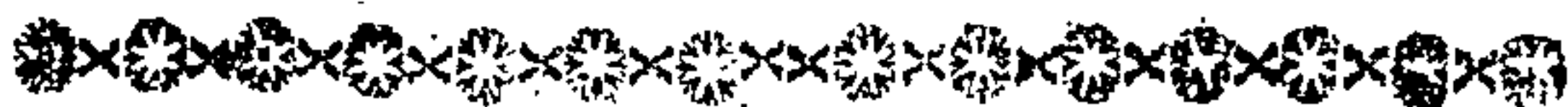


Mr. *Cumings's*

THANKSGIVING

SERMON

DECEMBER 11th, 1783.



A  
S E R M O N

Preached in BILLERICA,

DECEMBER 11, 1783,

The Day recommended by CONGRESS

T O

ALL THE STATES,

To be observed as a Day of

PUBLIC THANKSGIVING,

A N D

Appointed to be observed accordingly, throughout

T H E

Commonwealth of MASSACHUSETTS,

By the Authority of the same.

By HENRY CUMINGS, A. M. 

Pastor of the Church there.

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B O S T O N :

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A

## Thanksgiving S E R M O N.

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P S A L M CXXVI, 3.

*The Lord hath done great things for us,  
whereof we are glad.*

**T**HE inspired writer of this psalm (whoever he was) has manifest reference to some great and remarkable deliverance, which had been wrought for the people of God. He first calls their attention to the wonderful salvation, which they had experienced, and reminds them of the great pleasure and delight, which they enjoyed, on the occasion; and then, under the impressions of piety and religious philosophy, teaches them to adore the providence of the Almighty, and to ascribe their rescue from sore affliction and adversity, and restoration to a prosperous and happy condition, to the gracious interposition of divine power. *The Lord, says he, hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.* In which words, he directs the people to look above means, instruments, second causes and subordinate agents, to that supreme over-ruling Power,  
who

who has universal nature under his controul; and leads them to acknowledge God, as the author of that great salvation, which had filled their hearts with joy and gladness.

And nothing sure can better become a people professing godliness, than to eye the hand of providence, in all events; and especially to acknowledge the interposition of the Deity in such events and occurrences, as are great, important, remarkable and interesting; and devoutly to celebrate his praises, as their saviour and deliverer, when they have been rescued from danger, distress and grievous calamity, and put into safe, prosperous and happy circumstances. This, which is the universal doctrine of scripture, is clearly implied in the text; nor can it be doubted by any one, who entertains just conceptions of God, as the supreme Ruler and Governor of the world.

As rational and dependant creatures, it behoves us to cultivate the most exalted ideas of God's universal government and dominion, and to endeavour to possess our minds with an habitual realizing persuasion, that his providence presides over all the affairs of the world, and guides all the movements of nature; that he pulls down one nation and sets up another, as he pleases, and superintends all the revolutions that take place in the kingdoms of men; that he determines the

(to us uncertain) issues of war, and over-rules the passions of men, and the free motions of their wills, in such a manner, as to make them subservient to his purposes of judgment or mercy ; that he forms the warrior and the statesman, the hero, patriot and politician, bestowing accomplishments, abilities, wisdom, skill, prowess and resolution, on whom he pleases, for answering the designs of his providence ; and lastly, that although his interpositions may seldom be miraculous, in a strict sense, yet his agency is really and truly concerned in deciding the event of all human undertakings ; all those contingencies and circumstances which serve to raise or depress the spirits of men, to influence their counsels and operations, or to promote or obstruct their measures, being subject to his direction and sovereign disposal.

Were our minds possessed of these exalted ideas concerning divine providence, we should pierce through the veil of second causes and instruments, and view the disposing hand of God in all events. Animated by these sentiments, we should always be ready to adore the goodness and power of the supreme Ruler ; especially when we have experienced any remarkable deliverances and signal successes. On such occasions our hearts would naturally adopt that grateful language, *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us ; not unto our wisdom, policy or power ; but unto thy name be the glory.*



I presume, my hearers, you are all such strong believers, in the doctrine of providence, that, if you have any tolerable acquaintance with facts, I need not make use of any arguments to persuade you to apply the language of the text, on this occasion. With the greatest propriety may we say, *The Lord hath done great things for us ; whereof we are glad.*

What I intend, in the prosecution of this text, is to bring into view some of those *great things*, which God hath done for us and our country, which have been the occasion of great rejoicing of heart, and demand our grateful acknowledgments to the supreme Disposer of events. This I shall endeavour, in order to excite in your breasts, and my own, such sentiments of piety, devotion and gratitude, as shall be suitable to the wonderful interpositions of a merciful providence, and to the distinguishing vouchsafements of divine goodness, of which we, and the people of New-England and confederated America, have had large and happy experience.

I now find myself introduced into an extensive field, which abounds with a vast variety of objects, adapted to excite adoration and praise, to the Author of all good. But for want of time, I shall be obliged to confine myself to a few only of those numerous objects, deserving our grateful remembrance, which such a spacious field exhibits to view.

Time

Time would fail me, should I turn you back to the earlier periods of the country, and attempt to display the wonders of divine goodness towards our worthy ancestors, who, rather than submit to the iron rod of civil and ecclesiastical tyranny, emigrated from their native land, and sought and found an asylum in the inhospitable wilds of America. Time would fail me, to recount the many signal instances, of divine interposition, for their relief in distress, protection in danger, and support and deliverance, when engaged in bloody wars with the savage natives. Time would fail me, to shew how they prospered and flourished under the smiles of a propitious providence, notwithstanding the many difficulties and obstacles, seemingly insurmountable, with which they had to encounter ; and how their posterity, under the continued unremitting care of Heaven, spread themselves over the face of the land, and grew up to a great people, maintaining, all along, their civil and religious rights, in opposition to all the attempts of enterprizing ambition or hostile violence, to wrest the same out of their hands. Time would fail me to give you an account of these things ; I shall therefore leave them to your grateful recollection, in private, with the assistance of such histories, as you may be furnished with ; and turn your thoughts upon things more recent, which do in a peculiar manner, claim our attention, and call for our thankful acknowledgments, on this occasion.

B

Never

Never had any people greater occasion for thanksgiving, than the inhabitants of these States, at the present day. It becomes us all to enquire, *what we shall render to the Lord, for the great things he has done for us.* He has supported, protected and defended us, amidst the most alarming dangers and hazardous conflicts. He has crowned our virtuous efforts for the defence of our country with glorious success, and restored to us the blessings of peace and public tranquillity. The happy conclusion of a long and distressing war, lays us under infinite obligations of gratitude, to the *Lord God of hosts,* who has been *our shield and defence, our glory and the lifter up of our heads.* Rescued from danger, from the havock, desolations and carnage of war, and put into the peaceable and full possession of liberty and independence, the grand objects of our contest, we must be stupid, if we do not *rejoice in the God of our salvation,* and adore his providence, which has wrought so great deliverance for us, and raised us to a conspicuous place, upon the theatre of nations.

How great, my hearers, is the salvation, which the Lord God omnipotent hath wrought for us! Amidst surrounding perils, under discouraging prospects, in the depth of trouble and distress, when our affairs were in a most intricate, perplexed and alarming situation, we *cried unto the Lord,* who graciously *inclined his ear,* and *heard us;* inspired us with fortitude



cude and resolution, proportionate to our dangers and difficulties ; enabled us to defend our cause against the utmost efforts of the wisdom, power and policy of our enemies ; and by a series of events, in which his merciful interposition was remarkably concerned, has induced those, who waged an unjust war against us, to relinquish their unreasonable claims, to grant us all, yea much more than we contended for, at first, and to negotiate a peace with us upon the footing of equality and mutual independence. We may now therefore with the greatest pertinency adopt that language of the psalmist, *The Lord hath brought us up out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay ; he hath set our feet upon a rock, and established our goings. He hath put a new song of praise into our mouths.*

How different has been the state of our affairs this year, from what it was in years past ! What a wonderful shifting of the scene ! What a reviving transition from woe and sorrow to joy and triumph ! from gloomy uncertainties and anxious apprehensions, to fair and bright prospects ! from storms and tempests, to calmness and serenity ! from a dark and dreadful night, to a more glorious day than ever before beamed upon this western hemisphere ! Instead of the alarms of war, and the frequent tidings of battles, and slaughter, and *garments rolled in blood*, our ears and

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our hearts have been entertained with the more agreeable and welcome news of peace, upon terms honourable and advantageous.

Let us take a brief retrospective view of the footsteps of divine providence in the rise, progress and conclusion of the late war; and attend a little to the causes and events, which concurred to make us an independent nation, and which led to our final establishment in the peaceable possession of our fundamental rights and liberties. *Who so is wise and will observe these things, even he shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord.*

Great Britain, as if left to judicial infatuation, by her unadvised and arbitrary measures and politics, kindled the flames of the late war, which, in event, has proved not less glorious for us, than humiliating to her ambitious pride. Had she not assumed an unreasonable authority over us; had she not endeavoured to rob us of the essential rights of human nature, granted and confirmed to us, by the great Lord of heaven and earth, in the charter of our being; in short, had she not attempted to subject us to her despotic government, we should have remained in friendly union with her to this day, without entertaining a thought of resisting her power, or breaking our connection with her. From an unaccountable blindness to her own interest and inattention to the principles of justice and equity, she  
reduced

reduced us to this alternative, either to give up our pretensions to liberty, and submit to her unlimited claim of authority, to "*make laws binding upon us in all cases whatsoever*;" or else to risque the consequence of incurring her anger, and opposing her power. Our situation was then exceedingly perplexed and difficult. If we submitted, it was obvious, that our lives, liberties and estates were at once subjected to her arbitrary disposal; and that we should become slaves ourselves, and entail slavery on our posterity: if we resisted, we had reason to dread her wrath and power, and to be afraid of the consequences. Petitions and remonstrances availed no more, than chaff before the wind. Deaf, inexorable and obstinate, she persisted in her claims, and treated our complaints with neglect or insult. Finding all other means ineffectual (as became freemen) we ventured to resist, and left the event with God. A dark and gloomy cloud then spread itself over America, threatening a terrible storm of havock, slaughter and blood. The storm burst upon us, and we felt, severely felt, the dreadful shock. The plains of Lexington, reeking with the blood of several of our brave countrymen, who were wantonly slain by a party of British troops, first announced the commencement of war. The most distressing and hazzardous scenes soon opened upon us. Then were we in perils from every quarter; in perils from an hostile fleet, which invested

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our sea coasts, threatening to cut off all communication and intercourse between us and other nations, and so to deprive us of all chance of procuring necessary supplies for carrying on a war: in perils from a well disciplined and formidable army, which had actually invaded our land, in order to force us into unconditional submission: in perils from the scattered tribes of savages, that bordered upon us, who, by the instigation of British emissaries, kept our frontiers in continual alarms, by their hostile incursions: in perils also from the insidious arts, secret plots and stratagems of many of our own countrymen, who, either from a mistaken persuasion of the injustice of our cause, or from fears of the supposed omnipotence of Britain, did all they could, to disconcert our measures and weaken our hands, and to aid and assist the evil designs of our enemies. But amidst all these surrounding perils, the Almighty was our protector, so that our enemies could not prevail.

The providence of God was remarkably visible, in it's effects, both in uniting the inhabitants of these states, at first, to oppose the arbitrary measures of Britain, and in cementing that union afterwards, by the ties of the strictest confederacy, for their common safety and defence, even when appearances were very doubtful and unpromising. That a people, so distant from one another; and so different, in many respects, in their manners, customs and modes



modes of living, from whence strong local prejudices commonly arise; should be so generally inspired, as it were with one soul, and breathe the same spirit; and, regardless of the frowns and insidious flatteries of Britain, should bind themselves together in the closest alliance, to oppose her as a common enemy, and resist her even to blood; and should have the courage to erect themselves into a national state, and to adhere to their independence and sovereignty, amidst the greatest discouragements and difficulties, and most alarming dangers; cannot be accounted for, without acknowledging the interposing agency of that almighty Being, who has immediate access to all minds, and to whose providence (as has already been suggested) are subject all those contingencies and concurring circumstances, which influence the resolutions and actions of men.

Our insufficiency, according to human calculations, for the hazzardous conflict, in which we have been engaged, was mercifully hidden from us, and from our enemies, at the beginning of the contest. A full knowledge of our weakness, and the extreme dangers and difficulties of our situation, would have tended to dishearten us, to relax our efforts, and abate the vigor of our exertions; and at the same time, it would have fired our enemies with double ardor, and might have spirited them to have pushed into the country, with their whole collected force, at the only time, when  
they



they had any fair chance of conquest ; I mean, at the time, when we were first plunged into the war ; our circumstances then being such, that according to human probabilities, our enemies might have *swallowed us up quick*, had not God, in his providence, laid them under the restraints of fear, and intimidated them in such a degree, that all their boasted courage evapourated in puff.

It is well known, that at the commencement of hostilities we were weak, and without ally. We were without money, without ammunition, and but wretchedly armed to meet an enemy. We were undisciplined, and unprovided with the necessaries for carrying on a war. But our enemies had not the courage to take the advantage of these circumstances, so much against us, and in their favour ; on the contrary, though helpless and unprepared, we were enabled to confine them in the capital of this commonwealth for almost twelve months, and eventually to drive them from thence, notwithstanding all their boasts of power to crush us to atoms, when they pleased. *This was the Lord's doing*, and it ought always to be *marvellous in our eyes*.

Let me add, as an instance of God's great goodness to us, under these unhappy circumstances, that we were supplied with the warlike stores we most needed, from a quarter from which we least expected them ; they  
being

being taken from our enemies and conveyed to us, by little armed cruisers, whose success on the watery element, where we had no thoughts at first of atchieving any thing, exceeded our most sanguine hopes.

It is worthy also of our grateful observation, that God, who to serve his own purposes, sometimes, *hides wisdom from the wise*, was pleased to leave our enemies to adopt such measures, in the prosecution of their unjust designs, as contributed at once to their own disappointment, and to the promotion of our righteous cause. That they endeavoured, by threats and cruelties ; by the barbarous usage of many, who fell into their power ; and by marking their footsteps with havock and devastation, wherever they prevailed so far as to penetrate the country ; that they endeavoured by such means, to dishearten and discourage us, and frighten us into slavish submissions, will never be forgotten. They seemed to lay it down as an undoubted principle, that the constitution of America, was cowardice, till they were undeceived by sad experience. Their arts of intimidation, far from answering their purpose, rather served to strengthen the zeal and resolution of the friends of liberty, and to add desperation to their courage, by giving a most alarming view of the awful consequences, to be expected from the success of their arms. It was evident that they considered, and, as soon as they should be able, meant to punish patriotis-

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patriotism, as high treason and rebellion. From the temper which they discovered, every one, who had distinguished himself as a fast friend to the liberties of his country, had reason to fear, if they should gain their point, that a cruel and ignominious death would be his portion ; or if he should be permitted to live, that his life would be made miserable, by abuses and insults, imprisonment and confiscations. So that undesignedly, they took the most effectual methods, to rouse the courage and valour of America into heroic exertions, and to provoke every patriot to make the most desperate resistance.

There was a time, when, if our enemies had improved their advantages, in the exercise of that gracious and merciful disposition, of which they have so often boasted, and which they always attributed to their sovereign, it might have proved injurious, if not fatal to our cause. The time I have particular reference to, was, when they over-run the state of New-Jersey, in the year 1776. Our affairs were then in an almost ruined situation ; and it seemed next to impossible to retrieve them. At that time, had our enemies tempered their successes with clemency and moderation, they might, in a great measure, have appeased the fears of people, and made them the more ready to entertain thoughts of submission to Great-Britain. The wavering would doubtless have been secured on their side, and added  
greatly

greatly to the number of their adherents. But *the cause was from the Lord* ; who therefore left them to pursue the dictates of their own haughty tempers ; in consequence of which, their successes eventually turned to their disadvantage, by giving people a full proof of the necessity of tempting all hazards, rather than submit. I might mention other instances of their falling into the like error, when success and victory attended their arms ; but, for brevity's sake, shall leave them to your own recollection.

God has also manifested his *marvellous loving kindness* to us, in defeating the treasonable conspiracies of disguised enemies among ourselves, by timely discoveries. One instance of this kind is so memorable, that it will never be forgotten. I mean the bringing to light the treachery of one, who had the honour of a distinguished rank in our army, when he had concerted a plan for giving up a most important fortress, on the North River, into the hands of the enemy, whereby the communication between the northern and southern states would have been in a great measure cut off. This infernal plot was happily discovered, when it was just ripe for execution ; whereby the extensive mischief intended was prevented, and the treasonable author according to his deserts, doomed to everlasting infamy. In this instance, was remarkably  
verified



verified what Eliphaz says of the Almighty ; *He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise,—and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong.*

Let me further add, that there is, I believe, scarcely any person, who has attended to the footsteps of divine providence, in the vicissitudes of the late war, but must have observed, that we were sometimes disappointed, when we supposed we had a fair prospect of success ; and on the other hand, were often succeeded, when our affairs wore such a dark and gloomy aspect, as rendered success exceedingly doubtful. In such dispensations, so contrary to human views and conjectures, it was doubtless the design of Heaven, to lead us to the acknowledgement of a power superior to ourselves, and dispose us to eye the hand of One above, who governs all things here below.

It is worthy of particular observation, and ought always to be remembered with thanksgiving, that the successes of our enemies, by the providence of God, were in several instances, wonderfully over-ruled for our advantage.—We have often found, by experience, that what we judged unfavourable events, were only blessings in disguise ; being preparatory steps to some great events in our favour. The victories of our enemies, often brought them into such a situation, as turned the scale against them,



them, and prepared the way for their defeat. When they drove our little army before them through the state of New-Jersey, and obliged our noble general to cross the Delaware, in order to avoid falling into their hands, they seemed to think they had nearly compleated the conquest of the country, and should meet with very little if any more resistance. But this success only served to lull them into security, and to encourage them to scatter and divide into parties, for the maintainance of distant posts, and so made way for the battles of Trenton and Princeton, in both which we were victorious, and which soon shifted the scene of our affairs, and brightened our prospects. General Burgoyne's success, in the reduction of Tyconderoga, was also in it's consequence most unfortunate for them, and happy for us. Elated with this victory, flushed with confidence of further success, and, in imagination, *arraying himself* (to use a scripture metaphor) with the country, *as with a garment*, this ill-fated general imprudently pushed forward, until he found himself so ensnared, that he was obliged to surrender himself with his whole army, to the brave freemen of America. Such instances of our enemies being insnared by their own victories, should lead us to adore the providence of God, *whose way is in the sea, whose path is in the mighty waters, and whose footsteps are not known.*

The capture of general Burgoyne, with his army, as it was effected without the aid of any human ally, was a most glorious event to America, and was soon attended with very important consequences. It raised these states to an honourable and respectable consideration among the powers of Europe; and was that which induced the French nation openly to espouse our cause, and unite themselves with us in a friendly alliance. This presents to view another instance of the great goodness of God to us, for which we ought to celebrate his praises, this day, viz. his raising up for us an ally, in one of the first European powers. France, no doubt, was influenced by views of policy and interest to patronize our cause, and afford us aid. But this is perfectly consistent with believing the interposing agency of providence, in the case. For how came France to view it as for her interest to form an alliance with us, and make the independence of America an object of her most determined pursuit? To say nothing of immediate impressions; was not this owing, in a great degree, to a certain concurrence of contingencies, circumstances and events? And was not this concurrence of influential causes ordered by God? This will not be denied by any one, who believes that the world, and the affairs of it, are under the government of divine providence.

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Let me add, that as it would be ingratitude to God, to deny his interposition in bringing about an alliance, from which we received the most important assistances; so it would be great baseness and dissingenuity towards our allies, to deny their generosity in affording us aid, merely because they saw and felt themselves interested in the event of the war, in which we were engaged. For let any nation be deprived of all sense of interest, of all regard to their own welfare, and they will at once become incapable of the impressions of friendship and generosity, and of being moved to action by any inducements proper to influence rational beings. If we suppose that where the principle of self-love has any influence, there can be no generosity, we must also suppose that there never was and never will be any generosity in the world; it being impossible to mention any action, that a man can be excited to perform by any motives that can be laid before him, if he is void of love to himself. That man is friendly, is kind and generous, who affords us aid in time of need, and does those things for our relief and support, which we cannot claim as our just due, although he should not be influenced solely by a concern for our welfare, but a regard to his own felicity, either in this world, or that to come, or both, should be the main ingredient in the motive of his beneficent actions.

I would further observe, that as our allies deserve an honourable remembrance, for their generous interposition in support of our rights against the violent attacks of Britain ; so our own patriotic army, who have *done valiantly* for their country, and all those, who have personally jeopardded their lives, and in the face of every danger, bravely exerted themselves, in defence of our common rights and liberties, are intitled to particular honourable regards. And such they will doubtless receive, if our virtue and patriotism can keep the ascendancy of our avarice. But leaving this matter to your own ingenuous feelings ;

Let me now lead you to the southward, and give you a view of some of the wonderful appearances of providence for America, in that quarter ; particularly in the year 1781, which terminated gloriously for us, and so much to the disappointment of our enemies, that from that time they seemed to give up the thoughts of conquest, and to be disposed for peace.

At the opening of the campaign, in the last mentioned year, our affairs were involved in gloominess and darkness, and appearances were exceedingly unfavourable. Having captured our army, under our worthy General Lincoln, and overcome all resistance, our enemies were in full possession of Georgia and South Carolina. After erecting forts and garrisons, in those states, and leaving a sufficient force, as  
they



they supposed, to secure what they had gained, Lord Cornwallis, with his victorious army, moved northward, in order to join a body of troops, sent from New-York to Virginia ; by which junction they hoped to subdue the last mentioned large and wealthy state, and bring all the south into submission to the British king. This junction Cornwallis effected, after forcing his way through North-Carolina, where, tho' he met with some check from our forces under the heroic general Greene, yet it did not prevent his obtaining the object in view. At that time our force in Virginia under the Marquis Fayette; was by no means sufficient to face the enemy under Cornwallis. And we had reason to tremble for the fate of general Greene, who marched with his little army into South-Carolina, where, surrounded with enemies, strongly posted and garrisoned, as well as superior to him in numbers, he could not expect any assistance or succours from the northward, by reason of the distance and other circumstances. We were also under great embarrassments, by the failure of our medium of trade, and the loss of public credit, which rendered it extremely difficult, to make those exertions which such an alarming crisis required. But under these discouraging circumstances and gloomy prospects, Heaven interposed, and most marvellously defeated our enemies, and frustrated their raised expectations. Their successes once more turned to their disadvantage ; and once more they were ensnared

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by the work of their own hands. The Lord God of hosts gloriously displayed his power, in supporting our army under general Greene, in many severe and bloody battles, and giving them such success, that they soon wrested from the enemy the two southernmost states, excepting two towns, near the sea ; whereby a remarkable change in our affairs was produced, in that quarter, and our hopes of further success greatly encouraged. But the most important and memorable event of the year, was that which closed the campaign ; I mean, the surrender of Cornwallis and his army, in Virginia, to the united forces of America and her allies, under the command of the renowned and magnanimous general Washington, as great and excellent a character as adorns the present age, or can be found among the most celebrated heroes of antiquity. This glorious event proved very decisive, in it's consequences ; as it effectually discouraged our enemies from prosecuting their plans of conquest, and prepared the way for a peace, in which they have allowed us the undisputed possession of sovereignty and independence.

There was no event during the war, in which the hand of providence was more visibly concerned, than in this. It was brought about under a remarkable coincidence of favorable circumstances. Our enemies were permitted to break through all opposition, till they put themselves into the situation, which occasioned their

their final overthrow. The plan for attacking them, in Virginia, was, to admiration, kept a profound secret, till it was ripe for execution; though it must have been concerted many mouths before, and must have been known to Count de Rochambeau, the general of the forces of our allies, to Count de Grasse, the admiral of their fleet, and doubtless to many others, besides our worthy commander in chief. By this secrecy, and some movements that seemed to indicate different intentions, our enemies were entirely deceived, as to the object in view, until it was too late to interrupt our pursuit of it. Winds, seas and seasons, and all other circumstances and incidents, marvellously conspired to form a junction between the fleet of our allies and our land forces, at the time appointed. A most perfect harmony subsisted in the allied army, and gave strength and vigor to their united operations. To every one, who considers these things, the wonderful interposition of divine providence, in the capture of Cornwallis, must appear plain and obvious. Irreligion itself can scarcely deny, that we owe a tribute of praise to the supreme Governor, for this great and glorious event.

I might mention many other instances of God's gracious appearance for us, in the course of the late war, from the first rise, through all the stages, vicissitudes and hazzardous progress of it, to it's happy conclusion; but being confined to the limits of a sermon, and

instances

instances of this kind being very numerous, I am obliged to pass by many particulars. What has been said, is enough to awaken our gratitude to the supreme disposer of events, if there be a spark of ingenuity in our breasts.

In the furnace of affliction, we have been exercised with severe and fiery trials. But our greatest troubles were, in some measure, alleviated by a certain intermixture of good. The darkest and most melancholy scenes in which we were involved, had some rays of divine goodness, shining through them, which served to cheer and support our spirits, and nourish the pleasing hope of an happy issue. And frequently light arose suddenly out of obscurity, and shone with such a bright lustre, as gave us the most animating and flattering prospects. But then again our prospects would be darkened by the occurrence of some sorrowful event; by some disappointment or misfortune, by some success or victory of our enemies. Though such unfavourable events, were only temporary evils, and in many instances (as has been shewn) served to prepare the way for some great good, and were in the end over-ruled for our advantage; yet they were very grievous and distressing, for a while. Amidst an alternate succession of good and evil, of success and disappointment, our minds could not but labour, in anxious suspense about the final event of things. Our situation was calamitous; our troubles were great; and

OUR

our difficulties sometimes seemed almost insurmountable. We knew that our all, in this world, was at stake, and that the effects of our conflict, would be felt, not by ourselves only, but by our posterity, to the latest generation. We could not therefore be unconcerned, while the book of futurity was sealed, and the issue of things lay hid in uncertainty.

But this year has scattered all clouds of doubt, and freed our minds from the pains of anxious suspense. I congratulate you, my friends, on the return of the blessings of peace. It is impossible to express the effusions of gladness, which I felt, upon the first certain intelligence we received, of a cessation of hostilities, and of the settled preliminaries of a peace, as much for the honour and glory of America, as the most sanguine patriot could expect. The breast of every true friend to his country expanded with joy, on the occasion, and received the glad tidings with the most cordial welcome. *Glory be to God in the highest*, who has been pleased to dispose the belligerent powers to sheath the devouring sword, and put a stop to the effusion of human blood. *Glory be to God in the highest*, who has induced our enemies to acknowledge us as an independent nation, and to allow us the peaceable enjoyment of all the rights of human nature, together with the undisputed possession of as large an extent of territory, as our most raised expectations ever flattered



us with the prospect of. Though we have not yet received official intelligence of the completion of the definitive treaty, yet we have had such authentic information of it, as puts it past all doubt. We may now therefore *put off the harness* with joy and triumph; our peace and liberty, being established, upon a basis, as we trust, sure and permanent; and apply ourselves, without danger, to the cultivation of the mild and gentle arts of domestic comfort, prosperity and happiness. Each one may now retire *under his own vine and fig-tree*, and have none to make him afraid.

A new and flattering scene has opened upon us; but I cannot help sometimes looking beyond the scene as it respects us, under a persuasion that God may have designed the benefit of other states and kingdoms, by the great revolution which he has brought about in America. For besides that by this means there is an asylum provided, to which the oppressed and distressed of the human race in all quarters of the globe, may repair and be safe; this event will probably greatly affect the politics of Europe, and be attended with important consequences on the other side of the Atlantic. Animated by the brave example of America, Ireland has already been roused to assert her liberties, and contend for her rights; nor has she been unsuccessful, having gained some points, which may encourage her to hope, that she shall eventually be able to tear from her neck,



neck, that yoke of British oppression, with which she has long been galled. Nor is it unlikely, that this American revolution may produce great changes in Britain, and other parts of Europe ; and prepare the way for such alterations in their system of politics, as shall be friendly to the liberties of mankind, and serve to confine the power of arbitrary princes and potentates within narrower bounds.

The noble sentiments of liberty which have been displayed in the resolutions of Congress, and of the several assemblies of these states ; and the heroic exertions which we have made in the cause of freedom, have attracted the attention and excited the admiration of Europe. The friends of freedom and lovers of human kind there, have been warmed by that sacred flame of liberty, which British tyranny first inkindled here. Nor is it improbable that, under the influence of more enlarged and extended views of the essential rights of human nature, they may be spirited to do all that in them lies, to weaken the power of despotism, and promote the revival of dying and decaying liberty.

“The wise more wisdom from the wise acquire,  
 “As one brave hero fans another’s fire.”

Should the principles, upon which we have erected ourselves into an independent nation, in consequence of our success, be adopted by  
 other

other countries, tyranny would fall before them; the kingdom of satan and of anti-christ would receive a terrible shock; and we should have the satisfaction of reflecting, that the beneficial effects of our noble exertions, were not confined to ourselves, but extended to others, with whom we had no immediate concern, and made way for the happiness and prosperity of millions, who never saw nor will see these western regions. But to return from this digression, if it be one:

We have great reason to be thankful, that we have lived to see an happy period to that distressing war, which has been the means of consigning so many of our brave countrymen to the silent mansions of the dead. While we regret the loss of those of our brethren, friends and fellow-citizens, who have nobly shed their blood, in the late contest; and drop a sympathetic tear with the near relatives, whose feelings are most sensibly touched; let us *rejoice in the Lord*, who was pleased to preserve our lives through those scenes of sorrow and danger, and who has given us an opportunity of celebrating the day of America's deliverance and emancipation.

Let me just observe, as an additional motive of gratitude, that God has been pleased this year to open to us the rich treasures of his bounty, and to give us plenty as well as peace; causing the earth to yield her increase in abundance,

abundance, and rewarding the labours of the husbandman with an affluent harvest. We must be insensible, if the bestowment of the blessings of peace and plenty at once, besides, innumerable other mercies and comforts, both social and private, does not excite our gratitude to the Author of all good.

Let us often contemplate the goodness of God, and with thankful hearts celebrate his marvellous loving kindness towards us. That we may feel a constant flow of ardent, cordial praise to the great Author of all our mercies, let us keep those *great things which he has done for us*, whereby he hath filled our hearts with joy and gladness, in perpetual remembrance. Let us not content ourselves with the thanksgivings of a day, but endeavour to live to the glory of that God, who has showered down so many blessings upon us, and wrought so great salvation for us; that we may not become liable to the censure, which the psalmist applies to the Israelites of old; when he says, *They sang his praise; they soon forgot his works*. That length of time may not obliterate the memory of God's goodness to us, let us frequently meditate upon it; often call to mind the wonders of his love, which we have experienced; and endeavour to keep up a lively sense of the obligations we are under, of gratitude and obedience.

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My brethren, by the distinguishing goodness of providence, we are favoured with the means of becoming as happy a people, as ever lived. Should we be otherwise, it must be owing to our neglect or abuse of these means. When we consider that the confusions, convulsions and horrors of war are come to a period, and that our enemies, relinquishing their claims of authority and jurisdiction over us, have acknowledged us, as a sovereign and independent people, and left us in the unmolested enjoyment of all our rights ; when we consider that we are free from the tyranny and despotism of foreign powers, and at peace with all the world : when we consider that we are in possession of a large country, well watered, consisting of a rich and fertile soil, and capable by proper cultivation of affording full supplies of the necessaries, comforts and delights of life, and that our extensive sea coasts abound with good ports and commodious harbours for shipping, and so open to us a door for all the advantages of commerce with other parts of the world : when we consider the great profits, that might arise from our fishery (as settled by treaty) from navigation, and a free trade with all nations, (should these objects be properly attended to) as well as from agriculture, and the suitable improvement of our lands : when we consider, that by the confederation of these states, and by the several distinct constitutions of government, that have been formed by different branches of the union, all possible care

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has been taken to guard against the encroachments of arbitrary power, and that the best provision, which human wildom can invent, has been made for our secure and peaceable enjoyment of our lives and property, with as great degrees of liberty, civil and religious, as can consist with a social state : when we consider, that though we are burdended with an heavy debt, unavoidably contracted during the late war, for the defence of the country, yet our means and resources are fully adequate to the discharge of it : when we consider the advantages we enjoy for gaining a competent knowledge of every branch of human literature, together with our religious privileges and opportunities, under the enjoyment of God's word and ordinances, and a preached gospel : when we consider these things, and attend to our advantages and favourable circumstances, in these respects, what appears to hinder us from becoming a great and happy people, if it be not our own fault ? Religion and virtue will raise and exalt us ; vice only can sink and depress us.

We have manifested a laudable zeal, in the cause of civil liberty. We have resisted even to blood the power of aspiring ambition and despotism. We have obtained a glorious conquest over our temporal enemies, and our hearts are filled with joy and exultation, on the occasion. But still we shall be strangers to true happiness, if we are servants of sin, and slaves

to our own lusts. Would we be happy, we must exert ourselves to subdue each irregular appetite and passion, to disengage ourselves from the enslaving power of every vicious habit, and to acquire that *glorious internal liberty of the sons of God*, which will make us *free indeed*. This internal liberty, as it is necessary to prepare and qualify us for heavenly glory and felicity, so it is necessary to make us capable of true enjoyment on earth. Without it we shall be slaves, in the worst sense, how much soever we may hate the name, and whatever outward liberty we may be in possession of. We shall have within us all the seeds of misery, so long as we are destitute of this liberty. And if, under the conduct of the great *captain of our salvation*, we will but struggle and contend for this liberty, with the same zeal and ardor, which we have exercised in the cause of outward liberty, we have no reason to doubt of success. For *greater is he that is with us, than he that is in the world*.

In the view of every serious and sober person, nothing tends so much to darken our present agreeable prospects, as the prevalence of vice and wickedness, and that licentiousness both in principle and practice, which, by means of the late war, has been introduced among us. If we suffer those lusts and passions, from whence come wars, disorders, tumults, to reign over us, and maintain a sovereign sway within us; if we suffer an avaritious selfish spirit to  
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swallow up our patriotism, and devour our public virtue; if we give way to a turbulent factious temper, whenever public measures do not exactly suit our private views, separate interests or particular humors; if we set ourselves up in opposition to government and lawful authority, and, from an unreasonable jealousy of those, who are placed at the head of our national and political affairs, not by the orders or appointment of a foreign court, but by the suffrages of our own countrymen, endeavour to deprive them of all power to do us good, lest they should have it in their power to do us harm; if, without scruple or apparent remorse, we burst the bands of moral obligation, and trample the laws of justice and equity underfoot; if, envious, malevolent and revengeful, we put ourselves into a state of private hostility with one another, and endeavour to promote strife and vexatious discord among our brethren and fellow-citizens; if we abandon ourselves to indolence and luxury, intemperance, riot and profaneness, and live in the neglect of God and religion; if such be our temper and conduct, in vain shall we look for happiness, although we are in possession of all the materials of it; for in this case, internal divisions and domestic jars, will prevent public prosperity, and introduce such troubles, as will imbitter all the enjoyments and comforts of life. But if we act a wiser and better part; if we keep our irregular passions under restraint, and, suppressing the motions of pride, envy  
and



and selfishness, cultivate a meek, quiet and benevolent temper ; if we pay a sacred regard to the rules of justice, and endeavour to fulfill all moral obligation ; if we are careful to maintain our national honour and public credit, by the discharge of all our sacred engagements, and by giving energy to that government, which we ourselves have established ; if, by our example and influence we do, what in us lies, to promote harmony, love and friendship, with truth and righteousness, among all around us ; if, avoiding the expensive, impoverishing, debilitating vices of effeminacy, intemperance, idleness and luxury, we apply ourselves diligently to the virtues of sobriety, industry, œconomy and frugality ; in short, if we *fear God and keep his commandments*, and endeavour to improve the blessings of his grace and providence to the purposes of his honour, and our own felicity ; if we do thus, we may reasonably indulge the pleasing hopes of the continued smiles of Heaven, for raising us to a still higher pitch of prosperity and glory, and expect to receive such public and private blessings as shall afford us as much comfort and delight, as can possibly be enjoyed, in such a world as this.

Wherefore, my friends, if we love ourselves ; if we love our country ; if we wish to see this land become the glory of all lands, and to behold these American states rising into a flourishing empire ; if we hope for the perpetuation



petuation of the blessings of peace and liberty, to us and to our posterity, and desire that the present glorious day which beams upon us, may never be overcast with clouds, nor our present bright prospects terminate in future scenes of woe ; let us abstain from all iniquity, and endeavour to approve ourselves to the *God of our salvation* by a conscientious application to duty, in all its various branches. Then we may rest assured of his blessing, to which, as we have been indebted for past salvation, so we must owe our surest foundation and best prosperity, for time to come.

May God give us wisdom to demean ourselves as we ought, in our present happy circumstances, and to make a suitable improvement of all the blessings of his grace and providence, that according to our wishes, hopes and desires, happiness and prosperity may attend us, and be the portion of our descendants to the latest generation. God grant this, for his mercy's sake, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. AMEN.

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