

A Plea for "the American Bible Society."



A

**S E R M O N,**

DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, MARCH 29, 1818.

IN THE

**THIRD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,**

**ALBANY.**

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BY HOOPER CUMMING, A. M.  
PASTOR OF SAID CHURCH.

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1818.

TO

**THE HONORABLE ELIAS BOUDINOT, LL. D.**

*The zealous Founder, the munificent Patron, and  
the justly distinguished President of the American Bible  
Society,*

**THIS SERMON,**

**IS DEDICATED,**

**BY HIS SINCERE FRIEND,**

**THE AUTHOR.**

*Albany, March 31st, 1818.*

## *The Power of the Holy Scriptures.*



2 TIM. iii. 15.

*From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

**“TO** make men happy, and to keep them so,”\* has been justly considered by the sages and legislators of all periods, as incomparably the most important subject that can arrest attention and occupy the mind. But alas! political and moral science among men have maintained too little connection. The laws of Solon, the institutes of Numa, the theory of Plato, the elaborate essays of Seneca and Cicero and Socrates, the dogmas of the Chinese philosopher, and in modern times, the disquisitions of Hume, the reveries of Rousseau, and even the more sanctified reasonings of the immortal Locke, have failed in accomplishing their professed purpose. After patiently witnessing century upon century the most laborious human efforts, mankind are yet unsatisfied; and while closing their vision on the light of life, are eagerly grasping every phantom that revolving years present. Such is the constitution of their nature, and yet so unfortunate are the directions of their hopes, that should the case supposed, ever become reality instead of fiction—should some towering genius con-

\* “Not to admire, is all the art I know

“To make men happy and to keep them so.”

CREECH TRANSL. 6. Ep. 1 L. HOR.

ceive and develop the true principles on which human happiness is founded, as necessarily connected with the qualities and relations of human beings in a state of society; should he seize such truths, exhibit them in all their sublime consequences and beneficial results, and lead a nation to adopt them: the world would declare that he deserved from their united suffrage, a monument on whose base should be inscribed the motto so vainly assumed by Alexander and the Fourteenth Louis, "to the immortal man."

Different periods of the world have been times of vast and wondrous promise. But the human race have repeatedly looked in vain, for the prediction to become history. Rapine has superseded renovation; and what ought to have been reform, has terminated in anarchy. The fact is, that from the time of the original apostacy, our species have been dependent utterly and exclusively on God, for the origin of whatever is calculated to cheer and console, and elevate and purify. The efforts of mere men unassisted by Divine power and wisdom, have been signalized for inefficiency from the period when the first murderer went out from the presence of the Lord, renounced the light of Divine truth, and became the father of all who from age to age have opposed the wisdom of men to the wisdom of God. Progressive darkness, self-conceit, idolatry the most disgusting, profaneness, blasphemy, varied practices of deep impurity, in reference to social peace and order, spread and strengthened; hand joined in hand, the fairest hopes and interests were soon demolished; the barriers to the swelling tide were swept

away ; the earth was filled with violence ; and of the vast numbers who peopled it, but *eight* individuals were saved from the ruins of that deluge with which the incensed holiness of God scourged the sin of man.

Such was the tremendous result of the first experiment of human wisdom—an experiment of fifteen centuries—an experiment recorded in characters of confusion, dismay, and death, not only on the living page of sacred truth, but to this very moment on the broad face of the deeply-marred earth.

Reiterated efforts have since been made—reiterated failures have been the consequence. Leaving the vessel which by divine protection had outrode the storm, the venerable father of the new world, beheld the earth washed from the pollutions of ages, smiling with renovated beauty, and presenting prospects the most promising of a holier, happier series of events.

But, under auspices the most benign, four centuries had scarce elapsed, when by the far greater portion of the family of man, the knowledge of the true God was once more lost, and his worship abandoned and forgotten.

The Father of the faithful maintained his steadfastness, and exerted a wholesome influence over a few chosen followers ;—but, in the Gentile world, the light of truth occasionally glimmering, finally became extinct. The sage, the philosopher, and they, who by a nod decided the fate of empires, “ *profess-*

*“ing to be wise, became fools and changed the glory of  
“ the uncorruptible God into an image made like to cor-  
“ ruptible man, and to birds and four footed beasts” and  
reptiles.*

During the long period of this wide-spread defection, mighty kingdoms rose, flourished, fell, and the attainments of the human mind were correspondently various and splendid. Chaldæa and Egypt and Phenicia and Greece were in their turn illustrious seats of science and the arts and polished society. But what was their progress in Divine knowledge? Alas! the fact is as melancholy as it is notorious. Chaldæa and Egypt and Phenicia and Greece are not more renowned for their learning, their philosophy, their splendid embellishments, than infamous for their gross ignorance of God, their idolatries, and superstitions. The catalogue of their Deities was an endless catalogue. It comprised the whole range of creation from the most resplendent luminary of the heavens to the meanest animal of the earth—from the most illustrious of their heroes to the most despicable idols.

*“ Gods partial, changeful, passionate, unjust,*

*“ Whose attributes were rage, revenge, or lust,”*

were admitted to the highest honours of the Pantheon. And in precise accordance with the attributes ascribed to their divinities, were the rites, and modes of worship, with which they honoured them. Their temples were polluted with licensed debauchery, and their altars were stained with human blood.

And what was the character of Rome, immortal Rome, the seat of empires, the nurse of heroes, the mistress of the world? In all her cities, and in all her provinces, even during the Augustan age, emperors and senators and literati, as well as the despised plebeians practised idolatries of a nature too indecent to be named, and of an enormity too shocking to be described.

For more than one thousand years, the second grand experiment was made. The process was instituted and consummated under circumstances the most varied, and advantages the most propitious. Yet, was the result decisive. By the efforts of human wisdom, the world arrived not at the knowledge of God. They became bewildered in the thickening mazes, and were lost in the endless labyrinths of polytheistical delusion. The wisest and the most revered philosophers, ignorant of him who made the heavens and the earth, stupidly bowed, and presented their daily orisons at the feet of demons. In vain did they multiply their researches and vary their experiments;—utterly in vain did the schools of the Lyceum and the Portico lend their aid and exhaust their resources. After all the efforts of learning, and after all the penance of superstition, with respect to their eternal destiny, the whole species groped in darkness, and wavered in doubt. In the midst of his most solicitous inquiries, his most patient investigations, a secret sigh escaped the sage's bosom. And as he approached the brink of death, amazed and terrified, he was heard to ask, "Will God be propitious? Is there mercy in store for man."

But what the unassisted efforts of the wisest men in all ages have failed to accomplish, the scriptures given to the world by inspiration of God, have promptly and effectually achieved. *They are able to make men wise unto salvation.*

Blended with a firm and unwavering faith in Christ Jesus the antitype of the Levitical dispensation, the fulfilment of the predictions, the life, the soul, the symmetry of revelation ;—Christ Jesus, concerning whom the holy prophets spoke with rapture ;—Christ Jesus, whose praises the book of God continually celebrates in strains of angelick exultation—to whose honour it ministers, and around whom as the sun in the centre of the system, all the preciousness of its promises, all the sublimity of its doctrines, all the fervour of its devotion, all the impassioned strains of its eulogy revolve ;—these sacred heaven-descended writings, can teach lessons of wisdom the most profound, the most ennobling, the most salutary and durable in their effects. That living and abiding principle which detaches the affections of the heart from the evanescent pleasures of sense, and fastens them on the cross, the person and the kingdom of the Son of God—that living and abiding principle, which prostrates the works of the flesh, and inclines to spiritual pursuits—-which is a reliance upon testimony, a naked trust in the veracity of Jehovah, which, comprising the whole revelation of his will, centers particularly in the free grant which he has made of the Lord Jesus to sinners of the human race, assuring them, that *whosoever believeth on him shall not perish, but have everlasting life, that he will be a Father unto them, and they shall be his sons*

*and daughters ; that he will dwell in them and walk in them, and be their God, blessing them in their precious Redeemer, with all spiritual and heavenly blessings*—that living and abiding principle which with gratitude receives, with cordiality cherishes, and with persevering assiduity pursues the substantial pleasures of experimental godliness, does indeed make men wise unto salvation. A sinner must be cleansed, before he can be happy. Hence, the utility of faith. It points him to those scriptures, which open a fountain in which all impurity may be washed away—those scriptures which teach him his depravity, and at the same moment, the possibility of pardon—which assure him, that unless he become a new creature in Christ Jesus, he cannot escape from the vengeance of a holy God, and with the same breath speak to him concerning a divine spirit who regenerates the soul, and qualifies it for all the bliss of the upper world.

“ Oh how unlike the complex works of man,  
 “ Heaven’s easy, artless, unincumber’d plan,  
 “ No meretricious graces to beguile,  
 “ No clustering ornaments to clog the pile :  
 “ From ostentation as from weakness free,  
 “ It stands like the cerulean arch we see,  
 “ Majestic in its own simplicity !  
 “ Inscrib’d above the portal from afar,  
 “ Conspicuous as the brightness of a star,  
 “ Legible only by the light they give,  
 “ Stand the soul-quickenings words, ‘ Believe and live.’ ”

COWPER.

There is no condition so forlorn—no prospect so cheerless—no character so degenerate or degraded, that the Bible cannot impart wholesome instruction, and administer effectual solace. “ Give me a man,” said the eloquent Lactantius, a celebrated Father

of the Church, “ give me a man, passionate, slandering, ungovernable : with a very few words of God, I will render him placid as a lamb. Give me a man, greedy, avaricious, penurious : I will give him back to you, liberal, and lavishing his gold with a munificent hand. Give me a man who shrinks from pain and death ; and he shall presently contemn the stake, the gibbet, the wild beast. Give me one who is libidinous, an adulterer, a debauchee ; and you shall see him, sober, chaste, temperate. Give me one cruel and blood-thirsty ; and that fury of his shall be converted into clemency itself. Give me one addicted to injustice, to folly, to crime ; and he shall without delay, become just and prudent and harmless.”\*

The scriptures present to the mind considerations the most forcible and tender for breaking the power of sin and promoting the reign of holiness. The presence, the majesty, the purity of God ; the sanctitude of his law ; his everlasting love in the Lord Jesus ; the affecting expression of that love in *setting him forth to be a propitiation for sin* ; the wonders of his pardoning mercy ; the grace of Christ himself in becoming *sin for them, that they might be made the righteousness of God in him* ; the condescension of the Holy Ghost who deigns to dwell in them as their sanctifier ; the genius of their vocation ; the connexion of holy obedience with their own peace, their brethren’s comfort, and their master’s glory ; these and similar motives operate mightily in causing believers to *walk humbly with their God*. *The love of Christ constraineth us, even as a rational inducement.*

\* Lact. de falsa sapientia, lib. 3. cap. 25.

*to live henceforth not unto ourselves, but unto him that died for us and rose again.* And while a graceless man is deterred from the commission of crime, not by a regard to God's authority, or by gratitude for his loving-kindness, but by calculations of prudence, or fear of penalty, a Christian acting like himself, repels the temptation with a more generous and filial remonstrance, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God" ?

My brethren, do you know to what source you are indebted for all those pure, refreshing, vivifying streams which gladden the soil, and give existence to the fairest fruits of society ? It is the Holy Scriptures. The tender sentiments they instil, and the powerful restraints they impose, effect the harmony, the tranquillity, the social peace and order which distinguish the land in which you live, and form so joyous a contrast between it and Burmah, Segistan, Mongolia, Tartary, Congo, Caffraria and Hindoostan. The more dispassionate and considerate sort of infidels concede, that the effects of the Bible on political society are so salutary as to entitle it to legislative patronage. Some of that unhallowed tribe even acknowledge, that a free government cannot exist without its fostering influence. These effects are great and beneficial ; but transient and of small account in comparison with the influence it has upon the soul. It is emphatically *the word of life*. Its spiritual effects in producing human happiness transcend the utmost reach of thought. It arrests the daring transgressor, snatches him from endless woe, and translates him from the kingdom of darkness and of death into the kingdom of light and glory, subdues

his intractable and rebellious spirit, changes him from a hardened rebel into an affectionate, a penitent, a devoted child—from a malignant opposer of every thing sacred, into a tender, gentle, self-denying follower of the Lamb, and establishes him an heir of God, and a joint heir with Jesus Christ, unto an inheritance incorruptible and unfading. Adapted to every clime of the earth, to every stage of society, and to all descriptions of its members, unveiling their real misery and bringing near the only remedy; discovering at once their wants and the means of supplying them, and seconded by the energy of the quickening Spirit, these precious writings fasten on the conscience, melt the heart, thrill the very bones and marrow, and transform the most obdurate into a willing subject of the Lord. When Jehovah gives testimony to the word of his grace, it shall have free course and be glorified. No darkness too dismal for it to dispel—no prejudices too obstinate to subdue. Mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, these scriptures force their way through every physical and every moral difficulty, and in his name and strength do their messengers cast down imaginations and every high thought that lifteth itself up against the obedience of Christ. During his pilgrimage on earth, they gladden the believer's soul with rich discoveries of the divine glory; inspire him with tranquillity in the midst of the most formidable evils; counterbalance disease of body with serenity of mind, the greatest temporal loss with the highest spiritual gain; associate him in his feelings with all the pure in heart; enrich him with elevated triumphs in the last eventful scene; and beyond the grave, exalt him to the full and eternal enjoyment of that

felicity, which the eloquence of a seraph's lips never, never, could describe.

Is there a man, whose heart sickens at the remembrance of disappointments, deceptions, unlooked-for embarrassments, and hope deferred; who once grasped affluence, commanded reverence, and seemed to bid defiance to any dread vicissitude—whose successful enterprize was borne on the wind, and waves to distant lands—but, who is now crushed by poverty, deserted by those creatures of a summer's day, who courted him for selfish purposes, and tempted to destroy that life which has become a burden? The scriptures tell him that *here* he never had a settled habitation—that in his best estate, he was but a pilgrim—that in the skies, there are durable riches, unfading glories, stedfast friends. They urge him therefore to seek a city which has *foundations*, whose builder is God. Serenity revisits him. Despair forsakes his bosom. He cries Abba Father! and rejoices in those tribulations which wean him from the world, and ripen him for the inheritance of the saints.

Is there a man, who prostitutes the bounties of Providence, who abuses by intemperance those gifts designed for use and comfort, who enfeebles his intellectual powers, who reduces himself from the dignity of a man below the rank of some of the very meanest of the inferior tribes, who feels not for the distresses of anxious, sorrowing, broken-hearted parents—for the temporal sufferings and mental wretchedness of a tender, affectionate, faithful, but half-distracted wife—and the beggary of a helpless offspring; who is ripe for treachery, for stratagem.

for every crime—To him the scriptures say, “Prepare to meet thy God.” Ah! ’tis a voice of thunder to his affrighted spirit. He reads the holy volume, to learn the way of deliverance and peace. God, the God of mercy condescends to be his teacher. He is reclaimed, restored to society—and becomes to his consort a protector, to his children a guide, to all who know him, a salutary example.

The gambler, the midnight reveller, the profaner of God’s holy sabbath, the thief, the swearer, and that supremely selfish and malignant wretch, who, that he may gratify his brutal lusts, hesitates not to throw upon scandal’s clarion the fair fame of female virtue, who with a sacrilegious hand, breaks up the sanctuary of his neighbour’s peace; who tears asunder the ligaments of society, who utterly disregards the sanctitude of the marriage covenant, who destroys his moral principles in the company of a prostitute; who is fast becoming impervious to admonition, are nevertheless arrested by the power of the scriptures. The lightnings of Sinai flash—the pit of destruction yawns, and the shrieks of its accursed victims harrow up all the remaining sensibilities of the soul. Ah me! That man must have indeed become a reprobate, who can peruse without strong emotion, the terrifick descriptions of Tophat on the one hand, and on the other, the benign, the gracious, the alluring offers of pardon and redemption, which are presented by the sacred pages.

To the presumptuous worldling, they appeal in language as emphatick as sober. “For what is your life? It is even a vapour which appeareth a

“ little time, and then vanisheth away.” To the despairing they cry, “ Ho every one that thirsteth, “ come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money ; “ Come ye, buy and eat. Yea, come, buy wine and “ milk without money and without price.” “ The “ spirit and the bride say, Come ; and let him that “ heareth, say, Come ; and let him that is athirst, “ Come ; and *whosoever will*, let him come, and take of “ the waters of life freely.”

To her, who bedews the nightly pillow with her tears, on whose wan cheek the flowers have long since faded, to whom earth is a blank and barren wilderness ;—for her companion “ is in darkness”—he, in whom her soul delighted, can no more sooth, no more protect her—this blessed volume, as the organ of heaven’s bounty and compassion, sweetly says, “ I am the Father of the fatherless, and let the “ widow trust in me.” Daughter of grief, though thou canst no longer recline thy throbbing head on the bosom of him who was to thee dearer than thine own soul, yet Omnipotence is thy guardian, and the brighter, better world, where friends are never parted, where sighing never enters, where every tear is wiped away, will be an ample recompense for the toils and pangs of life.

Is there an aged, war-worn veteran, to whom his ungrateful country refuses from her replenished coffers, a support for his few remaining years ;—a man, whose nerveless arm no longer able to grasp the sword, is raised to heaven in supplications for his sons whom he has urged to the defence of the nation’s once more invaded liberties—a man whose

ears the mournful tidings have just now reached, that these sons, the stay of his age, and the hope of his family have fallen on the field of battle—a man, who never, never more shall be greeted with the name of *Father*, whose only companions are want and anguish—through whose desolate habitation howls the wintry blast, while famine keeps the door—to this man, even to this man, the book of God speaks in language cheering and consolatory. It tells him that there is a land where injustice finds no footing—where the rage of battle is not heard—where penury never gripes—where despotism never endangers the repose of liberty. To this it elevates his views. His streaming eyes are turned to Calvary; and from his bed of straw, he rises with transport to the bosom of Abraham.

“ Then, then, the triumph and the trance begin,  
 “ And all the Phœnix spirit burns within,  
 “ Hark! as that spirit eyes with eagle gaze,  
 “ The noon of Heaven undazzled by the blaze,  
 “ On Heavenly winds that waft her to the sky,  
 “ Float the sweet notes of star-born melody:  
 “ Wild as that hallowed anthem sent to hail,  
 “ Bethlehem’s shepherds in the lonely vale,  
 “ When Jordan hush’d his waves, and midnight still,  
 “ Watch’d on the holy towers of Zion hill.

“ Soul of the just! Companion of the dead!  
 “ Where is thy home? And whither art thou fled?  
 “ Back to its heavenly source thy being goes,  
 “ Swift as the comet wheels to whence it rose:  
 “ So hath the traveller of earth unfurl’d  
 “ Her wings, emerging from the world,  
 “ And o’er the path by mortal never trod,  
 “ Sprung to her source, the bosom of her God.”

CAMPBELL’S PLEASURES OF HOPE.

Such in a thousand and ten times ten thousand instances have been the effects of the Bible! Is it not then astonishing, that for centuries so little was

attempted to roll back the darkness of Paganism, and bring life and immortality to light? *Primitive believers* were indeed possessed of their Master's spirit. Like holy angels, they flew to the relief of wretchedness. Their compassion was co-extensive with the curse of God alighting upon sin. From Seleucia to Cyprus; from Salamis to Paphos; from Perga to Antioch; from Illyricum to Lystra; from Phandalia to Rome, they spread the scriptures, proclaiming the depravity of man, publishing Christ Jesus as the Almighty Saviour, and straining every nerve to disenthral the sinner from the bonds of the second death. But their zeal was entombed in the same sepulchre which received their bodies. For a long and dreary tract of time, the spirit of primitive enterprize slept; and ages after ages rolled away, with very little done, to extend the knowledge of the Saviour or the boundaries of his kingdom. Recently however, blessed be God! the scene has been changed. The friends of the Redeemer and of men have been roused from their slumbers, and looking round upon the world, their eyes have affected their hearts.

The EIGHTH of May EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND SIXTEEN, will long be held in thankful remembrance as a distinguished epoch in the annals of Christendom. Then it was that under a cloud of holy incense ascending before the throne of God and the Lamb, the *American Bible Society* was instituted. The scene was one on which angels might dwell with rapture. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men," responded from heart to heart, and tears of tender joy diffused

through the assembly, an influence more grateful than the dew of Hermon.

Local societies had previously existed in different parts of our favoured country. But the objects were local; the sphere of action was extremely circumscribed. Little was done, and that little, not without much cost and labour. Some places received no attention, while others were held in disproportionate regard. But a general society collects information from every quarter, solicits assistance from all interior institutions to answer any pressing call, and directs their united efforts to the promotion of the common cause. All the efforts of the local societies distributed in *seven* years only 150,000 Bibles—while a national institution in another land *in one year* collected the means of circulating 600,000.

In the language of that great and good man,\* who penned the address to the people of the United States on the subject of the institution on whose behalf I now address you, “ Concentrated action is  
 “ powerful action. The same powers, when applied  
 “ by a common direction, will produce results im-  
 “ possible to their divided and partial exercise. A  
 “ national object unites national feeling and concur-  
 “ rence. Unity of a great system combines energy  
 “ of effect with economy of means. Accumulated  
 “ intelligence interests and animates the publick  
 “ mind. And the catholick efforts of a country thus  
 “ harmonized, give her a place in the moral conven-  
 “ tion of the world; and enable her to act directly

\* The Rev. Dr. Mason.

“ upon the universal plans of happiness which are  
 “ now pervading the nations.

“ It is true, that the prodigious territory of the Uni-  
 “ ted States, the increase of their population which  
 “ is gaining every day upon their moral cultivation;  
 “ and the dreadful consequences of a people’s out-  
 “ growing the knowledge of eternal life, and reverting  
 “ to a species of heathenism which shall have all the  
 “ address and profligacy of civilized society without  
 “ any religious control, present a sphere of action  
 “ which may for a long time employ and engross the  
 “ cares of this society, and of all the local Bible So-  
 “ cieties of the land.

“ In the distinct anticipation of such an urgency,  
 “ one of the main objects of *the American Bible Society*,  
 “ is not merely to provide a sufficiency of well printed  
 “ and accurate editions of the Scriptures; but also, to  
 “ furnish great districts of the American continent  
 “ with well executed stereotype plates for their cheap  
 “ and extensive distribution throughout regions which  
 “ are now scantily supplied, at a discouraging ex-  
 “ pense; and which, nevertheless, open a wide and  
 “ prepared field for the reception of revealed truth.”

And now, my beloved brethren, you have an opportunity of testifying your patriotism, your humanity, your love of God. Your *patriotism*. By assisting the funds of the American Bible Society, you support an institution eminently calculated in its consequences to promote the peace, the prosperity, and the general interests of our land. The Bible teaches the duty of submission to our rulers, reverence for

the laws, devotedness to the publick welfare, and brotherly fellowship and concord. Your *humanity*. If you regard the temporal, the spiritual, the eternal interests of your fellow men, co-operate with our national institution. The Bible comforts in the midst of those distresses which surround us in this vale of tears; wards off temptation's blow, arms the mind with fortitude against every attack of sin; and at last, lights up the dark recesses of the king of terrors, and points to the closing eye the bow of mercy on that cloud which overhangs the sepulchre. Your *love of God*. 'Tis the volume of his grace which you are urged to bestow upon the destitute. The Bible speaks in language emphatically its own, of the benevolence of Deity, and describes all the essential qualifications for his favour, his presence and his kingdom.

'The institution of the American Bible Society had become indispensable. In parts of all the states, there are multitudes without the word of life. But the situation of the inhabitants on the frontier settlements, is, in this respect, deplorably destitute. "We know,"\* say men of the first character who have been there, "we know from actual observation, that "there are on our western borders, thousands of families growing up without the Bible. Many of them "are destitute of this invaluable treasure, not merely "because they are too parsimonious or too negligent "to obtain it, but because it is not within their reach. "They reside *one thousand miles* from any place "where the Bible is printed. Seldom is it carried "thither by the merchants. We ascertained by in-

\* Mills and Schermerhorn's Journal.

“quiry that in many of the principal towns of the western country, *there was not a Bible to be sold.*”

I have stated facts. I make no comment. I simply bring you a message from misery. When I expect a liberal contribution, do I presume too much? Rather does not each heart expand, and each ear quicken at the report? O charity! celestial instinct! How well dost thou comport with the suffering state of man! Thou art the surest antidote to sorrow! Thou formest the glorious chain that binds the feeling heart to the throne of eternal mercy! Thy breath like the kindly dew of morn refreshes while it invigorates! Thou art the source of our purest, best sensations!

Deeds of mercy are the triumphs of virtue. From the ruthless hand of persecution, you, the beloved people of my charge, have suffered much. Yet has God prospered you beyond example. And your distinguished munificence on former occasions is my warrant for believing, that your offerings to the Lord at the present time will reflect equal honour on yourselves, and benefit on the wretched.