

RELIGION

ESSENTIAL TO

*The BEING and HAPPINESS of SOCIETY:*

A

S E R M O N

FOR THE FAST DAY,

MARCH 9, 1796.

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By ALEXANDER HEWAT, D.D.

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1796.

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PSALM, xciv. 16.

*Who shall rise up for me against evil-doers?  
Who shall stand up for me against the  
workers of iniquity?*

THESE are the words of David the son of Jesse, and King of Israel, and evidently speak his concern for the interest of virtue and religion, and consequently the happiness of the people over whom he was destined to reign. They imply the great and oppressive cares inseparable from a crown, and the burdensome nature of the charge committed to a single person, together with his laudable anxiety to discharge the weighty duties of his station with honour and a good conscience. The Jews had long been the peculiar objects of Divine care, and Providence had on many occasions interposed in  
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their favour, protecting them from dangers, and delivering them from the hands of their enemies and oppressors; yet they could wander astray, provoking God, and forgetting their obligations to his goodness. "They could break in pieces the people of God, and afflict his heritage. They could slay the widow and the stranger: they could murder the fatherless, and condemn innocent blood; and yet say, the Lord shall not see it, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it\*." His apprehensions of danger from this great defection from God, and the increasing boldness and insolence of the wicked grown wanton by prosperity, the Royal Psalmist could not conceal. To give a check to immorality and irreligion he devoutly wished, and thought it full time to begin the work of reformation; but, conscious of the weakness of a single arm for that purpose, exclaims, "Who shall rise up for me against evil-doers? Who shall stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?"

Favoured, however, by a good Providence, as the ancient Jews were, there is a nation which this day boasts superior blessings, both of a temporal and spiritual kind; a nation

\* Psalm, xciv. 5, 6, 7—21.

for

for which God has been pleased to interpose at sundry times, and in divers manners, protecting it against enemies uncommonly formidable, loading it with benefits far beyond its deserts, and securing to it privileges, natural, civil, and religious, of inestimable value. The nation to which this description refers, it were needless to name. The picture is too plain to need an interpreter. Every one that hears me has anticipated the application.— But should it be asked, is there no forgetfulness of God, no insensibility to his goodness to be found among us? Amidst such undeserved favours and mercies as we enjoy, are we duly thankful to our heavenly Benefactor? and are there no impious murmurs and complaints to be heard in our streets? Is there no defection from God, no alienation of heart and affection from our king and country, no dereliction of principle to be laid to our charge? If there are many among us, who cannot be deemed such sober and virtuous men, such gentle and tractable members of society, and such faithful, worthy, and well-disposed Christians as the law of the land, and the spirit of our holy religion require, the duties of this day are wisely enjoined: and all must confess the necessity of

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calling

calling home our wandering thoughts, and the utility of calm and religious reflections.

Far from taking it for granted, that private vices are public benefits; we shall rather suppose, in general, that the sum of national happiness is in proportion to the degree of virtue existing in the body of the people. Whenever any ruler observes a spirit of disorder and irreligion increasing in the nation, if he be seriously concerned for the honour of God and the public good, and sensible how inadequate the influence of a single example is to work a reformation of manners, the questions of the ancient King will very naturally come from his mouth. "Who shall rise up for me against evil-doers? Who shall stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?"—Now, an answer to these questions, in our present circumstances, will furnish much matter of serious thought on this day of National Humiliation before God; and we shall be naturally led to inquire, who they are among us; who may justly be styled evil-doers; and by what marks and characters the workers of iniquity stand distinguished: and, secondly, to urge the necessity of union among those that do well, in order to frustrate

frustrate the designs, and weaken the hands, of evil-doers.

But before we enter into a subject of such importance, it may not be improper to make one general observation. Although it be certain that the good and bad meet together in society, yet so closely do the light and shade in human characters touch each other, and so often are men deceived by appearances, that in judging of our neighbours, much caution is always requisite to avoid rash opinions and mistaken judgments. To God alone unquestionably it belongs to judge of the human heart; because he, and he only, sees all the springs of action, and is perfectly acquainted with every man's secret views and intentions. Let no creature, therefore, presume to usurp a prerogative, which belongs only to the Creator. In religious opinions, in moral and political sentiments, men may differ and not be bad members of society. The rights of private judgment are sacred, and good policy will make allowances for the infirmities of human nature. Far, very far, from the professors of true religion be that burning zeal, which is not according to knowledge, which prompts persecution for conscience sake, and the extermination of all, whom

whom we are unable to persuade to be of one heart, and of one mind, with us. Let Charity never fail. It becomes even the wisest of mortals to remember, that they are *but men*, subject to error, and encumbered with frailty. If it hath pleased God to form his offspring of different tempers of mind, as well as different complexions of visage; and to permit a mixture of good and bad men in the world; to his will we must bow, trusting that all things are wisely ordered, and doubting nothing, but that the condition of mankind, considered on the whole, is the most proper for answering the end and purpose of trial and probation.

Admitting then that human nature is blind, and that submission to the will of Heaven is the indispensable duty of all men; it follows not, however, that we are to treat all alike, and make no distinction in our judgment and opinion between the innocent and guilty, the pious and impious, the just and unjust. Every man is responsible to society, if not for his thoughts, at least for his words and actions. Though Christians are forbidden to hate any man, however vicious and criminal, and taught to pray even for enemies; they are not required to tolerate vices and crimes. For what purpose was reason given us? but to act up to  
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the dignity of rational beings; and can any man be said to do so, "who calls evil good, and good evil, who puts darkness for light, and light for darkness \*?" Nor is much learning or deep penetration requisite to perceive these differences. They are as widely distant as east is from west. In general, good intentions, plain sense, and a moderate share of knowledge, are sufficient to shew every man "what is good, and what is required of him, namely, to do justly, to love mercy, and walk humbly with God †." Though the human heart be deceitful above all things, and its motives and principles of action so disguised that we cannot always form a right judgment of them; yet, as the external conduct lies open to every eye, it is of that, reason claims the privilege to judge; and the moral principle implanted in us, when preserved unbiaſſed and uncorrupted, will seldom fail of pronouncing a fair and righteous judgment. This principle is to the mind, what the eye is to the body, given and intended to enable us to perceive the right from the wrong path, and to guide us in the way of safety. Man was not blessed with eyes that he might shut them, and run blindfold into errors and dangers; nor

\* Isa. v. 20.

† Mich. vi. 8.

yet

yet with reason, and judgment and conscience, that he might abuse these gifts, and walk directly contrary to their light and guidance.

It is not of man then considered as a rude, solitary, and independent wanderer in the wilderness, nor yet of man devoid of moral, social, and religious principles, that it is our business to speak; but of man related to his Maker, of man a member of society, capable of piety and impiety, of good and evil, and responsible for his general conduct and conversation. If there exist a person, whether fool or philosopher, who either says in his heart there is no God, or claims a right to live as if there were no God, we must pass over him as one that has renounced his title to be ranked among the number of rational, moral, and social beings. For we cannot conceive that a being endued with reason has any right to act the part of a brute, or to live without God in the world. Nor is it possible to found a society upon the grounds of immorality and irreligion. It ought to be remembered, that, antecedently to all human laws, the relation between God and man subsisted, and our obligations to religion, arising from that relation, were incumbent upon us; and moreover, that these obligations would  
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would remain fixed and unalterable, though all human laws and institutions were abolished. As soon as we are sensible that God is, that he is the moral Governor of the world, and the rewarder of all that diligently seek him, we must believe “that them who honour him, he shall honour; and those that despise him shall be lightly esteemed\*.” The first dictate of nature, after our having a sense of our Maker, is, that he is the proper object of our love, reverence, and adoration. The better we are acquainted with our Heavenly Father, Preserver, and Benefactor, the more we shall love him; and the more we love him, the more studious we shall be to please him in all things. With what cheerfulness ought man to give homage and glory to God, who gave him all that he has, and upon whom depend all his expectations? and being conscious of our relation to our Creator and Governor, how naturally shall we love his offspring, and fulfil the several duties of our stations and relations as sovereign and subject, parent and child, master and servant, debtor and creditor? True religion is therefore the surest basis of all order and government, and the strongest tie of human society; for as it consists in the love of God and man, it includes

\* 1 Sam. 2. 30.

all the virtues; upon its foundation, as upon an immoveable rock, all morality is built.

It is true, the modern school of vanity and sophistry has laboured to set aside old distinctions among men, and to introduce universal equality. But vain are such novel arts; and were it possible to-day to reduce all mankind upon a level, to-morrow some distinctions would take place. Never were there two persons on earth exactly of the same complexion, figure, stature, and strength; never were there two men perfectly equal in all respects, having the same powers of body, and wholly alike in their mental talents and external circumstances. This variety, for many wise ends, was originally appointed, fixed, and established by a law of nature, and runs through the works of creation, vegetable, animal, and rational. In no point of view, perhaps, can man be said to be equal, but in the sight of God, who is no respecter of persons; and in the eye of the law, which knows no distinction between the highest and lowest transgressor. The law being the supreme arbiter of right and wrong, and having the life, liberty, and property of every individual under its protection, must take cognizance of every evil-doer, insomuch that the highest member of the community can claim no more right to set  
law

law aside, and take away the life of the lowest, than the lowest can to substitute his will in place of law, and take away the life of the highest.

Further, with respect to liberty, a blessing so precious, and so universally and deservedly esteemed, it is necessary also to make some distinctions: The liberty of a rational and social being consists not in living as he lists, or in the absence of all order, law, and government. On the contrary, where there is no law in a community there can be no liberty. Were all members of society perfectly wise, just, and good, there would be no occasion for laws; for of what use were laws where there could be no transgression? Hence we are taught, "that the law is not made for the righteous, but for the lawless and disobedient\*." Such, however, is the present selfish, depraved, and corrupt state of human nature, that every day we see individuals laying claim to rights and taking liberties which belong not to rational and social beings. "As far," says a late philosopher, "as, in any instance, the operation of any cause comes to restrain the power of self-government, so far slavery is introduced †." This principle

\* 1 Tim. i. 9.

† Price's Observations on Civil Liberty, sect. 1.

can be applicable to no society of rational creatures, but to the single savage or rapacious wild beast of the forest. For whatever may be the rights and privileges of a solitary, lawless, and independent man, as soon as we enter the social state, every one of us must surrender such a share of these as is inconsistent with the common good. This sacrifice all members of a community are required to make. It is the price which all must pay for the blessings and advantages of the social state. Were any member of a community to claim a right to rebel against his Maker, and to injure his neighbour; might not others, with equal justice, lay claim to the same privilege? or were a whole kingdom at once to break loose from religious and moral obligations, and each individual's hand to be raised against his brother, where would be the liberty and safety of the social state? Would not the howling wilderness be a happy refuge from inhuman hands, a place of habitation far more desirable than such society founded upon the basis of immorality and irreligion? No sooner, then, does any man, or body of men, presume to pass the verge of moral justice and religious duty, than they enter the region of darkness and devils, where all mutual love and confidence is lost, and reciprocal fear and jealousy, hatred and injuries, eternally reign.

Nor

Nor are the laws of justice, morality, and religion peculiar to one tribe, or kindred, or nation, but common to all men; laws of universal and indispensable obligation, without which, no society can exist, no liberty can be enjoyed. Every member of society, from the highest to the lowest, has an unquestionable right to labour for his daily bread, and to enjoy the fruits of his honest labour; but none can have any right to rob, murder, or steal. A man who has no religion, no fear of God before his eyes, no apprehensions of a future account, may harbour in his bosom sentiments of impiety and blasphemy, and secret designs of treason and rebellion, and escape with impunity from human laws, which cannot reach the thoughts and intents of the heart; but as soon as he is seized with a spirit of profelitism, and begins to disseminate his blasphemous thoughts and rebellious purposes with zeal and diligence to the injury of his neighbours, he becomes not only an evil-thinker, but an evil-doer, whom, by the common law of self-preservation and defence, every good member of society is bound to curb and restrain. Then, instead of a harmless person, he becomes, in fact, a furious madman with arms in his hand, "sparing none, but still sporting," whose frenzy we are bound to disarm, not only  
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out of love to others, but even out of compassion to himself. Nay, the best proof we can give of our love to his person is to tear the weapons from his hands, and deprive him of the means of doing mischief. In like manner, no man is prohibited to keep poison in his closet; but, if he chooses to lecture upon its virtues to the ignorant and unwary, and to disperse it through society as a sovereign remedy for all disorders, then he becomes an evil-doer; whose mouth and hands, by all laws, human and divine, ought to be shut. Nor is such restraint any infringement of the liberty of rational and social beings, but, on the contrary, essentially necessary to its preservation. The will of the individual is left entirely free, and may be used to every purpose, not pernicious to himself and others. It is only when the will chooses to do mischief, and when man becomes an evil-doer, that the law interposes with its checks and restrictions. It is only the abuse of this free will, which is the object of legal restraint and punishment. A liberty to do evil, and to persevere in evil doing, is the liberty of a devil, not of a rational and social creature. What is the design or end of all laws, divine and human? but to be a terror to evil-doers, and a protection to them that do well.

well. None, therefore, can have any thing to apprehend from the laws of justice and morality, tempered with mercy, and mildly administered, but workers of iniquity; and when every member of society has freedom to do all things consistent with common justice and equity, and is restrained from nothing but what is prejudicial to himself or others, he certainly enjoys liberty to the full extent of the word; and, in reality, as much as a good man should desire; nay, as much as Providence hath allotted to be the portion of rational and social creatures in this life.

Such are the boundaries drawn by the unerring hand of Nature, beyond which, no member of society can claim any right to go, consistent with common justice and equity. Suppose one person to lay claim to the privilege of doing as much evil as he pleases, and multitudes to join him on purpose to establish the empire of immorality and irreligion; then matters will be brought at once to an issue, and a trial of strength must necessarily take place between good and bad members of society. It is impossible that both can agree; for "What fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? What communion hath light with darkness? What concord hath Christ with

with Belial\*.” Their interest lies in opposite scales, and as the one increases in weight, the other must decrease. “No man can serve two masters,” repugnant one to another, and drawing different ways; “for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon †.”

Nothing is so offensive to evil-doers as the lustre which virtuous characters shed around them. This light loads them with perpetual reproach. They hate the light, and love the darkness rather than the light. The wicked league together, and plot against the just, and public danger must always increase in proportion to their numbers. Of this inveterate enmity we have a lively description in the Book of Wisdom. “Let us,” say such conspirators, “lie in wait for the righteous, because he is not of our turn. He is clean contrary to our doings. He upbraideth us with our offending the law. He is made to reprove our thoughts. He is grievous unto us even to behold, for his life is not like other men’s; his ways are of another fashion. We are esteemed by him as counterfeits: he abstaineth from our ways as from filthiness.

\* 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15.

† Math. vi. 24.

He pronounceth the end of the just to be blessed, and maketh his boast that God is his father. Let us see if his words be true; let us prove what shall happen in the end of him. Let us examine him with despitefulness and torture, that we may know his meekness and prove his patience. Let us condemn him with a shameful death; for, by his own saying, he shall be respected\*.”

Such is the nature of that emulation, envy, and hatred subsisting among the unjust against the just. To evil-doers of every kind, fixed laws, settled governments, and steady governors, are ever displeasing. They hate all rule, and all legal authority and power, and combine in order to subvert them, to render laws impotent; and by means of brutal force raise themselves above the fears of punishment. There is nothing safe when the wicked can conspire and promote mischief at pleasure; neither life, nor liberty, nor property, where the popular voice of the day is the supreme law. Who can be greater slaves than those who have many masters to obey? The rights of man oppose but a feeble barrier to the progress of popular phrenzy and outrage, and the raving passions of a giddy and lawless mob. All

\* Wisdom, ii. 12. 14. 19.

large assemblies are subject to sudden and violent passions, which are roused and inflamed by mutual converse and collision. Though no numbers can change the nature of crimes, and murder will be murder, and parricide parricide, whether perpetrated by one or by a legion; yet it is certain, that wherever multitudes are engaged in lawless undertakings, and face hardens face, as iron sharpens iron, they will often commit crimes, at the very thoughts of which a single person would shudder. Of this truth history abounds with instances for our warning and instruction.

Times were, when we were taught to believe, that the Ruler of the People could do no wrong. Now the case is reversed, and the doctrine of the new school is, that the People can do no wrong. Their voice is blasphemously pronounced to be the voice of God. But woe to that nation where the people's voice is the supreme law; and to that individual whose life lies at the mercy of a popular tribunal! How fickle and capricious are their humours? How fluctuating and unsettled their opinions and judgments? Did history vouch that none but evil-doers fell victims to popular rage; this, though it could not be an excuse, might, doubtless, be some mitigation of men's

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disorderly

disorderly and riotous practices. But the malignant genius of Democracy can but ill brook superior stations and fortunes, or yet superior talents, learning, and merit. Even innocence itself is not safe before the judgment-seat of the people; for instead of the criminal, their brutal arm often falls upon the excellent ones of the earth. Not to mention recent instances; how frequently has the lawgiver, the patriot, the best friend and benefactor of society, been selected as the object of popular hate and vengeance? By whom was a Solon and an Aristides first revered and idolized? By the people. Who next banished these eminent men? The same people. To-day they exclaim "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord to save us." To-morrow "they cry aloud, with one voice, crucify *him*, crucify *him* \*," and "release unto us Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber †."

Such are the effects of appeals to the voice of the people, and the absence of law, order, and good government. Such are the rash and arbitrary judgments of republican tribunals. They stand upon record as beacons upon unseen and dangerous spots of ground, to warn succeeding

\* Luke, xxiii. 21.

† John, xviii. 40.

ages to beware of those rocks upon which their forerunners have split. Say not in thine heart therefore, that the People can do no wrong. Under their sanction and authority, crimes of the deepest dye have been committed. Shew me the man devoid of religion, and I should be glad to know what restrains his hands from any crime, when he is sure of escaping with impunity from earthly tribunals; or a large body of people, who neither fear God, nor regard man: and what atrocity is there, which such a many-headed monster is not capable of perpetrating? Let us not deceive ourselves, or permit ourselves to be deceived with false and fallacious ideas of human nature, and fine-spun philosophical theories of its innocence, its goodness, and innoxious qualities; while the volume of history lies open before our eyes; and he that runs may read its manifold errors, crimes, and enormities. Let us not foolishly imagine that a *regeneration* of the people will be the natural result of a republican institution; or that a mere transfer of power and property from old possessors to new, will instantly produce a reformation of manners. To dissipate our own fortune, and greedily to desire, and run raving mad after the property of our neighbours, are things

things by no means uncommon or incompatible. Loose principles and lawless hands are dangerous neighbours. *Alieni appetens, sui profusus*, was the character, first of a person, and next of a people, thoroughly vitiated and corrupted; and both were Republicans. The one is the necessary consequence of the other. Boundless expence requires boundless supplies; and insatiable avarice, an income which nothing less than unlimited power can procure. A people can no more be said to be free and happy, when needy, turbulent, and desperate men have it in their power, whenever they please, to endanger life, invade property, and disturb the public repose, than when they groan under the yoke of a single arbitrary tyrant. To enjoy liberty in perfection, law must have its free course; for it is not possible to remedy evils, and remove grievances and complaints, when its execution is in any way interrupted. I have known both what it is to live under the government of law, and in a state of wild anarchy, where legal authority was suspended, and the popular voice reigned without controul; and cannot help deprecating the return of such ticklish times. If, notwithstanding the best laws and governments, both divine and human, much evil exists,

exists, and many disturbances happen in the social state; what a scene of trouble would this world be, were these barriers removed out of the way, and a general licence given to the workers of iniquity?

To come homeward—Since man is born for society, and cannot enjoy the blessings of the social state without some kind of government, in which it is necessary every member should acquiesce, and since some must rule, and others obey; What is the duty of both Prince and People? “He that ruleth over men,” says David, “must be just, ruling in the fear of God;” and treating mankind with tenderness and indulgence; “and he shall be as the light of the morning when the Sun riseth\*,” whose superior splendour scatters every cloud. It is the duty of good subjects highly to honour and respect the person of their Ruler, and to yield a voluntary and cheerful obedience, not to his will merely, but to his lawful authority. Or, according to the rule fixed and established by the Great Teacher of righteousness; As every ruler should govern, as he would desire to be governed, were he a subject; so every subject should obey, as he

\* 2 Samuel, xxiii. 3, 4.

would

would desire to be obeyed, were he a governor. Here is the great rule of equity, to which no rational and social being can possibly object. It includes all the relations which man bears to man, and is obviously designed for universal use. It is the even and perfect balance in which every superior and inferior ought to weigh their actions. Nor is it possible to draw the line of duty between one individual and another, or between one nation and another, in fewer or better words. It is a law which must remain in full force and obligation as long as society exists on earth ; and, but for the disuse into which it is fallen, this rule of right reason would prevent almost every quarrel, private and public, with which the world is agitated and disturbed.

As Moses once said to the Israelites, bent on worshipping a golden calf instead of their Maker, " Who is on the Lord's side ? let him come unto me \* ;" so it may be said to us. Nay, says the modern philosopher, to stand on the Lord's side ! that were an old fashioned practice, illiberal, and a sure mark of weakness of understanding. What ! shall impiety be esteemed the test of genius ; and the robbers of our best possessions, our religious prin-

\* Exod. xxxii. 26.

ciples,

ciples, the only men of liberality of mind ! Is it possible to do greater violence to language and truth ? In the still season of public security, impiety, like a noxious weed, often springs ; and prosperity serves to nourish it. But let us not forget, that it is impiety that awakes the sleeping thunders of Heaven, and draws down public calamities upon a guilty nation. To this cause, Tacitus ascribes the heavy judgments which befell the ancient Jews. And Josephus, their countryman, declares, that “ as no nation ever suffered such things as the Jewish, so no nation since the beginning of the world, did so much abound in all manner of impiety \*.”

Besides, vice is the evil genius which throws all affairs into disorder, and the moral and social world off its hinges. When it is asked, Who should stand up for me against evil-doers ? the answer is short, Every man that does and means to do well, without exception. The difference between virtuous and vicious characters, especially when men run to extremes, is so plain, that it can scarcely be mistaken by any person ; and the rule of judgment is likewise plain ; “ By their works ye shall know them †.” Having the knowledge of

\* Joseph. de Bel. Jud. lib. vi. cap. 11. † Math. xii. 30.

what

what is good, and what God requireth of us, no man must stand neuter between virtue and vice. "No man must waver in his mind, or halt between two opinions." To this purpose the words of our Lord are clear and unequivocal. "He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad." Though iniquity abounds, as must be confessed and lamented, yet there are but too many among us, who esteem it folly to stand in the gap, or stem that rising tide of effeminacy and extravagance, luxury and dissipation, which threatens to overwhelm the nation, relaxing its nerves, and poisoning its morals. We love to take our ease, to eat, drink, and be merry, and give ourselves no trouble about preventing the increase of immorality and irreligion. So very flexible and polite is the virtue of the age, that we can sit and hear the profane scoffer and impious jester, not only with patience, but pleasure; and listen to men who deny the faith, and set at nought our best hopes, without any symptom of either pain or indignation. This is not charity, but a base and ignominious compliance with folly and vice. It betrays not moderation of mind, but dereliction of principle. It is a base and cowardly

cowardly desertion of the cause of God and man, considering sin as an enemy too formidable to be opposed, and its strong holds too difficult and hazardous to be assaulted. Better things are certainly expected from men favoured by God with so many privileges and advantages. Such, however, it is to be feared, is the true picture of the age. Hence, through the growing boldness and insolence of foes, the indolence, timidity, and lukewarmness of friends, religion and virtue languish and decline; while vice and infidelity appear with an open and unblushing countenance, threatening us, not only with convulsions and troubles, the natural effects of sin, but with the punishments of Heaven, which national crimes and corruptions always deserve.

On the whole, if, to discourage impiety and vice, and promote a reformation of manners, it be incumbent upon virtuous and religious men to associate and strengthen the hands of civil rulers and magistrates, invested with lawful authority, and concerned for the honour of God and the happiness of society; surely it cannot be deemed needless to weaken the power of evil-doers, and to use proper precautions and all prudent means of frustrating their wicked designs

signs and machinations. In the days of peril, it behoves every lover of humanity and justice, every friend to personal property and national security, to rally round the standard of our King and Constitution, and stand forth in the public defence against every enemy, foreign and domestic. Had our foes obtained the object of their wishes, and succeeded in their diabolical plots and conspiracies, where would we have been this day? Not worshipping God in his house, without fear or distraction; not "taking sweet counsel together, and holding peaceable fellowship one with another;" but at large, upon a stormy sea, without chart or compass, and involved in a violent contention one with another; about what?—about the chief command; for where no one person had any right of preference, and all were equally masters, the strong arm alone must in the end seize the helm, and forcibly command obedience.

Finally, Let us not only be thankful to God for his great goodness hitherto extended towards us, in protecting us from secret plots and open violence, and delivering us from fierce and formidable enemies; but continue to be sober and vigilant, both studying and standing in the best posture of defence,

defence, until the wished-for opportunity offer of removing all fears, and restoring to the nation stability and repose. Nor let any among us deem a reformation of manners, a chimerical and impracticable undertaking. What has been, may be; so that, under the countenance of Heaven, it is only requisite, that each of us promise and undertake for one, and a national reformation will be an object by no means unattainable. Good laws are certainly precious blessings; but laws may be good, and obedience defective; and the best laws, unexecuted, are no more than a dead letter. We, perhaps, look for too much from laws, and too little from morals; yet certain it is, that laws will not supply the want of principles and virtues. Believe it, true religion is the vital spring of a well-ordered life and conversation; and wherever principle is wanting, practice will be unstable. When religion is extinct in a nation, morality will not long survive her; and without religion and morality, the execution of laws will be found very difficult, if not impracticable. Let us, therefore, be just to our Creator, and in good earnest consult both our temporal and eternal happiness. When he visits any nation with judgments,

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let us consider them as messages from Heaven, sent for the admonition and instruction of all ends of the earth. When he causes goodness and mercy to follow us, let us be quiet and contented ; and let us shew such a grateful sense of his past benefits, as cannot but be acceptable to him, and justify us in approaching his throne with our united requests for a continuance of his goodness.

THE END.

The first of these is the fact that the  
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