

SERMON,

DELIVERED

IN THE

BAPTIST MEETING-HOUSE,

AT

POULTNEY, (VT.)

ON THE

THIRTY-FOURTH ANNIVERSARY

OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE,

JULY 4, 1810.

BY CLARK KENDRICK,

PASTOR OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH AND CONGREGATION
IN SAID TOWN.

Published by special request.

RUTLAND :

PRINTED BY WILLIAM FAY.

.....

1810.

A SERMON.

PSALM, 144, 15.

Happy is that people whose God is the Lord.

THUS spake the pious Psalmist from experience, and from infallible inspiration of God.

He had seen in regard to himself, in his family, in society, and in nations, virtue rewarded and vice punished, perfectly consistent with the doctrine of the divine existence, the moral government of God, man's dependence upon and accountability to his great Creator.

He had seen nations without the knowledge or worship of the true God, dishonoring themselves by wickedness, and thereby plunging into wretchedness and misery, eating the fruit of their own doings, and receiving the reward of their own hands.

He had seen in the nation over which he had the honor to preside, vexation and calamity, as the consequence, and in part, as the wages of their national impiety; and again he had seen them prosperous and happy, as the fruit of repentance and reformation, and the acknowledgment of God their Creator.

In the contest he reviews a train of national blessings as the result of national righteousness, and says, *Happy is that people that is in such a case, and further adds, Yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord.*

By this expression he does not mean that there is a people on earth who are not in reality dependent upon and accountable to the eternal God.

He does not mean that the wickedness of a nation, be it ever so great, is calculated so to separate them from God, that in their wishes to evade the force of his government, he will in that respect sanction their choice and renounce his authority over them.

But so much is true, that nations and individuals have sentimentally and practically, resorted to atheism, have denied the existence, and of course, renounced the government of the Supreme Jehovah; have refused to worship him as such, and have changed the glory of

the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man, and have bowed down to, and worshipped the beasts of the fields and fowls of heaven.

But in our text, the prophet † pronouncing the benediction on a people whose God is the Lord, evidently means a people who own and acknowledge the true God, as their God and king, and who worship and glorify him accordingly.

In reference therefore to this explanation, I shall, in the first place shew when it may be said that the Lord is the God of a particular people or nation.—2d. I shall bring into view some special displays of divine goodness toward our nation, from which it will appear that our obligation is truly enhanced to embrace the Lord as our G^d.

When the Lord is the God of a people, &c.

1. When he enlightens them with divine truth, and reveals unto them the knowledge of his holy will. He hath not dealt so with every nation.

Under the Mosaic economy, the Jews were favored with the lively oracles of God, on the account of which they were distinguished from the benighted heathenish Gentiles, as the peculiar people of God.

Divine revelation is called a vision; and it is said where no vision is the people perish.

Therefore the revelation of the divine will is a peculiar expression of divine goodness to any who are favored with the enjoyment of it.

2. It may be said that a nation hath the Lord for their God, when they own and worship him as such, and that to the exclusion of all other gods.

Nothing can be more ridiculous than professed idolatry; and practical idolatry with a pretence to own and worship the true God, is equally impious and absurd.

When other objects hold their empire in and receive the supreme affections of our hearts, we certainly worship not the true God, however we may p^rsume ourselves with external appearances, and our professions be ever so specious, and sanctimonious before men. Religion has its origin in the affections. Therefore by wor-

slipping God can be meant nothing short of supreme love to him. This is the sum and essence of moral obligation. Every reasonable consideration discovers the infinite propriety of this duty.

The infinity and majesty of Jehovah, his infinite power, wisdom, and benevolence, his creating goodness and preserving mercy, all combine to enforce this sentiment as being perfectly correct; and not to be dispensed with for the ablest substitute a created intelligent can produce.

3. The affirmative of the proposition before us, involves the duty of faith in the Son of God, as mediator between God and man. The truth of God is manifest only through the Lord Jesus Christ. The Jews have rejected him, and in so doing, they have rejected the Lord as being their God; and of course he has rejected them. Fearfully fallen, and judiciously blinded, God grant that the time may be hastened, when the veil shall be taken from their hearts, and their reception, by Gentile believers, be as life from the dead.

The whole plan of divine operation, in importing good to mankind, is through the medium of the Son of God. When we deny him we make him a liar, and we put every thing of importance in relation to ourselves at the greatest hazard.

Finally, as we are transgressors against God, the subject involves the necessity of repentance unto life, of prayer and devotion, of good will to men, of righteousness, temperance and humility, of economy and industry, of peace, order, and good agreement, of suitable respect to magistrate authority, rendering honor to whom honor, and fear to whom fear is due. And if there be any other thing, it is happily comprehended in these words—Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

We shall now proceed to consider some of the distinguishing favors of Divine Providence to our nation, which seem to urge with irresistible eloquence in favor of our receiving & embracing the Lord as our God. In unfolding the history of our nation, we trace our forefathers to Europe. Born in an old corrupted world, where liberty for ages

immemorial has been destined to fall a sacrifice to lawless power and unrelenting ambition ; where tyrants, insatiable as the grave, not contented with external dominion and temporal supremacy, must assume dominion over the faith and consciences of men.

Amongst those European tyrannies, boasting of civilization and sublime religions, yet barbarous and corrupt as the piratical regencies on Barbary's famous coasts, thousands and millions met the terrors of tribunals and inquisitions, were sacrificed on the altar of their faith, & like the Angel upon Manoah's rock, ascended to heaven in fiery chariots, and no doubt amidst the applause of surrounding seraphs.

Our fathers, weary with such destruction, and with the corruptions and oppressions of the day, retired from the complicated scenes of distracted Europe, with a reliance on God, gave themselves to the waves and surges of a rolling ocean, and the winds of heaven by divine direction, wafted them to these western climes.

But what could be more formidable than the difficulties they had to encounter ? An unexplored wilderness to subdue ; and how often were their ears saluted with the midnight howl of terrible beasts of prey ? And what must still have been more painful to their ears, was, the war and death whoop of the frightful savage, whose wants, revenge, and barbarous pride were their only law, which often operated in indiscriminate murder of the most horrid kind. But God, who presides over the destinies of nations, who poured down manna from the clouds, and sent quails like the sand to the chosen tribes in their peregrinations in the Arabian deserts, and who dispersed the enemy before them, granted his gracious aid, support and protection, to those religious adventurers until their way was marked with prosperity and like Israel of old, they shot forth from the rivers to the seas.

2. Had I time to detail, yet perhaps the subject would be stale and unentertaining, relative to the circumstances which gave rise to the late revolution which sep-

arated us from the government of Great Britain. But suffice it to say, that ministerial pride, disoluteness, profligacy and debauchery, which gave rise to a sort of necessary royal oppression of these colonies, and a brave, magnanimous resistance of their unwarrantable measures, on our part, were the cause of it. Yet never was any thing more evident than the divine interposition in our preservation and victory. Who but the God of unerring wisdom, whose infalible agency dictates order and sympathy to nature, could have concentrated the views of the then few scattered millions and directed them to one single point, when their councils were muffled with magistrates of royal appointments, and they struggling with all their delegated power and chicanery in favor of their royal master? and who but that God who supports the pillars of the universe and who has the hearts of all men in his keeping, could have inspired the sons of Columbia with courage at such a time as this? when Britain (who had been flushed with recent conquests, and plumed with victories, whose name was the terror and dread of nations, whose warlike gallantry and achievements, almost made the house of Bourbon to tremble) let loose her royal indignation against these then infant colonies.

How distressing and frightful the scene, when the dreadful sound of war was thundered from the British throne! When a most baneful planet appeared rising in the east, portending a tremendous storm of carnage, blood and war. For so was the event, the decree went forth, and our harbors were lined with their warlike fleets, and our towns and cities were teeming with their armies in dread array.

For eight years the tragic scene continued. The savage, whose natural and artificial appearance is enough to appal the stoutest heart, and whose cruelty is scarcely exceeded by Britons themselves, were hired by British gold to the fearful work of death; and regular armies, divided into different sections, were blazing war throughout our abodes. Our property was captured on the seas, our brave men were falling in the field,

and our cities, towns and wealth were rising toward heaven in ashes, smoke and flames !

All this our fathers saw, and they wept, yea they fought, and they called on Israel's God who flew to their relief, and dashed in pieces the expectation of the foe, and commissioned the winds of heaven to conduct the residue of them far from our pleasant shores.

How ought we to acknowledge the divine hand. He breaketh the power of the oppressor—he causeth wars to cease, and giveth the battle to whomsoever he will.

3. To give a history of the peculiar situation of our country at the close of the war, would far exceed the design of this short discourse. We can but just remark, that we were destitute of a confederated system of government, our public treasures were exhausted, discontents, jealousies and complaints prevailed throughout the land. New evils were daily arising, and in different sections things were rapidly maturing for civil wars.

Measures, however, were taken by the wise and good to remedy those evils as fast as possible, and after much care and prudence, the states were all brought into one great confederated union, on the ground of our republican constitution, which guarantees the equal rights and privileges of the whole ; on the ground of which, and under the best civil administration the world ever contained, our nation has arisen, through the mercy and protection of the Almighty, to its present state of literature, civilization, extent, wealth and fame.— And God grant that our constitution may remain unimpaired until it shall be exchanged for the ultimate and everlasting economy of Jehovah above, and that the United States may remain one and indivisible, until the dissolution of national compact shall be announced by the Archangel's awful trump, and the melody improved on these festive occasions, shall be exchanged for the symphonies of Gabriel's harp.

In this our national consolidation, and the regular confines and movements of her wheels, the divine agency is as apparent as it was in receiving chaos to or-

der, and in forming and regulating the spheres of action through vast orbignity.

4. Let us reflect for a moment on the abounding goodness of the great Creator towards our nation, in planting us in so goodly a land.

The continent, a part of which we inhabit, is 10,000 miles in length and the greatest division of earth on the globe. It ranges through all latitudes and climes, in this hemisphere, nature has wrought on her largest scale. It is teeming with every thing rich, grand and magnificent. With lofty mountains of amazing range, with extensive rivers of unknown size, rolling along with superior majesty, with spreading lakes like flowing seas, with extensive plains, stately forests, meandering brooks and purling streams—

“ Wide as his vast dominion lies,
Make the Creator's name be known ;
Loud as his hunder shout his praise,
And sound it lofty as his throne.”

Furthermore, the greatest part of the country which we inhabit is agreeably situated between the extremes of heat and cold, “ with a soil luxuriant as the land of Nile, and an atmosphere healthy as that which surrounded the famed Helicon. The great Atlantic laves our eastern board and wafts to our shores the dainties of every clime.” Like the land of Canaan which was given to the chosen tribes, so our land is a large, a land flowing with milk and honey. And speaking of this extensive continent, on which the God of nature has placed us, I can't but congratulate my auditors on the late revolution of S. America, in which the people have abjured the government of ancient Spain, & set up for independence. This seems to presage the accomplishment of a prophetic remark by the Rev. Dr. Morse, as follows :—

“ The God of nature never intended, that some of the best part of his earth should be inhabited by the subjects of a monarch, four thousand miles from them. And may we not venture to predict, that when the rights of mankind shall be more fully known, the pow-

er of European potentates will be confined to Europe and their present American dominions become like the United States, free, sov'reign and independent empires." —*Universal Geog.* vol. 1. p. 630.

The ways of Providence are mysterious and deep.— No barbarity ever exceeded that which the Spaniards displayed in South America. They writhed the king on a bed of embers.—

“ Here Guatimozin writh'd in flames of fire,
And slaughter'd millions round their Prince expire ”

A number of years past the French king spent much blood and treasure, in conquering the island of Corsica. The object was effected ; and I learn that in the event of such a cruel war the French officers were attracted with the promising appearance of a little boy who had fallen under their observation, and consequently conducted him into France and had him educated in the military academy in Paris. Little did the French monarch apprehend, that by sending an army in Corsica, it would be to open the way for the transmigration of a little animal into the heart of his kingdom, that would one day aid in overturning the family of Bourbon, and seize upon the royal sceptre. But so was the event.— And he having grown up to his present consequence, has overturned the ancient monarchy of Spain, which so cruelly treated the S. Americans, and Ferdinand & his family are now royal prisoners to Bonaparte. And the Spanish Americans being apprised of this, have renounced their former connexion with Old Spain, and resolutely determined on independence. Thus we see how the wisdom of this world is confounded, and how God overrules the craftiness of men to bring about events entirely contrary to their calculations. But

5. The goodness of God is manifest to our nation, in giving us divine revelation, and the administration of the gospel of peace. These, with their blessed effects, are infinitely paramount to any others which can be named.

Other innumerable favors may subserve our present good, here below, but will end with this present life.— But the gospel alone can purify and enrich the heart,

ensure us the forgiveness of our sins, or discover that they can be forgiven, give us joy and rational triumph in death, and conduct to blessedness and immortality beyond the grave.

Why we are not profound idolaters, with our 30,000 deities, and as a nation 'tuel gamesters, and gladiators, and smoking our first born on the altars to atone for our sins, is not because our natural reason is superior to that of the sages of ancient-Greece and Rome, but because the gospel illuminates our abodes. Without it we must be heathen and destitute of knowledge of those important affairs which appertain to a world of unbodied spirits. How ought we then to improve it as an unspeakable gift.

6. The mercy of God is distinguishing toward us in preserving us from the destructive ravages of war, which is so rapidly depopulating many of the nations of the earth. The two great belligerents of Europe have put every engine of death in motion. Cities are invested with sharp shooters, and fall sacrifice to insatiable and devouring armies, or like Copenhagen the great and splendid metropolis of Denmark are enwrap't with devouring flames. The beautiful plains of Europe, once redened with the blooming clover, and glittering with golden grain, are glittering with all the implements of death, and redened with human blood. Instead of using the waggon and cart to bear the precious fruits of the earth to the barns and to the granery, they are of use only to conduct away the fruits of battles to dismal cavities, there to await the orders of the last dread trumpet. Fruitful fields are turned into grave-yards, thousands and thousands, by merciless war, in one day, are sent prematurely to the world of spirits, by which wives are made widows, and orphans are multiplied.— Empires are swept from the stage, kingdoms are blotted out, and struck from the list of existence, and lost in the general devastation and convulsions of unrelenting war. Indeed, almost all Europe is kindled into one great blaze of war, whilst darkness, like a weary cloud, appears to have spread itself over and rested upon

them, "and scarce a gleam of light appears to illuminate their way, except those lurid conuscations, which pour from the cannon's mouth on the embattled field."

O then, favored Columbia, thrice happy land, highly favored of the Lord; whilst such are the destinies of other nations our land is a land of peace and plenty—each one may sit under his own vine and fig tree, and none to molest or make him afraid.

And whilst the two great bell-fronts of Europe, like two great gigantic powers of hell, are gnashing their iron teeth, and are raging and foaming at our enviable situation and, like the Revelation's Dragon, casting forth their poisonous flood, we live in a world by ourselves, can retire from them both, and let them spend the arrows of death amongst themselves; whilst our natural security from their rage and madness, is, an ocean of 3000 miles rolling between.—A few reflections:—

1. How suitable and right it is that a people should own and worship the true God. He rules thro' infinite space and is every where present: the thick darkness can't veil us from his sight: he watches over the world in their silent slumbers and supports all beings: he is a God worthy to be adored, let all the nations fear him.

2. From a view of the divine favors towards us, we may discover our own ingratitude to God. Ought not a nation to seek unto the Lord, from whom they receive all their benefits? All those streams of divine goodness which we enjoy, ought to lead us to thankfulness, humility and repentance.

3. We learn how to perpetuate our national happiness and independence, by a regard to the honor of God and his laws and commandments. Without this we have reason to fear that the Lord will forsake us.

4. If there be a God of moral justice, national vices must meet with national judgments. And are we not guilty in a great degree of departing from and forgetting the Lord our Creator. How ought we to reverence his name, his word, his sabbaths, ordinances and institutions, and to lead peaceable lives under such an excellent government as the Lord has favored us with. And we ought not wickedly to murmur at our rulers because

they can't counteract the dispensations of divine providence (which for wise ends may check our prosperity) as the children of Israel did at Moses in a similar case, which was explained by God as murmurs against himself. But we ought to serve the Lord; for, says the prophet, the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish, yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted; and let our wealth & power be ever so great, & though we should entrench ourselves within walls of granite, yet all would not secure us if the Lord should determine to enter into judgement with us in his sore displeasure, as he did with Jericho, Babylon, & the people of Jerusalem.

6. Let no impiety, or improper conduct, disgrace the business of the day. The event which you this day commemorate is truly worthy the attention of this numerous assembly, and of all the good citizens throughout our wide domains. The independence of our empire is an event in which all ought to feel a common interest, & the importance of it ought to be transmitted from generation to generation. But in all our exultations we ought to be bounded by reason and the fear of the Lord.

The civility, temperance, order and regularity which have so far been characteristic of this audience, seem to presage a happy conclusion of the ceremonies of the day, and a seasonable & honorable retirement from the place.

Finally, as the great affairs of the nation are shortly to be conducted by you who are young, may your attainments and conduct be such as shall render the prospect agreeable. Let good manners, pure morals, and a suitable deference to the aged and to superiors in general be your constant attendants. Be temperate in all things; and may the deadly bane of infidelity be banished from your hearts, and impiety and irreligion from all your circles. As you grow in years, may you grow in the knowledge and love of your country. Prefer your own agency in the affairs of state, in your turn to manage, rather than to trust your interest and privileges in the hands of a foreign or domestic despot, though his service of your cause should be volunteered. Be virtuous and you will be respected—be pious and your souls will be saved. **AMEN.**