

A
DISCOURSE
ON
NATIONAL SINS:

Delivered May 9, 1798;

BEING THE DAY RECOMMENDED BY THE PRESIDENT
OF THE UNITED STATES TO BE OBSERVED
AS A DAY OF

GENERAL FAST.

By *WILLIAM LINN*. D.D.

ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF THE REFORMED DUTCH CHURCH
IN THE CITY OF NEW-YORK.

NEW-YORK:

Printed by T. & J. SWORDS, No. 99 Pearl-street.

1798.

P R E F A C E,

TWO motives, principally, have induced me to publish the following discourse; the one is, that those who disapproved of certain parts may have an opportunity of giving them a second and dispassionate consideration; the other is, that the sentiments advanced appear to me highly seasonable, and ought to be diffused as extensively as possible. The discourse is printed, *word for word*, as it was written in the first copy; and only three sentences, which will be found marked, were forgotten at the time of delivery. This is mentioned to apologize for the inaccuracies which will occur, and which would have been corrected, had it not been judged best scrupulously to adhere to the very words, which all who were present can be called to attest.—The notes are entirely added.

There are some general objections which have been made to the discourse, of which it may be proper here to take a little notice. It has been said, that the sentiments are different from those contained in other publications of mine, particularly in the “Signs of the Times.”

That publication was made in 1794, and is the latest which can be alledged against me. The scope of that performance I still heartily approve. If, in prosecuting my main object, I expressed sanguine expectations from the revolution in France, both as to herself and to the world, thousands, in all countries, at the time, entertained the same, and have been equally disappointed. If the French nation have departed from their original principles, I am not obliged to follow them. I will be no advocate for enormities unequalled in the annals of mankind; for principles which subvert all religion, morality and order, and which threaten to involve us, with the whole human race, in the utmost confusion and misery. Whatever may be the designs of God in these convulsions, and though they shall certainly be made subservient to his glory, yet we must not countenance or partake in the wickedness of the instruments.

Again; it has been said, that it is improper to carry politics into the pulpit. This is a saying to which many have no precise idea affixed. If they mean, that it is improper to discuss political questions, and to espouse a particular party, they have reason on their side. But, if they mean, that the love of country, the duty of citizens, and obedience to lawful government, have no connection with religion, and that a Preacher ought not to inculcate these, *I have not so learned Christ*. Religion, morality, and obedience to government, are inseparably connected. The true christian faithfully and conscientiously endeavours to perform all the duties of

his several stations and relations. The apostles were not politicians, and yet we find them strongly enjoining the duties which we owe as members of civil society.

Again; it has been said, that the discourse, admitting that it contains nothing but the truth, is not adapted to the occasion, and is also culpable for an imprudent display of sentiments. As to the charge of unseasonableness, what can be more seasonable, on such a day, than to point out those sins which are the cause of divine judgments? Were we not called to confess and forsake these? Deplorable must be our situation, if we cannot bear even a recital of them. But, why speak so much about France? Because the danger from France was the very occasion of our fasting; her sins prevail among us; and her miseries exhibit to us an awfully instructive lesson.

As to imprudence, I have only to say, that the occasion seemed to demand great plainness and faithfulness. I become more convinced that silence has been kept too long, and that to persist in it will be attended with the most fatal consequences. Our enemies have already gotten too fast a hold; and they wish for nothing but to retain us in blindness and lukewarmness to accomplish our ruin. The shock which the discourse, as was to be expected, gave to some, will eventually prove beneficial. I anticipate the time when what is said will be thought moderate; when I shall be commended rather than censured; and I am contented to wait. The views of France are disclosing daily, and the film removing

from our eyes. If, however, I am mistaken in all this, the charitable will impute the error to the head, and not to the heart, for I have no other interest than the best welfare of men. I love my God, I love my country, and I love my enemies.

May, 1798.

A DISCOURSE, &c.

JOSHUA vii. 13.

Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against to-morrow; for thus saith the Lord God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you.

THE slightest consideration of the occasion of these words, will show that they are not improperly chosen as the subject of discourse on this day. Notwithstanding the express command of God to the children of Israel, to save nothing for their own use in the destruction of Jericho, a man, named Achan, had taken from “among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels, and hid them in his tent.” When they, afterwards, went up against Ai, God

manifested his displeasure for the disobedience, by suffering their enemies to prevail. This greatly discouraged the people, and afflicted Joshua. He humbled himself before God, and earnestly intreated his interposition. Joshua was then informed of the true cause of the calamity; and that, until reparation was made, the divine assistance would be withheld.

Although only one man was particularly charged, yet all are represented as having committed a trespass, and they shared in the punishment. Others might have been guilty; or, at least, have had covetous desires, or have concealed what was done. But, if neither of these be admitted, the precedent was extremely dangerous, and the community, of which the individual was a member, were to be considered as partakers of the sin, unless it was openly disclaimed.

The application of the text to our circumstances as a nation, is natural and easy. For several years past, one calamity has succeeded another, with little intermission, or we have been kept in a state of alarm. Though the cloud has not always burst, yet it has been continually hanging over us. All who acknowledge the existence and government of God, must believe that these things befall us by his direction, and

are tokens of his anger. "He doth not afflict
 "willingly, nor grieve the children of men."
 There is an *accursed thing* in the midst of us.
 Why have we suffered by fires? Because of our
 sins. Why have we fallen by pestilence? Be-
 cause of our sins. Why have we been threatened
 with war? Because of our sins. Without re-
 formation, an entire removal of judgments is not
 to be expected. The rod may be taken away
 for a time, but it will return with double force.
 Punishments will follow sins, as sure as justice
 and judgment are the habitation of the eternal
 throne.

Danger impends, at present, from a quarter
 of which we had not once the smallest apprehen-
 sion, and of which we may not yet be sufficiently
 aware. It was hardly to be conceived, that so
 distant as we are from the scene of blood, studi-
 ous of peace, and desirous of doing justice to all
 nations, any circumstances should arise to involve
 us. We fondly dreamed, that the mighty crash
 of kingdoms would be like thunder heard remote.
 Least of all was it to be suspected, that a nation to
 whom we were enthusiastically attached, at whose
 victories we have rejoiced, whose crimes we have
 palliated, and whose injuries we have borne,
 should meditate our destruction. But, as they

are the instrument, in the hand of God, for chastising the inhabitants of the old world for their iniquities, so they may be likewise used for our correction; or, he may mercifully intend to force us to a distance from them, to “come out from them, that we be not partakers of their sins, and that we receive not of their plagues.” Though there is reason to hope, from the usual dispensations of Providence, that we are not doomed to ruin, and that we shall not be overwhelmed in the calamities of other nations, yet we may not escape unpunished. Numerous and aggravated as our offences are, we have not “worshipped the beast;” and, rapid as our progress has been in vice, we have not arrived at that height in which the righteous Governor of the universe gives command, “to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy.”

It is a matter, my brethren, of the most serious and interesting inquiry, what those sins are, among us, with which God is justly displeased. To determine on these, we must consider the sins which abound in the community, are the most destructive of its peace and order, and which have been invariably punished. These appear to be—the inattention to family instruction and government—the neglect of the ordinances of

divine worship, and of the due observance of the Sabbath—the abuse of temporal prosperity—the prevalence of infidelity—and the want of union. Other things might be particularized, but these are the principal, and more than will admit of a full discussion.

Think not that I unreasonably detain you by remarking, that it is impossible to speak, on an occasion like this, so as to satisfy all. If the duty of fasting and prayer be handled only in general, some will blame the Preacher for trimming; and he may even fall under the charge of unfaithfulness. If he touch on public affairs, then some will say, that he carries politics into the pulpit, and sides with a party. The best way is, to preserve a good conscience; neither to invite unnecessarily the resentment of the world, nor to dissemble, should it ensure the richest favours.

FIRST, The inattention to family instruction and government is an evil we have to deplore. It is a sign of the decay of religion, and has most pernicious effects. Were persons rightly impressed with the importance of divine things, they would be solicitous for the best welfare of those whom Providence has committed to their care. In this respect, Abraham was a pat-

tern. "I know him," saith God, "that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." How few, at this day, deserve this glorious testimony! Who copy this illustrious pattern! Many act as though nothing more was required than to give their children human learning, and provide for their advancement to riches or honors; whereas, their happiness, and their service to society, depend much more on a religious education, and habits of industry and virtue, than on the finest talents, and the most improved understandings. What are all human acquirements, without a sound faith to direct? What can parents substitute as an equivalent for this? "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" It is by early instruction in families, the force of good example, and prudent discipline, that persons are formed to be useful members in both Church and State. The influence of these is felt through the whole course of life. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

On the contrary, when children are permitted to grow up without pious instruction, and to

follow, without restraint, their own inclinations, they are likely to bring disgrace upon themselves, and ruin to society. The very foundations of order and morality are destroyed. Nor is the evil confined to the generation in which they live, but reaches to successive ones. Who is to teach when all are ignorant? What hope remains when the whole mass is corrupted?

We feel the dismal consequences of our neglect in this country, and, unless a speedy remedy is applied, must feel them yet more severely. To this is greatly to be ascribed those dangerous principles, and those dissolute manners, which prevail. The untutored youth is prone to admit the suggestions of infidelity, and run into the utmost licentiousness. When his mind is not stored with divine truths, and he is unacquainted with the holy scriptures, or the evidence with which they are supported, he is easily persuaded to reject their authority. It may be well questioned, whether the exclusion of the bible, as a school-book, is not highly improper. Children, by learning to read in this, obtain a knowledge of its contents, which they may never otherwise obtain. Many of its historical parts, its parables, and its precepts, make an indelible impression upon them,

The importance of a religious education appears from the injunction given to the children of Israel. "These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." The apostle also exhorts fathers to "bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The lamentable failure in what has been mentioned, is connected,

SECONDLY, With the neglect of the ordinances of divine worship, and of the due observance of the Sabbath. Many seldom or never present themselves in the house of God. The bells which summon to the place of public devotion, seem to be a signal to them to walk or ride abroad. Such are destitute of the fear of God, and, by their conduct, weaken the bonds of government. Were they above receiving instruction, or if they thought religion necessary only to preserve peace and order, they ought to add the weight of their own example. Legislators will not govern men by all the laws which they can make, unless a sense of moral obligation is supported. Little as some of them may think

of the necessity of public worship, and the contempt which they show, it is their securest hold and makes men "subject not only for wrath, but "also for conscience sake."*

The complaint which persons make of a corruption of manners, and of the impatience under lawful government, is idle, while they themselves contribute to these with all their might. The neglect of public worship introduces immorality, which first disturbs, and then overturns the State. Some who were once punctual in the duty, manifest a coldness and indifference; or, if they do attend, have lost the spirit of practical godliness. Where are meditation, secret and family prayer, mutual and Christian converse, without which public ordinances are, in a great measure, unprofitable, and the attendance upon them degenerates into a lifeless form?†

* "The belief of a future state of retribution is a more powerful restraint against wickedness, than any which can be imposed by human laws. It tends more to overawe the wicked, than all the decrees and ordinances which human legislators can frame." Wright on the Nature and Danger of Apostasy.

"What avail the best laws that ever were framed for preserving order, and securing the peace of society, if the enforcements of religion are wanting? Laws twisted about the necks of a corrupt people, will never bind them to duty: they may compel them to evasions, but they will never constrain them to virtue." Dr. Muter's Sermon.

† "Many of the prevailing vices of the age may be traced to the neglect of public worship as their source. Men should never

It cannot be supposed, that those who neglect divine worship pay a proper respect to the Sabbath. No; many of them spend the time either in transacting their worldly business, or in vain amusements. They not only omit religious exercises, but engage in what is a direct profanation of the day. Too frequently, even with those who profess to reverence the command of God, are worldly conversation, criminal indolence, and unnecessary visits, indulged. This is one of the reigning sins, and for which the Lord has a controversy with us.

That this is a sin which brings judgments upon a people, is apparent from the dealings of God towards the children of Israel, and his many declarations. Their prosperity and adversity, as a nation, depended on the regard which they paid to the Sabbath. This charge is often brought against them; "My sabbaths they greatly polluted." No less than three times does it occur in the same chapter, with a punishment denounced; "I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them." It is mentioned as a sign of their de-

"forget this great historical fact, that the downfall of kingdoms has been always preceded by a neglect of the worship of God." Wright.

generacy, that they said, "When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn, and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat."

As the profanation of the sabbath drew down the divine displeasure, so, for the sanctification of it, blessings were promised. "Blessed is the man that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it." Again; "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words, then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob, thy father; for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it."

Who but might have anticipated the growing corruption of that nation, and its fearful calamities, which blotted the sabbath from the week! which abolished all times and forms of religious worship! This opened the floodgates of vice, and kindled the anger of the Lord against them. Not contented with removing superstition, and correcting abuses, they insidiously endeavoured to overturn the Christian religion itself. To say

nothing of the monstrous wickedness, there was an extreme folly in their conduct. Of what advantage their division of time? How vain to imagine that it can long continue, even among themselves; much more, that it will be adopted by others? Their intention was, evidently, to destroy religion; for they knew that while assemblies were held for worship on the sabbath, there would be a memorial of Christ, and a testimony in favour of divine revelation.*

* The conduct of the French rulers cannot be better stated, than in the words of an author (Wright) already quoted. "They expressly forbade the public worship of the God of the universe. They began with abolishing the sabbath day as a day to be kept holy to the Lord. They ordered the doors of the several churches to be kept shut on the Lord's day. They ordered the shops to be kept open on that holy day; and they permitted every sort of business to be transacted on the sabbath day as on the other days of the week. Nay, they even imprisoned some of the people, who, from reverence for God, and from the force of religious education and customs," &c.

"In order to carry this infamous decree into full effect, or in order to obliterate the very remembrance of the sabbath day, they changed the old calendar, and they formed a new one; wherein, instead of a week consisting of seven days, they have substituted what they call a Decade, or a portion of time consisting of ten days, three of which are to constitute a month. And even to the months of the year they have given new names."———"This act of the French legislature, abolishing the observance of the sabbath day as a day to be kept holy to the Lord, might be shewn to be an instance of the most shocking profanity, and of the most barbarous policy. It is a decree most detestable, both in a civil and in a religious view."

I have expressed my doubt of the continuance of their division of time, on the principle of the difficulty to change old habits, and that God would speedily avenge the contempt of his authority. 16.

The same attempt to bring the sabbath into discredit, has been made, by some, with us. Publications have appeared for the purpose of showing, that it is not of divine institution, and that the observance of it is improper. Different as opinions may be about the utility of a legislative act on this subject, it is certain, that the neglect of the sabbath is an evil, in a political view, as it corrupts the morals of men, and ultimately endangers the peace of society. Wherever a disregard to the sabbath becomes universal, there can be no religion, no morality, and no safe government.* Let me mention,

THIRDLY, That we have abused our temporal prosperity. Since the establishment of the new constitution, the prosperity of this country has been rapid and unexampled. The neutra-

however, it should be permitted to continue so long as that the christian sabbath will be forgotten in France, who but must deplore their awful fate?

* It was to be expected, that so enlightened a statesman, and one who so constantly enforces religion by his own example, as the worthy Governor of New-York, would not be inattentive to this subject. In his speech to the legislature, at the opening of the last session, he says, "There is also much reason to regret, that more respect is not generally paid to the injunctions of the act relative to Sunday. If the sabbath be, as I am convinced it is, of divine appointment, this subject ought not to be regarded with indifference."

Though the advocates for a bill on this subject could not obtain one so strict as they wished, yet one was carried restraining certain immoralities.

lity, with respect to contending powers, which was early taken, the wisdom, the impartiality, and the firmness of administration, have, under the blessing of heaven, highly advanced us.

But this prosperity has been made the occasion of sin. We have turned our liberty into licentiousness; for the richest bounties we have repaid ingratitude and discontent; we have been seized with the desire of suddenly amassing wealth; we have been led into criminal speculation; and success has administered to our luxury and our pleasures. The expensiveness of public buildings, the variety of amusements, and the style of living, are far beyond what simplicity, sobriety, and prudence, ought to have dictated. We have cleaved to the gifts, and forgotten the giver; we have used them as our own, and not improved them for his glory; we have acted as though we were to continue here always, and there was no future state of account.

The almighty Ruler, by his present dispensations, gives us a salutary check, teaches us to feel and acknowledge his superintending providence, and the obligations which we owe him. Long continued prosperity is dangerous both to individuals and societies. "Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked; thou art waxen fat, thou art grown

“thick, thou art covered with fatness: then he
 “forsook God which made him, and lightly
 “esteemed the Rock of his salvation.” I hasten
 to say,

IN THE FOURTH PLACE, That the prevalence of infidelity is a cause of divine judgments. Not many years ago, a professed deist, in this country, was rare. If any doubted, they were ashamed to avow it, and they had so much decency as not to ridicule what the generality of mankind held sacred. But infidelity is now no longer concealed. Its advocates are numerous, and propagate their sentiments with a brazen front. Formerly, some of the most celebrated infidels attacked the Christian religion indirectly; but we have seen it represented as a fable not even *cunningly* devised, as destructive of morality, and the source of innumerable miseries. We have seen it loaded with all manner of reproach, and a bold attempt made to eradicate it from the earth. From an American press have issued the most horrid blasphemies which have ever been uttered. From an American press issued the first part of the “Age of Reason;” and the second part was re-printed here; a multitude of copies were imported, and circulated with uncommon industry. Surely, if our ports be shut,

it should be against such principles as these. Were it possible to lay an embargo on them in the country from which they come, it ought to be done; for they are infinitely more to be dreaded than all the fleets and armies of Europe.

Perhaps we may date the growth of infidelity among us, from the entrance of the French army. While they brought us the assistance we desired, and accelerated our independence, they leavened us with ungodliness; and it may yet be said of us, "The strength of Pharaoh shall be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion." Deism and atheism have long been propagated among that people, and at their revolution appeared in full maturity. Their very Clergy, the professed Ministers of the religion of Christ, headed by the Archbishop of Paris, came before the National Convention, and abjured the Christian religion, declaring that they considered it as an imposture. What else but horrid deeds were to be expected from those who gloried in the confession of their hypocrisy? What confidence can be placed in those who defy the Majesty of heaven and earth?*

* It is not intended, by any thing in this paragraph, to condemn the alliance with France, or to detract from the assistance which she afforded. Due credit and gratitude are acknowledged here, and in

There is, however, a more close alliance between the principles of infidelity and the overthrow of government than many apprehend. How are we to account for the fact, that many of those who bluster about the mal-conduct of men in office, are avowed unbelievers? It is not meant to alledge, that all who are wild with false notions of liberty are in this class; or that none of the friends of tyranny are liable to the

other parts of the discourse. But the alliance may, notwithstanding, by an unreasonable partiality on our part, by an exaltation of France in the stead of God, and by evil communication, prove the mean of the greatest injury to us. As to the opinion, that the growth of infidelity was promoted by the French army, it is my own; and I have expressed it with diffidence. I think that some influence is to be ascribed to them. The French officers had drank deep of a vain philosophy; and I remember to have heard it said, that they were generally mathematicians and deists.—The alarming prevalence of infidelity in France is attested in the fullest manner. Let me quote only the words of a late writer. "On the 19th of November, 1793, the Archbishop of Paris came to the bar of the assembly, accompanied by his Vicar and eleven other Clergymen, who there renounced their Christianity and their clerical vows; acknowledging that they had played the villain for many years against their consciences, teaching what they knew to be a lie, and were now resolved to be honest men." Note, p. 280, Philadelphia edition, of a book entitled, "Proofs of a Conspiracy against all the Religions and Governments of Europe, carried on in the secret meetings of Free-Masons, Illuminati, and Reading Societies. Collected from good Authorities, by John Robison, A. M. Professor of Natural Philosophy, and Secretary to the Royal Society of Edinburgh." This book is now re-printing, by Mr. George Forman, in this city, and deserves the highest attention. It displays an astonishing scene of wickedness, and is peculiarly calculated to open the eyes of all on those horrid principles which have been so industriously propagated in Europe, have so deeply penetrated the French nation, hurried them into their excesses, and plunged them into their miseries.

imputation; but that the most furious advocates for what they call the rights of man, are generally notorious infidels. There is a connection between the two, and it is well understood by some of these men. It has been practised upon us. What was the main object of a publication already mentioned? Besides the indulgence of a ridiculous vanity, it was to produce a revolution; and it would have infallibly done this, had the principles pervaded the bulk of the citizens. This happy nation would now have been in the same unsettled, confused, and miserable state of France. The vain and contemptible author thought he had accomplished the end, and that nothing more was necessary than to blow the trumpet of sedition, in his scurrilous letter to our chief magistrate, at that time, and the first man in the world. When we see so much ignorance, misrepresentation, and falsehood, employed by a person against the holy scriptures, we may well suspect his political creed, and cannot safely resign ourselves to his direction.*

* I see nothing in this paragraph which I wish to retract. I have only said what is fact, that *many* mal-contents avow themselves to be infidels; that the most furious of them were *generally* such. The conduct of some serious professors of religion is accounted for on other principles. To show that what I have stated is the case abroad as well as at home, hear the words of Dr. Watson, Bishop of Landaff, in his

As to the connection between licentious opinions upon religion and upon government, a late writer, who includes the disciples of Socinus, gives the following account: "We may expect," says he, "that they who, denying the necessity of a propitiatory sacrifice, presumptuously lay claim to eternal happiness upon the ground of their own merit; and who degrade the character of the divine Jesus into that of mere man, should endeavour to destroy all superiority in their fellow-creatures, and seek the gratification of their pride in the abo-

late elegant and animated "Address to the People of Great Britain." "It is here supposed," says he, "that the enemies of religion are also the enemies of government; but this must be understood with some restriction. There are, it may be said, many deists in this country, who are sensible of the advantages of a regular government, and who would be as unwilling as the most orthodox believers in the kingdom, that our own should be overturned. This may be true, but it is true also, that they who wish to overthrow the government are not only, generally speaking, unbelievers themselves, but that they found their hopes of success in the infidelity of the common people. They are sensible that no government can long subsist, if the bulk of the people have no reverence for a supreme being, no fear of perjury, no apprehension of futurity, no check from conscience; and foreseeing the rapine, devastation and bloodshed, which usually attend the last convulsions of a state struggling for its political existence, they wish to prepare proper actors for this dreadful catastrophe, by brutalizing mankind; for it is by religion more than by any other principle of human nature, that men are distinguished from brutes." As to the leading object of Thomas Paine, I have expressed an opinion. It is certain that his principles directly tend to confusion, and every evil work. Any favorable mention which I may have made of this man, I wish to be obliterated and forgotten.

D

" lition of all worldly distinctions. The same
 " captious and restless spirit, which leads men
 " to cavil at the articles of our religious faith,
 " and to reject the mysteries of the gospel, be-
 " cause they surpass their comprehension, causes
 " them to be dissatisfied with our civil constitu-
 " tion, and to represent its essential parts as use-
 " less and dangerous, because they do not agree
 " with their own imaginary ideas of unattain-
 " ble perfection. We here observe the same
 " temper of mind directed to different objects,
 " a similar error in judging of the dispensation of
 " God, and of the institutions of men: and this
 " natural alliance between certain opinions in
 " matters of Church and State, can alone ac-
 " count for events."* This is the only so-
 lution I have seen attempted of a fact which
 has frequently occurred to my mind, and it
 appears to be a rational one. Let me add,
 that as some, led away by the names of can-
 dour, liberality, and free inquiry, are be-
 trayed into lax doctrines in religion, so there
 are some who, deceived by the names of liberty
 and equality, embrace principles utterly subver-
 sive of all peace and order. Unsuspecting of
 danger, they are deluded by these specious ar-

* Dr. Pretyman's Charge to the Clergy.

tifices. The tree in paradise, of which our first parents were forbidden to eat, appeared to them "good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and to be desired to make one wise." "Ye shall not die," says the subtle serpent; "the prohibition is arbitrary; assert your *liberty*; eat, and ye shall be upon an *equality* with gods." They ate, and "the mortal taste brought death into the world, and all our woe."

Did time admit, it might be shown, that some form of religion is absolutely necessary for the support of civil government; that there never was a civilized nation without ceremonies of worship; that the necessity of them is declared by heathen writers, and acknowledged by atheists themselves; and that the present appearance in France is monstrous; and so long as it exists, revolution must succeed revolution, torrents of blood flow after torrents, and the wretched inhabitants become a terror to themselves and all around them. Let Americans be warned by such a spectacle! Let them grow wise by what is past! Do we guard our coasts to prevent the introduction of pestilential disease? Guard them much more against this moral pestilence! It is worse than all the plagues of Egypt. We should esteem it a special blessing in this hour of danger,

that we have a chief magistrate who is not ashamed of the gospel, and who publicly acknowledges, in his proclamation, the "Redeemer of the world" and the "Holy Spirit." No army need invade, if licentious principles abound. These will do the fatal business, and blast, by an untimely death, the American Republic, the last and noblest work of God.* Bear with me while I mention,

* The idea, in the last sentence of this paragraph, would be conveyed with more precision, were it said, "of all systems of human government, the last," &c. but the plan of adhering rigidly to the words delivered, precludes the correction of this and other errors in diction, which a critic will discern.

The declaration of infidels, that religion is the invention of kings and priests, is a plain confession of its utility in supporting civil government. All the ancient sages and lawgivers were of one opinion on this point. Cicero says, in his *Treatise de Nat. Deor.* lib. i. sect. 2. "*Religione sublatâ, perturbatio vitæ sequitur, et magna confusio. Atque haud scio, an pietate adversus Deos sublatâ, fides etiam, et societas humani generis, et una excellentissima virtus justitia, tolleretur.*" To the necessity of religion, President Washington has borne ample testimony, in his most excellent address on his resignation; an address fraught with political wisdom, and which, in matter and manner, is worthy the pen of the greatest philosopher and statesman in the world. "Of all the dispositions and habits," says he, "which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labour to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked, where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths, which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition, that morality can be maintained

ONCE MORE, The want of union as a mournful evil. The division of professing christians is not now intended. On this, you are in full possession of my sentiments; but I refer to that party spirit which has disgraced and distracted our public councils. "We cannot stand before our enemies until we take away this accursed thing from among us."*

(There are some who continually blame the measures of government for plunging us into the

"without religion."—If the heathen found their religious institutions and worship absolutely necessary, and highly beneficial, what advantages are to be expected from the profession and influence of the true religion? "There was never found," says the great Lord Bacon, who may be set against an host of infidels, "in any age of the world, either philosophy, or sect, or religion, which did so highly exalt the public good, as the Christian Faith."—The French legislators have not satisfied themselves with renouncing revealed religion, but have endeavoured to destroy natural religion itself. They have denied the being of God and his providence; that there is any future state of existence; declared death to be an eternal sleep; and set up, as objects of worship, Reason and Liberty.

* There is no part of the discourse in which an addition might be made more advantageously than here. There might be pointed out, in a religious view, the baneful effects of the indulgence of party spirit and disunion; in that it weakens the favour of divine things; engrosses the mind with objects foreign to its peace and happiness; destroys charity to our neighbour; and excites malevolent passions in the breast. Such considerations ought to have great weight with those who "exercise themselves to have always consciences void of offence toward God and toward men." I am happy in being able to say, with truth, that I bear no hatred, and wish no injury to those who may differ from me in sentiment; yea, that I cordially esteem some of these; and that, if any speak ill of me, and manifest resentment, I can forgive, as I hope to be forgiven, and quietly commit myself to him who judgeth righteously.

present difficulties; who impute to our rulers enmity to France, and partiality to Britain; who publicly alledge, that it has been the system to break with the one, and to join the other. But the secret is laid open; it is DISUNION. This has lessened us in the eyes of our enemies, and encouraged them in their repeated insults. This has led them to attempt a separation of the people from the government, and to think that their late insolent demands would be successful; yea, to threaten, that unless we complied, their vessels would ravage our coasts, and we would share the fate of other nations which they have overturned. What was some time ago made the pretext for hostile measures, was not so much as hinted to our messengers of peace; but all their requisitions are enforced by an appeal to our weakness, and this weakness arising from friends here on whom they reckon. O France! at thy first revolution our hearts beat high with expectation; for thy help in our need, we felt the sincerest gratitude; when thou wast environed by numerous hosts, we alone acknowledged thy republic; and when thou didst complain, we sent an honorable embassy to renew and strengthen the bands of peace. Is it thus thou requitest us?

Nothing is more easy and common than to find fault with measures, when they prove unsuccessful. Perhaps the error, if there be any, is in not having spoken, from the first, in a bold and decided tone to whatever nation sought to impose upon us. Peace, so necessary and desirable, was the great object; it has been protracted; and if, at last, we are obliged to repel aggressions by force, we may confidently appeal to Him who "ruleth in the kingdom of men."*

Happily, union in the means of self-defence is daily gaining ground, in proportion as the transactions are understood. The question is not now about a form of government, but whether we shall govern ourselves. It is not, whether the most proper measures have been pursued to

* The three preceding sentences are those mentioned in the preface to have been forgotten at the delivery of the Discourse. Whoever will allow himself to reflect seriously, must see how opposite has been the conduct of Britain and of France in accommodating their differences with us. The first immediately honored our Envoy, and entered into negotiation; the latter has treated us with studied contempt. No one can say that Britain had not received some provocations, and had not just cause to fear as to the part we would act; and yet had she behaved like the other, there would have been but one voice in America. With respect to a connection with foreign powers, it will ever involve us in difficulties. How proper the sentiments of President Washington on this head:—"The great rule of conduct for us, in regard to foreign nations, is, in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little *political* connection as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements, let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith. Here let us stop."

obtain peace, but what is the most effectual remedy. THE CONTEST IS FOR NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY AND INDEPENDENCE. Spirit of seventy-six, whither art thou fled? Where the spirit that declared, "We never will submit to be hewers of wood, or drawers of water, for any ministry and nation in the world." Did unanimity and vigor once appear in our public councils, our enemies would relinquish their attempt as idle, or, if they did not, would be covered with shame and confusion. Even the unparalleled conqueror of Italy would have the laurels snatched from his brow, and be covered with willows.)

War is, indeed, a dreadful calamity. It is justifiable on no principle but that of self-defence. Through the kind interposition of Heaven, it was averted, when, a few years ago, it seemed to be at hand. Negotiation was successful. Negotiation has been tried again—open—fair—and liberal. It has been spurned. Money has been demanded, but no security given for peace. Sums have been fixed, but accompanied with a hint, that more would be expected. What assurance that such rapacity would ever be satisfied? To hearken to these claims is disgrace; to comply with them is death. Look at Ve-

nice, at Belgium, at Switzerland. Look, above all, at Holland, the country of your ancestors, and if you inherit a drop of blood from those brave Dutchmen who, in former years, so nobly asserted their privileges——Holland, the storehouse of the world, the nursery of arts, learning and religion, has lost her eminence among the nations. She is dictated to, exhausted by contributions, her youth infected with infidelity, her commerce annihilated, and is little better than a province of France. How is the glory departed since the admission of a foreign master! How ignoble do men become when they willingly stoop to oppression! They are like asses couching down under their burdens.

I have not specified among our sins gaming, tipling, profane swearing, railing, lying, and other immoralities. They are the native fruits of irreligion, and abused prosperity. Nor has there been taken into the enumeration, the retention of a multitude of our fellow-creatures in slavery. Besides, that this could not be so fully stated as it ought, there are many circumstances which forbid it. Prudence may condemn the most distant reference, but conscience remonstrates against an entire silence. We know where we are most vulnerable; and melancholy is the tale

E

of St. Domingo. O thou Judge of the earth! incline us to do all the justice we can, and when thou visitest "the iniquity of the fathers upon the children," in wrath remember mercy!

HAVING considered the sins most prevalent among us, let us sincerely confess and forsake them. This is the important duty for which our excellent President has recommended to us to assemble on this day. He, impressed with a sense of the sins of the land, saw the necessity of deep humiliation; and, from the distinguished part he acted in our revolutionary war, knew that our safety depended on the favour and protection of almighty God. How innocent soever we may be in provoking the assaults of men, we have grievously transgressed the divine law. Each of us is addressed this day in the words of Joshua to Achan; "My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him." Let us remember that each, by his personal sins, adds to the sins of the community; that the reformation of the one is the reformation of the other; and that, had we not contributed to the stock of iniquity, the sins of others should excite our sorrow. "Go," said the Lord, "through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark

“ upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and
 “ that cry, for all the abominations that be done
 “ in the midst thereof.”

If we thus turn from the evil of our ways, we will have nothing to fear. The same God who hath so often and so remarkably interposed in our behalf, will again plead our cause. We live in an eventful period. What will be the issue as to France herself, to the other nations in Europe, or as to ourselves, is beyond conjecture. We are only assured, that “ the LORD hath his
 “ way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and
 “ the clouds are the dust of his feet.” We have already seen the power of the Church of Rome, if not destroyed, yet receiving its death wound. What more designs of Providence shall be fulfilled by the present convulsions, are unknown. The words of the Lord respecting Assyria are so remarkable as to demand our attention here:
 “ O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the
 “ staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will
 “ send him against an hypocritical nation, and
 “ against the people of my wrath will I give him
 “ a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey,
 “ and to tread them down like the mire of the
 “ streets. Howbeit, he meaneth not so, neither
 “ doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart

“ to destroy, and cut off nations not a few.
 “ Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when
 “ the Lord hath performed his whole work upon
 “ mount Zion, and on Jerusalem, I will punish
 “ the fruit of the stout heart of the king of As-
 “ syria, and the glory of his high looks.” What
 follows is no less remarkable, and the whole pas-
 sage recorded in Isaiah, 10th chapter, from the
 5th to the 19th verse, is full of instruction as to
 the ways and dealings of Providence towards
 nations.

Let the children of God trust and rejoice in
 him; and let those who are living in disobedi-
 ence speedily make their peace with him, through
 his Son Jesus Christ, whom he hath “ set forth
 “ as a propitiation for sin.” If, as a people, we
 are corrupt and vicious, judgments must be ex-
 pected; and if, as individuals, we continue to
 reject the gospel, future and eternal misery must
 be our portion.

Next to the duties which we owe immediately
 to God, are those which we owe to one another,
 in the support of the constituted authorities, and
 the defence of our civil and religious privileges.
 Unnatural children we are, if, when that coun-
 try which holds all that is dear to us is threatened,
 we do not breathe one spirit, and exert one

strength; if we do not renounce all partialities to this or to the other nation, be they who they will; and if we do not banish all party dissensions for the name of AMERICAN.*

To conclude, Let us earnestly pray that our Counsellors may be inspired with integrity, wisdom, firmness, and unanimity, in the management of our national affairs; that the desolations of war may soon cease unto the ends of the earth; that universal righteousness may prevail, and that this transporting anthem may be sung by all nations: "The kingdoms of this world are become
" the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ;
" and he shall reign for ever and ever." AMEN.

* There are some who alledge, that parties necessarily exist in all free governments, and that they are of real service. Britain is brought as an example. In my opinion the reasoning is delusive. The government of Britain is an old and established one; ours is of recent date; the one is monarchical; the other of the popular form. With us, there is much more danger of weakness than of energy, of anarchy than of tyranny. But whatever may be said on this, surely there ought to be no parties with respect to foreign nations. The prevalence of such a spirit would expose us to all their intrigues, and finally bring us under their domination. Much is said about gratitude to France. It ought to be remembered, that forgiveness of injuries is equally a part of morals; and that, with respect to all nations, we ought to be, "in war, enemies; in peace, friends."

THE END.