may often excite in them the complaint of the evangelical prophet "that they labor in vain and spend their strength for nought," yet let them not be weary in well doing, but persevere with redoubled diligence, supported by the glorious hope that their labor will not be in vain in the Lord.

LASTLY, the foregoing observations point out to us all, the sure means of promoting national happiness. Public virtue, and political prosperity are intimately connected. Righteousness will exalt, and vice bring ruin on a people. If then we are true patriots, if it is our glory *really to be*, as well as to be *esteemed* the friends of our country, we shall devote ourselves to the sincere practice of true godliness; and in our several stations faithfully endeavour its universal promotion. Enmity to religion is inconsistent with true patriotism. They who are either publicly or privately undermining the foundation of piety toward God, are weakening the force of moral obligation, and aiming a fatal blow against the dearest privileges resulting from the social compact. If we would wish to be a happy people, to enjoy in peace and tranquillity the blessings of a most excellent constitution, and to transmit those fruits of such vast expense of blood and treasure unimpaired to posterity, it is of the highest importance, that we practise true godliness; as every other expedient, while that is neglected, will be found utterly insufficient.

IN one word, the choice and practice of religion is urged on us, by every consideration which ought to affect a rational mind. Our duty to God, our country, and ourselves require it—our interest and happiness for time and eternity demand it of us. May God, of his infinite mercy grant us all, to experience it, in all its power, and in all its comforts and consolations, for the sake of the dear Redeemer. AMEN.