

PRESENT DUTY.

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501 38, 170

# A DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED ON THE 31<sup>ST</sup> OF DECEMBER, 1808;

WHICH WAS OBSERVED, BY CONCERT,

AS A DAY OF

PUBLIC THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER,

IN SEVERAL OF THE CHURCHES

IN THE

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA.

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*Published by the particular request of the Elders and Trustees of said Church.*

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## THANKSGIVING.

*Philadelphia, November 1st, 1808.*

*AT a meeting of the Clergy of the following religious denominations, viz. The Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist Episcopal, German Lutheran, Evangelical Lutheran Church of St. John, Moravian, and Associate Reformed, Churches: with a pledge of co-operation by the German Reformed, and Reformed Presbyterian Churches; whose ministers were prevented by circumstances from attending the meeting: the last day of the present year, was appointed to be observed in their respective places of public worship, as a day of solemn thanksgiving to Almighty God, for the blessings conferred on this city in particular, and the nation at large, during the current year; and of prayer, for the continuance and enlargement of the divine favor to ourselves and others.*

*By order of the meeting, the following address to the people of their respective charges, is respectfully submitted.*

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GRATITUDE for the unmerited blessings of a munificent Providence is at all times a reasonable exercise and an incumbent duty, and the expression of it constitutes an important part of that public worship, which all christian societies, are regularly in the habit of offering unto God in their weekly assemblies—But when cities or nations receive peculiar favours; or when they are exempted from calamities to which they have been before subject, or under which other nations are suffering, there appears to be a special call in providence

for setting apart, days of thanksgiving and praise, to Almighty God for his distinguished mercies.

Upon a review of the occurrences of the year which is now drawing to a close, and from a consideration of the dispensations of divine providence towards this city in particular, we are of opinion, that our circumstances plainly indicate, the propriety of engaging, unitedly and publicly, in rendering thanks to a gracious God, for the favours which he hath bestowed upon us. For, although we have suffered some privations, and have been threatened with considerable dangers, yet our city and our country generally, have been exempted from the calamities of war, pestilence and famine; the three principal scourges, which the governor of the universe makes use of, for the punishment of guilty nations. The blessing of peace can scarcely be appreciated by those who have never witnessed the horrors of war. The long train of evils attendant on a state of warfare, whether successful or unsuccessful, cannot be fully described. But that which greatly enhances the value of this blessing in our case, is, that to us it is almost a peculiar favour. The whole civilized world beside, has been, for many years, in an awful state of agitation. The period in which we live is marked by events of a very uncommon and astonishing kind.—Thrones, dominions, and empires, have not only been shaken to the centre, but overturned to the foundation. Ancient dynasties, the most powerful in Europe, have been entirely annihilated, and new ones suddenly created. Human blood has been profusely shed, and millions of our fellow creatures have been hurried out of the world by a violent death.—And still the work of destruction goes on—still the sword of war is bathed in blood.—Permitted to be little more than spectators of this awful scene, it is no doubt our duty, to sympathize in the sufferings of afflicted humanity; but, at the same time, we may rejoice that the “Lord reigneth,” and will overrule all these commotions to accomplish his own wise purposes. And we should be unfeignedly thankful, that hitherto our country has been

preserved from being involved in the tremendous storm which now overwhelms Europe: and also, that the spirit of internal discord has been so far repressed, as not to burst forth into open acts of violence. Whilst other cities have been convulsed and torn asunder with dissensions and insurrections, ours has enjoyed undisturbed peace, and settled tranquillity. “Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.”

But, our gratitude is not only due to God for the blessing of peace, but also for that of health. You stand in no need of arguments to convince you, that pestilence is a terrible judgment.—Your own experience is sufficient to prove, that the prevalence of a malignant epidemic disease, is a fearful calamity. At the conclusion of some former years, the retrospect of events was calculated to produce very different sensations from those which you feel at the present time. Then, the most poignant grief was revived by every recollection of the past. But these distressing scenes are too recent, and have left too deep an impression on your minds, to be easily forgotten; and the mention of them is here introduced, merely to excite your gratitude to a merciful God, for preserving you during the last season, from a visitation so calamitous. The common lot of mortality, it is true, has fallen upon many;—and the insatiable grave has devoured its usual number of victims, both old and young: but “the pestilence which walketh in darkness, and destruction which wasteth at noon day,” have not come near you. General health, with its concomitant blessings, has been granted. Free from alarm, and free from danger, you have been permitted to remain in your dwellings, and without interruption from disease, to pursue your respective occupations, and to enjoy the inestimable privilege of assembling from sabbath to sabbath in the house of God. “O give thanks unto the Lord for he is good, and his mercy endureth forever.”

But whilst we are recollecting the blessings of a beneficent providence, which claim your gratitude, we must not omit to mention the plenty, which has rewarded the labours of the husbandman. It is God who giveth us "rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." It is he who causeth the earth "to bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater." He has "crowned the year with his goodness," and his "paths drop fatness," so that "the pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord." "Sing praises unto his name, for it is pleasant, and praise is comely."

But it must be confessed, that the picture has a dark as well as a bright side. For, although in the retrospect of the past, there is reason to rejoice; yet, in the prospect of the future, there is also much cause to fear. Let us therefore "rejoice with trembling;" and, while we offer our thanksgiving for favours received, let us earnestly beseech the *Father of mercies* to continue our blessings, and to deliver us from those evils which we either feel or fear.

Our national affairs, it is acknowledged by all, are in a very difficult and perilous condition, and seem to be rapidly approaching to some important crisis. No human wisdom is adequate to foresee, and provide against, the evils to which we may be exposed. We should, therefore, with importunate supplications, entreat Almighty God to interpose in our behalf, and to continue to protect our country from all the dangers by which it is surrounded; to preside over our President; to counsel our counsellors; and so to overrule all the deliberations of our legislators, that they may be led, at this critical and interesting period, to adopt such measures, as will preserve the peace and promote the prosperity of the nation. And as the hearts of kings are in the hands of the Lord, so that he turneth them whithersoever he will, let us earnestly pray that he would dispose the contending powers of

Europe, to treat us with justice, and permit us to remain in peace;—that he would smile on our country, and cause our agriculture, commerce, and manufactures to flourish:—that he would preserve the health of our citizens, and banish plague and pestilence from all our borders.—And, above all, let us beseech the "God of all grace," that he would grant the rich effusions of his Holy Spirit to all our churches, that truth and piety, may flourish in our day; that the institutions of religion may be revered; that justice, benevolence, and humanity, may prevail; that the rising generation may be early and deeply tinctured with the genuine spirit of the gospel; that vice and error may be suppressed; that luxury and dissipation may be retarded in their alarming progress; that political dissensions and the baleful spirit of party may be extinguished; and, in short, that a pure and general reformation may take place among all denominations of christians, and through all classes of society. And, finally, let us pray, that God would extend the benign influence of the gospel to the most dark and distant regions; that the whole earth may be full of the knowledge of God; that his name may be great among the heathen; and that the remnant of Israel may be gathered in; that "the Lord may be King over all the earth," so that there may be "One Lord and his name One."

Dear brethren, we earnestly recommend that the day appointed be religiously observed for the aforesaid purposes; and that attention to secular affairs be, as far as practicable, intermitted. And we hope that a gracious God will enable you in sincerity to offer "the sacrifice of thanksgiving" and the "prayer of faith;" and that his ear will be open to receive your supplications, and his arm stretched out for your protection and salvation.



PRESENT DUTY.

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A DISCOURSE, &c.

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PSALM, XXX. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

“IN my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong. Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled. I cried to thee, O Lord, and unto the Lord I made supplication. What profit is there in my blood when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? Shall it declare thy truth? Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me : Lord, be thou mine helper. Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing : thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness ; to the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to thee forever.”

WE have assembled for the purpose of contributing our share to carry into effect the concluding recommendation in the *address* which was read to you in the morning. *Thanksgiving* for public mercies received, and *prayer* for future mercies, were the two objects submitted by that address to our serious and conscientious consideration. The recommendation

to consecrate the day to these objects comes from a number of clergymen of various religious denominations; who, after considering the aspect of holy providence, judged it their duty to make the proposal, and to take that part in its execution, which their station in the church of God renders proper. Accordingly, our former discourse went to illustrate the subjects of *thanksgiving*; the present is devoted to illustrate those of *prayer*.

The passage of Holy Writ which has been read, records events, which bear no obscure analogy to the circumstances of this nation. It presents, in the life of David, one of those rapid transitions from prosperity to adversity, which occur not unfrequently in human affairs. And, what is more interesting still, it exhibits that good man, in every change of fortune, tendering due adoration to the Supreme Disposer: praising the divine favour in his elevation, and from the depths of distress looking up, and imploring the divine interposition. It is thus that the visitations of the spirit of grace qualify for all contingencies. Give us but an abundant unction of that grace, and let Sovereignty order events as he pleases; for, whether in sorrow, or in joy, we shall abound in faith, and "in those fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God." This nation, like David, has been elevated to a high pitch of prosperity; like him, it is "troubled:" may our views and conduct correspond with his: and may God of his infinite mercy grant, that a similarity of issue may fill up the measure of coincidence; till the two cases accord as type and antitype:

"In my prosperity, I said, I shall never be moved. Lord by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong." Such was David's declaration; and it is not long since this nation might have pledged him in the cup of blessing. It was but lately that *its* mountain swelled towards heaven, and seemed to promise some stability of base. Within its territorial circuit were displayed a rapidly increasing population,—

fed, clothed, and industrious; while a generous soil poured out, with exuberant bounty, a superabundance of the gifts of life. Agriculture pushed on its conquests over the forests. Cities sprung up out of villages; villages arose in the deserts. In addition to these essential articles of national prosperity, its commerce covered the ocean: ships from every clime crowded its harbours: the fabricks and productions of the trafficking world filled its warehouses. We were clothed in silk, and fared sumptuously every day. The self-created distractions of other nations seemed to be permitted, and ordered by Providence to swell the spring-tide of our national prosperity. Our coffers ran over; and we exhibited the political phenomenon of a nation paying its debts. Our mountain stood strong. It is to be hoped there was national piety enough to recognise the fact, that it stood strong, by the favour of God. Perhaps some calculated on the perpetuity of our prosperous condition; on its longer continuance many certainly did calculate. Self-love, so inventive of reasons to justify and flatter its hopes, could produce a thousand imposing arguments to demonstrate, that it was as much the interest of other nations, as of this, that commerce should continue to flow in the channels, into which the necessities of the times had forced it.

But sanguine hopes are seldom realised: and ours, if such hopes were ours, have met a disastrous rebuke. The Lord hath hid his face and we are troubled. All the internal springs of prosperity continue; but commerce is gone. Reflecting men had long beheld, with anxiety and with terror, the embittered and obstinate spirit of hostility displayed by the two conflicting potentates of Europe. The fate of two great nations, populous, rich, and highly civilized, was itself an object sufficiently interesting to humanity. But that interest was, it appears, mingled with too justly founded a fear, that the effect of their hostilities might reach beyond themselves; that it might affect the essential interests of many nations; and that the principles of public law and of civilization might

get involved in the issue. These were not the alarms of the passions, but the apprehensions of sober wisdom, calmly calculating the effects of exorbitant ambition and relentless wrath, united with great power. The event has justified them all. Even this nation, "entirely divided from the whole world," has got involved at last. Nature had removed her far from the theatre of war: a commerce, which nursed and nurtured both the belligerents, has brought us into the midst of it: a commerce, the value of which we well knew, and they have sufficiently proclaimed; while each cuts off the channel which conveyed it to the other, as they would cut through the aqueduct of a fortress which they wished to reduce. The thing is done. Our commerce has disappeared from the ocean. Our ships rot along the banks of our rivers. Our seamen, where are they? At this moment the nation stands astounded. And no wonder. A great portion of the arrangements of the social body are to be changed at once, in opposition to feelings the most tender, and habits the most inveterate. Wealth must explore new and untried channels; industry find new objects; the poor seek new resources; even luxury—but luxury is the last that suffers in public distress.

Such are the circumstances in which we meet to supplicate the interposition of divine providence in behalf of the nation. The interest at stake is the happiness of a whole people. And we shall ill display our faith in God, or love to man, if such circumstances do not inspire our prayers with ardour and importunity. The subjects of prayer I shall state and illustrate in the order of the *address*.

#### FIRST SUBJECT OF PRAYER.

It is our duty "To intreat Almighty God to interpose in our behalf, and to continue to protect our country from all the dangers by which it is surrounded; to preside over our President; to counsel our counsellors; so to overrule all the deliberations of our legislators, that they may be directed, at this

critical and interesting period, to adopt such measures as may preserve the peace and promote the prosperity of the nation."

In sum and essence; that God would inspire our magistrates with wisdom and virtue for their high official functions; and crown their labours with, what is the end of all civil government, the happiness of the nation. Among all the social duties there is scarce any, of the duties which the people owe to their governors, there is certainly not one, which comes home to the understanding with stronger recommendatory arguments, and at the same time impresses conscience with less force, than the duty of prayer for civil magistrates. Every thing else we will do for them; honour them, praise them, pay them, fight for them; every thing but pray for them; every thing but bear them on our hearts to the throne of grace. This fact is a demonstration that there is a prevalent practical atheism in human nature; and that, even under the gospel, and with all the boasted illumination of the age, the simple principle that "Jehovah reigns" is by far too sublime for the gross and vulgar conceptions of men, who feel sufficiently impressed with every other species of government. The unceasing agency of Deity in the production of things, his operation on the mind of man, his supreme but all-wise disposal of us and our concerns; or in other words, what we call his Providence, is a principle of faith more difficult of admission than his creating energy; and vastly more important. It is this that lays the basis of religious trust. It introduces us to a rational communion with all the perfections of Deity. Deny this, and that communion is gone. All appeals to his justice or mercy, all confidence in his wisdom or power are absurd, if he presides not over us and all that interests us. But do they manifest their belief in the providential government of God, who never recommend the common weal to his care and keeping? It will be well if even that part of the community, who are accustomed to wrestle with God, by prayer, shall be found to have respected, as they ought, the apostolic exhortation: "I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made

for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty: for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.”\* It were devoutly to be wished, that there did prevail that sublime faith which recognises Jehovah’s agency in all things, from the most minute to the most grand; and which recommends to his safe keeping, parents, ministers, magistrates, church, and state; that he would so enlighten them by his spirit, that they may discharge their various trusts with fidelity. It is this that would sanctify man in all his relations. It is this that would sanctify, even that too frequently unsanctified thing, patriotism.

There are two objects to be kept in view when we address the throne of grace in behalf of our civil magistrates. The first is, that God would inspire them with wise and righteous counsels. Even a heathen could dedicate a temple to the *Inspirer of good counsels*. We will have exchanged heathenism for christianity, to little purpose, if we do not honour the true God in our way, as much as pagans honoured idols in theirs. A conversion from superstition to atheism is a poor step in the progress of intellect. Let us take a view of the privilege granted to prayer when a nation’s welfare is at stake; of the use which piety makes of that privilege; of the approbation which God gives to that use; and of the consequences to national felicity. Let us survey the whole in the instance of Solomon. After his advancement to the throne of Israel, he attended a grand national festival, at which he offered up a thousand burnt offerings. The subsequent history runs thus: “In that night did God appear unto Solomon, and said unto him, Ask what I shall give thee. And Solomon said unto God, Thou hast showed great mercy unto David my father, and hast made me to reign in his stead. Now, O Lord God, let thy promise unto David my father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of

\* 1 Timothy, 2. 1—3.

the earth in multitude. Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people that is so great?—And God said to Solomon, Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honour, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge my people, over whom I have made thee king; wisdom and knowledge is granted thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honour, such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like.”\* Such was the prayer of Solomon; such the answer of God. We read the result in the history of a long reign, peaceful and glorious; which civilized and enriched the Israelitish nation, and diffused its fame, linked and entwined with the most solid advantages, to the surrounding countries. When God withholds the blessing of wisdom from a government, the consequences are dreadful. There is not a more awful mark of heaven’s displeasure against a people, than to see their rulers abandoned to infatuated counsels. Yet in the changes of men and measures in the political management of nations, there has appeared I know not what malignity, worse than human; which has seemed to triumph in the pernicious counsels and ruinous administration of civil governors: as if the errors of a statesman and calamities of a nation, were grounds of rejoicing: or as if any virtuous man could wish a change, the means to produce which must be the previous prostration of justice and public happiness. Let us pray God to inspire our rulers in all their various ranks and functions, with wise counsels; and particularly with that, without which no counsel is wise, nor can be ultimately beneficial—the righteousness which exalteth a nation.

But we should pray for more than wisdom and righteousness in our civil governors. Injustice and folly eventually and

\* 2 Chronicles, 1. 7—12.

inevitably destroy nations: but wisdom and virtue will not always save a state. It is the blessing of heaven which gives them that success. Mankind admit, unless when malignity to multiply its censures multiplies crimes, they admit that no man is responsible for the success of his measures, but only for their wisdom and rectitude; herein recognising an important principle of religion—the providential government of God. There are nice junctures in human things. The moral machinery of states is vastly complicated: it interlocks, moreover, with the machinery of nature; with the situations and productions of countries; with winds and waves, and a thousand things else. To give success, therefore, to the wisest plans, belongs to him whose kingdom ruleth over all. Did a government combine in itself, the wisdom of Solomon, the meekness of Moses, and the heroism of David, it could neither insure success to its measures, nor stability to its duration. Nations should look beyond their chiefs, those idols whom they worship to-day, and dash in pieces to-morrow, to the supreme Jehovah, as the author of political prosperity or trouble. It must be strange, if, while the “hairs of our head are numbered,” and even “a sparrow falleth not on the ground without our heavenly father;” states and empires, the most important of things, should rise and fall without his agency. Strange indeed! that he who has kindly relieved us from the burthen of our cares, commanding us to be careful for nothing, but in every thing to let our requests be known to him by prayer and supplication, should be considered as having excepted the weightiest of all human cares, those of nations, from his benevolent grant, and left them to bow us down to the ground, without opening any avenue by which we may bring them to his throne, and obtain his support under their pressure. Let it never be said that those who pray to God for daily bread, for the preservation of an absent friend, for the recovery of a sick relative; should by some unaccountable weakness of faith, or sluggishness in duty, neglect to pray for their country; which includes in it the life, comfort, virtue, and honour,

of themselves, their friends, of millions of human beings, and of unborn ages.

It is a happy circumstance that this duty stands detached from the opinions afloat concerning men and measures. Our duty is plain; we see our magistrates elevated by the providence of God, and the voice of men, to the seat of authority: a nation's interests are in their hands: their administration must prove the happiness or misery of those whom they represent: this we see; and it is *our* duty to pray that God may enable them to discharge *their* duty.

THE SECOND SUBJECT OF PRAYER IS THUS EXPRESSED—

“And as the hearts of kings, are in the hand of the Lord, so that he turneth them whithersoever he will; let us pray that he would dispose the contending powers of Europe to treat us with justice, and permit us to remain in peace.”

This article includes three ideas.—Prayer for our enemies.—That they may treat us with justice.—That we may remain in peace.

*Prayer for our enemies.* Whether both, or either of the potentates of Europe, whose proceedings affect this country, be actuated by a spirit of animosity to its prosperity, the searcher of hearts must determine. We can see in them, only the organs of public measures. And, beyond peradventure, their measures will never be produced as a proof of their friendship for us. We place our duty on high ground when we insist, that, enemies though they be, we may not omit to pray for them. It is the command of our Lord: “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your father which is in heaven.” Doth God prescribe laws for individuals, and not for societies? It is absurd to

imagine that every man is bound to pray for the enemy who inflicts a trifling personal injury ; and yet that nations are under no obligation to pray for those more powerful enemies, whose injuries afflict millions. Let the law of God have its full scope. When we see the spirit of human nature interposing with its arguments, menaces, and physical force, to avert national calamity ; let the spirit of christianity interpose with its prayers and supplications—that cheap defence of nations.

But what prayers ? That our enemies may triumph in their iniquity ! God forbid. Christianity knows nothing of the wickedness of praying, that injustice may prosper : nothing of the absurdity of praying that our enemies may be successful in invading our rights ; and ourselves successful in defending them. It is impossible for God to command, or for man to perform such a thing. The prayer which we are directed to address to the throne of grace, is, that the Lord, in whose hands are the hearts of kings, “ would dispose the contending powers of Europe, to treat us with justice.” We ask no more, we dare ask no more, than that God would dispose them to “ reign in righteousness.” He can easily inspire them with sentiments of justice and moderation. He can teach them to feel the truth so fully taught in the scriptures ; so echoed by every man that writes, and every man that speaks ; so confirmed by every page of history ; and yet so ineffectual in the hour of temptation :—that no solid permanent advantage ever accrued to man or country, from the violation of justice and mercy. Whatever thoughtless men may have surmised, or malignant men urged against the duty of praying for our enemies, the truth is, our prayers for our enemies, and for our friends, and for ourselves, contemplate the very same blessing : that God would subject us all to the authority of his own most holy, wise, and good law, and prosper us in the discharge of our duty. But every prayer for the success of unrighteousness, even our own unrighteousness, is an abomination. The reason why prayer for enemies is so specifically and forcibly noted by our Lord is obvious. Injury ex-

cites no feeling but resentment ; and resentment prompts to nothing but revenge. These are far from comprehending the whole duty of man, in any case. Do we not see in every act of injury to man, a dishonour done to God, a brother exposed to wrath ? The former can be repaired, the latter averted, only by his repentance and reformation. Our prayers, if fruitless to the offender, at least exempt our own souls from guilt, while still we are in possession of all the rights and means of self defence. If answered, God is honoured, a brother restored to virtue, and our own peace and happiness secured, by a bloodless victory. The duty of prayer for our enemies will, when duly examined, be found, like the other sublimities of that glorious system of which it is a part, as full of wisdom and sound discretion as it is of benevolence.

There are times that try men’s souls. The present times try the souls of christians. Perhaps even *they* have not been wise spectators of the out-pouring of the viols of divine wrath on the nations of Europe. Glowing with unsanctified rage towards this nation, and as unsanctified an attachment towards another, they may have indulged themselves in an exultation in defeats and in victories, far from christian. Are we sure that we have felt for *man* as we ought ? Have we interceded with our heavenly father, to abridge the days of violence and blood ? I take it for granted that it was always our duty to pray that those men who direct the energies of desolation, over so large and fair a portion of christendom, should be disposed to use the vast power which heaven has committed to them, for the peace and happiness of mankind. They were at no time objects of indifference. Nothing human, is foreign to man. Our duty is now brought home to us. They are our enemies : and in this new relation, inauspicious and painful as it is, our duty has become more definite and pressing ; we must pray for them. Nor let a narrow and selfish regard confine our views to those points only in which our own interests are concerned. Let us lift up our eyes, and cast them over that wide field of horror which



Europe presents. Millions of men, as dear to their creator as we can be; and many of them as faithful servants of their Redeemer as any of us, exposed to hunger and nakedness, to oppression and the wasting sword, claim our prayers on their own account.

For ourselves, we are to pray that we may be permitted to "*remain in peace.*" Of the value of peace I need say nothing. The subject is too plain for argument; too trite for declamation. That men, as individuals, are fond of peace I believe; the occurrences in domestic and social life justify the inference. But that nations, in their corporate capacity, are fond of peace, is utterly incredible. With all their perpetual declamations in favour of peace, are they not perpetually at war? Fifty years in the century scarcely suffice for shedding human blood. Their *conduct* is the language we must believe. By some frown of God upon the human race, almost all the systems of government hitherto adopted, have been constructed, as if on purpose, to render peace insecure; and to make it, as easy to commence war, and as difficult to terminate it, as possible. It is not very long since, in that part of the world which we have been habituated to call civilized, every gentleman walked the streets with a sword by his side; no doubt under pretence of preserving the peace. Did they preserve it? It was but a word, it was but a look, and blood flowed. What individuals were then, nations are to this hour. The slightest insult, the slightest injury, even the suspicion of injury or insult, is sufficient to commit two great nations, on the field of mutual wrath and destruction. And once committed, they rarely cease, while they can find soldiers to be slaughtered, and money to pay them for exposing their lives. Open the pages of history, and tell me how many governments have been constructed on the principle of rendering peace secure, and the commencement of war difficult. If one cannot propose a remedy for such a clamant evil, he may at least be permitted to lament it. While the divine deduces from perpetual wars a proof of the corruption of human nature, the

politician may demonstrate from the same source, the ignorance of mankind in constructing governments. The proof is complete in both instances.

I will not affect to conceal the satisfaction I feel, that, by the singular favour of heaven, this nation has obtained a government marked with *imbecility*, or an inaptitude for war. Yes, that imbecility, so scoffed and so scorned: that imbecility, so regretted and bewailed: that very imbecility, is the brightest star in our political constellation. It is the grand security of our peace; and a much better security, than will ever be found in the justice or moderation of any one man whatever. To what other human cause can be ascribed the tranquillity, under which we have so long and happily flourished? It is not the political calculations of a man or knot of men at the head of affairs, it is not their gusty passions; it is not even their legitimate resentment of injuries and insults, that can commit the nation to the certain calamities, and uncertain issues of war. The injury must oppress, the insult must irritate, the whole mass of inhabitants, from one end to the other of a great empire. The cause of war must be a great one, because it has a *nation* to move. A government in a perpetual state of revolution, by the frequency of elections, can scarcely begin, and never continue a war contrary to the will of those who must ever be the actors and sufferers—the people. But whether an armed nation inflamed with one common spirit of resentment, will prove an imbecile enemy, when its territory and domicils are violated, is another question. We must defer the answer, till we see with what wisdom its energies are directed.

To those indeed who account human blood as so much water; who calculate nothing on thousands of fellow men writhing in the agonies of despair and death, on fields of battle; nothing on millions of human souls sent to the eternal world; who never reflect on the armies of widows and orphans, thrown into the jaws of hunger, and into the jaws of

vice, still more devouring : to such sanguinary spirits war may appear a trifling inconveniency, to be incurred on every pique of national pride, or for every paltry motive of commercial advantage. But the man who estimates these as very great evils, and who fills up the group of horrors, with burned cities, with desolated countries, with national debts contracted, which will wring from the hands of labour, its hard earning for ages to come ; such a man will ask, what is gained by all this waste of human life, and human happiness ? Is it that a hero may triumph ! Is it that a victory may be announced by the ringing of bells, and splendid illuminations ! Is it that a hospital may be built for those miserable fragments of men who have left their legs and arms on the field of battle ! Is it the pitiful dole of charity, so ostentatiously bestowed on widows and orphans, the poor solace for the loss of husbands and of fathers ! Is it that most detestable of all boasts, the superior desolation, inflicted on the enemy ! Or is it the *status quo ante bellum* ! If this be the whole, and in most cases it is the whole of the advantage accruing from a glorious and successful war, he will despise the wisdom and detest the morality of the men, who did not evade it, as long as evasion was possible. When national liberty and independence are the question, there is no choice. They deserve them not, who hesitate a moment about defending them. This is a cause worthy of blood. But to create facilities of going to war on every occasion, is the extreme of folly and depravity. Is war such a blessing, that we should be afraid of missing any opportunity of getting into it ! David preferred the pestilence.

But whatever protection the national institutions furnish to peace, they can never insure it. There is a supreme and righteous ruler, who will take vengeance on transgressing nations. And there is some ground of apprehension that he is preparing an awful chastisement for us. If the measure of our guilt should be that of our alarm, security is at present no proof of wisdom. But I shrink from attempting the portrait of national iniquity. Whether we have transgressed beyond the bounds which divine forbearance permits to frail

man, before the infliction of national judgments, God only knoweth. It were well, however, if a signal national repentance and reformation, rendered the question less dubious. If the supreme ruler please he can soon raise up against us some "bitter and hasty nation," to be the rod of his wrath. With the most profound humility and contrition, let us prostrate ourselves before him, and urge our last plea—his mercy. Let us pray that our peace may be permanent. He is not worthy the name of christian, who is terrified merely by "*the two tails of those smoking fire brands*," terrific and mighty as they are, and flushed with the conflagration of half the globe. He is still less worthy that name, whose hope of deliverance is not in the arm of Almighty God.

#### THE THIRD SUBJECT OF PRAYER TO GOD IS—

"That he would smile on our country, and cause our agriculture, commerce and manufactures to flourish."

The objects brought under our eye in this article, are the most important and obvious causes of national prosperity.—The organization of a great empire, is never completed, till every useful art and profession, has engaged in its service its due portion of the national wealth and population. Then, as hands, feet, eyes, ears, minister, each in its station and office to the being and well-being of man, each section of society, in its appropriate station and functions, contributes to the being, support, ornament and felicity, of the nation : and thus, while there is a separation into parts, there are ligaments which connect those parts into a whole ; and there is no schism in the body politic.

*Agriculture* is the first and noblest employment of man : the most conducive to health and longevity ; the most favourable to the enjoyment of the pure and unsophisticated pleasures of humanity ; the best calculated to expand and invigorate the mind, to preserve virtue uncontaminated, and to nurture a pure



and ardent piety. Cities have their importance, as marts of commerce, and seats of science, and as the centres where national force and counsel are collected, and whence they operate on the nation, and on all things connected with the nation. But the mass of political power, of sound practical intellect, of virtue, of piety, of happiness, of patriotism, should ever be sought among the cultivators of the soil. If it be not found there, we may assure ourselves that the nation is a hot-house, where plants are forced by artificial means beyond the power of soil and climate. It was a paradise watered by the dews of heaven, and producing its fruits and flowers by the immediate breath and agency of God, that was the first residence of innocent humanity ; and that furnished the means for perfecting its piety, and its virtue. We rejoice therefore to see the wilderness retreating westward. We exult, while we survey the teeming vallies and green hills, where man has asserted the original dominion which God gave him over nature. There peace and plenty reign throughout the year. Happy husbandmen ! Ye are the philosophers in soils and in crops ; in flocks and in herds : ye are the astronomers who know, not the eclipses of planets and satellites, but under what heavenly sign to sow ; when occur the droughts, and the dews of heaven ; and when to expect the appointed weeks of harvest. Ye are the elder sons and stewards of the universal parent, who receive from his own hand the bounty intended for all, and distribute it around his family. It is you that feed us all. And may that God who has given to you, "every herb bearing seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in which is the fruit of a tree," bless your labours with abundant increase.

But the husbandman is only the first link in the chain of social connections. The "*cunning artificer*" holds an important place. Clothes for decency and health, and some species of shelter from the elements, are as necessary to man as bread. Arts are coeval with society. And in the progress of tribes from barbarism to civilization, from civilization to refine-

ment, from refinement to luxury, the increase and extention of the arts keep pace with the march of general improvement. The prosperity of that class of men, who devote themselves to arts and manufactures is greatly interesting, both for their own sake, and for the sake of the public, so essentially served by them. Self interest and social benevolence, may be set at variance by sordid wretches, quibbling metaphysicians, and intriguing politicians ; but the sound moralist and wise man know that benefits ought to be mutual ; and will no more wish to destroy this principle, than that other principle of nature, that action and reaction are equal, and in opposite directions. Manufactures promote agriculture, as agriculture feeds manufactures. They are the two pillars of national independence, I mean real practical independence, where the sense does not belie the sound ; that independence which can be seen, felt, and enjoyed. A people depending on foreign countries for the bread that feeds them, are in the most miserable state of dependence that can be conceived. Rome, with five millions of inhabitants, domineering over the globe of the earth, and calling herself the *mistress* of the world, saw herself desolated by famine and insurrection, whenever a storm or other casualty interrupted the arrival of the victualling fleets of Egypt and Africa. Even the circumstance of being clothed by foreign countries, creates a dependence ; certainly not so dangerous as the former, but yet a real dependence. But whenever a nation has secured within itself those essential articles, "*food and raiment*," in the possession of which God has said "be content," she may boast of a substantial, practical independence. Should this country secure that advantage, at the price of all its present difficulties, the purchase will not be too dear. The young eagle is now sufficiently fledged to be thrown from the nest, to provide for himself. Providence has done this. And while some are indulging a zealous eloquence in reproaching those whose injustice has troubled us, and in magnifying the injury beyond all its dimensions, in order to render the reproach more pungent ; it is highly gratifying to see how many are bending their genius and force to those

projects of internal improvement, which must in the end convert a transient calamity, into a permanent national blessing. We pray for their success most sincerely. "Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies, she seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.— She perceiveth that her merchandise is good; her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands on the spindle; and her hands hold the distaff. She is not afraid of the snow for her household; for all her household are clothed in scarlet. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. Her husband is known in the streets, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. She maketh fine linen and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all."

*Commerce* is the next article, which claims our notice as a subject of prayer. This is the link which connects nation to nation; and converts the various tribes of men into one society. This is the channel in which the divine bounty flows, till it finds its level; equalising the riches and enjoyments of mankind, notwithstanding the variety of their soils and climates. It is the vehicle in which arts, science, and improvement, make the tour of the globe. We will appreciate its importance when we consider that it is to it we owe the grain in our fields, the fruits in our orchards, the cattle in our plains, and the flocks on our hills; to say nothing of those medicines by which we are enabled to ward off the calamities of life, and protract our existence to a reasonable period. Among its moral effects we recognise the security of property. It has taught justice to rapacious despotism. No arbitrary demands, no governmental extortions, nor any thing to impair that mutual trust which is the soul of traffic, can exist in the same atmosphere with commerce. The moment property becomes insecure, she spreads her sails, and is gone to another port. In fine, could nothing else be said in favour of

commerce, than that it has wafted the gospel of salvation, over a great part of the habitable world, it would be a high eulogium.

But alas! The moral condition of mankind forbids us to realise the golden dream of nations, linked together in friendly intercourse, mutually interchanging superfluities, for the relief of mutual wants. The human family was once a single society; and God thought it necessary to interpose, and sever them into dissociated tribes. Their union, it would seem, was the source of corruption; their separation is to be the security of virtue. The period of their re-union (if ever that should take place) has not yet arrived: it lies hid amidst the shades of long futurity. Commerce is now the only bond of union among nations. And if mankind were virtuous, and national concerns conducted on principles of justice, this bond seems sufficient for all the purposes of charity, and mutual benefit. Virtue, however, is scarce indeed. Individuals are but partially under the influence of moral principle; and, if I mistake not, nations not at all. This is the principal cause of the inconveniencies resulting from commercial relations: inconveniencies so numerous and weighty, as in many cases to render the general benefit, or general detriment, of such relations, extremely problematical. Should we give the reins to fancy, and imagine the nations of the earth to be so many moral persons (the personification is usual) we would shudder to contemplate the personages whom our curiosity had conjured up. What are they? Robbers. Do you expect candour, truth, fidelity, justice, mercy, from one of them? Nothing less. Do you expect they will make a fair bargain with you? Not if it be in their power to deceive you. Will they adhere to a bargain? Not if they find an interest in breaking it. If you are weak will they assist you, will they even permit you to grow strong, by the blessing of Providence? They seize the moment of your weakness to subject you to their power, or to turn the little rivulet which supplied you, into the full stream of their own

overflowing prosperity. Do they care for your blood? They do not. If this be not the truth, history lies, and the testimony of all our senses deceives us. And while nations are actuated by such principles, commerce, which brings them together, will be the grand cause of controversy, and bloodshed. Hence the fact, that while nothing is so favourable to commerce as peace, nothing so injurious as war, yet almost all the wars of modern times, originate in commercial claims and interests. It has long been matter of fact, and of feeling to this country, that commerce creates frequent collisions of interest among nations, and ever exposes the weak to the cupidity and injustice of the powerful. It is generally believed that America is not able to support her commercial rights by the sword. But I do not know that it is so generally admitted, that even were she able to enforce all her claims, the object is scarce worth the cost. What! Can we not eat our own bread? Can we not wear our own wool? Can no healthy, can no invigorating beverage be produced in a country, reaching almost from the pole to the equator? Can we not live out our three score years and ten, on the blessings which God has bestowed on one hemisphere of the globe? While foreign commerce is so cautiously guarded, and so much panegyrised, why is domestic commerce, which would link the east to the west, the north to the south, of this great empire; which would create new ties and dependencies, new benefits and charities among the children of the same household, so little thought of; or why has it so few advocates?

I ask not in what situation, as to piety and virtue, and the prospects of eternity, that large portion of the community are placed, who are immediately employed in the transportation of commodities from country to country. I will not enquire into the effects of commerce on patriotism: there are noble minds, which in the day of their country's peril can break those moorings which attached them to foreign nations, and make themselves fast to its soil and its fortunes. I have said that commerce brings us medicines; need I add, it is also the vehicle of

disease. I have said it taught despots to respect property; but does it instruct republicks to cherish liberty? When its advantages are all summed up, they amount to a rapid maturity, and premature decay of every nation which depends on it. And where is the great ground of boasting, if commerce introduces wealth, wealth luxury, luxury the dissolution of morals, and that again the decay and extinction of the state!

But are we not to pray for the prosperity of our commerce? Most unquestionably: nor have I lost sight of that duty. But I hold myself bound in honour and in conscience, not to urge the duty of prayer, without exhibiting what I conceive to be a just valuation of the blessing to be asked. Commerce is a blessing, but of the secondary order. As comfort is to be sought in our families, not in visiting our friends; so a nation's felicity is to be found within the precincts of its territory, not in foreign connections. I do not take into the calculation the case of a Tadmor in the wilderness, or a Corinth between two seas: such places are only centres where men meet to do business. Nations possessed of extensive and fruitful territories are different things. To the declamations in favour of general commerce, made by the men who manage the affairs of states, we listen with spontaneous jealousy. Without estimating at its worth the enlarged and permanent interest of a nation, they may be well pleased to see an immense property floating along its wharves, presenting a convenient subject of revenue, to any amount, and easily collected. Such men are not the best judges. Errors in politicks and morals are rarely discovered, and never proclaimed, by those who profit by them. The case seems to stand thus—we certainly do derive several important advantages from foreign nations; these are blessings to us: and we certainly do communicate several important advantages to foreign nations; these are blessings to them: and every man of humanity, would wish that the tide of heaven's blessings were permitted to wash all the shores of the universe, without being interrupted by

those mounds, which an unjust policy is perpetually erecting to force them out of their natural course.

I cannot close this article without observing, that since it has pleased God to inflict a wound, we should be thankful that he has inflicted it on a part, of all others the least mortal. Had it been famine, or pestilence, or civil commotion, then should we have felt the weapon pierce our vitals. But he has touched us in the extremities, in commerce, a part exquisitely sensible, tremblingly alive to feeling ; but not at all mortal. The language of the dispensation is, You shall have bread to the full, but you shall not grow rich so fast as you calculated.—

The remaining subjects of prayer, I shall recite together.

Let us pray to God : “ That he would preserve the health of our citizens, and banish plague and pestilence from all our borders; and, above all, let us beseech the “God of all grace,” that he would grant the rich effusions of his Holy Spirit to all our churches, that truth and piety, may flourish in our day; that the institutions of religion may be revered; that justice, benevolence, and humanity, may prevail ; that the rising generation may be early and deeply tinctured with the genuine spirit of the gospel ; that vice and error may be suppressed ; that luxury and dissipation may be retarded in their alarming progress; that political dissensions and the baleful spirit of party may be extinguished ; and, in short, that a pure and general reformation may take place among all denominations of christians, and through all classes of society. And, finally, let us pray, that God would extend the benign influence of the gospel to the most dark and distant regions ; that the whole earth may be full of the knowledge of God ; that his name may be great among the heathen ; and that the remnant of Israel may be gathered in ; that “ the Lord may be King over all the earth,” so that there may be “One Lord and his name One.”

The limits which must be set to this discourse admit nothing beyond a cursory notice of the three topics here suggested :—*Health, Religion, and the extinction of Party spirit.*

Of health it is unnecessary to say much, as every human being is equally ascertained of its value; and as the audience are in the habit of attributing this, with every other blessing, to him in whom “we live, and move, and have our being.” Too much circumspection, however, cannot be used to preserve on our hearts the impression, that he is the God of our lives, and that our days are in his hand. No reasonable man will object against inquiries into the causes of health and disease ; no true philosopher will exclude from his consideration of the subject, the idea of a supreme cause : but it belongs to the christian to estimate the moral considerations; the sins, and the reformations, which influence divine judgments and mercies. While we bless God that he hath not said concerning us, “they shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence,” let us implore his mercy for such an increase of faith and righteousness, that it may cease to be necessary to teach us the obligation of his law, by the infliction of its penalties.

As to *Religion*, it is the one thing needful ; the portion of the soul, the means of securing to man an immortality of happiness and of glory. In this view, it is constantly presented, in all the acts of private and social worship. Here we need not dilate. But the appropriate duties of the day forbid us to overlook the immense importance of it to states, and societies. A high encomium is passed on religion, when it is represented as the contrivance of civil authority, to enforce subjection to the laws. We cannot avoid feeling indignant that so base and spurious a parentage should be assigned to the offspring of heaven ; yet, while the high priests of impiety who pretend to have inspected the register of her birth, acknowledge, that notwithstanding the baseness of her descent and blood, she is still the protectress of order and law, of

justice, peace and social concord, we accept the compliment; and allow it that accumulated meaning, which belongs to the praise of an enemy. They are right in this praise. It does require something more august than mortal majesty; something more imposing than the wisdom of senates; something more terrible than legal penalties, so easily evaded; some inspection less capable of elusion than that of human tribunals, to give efficiency to those laws which prescribe restraints to all the wild and furious, and destructive lusts, of the human bosom.

When we read the scriptures, we feel the impression of a dignity in magistrates, laws and obedience, which we are sure we never experienced in reading history, or in contemplating any particular commonwealth: we see the magistrate receiving an investiture more noble than the pomp of a coronation, or even the election of the freest people on earth can give. He is the "minister of God;" the instrument by which the sovereign of heaven, manages the moral government of this world; by which he dispenses his justice and mercy to mankind, and preserves the order, peace and happiness of the human race. As such we fear and venerate him, with an allegiance consecrated by religion. We see in just laws something more than the contrivance of those men, whom wisdom, or the reputation of it, has raised to the high trust of legislation: they are the laws of God sanctioned by eternal rewards and punishments: and we feel that "we must be subject not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake." Religion, so far as it operates on society, secures veneration to magistrates, and obedience to the laws, to the full extent of their merit.

It does more: far more. It attains the noblest ends of civil government, by a native inherent energy, which leaves the magistrate nothing to do, but to look on and approve. While a christian is enabled to "do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God;" the laws against murder, unchastity, fraud, perjury, and other enormities, may, for him, sleep

in the statute books of the country forever. *He* knows little about them. They were not made for *him*; but "for the lawless and disobedient; for the ungodly and for sinners; for the unholy and profane." He soars over the heads of magistrates, and transacts his moral concerns, immediately with the sovereign of the universe: and while he thinks only of obeying the laws of God, he renders an exemplary obedience to the laws of man.

The influence of religion does not terminate here. Within the circle of social relations, there are immense tracts, where human government has scarcely the shadow of authority. How extensive are the duties of parental and filial obligation? How numerous those imposed by friendship and gratitude? How sacred the obligation to forgive injuries, to sympathise with sufferings, to bear with prejudices? Yet there is not one of a thousand of such duties that can be enforced by civil law; not one of a thousand violations of them, against which a civil penalty can be directed. They are only a few palpable crimes and virtues about which the magistrate is versant.—Religion steps in and sanctifies all the relations of man; and by a secret but mighty influence, eradicates vices which the laws could not punish, and plants in their room graces and virtues, which the laws could not injoin. Need I add, that religion furnishes the surest and best, and in many cases the only consolations, which can cheer and support us under the numerous calamities to which humanity is at present exposed.

As well therefore for sake of the blessings which it diffuses among men in this life, as because it is the means of everlasting happiness, should we pray that God, for Christ's sake, would diffuse the gospel over the land, and by the blessing of his divine spirit render it efficacious in the conversion and sanctification of the inhabitants. For the same reasons, we should pray for its diffusion over the globe. The moral state of the world at this day is shocking; it is alarming. The



greater part of it is literally a field of blood, where nothing is displayed but perfidy and violence. We despair of general peace and virtue, till the "prince of peace," reigns in righteousness. Our prayers should be the more earnest on this subject, because here, more than any where else, God displays that sovereignty which baffles calculation. He only can christianize the world.

The last subject to be noticed is *party spirit*. Perhaps it may appear superfluous to attempt defining a spirit, which whistles in every wind, and roars in every storm of politics; and which, though frequently changing its visible vehicle, still continues the same malignant blasting spirit, which all the world have agreed in reprobating. I should have thought so, were there not reason more than to suspect, that unguided declamation, has placed on one degraded level, the mean partisan and the man of moral worth; and poured out the same fretful and acrimonious invectives, against the baseness of the one, and the principled virtue of the other. The clumsy sophistry crawls on, from error to error, thus: every man belongs to some political *party*; he is, therefore, a *partizan*; and therefore, again, must be actuated by *party spirit*; and then, as all agree that party spirit is a base and abominable spirit, the conclusion is unavoidable: all men are alike base. A conclusion grateful to miscreants! But to ascribe no other, nor better motive to tens of thousands of men, respectable for judgment and virtue, than the desire of supporting a party, is to betray an intellect too weak to judge of human nature; or a heart so thoroughly rotten and dissolved, as to be incapable of conceiving even the possibility of a virtuous motive. What is that spirit which in all sects and parties, civil and ecclesiastical, merits the abhorrence of good men?

It has been said that parties are unavoidable in free governments. And whether we look to fact, or philosophy, we must accredit the assertion. The laws of justice and mercy are divine, and immutable. Systems of political economy must

change with circumstances; and therefore God has left them free, binding us only thus far, that change them as we may, we must never violate justice and humanity. We accept the liberty which the Creator has conceded to the free-born mind, under the sole restriction which his righteousness has imposed. To minds so differently gifted as ours, so variously instructed, so usurped by personal, local, and unaccountable feelings and prejudices, political questions will ever present an infinite variety of views. Differ we will. Nothing can prevent it, unless God should, by a moral miracle, reduce all men to the same standard of intellect, education, habits, virtues, vices. That miracle would indeed prevent parties: but it would destroy society, by destroying the adaptation of our various talents, to their appropriate offices in the social state. Under free governments, where mind lives, parties spring out of the constitution, which God has given to the world, and to man. Sin does not spring from the necessity of things. But man must mend God's world! Is there, then no human cure for parties? Yes, certainly: a medicine tried in all climates and on all constitutions, with complete success. A superincumbent despotism, which forbids all communication of thought, and combination of counsel! A despotism which appropriates to government the *rational* privileges of thinking, planning, and resolving; and leaves to the nation only the *brutal* rights of feeding, and of obeying they know not why, nor wherefore: such is the cure: if we like the medicine, let us swallow the dose; it never yet has failed. Only still the pulsations of my heart, and I shall have no more fever. One of the first of men, in one of the first of human productions, has said: "Give me the liberty to know, to utter and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties.\*" What man would praise that stagnant pool of society, where the pure and wholesome streams of our rational and nobler powers, are absorbed and vanish, leaving nothing behind but the grossness of our ani-

\* Milton's Areopagitica.

mal nature? Let us have the free and honest use of our souls, and if that creates parties, we shall derive some profit even from these. They will stimulate thought, they will provoke discussion, they will promote research, they will affect compromises between plans and measures, preferable in many instances to any one of those plans or measures, separately.

The result is ; that if parties are unavoidable, there is an unavoidable and a *virtuous* party spirit. No man can prevent himself (nor ought he, if he could) from feeling an interest in the measures which he judges just and beneficial ; nor can he avoid an attachment to the men who support them. As an honest man, he must applaud both. Any pretence to the contrary, would betray hypocrisy, or at least insipidity of character. A candid man, acting on his best judgment in the duties of his station, and violating no moral law, is an object of approbation. We may dispute his political judgment ; but the man we must respect. It is a violation of truth and decency, to stigmatise such men as partizans.

But there is another, and a very different party spirit. A spirit in which wisdom and honesty have no share. It knows nothing but party. Name but the men, and it stands ready to approve or disapprove, as the case may be, all they are pleased to do or think. It never ponders the wisdom and utility of a proposition ; but asks who moved and seconded it. It always dresses by the flag of party. It is a malignant spirit too : it deals less in panegyric than in censure ; more in refutation than in confirmation. It is a presumptuous spirit ; it knows every thing, and how it originated, and in what motives, and where it will end. This is that evil spirit which, in one degree or other, in all the parties on the field, is labouring with all its might, to banish all truth and candour, all independence of character, and enlightened patriotism, out of the nation and out of the world.

Its very first effect is to render a man's intellect of no use to him : talents, genius, knowledge, wisdom, of what use are they to a man who considers himself pledged to a blind and obstinate adherence to whatever his party, or the leaders of his party, are pleased to propose? The less such a man knows the better : " a common stediast dunce," noisy, bustling and violent, forms the best of partizans. When this party spirit has thoroughly leavened a mass of men, it gives a fatal permanency to the party, long after they have unfortunately survived their wisdom and virtue. Few parties arise without making court to public opinion, by the profession of an honourable object, to be obtained by just and honourable means. Few preserve their original purity ; but, by a variety of obliquities and aberrations, manouvre themselves off their first ground, and lay themselves liable to be frowned back into atoms, by the good sense and virtue of the community. But party spirit holds them together, after they have renounced, or lost their first object. And they are found co-operating, with the zeal of proselytes, in measures, which perhaps not a man of them would ever have adopted of unbiased choice.

But it is with horror that I mention one other effect of this party spirit. It is this—that, it destroys the best and noblest of human virtues, that which is the base of all virtue, and of all virtuous character, *honesty*. I do not allude to pecuniary honesty ; that is the lowest grade of the virtue : I mean that honesty, which impels a man, on every question of conduct, to form his best judgment ; to speak " as he thinketh in his heart ;" and to act according to his principles. Such a one is an honest man ; and we should never stoop to call or to think any other man honest. Yet such a man, the thorough paced partizan scarcely can be. He gets into the habit of shutting his eyes lest he should discover the faults of his party, and their measures ; or the excellencies of his opponents, and their measures. He learns to defend what he does not understand, and to confute what he cannot comprehend : to speak

or be silent, to praise or to blame, by signal ; to throw out inuendoes ; to search for slanders ; to credit vague rumours ; to circulate dark reports. What a pernicious influence must such proceedings have on any man's mind ? A soul poisoned, throughout the whole circle of its faculties, with darkness, and evasion, and disingenuity, is ruined.

Such is that "baleful spirit of party," for the extinguishment of which we are called upon to address our ardent supplications to the throne of grace. And verily the temptations are so numerous, and the motives to its indulgence so pre-pollent, and almost irresistible ; that to secure men against their influence, belongs only to that God, who can preserve virtue untouched in the midst of the fiery furnace.

Here, I willingly conclude. My object has been to lay before you what I conceived a just, (though it is certainly an inadequate) view of the blessings for which we have met to pray : and at the same time to communicate some impression of the duty of praying for those blessings. That latitude of reflection which such an occasion, and such topicks required, has been freely indulged. Knowing and feeling our privilege of drawing near with boldness to the throne of grace, nothing is wanting but a just estimate and impression of the blessings, which we are to supplicate. If the subjects which have been stated are not important, it will be difficult to name those which are. I hope you will ever esteem it a religious duty, which you owe to God, and a political duty which you owe to the state, to pray for the prosperity of the nation, and for those who administer its government. And, whatever issue adorable Providence may give to the present portentous circumstances, whether peace, or unavoidable war : be of good courage, and play the men for your people, and for the cities of your God : *and the Lord do that which seemeth him good.*