

A

**SERMON,**

PREACHED AT CONCORD,

BEFORE

**HIS EXCELLENCY SAMUEL BELL,**

*GOVERNOR,*

THE HONOURABLE

**COUNCIL, SENATE,**

AND

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,**

OF THE

**State of New-Hampshire,**

JUNE 6, 1822.

BEING THE ANNIVERSARY ELECTION

---

By JONATHAN FRENCH, A. M.

Pastor of the Church in North-Hampton

---

CONCORD :

PRINTED BY HILL AND MOORE

1822

## SERMON.

---

II Chronicles, I 10

"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?"

A PRINCIPAL duty of man is to walk humbly with God. From him we have received our existence and all we possess, and on him we continually depend. Our own inferiority and guilt and his perfect excellence demand of us lowliness of mind, and supreme reverence of him. How immeasurable the contrast between our weakness and his power; our vileness and his purity, our ignorance and folly and his knowledge and wisdom. Even such endowments and acquisitions as too often excite and nourish pride, should produce deep humility. Those who have reached the highest eminence possess nothing which they have not received from God. To be humble before God, is necessary to prepare us to feel our dependence on him, and to ask and receive good and perfect gifts.

Solomon, with his peculiar talents and accomplishments to be the ruler of a great people, deeply felt his dependence on God, and prayed that he might be enabled to fulfil the duties of the high and important station in which he was placed. "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?"

The essential qualifications of a good ruler are here comprised in the terms *wisdom and knowledge* and these requisites to the right administration of government are acknowledged as *gifts of God*, which are to be *obtained by prayer*.

The sentiments of every christian magistrate and legislator will accord with those expressed in the text, in which we observe,

1. That Solomon comprised the essential qualifications of a good ruler in the terms *wisdom and knowledge*.

Wisdom necessarily implies a degree of knowledge. In distinguishing them from each other, wisdom may be said to be practical, and knowledge speculative. Knowledge consists simply in an acquaintance with things as they are in themselves, in their natures, properties, and circumstances.

The full meaning of wisdom cannot be expressed by any other individual term. It implies the power of taking such clear and comprehensive views as to be able to devise important plans, and select suitable means for their accomplishment. It implies discernment of the various connexions of things, and a minute and extensive observation of their tendencies and probable results. It implies a facility to discover the dispositions, interests and designs of men, and to perceive what measures will most successfully excite or control their tempers, and aid or defeat their purposes. It implies foresight, which guards against whatever might possibly hinder, and which provides for an advantageous improvement of whatever might promote a desired object. It also implies the prompt application of suitable means to effect the end proposed. Wisdom therefore includes what is meant by the various terms discernment, sagacity, foresight and prudence.

But this is not all we are to understand by wisdom and knowledge from the lips of Solomon. They also include that correct disposition of the will, which is requisite for improving knowledge to the best purposes, and applying wisdom to the attainment of worthy ends. Wisdom was a term of more extensive import with the Hebrews than with the Greeks or Romans. Heathen philosophers called wisdom "an intellectual virtue." Solomon included in it morality and piety. "The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom." The wisdom and knowledge of which Solomon often spoke are separate from subtility. They are not such as distinguished the crafty and designing Ahithophel, but such as were possessed by Joseph, who feared God.

Wisdom without correspondent knowledge must be very limited in its operations, while great knowledge without wisdom has nothing to balance and regulate it, nor to direct it to useful and important purposes. And both, unless piety is included, are destitute of the only principle, which can ensure such improvement and application, as will be approved of God, and beneficial to men.

It is true the upright ruler may prove a blessing to his constituents, although he may have little knowledge or discernment, but it is impossible that he should be as useful as he would be were he capable of taking large and comprehensive views of the interests of the community, and of regulating and accelerating the motions of the various wheels of government. And godly sincerity may consist with such weakness of understanding, and ignorance of the complicated machinery of government, as would render a person unfit to rule. He would be liable to perpetual mistakes through his own misapprehensions, as well as through the subtility of designing

men, who might take advantage of his good intentions and credulity to promote their selfish purposes. On the other hand, the greatest sagacity and knowledge, unless under the controlling influence of the fear of God, can give no security for the faithful performance of duty, and they may render their possessor eminently dangerous. He who holds the office of a ruler is surrounded with peculiar temptations, and there can be no assurance that the highest grade of unsanctified wisdom will not degenerate into artifice, and the public good be sacrificed at the shrine of avarice or ambition.

It may be, indeed, that a person of talents and knowledge without piety may in some cases rule well. He may be influenced by the natural principles of generosity and honour, by the habits of a good education, by regard to public opinion or by the connexion of his own personal interests with those of the community over which he rules. But principles like these, while they have often led to noble deeds, have in too many instances proved feeble barriers against the influence of less worthy motives.

Were it not painful to exhibit the portraits of those, who have dishonoured the dignified office of the civil ruler, we might illustrate our subject, by selecting from the pages of history instances of mal-administration, which may be evidently traced to a want of the complete requisites for government, which have been considered. We might present instances of some who possessed sufficient knowledge, but were neither wise nor just, some, who were exceedingly sagacious, but destitute of correspondent knowledge or integrity, and some, who were honest, but too weak or too ignorant to govern with success. We might also select examples of the happy union of the best qualities, and trace their beneficial ef-

fects in the prosperity of the communities, whose affairs have been conducted by able and upright men. The history of our own favoured nation will ever exhibit to the world many bright examples of the latter character. Nor can the history of any people present one more illustrious than that of him, whose memory all delight to honour, and who well deserved the title of "Father of his country."

The importance of the qualifications for which Solomon prayed will appear, when we consider the reasons for which he desired them.

He was to go out and come in before the people.—They were the Lord's people.—They were a great people.

1. He was to go out and come in before the people. This was a proverbial expression among the Hebrews, denoting the administration of government both in seasons of prosperity and of adversity. It was taken from the employment of shepherds, who went before their flocks, that by their protection and guidance they might safely "go in and out and find pasture." It was the fervent prayer of Moses, at the close of his administration, "Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out and which may bring them in, that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd." The appellation of pastors and shepherds is often given in the sacred scriptures to civil rulers as well as to the ministers of religion. The similitude is very beautiful, and it would doubtless appear still more striking were we fully acquainted with the ancient customs, to which it refers. It evidently denotes the tender and vigilant care, the paren-

tal affection and fidelity, of a good ruler toward his subjects. The ruler of the world was pleased to select this figure, to represent his kind and faithful government over his people, and his righteousness in executing justice upon oppressors. "As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day." "I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat of the strong, I will feed them with judgment." "The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost, but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them."

Christ in his mediatorial government is described as a good shepherd feeding his flock; gathering the lambs with his arm, and carrying them in his bosom; laying down his life for his sheep; and not suffering any one to pluck them out of his hand.<sup>3</sup>

To sustain the character and fill the office here represented, high qualifications are requisite. The mind must be well improved; the heart must be warmed with the purest patriotism, and shielded with unyielding integrity, interwoven with candor and benevolence. He who sustains such a character stands on an eminence, as the friend, the guide, and protector of the people. He is to descry their dangers and give the alarm. He is to guard and secure their privileges, that the oppressed may be restored to their rights, and the oppressors punished and restrained. That he may provide for the common safety and prosperity, his watchful eye must be intent on what-

ever concerns the interests of the community. The people will look to him as a flock to their shepherd. Every eye will be upon him, every motion will be observed. Not only must he sustain a weight of care and responsibility, but the higher his station and the greater his usefulness, the more in some respects will he be exposed to danger. Those whose selfish purposes cannot be accomplished but at the expense of the public tranquillity, will view the patriotic ruler as their enemy. If they can smite the shepherd, the flock will be scattered, and they can gather the spoils. To discover and counteract their artifices will require no ordinary skill. They will endeavour to influence his councils, bias his judgment, and sway his measures. If they cannot move him from his upright purposes, they will attempt, and it may be with too much success, to blast his reputation and destroy the public confidence. And while the popular ferment will call into exercise all his talents, the ingratitude of those to whose welfare he is devoted will try the purest virtues of his heart. 'To go out and come in before the people he will need wisdom as an angel of God.' Not less important to civil rulers than to ministers of the gospel, is that precept of Christ, "Be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves."

2. Solomon felt the need of high qualifications as he was to bear the image of God's authority, and to act as his representative, in the government of his people. Who, said he, can judge *this thy people* ?

By whatever intermediate ways men are advanced to places of trust and power, they are officers under the general government of God. "In the hand of God is power and might, and in his hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all." "Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. but



God is the judge • he putteth down one and setteth up another." "By him princes rule, and nobles, yea all the judges of the earth."

The derivation of civil authority from God does not however justify any mal-administration, nor imply the duty of passive obedience to the will of oppressors. To restrain man from cruelty and oppression, God has limited even the dominion which he has given him over the inferior animals. And wherever he has intrusted authority, whether to the heads of a family or of a state, he has given the rules by which it is to be measured and exercised. It is only when rulers administer government agreeably to his will that they can be strictly said to rule by his authority. The proper design of government is no further answered than as it is in conformity to the divine law. Rulers, as the servants of the people, intrusted by their suffrages with their most important interests, are responsible to them. But as the ministers of God they are accountable to him. They must rule for him. Their charge is, "Take heed what ye do; for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in judgment. Wherefore, now, let the fear of the Lord be upon you, take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts."

Civil rulers must endeavour to counteract whatever opposes the laws of God, and to encourage and promote subjection to his authority. They must act in subordination to him in executing justice, and as the instruments of his providence in advancing the happiness of human society. As his representatives they must rule, as it is reasonable to believe he would, were he to take the immediate direction of the affairs he has intrusted to them, legislating and governing in their particular spheres, on the same principles of righteousness and benevolence by

which he conducts the government of the universe. Solomon might well ask for wisdom and knowledge, since he was to sustain so important a relation to God and to his people.

3. He also felt the need of high qualifications because he was to rule *a great people*.

The principle of equality with respect to the natural rights of men is evident. But it would be absurd to suppose that all men have equal talents and abilities to rule. And if to govern any community requires superiority of qualifications, distinguished abilities are important for the government of a people great in extent of territory, in numbers, wealth, arts and learning. The natural sagacity of the sachem may avail to manage the concerns of a tribe of the forest, but much wisdom and knowledge are requisite for the legislators and magistrates of a great, enlightened, and growing community.

The ruler of a great people needs to be well versed in political science; and especially in the constitution and laws of those over whom he is to rule. He needs a thorough acquaintance with human nature, and a particular knowledge of the genius, dispositions, habits, and circumstances, of the various parts of the community whose concerns he is to direct. He needs an enlarged and well furnished mind, and inflexible integrity, that where many private interests interfere, he may act uninfluenced by local prejudices or personal partialities, and without doing injury to any, advance the welfare of all.

We take a most interesting and exalted view of the office of a civil ruler, when we behold him as deputed of God, acting as his agent, and in unison with him in the government of a great people. But his obligations and accountability are great. In this respect there is a striking parallel between the office of a minister in the

kingdom of Christ, and of a civil ruler as a minister in God's providential government. Both, when contemplating the solemn duties and awful responsibilities of their stations, must feel the need of wisdom from above. The one will be constrained to exclaim with Paul, "Who is sufficient for these things?"—And the other with Solomon, "Who can judge this thy people that is so great?"

In our text we observe,

II. That Solomon considered the requisite qualifications for government as the *gifts of God*.

If any are distinguished by peculiar knowledge, wisdom and virtue, they are indebted to God for these blessings.

All who believe the perfections of God will acknowledge that he can have the most intimate access to the human mind, and influence it as he pleases either mediately or directly. If not a sparrow lives, or falls to the ground, without him, is it reasonable to believe, that he has no agency over his more noble works? While we confess his government and direction throughout all nature, would it not be absurd to suppose that he has excluded himself from all control and direction over the intellectual and moral parts of his creation? That he does exert his agency on the minds and hearts of men, we have the testimony of his word. "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord as the rivers of water he turneth it whithersoever he will." "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord." Great abilities, whether they are called natural or acquired, whether they are the effects of a direct influence, or of peculiarly advantageous circumstances, are equally the gifts of God.

It is not to be supposed, because God created Solomon with a capacious mind, that therefore his profound wis-

dom and extensive knowledge were acquired independently of divine aid and influence. Moses was formed with a mind of superior order. He became learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. He possessed eminent intellectual and moral qualifications for legislation and government. But when we consider the train of events which led to his elevation of character, when we reflect that God directed them all, and that had even a single circumstance been omitted or been otherwise than it was, he might have perished at his birth, or found his grave in the Nile, or have remained in obscurity and ignorance,—it appears that God as really gave Moses all that distinguished him, as if he had created him in full stature, with a mind and heart at once stored with wisdom and knowledge.

Heathen writers have considered the intellectual and moral excellencies of the most eminent men, as divine gifts. It was a saying of Seneca, "No person is virtuous without God. How can any one rise above fortune, unless assisted by him? It is he gives great and noble designs." Cicero observed, "Both our city and Greece have produced many extraordinary men; none of whom, we ought to believe could be what they are without God's help." To us it is declared by revelation, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the father of lights."

We observe, further, that they who possess extraordinary qualifications are dependent on God for their increase. Solomon had already much wisdom and knowledge when he prayed for these gifts. The office of a ruler is so important, it gives such scope and exercise to the best abilities, that if he who rules has much wisdom and knowledge, he may well desire more. Besides, the present possession of the greatest gifts does not ensure their continu-

ance. "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance," while he feels his dependence on God, constantly implores his blessing, and studiously obeys his will; otherwise, "from him shall be taken away even that he hath." Was it not thus with Solomon? When idolaters drew away his heart from God, did not his extraordinary wisdom, in a great measure, forsake him? It is certain, that from that time, his kingdom, which had been above all others prosperous, began to decline.

It is easy for God to lay a powerful and cultivated mind in ruins, and to take away any of the gifts for which men are ungrateful. "When the heart of Nebuchadnezer was lifted up and his mind hardened in pride, when he assumed to himself the honour of having acquired and achieved what God had given and accomplished, and would not glorify him, in whose hand was his breath, and in whom were all his ways,—God stained the pride of all his glory, took from him his reason, deposed him from his kingdom, and drove him among the beasts of the field."

III. Solomon acknowledged that the gifts of God which we have considered were to be *obtained by prayer*.

God is able to bestow his gifts on men if they do not ask. But that he has appointed prayer as the means of obtaining them is a sufficient reason for asking. It is not to be supposed he would have prescribed this means, if it were not to produce the end for which he expressly appointed it. He is able to feed us with manna from heaven. But this is not the way in which he is pleased to supply our wants. We may more easily see the connexion between the means and end, with respect to obtaining our daily subsistence, than between prayer and the attainment of such blessings as Solomon asked. But the connexion is as real in the latter case as in the former. It is

a connexion which God has established. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth unto all men liberally and upbraideth not." Praying for blessings is the condition on which they are promised. "Ask, and ye shall receive. For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth." It should also be considered that prayer for divine favours excites to an improvement of every other means for their attainment, and prepares for their reception. It is therefore reasonable to believe that God will bestow good gifts in answer to prayer, when they would not otherwise be given. One way in which the immutable God manifests his invariableness is, by always granting good gifts when sought by prayer. Solomon prayed for wisdom and knowledge. And God declared to him that he had done according to his word, and given him an understanding heart, and riches and honour, because he had asked for wisdom and knowledge, and had not asked for riches nor honour, nor the life of his enemies.'

The necessity of receiving continual communications of wisdom and knowledge from God must be felt even by those who most excel in these qualities. And 'God hath never said to them who pray to him seek ye me in vain.' His wisdom, knowledge and power are infinite. He sees the end from the beginning, and can never be at a loss as to what is to be done, nor for means to effect it. But there are many cases in which the wisdom of the wisest among men is utterly confounded. They meet with difficulties which they could not foresee. The event is concealed in futurity. They cannot discern a track, which may be pursued with safety. Their only sure resort is prayer. They may say with Jehoshaphat, "O our God, we have no might, neither know we what to do, but our eyes are unto thee." If darkness, which their vision can-

not penetrate, covers their path, all things are open to God. "He is light, and with him is no darkness." And who, that is accustomed to approach the hearer of prayer, but has often received light in times of the greatest perplexity, and has been enabled to discern and follow the line of duty, confiding in God. The direction is plain, and the promise sure, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct thy paths."

The first thing suggested by our subject is, that it should be the great object of every ruler to perform the duties of his station in such a manner as will be approved of God, and in the highest degree beneficial to his constituents.

All Solomon's views seem to have been directed to this point. Absalom had desired the kingdom. He was fascinated by the allurements of honour and power. His insatiable ambition prostrated every sentiment of justice and natural affection, and led him in the wild and guilty career of a most unnatural rebellion. But Solomon, with a noble elevation of mind, overlooked all those considerations which operate most powerfully on the vain and aspiring. Fixing his eye singly on the importance of the station to which he was raised, on the greatness and difficulty of its concerns, and on his accountableness to God and his people, it was his sole and intense desire to rule with wisdom and righteousness. Absalom, that he might seat himself on the throne, with great art stole away the hearts of the people. But Solomon, that he might make the throne the seat of justice, opened his own heart to God, and prayed that he might "discern between good and bad, and do judgment."

When rulers are governed by regard to the will of God and the good of the people, it may be expected they will



rule successfully. 'Integrity and uprightness will preserve them.' Instead of anxiously seeking to gather laurels, wield the sceptre, or secure emolument, they will be chiefly solicitous to magnify their office, by a due observance of all its duties.

We reflect, in the next place, that all who are in authority should feel their dependence on God, to enable them to rule aright.

Solomon, when he began to rule, was accounted wise and qualified to govern. David said to him, "Thou art a wise man, and knowest what to do." But he felt that he needed much wisdom and knowledge. He knew that God had placed him in a situation, which required great abilities. He felt and humbly acknowledged his insufficiency. "O Lord, my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father, and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give therefore to thy servant an understanding heart to judge this people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?"

If Solomon felt and expressed his need of wisdom, other rulers, however excellent their talents or great their accomplishments, should place their whole dependence on God to enlighten, direct and prosper them.

God will be acknowledged as the giver of every good gift. He marks with indignation those who arrogate to themselves the glory of the abilities he has bestowed. He said respecting Sennacherib, "I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. For he saith, by the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I am pru-



dent.<sup>o</sup> What can be more reasonable than that they whom God has distinguished should lay all their honours at his feet, and consecrate all with which he has intrusted them to his service ;—and what can be more criminal than to neglect this. “ Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches, but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth : for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.”

Those are best qualified for public employment who are sensible of its greatness and difficulty, who acknowledge all they possess as the gifts of God ; and who continually rely on his help. Such a sense of dependence will invariably lead the heart to express its desires to him, who has said, ‘ ask and ye shall receive.’”

This naturally leads us to reflect on the efficacy of the prayers of rulers.

We may reasonably believe that God will specially regard the piety and prayers of those who stand as the representatives of others. He has often blessed not only families but states on account of the prayers of their heads. When rulers pray that God would direct and prosper their measures, they express to him the desires of all the godly, and spread before him the wants of the whole community. God says to the civil ruler now as he did to Solomon, “ Ask what I shall give thee.” It is God’s invariable rule to make a distinction between those who acknowledge him by sincerely praying to him, and those who do not. This is often declared in his word, and confirmed by many examples. “ If thou seek him, he will be found of thee ; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever.” ‘ It pleased the Lord that Solomon

asked for himself understanding to discern judgment.' God blessed him and his people in answer to this prayer. 'When Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel, the Lord heard him.' In answer to the prayers of Moses and Samuel, God frequently spared and prospered the Jews, and it was in after times assigned as a proof that the people had sinned past recovery, and were given over to destruction, that even the prayers of those two pious rulers could not then have prevailed for them. When Nehemiah had prayed to God, with reference to his administration as a ruler of the Jews, he could confidently say, "The God of heaven he will prosper us." 'And their enemies perceived that their work was wrought of God.'

Prayer for blessings is accompanied, with powerful motives to use all the means for obtaining them. It was observed by a disciple of Plato, "We ought neither to pursue virtue as if it were in our own power to acquire it without the help of God; nor to content ourselves with mere prayer without using our endeavours to acquire what we pray for." But a disciple of Christ may say with assurance, We cannot succeed in any enterprise without divine help, and prayer will be accompanied with endeavours to obtain what we desire. Many favourable circumstances may encourage rulers to hope that their administrations will be prosperous. But nothing can inspire such resolution in duty and such confidence of success, as prayer to God and a firm reliance on his providence. It is not conceivable that a ruler should habitually and conscientiously pray that God would direct and bless him in all the concerns of his office, and not make it his constant endeavour to be faithful to his trust.

Moreover, devout rulers will be the advocates and promoters of religion. This is at all times due to the authority of Him, by whom and for whom they are ap-

pointed to rule. It is due to their constituents, because it is essential to their happiness. It is especially important to the happiness of a free people. Religion is the only permanent basis of freedom. 'A people are exalted by righteousness.' Nothing more directly tends to promote righteousness, and therefore to advance the prosperity of a people, than the piety of rulers. The Jewish people took their character from that of those who governed them. The reigns of those who favoured true religion were generally longer, and more prosperous, than were those of the irreligious kings. During the administration of pious men, the Jews were in a far more favoured and prosperous condition, than were the famed people of Greece and Rome, in their most flourishing state. And whoever will impartially view the history of our own country, in comparison with that of other nations, will trace our unexampled prosperity to the influence of religion, and will find occasion to bless God, that so many among our most distinguished statesmen have honoured and cherished the institutions of christianity, and that not a few have been eminently pious.

One important purpose, for which Solomon was raised to office and furnished with peculiar wisdom and knowledge was, that he might build the temple of the Lord, and give all the influence of his authority and great abilities to the support of the worship of God and the observance of all his commands. May our rulers ever feel that one purpose for which God has appointed them to rule is, that they may build his spiritual temple. They may do this, not by giving exclusive privileges to any portion of the church of Christ, but by securing the rights of all, by restraining the vicious from violating the laws of God, and by promoting a general observance of the institutions and precepts of the gospel. Especial-

ly should they beware of doing any thing which may have the remotest tendency to subvert these institutions, lest they provoke the displeasure of Him whom they are to represent and serve, lest they undermine the firmest pillars which support our excellent constitution, lest they discourage the hearts, and lose the confidence of those, who are the best friends of good government, and the surest supporters of the general welfare in every season of emergency.

We reflect again, that as the prayers of rulers are efficacious with respect to the good of the people, so are the prayers of the people for their rulers. A consideration of the arduous duties to which rulers are called, and the importance of the interests with which they are intrusted, render it very desirable that they should have the prayers of the community. Nothing will so much dispose the people to co-operate with their rulers in every measure for the public good as to pray for them. And when any acts of government are such as the wise and good cannot approve, nothing will give so much hope of redress, nor so directly tend to promote right feelings towards those in authority as to pray for them. It was justly remarked by one of our most celebrated divines, many years since, that "to pray more for rulers, and talk less against them, would many times be the better way to get some things amended." God has required the people to pray for their rulers, and exhibited their own good as an important motive. 'Prayers must be offered for all who are in authority, that the people may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty.'

Another reflection from our subject is, that rulers should be patrons of learning. Solomon prayed for wisdom and knowledge, but he was diligent in acquiring them. He says, "I applied my heart to know, and to

search, and to seek out wisdom and the reason of things." The means of instruction cannot be less necessary for us than they were for Solomon. The importance of the diffusion of knowledge, as it respects the general prosperity of a people, cannot be questioned. To the prosperity of our own country it is indispensable. Our freedom cannot be secure without it. Ours is an elective government. Such we fondly hope it will ever remain. And it is by the general and continued diffusion of knowledge that very many are to be prepared to fill with ability its various offices.

The views of the christian patriot will be directed not only to the present good, but to the future happiness of his country. Will not our rulers then encourage and strengthen our literary institutions, and as far as possible increase the means of education. Thus will they train up many who in one important particular shall be worthy to succeed them. And when they shall retire from their labours, they may reflect with satisfaction that the important affairs of state, which they have conducted, will be transmitted to wise men, who will know what the people ought to do, and that there will be an enlightened community, who will know how to appreciate and improve their services.

We reflect in the last place, that a general revival of religion is exceedingly desirable. Religion is favourable to the advancement of knowledge. It excites the energies of the mind, and leads to their assiduous improvement and right application.

Religion is an essential part of that wisdom which is necessary to right government. It includes "the wisdom which is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

Religion embraces every principle, and directs to every thing in practice, which is promotive of individual enjoyment and general happiness. It gives the only sure pledge of virtuous conduct in rulers or people. In proportion as the gospel has influence on the hearts and conduct of men, they will do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. They who rule in the fear of God will be just to men. They will rule for God, and guide his people with all the tenderness and fidelity of a good shepherd. And they who are subject for conscience sake will never be factious citizens. They will 'neither use their liberty for a cloak of maliciousness,' nor disregard the authority on which the welfare of society depends. A general revival of religion would bring a great multitude of all ranks into cordial subjection to the perfect government of Him, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," it would produce a happy union of rulers and people in affection and confidence toward each other, and in mutual prayers and endeavours for the common good.

We rejoice that the supreme authority of the Ruler of the world is here acknowledged, and that the rulers of this republic are assembled in his sacred courts, to ask of him wisdom and knowledge, that they may go out and come in before this his great people, and rule them with righteousness.'

May the people of this State, who have again, by their united voice, requested the services of his Excellency in the first office of their government, have great occasion to rejoice in his administration. When oppressed with the weight of his important duties, and his great responsibility, may his dependence be on God. From him may he continually seek and receive direction. May he be as

the light and as the rain of heaven to this people, who have repeatedly confided to him their invaluable interests ;— and may they “ see that the wisdom of God is in him to do judgment.”

May divine wisdom and goodness guide and bless the Honourable Counsellors, Senators and Representatives of this people. When subjects of legislation shall be intricate and perplexing, when a view of the consequences of their measures shall fill them with solicitude,—and whenever they shall deliberate and act, may they ask counsel of God. “ He giveth wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding.” May he lead them in the way of righteousness in the midst of the paths of judgment.’

Will not our honoured rulers, under all the burdens and difficulties of their stations, derive some consolation and encouragement from the assurance that all who fear God, instead of viewing them with unreasonable jealousy, will regard them as the constituted guardians of the public good, and will daily pray that God will give them wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore ; and that by making the will of God the standard of their conduct, they may be accepted of the multitude of their brethren, and approved by the Supreme Ruler, as the watchful, affectionate and faithful shepherds of his people.

And let it be the united prayer of rulers and people, *that the Lord may here be exalted, and fill our State with judgment and righteousness ;—that wisdom and knowledge may be the stability of our times, and strength of salvation : and the fear of the Lord our treasure. Amen.*



## APPENDIX.

### *A List of those who have preached on this Anniversary.*

A. D.	By whom	Of what place	Text.	Pages
1784	Samuel M'Clintock, D. D.	Greenland	Jer. xviii 7—10.	47
	85 Jeremy Belknap, D. D.	Dover	Ps cxlv. 11—15,	
	86 Samuel Haven, D. D.	Portsmouth	Mat xxiv. 45—47	24
	87 Joseph Buckminster, D. D.	Portsmouth	James i. 5.	30
	88 Samuel Langdon, D. D.	Hampton Falls.	Deut iv. 5—8	
	89 Oliver Noble,	Newcastle		
1790	John C. Ogden, A. M.	Portsmouth	Neh. v 19.	
	91 Israel Evans, A. M.	Concord	Gal v 1.	35
	92 William Morrison, D. D.	Longscondery.	Rom xiii. 3.	43
	93 <i>No sermon preached.</i>			
	94 Amos Wood, A. B.	Ware	Isaiah, ix 7	36
	95 John Smith, A. M.	Hanover	*Isaiah, xlvii 8	
	96 Wm. F. Rowland, A. M.	Exeter	II Sam xxiii 3.	
	97 Stephen Peabody, A. M.	Atkinson.	Ex xviii 21.	
	98 Robert Gray, A. M.	Dover	Gen xii 2.	29
	99 Seth Payson D. D.	Ridge	Ecd i 18	23
1800	Noah Worcester, D. D.	Thornton.	Judges 3 11.	
	01 Jacob Burnap, D. D.	Merrimack	Ps lxxxvii. 4—6	23
	02 Joseph Woodman, A. M.	Sandbointon.	Hos. vii. 9	
	03 Aaron Hall, A. M.	Keene.	II Chr xix 6.	
	04 Nathaniel Porter, D. D.	Conway.	I Chr xii. 32.	34
	05 Reed Page, A. M.	Hancock	Rom xiii 4.	
	06 James Miltimore, A. M.	Stratham.	Job, xxxix 14	35
	07 Nathan Bradstreet, A. M.	Chester.	Luke, vii 4—5,	24
	08 Asa M'Farland, D. D.	Concord	II Pet i 19	30
	09 Wm. F. Rowland, A. M.	Exeter	Gal v 14	27
1810	Roswell Shurtleff, A. M.	Hanover	Rom xiii 1—5.	23
	11 Thomas Beede, A. M.	Wilton.	John, vii. 48	20
	12 Moses Bradford, A. M.	Francestown	I Tim i 15	26
	13 John H. Church, A. B.	Pelham.	II Chron xv 2.	41
	14 Peter Holt A. M.	Epping.	Dan ii 44.	30
	15 David Sutherland,	Bath	Rev i 7	
	16 Phny Dickinson,	Waipola.	II Chr xxiv 2.	24
	17 Daniel Merrill, A. M.,	Nettingham Wt.	Matt. vi 10	44
	18 William Allen, A. M.	Hanover	Joshua, i 8	43
	19 Nathan Parker, A. M.	Portsmouth	John viii 12	26
1820	James B. Howe, A. M.	Claremont.	John ix. 29	21
	21 Ephraim P. Bradford, A. B.	New Boston	Isa xxi. 11	
	22 Jonathan French, A. M.	Northampton	II Chron. I 10.	26

Titles of honorary degrees, such as were conferred after the preceding discourses were delivered, are added.

*\*Not printed*