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THOMAS WILLIAMS'S
CENTURIAL SERMON,

JUNE, 1836.

RHODE-ISLAND PROTESTANTISM,

STATED AND COMMENDED.

A

S E R M O N,

ON

THE CONCLUSION OF THE SECOND CENTURY

FROM

THE SETTLEMENT OF THE STATE

OF

RHODE-ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS.

BY THOMAS WILLIAMS,
PASTOR OF THE CHURCH, BARRINGTON, R. I.

“Render, therefore, unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's ;
and unto God the things that are God's.”

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RHODE-ISLAND PRINCIPLE AND POLICY,
IN THE CHURCH AND THE STATE.

Respecting Ecclesiastical policy, whatever does not accord with the absolute Supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ, the perfection of the Holy Scriptures, the independence of Christian Churches, the official parity of Christian Ministers and the inviolable Sanctity of every person's Conscience, is not of Jesus Christ, but is Anti-Christian.

In every Political community, the several departments and professions and employments should so know their places and do their duties, that, being separated by proper distinctions and yet united by proper ligaments, they may become, as the perfect, honored and happy members of a living, healthy, vigorous and beautiful body.

S E R M O N.

EZEKIEL, XXXVI. 11.

And I will settle you after your old estates; and will do better unto you than at your beginnings.

The ancient people of God, on account of their peculiar institutions, were exposed to the hatred and contempt of other nations. Yet, so far as they feared and served God, they were honored and blessed by his presence and favor. But when they departed from him, he was obliged, by his holiness and sovereignty, to reprove and condemn their conduct. From the evils, which they brought on themselves by their disobedience, their enemies took occasion to reproach that people and their God; as if these evils were to be charged against him and his laws. Besides, God often permitted their enemies, for a time, to prosper and prevail, that he might instruct and humble his people. For this reason, their enemies boasted and triumphed, as if they had gained their designs and should possess the high places of Israel, by the establishment of their delusions and abominations. Under such affecting circumstances, God addressed to Ezekiel the instructions of the chapter which contains our text. "This chapter is entitled, "Israel revenged and comforted."

The instructions and consolations, in this precious portion of divine truth, rightly understood and wisely applied, it is believed, may be accommodated to the past, the present and future condition of the State of Rhode

Island and Providence Plantations. And it is my present object and purpose, instructed and assisted, as I hope, by the word, the Spirit and providence of God, to adapt the instructions of the text and context, so far as I am able, to the conclusion of the two hundred years, since this State began to be settled and possessed by Protestant Reformers and Puritan Christians. For it was in the month of June, 1636, according to the statement of James D. Knowles, in his Memoir of Roger Williams, that the founder of the State commenced his permanent residence within its bounds, and called the name of the town, in which there was given him a home for liberty with order and for piety with humanity, Providence. In agreement with the occasion and the design of the present discourse, it is proposed,

I. To consider the character of the Rhode Island Protestants, as it appears from the early settlement and the original institutions of this christian commonwealth;

II. To inquire what is necessary to the permanent settlement and advancement of the commonwealth upon its original foundations; and,

III. To show the great and happy effects of proper conduct respecting the civil and religious interests of the people in this State.

I. It is proposed to consider the character of the Rhode Island Protestants, as it appears from the early settlement and original institutions of this christian commonwealth.

If we would understand and appreciate the character of the christian Reformers, who founded the early settlement and established the original institutions of this State, we must consider their objects, their principles and practices in respect to religion and government, with their real and proper effects.

1. It was their great and special object to establish and maintain true christian liberty. Callender says, "Mr. Roger Williams and Mr. John Clarke, two fathers of this colony, appear among the first, who publicly avowed, that Jesus Christ is king in his own kingdom; and that no others had authority over his subjects in the affairs of conscience and eternal salvation." Knowles says, "The cause of Mr. Williams's banishment is to be found in the great principle, which has immortalized his name, that the civil power has no jurisdiction over the conscience. The great doctrine of liberty of conscience was then a portentous novelty; and it was the glory of Roger Williams, that he, in such an age, practiced it, defended it, suffered for it and triumphantly established it." George Bancroft, in his history of the United States, says of Roger Williams, "In the unwavering assertion of his views, he never changed his position; the sanctity of conscience was the great tenet, which with all its consequences he defended, as he first trod the shores of New England; and, in his extreme old age, it was the last pulsation of his heart." To use the words of Williams himself, "The removal of the yoke of soul-oppression, as it will prove an act of mercy and righteousness to the enslaved nations, so it is of binding force to engage the whole and every interest and conscience to preserve the common liberty and peace." In the charter, which was obtained by John Clarke, the 8th July, 1663, of king Charles, the Second, it is declared to be the object of the founders of this State, "To hold forth a lively experiment, that a most flourishing civil State may stand and best be maintained and that among our English subjects, with a full liberty in religious concernments; and that true piety, rightly grounded on gospel principles, will give the best and greatest security to sovereignty and will lay in the hearts of men the strongest obligations to true loyalty." According to this object, they were expressly and especially

allowed to practice non-conformity to the church of England. In the charter, it was published, granted, ordained and declared by the king, "That our royal will and pleasure is, that no person within the said colony, at any time hereafter, shall be any wise molested, punished, disquieted, or called in question, for any differences in opinion in matters of religion and do not actually disturb the civil peace of our said colony; but that all and every person and persons may, from time to time and at all times hereafter, freely and fully, have and enjoy his and their own judgments in matters of religious concerns, throughout the tract of land hereafter mentioned, they behaving themselves peaceably and quietly and not using this liberty to licentiousness and profaneness, nor to the civil injury, or outward disturbance of others." It was also meant to guard the people against every civil and worldly motive, in respect to religion; and to maintain the difference and distinction between ecclesiastical and political privileges, obligations and interests. Callender says, "This colony was a settlement and plantation for religion and conscience." He also says, "The very instrument of our original incorporation obliges us to serve God and Jesus Christ and obey all his holy laws." Such are the fundamental principles of civil and religious liberty, which it was the great and special object of the Rhode Island Protestants to establish and maintain, by the early settlement and original institutions of this christian commonwealth.

2. It was also their object to establish and maintain christian and civil order and government, upon rational and scriptural principles. On these subjects, it is the first and great point of truth and duty to "render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's." The sentiments and actions of human beings cannot be right towards God and yet be

wrong towards men ; nor right towards men and wrong towards God. The law of God and the gospel of his grace reach and bind all persons in all things. Our reason and conscience, as well as the law and gospel of God, teach and require us to regard and practice truth, justice and holiness, in our temporal and civil, as well as our eternal and sacred interests. The principles and professions of Roger Williams, on all subjects of civil government, as well as christian order and liberty, agreed with the decisions of conscience and the instructions of the Scriptures. The charter, which is the foundation of our ecclesiastical and political administrations unto this day, sanctions and ordains the righteous and regular establishment of government and order, no less than religious liberty and christian practice. The act of this State, in the bill of rights, is one of the noblest specimens of truth, justice and righteousness, that was ever received by any political community, or published by uninspired legislators. Nor less noble, rational and scriptural is the act of the State "relative to religious freedom and the maintenance of ministers." The people of this State, so far as they have conformed to their fundamental principles and original institutions, have esteemed it their right and duty to maintain truth, justice, order and liberty ; and therefore to support religion and government, humanity and sobriety. And they have guarded and secured the persons, the property and reputation of their fellow citizens and fellow men, by the regular process of the laws and the mighty power of justice and truth, from injury and abuse, from falsehood and violence. They have not sought, nor allowed other persons to seek a redress of pretended, or real wrongs, by mobs, or riots, by violence, or craftiness. They have been as watchful, faithful and bold to maintain justice and order, as they have been to maintain civil and religious liberty. For what liberty can there be, in the church, or in the State, without truth and justice, without

law and order? Nor has it been thought a reproach, or an offense, in any citizen, christian, or man, to procure safety against violence and lies, or a redress of injury and abuse, by a regular and official recourse to law and justice. Nor have Rhode Island Protestants renounced the rectitude, the importance, the necessity and obligation of military discipline and power, in subjection to civil government and authority, for the preservation of peace and order, safety and property, against injustice, violence and fraud. Immorality, infidelity and impiety have no sanction, nor allowance, from the laws, the customs, or even the liberties of this commonwealth. In the church and in the State, liberty, but not lawlessness, justice, but not cruelty, order, but not stubbornness, decency, but not deceitfulness, tenderness, but not cowardice, are the objects of Rhode Island piety and Rhode Island policy. It is now proposed,

3. To consider the principles of the Rhode Island Protestants. Their fundamental principles were righteousness and benevolence, reverence towards God and affection towards men. They meant to think, feel, speak and act right in their conduct towards their Creator, their fellow creatures and themselves. Such are the sentiments, that were loved and believed, professed and practiced by Roger Williams. Such are the principles of our charter. Such is the character of the people, according to the acts, which form the foundation and sustain the superstructure of their political and ecclesiastical economy. But their principles and professions acknowledge their obligations to benevolence, as well as righteousness. In their institutions and performances, they have been influenced by benevolence towards christians and citizens; and also towards strangers, foreigners, enemies and persecutors. The truth of this statement is evident from their conduct towards the Indians. Benevolence has

marked their character towards the injured and the oppressed in other communities. The people in this State have generously distinguished themselves, by their affections and exertions in favor of the enslaved and abused Africans and their American descendants, in former and later years. Towards their slanderers and despisers in other States, they have maintained a benevolent, dignified and unrevengeful behavior. While they know, that they have been rejected and opposed by sister States and sister churches, they have remembered the example of their God and the prayers of their Savior towards his persecutors and murderers. Amidst the variety of differences and denominations, which exist within the narrow limits of the State, in respect to religious subjects, had not the principles and affections of righteousness and benevolence been deeply laid in the foundations of the commonwealth, such love and peace, such order and friendship, such communion and happiness, as generally prevail in our families, neighborhoods, villages, churches and towns, could have had no existence. The fundamental and professed principles of Rhode Island, on the great subjects of religion and government, of piety, of humanity and sobriety, are righteousness and benevolence. They are the principles of the Bible and of the gospel of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

4. We will now notice the practices of the people in this State. In respect to their civil and religious, their literary and scientific, their mercantile and mechanical, their agricultural and military, their domestic and social character and conduct, they have no reason to be afraid, or ashamed of an enlightened and impartial comparison with any other community. The christian ministers and civil magistrates of the State, her farmers and merchants, her mechanics and manufacturers, her physicians and attorneys, her statesmen and warriors, her poets and

orators, stand before the world, without concealment and without deceit. The founders and the people of the State have now stood and acted before the world two hundred years. Until the conclusion of the second century from the commencement of her existence, they have stood as firmly, in the truth and order, in the spirit and power of the gospel, as any portion of christendom. The people of the State did not fall from their integrity during the conflicts and trials which they had to encounter before the revolution. In the fearful war that gave liberty and sovereignty to the United States of America, under the supreme and holy government and agency of Jehovah, in the council and in the camp, on the sea and on the land, they were "first in the fight, though last at the feast." And when has Rhode Island fallen, or failed, in the State, or in the union, before she had finished her two hundred years of faith, hope and love? The time would fail me, should I attempt to name the large number of worthy citizens and faithful servants, whom God has employed in private duties and public stations, during the earlier and later periods of this State, for the promotion of her various interests; yet a numerous company, who are worthy of the most respectful and grateful remembrance, present themselves before my mind. But neither the dead, nor the living servants of the State, nor the State which they have truly loved and ably served, need any other eulogium than a candid and judicious acknowledgement of their real and practical character.

5. Let us now attend to the result of the experiment, which has been made by the Puritan Protestants and Christian Reformers of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. And the effects of their most adventurous and original, independent and disinterested experiment have completely demonstrated the truth of their principles and illustrated the wisdom of their institutions. Rhode

Island has not only succeeded and prospered within her own bounds, but she has, under the marvellous dispensations of divine providence and by the word and Spirit of our God and Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, for the glory of his holy and fearful name, been a great means of salvation to New England and the United States: and she may yet be a great means, through the exceeding riches of divine mercy and by the exceeding greatness of the mighty power of God, of liberty and salvation, not only to these States, but to the nations of the earth. For "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world and things which are despised hath God chosen; yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence." Rhode Island and Providence Plantations have maintained, possessed and enjoyed, for two hundred years, liberty with order, peace with truth, piety without prelacy and prosperity, in all her concerns and interests, without presumption and without ingratitude. And she has endured reproach without resentment and suffered adversity without impatience, or despondence. "And now abideth faith, hope and love: these three; but the greatest of these is love." And if these three sister graces and virtues, beauties and blessings abide with us, through the presence and favor of God, he will settle us after our old estates; and he will do better unto us than at our beginnings. It is now proposed,

II. To inquire what is necessary to the permanent settlement and advancement of this commonwealth upon its original foundations.

All things in this world are subject to great and constant changes. Yet knowledge, goodness and wisdom, with

their happy and lovely effects, will be permanent and triumphant on earth and in heaven. Though the political and ecclesiastical establishments and every sentiment and interest and party and name, which are not of Jesus Christ will be overthrown and destroyed; yet whatever is of Jesus Christ will remain and prosper and prevail. While we review the wonderful movements of divine Providence from the morning of the creation until the present period, it is certain and evident, that God has pursued the greatest and wisest and best ends, by the most wise and proper methods, through the past scenes of earth and time. And such ends he will pursue, by such means, through the future scenes of earth and time, until the judgment of the great day. Such ends by such means he pursued in the early settlement and original institutions of this christian republic. With such sentiments and impressions respecting our beloved and happy State, we ought to review the two hundred years which have past since its commencement and which have so soon flowed into the boundless ocean of eternity. And we ought to consider, that the next two hundred years, with no less haste, will produce events and movements of greater wonder and more affecting interest in this State, in this land and throughout the earth. With such a fearful, yet joyful prospect, we are bound by every solemn and tender motive, as men, as christians, as citizens and philanthropists, to inquire what God and man would have us to do, that our civil and sacred interests may be settled after our old estates and be better than at our beginnings.

And for these important purposes, it is necessary,

1. That the people become intimately acquainted with the history of the State. The object, the principle and experiment of the Rhode Island Protestants were simple, definite and peculiar. They have been tried five times

forty years; and the world have looked and wondered; objected, complained and blamed: but they now begin to approve and applaud. And they will be obliged to conform to the fundamental principles and to imitate the original institutions of this evangelical and republican commonwealth. The latest of American historians has recorded the verdict of truth and justice in favor of Rhode Island; and all nations will pronounce the sentence, not of innocence merely, but of commendation and eulogy. Yea, it is believed, that the Supreme Judge and Sovereign of heaven and earth approves, by his word and spirit and providence, of her "work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." And shall we impeach, or pervert the testimony of two hundred years in our favor, renounce our birthright for a mess of pottage and deprive our children of the possessions and enjoyments, which our fathers won for us, in their warfare for truth and peace against earth and hell? If we would not commit such wickedness against God and man and be guilty of such folly, we ought to obtain and publish an accurate and faithful account of our early settlement and of the foundations and experiments of our ecclesiastical and political institutions. If we would establish and advance the interests of this State in the doctrines, duties and blessings of the Gospel and of the Rhode Island Protestants and Puritans, we must become intimately acquainted with their most instructive and affecting history and the great and happy effects of their living and lively experiment. Scraps and fragments of our history, a narrow and selfish account of parties and sects, will not show unto us, nor to our children the power and glory of God, as they have shone in this State; nor will they teach us our duty and safety. O, for that spirit of grace and wisdom, which was so mighty in the founder of this State, that "he was not afraid to stand alone for truth against the world." Let the people of

this State arise and stand for the truth of their own history and act according to their fundamental principles and their original institutions ; and they shall find, before two hundred years, from this day, shall close their hasty flight, that the earth shall embrace the same holy principles and be blessed with the same righteous and benevolent institutions with their powerful and practical influence and effects.

2. It is no less important and necessary to maintain correct sentiments, respecting our civil and religious interests. Such sentiments were avowed and maintained against the world, by the founder of this State. And unto this day, it is the public sentiment and the solemn profession of this whole people, "that truth is great and will prevail, if left to herself; that she is the proper and sufficient antagonist to error and has nothing to fear from the conflict, unless by human interposition disarmed of her natural weapons, free argument and debate; errors ceasing to be dangerous, when it is permitted freely to contradict them." These sentiments are scriptural and rational; they are glorious and beautiful. And they will arise and shine upon all nations and fill the earth with light and love, with faith and hope, with peace and joy, with order and liberty, with purity and happiness, with glory, beauty and praise. Shall such doctrines, then, after they have been tried in this State two hundred years, now be disregarded, disobeyed, opposed and hated? Shall we for strange nonsense and foolish novelties, turn from the old estates of our beloved and happy heritage and renounce the principles and the privileges, which have, for two centuries, distinguished the commonwealth of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, in important respects, from every other portion of christendom? It should be our study and prayer before God and our constant labor before man, that the people in this State may

never renounce, nor despise their heavenly inheritance; but maintain and transmit to successive generations, until the world shall end, the principles of civil and christian liberty, order, truth and peace, by which they have been so long and so highly blessed. But we are warranted to seek for our children, not only the liberties, the honors and blessings, which our fathers acquired for us; but higher and nobler possessions and enjoyments. There is a precious word, on which God causes us to hope: "I will settle you after your old estates; and will do better unto you, than at your beginnings." But such an hope, however patient, without the work of faith and labor of love, will avail nothing for ourselves, or our children. Nor will either love, or faith, or hope, or peace, or joy, or patience, abide with us and produce their precious fruits, without a bold, humble and faithful profession and support of the truth, respecting every sacred and secular interest.

3. If the people of this State would settle and advance their principles and enjoyments upon the only proper foundations, their civil affairs must be administered in righteousness. They have been the most highly republican and thoroughly independent of any community, in the wide world, for two hundred years. But their republicanism and independence were never designed to renounce, or to oppose the holiness and supremacy of Jehovah; nor to despise and abhor the dictates of humanity and benevolence towards our fellow creatures. In the charter, there is recorded the hope, in respect to the people of this State, that "there may, in time, by the blessing of God upon their endeavors, be laid a sure foundation of happiness to all America." Shall this hope be now turned to despair, because it was first formed from love to the Indians and must now be renounced from hatred to the negroes? How can we have liberty? how can we practice righteousness? how can we profess

piety? how can we promote humanity? while we live in intimate confederacy and fellowship with the most detestable and destructive slavery? Union with slavery and the enjoyment of liberty and the practice of righteousness are forever impossible. Rhode Island was the last of the old States to adopt the blood-stained communion of the united slave-holders and man-sellers and soul-traders. And, O, that she might be the first to repent of this injustice and violence and return to the holy profession and practice of righteousness! If we are not delivered from our political participation in the cruelties and abominations of slavery, our glory will depart, our liberty be destroyed, our happiness be forgotten and our State be forsaken and abhorred by the holy and righteous God, in whom our fathers hoped under persecution and affliction. If this people would be settled after their old estates and have God do better for us than at our beginnings, the standard of piety and humanity, of righteousness and benevolence, which was here raised by the noblest hero of the Protestant Reformers and Christian Puritans, must not be deserted by their official servants in the administration of our civil affairs at home, nor in the Congress of the union. Nothing but righteousness in our civil, as well as religious sentiments and practices, can exalt and advance this people; or settle our liberties with order and preserve our towns and churches and families from reproach and ruin and from the anger and vengeance of the holy and righteous God.

4. For the settlement and advancement of the people in this State on proper and permanent foundations, we must practically regard the Scriptures on every subject of religion and humanity. We are bound by the very character, designs, works and law of God and by the mediation, atonement and government of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the agency, office and work of the Holy Spirit and by all the doctrines and duties, promises and

threatenings, rewards and punishments of the gospel, to love our great and holy Creator with supreme and ardent affection and to love our fellow creatures, as ourselves, with impartial and disinterested benevolence. And without supreme love to God and true love to man, we have nothing of the true spirit of religion, or of humanity ; and are destitute of true virtue and are wholly selfish and sinful. Real and practical holiness, in heart, word and deed, is the sum and essence of religion and the whole duty which we owe to God and man. All opinions and practices, all affections and enjoyments, all divisions, contentions, disputes, parties and sects, will be tried by the immutable obligations and requirements, which bind all rational and moral agents to be constantly and perfectly holy. And they will stand, or fall, according to their nature and character, when tried by this simple, yet fearful test. Holiness, in its purity and power, in sentiment, affection and action, in individuals, families and nations, throughout the earth and forever, is the great object of God in the Scriptures and in the instructions and movements of his providence. As unchangeable as the perfections of his character and as permanent as the pillars of his throne, is the command of his law and gospel, "Be ye holy : for I am holy." With this command, the whole gospel of the grace of God, in its length and breadth, height and depth, perfectly agrees. It is only on the foundation of holiness, as taught and required in the Bible, that any community can be settled, advanced and prospered in its civil and religious interests and enjoyments. The people, then, in this State, must become thoroughly, practically and scripturally holy in all things, in order to be settled after their old estates and to do better, and fare better, than at their beginnings.

5. For the establishment and advancement of this people in their liberties and enjoyments, proper measures must be adopted for the promotion and prevalence of the

pure gospel throughout the State. The gospel, in its simplicity, purity and power, was the hope, the strength and life of the Rhode Island Protestants. Nothing, but the gospel, can produce true knowledge, holiness, liberty, usefulness and happiness among any people, or in any persons. Nothing, but the gospel, can preserve and advance any community, whether civil, or religious, in their possession and enjoyment of temporal and spiritual privileges. But the gospel will not exist, nor produce its holy and happy effects, without genuine benevolence and practical self-denial, in the various departments and transactions of civil and religious society. Before this State can be settled, after its original foundations and be better than at its beginnings, it must be instructed, purified and beautified by the religious education of the rising generation, the powerful ministry of the gospel and the general effusions of the Holy Spirit. But who shall now arise and stand for the truth, order and liberty of the gospel against the world and against the parties and sects, that intend and labor, by all means and by any means, to gain the people of this State to their own selfish designs and partial interests? "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock! thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth! Turn us, again, O God; and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved. Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth." It is now proposed,

III. To show the happy effects, which will arise from a wise and proper course of conduct, respecting the civil and religious interests of the people in this State. And it may be observed,

1. Such conduct will effect the real union and visible communion of true christians, throughout the State, in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel includes and exhibits an immutable foundation for the perfect

unity and eternal communion of all beings and of all persons, who possess the spirit of holiness. Through the Lord Jesus Christ and by the gospel of his truth and grace, all holy beings will be perfectly and eternally united in the kingdom of glory. Real christians, in this life, are virtually of one heart and of one soul. And so far as they are properly instructed and rightly treated, they love, believe and profess the same doctrines, they perform the same duties, exercise the same holy affections, pursue the same objects, enjoy the same blessings, maintain the same order and discipline and actually and visibly unite in the same divine and most holy and blessed communion. Such is the true nature and such are the proper effects of the gospel. Such will be its great and happy effects in all the nations of the earth. And such will be its future effects in this State; and in every town and village, in every neighborhood and family. Such also are its present effects, in all persons and families, who conduct as they ought to do towards God and man, towards the church and the State. Shall this people, then, whose founders advanced two hundred years before other Protestants and other Puritans, now decline and retreat? They may be, very easily and they ought to be, very speedily, settled after their old estates; and they ought to be and do better than at their beginnings. Proper conduct will produce such effects, in the union and communion of real christians, throughout the State, in the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

2. Another effect of proper conduct will be the prevalence of the gospel through the State. Proper conduct, by real christians, will soon furnish from our own sons, as many teachers and preachers of divine truth, as can be needed, to communicate the instructions and present the blessings of the gospel to every town and village, to every family and person in the State, regularly

and permanently, publicly and from house to house. The right and wise system of conduct will also afford to the children and youth of the State the advantages of literary and scientific, religious and moral instruction and education, every day and in every district. Such will be the conduct of christians and of the people; and such will be the good and happy effects of their conduct at a future period; and at a time, now not far distant. For God will hasten it in his time. And his time, yea, his set time to favor Zion in this State has come. Why, then, shall christians slumber? Why do the people delay? Who can behold the multitudes in our towns and villages and not be moved with compassion? They faint; and are scattered, as sheep having no shepherd. The harvest truly is plenteous; but the laborers are few. Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest. Why should we deprive ourselves and withhold from our fellow creatures, who are so near us, the present and the eternal consolations and enjoyments of the gospel? Why should this people deny themselves a speedy and permanent settlement after their old estates? and deprive themselves of privileges and enjoyments and honors, so much better than at their beginnings? Shall the gospel soon be taught and preached through the earth and to every creature? and not be taught, truly and purely and fully, to every family and every person in this State?

3. Another happy effect of proper conduct will be powerful assistance, in the exertions of the present time, for the reformation of all nations. The several denominations in the State have not been ignorant, nor inactive, respecting the signs and movements of this time; or the communication of the gospel to the destitute at home, or in foreign lands. Yet, in this respect, the people do not act, nor appear, to advantage, nor in their real character. Their affections and exertions are obscured and concealed,

by their connection with the several denominations in other States, to which they attach themselves. The christians, the churches and the people in this State have no distinct and prominent anniversaries, nor benevolent institutions of an evangelical character, which are peculiar to themselves and separate from the religious anniversaries and institutions of other States and which collect and unite christians and citizens of this commonwealth, in the affecting transactions and glorious enjoyments of such heavenly occasions. Nor have we any religious, scientific, or literary periodical publications, that exhibit the peculiar character and promote the peculiar interests of Rhode Island. In these respects we are tributary to christians, churches and people in other States. On this account, the intelligence and piety, the benevolence and enterprise of the State are not distinctly and properly shown and seen, in the great designs and movements of the present day, for the instruction and salvation of the nations. Could the intelligence, benevolence and energy in the State be raised above the entanglements of parties and sects and appear in their true light, it would then be seen, that my statements respecting this people, though now accounted the wild fancies of a lunatic and the unwise feelings of a whimster, are correct and moderate; and founded on truth and knowledge, which have been gained by a very thorough and extensive and repeated survey of the churches and towns and a particular and accurate acquaintance with the history and character of the people, from the earliest settlement of the commonwealth to the present time. May God, in his mercy and wisdom, soon give us a fair trial on this subject; and prepare us to meet it, for his own glory and the progress of his kingdom! Let the christians in this State and the people arise and act in the spirit, that was of the Lord Jesus Christ, in Roger Williams, John Clarke and Henry Vane; and then their principles and privileges will begin to be known and shown throughout the land and

throughout the world! So we might afford the most powerful assistance to overturn and destroy the delusions and oppressions, by which Babylon has covered the earth with darkness and sorrow and guilt and shame for thousands of years. Such will be the great and happy effect of wise and faithful conduct, by the people in this State, for the general interests of piety and humanity in this impious and cruel world, of which Satan has so long claimed to be the God and the king.

4. Another happy effect of proper conduct will be the blessing of God upon the temporal and spiritual interests and privileges of the people in this State. God has greatly blessed this State by its natural formation and scenery and by its relative position and limits; and also by its atmosphere and territorial and maritime peculiarities and advantages. And he has more highly blessed the State by its fundamental principles and original institutions, both political and ecclesiastical. Bancroft most boldly, yet truly declares, "The annals of Rhode Island, if written in the spirit of philosophy, would exhibit the forms of society under a peculiar aspect. Had the territory of the State corresponded to the importance and singularity of the principles of its early existence, the world would have been filled with wonder at the phenomena of its history." The smallness of its territory does correspond with the importance and singularity of its principles; and renders the phenomena of its history the more wonderful and glorious. And the world will yet be filled with wonder, when the annals of Rhode Island shall be written in the spirit of Christianity, so as to show what God wrought in the early settlement of this State, for the instruction and reformation of all nations; and yet wrought, simply and purely, by his word, spirit and providence, in such a manner as philosophy, without an unction from the Holy One, will never understand, nor believe. But wonderful and glorious, as its foundation

and history may be justly accounted, still greater wonder and glory shall elevate and distinguish its future history and advancement. For there is a marvelous preparation begun and it will be continued, for the general and powerful effusions of the Holy Spirit, with all the gifts and graces and blessings and beauties of his truth and love, upon the churches and towns in the State. God waits to be gracious. And while he waits, he says, "I will settle you after your old estates; and will do better unto you than at your beginnings." He also says, "I, the Lord, have spoken and I will do it." And again, "I will work; and who shall let it?" But what God does for the instruction, settlement and communion of his people in the liberties, enjoyments and ordinances of the gospel, he performs through their faithful patience, their labors and prayers. In this way he secures his highest glory and happiness and their fellowship and enjoyment in the blessings, which he gives and they receive. Thus God is blessed in blessing his people. And they are blessed in the duties which he appoints, that they may enjoy his holy presence and special favor. Just so far as the people in this State will perform their duty, they will be blessed of God and prepare the way for his blessing to rest on their children and their children's children, through all future ages until the world shall end.

5. Another happy effect of proper conduct, by the people in this state, will be their preparation for the everlasting communion of the redeemed family of God in heaven. Let the two hundred years, which have passed since the foundations of this christian State were laid in the truth and spirit, in the liberty and order of the gospel, be faithfully reviewed and their instructions practically applied; and long, long, before the next two hundred years shall finish their rapid flight, this precious and blessed portion of the earth shall be filled with wise,

holy, useful, happy and lovely families, churches and schools. But the people in this State and their children, in all future ages, will soon finish their term of trial and be formed for the decisions of the final judgment and the retributions of eternity. And, then, neither two hundred years, nor two thousand, nor two millions, nor millions of millions of ages, will limit their future progress. They must exist and advance, as vessels of mercy, or vessels of wrath, in heaven, or in hell, world without end! Such are the objects and such the motives, which bind and call and urge every citizen, every christian and every man, to do all he can do, that this people may be settled after their old estates and be better than at their beginnings. By such conduct we shall be blessed and become a blessing to the State, to the land and to the world, until the scenes of earth and time shall close. And then the people of this beloved and honored republic and the millions and millions of their children, who shall live and die before the world shall end, will be prepared for the employments, enjoyments and praises of the redeemed people of God, in the kingdom of glory, world without end. And all praise be given to Jehovah, Father, Son and Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen—Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!

IMPROVEMENT.

1. From the preceding statement respecting the early settlement of Rhode Island, with its connections and consequences, it is evident there are great and special reasons for gratitude to God for his mercies towards the people in this State. Without this great movement in divine providence, there would have been no pure and thorough and practical deliverance from the delusions, cruelties and abominations of popery. John Robinson, in 1620, before the pilgrims left Holland, well said, "I charge you, before God and his blessed angels, that you follow me no farther than you have seen me follow Jesus

Christ. If God reveal any thing to you by any other instrument, be as ready to receive it, as ever you were to receive any truth by my ministry; for I am verily persuaded the Lord has more truth yet to break forth out of his holy 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 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. This is a misery much to be lamented; for though they were burning and shining lights in their times, yet they penetrated not into the whole counsel of God: but were they now living, would be as willing to embrace further light, as that which they first received. But I must herewith exhort you to take heed what you receive as truth; examine it, consider it, and compare it with other scriptures of truth, before you receive it. For it is not possible the christian world should come so lately out of such thick anti-christian darkness and that perfection of knowledge should break forth at once." But who, among the New England churchmen and statesmen, followed the object and maintained the spirit of Robinson's wise and faithful charge so thoroughly and practically, as the founder of this State and the early settlers of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations? The events of two hundred years have shown the truth and the wisdom of that charge and the safety and happiness of the lively experiment, that was attempted and has succeeded within this State, in respect to the duty of constant advancement in the knowledge and practice of divine truth. For this decisive and glorious experiment, with its great and happy effects, "Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee."

2. What has been said in the present discourse shows, that there are great and special reasons to pray unto God for his presence and grace on behalf of this people. Though the fundamental principles of christian and civil liberty, order and peace, were truly professed and practiced by the founder of this State; yet these principles have not been thoroughly and faithfully reduced to practice in our towns and churches, families and neighborhoods. To a great extent and in many instances, they have been abused and perverted to infidelity and licentiousness, by native citizens of the State. Nor have they been less abused and perverted to evil purposes by some persons, who have come from other States and attempted to impose their opinions and practices upon the christians and citizens of this commonwealth, while they have chosen to be ignorant and erroneous respecting the liberty and order of the gospel and the principles, character and history of this christian republic. Neither Episcopalians, nor Presbyterians, nor Congregationalists, nor Methodists, nor Baptists, nor other Sectarians and Partisans, have been free from ignorance, error and sin in their designs and exertions respecting the religious interests and concerns of the people in this State. Besides the evils in the churches, there are many evils in the towns and in the civil transactions of the State, that oppose the true christian principle and policy of Rhode Island Protestantism. Even the Constitutionals, who are weary and sick of the ancient charter, have put a little of the old leaven into their new lump; and exclude colored people, whether Indians, Negroes, or Mulattoes, from the just rights of men, christians and citizens. But God will settle us after our old estates and do better unto us than at our beginnings. Our help and our hope and our strength are in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. Let our prayer, then, be unto him, day and night, for his presence and blessing with the people of this State and with their descendants and

successors through future ages. "God be merciful unto us and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us: that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations."

3. We may perceive what mercies are needed by the people of this State, that they may be established and advanced on proper and permanent principles. There is needed a visible standard, that may attract and unite the true and faithful friends and servants of God and man, throughout the State, upon the principles of the Bible and of Rhode Island Protestantism. This standard ought to be orthodox and liberal, rational and scriptural, devout and practical. There are also needed able and faithful teachers and preachers of divine truth and wise and holy ministers of the gospel. Nor is there less need of wise and righteous and holy and pious legislators and magistrates and judges. There are also needed christian and learned teachers of common schools, for the instruction of children and youth, throughout the State, in manners and morals, in letters and science and every polite and useful art. And there is needed a more simple and scriptural formation of christian churches, so that all persons, who are visibly disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ and children of the living God through the power and grace of the Holy Spirit, may be received and treated according to their character and conduct. There are also needed the purity and order, which God appoints and requires, in respect to families and the various domestic duties and relations. The head of every family is obligated and authorized to maintain the instruction, devotion and government, which belong to the several offices of prophet, priest and king, in his own house. Families are the most important societies, that can exist on earth; and they form the character and condition of schools and churches, towns and kingdoms, states and nations. The head and every member of every family should be able and willing to say in truth, "I will behave

myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart." For the bestowment of such mercies and for the removal of such evils, as will prevent their reception, there is needed a general and powerful and continued effusion of the Holy Spirit with his most glorious and blessed instruction, guidance, comfort and strength. Such mercies are indeed great and precious. But they are not too great and precious for God to give; nor for us to receive for the sake of his holy name. God now says what he said to his ancient people, "A new heart also will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and ye shall keep my judgments and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land, that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people and I will be your God." The great mercies, which God gives to his own people in all nations and in all ages, there is reason to hope and believe he will soon bestow upon the people in this State, not for our sakes, but for his own name's sake.

4. There are the most powerful inducements for proper and vigorous exertions for the temporal and spiritual prosperity of the people in this State. The location and limits of the State are favorable to its rapid and general improvement. The principles of liberty and independence, in respect to all subjects of religion and policy, which are the birth-right of this people, are favorable to the discussion of all questions, which affect the spiritual and temporal interests of human beings. The foundations, on which the institutions of this christian republic were originally established and which have been so long tried and so thoroughly confirmed, are a peculiar advantage. The purpose and the work of God in the settlement of this State, so far as we can form a judgment from its happy effects, should induce us to be bold and valiant for his

truth and the honor of his name and the progress of his kingdom. The results of this lively experiment are needed for the instruction and consolation of the church and children of God, in their present designs and labors for the deliverance of all nations from ecclesiastical and political usurpation and tyranny and oppression and violence. The revealed purposes and promises of God, respecting the future illumination and reformation and happiness of this guilty and troubled earth, are a perpetual and immovable foundation for confidence and exertion, that the people in this State may be settled after their old estates and have God do better for us than at our beginnings. The command of the Lord Jesus Christ, which binds his ministers and disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, with the promise of his almighty and constant presence, should move every man and woman and child in the State to do what they can for the progress and prevalence of divine truth in every town and village, neighborhood and family within its bounds. On this subject there should be no doubt and no delay. The glory and purpose and office and work of the Holy Spirit, in union with the Lord Jesus Christ and the eternal Father, warrant and oblige every person to make every possible and proper exertion for the temporal and spiritual prosperity and advancement of this people in knowledge, holiness, usefulness and happiness; in glory and beauty and praise. The past and present movements and aspects of divine providence should induce us to hear and believe his word, when he says, "I will work; and who shall let it?" Besides, we must be hastened to the awful decisions of the final judgment and the tremendous retributions of eternity. And can we bear and endure the sentence, that shall be passed upon every wicked and slothful servant in the great and last day? The supreme and final judge says, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

5. We may be assured, that wise and proper exertions will be attended with the most pleasing success. The truth and the power, the justice and the mercy, the wisdom, the faithfulness and the sovereignty of Jehovah himself are engaged for the instruction and protection and assistance and consolation and encouragement of every one, who will truly and humbly serve him in the faith and patience of t̄æ gospel. Besides, a cloud of witnesses have lived and died within the bounds of this State and have gone to the rest and the rewards of heaven. None of their prayers and tears, none of their sorrows and cares, none of their labors and hopes, have been lost, or failed of the most glorious and triumphant success. They, who are faithful in the service of God and man, will soon sing, “O, death, where is thy sting? O, grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know, that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

Finally—In God we hope. Let us, therefore, pray in true faith, watch in all things, labor with patience, give with cheerfulness, deny ourselves at all times and in all things and rejoice evermore. Then shall we hear, in all our conflicts and trials, the few moments we may remain on earth, “as it were the voice of a great multitude and as the voice of many waters and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”—“Now unto him, who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask, or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. For of him and through him and to him are all things; to whom be glory forever. Amen.”



RHODE-ISLAND PROTESTANT ASSOCIATION.

The subscribers account themselves to be obligated by the duties, which they owe to God and man, to make an attempt to form and maintain a Society, that shall be influenced and governed by the following articles of agreement.

I. The Society shall be called **THE RHODE-ISLAND PROTESTANT ASSOCIATION.**

II. The objects of the Association shall be to obtain and maintain the knowledge of the history and of the interests of the people in this State; to form and promote acquaintance, communion and friendship among ministers, churches and christians; to expose and resist all encroachments upon the personal, domestic, religious and civil rights, blessings and liberties of the people—of individuals, of families, of christians and churches: and to extend, as there may be opportunity and ability, the advantages of literary and scientific instruction and education, and the pure, peaceful and impartial ministry, instructions and blessings of the gospel, by wise and proper means, in this State and in other parts of the land and of the earth.

III. The Association shall consist of such ministers of the gospel, christian teachers and other persons, as may approve of the objects and articles here presented; and as may desire membership by the entrance of their names upon our records.

IV. There shall be an annual meeting of the Association in the City, Providence, on the Tuesday after the second First day in August; at which meeting such official servants and committees shall be chosen and appointed, as may be found necessary, or expedient, to secure and promote the objects of the Association.

V. There shall be a quarterly meeting on the Tuesday after the second First day in November, February and May, should divine Providence open the way for it, in such succession and rotation, as may be found practicable and expedient, in the different counties of the State.

VI. At the annual and quarterly meetings, any minister of the gospel, or pastor of a church, or any preacher, or teacher of divine truth, or any brother sent by any church, or meeting, or any delegate from any benevolent Society, who may be present, shall be entitled to all the privileges of the meeting, equally with the permanent and recorded members of the Association.

VII. The Association shall never assume, nor exercise the authority of an ecclesiastical tribunal; nor act as a council for the ordination, dismission, or discipline of ministers; or for the formation of churches; or for any other purpose of ecclesiastical government; or of political interest and management; nor shall appropriate, or examine any persons, to be candidates for the christian ministry.

At any annual or quarterly meeting, these articles may be altered, amended, or enlarged, provided it be done consistently with the fundamental principles of natural and revealed religion; and such resolves and laws may be passed, as the Association may judge to be expedient and beneficial.

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