

Ebenezer : or Jehovah, the Helper of America.

*John Tracy, 12th. 1814*

**SERMON,**

DELIVERED

IN THE CAPITOL, JULY 4, 1814;

BEING THE ANNIVERSARY

OF THE

**INDEPENDENCE OF AMERICA :**

BY THE DESIRE OF THE

CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF ALBANY,

AND PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST.

BY JOHN McDONALD, A. M.

PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CHAPEL STREET. AUTHOR OF A  
NEW TRANSLATION OF ISAIAS XLVIII, WITH NOTES CRITICAL  
AND EXPLANATORY.

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*Rev. Mr. May 1817*

## SERMON.

1 SAM. VII. 12.

*“ Then Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpah and Shen, and called the name of it EBENEZER; saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.”*

*Honorable Magistrates, Respectable Citizens !*

ASSEMBLED to commemorate the birth day of our national independence, let every unsocial and every unhallowed sentiment be banished from our bosoms. Let benevolence to the living, who share in our privileges; let veneration for the memory of the illustrious dead, whose wisdom and valor achieved our independence; let gratitude, pious and sincere, to God, the Author of this, and of every good and perfect gift, pervade and solemnize every heart.

The text chosen to secure union in our recollections, appears well adapted to give them emphasis. It was originally employed by a prophet and statesman of the highest order, on a memorable and affecting occasion.

Samuel, judge of the Israelitish tribes, had seen them, for many years, oppressed by the Philistines, a cruel and relentless foe. In a recent engagement they had even captured the Ark of the Covenant,

the palladium of church and state, and by their impieties they had profaned the sacred chest. But struck with terror under the acknowledged judgments of God, they were compelled to send back the dangerous spoil, accompanied with expiatory presents. Afflictions from heaven produced no sentiments of compassion in their hearts to Israel. They soon followed the ark and their presents with a proud and powerful army, to extirpate a people whom they hated, because they had injured them.

Under the alarm of danger, without forces and without alliance, the judge, with his nation, betakes himself to God. A fast is proclaimed; prayers are offered, and the altar is loaded with the victim of propitiation. The venerable prophet, at once judge and priest, stands by the altar, and wafts, with its rising odours, the supplication of faith to heaven. In the mean time, the feeble and dispirited tribes receive orders to gird on their armour, and to meet and encounter the advancing foe. Immediately the thunders of God roll terribly in the sky. The shout of the hosts, and the trumpets of war, are overpowered by the more awful voice of The Almighty. The enemy, in terror, are discomfited. They are pursued. They become the food of Israel's sword. Courage succeeded dejection and dismay. Prayer and tears give place to triumph and loud sounding praise. The prophet concludes the scene with an act of devotion that at once marks a generous mind, and a feeling heart. "*Then Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and he called the name of it Ebenezer; saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.*"

Through scenes, resembling these, our nation has already passed. A prince, whom our fathers loved, and revered as a parent, and a nation whom they fondly carassed as kindred, deceived and instigated, in an evil hour, by weak and wicked ministers, aided by a senate, too obsequious, adopted measures, which, unless resisted, must have terminated in the destruction of the dearest rights of the Man, the Citizen, and the Christian. Though they loved their king, they respected themselves. They remonstrated with filial reverence, and were treated with cold contempt. Remonstrance was followed by respectful and earnest petition, and was answered by new injuries. They at length determined and dared to resist, and God gave success to their righteous cause. Their civil rights were not only respected; but their national independence acknowledged: While surrounding nations, with applause, hailed them, Worthy to enjoy the prize for which they had so resolutely contended, and had so nobly won.

The venerable founders of our nation, like the man of God, and his people, in the text, began the unequal contest by appealing to God, and imploring his direction and aid. In him, during the conflict, they continued to trust. To him, at the victorious close, they raised the memorial, and inscribed it with the pious sentiment, “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.”

Amidst surrounding clouds and tempest, while gathering darkness shuts up the prospect before us, we are permitted, in perfect possession of our enjoyments and rights, to celebrate another anniversary.

Among the various subjects that claim our attention, we are, under present circumstances, invited to acknowledge, with recollections of gratitude, the Divine goodness ;

In the birth of our nation, and His peculiar providences to her in her infant state.

In preparing and qualifying her in due time to receive independence.

In conducting her through a dangerous and tedious war, to indisputed sovereignty and independence.

In graciously directing her with wisdom and honor to improve independence when obtained.

In admonishing us by present corrections and judgments, to acknowledge our sins and abuse of our independence, by which it seems endangered.

In granting us this favorable opportunity of forming resolutions of returning to God whom we have forsaken, that he may graciously perpetuate our independence, and render it a blessing to our nation and to the world.

A few observations on each of these topics, and in the order in which we have mentioned them, will accomplish the object of this address.

I. We are invited to acknowledge the Divine goodness in the birth of our nation, and His signal providence to her in her infant state.

The origin of nations, for the most part, lies buried in fable and obscurity, beyond the limits of record. We can trace the founders of the American nation to their cradle, attend to their early education, and mark the causes that formed their early tempers and habits. We can fix the precise period, when Providence revealed the seat of empire, and the manner in which they were transplanted into it. For in the American, as in the Israelitish state, God first marked out the empire, and then gave birth and education to the chosen inheritors.

The American hemisphere, in which our nation is seated, and which, for ought we know, it is one day destined to fill, furnishes subject of contemplation to the philosopher and Christian, mysterious and profound. A vast region, equal nearly to half the globe, with a surface abounding in all that is necessary for the subsistence and accommodation of man, and whose bowels were filled with all those treasures which he accounts most precious, lay for thousands of ages concealed by a veil which the eye, the industry, and knowledge of man, could not penetrate.

While the crowded inhabitants of the other hemisphere were engaged in fierce contention for some barren mountain, or some insignificant plain, for some contemptible stream, or some ungrateful shore: while their destructive disputes, for more territory and for more gold, prematurely replenished the dwellings of the dead, and spread misery and devastation over the wretched survivors, the immense plains, the innumerable hills, and towering mountains, the majes-

tic rivers, and the prolific seas of America remained unoccupied, unclaimed, and unknown. For what purpose, may it be asked, was this beautiful and rich continent created by that Being, who, though bountiful, is never prodigal of his gifts? Who, when he creates the loaf, never suffers the crumb to be lost? Philosophy, startled, stands in silence. Christianity can only add, "Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

This country, fertile and fair, slept inglorious for many ages, abandoned to savage beasts, or to scattered tribes of men more savage than they, whom misfortune had casually thrown on her shores, without power of returning to the land of their fathers, without talents, and resources, even to preserve civilization, much less to rise to science and to God. Awfully instructive and humbling theme!

At the apparent destined hour, a mariner, by natural sagacity or by intense study, acquired the knowledge of geographical science beyond all his cotemporaries, above all the ancients; Columbus, impelled by a secret, by an irresistible, shall I say, a Divine impulse, that neither difficulties, nor disappointment could weaken or subdue, determined to penetrate to India, in that very course where the new world lay, and which, in his pursuit, he could not miss. Of its existence, however, he had neither knowledge nor suspicion. Undaunted he burst through that frightful rampart which the fears, or the ignorance of sailors had arrayed in horrors, and by steering for the East discovered the West Indies. By dragging a new world to light, procured himself a deathless name.



To add to our surprise in regard to its concealment, and discovery, in that very course where the ships of Tarshish, under the direction of Phenicia, of Tyre, and of Solomon, three thousand years before, made periodical voyages, every three years, without ever obtaining a glimpse of this virgin world, by chance, by search, or by shipwreck, and returning with the report.—This country Portuguese sailors discovered, to a great extent, a few years after the discovery of Columbus, while pursuing the common tract. Thoughts crowd, but prudence must repress them.

When God had thus fully unveiled the asylum, and the empire intended for his favorite child, when driven to the wilderness from the face of his enemy, he began to make preparations for his birth, and education. America was discovered in the year 1492, and twenty-five years afterwards, the precise period between the call of Abraham and the birth of his heir, LUTHER, the FIRST BORN of the Reformation, made his appearance in Germany.

Under the piercing rays of this morning star, Europe began to awake from her slumbers, civil, literary and religious, of more than a thousand years. During that long and dark night, the faint glimmerings of expiring knowledge, like lamps in the sepulchres of the dead, were entombed in Gothic cloisters, and monkish cells, not more dark than the understanding of their inhabitants; not more cold than their hearts. By the agency of the Reformers, under God, sacred light was diffused in more than pri-

meval splendor, with incredible celerity, and through a wide extent. Germany and Britain, Switzerland, and Holland, with the countries circumjacent, were literary and morally regenerated.

Britain became the nurse of religious knowledge, and of religious and civil liberty, in theory and practice. The excentric reigns of the Tudors, the unsteady, weak and tyrant house of Stewart, the enlightened republican parliament, the nervous and free administration of the usurper Cromwell, were highly favorable for acquiring gradually correct views of religion and civil government. At one time the popish faction, arrayed in its native cruelty, persecuted Reformers of every name. At another time, English prelacy swayed the nation and displayed intolerance, with pride and rage, for uniformity. The presbyterian and the independent had each their short reign, who, detesting civil persecution, treated prelacy, ancient and modern, with the most provoking and sullen contempt. Delighting to tear off those rags which their opponents considered as ornaments, they, with puritanical boldness, exposed the weakness and diseases which they were said to conceal.

It was at this period, and amidst these circumstances, when different parties studied with accuracy and contended publicly for their religious and for their social and civil privileges, that the founders of the American colonies were born and nurtured. Curiosity, principle, self defence, formed every man a civilian and a divine. Thus furnished, thus agitated, and seeing no end to religious and civil disputes, they

turned their eye to the new world, with the hope of enjoying that repose which the old world could not bestow. Virginia, Maryland, and New-England received colonies of churchmen, papists, and independents. Others from Holland and from Germany, from Sweden and Denmark, from Scotland and from Ireland followed. All carried the same love of liberty, the same political principles and experience ; and solitude soon taught them toleration. Prejudices evanishing, and attachments strengthening, they at length became component parts of the American government.

Of all the American colonies, those of Plymouth, and their connexions, were the most enlightened, the most singular in their habits, the most respectable, and those to which our nation is most highly indebted. Hated for the strictness of their morals, persecuted for the simplicity of their worship, and their inflexible adherence to civil and religious liberty, they abandoned their country and their relations, and, in an organized body, sought a dwelling in the bosom of an unknown and inhospitable wilderness, filled with savage beasts and fierce barbarians, where, with their wives and children, they might live in innocence, uncontaminated by the world, and enjoy, undisturbed, the private and public worship of God, with warm hearts, and unwounded conscience.

Never was there a society more select. Neither vice, nor vicious persons, found shelter among them. With their tents they pitched their tabernacles. Like Israel, they carried with them, prepared, the models of church and state. Every family was a Bethel. The father acted as the priest and king of his house.

Every mother, like those of Moses, of Samuel, and Timothy, trained up her sons as prophets, and her daughters as ornaments of her house—as daughters for God.

Their morals and piety were accompanied with sound learning, with knowledge of the arts and sciences, with agricultural skill, and steady habits of industry. “The wells of English language undefiled,” such as Milton purified, and of which he drank, appeared to supply their speech and writing with copious, and masculine expression.

From such sires have American republicans sprung; by such mothers were the first cradles of New-England rocked.

Can we own the hand of God in the birth of Isaac, and in the raising of his seed in Egypt; in giving Abraham a view of the Land of Promise, and, in due time, putting his children in possession of it, and deny that we can discern nothing of a peculiar providence in the discovery of America and in preparing inhabitants for it? If we discover the Divine agency, our hearts must be penetrated with admiring gratitude, and urge us to exclaim, “Hitherto, indeed, hath the Lord helped us.”

II. We are invited this day to recognize the Divine providence, by which we have been prepared and qualified to receive national independence.

This is a consideration of the highest importance to our nation, and demands our warmest gratitude.

Occasion, and natural talents, alone enable societies to vindicate their natural rights. Habits, produced by education, by experience, by morals, and religion, are indispensably necessary to qualify for the enjoyment of the acquisition. “I owe, said the generous conqueror of the world, to Aristotle more than I owe to Philip. By means of my father I am a man. By means of my preceptor I have been taught the exercise of intelligence and reason, the prerogatives of man.” Independence bestowed on a people, not prepared for receiving it, is a gift pregnant with pernicious consequences.

On several occasions the slaves of Greece, and of Rome, broke their chains, asserted their liberty, and always to their own ruin. Without experience, unaccustomed to self command, or self direction, void of reason and destitute of resource, they speedily extinguished their liberty and their lives in blood.

In our own time, the negroes of Saint Domingo, with their personal liberty, asserted national independence. Has it increased their happiness, or added to their security? Without civilization, without morals, without religious restraint, and without social subordination, they resemble more a troop of uncaged lions, than subjects of civil government. Fifty years slavery could not have inflicted so much misery, or produced such dreadful scenes of savage cruelty, as five years of their independence has done.

France, a nation, the first in Europe, for learning, for arts, for science, and for refinement in manners, has, in her recent revolution from despotism to popu-

lar government, exhibited an awful example of a nation set at liberty before the people were ripe for rational independence. They no sooner became sensible of oppression and degradation, and willed to be free, than they succeeded. They no sooner enjoyed freedom, than, like children and savages, they discovered themselves wholly disqualified for enjoying it.

Her ancient grandees ruled by the terrors of the sword, the splendors of the robe, and the magic of a name; stript of these, they had neither talents nor influence to repress the powerful nor to direct the ignorant. The profligate, let loose, like the unclean spirits on the sons of Sceva, the Jew, sprang on them for their destruction. Her statesmen, without studying human nature, moved the government as a vast complicated machine. The first disturbance in its movements affected the whole, and it exceeded their power to correct the disorder, and renew the motion. Her men of science were acute and skilful in analyzing and combining the elements of nature, but they were miserably deficient in the knowledge of selecting and combining the jarring sentiments of a great nation, at that time in chaotic disorder, and in directing them to those pursuits that enlarge the sphere of human knowledge and social happiness, and secure to their nation unfading honors.

Her peasantry, ignorant and degraded, were submissive through fear, and not from principle. They could only act by the voice of a master. They resembled machines, not reasonable agents.

*Notes to volume.*

In a word, society, at that time, through all ranks, through all professions, and in every sex and age, was corrupted to the very core. Too enlightened to submit to slavery, too corrupted to enjoy liberty, and too far gone for reformation. How awful have their judgments been!

Let us now contrast France with the colonies of America, and, with heartfelt gratitude, exult in the scene. In France, all theory; in America, theory and practice combined. Here virtuous and devout fathers, chaste and industrious mothers, families under strict discipline; no idleness; no oppression; no abject poverty; no useless profusion. Magistrates enlightened, laws respected and obeyed. Ignorance, in great measure, subdued; useless knowledge nowhere cultivated. Churches crowded; theatres proscribed. The scriptures revered, Sabbaths sanctified, the name of God held in veneration, his worship universally regarded. The nation was ripe for independence. It produced no innovation. It only increased and extended her privileges and security, with the extension of her duties and obedience.

To strengthen our gratitude to God, and more deeply to impress our minds with veneration for our early institutions, moral, civil, and religious, let us briefly compare the English with the Spanish, the Protestant with the Catholic colonies of America.

The Spanish colonies were planted about an hundred years before the first English settlement. They seized on fields highly cultivated, of fruitful soil, of a friendly climate, and among natives, the

most mild, friendly and inoffensive of the Indian race : The English took possession of an inhospitable wilderness, of frightful atmosphere, of ungrateful soil, and among Indians, the most hostile, cruel and perfidious, of the savage name.

The Catholic colonies, like children, were cherished and protected, by their native government ; magistrates, courts of justice, and boards of direction, were provided at the public expense. Cathedrals and chapels were founded, and ministers of religion, of every name, to teach them morals and religion, were furnished by royal munificence. The Protestant colonies received no aid from the purse or sword of their native government ; for them no magistrate, no minister of religion, was supplied at the expense of royalty. For them no halls of justice ; no simple house of God was ever gratuitously provided. Like Ishmael, the son of the bond woman, to avoid oppression, they fled to the wilderness, followed hardly by a kind or lingering look, nor was a single consoling message sent after them.

Hear the result, and own, with triumph, the hand of God, who has made us to differ. Nearly forty years ago, the English colonies have reached national maturity : The Spanish, of three hundred years old, continue in their leading strings, feeble, helpless—babes. The Protestant have acquired a place and a name among the nations of the earth : The Catholic, slaves to priestly dominion, lie degraded, unknown, unnoticed, in the public annals of the world.



III. We are invited, on this anniversary, to acknowledge the hand of the Lord in conducting us through a dangerous and tedious war, to an honorable independence.

The superintending providence of God is discernible in the rise and continuance of this war, in its agents, its aids, and its opposition: in occurrences the most minute, and in events the most magnificent.

The union, in sentiment and exertion, of thirteen states, scattered in various climates, along an extensive shore, of different habits, of strong mutual prejudices, of diversified and of interfering interest, without external pressure, or powerful internal influence, is in itself astonishing. None but He, in whose hand are the hearts of all men, and who can turn and keep them in their course, as he does the rivers of water, could have united and preserved, in union, through the painful, the dark, the expensive, and dubious conflict, the members of the American nation.

Ample supply of agents, civil and military, suitable and qualified for the direction and execution of public affairs, claim our attention and gratitude. No sooner were public services required, than servants stood prepared, and within reach, to perform them. Conventions, when called, were instantly filled from the bench and the bar; from the plough and from the counting desk, with talents and experience adapted to the times.

Their deliberations were conducted with eloquence and animation. Their arguments were pal-

pable and convincing. No frenzy appeared, no dejection was felt. Artifice and temptation could neither warp nor seduce; opposition and adversity could neither intimidate nor subdue.

In all their public declarations, simplicity and candor shine. In all their petitions to majesty, dignity is united with moderation and respect. In all their remonstrances, inflexible firmness is maintained without asperity or passion.

The public papers, of these times, are models in their kind. They reveal the writers as real actors in the scene. They are such as a Roman senate might own without a blush, and such as a British senate, though opposed, had the magnanimity to applaud. Foreign agents, ambassadors, and others, acted as if educated for their stations, and reflected honor and credit on themselves, and their infant nation.

In the formation and establishment of our army, the same gracious providence appears. Its elements, in men and in officers, had been previously prepared. Accustomed to constant alarm, from a savage foe, the American youth grew up familiar with arms and their use. As militia, many of them, during the previous French war, fought by the side of the British regulars, and from them acquired the art and the exercise of war. Officers and privates, instructed in this school, adorned and filled the infant ranks.

A commander in chief was wanting, of extraordinary and diversified talents. Such a commander, like

a polished shaft from his quiver, God had prepared. WASHINGTON, a name dear to his country, revered by the nations, and destined to flourish with unfading honors till nations are no more, was chosen to this honorable and dignified rank, by the unanimous voice of America: Rich in the endowments of nature, of great and approved experience in the military art, and in the prime of life. Majestic in his person, dignified, without any tincture of pride or ostentation, his exterior commanded respect and conciliated confidence. His countenance was open and serene, with an eye that created no alarm, while it looked on its object, and read the movements of the heart. He obtained the knowledge of men by intuition, and his decisions seldom deceived him. Open and communicative, when circumstances permitted. Impenetrable to scrutiny, when he determined to conceal: vigilant, cautious, temperate, and pious, he was secured from surprise or perturbation. Ardent and impetuous by constitution, cautious, cool, and collected, by experience and self discipline. No solicitation, no censure, could urge to rash and desperate adventures: no labor nor difficulty could deter him from seizing and improving favorable opportunities, when presented to his view. Fully acquainted with the genius and disposition of his countrymen, and with the resources of his country, he knew how, and when, to apply, and what to expect. Condescending and kind to his associates in war, without undue familiarity, he knew, and they never forgot, that he was their general. A lion in battle, a lamb in private life.

Great and respectable, as the American general and his army appeared in the field, the concluding scene, like the mildness and lusture of the setting sun, displayed a spectacle of patriotism, still more attractive and sublime. The victorious army receive a mandate from their country, delivered by their chief, to cease being soldiers, and to become citizens. Without receiving pay or provision, they deliver their arms, and prepare to revisit, in the deepest poverty, their impoverished homes. Their commander knew a soldier's pride, and a soldier's heart, in such circumstances; he sympathizes with them; he soothes, and dismisses them with his regrets and his blessing. He knew the state of his country, anxious to testify their gratitude and respect; yet unable to discharge their long and just debts. Without disorder, neither loaded with the spoils of their enemy, or the plunder of their country, they present their families with national independence, the sole reward of years of toil. The sword is exchanged for the hoe, the musket for the plough, the field of labor for the camp of improvidence.

Their commander severed from his associates in war, hastens to deposit his commission and his sword, his work honorably completed, into the hands of that honorable body, by whom they were entrusted. The scene of mutual congratulation exceeds description. He rose in dignity and devotion, when he surrendered the precious emblems. Congress, melting in gratitude, expressed a homage, great as mortal could accept. Both in union, raised an everlasting memorial

with the inscription of our text, which we this day cordially commemorate: "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

IV. We are invited to acknowledge, this day, the goodness of the Lord, in directing our nation to a wise and honorable improvement of her independence.

This is the crowning blessing, the consummation of the whole. Nations may be fitted and qualified to receive independence, and may acquire it honorably; but without preserving the same virtue and exertion, the same pious reliance on God, it may soon be lost or converted into the means of their own destruction.

The ten tribes of Israel afford a striking illustration of this remark. Trained up for war and regular government, by David, they were, after his death, oppressed by the long, the foolish, and expensive reign of Solomon, his successor. On the accession of Rehoboam, his son, to the throne, they sought relief, by a respectful address. The rash and foolish youth, by the advice of ignorant and wicked counsellors, returned an answer full of insult. The Israelites spurn the message indignantly, abandon their king, and no sooner willed, than they accomplished their independence. Irritation and success engendered pride. Pride impelled them to acts of violence and injustice, and after becoming a curse to themselves, and a scourge to all around them, their independence terminated in irrecoverable slavery and disgrace.

France, under our own eye, has furnished the most melancholy example of independence abused, that the annals of nations record. Short and easy was her ascent to independence, beautiful and rich the inheritance obtained ; numerous the champions that were ranged for her defence. But the very agents that broke her chains and asserted her freedom, became the murderers of those whom they had sworn to protect, and strangled, in the cradle, the heavenly stranger. The people, infuriated under their instigation, trampled on law, on every thing venerable and sacred, spread destruction and carnage over that beautiful country, and its inoffensive inhabitants.

For ten successive years, a succession of monsters in human form, profaning the name of liberty, exposed the very name to suspicion, and their country and themselves to the execration and dread of the nations of the earth. It sunk in anarchy. For more than other ten years a despot has trampled France under foot. Of splendid talents, of boundless ambition, of an unfeeling heart, he removed the scaffold of blood from the streets of Paris, and converted the fair and extensive plains of Europe into fields of slaughter and polluted cemeteries. Those who despised, and those who adored him ; those who resisted, and those who relied on his promises and generosity, fell, in succession, the victims of his insatiable thirst for dominion and blood.

Within a few months, after unexampled successes terminating, in a chain of disaster and defeat, that compels infidelity herself to own a God of retribu-

tive justice, humanity has been gratified with the intelligence of his overthrow. He that awed and afflicted the civilized world has lost his terrors. Betrayed and deserted by the associates of his villainies, rejected by the nation that he crushed, detested by mankind, he has voluntarily abdicated the most splendid throne in Europe, and banished, like a convict, on a disgraceful dole, to tread on the mines of Elba, mother of metals, in which his iron soul delighted.

With these nations compare the honorable career of America, and own the hand of God. No circumstances, no prospects, can be conceived more gloomy and distressing than those that succeeded the revolutionary war. Strangers and battles had devoured her farms. Habits of agriculture and commerce were destroyed. Every source of national revenue dried up. An enormous public debt contracted. Without experience, without an ally, without a friend.

Did a tyrant rise to usurp authority amidst the consternation? America had not yet brought forth a paricide. Did the nation abandon herself to despair? Did she propose measures unbecoming her dignity? Did she distrust or forget her Helper in the war? No! She remembered God. She applied to him, and now He became her Counsellor. With united deliberation, a federal compact was framed and adopted. The hero of the field has the reins of government committed to his hands. New talents, adapted to new duties, are developed. The statesman equals the soldier. Great in the field, great in the cabinet, he rises, with every new event in the confidence and affection of his nation.

A change from gloom to glory, is instantaneously produced. Prosperity, unknown, commences her reign; credit and confidence are restored. Debts are settled and discharged. Murmur and languor take their flight, and active industry and perseverance supply their place. Commerce launches her ships, and spreads her sails, and wafts, with every breeze, the wealth of the nations into the lap of America. Let us look back through twenty, out of the twenty-six years of our national government, and we may challenge the history of nations to produce a parallel to our prosperity. "It is the doings of the Lord and wondrous in our eyes." Shall we not, with pious gratitude, set up our memorial between Shen and Mizpeh, between peace and prosperity; between war and adversity; and deeply inscribe, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

V. We are this day admonished to listen to the judgments and corrections of the Lord, which threaten to deprive us of what the Lord hath hitherto bestowed on us.

This introduces a variety in our exercises, less pleasing, but not less seasonable and expedient. To join trembling with our rejoicing, produces salutary effects.

All must acknowledge that it is not with our nation as in years past. The sun of union and of prosperity is covered with a black cloud. This change must proceed from causes over which we have some control. God is unchangeable, he resteth in his love, and is unwearied in his goodness.



Among the wounds, which God continues to inflict, the following four claim our serious attention.

We are deeply wounded in our commerce and navigation ;—the sources of our national opulence. A few years ago American canvass whitened every sea, and spread to every breeze. Her stars and her stripes floated in every harbor, and circulated her own and the productions of the world. Now, withdrawn or chased from the bosom of the ocean, they grow black, they mourn, they languish, in our silent ports. No longer is the noise of the sailor and cordage heard, the hum of busy men has withdrawn. Our merchants, who had become princes in our land, and their families arrayed in splendor and surrounded with all the luxuries of the Indies of the east and of the west, rest in dissatisfaction, in inglorious languor. The breeze may shift and freshen, but it wafts the much desired and rich cargoes to their store houses no more.

Our statesmen no longer boast of an overflowing treasury. The sea refuses, when most needed, to supply the shameful profusion of the land. America! commerce became your God! JEHOVAH, the Helper of your fathers, hath smitten your Dagon. God has done it. Be silent and repent.

Again, our national honor and respect have received a painful wound. When WASHINGTON sat at the helm, and when regular industry and unsullied integrity ; when republican morals, and revealed religion, were the ornaments of our nation, the American name was every where respected. The citizens,

like the magistrate, sought to merit self and national respect, alike indifferent to the friendship and hate of foreign nations. How sad the change! how degrading the language. *I am of France. I am of England.* This odious, this dangerous leaven, began to ferment even under the administration of WASHINGTON. It appears, by his letters, to have embittered his last days, and to have filled his patriotic soul with painful apprehensions. But WASHINGTON never dreaded what we have seen and felt. Miscreant officers, of a haughty and ill bred despot, dared to abuse and tantalize our nation; and corrupted citizens have sought to palliate and conceal the insult. Never could he have suspected that American citizens would have excused and justified, at the expense of their own government, the outrage on the rights and sovereignty of America, by British councils, while their own legislature blushed and refused to sanction the procedure.

Self degradation invites contempt. Of this America has received a full cup. The duke of Cadore, and the ambassador Surrurier, have, in language too base for insertion, discovered in what estimation they held the votaries of their idol. Foster, in his reiterated insinuations and charges, and Castlereagh, in his indecent sarcasms to Russel, have abundantly discharged the debt which is due to the admirers of British liberality.

Americans, pause and reflect. Did you ever read of a Roman that reviled his government, and eulogized foreign nations, that could live in Rome? The monster durst not look a Roman in the face, nor en-

dure the light of the sun. Whom do the British, the nation from which you sprung, respect and praise. Not France, nor Spain ; not America nor Russia. This would excite the blush of indignation. They respect themselves, and glory in their own government, and all the world respects and honors them for their patriotism.

Napoleon is at rest. What friendship did ever he discover, what favor has he conferred on America? We are silent. His intrigues, his treachery, and his sword, will probably disturb America no more. But though he is gone, our shameful partiality to emperors and kings may soon raise up another as formidable and unfeeling as he.

Britain, in whose friendship and generosity so many confide as our bulwark, is at peace now with all the world, except the United States. Does she hasten with her smiles? It must be confessed that the crowding of her transports, the mustering of her forces, the collections of munitions of war, is an unusual language to extinguish suspicion, and to conciliate confidence. Respect to her own interest, without much attention to ours, will, probably, regulate her measures. And I sincerely pray that the fraternal embrace of her lion may never break the spell that binds her admirers.

A third calamity, equally dangerous and disgraceful, under which we labor, is disunion in sentiment, interest, and affection. Region against region, party against party, man against man. To censure and to disagree, is the only thing in which the United States

seem to be united. The measures which this man extols as the essence of wisdom, that man execrates as the consummation of folly. What grieves one, delights another. A house divided against itself cannot stand.

Have the bloody scenes between the factions of Lancaster and York been forgotten? Have the dissensions that subverted Batavia, Poland, and Geneva, never awakened our fears? Will the Grecian states lie entombed, destroyed by their own divisions, without affording instruction? Shall the inspirations of reason, confirmed and matured by reflection, in the parting request of WASHINGTON, fix no impressions on our obdurate hearts? Shall we dare to disregard the dying charge of Him who loved us with eternal love, and bought us with his blood: "A NEW COMMANDMENT I GIVE YOU, THAT YE LOVE ONE ANOTHER."

To consummate our miseries, war, the opprobrium of the human race, has been added. That our nation has not had strong and repeated provocation to awaken resentment and to demand redress, few will dispute. The causes stated in our declaration are as plausible as are generally found in similar instruments. But when an antagonist behaves improperly, we are under no obligation to contend with him to our own hurt or ruin. America, in circumstances, and in a situation favoured by God, with abundance of every thing, is separated from all the world beside. Our territories were not invaded, our population felt no surplus, the thirst of our nation was more for mercantile than military glory.

We had the time of declaring war put in our own power. The war was begun with precipitate rashness, without preparation, without system. The conduct of it was committed to hands the most incompetent, who, without foresight, without economy, and without exertion, purchased disgrace by draining the treasury, and cruelly neglecting the army. The martial character of our country has been eclipsed—prostrated. Base commanders; brave soldiers; barren battles; disgraceful defeats; shameful surrenders! From this charge, militia generals ought to be honorably excepted. Most of them reflect honor on themselves, and the states that appointed them. The splendid exploits of Shelby, Van Rensselaer, and Brown, failed only in proper support, from becoming the most brilliant and useful in their respective campaigns. Heaven pardon us, and deliver us from such agents, from such disasters. Our navy, our sailors, have rescued us from being pointed at by the finger of scorn among all civilized nations. Their gallant deeds exceed all Greek, exceed all British fame. Terrible in combat, honorable and humane in victory.

Let us turn our eyes from scenes, which, in profligacy and profusion, which, in wanton effusion of blood, awaken horror and defy description. Let us turn, with trust, to that God, who can terminate present difficulty and danger, by teaching us again to exclaim, “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.”

VI. Lastly—We are invited, this day, while commemorating past mercies, and deploring present

judgments, to form resolutions of returning to God that he may perpetuate our national independence, and make it a source of public and private happiness.

This is a service difficult and delicate to explain; but indispensable to secure peace and prosperity. General exhortations are heard with too much indifference and forgotten without regret. We are too prone to persist in error, when we cannot plead in its defence. Pride attends us still. But it is the glory of a man, and of a nation, to confess and reform.

An answer, to two very plain questions, will enable every one of us to discover our duty and our danger, the path that we ought to abandon, and the way which we must pursue, to save us from ruin.

What conduct, moral and religious, what measures, social and civil, raised humble plantations to a splendid empire? What causes, public and private, have plunged a prosperous and growing empire into present disgrace and distress? To furnish a satisfactory answer to both, a faithful application of our preceding remarks will be sufficient. Have the sons of the Plymouth Pilgrims continued to walk in their parents' step? They have not—for the causes of prosperity in the sire will never become the cause of adversity in the son. Boston, famed for devotion, in her churches, for discipline in her families, for love and hospitality, independent of party names, has she undergone no change? Does the fervor of her piety, of her patriotism, of her exemplary benevolence, shed their wonted perfumes on every side.

Is she slandered by that fame, that represents her divided in religious sentiment, divided and embittered by political faction, a place where hospitality finds shelter only under the roof of her own political sect? Jerusalem has backslidden, and all our Israel follows her example.

Our duty is plain. Let us abandon the course that hurries us to ruin. Let us return to the good old way which our fathers trod.

Sires, remit your insatiable pursuit of gain, and train up your sons to piety, to industry, to rectitude, and to self command. A son, virtuously educated, will acquire an estate ; no possessions can form a son for an ornament. *Estates perish ; habits are deathless.*

American mothers, daughters of Sarah, labor, by example and instruction, to adorn and bless our nation, by training up daughters to God. The fashionable lady, like the butterfly, flutters and dazzles for a day, and retires to darkness. The virtuous woman, whose chief ornament is that of a meek and quiet spirit, is of great price in the sight of God, and under the wrinkles of age, displays the graces of the saint. She is the crown of her husband, the praise of society.

American youth, cultivate sincerity, despise flattery. Nations who adore the persons, regardless of the virtues of the fair, like heathen worshippers, never bestow the affection and respect of the heart.

Let magistrates, like *select men*, indeed, regardless of censure or applause, keep the law in their hearts.

and the sword in their hand, a terror to evil doers, and the protection of *those* who do well.

Citizens, respect the government, the institutions, the laws, and the authorities, under which you live. They are the ordinances of God, and demand submission and respect. Let not the noisy bar of a tavern, nor the indecent page of polemic journals, but the ballot box, be your place of appeal.

Clergymen, with the luminaries of the reformation and lights of infant America in your eye, be instant, in season, and out of season, in teaching sinners their danger and the way of salvation. Let our determination be to know no politics in the pulpit, save Christ crucified. How preposterous and profane to employ those lips in blowing the trumpet of discord and sedition, that have been consecrated to proclaim peace on earth and good will to all men.

O Americans! Happy did you know your own privileges! What people on earth can be compared to you? God himself, in these last ages, hath sought out, and prepared a residence for you! He watched over your infant hours, and while other nations have destroyed each other, and their countries, he hath redoubled your wealth and your numbers. He seems, in his providence, to destine you, if your wickedness provoke him not, for an empire, more powerful, more extensive than Assyria and Rome united,

It is religion and morals that give stability to governments, and that preserves them from disorder and dissolution. Republican Rome, with some pa-



gan virtue, ruled with energy and felicity, the fairest portion of the civilized world. Genoa, under the Christian name, debased in religion and morals, could not secure peace and order over a territory of a few acres. A representative republic, of unsullied morals and undefiled religion, may rule the world. Corrupted nations, like slaves, or brutes, require tyrants, with their executioners, to keep them from destroying each other, and hold the wretches in dread.

Americans, love your country ; and in these times of revolution and rebuke, cling to your government. Has its helm been committed to hands feeble and unfit to steer the ark of state, amidst shoals and tempests, may infamy overwhelm the wretch who should advise to submit to foreign correction. Let justice and friendship, let candor and impartiality, appear in all our intercourse with Britain and France, with Spain and Algiers ; America claims, and let her have, our undivided affection and obedience.

He is worse than a man, who will not admit that we are exposed to great danger, and to a terrible conflict ; he is less than man, and unworthy the name of American, that indulges despondency and distrust. No nation, all the nations of the earth, cannot destroy us, unless, through jealousy and treachery, we destroy ourselves. " It is lawful to be taught by our foe." Britain, a few months ago, without friend or ally, stood exposed to the policy and assault of united Europe. As the combination spread, her courage became collected. As the attacks were

multiplied, she redoubled her exertion. By respecting herself, she hath seen every foe prostrate, and ready to pay her homage and receive her commands. It is not owing to the rocks of her island, nor to her navy, and her gold, but to the union and nerve of her sons, that she now stands so high. Union and exertion, will, with perhaps many severe blows, and with God our helper, give us all that is our due, and may we never ask for more.

With overflowing gratitude for the past, with unshaken confidence in God for the future, with determined resolution of forsaking what is evil, and cleaving to that which is good, let us guard with zeal, let us defend with courage, let us transmit, with fidelity, our precious privileges unsullied to posterity, that our children, in ages to come, may bless our memories and adopt our text : “ Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.”

“ Finally, let us live as brethren, with compassion and courteousness. Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, let us ever think on these. Brethren, farewell, be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you.”

## NOTE.



The following note was prepared and intended as an appendix to the sermon. Acute and increasing pain in his limbs, compelled the preacher to seek immediate ease, by its omission. Persuaded of its seasonableness and importance, both in respect to this, and a sister city, he has presumed to introduce it in this place, in the hope that it may meet the eye, and the approbation of the worthy Magistrates of both cities.



Fathers and Magistrates of this ancient and flourishing City !

For many years I have ardently desired the opportunity of addressing you, which this day, by your own invitation, has unexpectedly presented. Indulge me, then, with a patient ear, while I add a short appendix to a long sermon.

With my fellow citizens, in general, I cordially unite in applauding your judicious, indefatigable, and extensive exertions in the improvement of this city. New streets in every quarter, have been opened, the crooked and contracted made spacious, and you have provided that the foot of delicacy, of age, and of infirmity, shall not be incommoded with a single pebble, throughout the extent of the city.

Your attention to the poor, through age, through infirmity, through accident, and even through self improvidence, fully displays the humanity of Christian magistrates. To prevent poverty and to coun-

teract moral contagion in the bud, you have, with exemplary benevolence, provided substantial education for the children of the poor, and profligate, without expense and without degradation. You have, with a munificence, that does honor to yourselves, and your citizens, by judicious and liberal donations, laid the foundation of an academy, which we fondly anticipate, will rapidly rise as an ornament to our city, and as a source of letters and science, that shall abundantly water neighboring counties, and neighboring states. We pass over the public embellishments of Albany; they attract the public eye, and command respect.

“But one thing is still lacking.” Small, perhaps, in appearance, as the cloud of the prophet on Carmel, but which conceals tempest and contagion in its womb. Of what advantage are smooth and commodious streets to the foot of the maid and the matron, when their ear cannot pass without insult by obscene sounds and blasphemous imprecations? What benefits can be expected to flow from public schools of learning and morals, if our youth are daily exposed to the maddening effusions of ignorant mirth, and of moral turpitude? How painful, how indecent, to move with pious meditations from pious dwellings to the house of God, among files of profligate slaves, and, *proh pudor!* of more outrageous freemen?

It is too well known, that the sun no sooner descends, and the veil of night invites men and beast to rest and repose, than troops of negroes repair to the most public corners of our streets, and begin their evening orgies. Obstreperous mirth, sham quarrels

obscene language, horrid and uncouth blasphemy, overpower every other sound. Boys of every description, with and without the knowledge of their parents, collect, mingle, and join in all the indecencies of the scene. Here, under these swarthy guides, the ruin of many an amiable youth commences. Here the hope of many a fond father, and many a fond mother, loses all relish for what is moral and intellectual, and plunges, before the mid day of life, into intemperance and dissipation, that terminate in disease and premature death; and leave hearts broken, whom they ought to have upbound. I mention, with horror, that no girl, near these scenes, can reach the years of sensibility, without becoming familiar to the obscene language of the haunts of prostitution, and the heaven insulting blasphemy that circulate in the cells of intemperance and wickedness! What must a father, what must a mother feel, when passing with their innocent and modest daughters, their ears are wounded with those insufferable indecencies?

On Saturday evenings, these collections receive great accessions from the white inhabitants, and the scene partakes of something infernal. Decency, unless prepared to meet gross insult, must abandon the streets. With the Sabbath, preparations commence for evening scenes, of complete riot and uproar, prolonged beyond the midnight hour. Not only passengers, but families, are kept in vexation and alarm, and by whom?—

To whom can we apply for protection? To your honored guardians of our city, of our persons, of

youth, and of our morals. Armed with city privileges, and with public law. Abundantly supplied with constables, active and vigilant, ready to receive and execute your commands; furnished with places of confinement and modes of correction, interpose your authority. Have we not an advocate in each of your consciences, in each of your hearts? Your families, your wives, and your daughters, with all who respect decency and regard the dignity and reputation of the city, plead. The citizens, and especially the amiable and attentive fair, who now listen and surround you, though modesty checks their voice, with one assent, cry, rise and help us.

Hark! God in thunders, from sacred Sinai, utters his third and fourth commands, with all their sanctions and all their promises, and commands us to keep sacred the fearful name of the Lord our God, and to sanctify his Sabbaths!

*John Wray*

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