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DISCOURSE

DELIVERED

AT PLYMOUTH DECEMBER 22, 1809,

AT THE

CELEBRATION

OF THE

188th ANNIVERSARY

OF THE

LANDING OF OUR FOREFATHERS

IN THAT PLACE.

.....

BY ABIEL ABBOT, A. M.

Pastor of the First Church in Beverly.

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§ BOSTON :

PRINTED BY GREENOUGH AND STEBBINS

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1810.

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DISCOURSE.

DEUT. XXXII. 11, 12.

AS AN EAGLE STIRRETH UP HER NEST, FLUTTERETH OVER HER YOUNG, SPREADETH ABROAD HER WINGS. TAKETH THEM, BEAURETH THEM ON HER WINGS; SO THE LORD ALONE DID LEAD HIM, AND THERE WAS NO STRANGE GOD WITH HIM.

IT is 189 years, since our ancestors stepped from their shallop upon the rock of Plymouth, to achieve an enterprize, the magnitude and importance of which to their posterity and mankind we can now estimate. A little destitute and distressed parent colony of one hundred and one souls, by subsequent immigration and natural population, is become 1,500,000 of people, spread over five states, of rough yet productive soil, opulent by commerce, and, a circumstance much more important to be remarked, enjoying civil liberty and the sacred rights of conscience, and maintaining, with some degree of reverence and zeal, the principles and institutions, which discriminated the character and to enjoy which and transmit to posterity was the pious and generous object of the founders of New-England.

It is with no common emotions, my respected auditors, that I have come to the cradle of New-England on this occasion. comparing, as I passed, the present

appearance of an interesting tract of country with antient facts and events. Entering this town, every step seems on hallowed ground. I see the living spring, whose waters were so sweet to the pilgrims, and the pleasant brook at the foot of the hill, which decided the spot of their settlement. Yonder I see the spacious bay, whose surface was enlivened with fowl, and its bosom stored with fish and *treasures hid in the sand*, which they regarded as some assurance against the calamity of famine. We are assembled on the brow of the hill, which was crowned with their dwellings, their fortress, and palisado. Yonder is the repository of their sacred dust; *their names are written in heaven*.

While I feel a portion of the virtuous enthusiasm, which animates the inhabitants of this antient town and parent colony on this joyful anniversary, I feel wholly incompetent suitably to direct your reflections. The very fruitfulness and interest of the subject create difficulty; and the researches and eloquence of the divines and orators, who have enriched your libraries with their discourses, I perceive have explored every topick relating to the grand event and enterprize, which you celebrate.

I hope however you will think me employed suitably to the occasion, while I endeavour to disclose the means, by which a colony was successfully planted upon this spot, at the first attempt; by a small company, half of whom were women and children; arriving upon an inhospitable coast, in the worst season of the year; slenderly furnished with necessaries; alight-

ing upon soil by no means generous ; in a climate not the mildest ; weakened by diseases, and reduced in three months to half their number by death : while a much more numerous colony, chiefly or wholly men ; conducted by leaders of great enterprize and energy ; furnished liberally by a wealthy company ; and patronized by government, was *several times* planted and extirpated* in the mild climate and fertile soil of Virginia ; and after twenty years efforts not an Englishman remained in the territory. It is evident, at the first view, that the ordinary means of success were with the colony, which failed ; and the difficulties, insuperable by common minds, were with the colony, which succeeded. What remains for us then but as grateful sons of pious sires, who discerned and acknowledged the divine hand in every incident of their settlement, we apply the poetic language of the founder of the Hebrew commonwealth to the founders of our own. *As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings ; so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.*

In this passage the providence of God, in conducting Israel to the land of Canaan, is declared by a figure of great beauty and tenderness. Their history illustrates its correctness. Moses and Aaron, *men mighty in words and deeds*, led forth that oppressed nation from bondage. These men however were but the hands of God, with which he performed the enterprize. For this purpose, Moses was preserved in the ark of

* Robinson's Virg.

bulrushes ; received the education of a prince ; *was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians* ; and, to mature his great mind for the enterprize, was driven into exile, to spend the season of forty years in quiet meditation. These circumstances account for the smallest part of his accomplishments ; direct communication with the *Shechinah* furnished the rest. In contemplating the emancipation of this nation and their establishment in the land of promise, it would be impiety to suffer our admiration to terminate in the instrument, which was thus furnished, supported, and guided in every step by the hand of Providence.

It is certainly not too much to say that we contemplate a similar case in the settlement of our forefathers in New-England. We recognize noble conductors ; *men mighty in words and deeds*. They were men prepared for the enterprize of planting a religious colony ; of founding churches in the wilderness ; of winning the ferocious savage to friendly sentiments and offices ; and of recommending to him the arts of civilized life and the faith and virtues of the gospel. They were well prepared to lay the basis of civil freedom, and to establish institutions, which should shed a pure and benign influence upon their children to the end of time. But let not our admiration terminate in these wonderful men ; let us gratefully contemplate that discipline of God's providence, which made them what they were ; and that blessing, which crowned their arduous undertaking with complete success.

The first object before us is to consider the means, which God in his providence employed, to prepare a

pious, virtuous and enlightened company to settle New-England.

The Puritans were destined to furnish the several colonies, which settled in New-England. This was that part of the English clergy and people, which was dissatisfied with a partial reformation from popery. This is not the time to attempt their history, nor to show the progressive steps of persecution and suffering, which led to their removal to the new world.

The points in contest between the Puritans and their prince and prelates, as they regarded ceremonies rather, than doctrines, have been often represented as of little importance. But *subscription, assent, and consent* were demanded; and whether to little or much, the principle was the same, and was a grievous imposition upon conscience. However, more was probably implied in the exaction, than at first view appears. To a few things of an indifferent aspect they linked others of dissolute tendency. The head of the English church was not only ambitious of the splendid vestments and ceremonies, but was also covetous of the licentious morals of the Papal church. As evidence of this it will be sufficient that I present the declaration of king James, issued to the bishop of Lancashire, by which he required him to “*present all PURITANS and PRECISIANS within his diocess; either constraining them to conform, or to leave the country.*” This rigorous order was accompanied by one of the most dissolute nature—*That “those, who attend on church on Sundays, be not disturbed or discouraged from dancing, archery, leaping, vaulting, having May games, morrice*

*dances, setting up May poles, and other sports therewith used, or any other such harmless recreation on Sundays after divine service.”** This declaration he commanded should be published by order from the bishop of the diocese *through all the parish churches*. All those ministers who refused to read this royal licence to profane the Sabbath, were summoned to the tribunal, imprisoned, and suspended.

This persecution was not confined to one reign; it raged for half a century. “Many of the most eminent of the Puritan clergy were deprived of their benefices, others were imprisoned, several were fined, and some put to death. A new tribunal was established under the title of the High Commission for ecclesiastical affairs, whose powers and mode of procedure were hardly less odious or less hostile to the principles of justice, than those of the Spanish Inquisition.”†

The rights of the dissenting people were also invaded with the same violence, as those of their ministers. The Parliament, tamely obsequious to the unconstitutional commands of the Sovereign, “consented to an act, by which every person, who should absent himself from church during a month, was subjected to punishment by fine and imprisonment; and if, after conviction, he did not within three months renounce his erroneous opinions and conform to the laws, he was then obliged to abjure the realm; but if he either refused to comply with this condition, or returned from

* Prince’s New-Eng. Chron. p. 56.

† Robinson’s History of North America, page 144.

banishment, he should be put to death as a felon, without benefit of clergy.”*

In this brief narrative, we see the wrath of man ; but it is made to praise God, as it selects and disciplines the instruments of a grand design. From the imposition attempted upon conscience, our forefathers learned to respect its rights ; from the violence and indignity offered to their persons, they learned to think justly of the sacred nature and value of freedom. And the very attempt by public authority to sanction sports, profane on the Sabbath, and of licentious tendency at any time, induced them to think with the deeper concern of the importance of morals in themselves and their children. For it is the effect of persecution to drive the subjects of it to the greatest distance from the principles and temper of their persecutors.†

Under the pressure of circumstances like these, the little band of pilgrims formed in England and fled to Holland. To this assembly I need not rehearse the unparalleled sufferings, which attended their removal ; they are recorded in the books of your church, and have been often heard and oftener read. After various disasters brought upon them by treachery, by the scorn of the proud, the brutal violence of the multitude, the exaction and indignities of unfeeling magistrates, the distress of unexpected and involuntary separation, and the perils of the sea, wrought into tempest, they blessed God for their arrival in a land of freedom.

* Robinson's North Am. p. 645.

† See Appendix, note 1.

In Holland they enjoyed a season of peace. But the blessing cost them much ; fugitives from oppression, they had made the sacrifice of their possessions, and felt the hard hand of poverty upon them in a land of strangers. But for this they were compensated by peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost. If other things were scanty, they had a religious feast in the able ministry of Mr. Robinson, the prudent government of Mr. Brewster, and in the sweet satisfaction of uninterrupted social and religious intercourse with each other. Their church settled into order ; increased in numbers, and improved in gifts and graces ; and the congregation became numerous by fresh emigration from England.

The ultimate happiness of the children of Israel was deeply concerned in their temporary residence and wanderings in the wilderness, as it afforded opportunity for the delivery of the law from mount Sinai and for the institution of the Mosaick economy, and was a season of divine discipline to prepare an obedient people to settle in the land of promise. So the pilgrims in Holland became settled in their principles, decided in their modes of government, inured to the hardships of a strange land, knit together in love, and gradually prepared for an enterprize, which demanded rare virtues and habits. Their leaders were ever intent upon the moral worth and christian perfection rather than the ease and affluence of their precious charge ; and when dangers to the former threatened them in the metropolis, they fled with them to Leyden.

To the leading men of this religious band, destined to be the founders of empire, Providence, by a concurrence of events, furnished singular advantages for improvement. The republic, recently dismembered from Spain, was divided into two rival factions. These agitated subjects of great interest both theological and political. In the church Episcopius and Polyander were able polemicks, and in the state, Maurice and Barneveldt. These controversies in a land of freedom and toleration were a school to the pilgrims. As strangers they modestly declined entangling themselves with parties. But when respectfully solicited and repeatedly urged by a professor in the university and the ministers of the city, Mr. Robinson maintained a publick disputation with the Arminian Professor in the presence of a very numerous assembly, in which his friends considered him as victorious and rising into high respect.

An experienced civilian,* who addressed you on a former occasion of this kind, and reviewed the first essay of civil polity, attempted by our forefathers, considers them as having been deeply interested in the ardent discussions of the theoretick principles of government, and to have been “*assisted to form accurate ideas, concerning the origin and extent of authority among men, independent of positive institution.* And—*That the instrument on board the MAY FLOWER testifies that the parties to it had anticipated the improve-*

* The Hon. J. Q. Adams, Esq.

ment," which their native country was half a century after them in attaining.*

The result of these observations is that it was a most wise arrangement of Divine Providence, in preparing the apostles and civil fathers of the new world, to instruct and exercise them in Holland.

It was very natural that this pious and enlightened congregation discovered the infelicity of their situation, as a permanent residence, and looked abroad for one, where, secluded from the corruptions of old cities, they might bring up their families in christian purity of principles and manners; a situation, to which the thousands of aggrieved brethren in England might resort, who had not courage to encounter the poverty and hardships to which they were subjected in Holland. They looked with a wishful eye to this inhospitable wilderness. Undaunted they saw a dreary coast opening its arms to invite them. They had been too long accustomed to sufferings, to be deterred by the prospect of hardship. They were willing to go forward as a forlorn hope, and prepare the way for sincere but less resolute friends of incorrupt christianity.† And this charitable sentiment for friends in England was seconded by a noble sentiment of humanity to the natives of the wilderness. To carry the gospel to the heathen was an object, very agreeable to their apostolick zeal. They were soon decided, and concerted measures for their removal.

* A recurrence to other early political institutions in this colony and particularly to the admirable declaration of rights in 1656, will demonstrate an enlightened policy almost without a parallel.

† See Appendix, note 2d.

As it has been my object to show how wisely Divine Providence prepared an incomparable band of colonists to establish civil and religious institutions in the new world, which were to have a durable influence upon the happiness of millions, let us pause in the narrative to consider a few testimonies of their character and virtues. If they be familiar to you, they are interesting, and cannot be too often repeated to the sons, if they may be induced to emulate such sires.

Mr. Cushman and Mr. Carver were sent as agents to negotiate with the Virginia company in England, and to sue to the king for liberty of conscience in a Transatlantick wilderness. Their conduct on the occasion is thus reported by Sir Edwin Sandys—“ *That they had carried themselves with that discretion, as is both to their own credit and theirs from whom they came.*” But one who knew them intimately, and he *an Israelite indeed in whom was no guile*, thus sums up the character of the whole congregation. “ 1. *We verily believe and trust that the Lord is with us ; to whom and whose service we have given ourselves in many trials, and that he will graciously prosper our endeavours according to the simplicity of our hearts.* 2. *We are well weaned from the delicate milk of our mother country, and inured to the difficulties of a strange land.* 3. *The people are for the body of them industrious and frugal, we think we may safely say, as any company of people in the world.* 4. *We are knit together as a body in a most strict and sacred bond and covenant of the Lord ; of the violation whereof we*

*make great conscience, and by virtue whereof we hold ourselves straitly tied to all care of each others good, and of the whole. 5. And lastly it is not with us as with other men, whom small things can discourage, or small discontentments cause to wish at home again.**

A short time before they left Holland, the magistrates from the seat of justice gave them this noble testimony. Addressing the Walloons who were of the French church, they say—*These English have lived among us now these twelve years, and yet we never had one suit or action come against them; but your strifes and quarrels are continual.†*

But the virtuous pilgrims need not epistles of commendation from the old world; their best eulogy are their deeds, their sufferings, and their virtues in the new.

I pass over the series of disappointments and discouragements; which embarrassed and delayed the pilgrims in Europe, and the disasters and deliverances of their passage; that I may have time to consider the smiles of Providence, attending their settlement on this spot. In this fruitful particular, which has been copiously discussed by others, I will study brevity. Our attention is arrested,

1st. By those judgments of God, which swept off the old inhabitants to prepare a safe residence for the new.

The most judicious historians state that nineteen twentieths of the Indian population, from Narragansett to Penobscot, were extinguished by a war, which rag-

* Prince p. 51, 2.

† Morse and Parish.

ed in the east, and by a pestilence, thought to have been the yellow fever, which spread over the whole country. It is particularly remarkable that of the tribe, which occupied the spot of the Plymouth settlement, *one* native alone survived, and his friendship and services as an interpreter were of essential importance to the colony. Our forefathers were destined to the Hudson, on whose banks were a numerous and warlike people; but Providence overruled the treachery of the hireling captain to bring them to the spot, which was prepared for them. Shall we not record this circumstance in the grateful language of the Psalmist—*We have heard with our ears and our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old. How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand and plantedst them; how thou didst afflict the people and cast them out. For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them; but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them.* Ps. xliv. 1, 2, 3.

Notwithstanding this waste of native population, there remained thousands of dangerous neighbours. They were predisposed to hostility, for they had received *injuries*; and *these* Indians seldom forget or forgive. The infamous Hunt had enticed on board his vessel twenty natives from the tribe, which occupied the very spot, on which our forefathers settled, and seven more from the Nausites, a neighbouring tribe, and had sold them for slaves in Spain. Some of them had made their escape back to their coun-

trymen and doubtless excited them to vengeance. Twenty canoes of them attempted to vent their indignation upon the first English vessel, which appeared upon their coast. And a few months only before the arrival of our forefathers, captain Dermer landing on the coast with his men, the natives fell upon him with great fierceness. The captain received from them fourteen wounds, and lost all his men, except one, who kept the boat. Therefore,

2dly. We must regard, as a peculiar smile of Providence, that awe of the strangers settling in their neighbourhood, with which the natives were impressed.

*When they were but a few men in number, yea very few and strangers in the land; he suffered no man to do them wrong; yea he reprov'd kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.**

A smile in Providence on the pilgrims, which was to their drooping minds, *as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds,* was,

3dly. The first interview and the league with Massasoit, at the foot of this hill.

The interview was a charming display of dignity, simplicity, and affection. The powerful Sagamore appears on yonder hill with a life guard of sixty men. The governor sends the faithful Winslow to solicit him to conference. He detains the messenger as a hostage in the hands of his brother, and descends to the brook with twenty men, who, to create confidence,

* Ps. cv. 12, 14, 15.

leave their bows and arrows behind them. A little band of musketeers meet and salute him at the brook and conduct him to the apartment of state, decorated with a green rug and cushions. Then instantly the governor is ushered in with beat of drum and sound of trumpet. After salutations the governor kisses the hand of the Sagamore, and the Sagamore returns the affectionate compliment. The governor entertains his guest with refreshments, and they agree in a league of friendship. The governor attends him to the brook, and they affectionately embrace and part.

If we consider the circumstances of the colony at that moment, half their number already dead, and of the living, not more in health, than were required to perform the escort on the occasion; and, on the other hand, consider the deadly enmity to every thing English, prevailing through all the tribes; in this convention, obtained with Massasoit, can we see less than the merciful interference of that great Arbiter, who *turneth the king's heart, as the rivers of water, whithersoever he will*. If that treaty had not been adopted or had been soon violated, which was in force and without infraction fifty four years; or if the ferocious and implacable heart of Phillip the son, had been in the gentle bosom of Massasoit the father, humanly speaking, the little colony must inevitably have been extirpated. *God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb*. He curbed the darling passion of the savage, the passion for war; and though conspiracies were often attempted, and the lowering storm seemed often ready to break over their heads, it was delayed, till the con-

federate colonies were able to meet and subdue the combined forces of the whole country.

In contemplating the history of our forefathers, replete with interesting incidents, one man discerns and eulogizes the prudence of the governor; another the intrepidity and conduct of the captain; and a third is of opinion that secondary characters among them are entitled to equal admiration, and that they would have commanded it, if their lot had raised them higher into notice. What forbids us to agree with them all, and to derive from their united opinions a very pleasing evidence of the providence of God,

4thly. In the *combination* of such rare talents and virtues in the establishment of so small a colony. By what means in providence this was effected, it has been the object of much of this discourse to disclose. And now were there time remaining, proper for me to occupy, it would be a delightful employment to illustrate this point by observing those worthies, Robinson, Cushman, Carver, Bradford, Winslow, Brewster, Standish, in their several offices and arduous enterprizes. We would follow the adventurous Winslow, travelling forty miles through hostile tribes, to comfort, and, blessed be God, to save the almost dying Massasoit. We would attend their Washington in his excursions for corn and his more serious expeditions with his army of 8, of 14, or of 20 men, and observe a vigilance, which the wildest savage could never surprize, a courage, which numbers could never intimidate, and a humanity, which never shed a drop of blood beyond his commission, or which treachery

and the dangers of the colony did not demand. On these and other occasions we should see the men and means, which, under God, won and secured the friends, and awed the turbulent enemies of the colony into sullen forbearance.

It was a difficult task to preserve peace without ; was it less difficult to preserve content within the little colony, under distresses inconceivable ? For a moment take a survey of those huts of the forefathers. Each is a hospital, except that medicine and attendance are wanting. You see them pinched with hunger, crippled with scurvy and rheumatism, burning with fevers, and consuming with hectick. But perceive you any disorder ? hear you a single murmur ? are there any mutual reproaches ? cast they a wishful eye back to their native country ? There is nothing of this ; but here is a scene, which shows how well the Pastor knew his flock, and how just were those predictive words—*It is not with us as with other men, whom small things can discourage, or small discontentments cause to wish at home again.* You see here nothing less than that, which supported martyrs in the flame and on the rack, the mighty strength of religious principles. You see here the fruit of the many sermons and prayers of an incomparable pastor, and of the exhortations of a venerable elder, enforced by the blessing of God. What these were we may judge by some admirable fragments, which have been preserved, and by one entire sermon, delivered on this spot within a year from the landing by Mr. Cushman. This whole discourse of a *layman* has so close an aspect to the

circumstances and *engagements of the auditors*,* is so admirably adapted to promote self-denial, christian affection, and patriotick enthusiasm in suffering and doing every thing necessary to the success of their grand design, and, if there was a selfish idler among them, to sting him into exertion in the common cause, that it is a noble monument of the strong powers, enlightened zeal, and christian principles, embosomed in the infant colony.

Will you indulge me in a few reflections.

1. In the first place, while we contemplate the footsteps of his providence in this interesting range of history, in what an amiable view is the Divine Being presented to our minds? He is not here seen, as some would represent him, on an exalted throne, encircled with rays of glory, reposing in slothful majesty, the mere spectator of the works he hath made, resigning every thing to the direction of general and fatal laws. No; he is seen as a father in the midst of his family; provident of their welfare; not indeed always fondly indulgent to their present wishes; but concerting means, rugged and painful perhaps, yet the best to insure their greatest ultimate perfection and happiness. As members of the New-England family, with what admiration ought we to review those early acts of God's providence, the influence of which are seen and felt at this hour. For half a century, the great Husbandman was preparing, selecting, and, *with his fan in his hand*, was winnowing the precious seed, with which this land was plant-

* See Appendix. Note 3.

ed ; that precious seed, which our fathers *went forth weeping and bearing*, viz. the principles of civil and religious freedom, the doctrines, virtues, and habits, which grow out of them, and the simple and impressive institutions, which are calculated to perpetuate them. We, except we be religious idlers, we reap the rich harvest, *rejoicing and bringing our sheaves with us*. Let our hearts glow on this occasion with grateful sentiments to our fathers, but ultimately and chiefly to the God of providence.

2. While we admire, let us emulate our forefathers in that, which was their grand object.

Religion was the object of all their cares, and to that one point all their measures in England, Holland, and America had reference. It was religion in its pure spirit and substantial, selfdenying duties; which they regarded. They *sought first of all things*, and to the neglect of all other, the *kingdom of God and his righteousness*. *Houses and lands* they literally *forsook, brethren and sisters, fathers and mothers, wives and children, for Christ's sake and the gospels*; nor *counted their lives dear to them, so that they might win Christ*. We inherit the land and institutions of such fathers; it becomes us with much solicitude to enquire whether we inherit their excellent spirit. Let us not, with degenerate Jews, content ourselves with saying, *We have Abraham to our father*, nor think that we have done enough, when we have *built the tombs of the prophets, and garnished the sepulchres of the righteous*. These things become us; but other things are more necessary; viz. that we im-

itate their virtues ; that our hearts glow with similar affections, and beat with like zeal ; that we delight in the same ordinances, and take up our cross, whatever it be, and follow Christ. These things, as they are of infinite importance to ourselves, so are they the very recompense, which our fathers desired and hoped their sons would render them from generation to generation.

3. Let us respect and cherish liberty of conscience, which was a prominent cause of the emigration of our ancestors. They purchased it at a great price. All the delights implied in that dear word, *home*, they resigned ; all the inconveniences of dwelling in a strange land they cheerfully encountered ; and the hardships of a wilderness with incredible fortitude they endured, that they might enjoy this blessing and transmit it to us. And now let there be no subtle Jacobs to *purchase*, and no profane Esaus to *sell* the birth-right. Inflexibly let us adhere to the simple principle, which they supported, *No test of truth, no rubrick of worship, but the Bible* ; and living in a country settled on such a principle, and by such ancestors, let us frown on every attempt to bring us into bondage to lords secular or spiritual. And,

4. Let us emulate our ancestors in laborious researches after divine truth. Their laymen were divines, and their divines champions. They studied the scriptures and were mighty in them ; yet did not imagine that *they had already attained, or were already perfect*. The learned Robinson himself was conscious that he had not explored the whole truth. He

venerated Luther and Calvin, but regarded them as only commencing the work of detecting errors, which had crept into the church in the time of papal darkness. When parting with his spiritual children, that were coming to America, this was his solemn address to them—“*I charge you before God and his blessed angels that you follow me no farther than you have seen me follow the Lord Jesus Christ. If God reveal any thing to you, by any other instrument of his, be as ready to receive it, as ever you were to receive any truth by my ministry; for I am verily persuaded—I am very confident that the Lord hath more truth yet to break forth out of his word. For my part I cannot sufficiently bewail the condition of the reformed churches who are come to a period in religion, and will go, at present, no farther than the instruments of their reformation. The Lutherans cannot be drawn to go beyond what Luther saw: whatever part of his will our good God has revealed to Calvin, they will rather die than embrace it. And the Calvinists, you see, stick fast, where they were left by that great man of God, who yet saw not all things.*”

5. Finally; it becomes us to lay to our hearts the conviction that the same means, which established an infant colony, are essential to the preservation and happiness of the million and half of people, into which it is grown.

To that guardian Providence, which covered the heads of our fathers, let us humbly look for protection from a thousand dangers, against which wealth and numbers and human prudence alone cannot de-

fend us. But can we look up with the same serene confidence as our fathers? Is the state of our country, or of our congregations such as answers to the description of the pilgrims in Holland? Is there the same ardent piety, generous love, and delightful communion; full assemblies, *receiving with meekness the engrafted word*, and crowded tables with grateful tears celebrating the dying of their Lord? And, my respected brethren, teachers and ensamples of the flock; breathe we the large spirit of the enlightened Robinson, and feel we the quickening influence of the same holy zeal for the advancement of our people in light, grace, and virtue? All these questions are too easily answered.

Since the convulsive struggle for independence, our countrymen have been withdrawn from the rough school of adversity, in which our fathers were improved. It is too evident to admit of question that in the soft season of peace, we have revolted from our national Friend and Patron. The evidences of this are the abounding vices of profaneness and intemperance; infidelity, and neglect of his word, his worship, and ordinances; which vices and neglect were esteemed scandalous by our forefathers; and infidelity was not named among them. It must not be disguised that we already begin to feel the frown of Providence in the check of our prosperity; in the divisions of the people, in the distraction of our counsels, in the exhausted state of our treasury, in the defenceless state of our coasts, and IN THE OMENS OF WAR. The world is become a theatre of the fearful

judgments of God; and the storm, which has long broken disastrously upon Europe, seems gathering towards the American coasts. May God in mercy avert it. In all events, let us pray devoutly with king Solomon—*The Lord our God be with us, as he was with our fathers; let him not leave us nor forsake us; that he may incline our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments, which he commanded our fathers.*



APPENDIX.

NOTE I.

SOME facts in the history of New-England show that our excellent ancestors had not, by the things they suffered, fully learned the lesson of toleration; it would have been strange if they had, as they were almost without example of it in Europe. However the valedictory address of Mr. Robinson to that part of his flock, which came to America, and the early character of the Plymouth church are evidences of catholicism without parallel in their day. It is true they expelled Oldham and Lyford; but it was for civil offences, or for the *heresy* of a factious and disorganizing spirit and conduct; not for diversity of opinions, in regard to doctrines or ceremonies.

NOTE II.

Extract of a letter sent from England to the colony at Plymouth in 1623.

“Let it not be grievous to you that you have been instruments to break the ice for others, who come after with less difficulty; the honour shall be yours to the world’s end: we bear you always in our breasts, and our hearty affection is towards you all, as are the hearts of hundreds more, which never saw your faces, who doubtless pray your safety as their own.” *Prince’s New-England Chronology, p. 139.*

NOTE III.

It is a subject of surprize that our forefathers have been so often reproached with the scheme of a community of goods, as if it resulted from enthusiasm and an ill judged imitation of the first Christians. A respectable anonymous annotator upon Mr. Cushman’s discourse apologizes for the pilgrims; and even Dr. Robinson, with a sarcastick severity,* not to be expected from a historian of his candour and intelligence, has fallen into this palpable error; for such I think it will appear. Recurrence to the history of the agreement between the London merchants and the Leyden adventurers will discover the authors of that scheme.

In the Spring of 1620, Mr. Weston went over to Leyden, where the people entered into articles of agreement with him for shipping and money to assist in their transportation to America. The agreement was of the nature of a partnership in business, for the term of *seven* years; the gains to be divided between the planters in America and the adventurers in London, according to their respective shares; ten pounds furnished in goods or money, or a person above sixteen years of age, being accounted as the price of a share. As a reasonable encouragement however to the emigrants, it was provided that, at the end of the seven years, the houses and lands should be theirs without division; and that they should be al-

* History of Virginia and New-England. page 150

lowed, in the mean time, *two days of the week for their own employment*. This surely looks like making provision for the enjoyment of private property.

But when Cushman and Carver were come to London to receive the money and to provide for the voyage, they found the merchants more penurious and severe, than Weston himself, whose conduct on this and subsequent occasions was sufficiently selfish. In short, they ultimately refused to advance the money, except upon these material alterations in the articles of compact.—That the *whole* time of the planters should be employed for the company; and “*That at the end of the seven years, the capital and profits, viz. the houses, lands, goods, and chattels be equally divided among the adventurers.*”^{*} These terms were not “relished” by the pilgrims, but they finally consented to them.

From these facts it is evident that the people at Leyden were cool and prudent in this negotiation; proposed better terms than they could obtain; obtained the best that they could; and endeavoured to provide for the immediate acquisition and enjoyment of private property. But, *The destruction of the poor is their poverty*. They were obliged to submit to conditions, which amounted to the selling of themselves for their passage, or to abandon their enterprize.

Thus the community of goods in the Plymouth colony resulted not from the enthusiasm of the planters, but from the avarice and narrow policy of the London adventurers. Of consequence, the submission of the pilgrims to these terms, as it was necessary to their noble enterprize, is a further mark of their Christian magnanimity, which has not been sufficiently admired.

Community of goods is the term by which this partnership is stigmatized. If by the phrase is intended the exclusion of all idea of private property, it is wholly erroneous; it was property undivided, property held jointly; in the ultimate division of which Bradford, Winslow, Allerton were probably

^{*} See the whole agreement in Belknap's Amer. Biog. vol. II. p. 181. 2. &c.

to receive a dozen shares each, while others should receive but one. Hence when the colony found difficulty in their connection with European partners, five of the number were sufficiently responsible, with the privilege of the trade of the colony, to liquidate their claim.

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