

The DIVINE GOODNESS displayed,

I N T H E

AMERICAN REVOLUTION;

A

S E R M O N,

PREACHED IN NEW-YORK, DECEMBER 11th, 1783.

APPOINTED BY CONGRESS,

A S A D A Y O F

PUBLIC THANKSGIVING,

THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES;

BY JOHN RODGERS, D. D.

N E W - Y O R K:

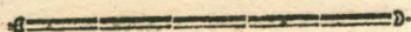
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M, DCC, LXXXIV.



T H E

Divine Goodness Displayed, &c.



Pf, CXXVI, 3.

*The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof
we are glad.*

THE subject of this divine poem, from whence I have taken my text, not obscurely points us to the occasion on which it was penned. It was the return of the Jews, from their captivity in Babylon. This is what is meant by “the captivity of Zion,” in the first verse,

It is generally supposed, and with great probability, that the prophet Ezra was its inspired penman. The first verse expresses the effect this signal deliverance, of his people, had upon them. “* When the Lord turned again the
“ captivity

* Verse 1,

“captivity of Zion, we were like men that dream.” It was so great and unexpected an event, that they could not, at first, believe it was real. But they soon found it was real, however great: And in consequence thereof, were filled with the most sincere joy and gratitude to God. “* Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing.”

SUCH was the nature of this deliverance, that the Heathen nations around them took notice of it. “† Then said they among the Heathen; “the Lord hath done great things for them.” It is no uncommon thing for our God, so to effect the salvation of his people, as to attract the attention, and force the acknowledgments of their enemies themselves. But however *they* may treat it, those who are the subjects of God’s delivering goodness, at any time, or in any way, ought to notice it with care, and acknowledge his hand in it, with gratitude of heart. Thus did the people of God of old; and thus are we taught to do in the words of our text. “The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad.”

You will readily perceive, my brethren, with what ease and propriety, the words of our text apply to the design, and the duties of this day. They contain the very language the God of providence

* Verse 2. † Verse 2, latter part.

vidence has put into our mouths; and teach us that notice, we are to take of the dealings of his gracious hand towards us.

If you will please to attend, I will,

I. POINT you to some of *the great things* our God has done for us; and for which we have cause to be glad this day.

II. SHEW you *how* we ought to manifest this gladness.

I. LET us consider some of those great things our God has done for us; and which it become us to notice, and acknowledge this day.

THESE are different, according to the different points of view, in which we consider ourselves; either as the creatures of his hand——as sinners, under a dispensation of grace——or, as the members of society. But to enter into a particular consideration of each of these, would be as vain, as to attempt to count the stars in the firmament, or number the sands on the sea shore. You will expect, therefore, but a very few of the numerous instances, of the great things, our God has done for us.

I. HE has given us his son Jesus Christ, to redeem us from the curse of his broken law; and
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open the way for our return into that favour of heaven, which we had lost by sin——And who that attends to the inestimable value, of this gift of God; the character of the persons for whom he was given; the nature of the work for which he gave him, and the rich and numerous benefits, that flow to our race, from God, through Him; but feels the force of the apostolic remark? “* Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us; and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.” Surely God has done great things for us, in this unspeakable gift of a Saviour.

2. HE has opened a treaty of peace with us, through the mediation of this his incarnate son——He is “† a God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” This treaty he is negotiating, in and by the ministry of the gospel; which is therefore stiled, “‡ The ministry of reconciliation.”

I AM well aware, that the ministry of the gospel, however judiciously and faithfully discharged, is esteemed by many, as the Israelites esteemed their manna of old; but *as a light thing*. They do not consider, there is not a faithful Minister of Christ, whatever may be his particular denomination, or wherever he may be employed,

* I. John iv. 10.

† II. Cor. v. 19.

‡ Verse 18.

ployed, but his gifts and graces cost the son of God his blood upon the cross; or a single gospel sermon they hear, or might hear and neglect, but what our Lord purchased with his expiring groans on mount Calvary. And this is the reason, why the ministry of the gospel, is ranked, by the apostle of the gentiles, among the richest of our Lord's ascension gifts. *

THUS it appears, God does great things for a country or a people, when he blesses them with a judicious and faithful administration of his word, and ordinances; however the more ignorant, or profane part of mankind, may esteem it.

3. HE gives us his Holy Spirit, for the rendering this word and these ordinances effectual, for the great purposes, for which they are instituted——Thus they become “the power of God, and the salvation of God, to them that believe.” Such is the ignorance and depravity of human nature, that they will be all unavailing, unless rendered successful, by this divine agent.

HENCE we hear the evangelical prophet complaining, “† Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” And it is worthy of our notice, that our Lord himself,

* See Eph. iv. 8, 11, 12, comp. † Is. liii. 1.

himself, was far from being so successful in his ministry, as might have been expected, seeing, “ he taught as man never taught.” Multitudes who heard him, not only continued unbelieving; but blasphemed him and his doctrine. This was, no doubt, wisely ordered, for the support of his faithful ministers, in every age; who for reasons, worthy of God, tho’ not known to us, labour so much in vain.

BUT this serves to illustrate, the necessity of the operations of the spirit of grace, for rendering the ordinances of the gospel successful; and at the same time highly illustrates, what great things God has done for us, by appointing him to this important office.

4. GOD does great things for his people, when his Spirit applies the redemption of Christ, to their precious souls——Then it is their sins are pardoned, and they receive a title to the inheritance of the saints in light. Then it is, they become “ * the children of God by faith “ in Christ Jesus.” Then it is, they are renewed in the spirit of their minds; and that good work begun in them, that shall be perfected to the day of the Lord Jesus. “ † Happy is that people, that is in such a case; yea “ happy is that people, whose God is the Lord.”

But

* Gal. iii. 26. † Ps. cxiv. 15.

BUT it is time I should proceed to observe,

God has done great things for us, if we consider ourselves, as *members of society*. This is one of the most interesting points of view, in which man can be considered. And a point of view, in which much is required of us, and much is done for us. This is the point of view, in which the Psalmist principally considers himself, and the church of Israel, when he exclaims exulting in the text, "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." And this is the point of view, in which we are especially to consider ourselves this day. And were we to take a particular survey of what God has done for us, as members of society, we should be led to consider the many blessings spiritual, and temporal, we enjoy, either as the church of God; or as citizens of the State. But this would be a subject too copious for our time.

I SHALL call your attention, therefore, to those things only, which our God has done for us, AS A PEOPLE STRUGGLING FOR OUR INESTIMABLE PRIVILEGES. This best accords to the design of the day.

AND it may be truly said, the Lord has done great things for us, in this point of view; whether we consider the *ends*, he has accomplished

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for us; or the *means*, by which he has accomplished them.

1. Let us briefly consider the *ends*, the *great ends*, God has accomplished for us—He has graciously and fully defeated the designs, the Court of Britain had formed to deprive us of our liberties. They had laid their plans with such art, as to deceive the nation into favourable sentiments of their measures; and thus led them to aid in the accomplishment of their purposes. I need not here repeat the measures pursued by them, for this end. They are too recent to be forgotten by us.

THE warding off this blow, was all we first thought of. The redress of those grievances, which their unconstitutional acts of Parliament laid upon us, was the only object we had first in view. And O! with what joy and gratitude of heart, would we have received this at their hands, any time before the beginning of the summer, 1776.

BUT this is not all heaven has done for us! He has broken our connexion with that people, long practised in the arts of venality, and grown old in scenes of corruption. He has fully delivered us from all their unjust claims, and future practices upon us; and given us a place among the kingdoms of the world. We have,
under

under the auspices of his holy providence, risen into *existence as a people, and taken our station among the nations, and the empires of the earth!* An event of such magnitude, that it forms a new æra in the history of mankind. And we have nothing to do now, but *wisely* improve this event, to render it a fruitful source of happiness to ourselves, and millions yet unborn.

LITTLE did we think of such an event as this, when we began the struggle for our invaded privileges. The growing injustice of the British Administration; their accumulated injuries, opened it upon us, and forced us into the measure, as the only alternative to save our oppressed land. It was this, or the most abject slavery! A dread alternative, indeed, at which every bosom, at first, beat terror; but which an Allgoverning Providence has wisely overruled for our salvation! Surely our God has done great things for us!

BUT this will appear still more clear, if,

2. WE attend to some of the *ways, the means,* in and by which, God has effected these great things for us,

BUT where shall I begin, or where shall I end here? The subject is so copious, that I can
but

but barely glance at the few following particulars.

THE early and just alarm our country took, at the measures pursued by the British court towards us, strongly points us to the watchful care of a kind providence over us.

THE unanimity in opposing these measures, that prevailed among the then colonies, and among all ranks and degrees of their respective inhabitants, with a very few exceptions indeed, is another remarkable display, of the kindness of heaven towards us.

IT is true, both these were the native effects of the unconcealed designs of the court of Britain upon our liberties, and the manifest injustice of their claims. But this strongly marks the hand of heaven; that they should be left to act a part so undisguised and impolitic, and therefore so calculated to alarm, when they could have effected their purposes with unspeakably more ease; with less expence, and with a moral certainty of success, without giving any alarm at all, unless it had been to the sagacious few. And, as if the avowal of their designs was not sufficient to alarm and unite us, they did not hesitate to enforce these claims, by all the terrors of the sword. Thus we were called to resistance, and obliged to resistance, by the principles

ciples of self-preservation, that first law of nature. Their violence awakened those fears, and armed those resentments, that their artifice could not reach. Heaven designed our emancipation, and therefore left them to act the part, best calculated to effect it.

AGAIN, the appointment of proper men, by the then several colonies, to meet in Congress, to consult respecting the general interests and defence of the whole, was a measure of the highest importance. And the prudence and firmness of the measures pursued by them, exhibit the fullest evidence of the wisdom of that august body, and the kindness of providence in directing them thereto.

THE military ardour, in defence of our privileges, that inspired all ranks, from the one end of the continent to the other, deserves our careful notice here. Into what but the hand of heaven, can we resolve that military enthusiasm, that seized our country, and spread like a rolling flame from colony to colony?—Bosom catching fire from bosom, and thus pouring forth an army, sufficient to make a most respectable stand against the enemy, (for so we must now call them, through the remaining part of the war) wherever they came forth against us. In evidence of this, you will please to recollect the manly resistance they met with, at Lexington, where

where the first American blood was shed in the controversy, April 19th, 1775—The well fought battle of Bunker Hill, so fatal to the British troops, on the 17th of June following—And the confining their whole army, within the town of Boston and it's environs, for near a year from this time, by a set of raw undisciplined men; till they were obliged to steal away, with precipitation and shame.

THE northern expedition, in the fall of this same year, under the brave General Montgomery—the taking St. Johns, Chamblee, and Montreal—in a word, the overrunning the whole province of Canada, and laying siege to the city of Quebec * itself, by this new raised army, exhibit another lively display of this military ardour.

ALLOW me to add, for the event is memorable, of the same kind is the gallant and successful defence of fort Moultrie, on Sullivan's island, in South-Carolina, in the month of June, the following year. By this event, truly glorious to the American troops that defended it, and equally reproachful to the British forces that attacked that unfinished fortress, the town of Charlestown, and thus the whole State of South-Carolina,

* At this siege fell greatly and deservedly lamented the gallant Montgomery, his Aid-de-Camp, Major John Macpherson, a most amiable and accomplished young Gentleman, and the brave Captain Cheefman, of this city.

Carolina, were saved from falling into the enemy's hands. Had that Southern expedition succeeded against us, that year, you will easily perceive the baleful influence it must have had upon our affairs, at that early period of the war.

THE providing a proper person to take the command of the American army, is none of the least of the displays of the goodness of God to us, in this struggle. How judicious, how heaven-directed the choice of Congress in this matter! You all know the illustrious WASHINGTON was the man, on whom their unanimous choice fell: The man, whom heaven had raised up, for the great business of leading our armies, and saving his country: The man, in whom all the States, and all ranks in these States have so happily, and so justly reposed the most entire confidence. But the interest had by this great man, in the esteem and the confidence of those he commanded, through the course of the war, both Americans and foreigners, illustrates in a signal manner, the goodness of God to our country, in raising him to this elevated station; and at the same time illustrates his great personal merit——But above all, the event demonstrates both these.

THE kindness of heaven also in providing officers of an inferior rank, to command our armies, in one department and another, deserves our grateful notice——We have had officers of different

different ranks, who have highly merited of their country, during the course of this severe and eventful war; and who stand justly entitled to their gratitude and their remembrance.*

BUT this army, thus collected and thus commanded, had neither arms, ammunition or military skill, to oppose the formidable enemy that came forth against us. But how conspicuous the hand of heaven, in providing us with all these, from time to time!

THE contempt with which our enemies treated us, in the beginning of this struggle, led them into a system of conduct, ruinous to themselves, and at the same time greatly advantageous to us; in all these several points of view. There are two things that deserve our notice upon this head——Their making their first attack upon the Eastern colonies (for so they were at that time) instead of the Southern; and particularly their attacking the well-peopled, and brave province of Massachusetts Bay. Had they gone, with equal numbers, against any of the three Southern colonies, at that time; the events that afterwards took place, in the course of the war, shew with what ease they would have possessed themselves

* The early and active part, which that illustrious young nobleman, the Marquis de la Fayette, took in our cause; and the eminent services he has rendered us, both with his court and nation, and in the field, justly entitle him to the warmest gratitude of every American.

themselves of them: and at least prevented their joining in the general union, and thus prevented their emancipation——To this I may add, the smallness of the army they at first sent out against us.

THEY thought a few thousand men would effect their purpose, which gave us leisure, after the commencement of hostilities; to prepare in all the above respects, for opposing and defeating them. They themselves contributed, not a little, during this period, to teach us the art of war. And after we had taught them to fear us, and they had, in consequence of this fear, augmented their numbers to more than a sufficiency to *crush* us; their pusillanimous caution, was, in the hand of heaven, no small mean of our salvation. Witness their conduct during the summer and fall of 1776.

THIS system of pusillanimity, among many other instances that campaign, was shamefully conspicuous, in their suffering the retreat of our army, not half their number, from Long-Island, two nights after the battle, of the 27th of August, that year. And while the secrecy and expedition, with which this retreat was conducted, do the highest honour to the military talents of our great Commander, and his brave Officers; it's success, and the signal interpositions of providence that contributed thereto, exhibit

a most lively display of the guardianship of heaven over us, and our Liberties. †

WHO

† This retreat was determined upon in a council of war, in the afternoon of the day before it took place, and the more effectually to cover the design from the army themselves, and the enemy, in case of information by deserters; the militia, then on the island, were ordered over immediately, as if to provide them with shelter, in the city, from the heavy rains then falling, as they had no tents,

The embarkation of the troops was committed to Major-General M'Dougall, then a Brigadier, who was upon the spot, at Brooklyn-ferry, at eight o'clock, the hour fixed upon for the commencement of this important movement; but, to his great mortification, he found the militia had not yet embarked. The getting them over protracted the time till between ten and eleven o'clock. In the mean time, about nine o'clock, or a little after, the tide of ebb made, and the wind blew strong at north-east; which adding to the rapidity of the tide, rendered it impossible to effect the retreat, in the course of the night, with the number of row boats they could command; and the state of the wind and tide, put it out of their power to make any use of their sail-boats. The Brigadier sent Colonel Grafon, one of the commander in chiefs' aids, who attended him on that occasion, to report to his Excellency their embarrassed situation; and gave it as his opinion, that the retreat was impracticable that night. The Colonel returned shortly after, not being able to find the commander in chief; on which the Brigadier went on with the embarkation under all these discouragements. But about eleven o'clock the wind died away, and soon after sprung up at south-west, and blew fresh, which rendered the sail boats of use, and at the same time rendered the passage from the island to the city direct, easy and expeditious: by this means the whole army, nine thousand in number, with all the field artillery, and such heavy ordnance as was of most value, were got over safe, by day-light, except the covering party; and not long after the day broke, a heavy fog rose, and hovering over the heights of Brooklyne, concealed this party from the notice of the enemy, notwithstanding their vicinity to our works; by which means they also effected their retreat without interruption.

Had it not been for this providential shifting of the wind, not more than half the army could possibly have got over, and the remainder, with a number of the general officers, and all the heavy ordnance at least, must inevitably have fallen into the enemy's hands.

WHO that reflects upon the dark scenes thro' which we passed, from the period now before us, till the glorious battle of Trenton, December 26th following? (and dark indeed they were) Who that considers the awful poise, in which the fate of America then hung? Destruction awaiting us on every side! And at the same time considers the complicated difficulties and hazards that attended that well-timed enterprize; with it's signal success and extensive consequences, can help exclaiming in the language of our text, "The Lord hath done great things for us."

THINK also, my brethren, of the masterly movement of our great General, and his little army, from the vicinity of Trenton, a few nights after; by which he escaped the fangs of a greatly superior, and enraged enemy. This grand military manœuvre, and the successful battle of Princeton, next morning, which spread such dismay among the enemy; delivered the whole of West-Jersey from their ravages, and drove them back, with precipitation and terror, to the banks of the Rariton; to which they were confined, till they were obliged to abandon the State. *

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* I need not inform those who are acquainted with the ground, occupied by our army, when this movement was determined upon, how perilous their situation. To all human appearance, they must have been compleatly taken, or cut to pieces before noon, next day, had it not been effected. Which leads me to mention a providence

THE American army by a variety of casualties, during two campaigns, being now reduced to a shadow. The raising a new army; the making the necessary provision for the feeding, cloathing and paying them; the keeping them together in the face of countless difficulties, with which both country and army had to struggle; the unexampled patience and perseverance of this patriot band, under every hardship, arising from cold and hunger, poverty, nakedness and neglect. And, above all, their astonishing success, from time to time; aided indeed by the brave militia of the country, ever ready when called upon, so clearly point us to the finger of God, that it would be unpardonable stupidity not to notice it, and the basest ingratitude not to acknowledge it.

THINK

dence that contributed to its accomplishment, that deserves our notice. The weather had been very moist for some days, which rendered the ground so soft, and the roads and fields they had to pass, so deep, that they were scarcely passable for the field-pieces, and other carriages necessarily attendant upon the army, which must have rendered their march extremely difficult, and slow, if at all practicable. But the weather cleared up in the evening, became very cold, and froze so severely, that the ground became sufficiently hard before the hour fixed upon, to bear both men and carriages, without the least inconveniency: And this gave a plausible pretext for that line of fires, the commander in chief caused to be kindled, soon after dark, in the front of his army; the true design of which was, to conceal him and his movements from the notice of the enemy; and induce them to believe he was still there, waiting for them till morning. For this purpose, the men appointed to the business, kept the fires in full blaze, till break of day: And both these important ends were fully answered by the stratagem.

THINK also this day, of the battle of Bennington, in the month of August 1777, the first dawn of prosperity upon our affairs, in that quarter——and of the gallant and successful defence of fort Schuyler. Think of the capture of General Burgoyne and his whole army, in the month of October, that same year——And, the confining the British army within Philadelphia, during their possession of that city; notwithstanding their great superiority to our army, in point of numbers, and their great advantages over them, in every other respect; save only in the goodness of their cause, and their military virtue. Think also of their evacuation of that city, unable to hold it full nine months, after all their immense expence of treasure and labour, and their no small loss of blood in taking it.*——And of the battle of Monmouth, ten days after, by which they were driven back with disgrace, into this city. And “hath not
“ the Lord done great things for us?”

I MIGHT here mention the evacuation of Rhode-Island, in the month of October 1779; by which they abandoned the conquest of the Eastern States, as hopeless, at the end of four years and six months, fruitless toil for this purpose——And the severe repulse they met with, in their descent upon the eastern parts of New-Jersey,

* Philadelphia was taken September 27th, 1777, and evacuated June 18th, 1778.

Jersey, in the summer of 1780; principally by the brave militia of that State. But our time does not admit of recounting all the various instances of success, with which Providence was pleased to bless our arms, during this severe conflict; nor even of enumerating all his kind interpositions in our favour.

I MAY not, however, omit the providential discovery of that infernal plot, laid by the basest of traitors, for the delivering our strong holds, on the Hudson's river, into the hands of the enemy, in the month of September that year. This discovery was so seasonable, and even critical; and the evils from which our country was hereby saved, were so many and so great, that we may truly say, "The Lord hath done great things for us."

BUT it is time we should pass to the Southern States; whose deliverance out of the hands of our enemies, when so fully possessed by them, illustrates, in a striking manner, the great things our God has done for us. Here the American army, and the gallant militia of that country, exhibited the most astonishing examples of patience, perseverance and fortitude. And their success, was the reward of their signal military virtue. Recollect here the battle of King's Mountain, September 1780; where Providence began to smile upon our arms in that quarter—

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The memorable victory of Morgan over Tarleton, at the Cowpens, January 17th, 1781; and his remarkable escape, with his prisoners, from the pursuing vengeance of Lord Cornwallis and his whole army *——Recollect too the well-fought battles of Guilford Court-house, and the Ewtaw-Springs——with the delivery of the enemy's strong posts, in those States, into our hands, the one after the other, until the States themselves were totally and finally rescued from their domination. Can you review these scenes, to day, and not acknowledge, with gratitude of heart, that “The Lord hath done great things for us.”

But one of the most signal displays of the great things our God did for us, in that quarter, is yet unnoticed. You will easily understand me as alluding to the capture of Lord Cornwallis, and his army, in the month of October, 1781.

* Immediately after the battle was over, General Morgan, without loss of time, set out for North-Carolina and Virginia, with his prisoners, to the number of five hundred; apprehensive that Lord Cornwallis, who lay with his army at no great distance, would attempt a rescue. In this he was not mistaken. His Lordship, without delay, destroyed his heavy baggage, and pursued the fleeing victor. And being able to march with greater expedition than Morgan, encumbered with so many prisoners, gained upon him. Morgan crossed the Cawtaba, if I am rightly informed, the evening of the second day; he passed it however without difficulty, and encamped on the north side of the river. A few hours after his Lordship came to the river, and found it so swelled with rains that had fallen in the mountains, though they had none there, that he could not pass it. And being detained two days, notwithstanding all his efforts to get over. General Morgan, in the mean time, escaped with his prisoners out of his reach.

1781. There were so many events the taking place of which, and the combination of which, were necessary to the accomplishment of this end; and these events so entirely dependent upon Providence, so wholly out of the reach of human wisdom to direct, or of human power to effect or combine, that the hand of the Lord was eminently conspicuous in them. Shall I mention the following without enlarging? Lord Cornwallis's taking post at York and Gloucester, the most favourable position in all that country for besieging him, so as to secure him from escaping—The seasonable arrival of the French fleet, commanded by the brave Count de Grasse, so as to prevent his Lordship's escape, by sea; when he must have discovered he was the object of our illustrious commander's movements.—The defeat of the British fleet, on the fifth of September, off the mouth of the Chesapeake, when they attempted to throw in succours to his Lordship's relief, or, it may be, take him off—The remarkably opportune arrival of the Count de Barras's squadron, from Rhode-Island, after having been in the utmost danger of falling in with the British fleet, and becoming a prey to their superior force. This gave the fleet of our allies so decided a superiority over the enemy, as to cut off all hope of relief from them—And lastly, the safe arrival of General Washington, with the allied army under his command, after a march of five hundred

dred miles, in that hot season of the year, at the very juncture it was proper to commence their offensive operations. The entire harmony that subsisted in the allied army, notwithstanding their difference in language and manners, and what is more, their difference in religion, and their former national prejudices, is an event that also deserves our notice; especially considering the influence it must have had; on the glorious issue of the campaign: And what was it our God did for us, by all this? He hereby delivered into our hands an army of seven thousand; two hundred and forty-seven chosen troops, the flour of the British army in America; and under the command of the most enterprizing general they had upon the continent, with a large train of artillery and all their military stores.

AND what renders this Providence the more remarkable is, that it was the *second* British army God delivered into our hands; during the war; an instance scarcely to be paralleled in history, that two whole armies; with all their military apparatus, should be thus compleatly taken in the course of four years: Thus it was God taught our enemies, that America was not to be conquered by the power of the sword: And hath not the Lord done great things for us?

IT has been frequently remarked, and with great justice, that the goodness of God, in the great things he has done for us, has been, not a little enhanced, by the seasonable manner in which

he has often interposed in our behalf. When our affairs have worn the darkeſt aſpect, then it was God has appeared for our relief. “In the mount of the Lord it has been often ſeen.” Witneſs the winter of 1776, juſt before the memorable and critical battle of Trenton, already mentioned—the ſummer of 1777, juſt after the loſs of Ticonderoga and its dependencies—and the winter of 1777, when Heaven provided the ſeaſonable and powerful alliance with France, in our favour.

It alſo deſerves our notice, that the means on which our enemies placed the higheſt dependence, for accompliſhing their purpoſes, had all moſt uniformly the directly contrary effect. This was remarkably the caſe reſpecting the cruelties exerciſed upon us, from time to time; in wantonly burning our towns; laying waſte ſome of our richeſt frontier ſettlements, by the ſavages of the wilderneſs; murdering our citizens; burning and otherwiſe deſtroying ſo many of our churches, and the like. † They deſigned

† It is much to be lamented, that the troops of a nation that has been conſidered as one of the bulwarks of the reformation, ſhould act as if they had waged war with the God whom chriſtians adore. They have, in the courſe of this war, utterly deſtroyed more than fifty places of public worſhip, in theſe ſtates. Moſt of theſe they burnt, others they leveled with the ground, and in ſome places left not a veſtige of their former ſituation; while they have wantonly defaced, or rather deſtroyed others, by converting them into barracks, jails, hospitals, riding ſchools, &c. Boſton, Newport, Philadelphia and Charleſtown, all furniſhed melancholy inſtances of this proſtitution, and abuſe of the houſes of God: And of the nine-

signed and expected by all these to break our spirits, and terrify us into submission, but their never failing effect was, to rouse and animate the country into a more vigorous and determined opposition.

THESE addresses to our fears, as if we were capable of no more generous principle of action; this treatment of us as slaves, excited our indignation and our contempt, as well as our resentments: Our indignation at the insult hereby offered us; and our contempt of the men, who shewed such ignorance of human nature, in its present state of improvement. They hereby taught us their utter incapacity to govern us, both in point of wisdom and virtue; for all this was no doubt done by order of their rulers: And thus they taught us too, the necessity of maintaining our independence, or perishing in the struggle.

I have

teen places of public worship in this city, when the war began, there were but nine fit for use, when the British troops left it. It is true, Trinity church, and the old Lutheran, were destroyed by the fire, that laid waste so great a part of the city, a few nights after the enemy took possession of it; and therefore they are not charged with *designedly* burning them, though they were the occasion of it, for there can be no doubt, after all that malice has said to the contrary; but the fire was occasioned by the carelessness of their people, and they prevented its more speedy extinguishment. But the ruinous situation in which they left two of the Low Dutch reformed churches, the three Presbyterian churches, the French Protestant church, the Anabaptist church, and the friends new meeting-house, was the effect of design, and strongly marks their enmity to those societies. It will cost many thousands of pounds sterling to put them in the repair they were, when the war commenced. They were all neat buildings, and some of them elegant.

I HAVE only to remark farther here, that the successes of our enemies, have, in more instances than one, proved the very snares, in which they have been afterwards taken. Of this their taking Ticonderoga, in July, 1777, just noticed; and their boasted victory at Guilford Court-house, North-Carolina, March 15, 1781, are illustrious instances.

AGAIN, the formation and completion of that social compact among these States, which is usually stiled *the Confederation*, is another instance of the great things our God has done for us. This is that which gives us a *national existence and character*. Previous to this great event, we had no permanent union among ourselves; nor were we considered by the other powers of the earth, as a people, a nation, distinct from that from which we had so lately separated. By this event, the Thirteen United States, though so different in situation, customs, manners, and, in many respects local interests, became ONE PEOPLE. Their interests, however different, are hereby united and consolidated into *one common interest*; and they stand jointly and severally pledged to each other, for the united defence of the respective rights of every distinct state, and the common rights and privileges of the whole body. And this teaches us, by the way, the *sacred* obligations each state is under, and every individual in each state to support and strengthen this federal bond, and

to give it energy and efficacy, to the utmost of his power. Our ALL, under Providence, depends upon this.

ONCE more, God's raising us up such powerful friends, among the nations of the earth, who have so generously espoused our cause, is another instance of the great things he hath done for us, during the late war. I need not remind you here, how unable we were, in every point of view, to contend with the mighty nation, that had made war upon us. But so had the God of Providence ordered matters, in the course of events, that it was the decided interest of the great nation, who first took us by the hand, and indeed of all the maritime powers of Europe, to favour our cause. They, it is true, acted upon the principles of human policy; but that God, whose kingdom rules over all, was hereby accomplishing his own great and gracious purposes, respecting these States.

ANOTHER instance of the divine goodness to us, and which we may not pass unnoticed, is, his providing us in this State with so good a Constitution, for the securing our inestimable rights and priviledges. I do not say it has not its imperfections, like all human institutions; but it is, upon the whole, equalled by few, and surpassed by none of the constitutions of the Sister States, in wisdom, justice and sound policy. The rights of conscience, both in faith
and

and worship, are fully secured to every denomination of Christians. No one denomination in the State, or in any of the States, have it in their power to oppress another. They all stand upon the same common level, in point of religious priviledges. Nor is this confined to Christians only. The Jews also, which is their undoubted right, have the liberty of worshipping God in that way, they think most acceptable to him. No man is excluded from the rights of citizenship, on account of his religious profession. Nor ought he to be.

WHAT great things has the God of Providence done for our race! By the revolution we this day celebrate, he has provided an assylum for the oppressed, in all the nations of the earth, whatever may be the nature of the oppression. And that, while he is hereby accomplishing those great things, that are opening the way for the more general spread of the gospel, in its purity and power; and in due time, the universal establishment of the Messiah's kingdom, in all its benign efficacy on the hearts and lives of men. Interesting events that lie before us, in the grand system of Providence! How glorious the prospects which these scenes open upon human nature! But our time forbids the pursuing them!

LASTLY, God has done great things for us, by that *honorable*, and I may add, *glorious peace*; by which he has terminated the late unnatural war.

war. In whatever point of view we consider this event, it is all as important as we now represent it. It has closed a truly tragic scene in our country. It has secured to us *all* we have ever claimed or contended for, in any stage of the war—*The fullest possession of absolute sovereignty, independent of the crown, and people of Britain; or any other power upon earth.* We are hereby put in possession of a most extensive, and fertile territory, abounding with every article, necessary for the support or conveniency of its inhabitants; and a territory, that furnishes the richest plenty of materials, for every kind of the mechanic arts; and all the various articles necessary for the most extended commerce, with all the nations of the earth.

THE *exhausted state* in which this great event found our country; and the *short time* in which God has effected all this for us, not a little enhance the mercy. Not quite eight years; if we compute the time, from the first commencement of hostilities, between Britain and us, to the ratifying of the provisional treaty. This is a less time than that, in which the States of Holland, in their glorious struggle with Spain, dared so much as lay claim to independence. There is not an instance in history, within my recollection, of so great a revolution, being effected in so short a time, and with so little loss

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of lives and property, as that, in which we this day rejoice.

It is true, it has cost us both blood and treasure; but if you consider the magnitude of the object for which we have been contending; the unequal terms on which we commenced, and pursued the contest, and its glorious issues, now fully secured to us by the definitive treaty; these are less, much less, than we had a right to expect.

THERE is one circumstance, that has had no small influence on the speedy accomplishment of this happy event, that must not be omitted: I mean the impoverished state of Britain, *as a nation*, notwithstanding her great resources, and the princely wealth of many of her subjects: Her national debt had grown to so enormous a height, that all the revenues of the kingdom, though improved by the highest arts of financing, are scarcely equal to the discharge of the annual interest, and the charges of collecting them. Had it not been for this enormous, and this accumulating debt, which shook their national credit, they would not have so readily listened to terms of pacification with us; much less would they have given us the advantageous, and honorable terms we have obtained.

THUS that God whose kingdom rules over
all;

all, has been laying the foundation of this new Empire, ever since the days of the illustrious William the III^d. for it was in his reign, the foundation of this ruinous debt was laid; and laid by the friends of liberty in that day.

AND now, my brethren, put all these things together, and may we not say, with the greatest propriety,—“ The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad?”

WHICH leads me to

II. SHEW you how we ought to manifest this gladness of heart, for all these great things our God has done for us. And here we must necessarily be very brief.

I. BY a careful notice of them—Not to notice these interesting events, and especially not to mark the hand of the Lord in them, would be both stupidity and ingratitude. They address us in the following language of inspiration; “ The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof. “ Clouds and darkness are round about him; “ Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.”* This is one of the most instructive ways, by which the Lord Jehovah is teaching us his being and perfections, his character and government.

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* Ps. XCVII, 1. 2.

2. By recounting them before God, with joy and gratitude of heart—This was the frequent and instructive practice of the inspired Psalmist, respecting the deliverance of the people of Israel out of Egypt, and their peaceful settlement in the land of Canaan. You have repeated instances of this, in the Book of Psalms. The Song of Moses at the Red Sea, is another instance of the same kind. And this leads me to remark the propriety of setting apart particular times and seasons, for this important business. The Christian's setting apart seasons for it in private, and thus making it a part of the devotions of the closet. And it is admirably calculated, to raise and promote a spirit of truly Christian devotion. And communities setting apart particular days, on proper occasions, for this same purpose: Of this kind is the day we now celebrate. They are tokens of national gratitude, and no improper way of expressing it.

3. By psalms and songs of praise to God, for all these great things—The expressing our gratitude to God for his goodness, by songs of praise, is a natural and an ancient custom, that has the sanction of divine authority. It was this gave rise to many of those divine poems, called the Psalms of David. That from which we have taken our text, is an instance of this kind, with many others. This too is the divine command, “Is any merry, let him sing psalms.”*

* James V. 13.

4. BY testifying a benevolent and kind disposition, one towards another——The divine beneficence, in all the great things he has done for us, is designed and calculated to form us, to a similar temper and conduct, towards our brethren of the human race. Many of them indeed may be unworthy of it; but you will please to recollect, that our unworthiness does not preclude us from the beneficence of Heaven; otherwise he had not effected this glorious revolution for us. This is, in no instance, the rule of his conduct towards us; neither ought we to make it the rule of our conduct towards our fellow creatures, in the duty before us.

You should especially beware of indulging a spirit of resentment and revenge, on this occasion. True greatness of mind guards us against this evil. The decision of unerring wisdom and truth is, “He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.”* Nor can any thing be more opposed to that benevolence, which the religion of Jesus so strongly breathes, so warmly enjoins, and with which it never fails to inspire its genuine votaries,

THIS benevolence ought, in an especial manner, to manifest itself with respect to those religious distinctions, that unavoidably take place
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* Prov. XVI, 32.

among the disciples of our common Lord, in the present state of imperfection——It is not to be expected, that we should all be united in *opinion*; and it is best, for the more general exercise and improvement of the Christian temper, that we should not; but we may be all united in *affection*. And this is what I most devoutly recommend. And where we cannot agree to agree, let us agree to differ. Love is the peculiar characteristic of the religion of Jesus. Hark! in what affectionate language our Lord himself addresses us on this subject, “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.”*

BUT I may not dismiss this improvement of the great things our God has done for us, without reminding you of the case of those deserving citizens, who have lost their ALL, by this struggle, some in one way and some in another; and that, with many of them, while they have been hazarding their lives, in the high places of the field, in the defence of their country. To which I may add, the more pitious case of those, who have become widows and fatherless, by this great contest. My heart bleeds for them. Could the tears of sympathy supply their wants, or repair their

* John XIII, 34- 35.

their losses, it should soon be done. I most affectionately recommend them to the notice, and the friendship of their more opulent fellow citizens, and the attention of the public; not upon the score of charity, but of justice. Can no plans be fallen upon, for employing such deserving members of the community, which is the best method of providing for them? And can luxury and dissipation, those awkward vices in our present situation, (to give them the softest name) can they spare nothing for the supply of the more indigent among them? The approaching winter enforces the duty before us, with an energy that language fails to express.

5. WE ought carefully to manifest our joy in God, and gratitude to him, on this occasion, by a wise improvement of the great things he has done for us—He has, by the revolution we this day celebrate, put all the blessings of liberty, civil and religious, within our reach. Perhaps there never was a nation, that had the fair opportunity of becoming the happiest people upon earth, that we now have. But *misery*, as well as *happiness*, lies before us, (and both in the extreme) unless the present state of things is *wisely* improved by us. They are both at our option. And Heaven and earth are looking with eager expectation, to see which we shall choose. The eyes of those Ministers of Providence, the angels of God, who have so often aided us in
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this glorious struggle, for liberty; the eyes of the nations of the earth, and particularly the eyes of all Europe, are upon these States, to see what use they will make of the great things God has done for us. How dignified, how interesting the situation! But however solemn and interesting, the path is plain before us. Would you reap the fruits of your toils, your losses and your blood; it is *indispensably necessary* that the fœderal union of these States be cemented and strengthened—that the honor of the Great Council of the nation be supported, and its salutary measures carried into execution, with unanimity and dispatch, without regard to partial views, or local interests—that the credit of this new empire be established, on the principles of the strictest justice—and its faith maintained sacred and inviolable, in whatever way, or to whatever description of persons it has been pledged, or may at any time be pledged. Alas! that its glory has suffered so much already, by the failure of our currency. Let us carefully repair this waste of honor, if we cannot repair the waste of property, by the most sacred adherence to our engagements, in all future time. Among the virtues necessary to be attended to for the accomplishment of these great ends, industry and frugality are of the highest moment.*

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* The following extract from my first sermon, after the evacuation of the city, by the British troops, I take the liberty to annex,

It is of the last importance too, that you make the constitution and laws of our country, the great rule of your political and civil conduct. Be pleased to remember here, that the government to which I recommend your reverence and obedience, is a government of your own framing; and a government for which we have fought and bled; and, blessed be God, have fought and bled with success——And that the Magistrates by whom this government is administered, are the men of your own choice, the Magistrates of your own appointing. Thus it becomes both your duty and your interest, to strengthen the hands of government, and its ministers, as the sure path to national happiness in all future time.

AND

as not improper in this place.——“ Thus it appears we have
 “ been deeper and longer in the furnace of affliction, than our bre-
 “ thren and sisters in the other States of the union; we should
 “ therefore come forth more refined by our trials. This will be
 “ justly expected of us by our God and by our country.

“ I particularly beseech you to beware of that pride and vani-
 “ ty, that dissipation and luxury, that so soon disgraced most of
 “ the cities and towns in the neighbouring States, on their de-
 “ liverance from the hands of the common enemy. These are
 “ evils at all times displeasing in the sight of a holy God; but
 “ especially so when under his correcting hand, or rejoicing in his
 “ delivering goodness. They will in our case and situation, be an
 “ offence against all the laws of sound policy, as well as true reli-
 “ gion——Let patriotism and piety therefore unite their efforts, in
 “ guarding you against these destructive evils, and engaging you
 “ in the practice of the contrary and important virtues of humility
 “ and temperance, industry and œconomy.”

AND would you know the influence this line of conduct will have upon your reputation, as a people, recollect the ever memorable 25th of November, (the last month) the day when the deliverance of these States was compleated, by the evacuation of this city. The order, decorum and dignity, with which the change of government was introduced on that happy day, and which have ever since reigned in our city, do the highest honor to our cause, our citizens, and our army. They have attracted the notice, excited the admiration, and forced the acknowledgments of our enemies themselves, in favour of our virtue, and regard to order and good government; while they will greatly enhance the pleasure and esteem of every friend of the revolution, throughout the union.

6. AND lastly, God calls us to testify our joy in him, and gratitude to him, by lives devoted to his fear and service—This is the most acceptable manner, in which we can express our thankfulness to God for any favor spiritual or temporal. One of the great ends, for which he pours his goodness upon us, in such rich plenty and variety, is to lead us to repentance, for our manifold transgressions against him. Every instance of his beneficence, is a cord of love thrown over our souls, to allure us to himself. To *offer praise to God, to glorify him, and to order our conversation*

conversation aright, are used by the Holy Spirit himself, as phrases of the same import, in the following Words, “Whofo offereth praise, glorifieth me, and to him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I shew the salvation of God.”*

You will please to remember farther, that the virtue I recommend, both political and moral, is *essential* to the preservation of the dear-earned priviledges, in which we rejoice this day. This is especially the case in a democratic government, and the more democratic the government, the more necessary. Prevailing vice will assuredly sap the foundation of our priviledges sooner or later; nor is any great length of time necessary for this fatal purpose.

I ONLY add, once more, that the sons of profaneness cannot now sin at the cheap rate, in point of criminality, they were wont to do. Your guilt is greater, in your neglect of God, and contempt of his son Christ; in your profane cursing and swearing; your drunkenness, reveling and uncleanness; your sabbath-breaking, gaming and dishonesty in dealing; in a word, in your every species of impiety, than in years past, in proportion to the great things God has done for us, as a people. I beseech you then, my dear brethren, by all these mercies of God, in addition

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to

to all the grace of the gospel of his son Christ,
that you break off your sins by repentance, and
study to walk before him, as it becometh those,
for whom the Lord hath done such great things.
Which may God of his infinite mercy grant,
you may be enabled to do, for Jesus sake, Amen
and Amen.



American revolution

Rodgers, John, D. D. The Divine Goodness Displayed in the American Revolution. A Sermon, preached in New-York, December 11, 1783, appointed by Congress as a Day of Public Thanksgiving, throughout the United States. 48pp., small 8vo. sewn, New York, Samuel Loudon, 1784, 7.50

Tyler, Lit. Hist. A. Rev. 11, 311. "In the city of New York, where, for local reasons (evacuation of the City had been completed only the month before), exultation over the peace was uncommonly fervent, John Rodgers,.... discoursed to his flock....holding up to his fellow-countrymen the need of authenticating their professions of national gratitude by fidelity to all national obligations.....". Cited by all standard authorities, has records as high as \$27.00 at auction.