



Mr. CUMINGS's
THANKSGIVING SERMON,
NOVEMBER 29, 1798.



A

S E R M O N

PREACHED AT

B I L L E R I C A,

NOVEMBER 29, 1798,

BEING THE DAY OF THE
ANNIVERSARY THANKSGIVING

THROUGHOUT THE

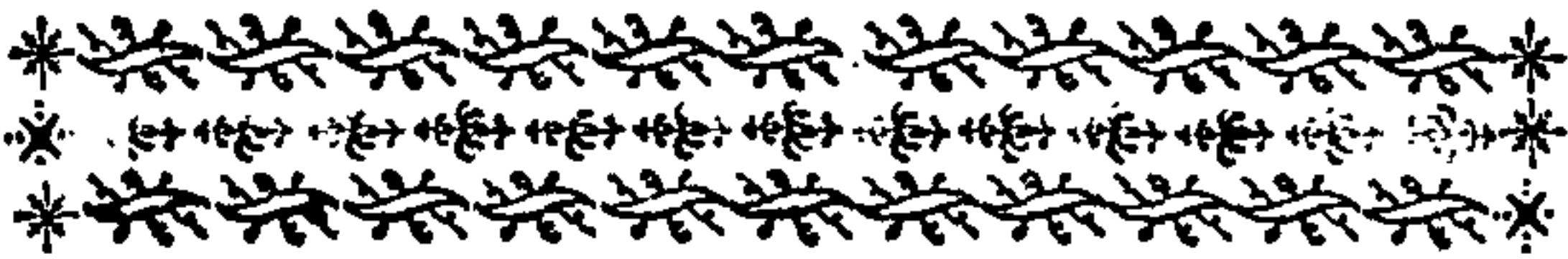
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS.



By HENRY CUMINGS, A.M.
PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN SAID TOWN.



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MDCXCVIII.



J O B, V. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

“ He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise.

He taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong.

They meet with darkness in the day time, and grope in the noon day, as in the night.

But he saveth the poor from the sword, from their mouth, and from the hand of the mighty.

So the poor hath hope, and iniquity stoppeth her mouth.”



EVER since the fatal lapse of the first founders of our race, the manners of mankind, and the unfriendly animosities and hostile contests, which have marked their conduct towards each other, have fully evinced, that appetite and passion have been an overmatch for conscience, and usurped the dominion of reason and charity.

THOUGH the great Author of our being hath indued us with social affections and benevolent inclinations, the proper tendency whereof is, to produce love and harmony and a constant reciprocal interchange of kind offices ; yet it is melancholy to observe, how often and how generally the influence and operation of these kind and friendly dispositions,
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are counteracted, and the happy effects, which they are adapted to produce, prevented, by the prevalence of the opposite passions of sordid selfishness and avarice, of pride, self-conceit and a restless insatiable ambition of superiority and power, which have evidently gained a pernicious ascendancy in the degenerate race of man.

THIS is not vague declamation. The present state of the world proves it to be a sorrowful reality. And whoever will consult the historic page, will meet with a continued series of sad experimental evidence, through all successive periods of time, from the beginning to the present moment, that mankind, in all the inhabited parts of the globe, whether in a state of barbarism or civilization, have been (as they still are) exposed to constant hazards and dangers; either from the secret devices and insidious arts of crafty ill-designing men; or from the open assaults of aspiring pride and ambition, armed with power, or stimulated by envy and other mischievous passions. And amidst those scenes of disorder and misery, in which the world has been constantly involved, from the indulgence of tumultuous and irregular passions, how little have we seen of that love and goodness, of that purity and holiness, wherein the true honour, happiness and perfection of human nature consist?

THERE have indeed, in all ages, appeared some worthy characters, who have laudably exerted themselves to stem this general torrent of depravity and disorder; but these have been comparatively few, in number, and their virtuous endeavours to restore the reign of rectitude, peace and benevolence, have seldom been crowned with desired success. The good they have done has been generally confined to narrow limits; folly and wickedness continuing to overspread the world at large, notwithstanding their
 most

most zealous exertions to promote a reformation and purity of manners.

EVEN innocence and integrity, although, under providence, they are the best guards, are not always a sufficient protection against the mischievous plots and pursuits of crafty, vindictive and self-important mortals, who are wont to measure and estimate their dignity and rights, by their cunning and power.

TRUE it is, many of the misfortunes and calamities, with which we are visited in this world, are owing in a great measure to the indulgence of our own unruly passions, as their procuring cause. Men are often embarrassed and ensnared by means of their own sin and folly. But supposing we should order our own conduct ever so well ; supposing we should keep our own appetites under proper discipline, confining them always within the bounds of moderation and sobriety, according to the dictates of reason and benevolence ; still we may be involved in troubles and perplexities, from the disorderly passions and corrupt lusts of others, with whom we are unavoidably connected, as members of the community ; nor will our greatest prudence and wisdom be an infallible security, against events and occurrences interruptive of our peace and enjoyment, and prejudicial to our welfare.

SUCH being evidently the general predominance of selfish and unfriendly passions, that the virtuous few are in continual danger of being devoured and destroyed, and can find no safety and security, except in an almighty providence ; what abundant reason have we to rejoice in the assurance we have, that there is One above, who regulates all the affairs of this lower world ; who presides over all second causes and instrumental agents, and disposes
all

all events ; who controuls the passions of men, and either restrains their wrath, or so overrules it, as to make it eventually subservient to the purposes of his wisdom and benevolence ?

THE doctrine of a superintending providence, to the government whereof all the affairs of the world are subject ; which often interposes, for entangling the wise in their own craftiness, confounding their counsels, disconcerting their policies, defeating their enterprizes, and disappointing their expectations, when, calculating on their skill and power, they are most confident of success ; and as often, for affording protection, support and prosperity to those, who on account of their weakness, or deficiency in ability or means of defence, are liable to be trodden underfoot by their more artful and powerful neighbours ; this doctrine of a governing providence, is a plain dictate of sound philosophy, and the basis of all religious worship. It is a doctrine clearly held up to view in the passage before us, and elsewhere constantly inculcated, in the sacred pages of Revelation. Nor is there any thing better adapted to compose the minds of serious and devout souls, into patience and resignation, and inspire them with consolation and comfort, amidst national disorders, tumults and revolutions, and the uncertain changes and vicissitudes of joy and sorrow, to which the lot of individuals is unavoidably subject, than the consideration, that a God of infinite power and perfection, of infinite rectitude, wisdom and goodness, governs the world, to which we belong. Exclusive of this consideration, dismal scenes and gloomy prospects, would at once open upon us, and would cast a damp upon all the joys of life, and imbitter its sweetest comforts.

THOUGH to the attentive and inquisitive eye of religious philosophy, every event and occurrence
exhibits

exhibits obvious evidence of God's providential government; yet his interpositions have scarcely been more remarkable, in any one thing, than in frustrating the schemes, devices and plots of haughty pride and boundless ambition, and defending the weak against the mischievous machinations of the great and powerful. So that,

WHEN the church and people of God are in jeopardy (as they often have been, from the beginning) from the counsels, policies and confederacies of subtle and powerful enemies; secret and close in their consultations, and formidable in their conspiracies; they may solace themselves with the consideration, that there is a supreme Power, above the controul of unreasonable and haughty mortals, that can fulfil its designs, in spite of their projects, and turn their boasted wisdom into foolishness.

LET crafty and designing men, instigated by the emotions of their self-important feelings, lay their plots ever so deep, or concert their schemes with ever so much art and secrecy, in order to depress others, and aggrandize themselves, still success is doubtful. Their power of execution may fail them. For it is easy with God to crush their evil designs in embryo; or when their enterprises wear the most promising appearance, and seem almost to be grown up into accomplishment, *He that setteth in the heavens* may laugh at their confidence and throw into their way a thousand unexpected events, that shall effectually baffle the utmost efforts of their skill and power, and overwhelm them in disappointment.

How were the plots of Ahithophel, of Haman, and of those that conspired against Paul, disconcerted and defeated? They realized the truth of the Psalmist's observation, when he says, *The wicked*

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plotteth

plotteth against the just and gnasheth upon him with his teeth ; the Lord shall laugh at him, for he seeth that his day is coming.

How were the mischievous devices and formidable enterprises of Pharaoh, against the innocent sojourners of Goshen, overthrown ? Snared in the work of his own hands, the mischief he intended for others, returned with vengeance upon his own head.

IN what a remarkable and humiliating defeat, did Sennacherib's hostile designs against Jerusalem terminate ? That haughty Assyrian monarch, having been permitted for a while to bear down all before him, vainly boasted that he could, by his mighty power, which had been an overmatch for the gods of other countries, trample the Jews under foot, though supported by the LORD GOD Omnipotent. An angel from heaven, commissioned for that purpose, soon made him sadly repent of his blasphemies, and gave him, to his shame and confusion, a most awful and convincing proof, that there is *no wisdom, nor counsel, nor might against Jehovah.*

How have the evil designs of the Jews, together with the confederacies of the kings and princes of the Gentiles, *against the Lord and his Anointed*, been hitherto broken and frustrated ? And from the past interpositions of providence in favour of Zion, in times of danger and trouble, what abundant reason have we to rely upon the divine promise, that *the gates of hell shall never prevail against her ?*

FROM the sacred records and other authentic histories, it would be easy to fill volumes, with examples serving to illustrate, and confirm, beyond dispute, the doctrine of our text ; but want of time forbids my expatiating, in such an extensive field.

VARIOUS

VARIOUS indeed are the ways and methods, in which providence proceeds, for the accomplishment of its designs and purposes. There is reason to believe, that the supreme Ruler often employs the ministry of angels, for the execution of the decrees of his government. And since *he has the hearts of all men in his hands*, there can be no reasonable doubt, but that he frequently applies himself immediately to their minds, for raising or depressing their natural faculties; encouraging and animating some to noble exertions, leading to equally noble achievements, and, at the same time, disheartning others, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise. Seeing also, that the seasons of the year, together with the atmosphere and all the elements, are subject to his sovereign management, no one can reasonably deny, but that it is easy with him, without any infraction upon the standing laws of nature (which are his laws) to introduce such changes of weather, at particular times and places; to raise such storms or command such calms, as shall dash the plans and measures of one party into disappointment, and crown the enterprises of another with success. In this way, according to the figurative language of inspiration, he may cause the *stars in their courses, to fulfil his word*. In short,

As all the secret wheels and springs of nature are under the absolute direction of the great first Cause; so, whenever he pleases, he can put into operation a thousand hidden causes, out of the reach of human inspection, calculation or controul; which shall produce unthought-of events, favourable to the wishes, and promotive of the prosperity of some, and equally cross to the hopes and expectations of others.

BUT in whatever ways or methods providence proceeds in the government of the world, still it becomes

us as a people professing godliness, to look above means and instruments, to that sovereign power, which presides over all ; and while we cultivate a temper of devout resignation to the will of God under all circumstances, it behoves us to offer him a tribute of praise and thanksgiving for all those unmerited blessings and privileges, which he has been pleased to bestow upon us ; especially for those peculiar felicities and advantages, which distinguish our lot among the nations of the earth ; and more especially, to recognize, with gratitude, every instance of his kind interposition, for securing to us the continued enjoyment of such favours and benefits ; for guarding us against dangers, averting impending calamities, and lengthning out our peace and prosperity.

TIME would fail me to detail the wonders of God's goodness towards his American Israel, since our forefathers first planted themselves on these western shores. Recommending it therefore to all, whose recollection may not be sufficient for the purpose, to consult the annals of America for information, respecting preceding gracious appearances of providence, in behalf of this highly favoured country, I shall confine myself within the compass of the memory and experience of the present risen and-rising generation, and shall endeavour, at this time, by exhibiting to view some wonderful displays of divine mercy towards this land, since we have succeeded to the inheritance of our fathers, to excite suitable emotions of gratitude to the great Lord of heaven and earth, who, while *he hath not left any nation, without a witness of his goodness*, hath been pleased, according to his sovereign pleasure, notwithstanding our unworthiness and demerits, to make us his peculiar favourites, and the objects of his special kind regards.

THOSE

THOSE of you, my hearers, who have attained to the meridian of life, as well as those, who are in more advanced age, cannot easily forget how conspicuous the providence of God was, in a great variety of instances, in preparing the way for and bringing about the late memorable revolution, which has given us national independence and sovereignty. But having often called your attention to the footsteps of providence, which led to that glorious event, let it now suffice to observe, that ever since we have been acknowledged in a national character, the providence of God has been equally conspicuous, in counteracting and defeating the evil devices and projects, both of domestic factions and foreign intrigues, and in granting us all the comforts of affluence and prosperity, together with the blessings of public peace, civil liberty and good government ; especially since the adoption and establishment of the federal constitution, formed by the united wisdom of elected sages from every state, which, at the same time that it cements the whole, as one indivisible body politic, guarantees to each confederated state, a republican form of government. This national constitution hath hitherto been a pregnant source of blessings throughout the union, being admirably calculated to promote mutual confidence, and to give people security, amidst the means of as great temporal enjoyment and felicity, as perhaps can consist with the present lot of humanity, or the constitution of things, in such a world as this.

HOWEVER the restless genius of ingratitude may be employed, to fix the eye of attention on the dark side of things ; to magnify the ills and depreciate the blessings of human life ; and to cloud the bright face of providence with gloomy presages ; it must be obvious to every grateful mind of tolerable information, that, ever since the revolution, in addition

tion to those noble prospects wherewith christianity sweetens the cup of mortality, the greatest degrees of temporal happiness, have either been realized by the generality, or referred to their option ; there having been few comparatively, whose circumstances have not enabled them, by honest industry, in their several callings, accompanied with prudence, œconomy and the frugal virtues, to acquire, not only competent supplies of the necessaries, but also many of the elegancies and luxuries of life.

THIS scene of prosperity, commencing with our national birth, and greatly improved and enlarged by our federal government, by the blessing of Heaven, hath hitherto been continued, with very few interruptions, notwithstanding it has often been in alarming hazard of a sad reverse ; especially since the commencement of the wars in Europe. Since that time, no arts of deception, adulation or intimidation, calculated to impose on the credulity of unsuspecting integrity, or to rouse the fears of peaceable and quiet citizens, and promote discontent and divisions among people at large, have been unassayed, in order to involve these States in those hostile contests, that have deluged one quarter of the globe in blood, and reduce their government under the sovereign management of that nation, whose fraternal embraces have hitherto proved a deadly crush, to all who have been either allured or forced into the dreadful experiment. But *hitherto bath the Lord helped us*, and in the course of his guardian providence, given us many visible and very interesting commentaries, on the passage of scripture before us.

THE European nations, with whom we were at peace, being engaged in a war with France, in whose quarrel we were not obliged, by any prior stipulations,

stipulations, to become an active party, our former president, the worthy and patriotic Washington, ever attentive to the interests of his country, interposed his authority to preserve us in a state of neutrality towards those belligerent powers ; as the best expedient to prevent our being intangled in the labyrinth of foreign politics, and swallowed up in the vortex of the clashing interests of distant nations.

UNDER providence, this wise and prudent measure of the supreme executive, has been the happy means of confining us to that line of sound policy which teaches us to cultivate peace with all the world ; and consequently of preventing our being plunged into the horrors of that tremendous war, which has already raged for several years, with vast effusion of human blood, on the other side of the Atlantic, consigning thousands and hundreds of thousands to the regions of the dead, before they had *lived out half their days*.

AND what abundant reason have we to give thanks to God, the supreme disposer of events, that we have hitherto been able to maintain our neutral position ; especially, at a critical period, when we were in the utmost danger of being compelled to relinquish it, on account of an unhappy dispute with the British nation, accompanied on their part, with such hostile depredations on our commerce, as roused the indignation of America, and almost provoked her brave sons to draw the avenging sword immediately, without using any peaceable endeavours, for obtaining satisfaction and bringing about an honourable and equitable reconciliation. But at that alarming crisis, it pleased God to check the precipitancy of resentment by prudent considerations, and to dispose the government of these states, to begin with pacific negociation, which terminated

ted in an amicable compromise, and happily preserved us on the neutral ground, which we had chosen.

BUT our neutral policy, together with this friendly compromise with Great-Britain, it seems has given offence to France, whose views of fraternizing these states have thereby been hitherto defeated.

As soon as the president had issued his proclamation, forbidding the citizens of America to espouse the cause of either of the parties at war, and enjoining the strictest neutrality (so far as the faith of existing treaties would allow) the French minister,* then resident among us, immediately took umbrage, and had the insolence to menace the government with an appeal to the people ; as if it were compatible with our national dignity and sovereignty, to permit the deliberations and measures of the councils and constituted authorities of the country, to be awed, suspended or counteracted, by the minatory insults of an assuming foreigner.

FROM that period, it appears to have been a settled plan with the ruling powers of France, to stir up seditions among us, and, if possible, to separate the people of America from their government, with a manifest view of drawing this happy country into such a dependant and servile connection with them, as should best subserve their ambitious schemes of universal dominion. For the accomplishment of these purposes, they have been indefatigable in their endeavours, through the instrumentality of artful emissaries, and venal sycophants, and by means of secret invidious slanders and virulent groundless calumnies, industriously circulated through the continent, to alienate the minds of the honest citizens of these states against their government ; and especially

* GENET.

cially to poison them, with incurable prejudices against those two worthy personages and veteran patriots, who have, in succession, been deservedly honoured with the reins of administration, having, through the lapse of many years, and in the most trying times, invariably proved their attachment to their country, by the irresistible evidence of facts.

BESIDES this noble duumvirate, the illustrious Washington and Adams, many other noble characters, and tried staunch patriots, have been attacked with torrents of abusive slander and defamation; and the most uniform and long-proved friends to the liberties and independence of their country, have been traduced as enemies, under the venal bias of British influence, without any shadow of proof, except the impudence of false accusers, probably under the influence of venality from another quarter.

THESE crafty devices against our national government, being disguised under the plausible pretext of benevolent concern for the rights and liberties of the people, have, in some instances, operated according to their design, by making upon the minds of some well-meaning but uninformed citizens, in many places, impressions unfriendly to the civil authorities of the land. But blessed be God, who has been pleased to keep open the eyes of the plurality, to discern the aim and tendency of such insidious arts, and enable them to guard their country against the pernicious effects of such clandestine mischief and ensnaring policy.

FAILING in these attempts to revolutionize America, and chagrined with disappointment, the French administration have thrown off the mask, and by open and unfounded criminations of the government of these states, and the prosecution of hostilities, in a predatory war on our commerce, accompanied with an haughty refusal to hearken to any exculpations or
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complaints

complaints on our part, have given us demonstrative proof that the most humiliating submissions are required, in order to our living upon tolerable terms of friendship and amity with that domineering nation.

WHEN we consider the power, artful policy and unbounded ambition of the French republic (if a tyranny under the forms of liberty, may be so denominated) and attend to their conduct towards other states, which have been obliged to submit to their victorious arms, and, at the same time, reflect on the late tenor of their actions towards this country, plainly indicative of inimical views and designs, in contradiction to all complementary professions of friendly regard, we have reason to rejoice, that providence has interposed a wide ocean between us and them, which we trust will ever be an insuperable obstacle to the execution of every hostile plan for the subjugation of America, to their directorial despotism.

THE present year, which commenced with lowering clouds in our political horizon, has been a year of doubtful expectation and ominous conjecture, in reference to our future intercourse and correspondence with the French nation. In the course of the year some very important events have taken place, which will probably be attended with interesting consequences; I mean, the dissolution of those special obligations we were laid under to France, by treaties, which having been first violated by her, have been annulled and become void and of none effect, with respect to us; together with the consequent preparations that have been made for the defence of this country against every hostile enterprise of that terrible republic.

FOR several years we considered France as a friendly ally, and have never been wanting in proper

per expressions of gratitude, to the utmost extent of our obligations, for the assistance she afforded us, in our war with England. But if her friendship towards us, was owing solely to her enmity against Britain, a rival power, which she wished to weaken; and if she did really urge her influence, to prevent our being placed on such good ground, as was eventually allowed us in the treaty of peace (as many believe) her merit towards us, and our debt of gratitude to her, have both been overrated.

It is well known, that people, in general, throughout this country, rejoiced in the successes of France, while her object appeared to be, the defence of the cause of liberty, and the securing for herself the blessings of a free government, without preparing a yoke for others. But since she has given evidence that she is actuated by very different views and motives, her victories have produced very different emotions in American breasts.

ELATE with successes, and conceiving herself to be an overmatch for all the world, her object now appears to be universal domination; and her profers of liberty seem to be designed only, as allurements or baits, for catching the credulous and unwary. For, so far as her conquests have extended, instead of bestowing the blessings of freedom, she has rather established her own despotism; and the tree of liberty, upon which she has lavished such captivating panegyrics, and which has graced, or rather disgraced her victories, has hitherto yielded no better fruits, than infidelity, irreligion, and licentiousness both in principle and practice, in connection with the subjugation of the weak to her superior power and sovereign jurisdiction, under the notion of equality and a fraternal embrace. Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Venice, Italy, &c. to their extreme sorrow, have had sad experimental evidence of this. And had providence permitted

France

France to carry into effect her views of disorganizing the government of America, and establishing her directorial authority, we should undoubtedly, before this day, have been in the same distressed and degraded situation.

WHATEVER professions of friendship may be made, by that intriguing nation, their conduct towards us (and actions always speak louder than words) is clearly evincive of hostile designs. Their refusing to accredit our envoys, who were commissioned and authorized, to enter into a friendly discussion of all matters of grievance, to remove all misunderstandings, to accommodate all differences and promote a restoration of harmony upon terms of equity and national honour, and treating those ministers of peace with supercilious neglect ; as it was an insult offered to the sovereignty of America, so it is a manifest unequivocal evidence of their fixed determination to abridge us of the rights of our acknowledged independence, and to reduce the government of these states into subordination to their superintendency.

THAT such are the views of France will be further evident (if further evidence be necessary) when we consider her equivocal conduct towards our ambassadors, whom she refused to acknowledge, in their public character ; and especially her oblique requisition of tribute, to a large amount, as a preliminary to negociation, together with the arts of intimidation, which she used to enforce a compliance, and also her boasting, that she had a party in this country, of sufficient influence, to exculpate her, and throw the blame on our rejected ministers, should no compromise be effected. But

PERSUADED I am, she will find herself mistaken, in regard to her partizans, in this country. For I cannot yet bring myself to believe, that there is any considerable number of real Americans, who are so
alienated

alienated to their own country, as to be willing to sacrifice their patriotism to the unreasonable claims and expectations of France ; especially after being acquainted with the servile condition of those unhappy republics, that have been the victims of her conquering arms ; and more especially, after the developement of her views, and intentions in reference to these states, in the communications of our envoys, whose characters intitle them to full credit. I trust that gallic duplicity, however it may be supported by expatriated presses, will never triumph over American sincerity. It would be an indelible disgrace to this country, to believe a Talleyrand, in opposition to a Pinckney, a Marshall, and a Gerry. Should I be a witness of such an event, I should be grievously pained with the wounding reflection, that my countrymen were *left to strong delusion to believe a lie*, in order to prepare the way for *damnation*, in the hellish embraces of irreligion and atheism, those infernal demons of guile and tyranny.

BUT I hope better things. And if the genius of America be not departed ; if her sons feel any thing of that genuine spirit of liberty, which warmed the breasts of their ancestors, and, glowing with unabated and inextinguishable ardors, burst forth into the most noble and hazardous exertions, in the year 1775, confident I am, that she will risk the consequence of a most resolute resistance, rather than submit to such foreign influence and direction, as would rob her of her rights of sovereignty, and reduce her to the inglorious situation of a tributary state.

BUT leaving our cause with the *Most High over all the earth*, the supreme *Governor among the nations*, let us, with grateful tributes for past protections, deliverances and escapes, and for the continuance hitherto of those peculiar blessings, which have raised us above the level of the generality of human kind,

kind, endeavour to approve ourselves unto him and secure his future almighty guardianship and patronage, by a faithful discharge of all duties of religious, moral and civil obligation. For *if God be for us, who can be against us?*

THE ways of providence are often mysterious, and the designs thereof inscrutable. Who knows but infinite wisdom, in great mercy to America, may have brought about a dissolution of our special relations to France, with a view of putting a check to that alarming inundation of impiety and infidelity, which, having overwhelmed a great part of Europe, has lately rolled its swelling waves across the Atlantic (I was going to compare it to the flood, cast out of the mouth of the apocalyptic dragon, after the woman that fled into the wilderness) threatening our happy country with an universal devastation of every religious sentiment, moral principle, and rational enjoyment, together with the consequent introduction of that wretched unhallowed philosophy, which degrades man to a level with the beasts that perish, without one single ray of celestial light to cheer his spirits, in the views of a dissolution?

THAT we may never realize the horrors of such a dreary scene of unprincipled libertinism and perverted reason, let us firmly adhere to the profession of our faith, and stand fast in the liberties wherewith Heaven hath made us free. Exerting ourselves in defence of our religious and civil institutions, let us shew, by our example, that we pay a sacred regard to both; considering religion and civil government as invaluable blessings, and the best means provided by infinite wisdom, for restraining those irregular passions, from whence most of the woes and miseries of human life originate.

RELIGION, my hearers, is the highest exaltation and glory of man, and is of the utmost importance
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to promote, both individual happiness, and the peace and good order of societies. Religion, being founded in a reverential sense of a supreme invisible power, to which all men are amenable, and in a firm belief of a future judgment and state of retributions, affords a most powerful curb to the corrupt lusts of human nature, and is, at the same time, a mighty aid to every social affection and benevolent inclination. It arrests our hopes and fears, those main springs of action, and engages their powerful influence, to excite, encourage and assist the pursuits of virtue and love, and prevent every instance of folly and wickedness, that would be prejudicial to ourselves or others.

THE christian religion, especially, combines every consideration and argument, taken from this world and that to come, that can possibly be laid before the minds of men, in a way of motive or moral suasion, to induce them to walk in those ways of virtue and benevolence, which will most effectually promote *peace on earth, and good will among men.*

WHOEVER therefore shews himself to be an enemy to religion, and particularly to the christian system, does, at the same time, prove himself to be an enemy to society, by employing his influence, to encourage every criminal pursuit, and to pluck up the very foundations of honour and honesty, truth and fidelity, benevolence and patriotism. For what foundation, I pray, can any one have to put trust and confidence in a man, who is an avowed unbeliever, and profane scoffer at religion, without any fear of God before his eyes, doing all that in him lies, by his example, impious jests, and delusive sophistry, to promote a disregard to the institutions of divine worship, to encourage infidelity, and to set men at loose from the restraining impressions of faith in God, in a providence, and a judgment to come? We have surely the greatest reason to exercise the most cautious vigilance, and to be upon our
guard

guard against all, who discard a governing Deity, and trample religion, with its fundamental doctrines, under foot ; for whatever praises they may bestow upon themselves, as friends to liberty, rectitude and the rights of human nature, they betray their own hypocrisy, and furnish full evidence, that if they had power, they would be unmerciful persecutors, cruel oppressors, and tyrannical despots.

It is indeed scarcely possible for a man to do such violence to his faculties, as entirely to suppress all sense and awe of a Deity. The human mind is so framed, that it early receives an impressive persuasion of dependence on some invisible power, of an overruling providence and future retribution. This impression is of great importance, to check the exorbitancy of the human passions, and support the cause of virtue in the world. We have reason therefore to give thanks to God, for giving such notices and discoveries of his being, perfections and providential government as are adapted, at once to make and establish this salutary impression, and preserve a general veneration of a Deity, among men. We have reason especially to rejoice and give thanks, on account of the glorious light of the gospel, and the instructions received from the preaching thereof, and from the administration of christian ordinances of worship ; these being means admirably calculated to cure the moral disorders of the mind to curb the irregular appetites of human nature, to confine its passions within the bounds of moderation, to suppress the motions of enmity and malevolence, and promote general friendship and harmony.

If therefore you love yourselves and wish well to your country, let me earnestly impress it upon you, from these engaging motives, to hold fast this holy religion, to preserve a veneration for its laws and ordinances, and comply with its sacred requirements and institutions ; and particularly to *remember*
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the sabbath day to keep it holy—not forsaking the assembling yourselves together, as the manner of some is ; for should the sabbath be abolished, scepticism will soon triumph over faith, and christianity be absorbed in scepticism and heathenism.

AND while we hold fast our religion, and refuse to exchange the glorious and reviving light of the gospel, for the dismal gloom of dreary antichristian philosophy, let us duly appreciate the blessings of civil government, and particularly cultivate an attachment to our national sovereignty, and the authorities erected by the great body of the people throughout the union.

FOR such is evidently the present disordered state of human nature, owing to the prevalence of ignorance, selfish affections, and corrupt prejudices, that the considerations of religion and rectitude are but little regarded, in innumerable instances, and would be insufficient to restrain the generality from plotting mutual mischief, and pursuing measures injurious to one another, without the co-operation of civil government, to curb the excesses of irregular passions, and oblige mankind to conform, externally at least, to the rules of justice and equity, and live together upon terms of tolerable peace and friendship.

THE design or end of civil government, is the welfare of mankind, which, without a miracle, in the present state of human nature, could not be effectually secured and promoted, if every one, exempt from all controul of law and civil authority, had liberty to do whatever was right in his own eyes. This being the case, it is evidently the will of God, the universal parent and friend of the world, that men should form societies, social compacts and civil constitutions ; or that they should establish and enforce the observance of certain rules, for the regulation of their conduct towards each other ; for the

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prevention

prevention of mischiefs arising from the competitions of interest, from opposite and interfering views and prejudices, or from the clashings of pride ; ambition and other selfish passions ; and for the preservation of harmony and good order, amidst the advantages of mutual confidence and assistance, and a general reciprocation of kind offices.

CIVIL government is therefore to be considered as an ordinance of GOD ; but the particular forms of it are left to human wisdom and discretion.

WHAT particular form of government is best adapted to promote the greatest good of man, is a political question, which has been matter of dispute among civilians in all ages, and will probably continue so to the end of time. And considering the variety of circumstances that distinguish the nations of the earth ; the changes that are continually taking place among them, from various causes ; and the impracticability of introducing an universal uniformity, in regard to customs, habits and modes of thinking and living ; considering these things, perhaps the same precise form of government, however excellent in its principles, would not be equally suitable for all people, or for the same people, at all times ; nor accommodate itself, with equal advantage to the different circumstances of different ages, places and communities.

IN regard to the above question, I will venture however, to say in general, that such a form or constitution of government, is best calculated to promote the welfare of mankind, as, rejecting every scheme of inapplicable theory, and accommodating itself to the real state of human nature, provides the best guards against the extremes of arbitrary power and licentious liberty, and preserves the most even balance between constituted authorities and popular privileges, and, preventing, as far as possible, all dangerous

dangerous encroachments of the one on the other, equally secures the blessings of civil government, civil union and the rights of man.

THE constitutions of the several American states, in connection with the federal constitution, under which they are all united, do perhaps as nearly answer the above description, as any forms of government now in the world, or as any others, that can be devised by the wisdom of man, for a country circumstanced as this is. Both the federal and state constitutions are formed upon a scale of as extensive liberty, as perhaps can consist with any efficient government; the existing authorities and powers, not self-created nor derived from supposed hereditary right, having originated from the people at large; and being exercised by men, chosen and appointed by their free suffrages, who after a limited term, must be reduced to a level with their fellow citizens, and share in common with others, in all the consequences of their conduct, while in office.

IF I understand the nature of our national government, it bears the stamp of the people's sovereignty, being so framed, that it is properly the government of the people, by temporary delegations of authority, and power, proceeding from them, defined and limited by them, and made responsible to them. To trample upon any constitutional acts of congress, is therefore to trample on the sovereignty of the nation. To vilify or oppose any of the constituted authorities, in the proper execution of their respective delegated trusts, is also to insult the majesty of the people. It is likewise rebellion against the supremacy of the people for the officers of one department to break over their prescribed bounds, and invade the province of another. And to attempt to separate the people from their government, is to attempt to divorce them from themselves. Nor is it conceivable what view any can have in
such

such attempts, except to produce a revolution,—an event to be deprecated! For should the present constitution be overthrown, either by foreign intrigue, domestic faction, or any other cause, there is reason to fear, that the liberties and privileges of the people will suffer a greater abridgment, under a more despotic government, than was ever before experienced, in this country.

If it be true, that in consequence of the wisdom, firmness and spirited measures of our government, the haughty menacing tone of the Directory of France, has been lowered, and their dispositions towards this country, meliorated; we have reason to give thanks to God for such a favourable event. But past experience should teach us the cautious policy of being always on our guard, and well prepared for defence; unless we can have more substantial evidence of the friendly intentions of the French government, than empty professions, or some few instances of flattering change in their language or conduct, which may be nothing else but lullabies or opiates, the insidious arts of their boasted diplomatic skill, which has proved the ruin of so many other states.

MAY the sovereign Ruler among the nations, still mercifully regard and defend the people of confederated America, and grant them wisdom both to discern and pursue the things of their peace and prosperity; that they may never be absorbed in the calamities of such an inglorious revolution, as shall reduce their government under the arbitrary direction and controul of foreign influence, and add them to the hideous roll of degraded and enslaved republics in Europe.

SUPPRESSING every ungrateful emotion of discontent, and making it our constant devout enquiry, *what we shall render to the Lord for all his benefits,*
let

let us endeavour to live answerably to our high obligations, that it may be well with us, and with our posterity after us.

CONSIDERING the present state of human nature, we may indeed expect to hear many murmurings of ingratitude and a selfish temper, even amidst the highest scenes of prosperity, and under the most auspicious smiles of providence. For notwithstanding the blessings wherewith we are surrounded, how many do we often hear complaining; particularly of the scarcity of money? But when we attend to the appearances of affluence around us, and consider the expensive modes of living and costly luxuries, that have been introduced by all classes of citizens; when we consider also how much money is needlessly expended at public and licensed houses, or lavished upon unprofitable amusements, or superficial embellishments, which, however innocent in themselves, never stamp a dignity on the human character; when we consider these things, what shall we think of the above complaint? If debtors, who aim to withhold from their creditors their just dues, as long as possible, imagine that such a complaint, under such appearances and circumstances, will be a valid excuse among the discerning, they will find themselves mistaken. It would be happy for us, if honesty and fidelity were not scarcer than money. It would be well, if every one would bear it in mind, that every culpable failure in punctuality, inflicts a wound upon credit, which cannot be healed without some more efficient remedies, than common excuses and apologies.

LET us therefore, my hearers, *renouncing the hidden things of craftiness and dishonesty*, endeavour to fulfil all righteousness, and to square our actions and behaviour towards one another, by that everlasting rule of rectitude, founded in eternal reason and the immutable fitness of things, and sanctified by christianity,

tianity, which obliges us to do to others, as we should think them obliged to do to us, on an exchange of circumstances.

DISCARDING that impious and licentious liberty, which claims for weak, ignorant and dependant mortals, an exemption from all law, and rule, and civil authority, and exalts itself even above the authority of Almighty God. Let us, while we cultivate the dispositions of piety and devotion towards our Maker and Preserver, cultivate also the dispositions of justice, and charity towards our fellow creatures, and by the constant discharge of every civil and social duty, endeavour to promote peace and good neighbourhood, as far as the sphere of our influence extends, that social happiness may increase and abound, and by its benign influence, improve the other joys of life.

ALWAYS ready to join our fellow citizens of these states, in every constitutional measure for defeating the artful stratagems, crafty plots and open attacks of every enemy to the independence and government of our country, let us exhibit an example of all the virtues of a good and pious life, in our several private stations and relations, and, by *leading quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty*, endeavour to manifest our gratitude to the beneficent Author of all good, for that profusion of private enjoyments and domestic delights, as well as other blessings, which from the treasures of his inexhaustible bounty, he hath been pleased to shower down upon us.

COULD people, in general, throughout America, be persuaded to act, with propriety, according to the exhortations now given, it would baffle the arts and efforts of the united conspiracies of earth and hell, to break our union, or rob us of the blessings of independence, under the operation of a free govern-
ment

ment of our own choice ; and we might therefore reasonably rejoice in the flattering prospect of continued prosperity, and might, with full assurance of hope, anticipate future security, under the never failing guardianship and benediction of the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth.

AND now, my hearers, having delivered my sentiments with an unreservedness expressive of full confidence in your candor, I shall conclude by exhorting every one seriously to consider, that he is formed for immortality, beyond the bounds of time. With the faith of christians, let us all look forward into futurity, and take care to lay up treasures, in that heavenly country, which is prepared for all, whose conduct in this life shall meet the final approbation of the supreme Judge.

HAVING acquitted ourselves well, in the several posts assigned us upon the probationary theatre of this world, may the everlasting JEHOVAH, through the mediation of JESUS CHRIST, his most merciful plenipotentiary on earth, when the drama of this life shall be finished, and this sublunary scene shall close, admit us to that world of glory and joy, where there are no disputes arising from competitions of interest, no mischevicious devices or machinations, no temptations, no insidious plots, no disturbers of peace, no envious or malevolent beings ; but, where all is love, union and harmony, in the fullest perfection, under the immediate beatific influence and irradiation of supreme original Excellence and Goodness, forever and ever. 9 : 7 : 10

A M E N.

