



MR. S T O N E's
ELECTION-SERMON,

MAY 10th, 1792.



A
S E R M O N,

PREACHED BEFORE HIS EXCELLENCY
SAMUEL HUNTINGTON, Esq, L.L.D.

G O V E R N O R,

AND THE HONORABLE THE
G E N E R A L A S S E M B L Y

O F T H E

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

CONVENED AT HARTFORD, ON THE DAY OF THE
ANNIVERSARY ELECTION.

MAY 10th, 1792.

BY TIMOTHY STONE, A. M.

PASTOR OF A CHURCH IN LEBANON.



PRINTED AT HARTFORD,
BY HUDSON AND GOODWIN,

M D C C X C I I.

*At a General Assembly of the State of
Connecticut, holden at Hartford, in
said State, on the second Thursday
of May, A. D. 1792.*

ORDERED, That the Hon.
WILLIAM WILLIAMS, and
Mr. ELKANAH TISDALE, return
the Thanks of this Assembly to the
Rev. TIMOTHY STONE, for his
Sermon delivered before this As-
sembly at the General Election on
the 10th of May instant, and desire
a Copy of the same that it may
be printed.

A true Copy of Record.

Examined, by

GEORGE WYLLYS, Sec'y.



ELECTION SERMON.

DEUTERONOMY IV. 5, 6.

Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whether ye go to possess it.

Keep therefore, and do them ; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall bear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.

WE are not left in doubt, concerning the wisdom and salutary nature of that constitution under which the Hebrews were placed, as it proceeded immediately from God ; and, in reference to the particular circumstances of that people, was the result of unerring perfection. It was a free constitution, in which,

all the valuable rights of the community were most happily secured. The public good, was the great object in view, and, the most effectual care was taken to preserve the rights of individuals. Proper rewards were promised to the obedient, and righteous punishments allotted for the disobedient. God designed, for special reasons, that the seed of Abraham, should be distinguished in a peculiar manner from all other nations ; he therefore undertook the government of them himself, in all matters respecting religion, civil policy, and that military establishment, which he saw to be necessary for their happiness and defence. We find Moses, who received this constitution from God, and delivered it to his people, frequently exhorting them, to maintain a sacred regard for this divine institution, and to pay a conscientious obedience to all its laws : in doing of which, they might secure to themselves national prosperity, and enjoy, the unfailing protection of Almighty God.

To deter them from disobedience, he called up their attention to that solemn scene which opened to their view, when they stood before the LORD their God in Horeb : when there were thunders, and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud ; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And the LORD commanded, saying, *gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children.*

For the LORD thy GOD, is a consuming fire, even a jealous GOD.

THE argument made use of in the text, to excite in that people, a spirit of obedience to their constitution and laws, was this, that it would raise their character in the sight of the nations : who from thence would be led, to entertain a veneration for them, as a great nation, a wise and understanding people. This sacred passage, in connection with the important occasion, which hath called us to the house of GOD, this morning, may direct our attention to the following enquiry.

IN what, doth the true wisdom of a people, a civil community, consist ?

THE general answer to this question, may not be difficult ; it will no doubt, be readily admitted, that the highest wisdom of a community of intelligent beings, must consist, in pursuing that line of conduct, which shall have the most direct and sure tendency to promote the best good of the whole, both in time, and eternity. What ever creatures, may conceive to be a good, either, through imperfection of understanding, or degeneracy of heart ; yet, if that which they call good, is inseparably connected with more pain than pleasure, taking in the whole of their existence ; then it cannot with propriety be styled good, certainly not the best good, consequently wisdom will not choose it. The province of wisdom, is, to discover and elect the most valuable objects ; and, to adopt the best means to obtain them. These

observations, apply with equal force, to individuals, and communities ; to all classes of men, whether in the higher, or, lower walks of life. Communities, most certainly, as well as individuals, under the guidance of wisdom, will pursue that conduct which shall be productive of their highest happiness, in every period of their existence. But the question returns, what is that conduct, which shall have the desired tendency, and will effect the highest good ? This question, as it respects mankind at large in their present state, might admit, a great variety of answers : some of which, may demand particular notice on the present occasion. As,

1. WISDOM will direct a community, to establish a good system of government. It may be a question, whether the allwise God ever designed, that any of his intelligent creatures, even in a state of perfection, should exist without some kind of government, and subordination amongst themselves. All creatures, have not the same capacities ; neither are they placed under equal advantages ; and, if those may be found, whose capacities are equally extensive, still they are different ; and seem to be designed for different purposes, and stations, in the great system. We read, of thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers amongst the angelic hosts : which titles, denote various stations among those sinless beings, that they are differently employed, in degrees of subordination to each other, in the government of that holy family of which, God, is the father. But, however this may be, as our acquaintance with that world of glory, is very imperfect—

yet it is beyond a doubt, that government was designed, and is absolutely necessary for men on earth, in their present state of degeneracy.

CREATURES, who have risen in rebellion, against the holy and perfect government of JEHOVAH ; have partial connections, selfish interests, passions and lusts, which often interfere with each other, and which, will not always be controlled by reason, and the mild influence of moral motives, however great : but these in their external expressions, must be under the restraint of law, or there can be no peace, no safety among men. Some kind of government, is therefore indispensibly necessary for the happiness of mankind, that they may partake of the security, and other important blessings resulting from society ; which cannot be enjoyed in a state of nature. Without any consideration, of the various forms of government which have been adopted, in different ages and countries ; that, may be the best for a particular people, which in the view of all their circumstances, affords the fairest prospect of promoting righteousness, and of securing the most valuable privileges of the community, in its administration.

CIVIL liberty is one of the most important blessings which men possess of a temporal nature, the most valuable inheritance on this side heaven. That constitution may therefore be esteemed the best, which doth most effectually secure this treasure to a community. That liberty consists in freedom from restraint, leav-

ing each one to act as seemeth right to himself, is a most unwise mistaken apprehension. Civil liberty, consists in the being and administration of such a system of laws, as doth bind all classes of men, rulers and subjects, to unite their exertions for the promotion of virtue and public happiness. That happy constitution enjoyed by the Hebrews, of which, the Supreme Lawgiver was the immediate author, was no other, than a system of good laws, and righteous statutes: which limited the powers and prerogatives of magistrates, designated the duties of subjects, and obliged each to that obedience to law, and exchange of services, which tended to mutual benefit. † “And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous, as all this law which I set before you this day.” A state of society necessarily implies reciprocal dependence in all its members; and rational government, is designed to realize and strengthen this dependance, and to render it, in such sense equal in all ranks, from the supreme magistrate, to the meanest peasant, that each one may feel himself bound to seek the good of the whole: when individuals do this, whether rulers or subjects, they have a just right to expect the favor and protection of the whole body. The laws of a state, should equally bind every member, whether his station be the most conspicuous, or, the most obscure. Rulers in a righteous government, are as really under the controul of law, as the meanest subject: and the one equally with the other, should be subjected to punishment, when ever he becomes criminal, by a violation of the law. Re-

 † Deut. iv. 8.

wards and punishments, should be equally distributed to all, agreeably to real merit or demerit, without respect of persons. A constitution, founded upon the general and immutable laws of righteousness and benevolence, and corresponding to their particular circumstances, will therefore become a primary object with a wise and understanding people.

2. THE wisdom of a people will appear, in their united exertions to support such a system of government, in its regular administration.

ENACTING salutary laws, discovers the wisdom and good design of legislators: but the liberty and happiness of the community, essentially depend upon their regular execution. The best code of laws can answer no good purposes, any further than it is executed. Every member in society is bound, in duty to the community, himself, and posterity, to use his endeavours that the laws of the state be carried into execution.

LAWS, point out the existing offices, relations and dependancies of the community: they serve for the direction, support and defence of all characters; but considered as restraints, they more especially respect the unruly members. †
 “Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers, and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for liars, for perjured persons,

† 1. Tim. i. 9, 10.

and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine." It is unreasonable to expect, that the vices of man which are inimical to society, will be restrained by silent laws existing upon paper : they must be carried into execution, and be known to have an active existence, that such as contemn the law, may not only read, but feel the resentment of the community.

It is not within the reach of human understanding, to look with precision into futurity, to discover all the circumstances and contingencies which may take place among a people : neither is it certain, that every person who may possess a fair character for ability and integrity, and who may be called into public life, will be governed in all his actions, by public and disinterested motives. Through necessary imperfection, or corrupt design, statutes may be enacted, which may not prove salutary in their execution ; but greatly prejudicial to the common good : hence ariseth the necessity of alterations and amendments, in all human systems.

CHANGES however, should be few as possible ; for the strength and reputation of government, doth not a little depend upon the uniformity and stability observed in its administration. Laws while they remain such, ought to be executed, when found to be useless or hurtful, they may be repealed : to have laws in force and not executed, or to obstruct the natural course of law in a free state, must be dangerous ; will have many hurtful tendencies, will greatly weaken government, and render all the interests of the community insecure. Liberty, property and

life, are all precarious, in a state where laws cease in their execution. When known breaches of law pass with impunity, and open transgressors go unpunished; when executive officers grow remiss in their duty, especially, when they connive at disobedience: all distinctions betwixt virtue and vice will vanish, authority will sink into disrepute, and government will be trampled in the dust—for which reasons, with others that might be named, it must be the wisdom, the indispensable duty of all characters in society, to unite their exertions, for the support of righteous laws, in their regular administration. As it would be exceedingly unreasonable to expect, that any people, can ever realize the benefits of good government, under a weak, or a wicked administration—in which, persons destitute of abilities, or, of stable principles of righteousness and goodness, fill the various departments of the state. Hence,

3. THE wisdom of a people will appear in the election of good rulers.

THE peace and happiness of communities, have a necessary dependance, under God, upon the character and conduct of those who are called to the administration of government. A bad constitution, under the direction of wise and pious rulers, who have capacity to discern, disposition and resolution to pursue the public good, may become a blessing; being made to subserve many valuable purposes. But the best constitution, committed to rulers of a contrary description, may be subverted; or so abused, as to become a curse: and be rendered

productive of the most mischievous consequences. The understanding, or folly, of a people in reference to their temporal interests, is in nothing more conspicuous, than in the choice of civil rulers. In free states the body of electors have it in their power to be governed well; if faithful to themselves and the public, in raising those to offices of trust and importance, who are possessed of abilities and have merited their confidence by former good services.

KNOWLEDGE and fidelity, are qualifications indispensibly necessary to form the character of good magistrates. No man, ever possessed natural or acquired abilities, too great for the discharge of the duties constantly incumbent upon those, who act as the representatives of the Most High God, in the government of their fellow creatures: multitudes however well disposed, are totally incapable of such trust. The interests of society are always important, they are many times involved in extreme difficulty, through the weakness of some, and the wickedness of others; and there is need of the most extensive knowledge, wisdom and prudence, to direct the various opposing interests of individuals into one channel, and guide them all to a single object, the public good. Wo to that people, to whom God by his providence in judgment shall say; "I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them. And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour: the child shall behave himself proudly against the antient, and the base against the honourable. And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in

the strict and equity cannot enter ; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey." †

But knowledge alone, will qualify no person to fill a public station with honor to himself, or advantage to others. The greatest abilities the most extensive knowledge are capable of abuse, and when misapplied to selfish ambitious purposes, may be improved to the destruction of every thing valuable in society.

FIDELITY therefore, is another essential characteristic in a good ruler. This is a qualification so absolutely essential, that *when known to be wanting*, no conceivable abilities can atone for its absence. Fidelity hath no sure unshaken foundation, but in the love and fear of the one true God : that love, which extends its benign influence to all the creatures of God. This is a branch of that benevolent religion, which the Son of God came down from Heaven to establish, in the hearts of men on earth : this when seated in the soul of man, becomes a stable principle of action, and will have an habitual influence in all his conduct, whether in public or private life—this will enable rulers to maintain the dignity of their elevated stations, amidst the strong temptations with which they may be assaulted—feeling their just accountableness to those of their fellow men, who have placed such confidence in them, as to entrust them with all their valuable temporal interests : and what is infinitely more, feeling their accountableness to God ; they will labor to discharge the important duties of their office ; remembering that the day is fast approaching,

† Isa. iii, 4, 5, and lix : 17, 18.

when, notwithstanding, "they are gods, and children of the Most High, yet they shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes." Able pious magistrates, who wish to answer the end of their appointment, will not wish to hide their real characters from the public eye—they will come to the light that their deeds may be manifest.

It is the interest and privilege of an enlightened free people, to be acquainted with the characters of their most worthy citizens, who are candidates for public offices in the community; and, it is equally their interest and privilege, to make choice of those only to be rulers, who are known among their tribes, for wisdom and piety. Following the salutary counsel of the prince of Midian, they will provide out of all the people, able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness.

FREE republicans, as observed above, have it in their power to be governed well: but they are in the utmost danger through a wanton abuse of this power. Actuated, by noble public spirited motives, and a primary regard to real merit in their elections; they will have the heads of their tribes, as fathers to lead them in paths of safety and peace: under the guidance of such rulers, who consider their subjects as brethren, and children, and all the interests of the community as their own; a people can hardly fail of all that happiness of which societies are capable in this degenerate state.

BUT when party spirit, local views, and interested motives, direct their suffrages, when

they loose sight of the great end of government the public good, and give themselves up, to the baneful influence of parasitical demagogues, they may well expect to reap the bitter fruits of their own folly, in a partial wavering administration. Through the neglect, or abuse of their privileges, most states have lost their liberties; and have fallen a prey to the avarice and ambition of designing and wicked men. "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn." This joy, or mourning, among a people, greatly depends on their own conduct in elections—bribery here, is the bane of society—the man who will give or receive a reward in this case, must be extremely ignorant, not to deserve the stigma of an enemy to the state—and should he have address to avoid discovery, he must be destitute of sensibility, not to feel himself to be despicable. All private dishonorable methods to raise persons to office, convey a strong suspicion to the discerning mind, that merit is wanting: real merit may dwell in obscurity, but it needeth not, neither will it ever solicit, the aids of corruption to bring itself into view. When streams are polluted in their fountain they will not fail to run impure—offices in government obtained by purchase, will always be improved to regain the purchase money with large increase: and a venal administration will possess neither disposition nor strength to correct the vices of others, but will lose sight of the public happiness, in the eager pursuit of personal emolument.

4. **WISDOM** will lead a people to maintain a sacred regard to righteousness, in reference to the public, and individuals.

MORAL righteousness is one of those strong bonds by which all public societies are supported. Heathen nations ignorant of divine revelation, and the particular duties and obligations which are enlightened and enforced by the word and authority of God ; have nevertheless been sensible, of the great importance of moral righteousness. Greece and Rome, in the beginning of their greatness, before they sunk into effeminacy and corruption, were careful to encourage and maintain public and private justice : they laboured to diffuse principles of righteousness among all ranks of their citizens. Many of their writings on this subject, deserve attention so far as the observance of moral duties respect civil communities, and the well-being of mankind in the present world. As all civil communities have their foundation in compacts, by which individuals immerge out of a state of nature, and become one great whole, cemented together by voluntary engagements ; covenanting with each other, to observe such regulations, and perform such duties as may tend to mutual advantage : hence ariseth the necessity of righteousness, this being the basis on which all must depend. When this fails, compacts will be disregarded, men will lose a sense of their obligations to each other, instead of confidence and harmony, will be a spirit of distrust and fear, every man will be afraid of his neighbour ; jealousies will subsist betwixt rulers and subjects, the strength of

the community will be lost in animosity and division, all ability for united exertion will be destroyed, and, the bonds of society being broken it must be dissolved. It was long since observed, by one of the greatest and wisest of kings, and will for ever remain true; "That righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." The truth of this divine maxim doth not depend upon any arbitrary constitution, or, positive system of government: but flows from the reason and nature of things.

THERE is in the constitution of heaven, an established connection, between the practice of righteousness and the happiness of moral beings united in society. Public faith, and private justice, lay a foundation, for public spirit and vigorous exertion to rest upon; in such a state, every one will receive a proper reward for his service, let his station be what it may: and every delinquent, will realize such punishment, as his offence, or neglect of duty may deserve. In a fixed regular course of communicative and distributive justice, all may know before hand, what the reward of their conduct will be. What the apostle hath said concerning the natural body, and applied to the church of CHRIST: may with equal propriety and little variation, be applied to political societies. These bodies are composed of various members, the members have various offices, but all of them are necessary, for the well being of the whole; there is something due from the body to every member, and from every member to the body: every part is to be regarded,

and righteousness maintained throughout the whole.

THE members of a well organized civil community, under an equal and just administration, have no more reason to complain of the station allotted to them in providence ; than the members of the natural body, have of the place, by GOD assigned them in that. "The eye cannot say unto the head, I have no need of thee ; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. But that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it : or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." No member of the natural body, of a civil community, or of GOD's moral kingdom, can be required to do more, than observe the proper duty of its own station : when this is performed, all is done which can reasonably be demanded, it hath done well, and may expect the approbation and protection of the whole body.

MEN may indeed complain, because they are not angels ; and do it with as much propriety, as to feel discontented, because they are not all placed at the head of civil communities. The allwise GOD, hath given us our capacities, and fixed our stations, and when righteousness is observed by us, and the community of which we are members, we shall then do, and receive, what belongs to us, and this is all we can reasonably desire.

5. THE wisdom of a people essentially consists, in paying an unfeigned obedience to the

institutions of that religion, which the Supreme Lawgiver hath established in his church on earth.

THAT religion, which GOD hath enjoined upon rational beings, is not only necessary for his glory, but essential to their happiness. To establish a character as being truly religious, under the light of divine revelation, it is by no means sufficient, that men should barely acknowledge the existence and general providence of one supreme DEITY. From this heavenly light, we obtain decided evidence, that the Almighty Father, hath set his well beloved Son the blessed IMMANUEL, as King upon his holy hill of Zion. This DIVINE person, in his mediatorial character, "is exalted, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also, in that which is to come. And all things are put under his feet. That at the name of JESUS, every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that JESUS CHRIST IS LORD, to the glory of GOD the Father."

IN vain, do guilty mortals worship the great Jehovah, and present their services before him, but, in the name, and for the sake of this glorious Mediator. For it is his will "that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father."

COMMUNITIES, have their existence in, and from, this glorious personage. The kingdom is his, and he ruleth among the nations.

Through his bounty, and special providence, it is, that a people enjoy the inestimable liberties and numerous advantages of a well regulated civil society : through his influence, they are inspired with understanding to adopt, with strength and public spirit to maintain, a righteous constitution : He gives able impartial rulers, to guide in paths of virtue and peace ; or sets up over them the basest of men. By his invisible hand, states are preserved from internal convulsions, and shielded by his Almighty arm from external violence : or, through his providential displeasure, they are given as a prey to their own vices ; or to the lusts and passions of other states, to be destroyed.

THUS absolutely dependant, are temporal communities, and all human things, upon HIM who reigneth King in Zion. “ Be wise now therefore, O ye kings ; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little : blessed are all they that put their trust in him.”

THE holy religion of the Son of God, hath a most powerful and benign influence upon moral beings in society. It not only restrains malicious revengeful passions, and curbs unruly lusts ; but will in event, eradicate them all from the human breast—it implants all the divine graces and social virtues in the heart—it sweetens the dispositions of men, and fits them for all the pleasing satisfactions, of rational friendship—teaches them self denial—inspires them with a generous public spirit—fills them

with love to others, to righteousness and mercy—makes them careful to discharge the duties of their stations—diligent and contented in their callings—this, beyond any other consideration, will increase the real dignity of rulers—will give quiet and submission to subjects—this is the only true and genuine spirit of liberty, which can give abiding union and energy to states—and will enable them to bear prosperity without pride—and support them in adversity without dejection—this will afford all classes of men consolation in death, and render them happy in God, their full eternal portion, in the coming world.

RELIGION, therefore is the glory of all intelligent beings, from the highest angel, to the meanest of the human race : and will for ever happily its possessors, considered, either individually, or, as connected in society : for this assimilates the hearts of creatures, to the great fountain of being in the exercise of general and disinterested affection ; and is, the consummation of wisdom.

If the preceding observations, have their foundation in reason, and the word of God : we see the happy connection between religion and good government. The idea that there is, and ought to be, no connection between religion and civil policy, appears to rest upon this absurd supposition ; that men by entering into society for mutual advantage, become quite a different class of beings from what they were before, that they cease to be moral beings ; and consequently, loose their relation and obli-

gations to GOD, as his creatures and subjects : and also their relations to each other as rational social creatures. If these are the real consequences of civil connections, they are unhappy indeed, as they must exceedingly debase and degrade human nature : and it is readily acknowledged, these things being true, that religion can have no further demands upon them. But, if none of the relations or obligations of men to their Creator, and each other are lost by entering into society ; if they still remain moral and accountable beings, and, if religion is the glory and perfection of moral beings, then the connection, between religion and good government is evident—and all attempts to separate them are unfriendly to society, and inimical to good government, and must originate in ignorance or bad design.

RELIGION essentially consists in friendly affection to GOD, and his rational offspring ; and such affection, can never injure that government which hath public happiness for its object.

ATTEMPTS have been made to distinguish between moral and political wisdom—moral and political righteousness—as tho there were two kinds of wisdom and righteousness, distinct in their nature, and applicable only to different subjects : that which is moral, belonging to the government of men as subjects of GOD's dominion ; and that which is political, to men as subjects of civil rule—But, if wisdom and righteousness, are the same in the fountain, as in the streams, in GOD, as in his creatures ; differ-

ing not in nature and kind, but only in degree, then all such distinctions are manifestly without foundation. We read it is true, of a particular kind of wisdom, the fruit of which is "bitter envying and strife and every evil work: and that this wisdom, is earthly, sensual, and devilish." But, until it is made to appear, that this is more friendly to civil government, than the wisdom "from above, which is pure and peaceable, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy:"* the supposed distinction, will not apply to human governments with advantage—nor, destroy the connection between religion and good government.

RELIGION and civil government, are not one and the same thing: tho' both may, and are designed to embrace some of the same objects, yet the former, extends its obligations and designs immensely beyond what the latter can pretend too: and it hath rights and prerogatives, with which the latter may not intermeddle. Still, there are many ways, in which civil government may give countenance, encouragement, and even support to religion, without invading the prerogatives of the Most High; or, touching the inferior, tho' sacred rights of conscience: and in doing of which, it may not only shew its friendly regard to christianity, but derive important advantages to itself.

THE friends of true happiness, whether ministers of state, or ministers of religion, or, in what ever character they may act, will therefore

* Jam. xiv.—18

exert themselves to promote that cause, which aims at no less an object, than the glory of JEHOVAH, and the highest felicity of his unlimited and eternal kingdom.

A CIVIL community, formed, organized, and administered, agreeably to the principles which have been suggested, will possess internal peace and energy; its strength and wealth may easily be collected for necessary defence, consequently will ever be prepared to repel foreign injuries: it will enjoy prosperity within itself, and become respectable amongst the nations of the earth.

COULD this, and the other states in the American Republic in their separate and united capacities, be established upon the principles of true wisdom, that righteousness and goodness, which have their foundation in the nature of things, and are essential parts, of the christian system—could we build upon this foundation, we might set forth a good example, and become a blessing to mankind—in this way we might establish our character as a wise and understanding people—become * “beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem”—we should “look forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.”

THOSE deserve well of their brethren, who have devoted their time and superior abilities to the public, in the establishment and administration of civil constitutions, which are calculated to answer purposes, importantly beneficial to mankind.

* Solomons Song vi. 4. and 10.

THESE thoughts, may call our grateful attention, to the honourable and venerable characters, collected this morning in the house of GOD. Some respectful, serious addresses, to the different characters here present may conclude this discourse.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,

SEATS of dignity in free republics are truly honorable, where merit, and the voice of uncorrupted citizens are the only causes of elevation. The first Magistrate in such a state, is more respectable than the most powerful Monarch, who obtains his throne, either by arbitrary usurpation, the arts of venality, or even the fortunate circumstance of hereditary succession. In either of the instances supposed, the throne may be filled without personal worth, may be supported by the same means by which it was at first obtained, and may be improved for the purposes of idleness and dissipation : or what is worse, to consume the wealth, destroy the liberties, and even sport with the lives of subjects. By means of such abuse of power, a people will be rendered vastly more wretched, than they would have been in a state of nature ; and yet find it extremely difficult, to extricate themselves from these complicated evils. But such abuse of power cannot so easily take place, or be continued, in free republican governments ; where places of honor are inseparably connected with important duties ; duties which must be performed, otherwise such places will not long be supported, under the jealous inspection of a people, possessed of the knowledge,

and love of liberty, together with the means of its preservation.

THESE considerations, add to the merit, and increase the lustre of those worthy characters, which have been repeatedly called by the united voice of their brethren to preside in this State. The understanding of this people and their knowledge of worth, have been conspicuous, in the attention generally paid, to deserving personages in the election of their rulers : especially in the long succession of wise religious governors, whose eminent talents, and pious examples, have been so extensively beneficial to this community. May your Excellency's name, in this honourable catalogue, remain a lasting memorial, of the many services which you have rendered to this people, as a public testimony of the respect of your enlightened fellow citizens : and may your unremitting exertions for their prosperity be continued, and all your benevolent endeavours to promote their temporal and eternal interests, meet the divine blessing—may you never bear that sword in vain, which the exalted MEDIATOR, through the instrumentality of men, hath put into your hand ; let this be a shield to the innocent, the widow, and the orphan, in their oppressions ; while it remains a terror, to all such as do evil : you will if possible, scatter the wicked with your eyes, but when coercion becomes necessary, you will bring the wheel over them. Sensible of the weighty cares, and strong temptations of your exalted station, may your dependance, be increasingly fixed on that glorious and gracious Being, who hath called you to office ; esteem-

ing his approbation infinitely superior to the applause of mortals. By the weight of your example, and the influence of that authority with which you are clothed, may you, sir, do much for the honor of GOD the Redeemer, for the advancement of his holy religion among men—for the promotion of righteousness and peace, in this, and the United States of America—for the abolition of slavery and every species of oppression—for the increase of civil and religious liberty, in the earth—And when, by the Supreme Disposer of all events, you may be called, to relinquish the honors, and cares of this mortal life, our prayer to Almighty GOD, is, that in that solemn hour, you may enjoy the supports of conscious integrity, meet with the approbation of your Judge, and be graciously received to the society of the blessed.

THE public address, may now, be respectfully presented, to his Honor the Lieutenant-Governor, the Council, and House of Representatives.

HONORED GENTLEMEN,

THE trust, which GOD, and this respectable commonwealth, have reposed in you is truly important. All the temporal interests of this people, in a sense, are put into your hands and committed to your management, for the general good. Children place strong confidence, in the wisdom and tender care of their natural parents ; so, do this people in you, gentlemen, as their civil fathers : this confidence is not only implied, but expressed, in the designation

of your persons to those offices which you hold, in the government of your fellow citizens. Civil liberty, is an inheritance descending from the Father of Lights, a talent which, individuals may not despise, or misimprove without guilt : how vastly important then, must this, with its connected blessings in society, be, to a large community ? The extensive views, and patriotic feelings, of wise and virtuous magistrates, cannot fail, deeply to impress their minds with the weight and solemnity of the trust reposed in them. Great anxiety for preferment, betrays a weak mind, or a vicious heart. Those only, deserve the honors of an elevated station, who are willing to bear the burdens, and perform the duties which belong to it : and to reap the rewards which righteousness and benevolence will bestow : and who, in the ways of well doing, can meet with calmness, the temporary ingratitude, of a misguided misjudging people. Not that the preacher would be understood to mean, that great esteem, with an ample pecuniary recompense, are not due, to those, whose time, and superior talents are employed, in promoting the happiness of their fellow men.

You, gentlemen, are vested with an authority, which men of wisdom and virtue will ever revere ; which properly exercised, none can resist, without resisting the ordinance of God : and persevering in their resistance “ must receive to themselves damnation.” May you ever exercise such authority, in the meekness of wisdom, for the best good of your brethren : agreeably to those unchangeable laws of righte-

ousness and goodness, which the Supreme Law-giver hath established in his moral kingdom.*

“That no iniquity, be found in the place of righteousness, or, wickedness, in the place of judgment; your eyes will be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with you: these who walk in a perfect way,” will be designated by you for all important executive trusts. Viewing yourselves, in the light of truth, as the ministers of God, to this people for good, you will realize the important connection between the moral government of JEHOVAH, and those inferior governments which he hath ordained to exist among men. In this light, you will esteem it your highest glory, to manifest a personal, supreme regard, to the benevolent institutions of the Son of God: by the weight of your example, and the force of all that influence you possess, you will study to commend his holy religion to all men; that you may be instrumental, in promoting the temporal peace and eternal happiness of this people. Public sentiments have a vast influence upon the conduct of mankind; public sentiments receive their complexion from public men; the rulers of a people can do more than some may imagine, to promote real godliness: if this, is recommended in their conversation, and exemplified in their lives, it will attract the attention of multitudes; it may lead some to a happy imitation, and will not fail, to give strong support, to all the friends of God.

But men, sufficiently disposed at all times to cast off the fear of God, need slender aid, from public influential characters, to become pro-

* Eccl. iii. 16—Ps. ci. 6.

fessed advocates, for infidelity and licentiousness. How exceedingly interesting, gentlemen, to yourselves and the community, is the station assigned you in providence? May unerring wisdom guide all your steps, and the God of Abraham be your shield, and exceeding great reward.

THE Ministers of God's sanctuary, will accept some thoughts addressed to them, not indeed for their instruction, but, to "stir up their pure minds by way of remembrance."

REVEREND FATHERS and BRETHREN,

OUR character as christians, obligeth us to be righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless: not forgetting that, of civil magistracy, as one of the wise and gracious appointments of heaven, which, rightly improved, will extend its happy influence beyond the present life. And, our office as ministers, calleth us to exhort all the disciples of Jesus, that they "submit themselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: unto kings and governors as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." The ignorance and folly of that principle, that there is no connection between religion and civil policy, is most happily refuted, when the followers of Jesus act in character, and demonstrate to the world, that real christians are the best members of society in every station. We are not then acting out

of character, when pointing out the advantages of a righteous government, and the necessity of subjection to magistrates. This however, is not the principal object of our ministry: our wisdom and understanding will eminently appear, in converting sinners from the error of their ways—in winning souls to CHRIST. To effect which our speech and our preaching must not be with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power.

CONFIDING, in the unerring wisdom, and boundless goodness, of GOD, we need not be ashamed, nor afraid, to declare all his counsel—being well assured, that no doctrine, or duty, can be found in his revealed will, but such as are profitable for men to believe and practice. The great comprehensive design of the christian ministry, is the glory of GOD, in the salvation of sinners, through JESUS CHRIST. In pursuing this noble and important design, we shall labor to exhibit, the divine excellency of the christian religion, in the holiness of our lives and conversation, as well, as in the simplicity, and uncorruptness of our doctrines: that our example and our preaching, may unite in their tendency, to persuade sinners, to become reconciled to GOD. “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings; that publisheth peace, that saith unto Zion, thy GOD reigneth!” and how is this beauty increased? when the spiritual watchmen upon the walls of Zion, “sing together with the voice, and see eye to eye.” *

* Isa. lii. 7. 8.

THAT this beauty may appear and shine, in all the ministers and churches of CHRIST; let us become more fervent, and united, in supplications, to our Father in Heaven, that he may shed forth plentiful effusions of that spirit of love, and of a sound mind, which is the only abiding principle of union, between moral beings. Under the influence of this holy spirit, awakened to activity and renewed diligence, by the repeated instances of mortality, among the ministering servants of God, in the past year; may we all pursue the sacred work assigned us, with increasing joy, and success, until called from our labors, to receive the free rewards of faithful servants, in the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST.

A brief address, to the numerous audience present on this joyful anniversary, will close this discourse.—

BRETHREN AND FELLOW CITIZENS,

LET us not vainly boast, in our truly happy constitution—nor in the number of wise, and pious personages, whom God hath called to preside in its administration. We have abundant occasion indeed, to bless, and praise, the God of Heaven; for all our distinguishing privileges, both civil and religious—few of our lapsed race, enjoy immunities, equal to those which we possess: but we do well to remember, that profaneness and irreligion, infidelity and ungodliness, when connected with such advantages, will exceedingly enhance the guilt of men, and without repentance will awfully increase the

pains of damnation. Would we become a wise understanding people, we must learn the statutes, and judgments, which the LORD our GOD, hath commanded, and obey them—we must be a religious, holy people, “for without holiness, no man shall see the LORD.” Let all be exhorted, to become wise to salvation, through faith, which is in CHRIST JESUS.—AMEN.

