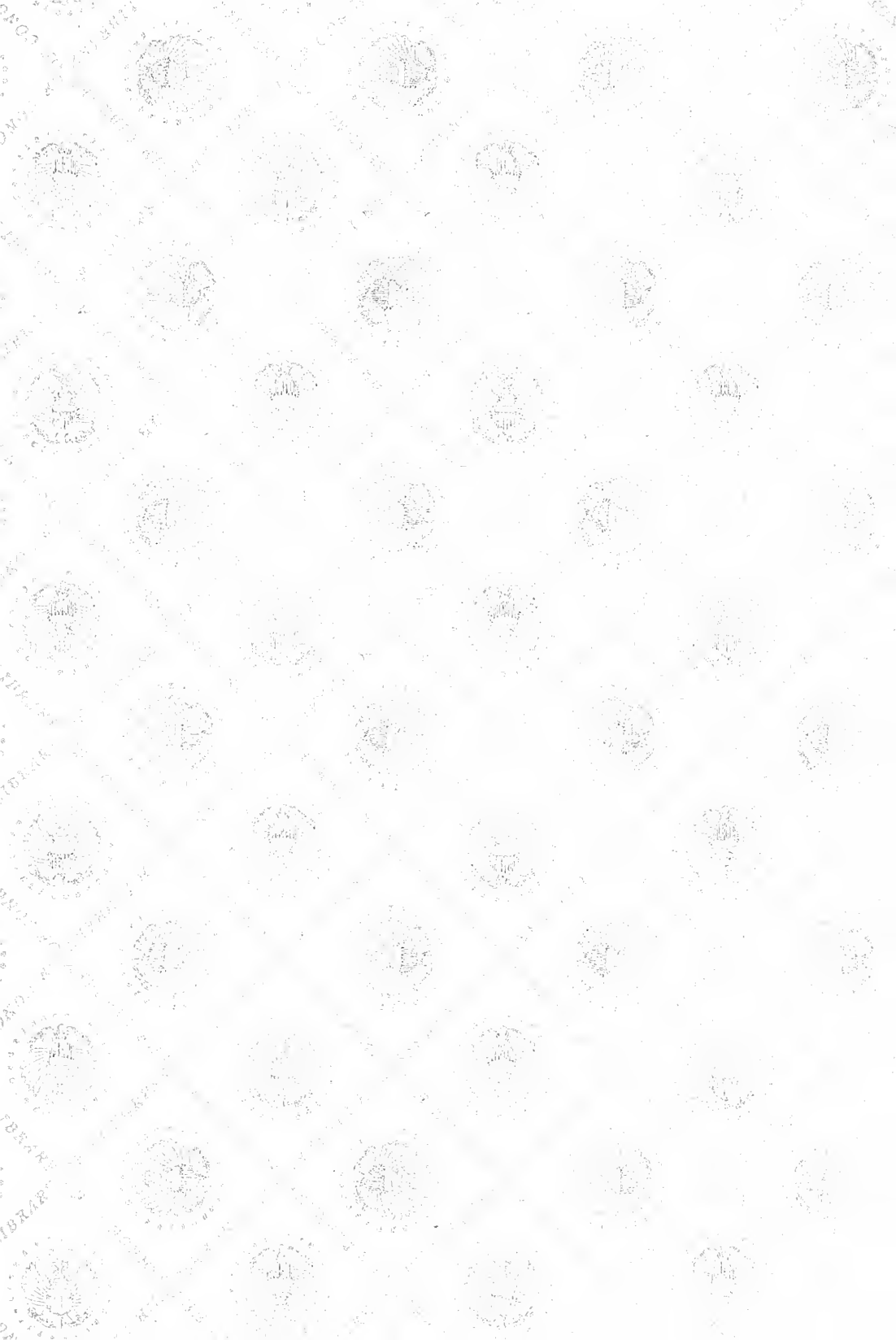


E 207
.K74 B71



Rockland Free Press.

ROCKLAND, APRIL 21, 1875.

A SERMON

Delivered before the Congregational Society at Thomaston, (Maine) November 2, 1866; being the Lord's day after the interment of the

Hon. Henry Knox,

Who Died, October 25th, Aet. 56 years.

BY ALDEN BRADFORD, A. M. S. H. S.

Published by Request of the Inhabitants composing said Society in Thomaston.

Behold the Lord doth take away—the mighty man, the man of war, the honorable man, the counsellor, and the eloquent orator.”—ISAIAH.

(Printed by Babson and Russt.)

AUTHOR'S NOTE.

The following Sermon is submitted to the press upon the urgent and repeated request of a Committee chosen by the Society at Thomaston, who heard it from the pulpit. It was written in much haste and in a very infirm state of health. But it is not consistent with my ideas of propriety, to make any alterations. The character of General KNOX, attempted in the close of the Discourse, I am sensible, is not complete and perfect; though the sketches here given, so far as they go, I believe are strictly just. This remark, by way of apology, I consider necessary, both in justice to myself and the character of the deceased.—Some facts are added, as notes, and these are concisely stated, to prevent swelling the pamphlet.

A SERMON, &C.

REVELATION vii., 9th & 10th.

“AFTER THIS I BEHELD, AND LO A GREAT MULTITUDE, WHICH NO MAN COULD NUMBER, OF ALL NATIONS AND KINDREDS AND PEOPLS AND TONGUES, STOOD BEFORE THE THRONE AND BEFORE THE LAMB, CLOTHED WITH WHITE ROBES AND PALMS IN THEIR HANDS; AND CRIED WITH A LOUD VOICE, SAYING, SALVATION TO OUR GOD, WHO SITTETH UPON THE THRONE AND UNTO THE LAMB.”

It is by the christian revelation only, that we have satisfactory evidence of a future and immortal state of existence. This is the fullest assurance, that we shall exist after the present, mortal scene is closed; and expressly declares, that all the sincerely virtuous, “those who fear God and work righteousness,” will be exalted to unspeakable glory and felicity in the heavenly world.

It is true, indeed, that all other systems of religion, which have been formed or adopted by mankind, have inculcated the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and of a future state of retribution. And may not this be justly considered as proving, that the doctrine is agreeable to the reason, the apprehensions and the expectations of mankind?

Human reason, however, could not argue the probability and suggest the hope of immortality. The theories and reasonings of the wisest philosophers could never furnish convincing evidence, that we should live beyond the grave. To ascertain and prove this most interesting and important truth, the assurances of divine inspiration and the display of divine power appear to have been necessary. It was requisite that a doctrine, so full of consolation and so useful in morals, should be sanctioned by that Being, whose ability none can deny and whose promise none will doubt.

This doctrine and this truth must be established, then, by the interpositions of divine wisdom and power. The christian religion is attended and supported by such interpositions. Divine power was *extraordinarily* exerted, divine intelligence and mercy are *extraordinarily* displayed in every part of this gracious dispensation. Prophecies and miracles; doctrines, novel, comprehensive and consoling; precepts, pure and perfect; the character of its author incomparably superior to that of any merely human being—all combine to prove that the christian religion was dictated by the wisdom and support of the power of the Great Parent of the universe. At the period foretold by inspired prophets for centuries before the event, and with the singular and wonderful, yet perfect character, which had been described, the Son of God appeared in human flesh. Though he possessed power to command the elements, and to direct and control the passions of men, his conduct exhibited the brightest pattern of temperance, humility, self-denial and disinterested benevolence. His exalted virtue and spotless purity of character; the gracious doctrines and holy precepts of his religion; as well as the miracles he performed, declare his divine mission and prove him to have been filled with the wisdom and spirit of God. The great truths and the best doctrines of natural religion, he fully confirmed: And he taught others, respecting the nature and benefits of his mediation, most important to be known by a sinful world. After having voluntarily submitted to death, in obedience to the will of his Father, to effectuate the purposes of his grace, he arose triumphantly from the grave and ascended up into glory. Surely then we must acknowledge that “this was the Son of God.”—“He is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens.”



E207
K74B71

The resurrection of Christ himself, connected with the assurance that he will come at a future day and restore the dead to life, is a firm foundation, on which to build our hope and faith of immortality. On this promise and on this *fact* we rest, with a sure and certain expectation of a future and eternal state of existence.

"And why should it be thought a thing incredible, that God should raise the dead?" Certainly a Being of infinite power, who created, who preserves and governs all worlds; who at first formed man out of the dust of the earth, and gave him animal and intellectual faculties, can awake again to life our slumbering atoms; and raise us, clothed with spiritual bodies, to the realms of immortal glory. Who will limit the power of the Almighty? Who will pronounce what is possible with God? That the disciple of nature, or the pupil of human philosophy should be puzzled on this subject, is not matter of wonder, and can be no *just* objection to the doctrine of revelation. Whatever of difficulty or of mystery there may be resting on that article of christianity, its truth is in no degree incompatible with the perfections of the Deity, nor contradictory to any known axioms of philosophy.

It is sufficient for us to know that we shall be made partakers of immortality. But whether our souls were *originally* created immaterial and immortal;* or whether it will be by a divine communication of power, imparted at the *resurrection*, which shall give us a spirituality and incorruptibility of existence; it is impossible for reason to determine. And, in the opinion of many learned divines, the inspired scriptures have not expressly decided. But, that, at some future period, we shall all be raised from the silent prison of the tomb, and that the righteous will be admitted to the mansions of immortal bliss and glory, is abundantly declared in the volume of inspiration; and cannot be doubted by those who believe in the christian revelation. "Blessed be God for this unspeakable gift." "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in the plenitude of his mercy, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, has given us a lively hope of an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled and unfading, reserved in

*It will be readily admitted that true philosophy favors the idea of our possessing an immaterial and spiritual principle, which does not depend on the body for its being or exercises; and in several places the word of God implies that we shall continue to exist between death and the resurrection. In this opinion, we acquiesce. It is, however, known that the opinion of many eminent Theologians, that the interval between death and the resurrection is a season of insensibility. The scriptures, say they, represent the dead as in a state of inactivity; and the christian doctrine of resurrection, they contend, supports this supposition.

heaven for those who are kept by divine power through faith unto salvation."

The gospel teaches us that "there will be a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust;" that "*all* who are in their graves shall come forth; those who have done good, to the resurrection of life and happiness; and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation." The impenitent and wicked will then be separated from the righteous, and from the blissful presence of God, with this awful sentence, "depart from me, ye workers of iniquity." And the righteous will be received to the abodes of everlasting happiness; never more to experience the toils, temptations and sorrows which are incident to humanity.

This society of good beings, we are assured, will be unspeakably great and numerous. Though it is a lamentable fact, that many of the children of men disregard the precepts of religion and the requirements of heaven, and pursue those vicious courses which lead to destruction; yet there will be found an innumerable company who are faithful and holy, and who will share in the rewards of immortality. Those who are sincerely devout and pious; those who love and serve God, of every age and nation, will compose this glorious and august assembly. "I saw," says the apostle John, "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and people and languages stood before the throne and before the Lamb."

Whatever, from partial or hasty views, we may be ready to imagine, as to the number of those who will be subjects of grace and glory, the gospel instructs us, that salvation is confined to no sect nor nation. "God is no respecter of persons." He will be found of all those who sincerely seek and faithfully serve him. Whether barbarous or civilized, whether learned or ignorant, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether under the gospel, or enjoying only the light of nature; all who are truly desirous and careful, according to the knowledge they have, to please God, will be graciously accepted and made happy in the heavenly world. None will seek and serve him in vain. With impartial eye he views the whole family of mankind. *They are all his offspring*. And in whomever there is sincere piety and prevailing moral goodness; whoever resist and overcome evil; whoever conquer unruly passions and habits; these he approves and loves. He beholds with approbation the widow's mite, as well as the more extensive charity of the opulent; the honest sincerity and humble worship of the ignorant savage, as well as the more enlightened and improved virtue of those

favoured with the gospel.* And he will bless and remunerate them all.—Though no human being can really plead *personal merit* before God, or *claim* a title to future glory and happiness, (as all are imperfect and sinful, and will receive, not of debt, but of grace,) yet, those whose sincere desire and endeavor it is to conform to the will of heaven, will be admitted into the society of the blessed above. In the heavenly world, all the virtuous and good, who have ever lived on earth, will be collected into one glorious and blissful society. “They shall come from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God.”

Should it be objected, that this can only apply to those who have lived in christian countries and have believed the gospel; and, therefore, that it does not appear, as suggested, that any of the heathens will be saved—it might be said in reply, that the great sin of infidelity consists in disregarding and opposing the evidences which God has given those who enjoy the gospel; that all who are saved, will be accepted by divine grace through the Saviour; that all pious and upright heathens, such as were *Abraham* and *Cornelius* before they received supernatural instruction, have the spirit, if not the name of christians; and, that being of this disposition and character, they belong to the kingdom of the Redeemer, and will be owned and blessed by him at the last day.

This celestial company will not only be exceedingly numerous, but unspeakably happy. It will be composed wholly of virtuous spirits, delighting in God, and in whom he will also delight. It will be their sublime and blessed employment to contemplate new manifestations of the divine wisdom and goodness, and to unite with hosts of angels “in praising and glorifying him who sitteth upon the throne of the Universe and the Lamb forever and ever.”—The faculties of our minds, it is reasonable to suppose, and is clearly intimated in scripture, will be greatly enlarged in the future state; and we shall be permitted to see and know more of the perfections, works and wisdom of God.

*This sentence, perhaps, is capable of misconception. It was only intended to convey the idea that the sincere and virtuous even among heathens would be saved; Not that our holy religion does not exalt and refine our dispositions, and greatly tend to purify our conduct; Nor that a holy life upon christian principles is not most pleasing and acceptable to God. And it has been observed before, that reason was not a sufficient guide to truth and virtue. Where God intends to call many children to glory, we believe he will prepare the way for the introduction of the gospel. Yet we consider it rational and scriptural, that those heathens who are careful in their enquiries and conscientious in their practice will find mercy at the great day through the atoning blood of the Redeemer.

New wonders and displays of providence will probably be made to us, to exalt our admiring and adoring thoughts, and to gratify and delight our souls. Many mysteries in the divine conduct will be explained to our enlightened comprehension; and the riches of redeeming love be more fully understood. These will be perpetual themes of praise, and inexhaustible sources of gratitude and joy. The sacred song, which will resound through the celestial mansions, will be, “blessing, glory, honor, and salvation to God the Father and to his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who has redeemed us by his blood, out of every kindred and tongue, and people and nation.”

This great company of glorified beings represented to be thus serving and praising God in heaven, it is also to be observed, were pure and righteous. And it is agreeable to the whole current of inspired scripture that those who are admitted into the heavenly world and participate in its spiritual joys, will be holy and virtuous beings. The idea is suggested in our text, by the expression “that they were clothed with white robes.” This apparel was an emblem of personal purity and holiness, through the sanctifying influence of the gospel, and of the interest they had in the redemption of Christ; by whose mediation and atonement those who believe and repent are considered as innocent or righteous in the sight of heaven. God has appointed Jesus Christ to be a Saviour, and a propitiation for the sins of the world; on which account, the penitent and faithful are offered pardon and favored with the influences of divine grace to renew and sanctify them for the pure joys and the exalted services of heaven. It is the blessed design of the gospel to deliver us from the power of sinful lusts and habits. It furnishes peculiarly powerful motives to turn us from sin to holiness, and to render us pure in heart and life. “Know ye not,” says the apostle, “that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.” In that blessed mansion all is holy obedience, peace, devotion and love. An inheritance there is prepared for those only who have overcome temptations and subdued their evil and corrupt affections. They are described as *victors having palms in their hands*. They are those who have conquered their spiritual enemies, fought the good fight of faith, and maintained their integrity amidst surrounding corruption.

We perceive, then, that the christian religion furnishes us both with encouragement and counsel, to live above the world, to deny ourselves all unlawful pleasures and indulgences, and to conform to the precepts of heavenly wis-

dom. And certainly, this world is not to be considered *chiefly* as a *state* of enjoyment. It is not our permanent place of abode. We are here pilgrims and sojourners, as were our fathers before us.—The gospel does not, in fact, require us to treat worldly goods with contempt, nor to be insensible to the common blessings of life. The bounties of providence should be received with gratitude and enjoyed with cheerfulness. Christianity is not answerable for the voluntary severities of superstition, nor the absurd practices of enthusiasm. This divine system would conduct its votaries in the paths of sobriety and virtue to the realms of future glory and immortality. At the same time, it requires us to suppress all anxious desires for the vain pleasures and fading honors of the world. "It calls us to glory and virtue." It would have us *deny ourselves all unrighteousness*, both in principle and conduct; and persuade us to cultivate spirituality of affections and to acquire virtuous and holy habits.

This divine religion is all our salvation and all our hope: Let us propose it as the constant rule of life. Would we derive consolation from its promises and share in its offered grace, we must be careful to live in conformity to its holy precepts.

The doctrines of christianity do also administer great consolation to those who mourn the death of virtuous relatives and friends. For such, we mourn not as those who are without hope. In this appears the unspeakable benefit of the gospel, when compared to the systems of infidelity or fatalism. It attempts not, indeed, to stifle the emotions of sorrow at the exit of a valuable friend. But it greatly soothes and mitigates our grief, by assuring us, that the spirits of departed saints, relieved from the infirmities, the cares and evils of this terrestrial abode, will be admitted to the mansions of celestial glory.

Far be it from me to flatter the living, or to pronounce an unjust panegyric on even that respectable personage, whose recent death is so deeply lamented. The intimate acquaintance and friends of General Knox, I am persuaded, will readily join me in classing him among those characters *who have done great good in their day and generation*; among those who have deserved well of their country and mankind.

Few men have possessed equal energy of intellect with him. The faculties of his mind were vast and comprehensive; and by application and study he had acquired much useful information, which rendered him a more valuable citizen, and capacitated him to be an entertaining and instructive companion to men of literature and science.

As a Patriot—few indeed in our country could justly claim merit or recount services superior to his. With those heroes and statesmen, who in the memorable period of 1775, made a brave and decided stand in defence of civil liberty, no motives could have operated but those which were perfectly pure and patriotic. Among these meritorious characters, General Knox holds a distinguished rank. From the first moment to the close of that defensive and lawful contest, which terminated in the establishment of our freedom as an independent republic, he bore an active and conspicuous part. He possessed, in a high and flattering degree, the esteem and confidence of his illustrious compatriot, WASHINGTON. His military talents, his bravery, his perseverance and integrity were acknowledged by that great man; and while he lived, he never ceased to appreciate these valuable qualities. His exertions were united with that illustrious Patriot, in composing the discontented and mutinous spirit, which appeared in some parts of the army at the close of the war, and which threatened the country with the most calamitous events. And by the same exalted character, he was selected as one well qualified to fill a responsible and important office in the federal government; which under Providence has been the instrument of our political welfare and happiness.

But in the characters of a soldier and statesman, he did not lose the more mild and amiable virtues of the man. The bland and gentle affections of humanity had full possession of his soul. "His heart was made of tenderness." The afflicted and distressed were sure to share in his compassion and charity. And in the relations and offices of domestic life, he was eminently affectionate and exemplary. He disregarded his own wishes and convenience, in kind endeavours to promote the interest and happiness of his friends.

The possession of extensive property and of high office is too apt to engender pride and insolence. But both in disposition and manners, our departed friend was entirely exempt from this common frailty. Mildness ever beamed in his countenance; "on his tongue were the words of kindness;" and equity and generosity always marked his intercourse with his fellow-men. The poor, he never oppressed; the more obscure citizen, I believe, could never complain of injustice at his hands. With all classes of people, he dealt on the most fair and honorable principles; and would sooner submit to a sacrifice of property himself, than to injure or defraud another.

In his political character, we should be unjust did we not give him the praise of candor and moderation. Though decided in his opinions and undisguised in his conduct, he could not truly be denominated the zealot of party. Even his enemies, (if enemies he had, of those who knew not his worth) will not deny him the merit of impartiality and magnanimity. It is not, however, to be dissembled, that he was a warm advocate for the principles and measures of our beloved WASHINGTON, and for those of the friends and admirers of that sainted Patriot. And with this conviction, it was impossible for a man of his sincerity and greatness of mind, to be guilty of any treacherous conduct, or of a change of opinion for the sake of popularity or promotion. He was one of those "*rare characters, who prefer the public good to the public favor.*" And with those who can distinguish the features of the sincere patriot, his civic virtues and services will ever be highly appreciated.

To the amiable qualities and moral excellences of General KNOX, which have already been enumerated, we may justly add his prevailing disposition to piety. With much of the manners of the gay world, and opposed as he was to all superstition and bigotry, he might

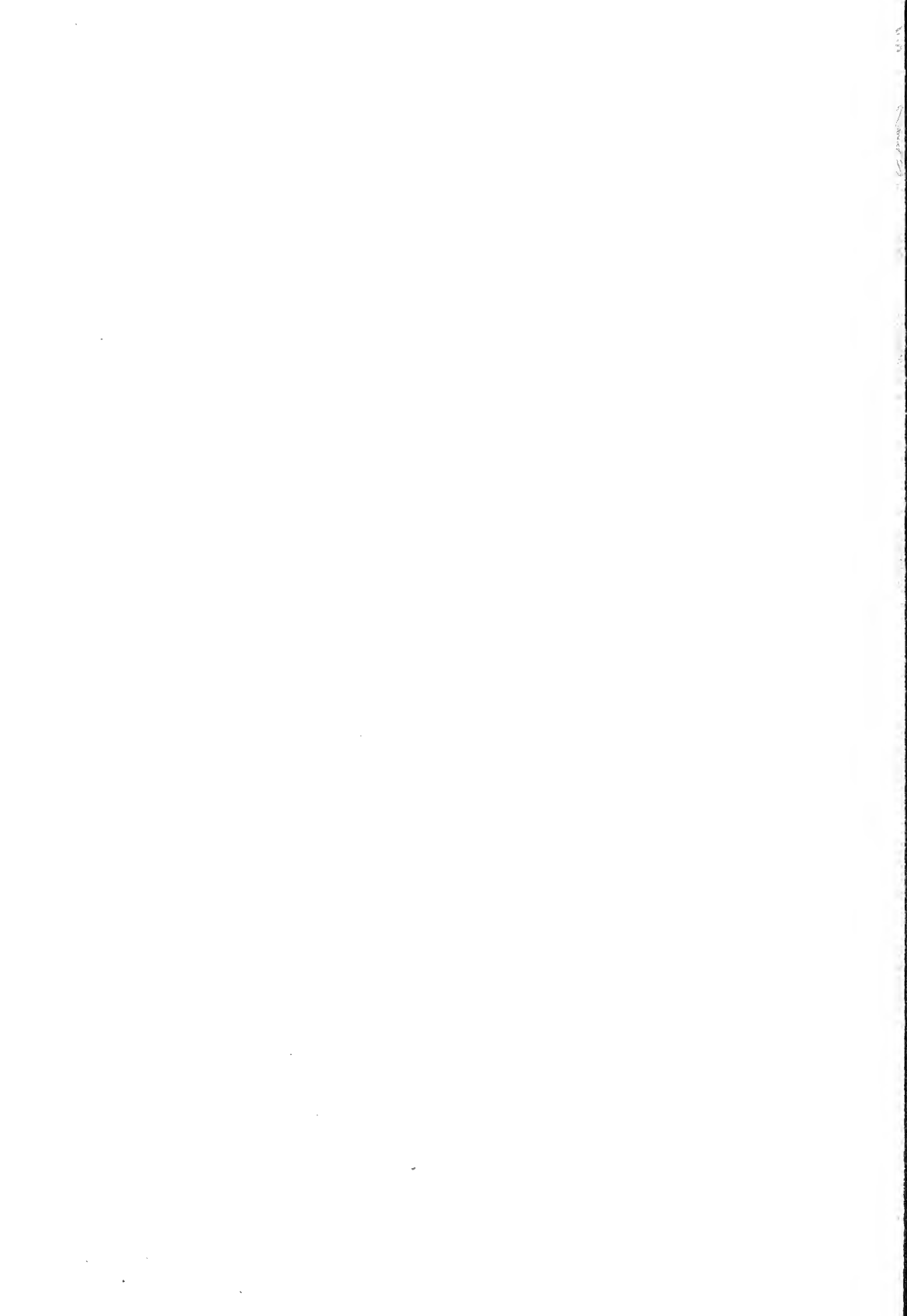
*As I do not recollect that it has been noticed in any biographical remarks of Gen. KNOX, I cannot refrain from mentioning in this place, his filial piety, his most affectionate and assiduous attentions to a *widowed*, aged mother. In his greatest elevation in his most pressing duties of a public nature, she was remembered and honored. Perhaps, no one was ever more anxiously devoted to provide for the comfort and happiness of a beloved parent. Her family name was CAMBELL—Here also let me record the time of his birth; which was on the 25th of July, 1759—A memorandum in his father's family Bible furnishes this fact. He was the sixth of twelve children, most of whom died in infancy. One of his brothers was an officer in our revolutionary war, and afterwards a Consul from the United States in some part of Europe; he died several years ago.—Of the public services, of the military talents and merits of Gen. KNOX, much more, we are sensible, might be justly said. Before hostilities openly commenced, he had discovered uncommon zeal in the cause of liberty; and was an officer of an independent company in Boston; in which station, his attention and skill in discipline gave presages of his future eminence. And no officer entered into our army, if we except the Commander in Chief, under more honorable and flattering circumstances. It was at the unanimous request of all the officers of artillery, that he was vested with the command in that department. His conduct through the war afforded proof that the choice was most judicious.—But we forbear to particularize the numerous instances of his meritorious, public services. His name is enrolled on the page of history, with other heroes, who under providence, saved us from foreign oppression and slavery; and his patriotic deeds are recorded in the annals of our country.

not appear to those ignorant of his better feelings, to possess religious and devout affections. But to his friends, it was abundantly evident, that he cherished exalted sentiments of devotion and piety to God. He was not only a firm believer in the natural and moral attributes of the Deity, which philosophy might admit, and in his overruling and all pervading providence: But always expressed a warm sense of his dependence and obligation for all the means of happiness. From various conversations, which I have had with him, on these subjects, it is my settled conviction, that he received the gospel as a divine system, and that his heart was warmed and influenced by pious affections. He had a strong belief of the immortality of the soul.* And would contemplate with increasing satisfaction and delight the prospect of intellectual employments and glories in the future world.

He sincerely respected the ministers and institutions of our holy religion: And his exertions, to provide for the regular support of the gospel in this place were great and unremitting. By his liberal donations to erect this house of religious worship and to remunerate the labors of the preacher; and by his exemplary conduct in attending the service of God on the sabbath, he gave full proof of his sincere attachment to the sacred cause of christianity. The inhabitants of this town have done honor to themselves by the respect they have shown to his memory, and the sorrow expressed at his decease. They have in truth lost a most liberal friend and benefactor.

But the sorrows and the loss of his own bereaved family—who can estimate? May God Almighty comfort them. May he direct them to make a religious improvement of this calamitous event, which now overwhelms their senses in deep distress. May he take them into his special protection; and make them partakers of his favor and blessing in this world, and of his grace and glory in heaven.

*The following paragraph is extracted from his Will: "I think it proper to express my unshaken opinion of the immortality of my soul or mind, and to dedicate and devote the same to the Supreme Head of the Universe—to that great and tremendous Jehovah who created the universal frame of nature, worlds and systems in number infinite; and who has given intellectual existence to the rational beings of each globe, who are perpetually migrating and ascending in the scale of mind according to certain principles always founded on the great basis of morality and virtue."





LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 011 712 128 8