Mr. Adams's Discourses on Religious Liberty.
Religious Liberty an invaluable Blessing:

Illustrated in two

Discourses

Preached at Roxbury Decr. 3. 1767.

Being the Day of general Thanksgiving.

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Psalm xlv. 1, 2. We have heard with our Ears, O God, 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 planteft them; how Thou didft afflict the People, and cast them out.

Exodus xv. 2.—My Fathers God and I will exalt Him.

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**DISCOURSE I.**

GALATIANS V. 1.

Stand fast therefore in the Liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the Yoke of Bondage.

The Yoke of bondage, which the Apostle speaks of in the text, was the rites and ceremonies of the mosaic law. Many, in that day, pretended to embrace the christian faith, but, at the same time, taught and practised circumcision and obedience to the law of Moses. This the Apostle considered as an abridgment of christian liberty, and an unreasonable imposition, especially, on the Gentile converts. This the Apostles called a yoke—which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear: and in this epistle, it is called a being in bondage, under the elements of this world. The principal design of this, and of some other of St. Paul's epistles,
epistles, is to vindicate the liberty of believers from the obligation of the masonic law, and to show, that by embracing the law, they do virtually renounce Christ and fall from the doctrines of grace. Having thus vindicated the liberty of christians from legal impositions, he, in the text, fervently exhorts them to **stand fast in the liberty wherein Christ hath made them free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.** In discoursing on these words, I shall,

I. **Shew,** that christianity is a system of the most perfect and valuable religious liberty.

II. **Nevertheless,** christians have sometimes had this liberty abridged, and have groaned under the unscriptural impositions of men.

III. **I shall** take a brief view of the religious liberty, which God, in his good providence, hath granted and is continuing to the churches, in this land.

IV. **Show,** that it is highly incumbent on us to understand, and praise God, for our religious privileges; and to **stand fast in the liberty wherein Christ hath made us free.**

And while I am discoursing to you, on this subject, I shall not think, that I have altogether mistook the design of this anniversary day, on which, our religious privileges ought to be one principal article of our joy and thanksgiving.

I. **Christianity** is a system of the most perfect and valuable religious liberty. Whoever will be at the pains to consider the genius and spirit of
Christianity, as laid down by Christ and his Apostles, will find, that it is, on every account, a system of the most perfect liberty.

Not that it relaxes our obligations to perfect and universal holiness; or is, in any sense, friendly to licentiousness: The law of God, in its spiritual meaning, is not set aside, nor toleration, in any single instance, given for sensual indulgence. The Apostles ever disavowed such a doctrine: preaching, that we are not without law to God, but under the law to Jesus Christ. They called on Christians; for brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

But yet the gospel breaths the spirit of religious liberty—liberty from the guilt of sin, and the condemnation of the law. Liberty from the dominion of sin, the slavery of Satan.—Liberty from the elements of the Jewish law, and liberty from the impositions of men; conceeding to every man, that fundamental right of nature, to examine and judge for himself, in matters of religion; and to worship God, according to the dictates of conscience, and the institutions of the head of the church, without the impositions of mankind. These are glorious liberties of the sons of God.

Our Saviour early intimated, that his was to to be a kingdom of rest and liberty: that is, at least, one thing implied in that gracious invitation, Mat. XI. 28. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. And again, Joh. VIII. 36. If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. Before Pilate our Lord declared, John XVIII. 36. My kingdom
is not of this world. Mat. XX. 25. Ye know that
the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over
them—but it shall not be so among you: But whoso-
ever will be great among you, let him be your minister;
and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your
servant.—The Apostles, though divinely inspired,
did not pretend to be the lords of men's faith; they
recommended careful enquiry, and desired no
means of propagating the christian doctrine and
worship, among Jews or Gentiles, but, by manifes-
tation of the truth, and giving miraculous witness to
the same. They constantly called on men to at-
tend the evidences of truths of such unalterable
consequence; not, says an inspired Apostle, that
we have dominion over your faith, but, are helpers of
your joy. They called on men to exercise their
own judgment; and, in points of controversies,
gave this advice, Rom. XIV. 5. Let every man be
fully persuaded in his own mind. Christians are
strictly forbidden judging and condemning one an-
other, ver. 4. Who art thou that judgest another
man's servant? To his own master he standeth or
faloth. Ver. 10. But why dost thou judge thy bro-
der, or set at nought thy brother? For we shall all
stand, at the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ. The
Apostles knew that christianity, in its facts, doc-
tines, forms of worship and discipline, could not
suffer, by the freest and fullest enquiry. Although
they were fully persuaded of its truth and excel-
dency, yet they desired no one to be followers of
them, but, so far as they gave evidence, that chri-
tianity was from heaven. In short, the Apostle
James I. 25. exactly describes the nature of the
gospel, and the spirit it universally breaths, when
he calls it, the law of liberty, and tells us we
shall be judged by the law of liberty.

II. Although
II. **Although religious liberty** be such an unalienable right of nature, and so fully maintained in the gospel of Christ, yet there have been frequent attempts to deprive christians of this liberty. Heathens and christians, Jews and Gentiles have united, in violating the rights of conscience; imposing, either the worship of false gods, or else the doctrines and injunctions of men respecting the worship of the true God.

The first enemies to Christ, and the liberties of his kingdom, were the unbelieving Jews. As they, all along, set themselves against Christ, and crucifyed the Lord of glory, so, when the gospel was preached, and christianity began to spread, after our Lord's ascension; especially, when the word was preached to the Gentiles, and they received into the church, without circumcision, they aroused, and exerted themselves to oppose the doctrines of the Apostles. Wherever these came, preaching the gospel, those infidels stirred up the people to persecute and destroy them. Almost, if not quite, all the opposition, which the Apostles met with, proceeded from the malice and zeal of the Jews stirring up the heathen to persecute the followers of Jesus. The Roman government seems to have been less zealous, in the persecution of the christians, than these bigotted Jews. Many, who did, in a sense, embrace christianity, were yet extremely fond of retaining the jewish rites, and could not be content without imposing them on the consciences of the Gentile converts. Often does St. Paul warn christians of judaizing teachers; much does he say to establish them in their liberty. In Gal. II. 4, he speaks of false brethren, unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty, which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage.
When Christianity spread, and became an object of general attention, it alarmed the zeal of the Heathen world; and they became the persecutors of the Jews in persecuting the church of God. The Pagans were strongly possesed in favour of their national religion; of their gods and sacrifices; temples and altars; their festivals and sacred ministrations, which, they found, the christian religion was designed to overthrow. They were jealous of the worship of the gods; and though they did not refuse to admit the favour of the world into the number of the gods, yet, when they saw the christians abandoning the pagan gods and their worship, they were enraged. When they saw men convinced by the light of truth, and conscientiously turning from dumb idols, to serve the living God, and wait for his son from heaven, the aid of the civil magistrate was implored, to extirpate so dangerous an heresy. The Roman Emperors, at least many of them, became the furious persecutors of the disciples—the harmless followers of the lowly Jesus; until the reign of Constantine, the first christian Emperor, by whom, christianity received a civil establishment, in the beginning of the fourth century. Before this time, thousands of holy Martyrs had sealed the testimony of Jesus with their blood. But so far were these violent and unreasonable persecutions, of quiet and good subjects, who desired only to live in all good conscience, towards God and man, from rooting out the christian religion; that they served but to propagate it the more; multitudes seeing the patience and constancy of the Martyrs, under the cruelest sufferings, embraced the religion, for which they dyed. These violent persecutions, doubtless, awakened thousands to examine into a religion, that had so many to dye
dye for it; and it hath, from that time, been a common saying, that the blood of the Martyrs was the seed of the church.

**Under Constantine**, the empire became Christian. Paganism was abolished by imperial Edicts, and Christianity became the national, the established religion of the Roman empire. The Christian emperors heaped many honors and privileges on the evangelical ministry; dignity and wealth became the temptations to ecclesiastical functions. The purity of the Christian ministry was lost; the simplicity of Christian manners was sadly corrupted, an awful example was left, to teach us, how little temporal power can do to advance real Christianity; yea, I might say, how contrary the dignities and riches of this world are to the simplicity of the gospel.

Nothing is more natural to us than a desire to impose our own judgment on our fellow men; we earnestly wish to bring all men to a conformity to our own judgments and manners. This is an instance of the natural pride of our hearts. This was the source of pagan persecution, and this principle produced infinite mischiefs in the Christian world. Pride, working in the hearts of professors, would not long suffer the church to be quiet, in the free enjoyment of the rights of conscience. As Christians could not, in every thing, think alike, frequent attempts were made to propagate the opinions of men, concerning faith and worship, by the decrees of councils and synods—the secular arm was soon called in, and employed, to enforce the decrees of councils; and they, who could not subscribe to forms, of human invention, were persecuted, excommunicated, and driven into banishment.
ment and death. Thus, in a few ages, we find
councils against councils, fathers against fathers,
sects of christians embittered against each other,
and mutually persecuting one another, as they
could engage the magistrate on their side: All
sides in their turns commenced persecutors; no-	hing seems to have been less understood than mu-
tual forbearance, and the liberty of private judg-
ment, in matters of religion. I do but hint at
what is fully known, to such as are acquainted
with ecclesiastical history.

It is needless to point out the steps, by which,
the bishops of Rome made their way to the papal
power. The Apostle tells us, 2 Theff. II. 7. that,
in his time, the mystery of this iniquity doth already
work. It then, had its beginning, in the pride
and love of pre-eminence, which were, then, dis-
cernable in some christians. The aspiring views
of the roman bishops, the favours of emperors, and
the splendor of their see; Rome, for ages, having
been the capital of the world, all conspired to ad-
vance the power of the roman pontiffs; until, at
length, the bishop of Rome was declared and ac-
knowledged, universal bishop of the church, the
succesor of St. Peter, and the Vicar of Christ, on
earth. For many hundreds of years, the popes
were, generally, acknowledged head of the church;
kings and potentates submitted to their jurisdic-
tion, and held their kingdoms, as gifts of the roman
see.—They decided controversies; formed articles
of faith, appointed rites and ceremonies in the
worship of God; to all which a blind and absolute
obedience was required; they granted indulgen-
ces, pardoned sins, and opened and shut the gates
of heaven, at their pleasure; exactly fulfilling that
prophetic
prophetic character of antichrist, 2 Thes. II. 4. So that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself, that he is God. Thus the liberties of the church were given up to the popes of Rome; all the rights of conscience were troden under foot.

During this grand papal apostacy, christians, not content with the simplicity of gospel worship and discipline, were continually adding their own inventions to the worship of God. Transubstantiation, the worship of images, relics, saints and angels, and all the superstitions of popery made their way into the church: Rome christian resembled Rome pagan; and the christian resembled the pagan temples; an awful example to what lengths men will go, when they leave the pattern, which Christ and his Apostles have left us, and pretend to decorate the worship of God, with their own inventions!—Thus the worship of God was filled with idolatry, the temples of God became the temples of idols: the scriptures were little understood; the senseless decrees of popes and councils were received, with blind submission, as the rules of faith and worship.

These were dark ages; a cloud of ignorance overspread the church: superstition and idolatry well nigh extinguished the pure and noble religion of Jesus. The teachers of the people were ignorant and immoral: real learning was in a great measure banished out of the church of God, and the people proportionably sunk into ignorance and superstition.

Not that God left himself without witness, in these times of ignorance. All along, there were some, who saw the corruption of the church, and abhorred
abhorred the superstitions and idolatry of the times. So long ago as the twelfth century the Waldenses and Albigenses, * in France and Savoy, openly declared against the abuses of the church of Rome; they boldly preached, that the pope is not head of the church, denied the real corporal presence of Christ, in the Eucharist, the worshiping of saints and images, and separated themselves from the Roman communion. These glorious witnesses of God's truth became martyrs, in the cause of reformation. The papal bulls raised the zeal of Christendom, to extirpate this unhappy people: all manner of barbarities and cruelties were practised upon them, and multitudes perished in the glorious cause. However, their doctrines could not be suppressed; the dreadful persecution, they suffered, spread their opinions, through most parts of Europe: Thousands had their eyes opened, to see the errors of popery; and then were sown the seeds, which, afterward, sprang up, and, at length, produced the glorious reformation.

God, whose ways are unsearchable, and his judgments past finding out, is greatly to be admired, for raising up such a number of great and learned men, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The fall of the eastern empire, and the extension of the Turkish dominion into Europe, was the revival of learning in the west: 'Tis too great a work to tell you, by what means and instruments, the reformation opened and advanced. It must suffice to say, learning revived; by the indefatigable labours of divers learned and worthy Divines, the people were enlightened to discern the errors of popery; they were taught that the pope was antichrist; en-

* See Perrin's Hist. of the Waldenses.
quiry and private judgment were promoted, sove-
reign princes were persuaded to abandon the ro-
mish church, and patronize the cause of refor-
ation—a glorious reformation was accomplished; and a deadly wound was given to papal power.

In the fourteenth century, about 130 years be-
fore the reformation of Luther, flourished that stout
and valiant champion of the truth, John Wickliffe,
by whom, the seeds of the reformation seem to have
been sown in England. While professor of divi-
nity at Oxford, he boldly published against tran-
substantiation, the infallibility of the pope, the
pre-eminence of the church of Rome; teaching
that the new testament is a perfect rule of faith
and manners, and ought to be read, by the peo-
ple: and further maintained most of the points, by
which the Puritans were afterward distinguished;
as, that there are but two orders in the ministry,
viz. Presbyters or Bishops and Deacons; that all hu-
man traditions are useless; that mystical and sig-
nificant ceremonies, in the worship of God, are
unlawful; and that, to restrain men to a prescribed
form of prayer, is contrary to the liberty granted
them by God*. This Wickliffe was a wonderful
man, for the times in which he lived. He was the
first, that translated the new testament into English;
he wrote near 200 volumes; and such was the kind
providence of God, that, though his doctrines were
condemned at Rome, and afterwards condemned,
in a convocation at London, himself deprived of his
professorship, his writings ordered to be burnt, and
himself

* Vid. Neal's Hist. of the Puritans. And if the reader
would see the principles of Wickliffe, he will find them,
in the learned Mr. Pierce's vindication of the differ-
ters; p. 45; 46.
himself imprisoned, yet, he followed his ministry, and in an advanced age, quietly departed this life, 1384. His bones, with his works, were, however, ordered to be burnt, by the council of Constance, forty one years after his death: But his doctrines remained, the number of his disciples increased, which gave occasion to severe laws against heretics, his followers were vexed with a most grievous and cruel persecution, and some hundreds of them were put to death, before the grand Reformation.

King Henry VIII, from the opposition he met with, in accomplishing the divorce of Queen Catherine, began and carried into execution a national separation from the church of Rome.—He renounced the jurisdiction of the pope; assumed the ecclesiastical supremacy to himself, declared himself sole and supremum head of the church of England, next and immediately under Christ; and, consequently, he assumed to himself all jurisdiction over the Clergy, with the whole power of reforming errors and heresies, in doctrine and worship; he suppressed the monasteries and religious houses, took away all authority of the pope, over the church of England, and established that separation from Rome, which continues to this day.

Henry, in his younger life, was an obedient son of the papacy, and, for writing against Luther, received, from his holiness, the title of defender of the faith. And still he was a papist, in the main, and persecuted papists and protestants, who did not fully comply with his own injunctions. Under him suffered holy Lambert, who was executed in Smithfield, in a barbarous manner; crying out, in the flames, none but Christ, none but Christ. Nevertheless there were, in this reign, divers pious and learned
learned men, who longed for a real reformation; among whom was archbishop Cranmer, who took this opportunity to attempt a reformation in doctrine and worship. Books were printed, the bible again translated, and set up to be read in churches. But, by means of the rigid temper of the King, who would have nothing taught or maintained contrary to his own instructions, the reformation made but little progress in this reign. The most that the church legally obtained was, that the King was acknowledged head of the church, instead of the pope, and the sole right of reformation was vested in the crown; royal proclamations had the force of laws, and the subject was obliged, under severe penalties, to believe, profess and obey according thereunto—as if the King had a right to judge for the whole nation, and impose upon them what religion he pleases, without their consent!

During the reign of Edward VI, who was a remarkably pious and learned prince, but dyed in the 16th year of his age, the reformation went on gloriously, under the direction of Cranmer, and other great and excellent reformers. The popish laws against heretics were repealed, by act of Parliament, and new ones enacted in favour of the reformation. Images were taken out of the churches, and the rites and ceremonies of popery abolished—the sacrament was ordered in both kinds—private masses were put down—out of the roman Missals of Sarum, York, Hereford, Bangor and Lincoln, was composèd the morning and evening service, almost in the same form it stands at present, only there was no confession or absolution; * from

*C

*Vid. Neal's Hist. of the Puritans, Vol. i, 4to, p. 36. Who adds "it would have obviated many objections, if "
the same materials they composed the Litany, differing, in but one article, from that, which is now used—the mass-books were called in—the altars changed into communion tables—the doctrinal articles of the church of England were formed, being 42 in number, but since reduced to 39.—The common prayer-book was, a second time, corrected, and established by act of Parliament. This was a great and glorious work! Although, it must be confessed, they were mistaken in using severities; and even Cranmer exposed himself to censure, by promoting or consenting to some executions. But yet, they were great and good men; valiant in the cause of truth, and made as quick advances, in restoring religion to its primitive simplicity, as the circumstances of the times would admit.—These reformers, 'tis evident, would have gone farther, and did not design this as the last standard of reformation; they left it under their hands, "that they had gone as far as they could, in reforming the church, considering the times they lived in, and hoped that they that came after them would, as they might, do more."* And the King himself lamented, that "he could not restore the primitive discipline, according to his heart's desire."†

King Edward was succeeded by Queen Mary, a biggoted papist; the work of reformation stopped, in an instant, a dark cloud hung over the glorious

"the committee had thrown aside the mass-book entirely, and composed an uniform service, in the language of scripture,—but this they were not aware of, or the times would not bear it.

* Vid. Piers's vindication, p. 11. † Vid. p. 12.
rious reformers, who had done so much in the pre-
ceeding reign. The foreign protestants, who had
taken shelter in England, from the storms of per-
c reckution abroad, were driven out of the kingdom.
Popery was again established, by act of Parliament.
The popish ceremonies were established; the king-
dom was reconciled to the see of Rome; several
thousand protestant ministers were turned out of
their livings. The penal laws against heretics
were revived; multitudes fled from persecution
into foreign countries. The bishops, Cranmer, Rid-
ley, &c. with Rogers, Bradford, and many others,
who had been such glorious reformers, were cruelly
burnt for heresy, and sealed their testimony to the
reformation, with their blood. Two hundred and
seventy seven persons * suffered death for religion;
innumerable others were imprisoned, and prepar-
ing for execution, when God mercifully appeared
for them, and the nation, delivering them from death,
and the nation from popery and slavery, by the
death of their merciless persecutor.—The Lord
knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation,
and to reserve the unjust to the day of judgment to be
punished.

The accession of Queen Elizabeth to the throne,
gave new life to the reformation. Those, that had
fled into other countries, returned; and those, that
had laid concealed, quickly appeared. She was,
indeed, a favourer of the reformation, but thought
it had been carried too far; she was fond of many
of the old rites and ceremonies, in which she had
been educated: She was naturally proud, affected
much state, and, through all her life, set upon a
uniformity

* Of whom 5 were bishops, 21 ministers, 8 gentlemen,
84 tradesmen, 100 husbandmen, 53 women, and 4
children.
uniformity in the worship of God. The supreme ecclesiastical power was vested in the Queen, by Act of Parliament, which she did not fail to exercise, to vex and distress those, who could not, in conscience, conform to all the modes and habits of the established church. In the beginning of her reign, she established the court of high commission, which sported itself, in tyranny and oppression, until it became odious to the nation; at this time also passed that Act for the uniformity of common prayer, and service, in the church, and administration of the sacraments, which was the fatal rock, on which, the peace of the church was dashed in pieces.

There were some, even before, as well as at that day, who conscientiously scrupled the romish habits, and multitudes, especially of those who had been exiles in Queen Mary's persecution, who disliked the common prayer, and could not conform to the terms imposed on them, by royal or episcopal authority.

The Queen had no tenderness for scrupulous consciences, but proceeded, with vigour, to enforce a uniformity in the worship of God. Subscriptions were required, promising conformity to the habits, and likewise to the rites of the common prayer, &c. under pain of being deprived, in three months: The consequence was, many were deprived, and, with their wives and children, laboured under great poverty; some were put in prison, and the poor men, who were just returned from exile, found themselves involved in a second persecution. A proud prelate (A B. Parker) who was the instrument of their sufferings, said, "he did not doubt, " when the ministers had felt the smart of poverty " and want, they would comply, for the wood is yet " but green."—But he found himself mistaken.
During almost the whole reign of Queen Elizabeth, who died in 1602, the prosecution of the non-conformists was carried on, with vigour. Subscriptions were required, not only to the doctrines and worship established by law, but to rules imposed, by ecclesiastical authority: Oaths were administered ex officio; the edge of the laws made against the papists, was turned against the conscientious Puritans. Multitudes of pious, godly ministers were informed against, pursued, arraigned, suspended from their ministerial functions, turned out of their livings: and all, not for damnable errors in doctrine; not for immorality of life, but for a conscientious scrupling to conform to impositions, of human authority. "A fourth part of all the preachers, in England, were under suspension, at a time, when, not one beneficed clergyman in six was capable of composing a sermon." It would tire your patience, and too deeply affect your hearts to relate the many instances of cruel sufferings, in those days, under the lash of episcopal power.

Nor that there were wanting thousands, who esteemed and pitied them.—We are particularly told, that, when the ministers were silenced, their people earnestly begged for their restoration; many of the nobility and gentry received them into their families, as chaplains, and tutors to their children, not merely out of compassion, but from a sense of their real worth. "For they were men of undissimulated piety, and devotion, mighty in the scriptures, zealous for the protestant religion, of exemplary lives, and far removed from the liberties and fashionable vices of the times, and indefatigably industrious in instructing those committed to their care. Here they were covered from their oppressors, they preached in

* Vid. Neal's preface to his history, pag. 8.
in the family, and catechized the children, which, without all question, had a considerable influence on the next generation." Divers of the nobles and gentry, petitioned on behalf of the unhappy sufferers: But cries and intreaties were to no purpose, these persecuting measures were pursued, by two hard-hearted prelates, * under the encouragement of a proud and unreasonable sovereign, through the greatest part of this reign.

When King James I. ascended the throne, it was expected that he would put an end to these persecuting measures. His education in the church of Scotland, the high regard he had expressed for her worship and discipline, his subscribing the solemn league and covenant, and the intercession which he made in the former reign for the relief of the sufferers, raised the hopes of the nonconformists, that they should see better times. But they soon found themselves mistaken. It was not long before he published a proclamation to enforce uniformity; countenanced and encouraged the persecution of the puritans; and in the second year, after his coming into England, three hundred ministers were, either silenced, or deprived of their benefices; excommunicated, cast into prison, or forced to leave their country and go into banishment. "A more grievous persecution of the orthodox faith" (says Mr. Calderwood) "is not to be met with in history, in any prince's reign."

The violent proceedings of the bishops, in the latter end of the last reign, drove great numbers of nonconformists into Holland, where, by leave of the states, they erected churches, after their own mode; some of these were the people, who transplanted themselves into this country. —In 1604 the high abuse of church

* A. B. Parker and Whitgift.
church power obliged many other learned ministers, and their followers, to leave the kingdom, and settle in Holland, where English churches were erected, after the presbyterian mode. But the greatest number of those who left their country were the people called Brownists, who were rigid seperatists from the church. Mr. Robinson, a pastor of one of these churches at Leyden, first struck out the congregational form of church government, and part of his church in 1620, transported themselves and their form of government to this land.

It was a most affectionate parting these adventurers, about 120 in number, took of their minister and the remainder of their friends, in Holland, when they embarked for this new world. With tender affection, their worthy pastor on his knees, with fervent prayer, committed them to the blessing and protection of heaven. They arrived at Plymouth in the beginning of winter—sad was their condition, when they arrived in this howling wilderness. Winter immediately came upon them; they had no accommodation for their entertainment, and inexpressible were the hardships they underwent. A sad mortality raged among them, occasioned by the fatigues of a long voyage, the severity of winter, and the want of necessaries. The country was covered with woods, their little cottages were not sufficient to keep them warm; they had neither skilful physician, nor indeed wholesome food; so that, within two or three months, half their company found their graves.—However, the survivors, as the spring came on, being encouraged by the recovery of their health, and by supplies sent from their friends at home, prosecuted their arduous undertaking, “and laid the foundation of one of the noblest settlements in America, which,
which, from that time, has proved an Asylum for the protestant nonconformists, under all their oppreiffions."

It is needless to hint to you the character of King Charles I, whose arbitrary measures bro't his head to the block. His prime minister was William Laud, first bishop of London, and afterwards A. B. of Canterbury. He was the adviser of most arbitrary measures, and a furious and cruel persecutor of the Puritans. Soon after his advancement, he proceeded against the non-conformists with great severity. One or other of the puritan ministers was, every week, suspended or deprived, and their families driven to distress; there was no liberty of conscience, nor any prospect of relief; the clouds gathered thicker over their heads, and threatened a dreadful storm. This put our fathers on projecting a settlement in this Province, where they might be delivered from the hand of oppression, and enjoy the liberty of their consciences. They arrived first at Salem in 1629, and afterwards, (viz. in 1630.) in much greater numbers in this neighbourhood, and laid the foundation of these flourishing churches; in which liberty of conscience hath, blessed be God, been enjoyed these 137 years.

When our fathers left their native country, they did not mean to excommunicate the established church. They called its members their reverend fathers and brethren, and fervently asked their prayers for themselves; promising to remember them "when" (say they) "we shall be in our poor cottages in the wilderness, overshadowed with the spirit of supplica-

* A particular account of the first adventurers to Plymouth, with the characters of several of their leading men, the reader will find in Lieut. Gov. Hutchinson's appendix to his history of the Massachusetts-Bay.
tion, through the manifold necessities, and tribulations which may not altogether unexpectedly, nor we hope unprofitably, befall us." But they found their consciences oppressed, and the worship of God burdened with unscriptural ceremonies. For want of conformity to human impositions, they found themselves so hunted and perplexed that they had no rest. Therefore they quietly withdrew themselves into this land, where was granted them free liberty of conscience to worship God in their own way; where they could set up the worship of God, on what, they believed, the scripture plan, and enjoyed his ordinances, free from useless ceremonies and the impositions of men.

Our fathers were truly a distressed people, and fled hither from the hand of persecution. — It is no small thing to forsake our native country, our dear friends, our pleasant houses and delightful accommodations—to adventure over a wide ocean,—to settle in a wild, howling, uncultivated wilderness,—a country destitute of every desirable accommodation, and filled with numerous nations of barbarous savages. And yet, all these our fathers did. Though they were persons of good rank and circumstances in life, yet they bid a final adieu to all the delights of their native country; exposed themselves, with their wives and children to the dangers of a long voyage; and to all the distresses which they could not expect to avoid when cast on a desolate shore, destitute of any kind of covering from the rage of the elements, and of most sorts of the food on which they fed; in the garden of the world; and all that they might serve God in his ordinances, agreeable to conscience; free from unscriptural impositions.

Our fathers were not the scum of the nation, a set of indigent wretches, that could not subsist in their own country, but many of them persons of figure and fortune.
Religious Liberty

fortune. They left a fair inheritance, or spent plentiful estates to plant themselves in a desolate country. Neither were they an ignorant rabble, but many of them gentlemen, of liberal education; men of good abilities, well acquainted with the scriptures, and the discipline of God's house. Among them were divers excellent ministers, educated in the universities, and greatly esteemed for their labours in the best parts of England. * Their undertaking was bold and hazardous, and they passed through innumerable fatigues in this glorious work. But the good hand of their God was upon them; he wonderfully succeeded their undertaking; and we bless God, at this day, who made tyranny and oppression the cause of liberty and religion; the Lord thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the Lord thy God loved thee.

The Laudian persecution of the nonconformists proceeded in England, after the first settlements here. They were harried in the star chamber, the high commission courts, and at the council table. This engaged many to follow their brethren hither, and several of the

* See the characters and circumstances of the principal adventurers, in the Lieut. Governor's Hist. of Massachusetts-Bay, vol. 1. p. 14. margin. As also the lives of the ministers, who came over in the early days of the country, in Dr. Mather's Magnalia. Of the latter Mr. Neal says, they were "the chief leaders of the people into these parts"—"I have before me a list of 77 divines, who became pastors of sundry little churches and congregations in that country, before the year 1640, all of whom were in orders in the church of England—and I must say, though they were not all of the first rank, for deep and extensive learning, yet they had a better share of it than most of the neighbouring clergy; and which is of more consequence, they were men of strict sobriety and virtue; plain, serious, affectionate preachers—and took a great deal of pains to promote Christian knowledge, and a reformation of manners, in their several parishes." Hist. of Puritans vol. 1. p. 546.
the great champions of the British liberties, such as Pym, Hampden, Sir Arthur Hauserigg, Oliver Cromwell, Dr. Owen, were on the point of transplanting themselves into this wilderness, but were detained, in providence, for a greater work;* and, in the succeeding twelve years of Laud's administration, 4000 planters came over to people these American deserters. These violent proceedings did but open the eyes of the people, increase the number of the puritans, create an aversion to prelatical government, arouse the patrons of liberty: And at length issued in the violent death of Laud, and his royal master the King, the abolishing of episcopacy, and the establishment of another form of church government, under the protection of Oliver Cromwell.

Upon the restoration of Charles II, episcopacy was restored also.—The terms of conformity were carried higher than before the civil war, †—conformity was required under the penalty of being deprived of their livings. On the black Bartholomew-day 1662, about 2000 were obliged in conscience to relinquish their livings and ministry in the church; "an example hardly to be paralleled in the christian world. It raised a grievous cry over the nation; for here were many men much valued (says bishop Burnett) and distinguished by their abilities and zeal, now cast out ignominiously, reduced to great poverty, and provoked by most spiteful language." Mr. Locke calls them "worthy, learned, pious, orthodox divines. § A nobler set of ministers there never were in any nation. Sad were the calamities of far the greater part of these unhappy sufferers, who, with their families, might have perished, had it not been for the charities of the people, to multitudes of whom they were exceeding.

ceeding dear. "Many hundreds of them" (says Mr. Baxter) "with their wives and children, had neither house nor bread; the people they left were not able to relieve them, nor durst they if they had been able, because it would have been called a maintenance of schism or faction." Ministers, of gravity and years, were rallied in the pulpits, exposed in the play houses and insulted by ignorant mobs.—And, as if all these sufferings were not enough, a severe act was made, by which all nonconformist ministers, who would not by a certain day swear, "not at any time to endeavour any alteration of government, either in church or state, should not, unless in passing the road, come or be within five miles of any city, town corporate, or borough, that sends burgesses to Parliament; or within five miles of any parish, town, or place, wherein they have, since the act of oblivion, been parson, vicar or lecturer, &c. or where they have preached in any conventicle, on any pretence whatever, under severe penalties. Thus were they cut off from the assistance of their friends, and exposed to the lash of a barbarous law, which was, in abundance of instances, inhumanly executed.

Your patience will not hold out, while I trace the persecution of the nonconformists through the remaining part of Charles's reign. In consequence of cruel acts, great numbers of pious ministers and people were laid in prisons, among thieves and common malefactors, where they suffered the greatest hardships and indignities; "an estimate was published of near eight thousand protestant offenders, who had perished in prison, in the reign only of Charles II. By severe penalties inflicted on them, for assembling to worship God, they suffered in their trade and estates, in the compass of a few years, at least, two millions; and a lift of sixty thousand persons, was taken, who had suffered, on a religious account, between the restoration..."
"restoration and the revolution;"* i.e. in 28 years. It was by the glorious revolution in 1688, an æra ever to be mentioned with joy, when William and Mary, of glorious memory, ascended the throne, that a period was put to the exorbitant exercise of episcopal power.

King William earnestly desired the union of all his protestant subjects; he was for taking of the test, and abrogating the penal laws, as far as related to protestant dissenters; but could not accomplish his desire. However, the act for toleration of protestant dissenters, was passed, in the beginning of his reign; and it was impossible to hurt the dissenters, while he lived.

The designs formed against their liberties in the latter end of Queen Anne's reign, † were happily frustrated, by the accession of George I; and, since the dominion of the royal house of Hanover, the toleration hath been religiously maintained.

It is frequently said the times are grown better, the principles of religious liberty, and the rights of private judgment are better understood, and a full toleration is, generally, agreed to be best; to be sure the wanton exercise of prelatical power hath, for some years been restrained.—Blessed be God that, on this account, we live

* Vid. Dissenting gentleman's answer to Mr. White, p. 77. and Neal, vol. 2. p. 759.
† I mean the act against occasional conformity, which was formed with design to cramp the toleration, and keep under the dissenters: And the act to prevent the growth of schism, in which the education of children is taken out of the hands of nonconformists, and entrusted only with such as are full and entire conformists; and if any school-master or tutor should be willingly present at any conventicle of dissenters for religious worship, he was to suffer three months imprisonment, and be disqualified from teaching a school for the future. This last act was to take place, on the very day that the Queen died; but King George, being sensible these hardships were bro't on the dissenters, for their steady adherence to the protestant succession, in the house of Hanover, procured the repeal, of these acts, in the fifth year of his reign.
live in better times.—Blessed be God for the writing of Lock, and other learned men, who have so effectually exposed the iniquity and absurdity of persecution for religious opinions. But can it yet be said that the dissenters at home are not subjected to temporal inconveniences, on account of their religious opinions? To say nothing of their being held to support the established worship; as an additional charge to the maintenance of the ministry and worship of God, agreeable to their consciences, which, perhaps, the members of the church of England would think an unreasonable imposition here.* To say nothing of this, yet the test act,† which requires a receiving the sacrament of the Lord's supper, according to the usage of the church of England, as the condition of serving their King and Country, in places of honour and profit, cannot be looked upon, by judicious men, otherwise than as

* This was accounted a grievance among us, and, some years ago, an act of the government was made, with universal approbation, releasing the members of the church of England, who steadfastly attend the worship of God in that way, from any obligation to support the public worship as legally established here. The like liberty was also granted to people of other denominations. Such is the regard we generally have to liberty of conscience!

† This act was made in 25th of Charles II, and obliges, under very severe penalties, "all persons bearing any "office or place of trust or profit—to receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper, according to the usage of "the church of England, in some parish church, on a "Lord's day, immediately after divine service and ser-
"mon, and to deliver a certificate of having so received "it, under the hands of the respective ministers and "church Wardens, proved by two credible witnesses, "upon oath, to be recorded in the court." This act is complained of as a grievance by the most judicious part of the nation. And though it is resented with, in many instances, yet why is it kept in being, unless that it may prove an instrument of oppression, when the times will permit?
as a degree of legal imposition; it is, at least, depriving a great number of legal subjects, of the common priviledges of British subjects, for acting up to their own consciences. And, for what, do they deserve this hardship?—Have they not ever been steady to the government, as established at the revolution? Have they not ability and will to serve the publick? Have they not a natural claim to the priviledges of Englishmen? When, therefore, they are, by law, excluded from all places of honour and trust, unless upon such conditions as they cannot in conscience comply with, what is this, but astriping them of the priviledges of society, and keeping them, to a certain degree, in a state of oppression and persecution?

It is not without pain at heart, that I review the sufferings of the conscientious nonconformists through a long course of years. Some of the best men—many of the best christians—hundreds of the best ministers, that ever were in the nation, have felt the rigors of persecution for conscience sake. They endured silencing, fines, imprisonments, and lingering deaths. Who can read, without a bleeding heart, the unrelenting cruelties of Parker, Whitgift, Bancroft and Laud, under whom, hundreds of godly ministers, were either loaded with fines or shut up in filthy jails, or obliged to fly their countries. What mistaken zeal was it that ejected 2000 ministers in one day, excellent pious divines, whose writings will be highly esteemed, as long as there is real piety in the nation?—Abandoned to poverty and death; inhumanly banished from the places of their ministrv, left those, who had tasted the sweet of their labours, should afford them any relief?—May God forgive this mistaken zeal, and let not the sin be found charged upon them in the great day.

My Brethren, I say not these things to raise your unchristian resentment, but to enlarge your gratitude; that
that you live in a better age, and in a land of liberty. Thousands in former days, doubtless, abhorred those persecuting measures, and thousands of their successors, in the church, abhor them in the present day. Much of the blame was owing to the times, as well as the men. Liberty of conscience, the rights of private judgment, and the absurdity of advancing the kingdom of Christ, by penal laws, were not so well understood, among any denominations of christians, as they have been since. It seems to have been, through the special interposition of heaven, that our fathers obtained, from the Crown, a grant of this country, with such full liberty of conscience; and what a kind providence is it, which, through all the changes and revolutions of our mother country, in the 130 years past, hath suffered no durable change in our religious liberties. Here we dwell in a land of light, a region of liberty: We worship God according to the order of his sanctuary; a happiness, that thousands of the best men have not enjoyed.

These things, to men wholly indifferent to religion, and strangers to serious impressions, may seem to be trifles. One way of worship is to them as good as another, any or none may be, to them, alike; but to men who are seriously concerned to secure the divine acceptance, and enjoy the word and ordinances in gospel simplicity, religious liberty is one of the most precious jewels on earth. The rights of conscience are sacred; and what is there worth enjoying here, if we are deprived of the free enjoyment of the word, ordinances, and worship of God, in conformity to our own consciences? Let it become an article in your daily thanksgivings; let this be a principal subject of our unfeigned praise on this anniversary and joyful day. Happy is the people that is in such a case, yea happy is that people whose GOD is the LORD.
Religious Liberty an invaluable Blessing.

**DISCOURSE II.**

III. I PROCEED, as was proposed, to consider the nature of that liberty wherewith, we apprehend, Christ hath made us free; the religious liberty which we, through the wonderful providence of God, do enjoy, in this land. And

In general: It is the liberty of worshipping God, in his ordinances, in gospel simplicity, without the unscriptural impositions of men. This is the liberty for which our fathers came into this land, and this is the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.

It may not be amiss, now we are upon this subject, nor unprofitable, especially to our youth, to shew particularly what were the unscriptural impositions, under which our fathers groaned; what were the things, with which they could not comply; and, for the non-compliance with which, they drew on themselves those difficulties, which occasioned their remove to this land. And here;
Though I will not pretend to relate every thing that was matter of grievance, yet I will give you the principal exceptions they made to the establish- ed government, worship and discipline; and that, very much, in the manner, in which, I find them summed up, by an able and faithful historian.*

They complained of the bishops affecting to be thought an order superior to presbyters; and claiming the sole right of ordination, and the sole exercise of ecclesiastical discipline, as having no foundation in scripture, nor primitive antiquity; and being contrary to the judgment and example of all the protestant churches abroad.

They also disliked the temporal dignities annexed to their office, and their engaging in secular employ- ments, as tending to exalt them above their brethren, as not agreeable to their character, as ministers of Christ, not consistent with the due discharge of the sacred ministry.

They excepted to the titles and offices of Archdeacons, Deans, Chapters, and other officials, belonging to cathedrals, as having no foundation in scripture, or primitive antiquity.

They complained of the cruel unreasonable ex- ercise of church-power; and that the highest censures in the church were in the hands of laymen, and not in the spiritual officers of the church.

They also lamented the want of a godly discipline, and were grieved at the promiscuous access of all sorts of persons to the Lord’s supper, when the church, in her own articles, is described to be “a congregation of faithful persons.”

ALTHOUGH they did not dispute the lawfulness of set forms of prayer, yet they desired a liberty for prayers of their own composition, in the public worship; and they disliked some things in the public liturgy. As, the frequent repetition of the Lord's prayer; the interruption of the prayers, by the responses of the people, which is practised in no other protestant church in the world. They also excepted to some passages in the offices of burial and marriage: as the Lord's with my body I thee worship, in the former; and thee, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to everlasting life, to be pronounced over the worst of men, except in a few cases.

They likewise disliked the reading the apocryphal books, in the church, while some parts of canonical scripture were omitted; they also thought no man ought to be ordained a minister in the church, who was incapable of preaching and expounding the scripture. This was a frequent grievance in those days. One of their common complaints was, that there were so many unpreaching ministers, pluralists and non-residents; and that men were presented to livings in the church, by royal authority, bishops, and lay patrons, when they ought to arise from the election of the people.

They also disapproved of the observation of sundry of the festivals and holidays of the church, as having no foundation in scripture, or primitive antiquity.

They disallowed of the cathedral mode of worship, of singing their prayers, and of the Antiphons, or chanting the psalms by turns; nor did they approve of instrumental music in the church, which was not in use in the church for above 1200 years.
after Christ, but was, consequently, brought in, in the depths of popery.

They also scrupled conformity to certain rites and ceremonies which were enjoined by the rubrick, or the royal authority: And would not be dispensed with, in compliance with tender consciences. As,

The sign of the cross in baptism, which is no part of the institution in scripture, and of whole use, in baptism, there is no express mention made, until the 5th century; and had been abused to superstition by the church of Rome. They also disallowed of the baptism by midwives; and of the manner of churcning women, which they thought look'd too much like Jewish purification.

They also excepted to the use of god-fathers and god-mothers, to the exclusion of parents, from being sureties for the education of their own children.—To giving heathenish names—and the answer given in the name of the child. They likewise disapproved the time and manner of confirmation. They excepted to the injunction of kneeling at the sacrament of the Lord's supper, as not agreeable to the example of Christ, and his Apostles; which, they believed, hath no foundation in antiquity, for many hundred years after Christ, and hath been practised by the papists in their worship of the elements: At least, they thought, kneeling at the communion ought to be left indifferent. They disliked the bowing, at the name of Jesus, as grounded upon a false interpretation of scripture, and favouring of superstition. As also, the giving the ring in marriage, derived from the papists, who make marriage a sacrament.

* See Dr. Edwards's, a divine of the church of England, Theologia reformat a, vol. i. p. 658. —Pierce's vindication, p. 391, &c. —Homily 2, of the place and time of prayer.
crament; and the ring a sacred sign or symbol: As also the forbidding of marriage at certain seasons.

They also disliked the wearing the surplice, and other ceremonies in divine service, of which the church says, in the preface to her liturgy, that, *bo* they were devised by men, yet they are reserved for decency, order and edification; but our fathers saw no decency in these vestments, and, as they had been abused to popery, they thought them absolutely unlawful, and supposed the use of them a giving encouragement to the church of *Rome*, and that there were no foundation for them, in scripture or primitive antiquity. *

These were the things imposed on our fathers, by human authority, contrary to the judgment of their own consciences: These grievances they laboured for the redress of, many years; but, all that time, could obtain no relief. They saw the reformation stand still, and could obtain no nearer approach to the simplicity of gospel worship and discipline—at length, as it were, guided by a divine direction, they resolved on transporting themselves to

* And if we add but one article more, though indeed that is a capital and fundamental one, we have the chief heads of controversy, between the church of *England* and the protestant dissenters, at this day; and that is our exception to that part of the 20th article of the church, viz. that the church hath power to decree rites and ceremonies; and authority in matters of faith. We know of no authority that Christ hath delegated to his church to add to, or diminish from the form of worship, which is already given us, in the new Testament. And if the church of *England* hath such a power, we see not why the church of *Rome* hath not the same privilege. Instead of the churches having authority in matters of faith, we believe, the natural right every man hath to judge for himself, without being determined, by the laws of the civil magistrate, or the judgment of any church under heaven.
Religious Liberty

...where they founded churches, and set up God's worship, in a nearer conformity to the gospel of Christ, and carried the *reformation* from popery to a much greater perfection. The form of worship and discipline, on which they erected churches _here_, was the same, in substance, which we preferve unto this day. A form approaching, as we believe, very near to the plan of the new testament, which we are not ashamed of; but glory in, and hope in God will be the order of the *New-England* churches, until the _head_ of the church shall appear.

But some may demand, _wherein_ consisteth the real valuable liberty, and perfection of our churches; _wherein_ consists our nearer approach to gospel order; and the liberty with which Christ hath, in his providence, made us free?

I answer: In the first place we disclaim all human authority, in matters of faith and worship: We regard neither pope nor prince as _head_ of the church; nor acknowledge that any *parliaments* have power to enact articles of doctrine, or forms of discipline, or modes of worship, or terms of church communion. We utterly deny the power of any *national* church, or even of the church _universal_, to decree rites and ceremonies, in the worship of God, or to have authority in matters of faith. Or to make new terms of ministerial or lay communion, which are not already made, in the new testament.* We utterly disclaim,

* See the iniquity of requiring subscriptions to articles, of human composition, fully expos'd in a book intituled _The confession_. Said to be written by a dignified clergyman, of the church of England. It is an absurd, I had almost said, an impious representation, that Christ and his apostles settled no determinate form of worship and disciplin...
an invaluable Blessing.

disclaim, and enjoy a liberty from all civil and ecclesiastical authority in matters of faith and worship. Christ, and Christ alone, we acknowledge and submit to, as sole head, king, and lawgiver, in his church; as alone having authority, by himself, and by his inspired Apostles, to give us articles of faith, and to institute rites and forms of worship and discipline, in the church which is the house of the living God. We here assert, maintain, and enjoy the liberty of judging and acting for ourselves, in matters of religion; God alone being the Lord of conscience, and his people accountable to him alone as their only sovereign: These churches are founded on the natural right of private judgment; they are voluntary societies of the faithful, for the worship of God, in the manner, that they find prescribed in God's word; without the least impositions of human authority, temporal or spiritual. Liberty is the fundamental principle of our establishment; we are accountable to none but Christ. This liberty, blessed be God, we have fully enjoyed, from the beginning: It is a darling privilege, which we cannot be too unwilling to give up. While we retain this liberty, we hold the door fast shut against spiritual tyranny and impositions on conscience. Indeed our churches, on important occasions, ask advice and direction of their brethren, but even here all authority & coercive power is wisely guarded against—to their own matter every church; and every christian, standeth or falleth. Christ alone is head of the church; to his injunctions we pay an implicit obedience, but from every other spiritual jurisdiction; whether in popes, in discipline in the church, but left these things to the civil magistrate; as if Christ left his church a weak and helpless infant, to be nurtured, and formed by human authority: which seems to be the sense of a late essay on establishments, wrote in answer to the Confessionals.
in kings, in parliaments, synods or councils, we
claim and actually enjoy a total exemption: Oh
blessed privilege!

We enjoy a liberty from the power of unscriptural
officers and ministers, in the church of God; we
have but two orders of the ministry, elders or pastors,
or presbyters or bishops, or overseers, (for, by all these
names, are the ordinary ministers of Christ called, in
the new testament, from the several views of the na-
ture of their office) and deacons. As for arch and di-
ocesan bishops, arch-deacons, deans, chancellors and other
officers; we, after the example of the protestant
churches abroad, reckon them quite unscriptural,
and useless, and a vast and needless charge to the
people of God; a yoke of bondage, that neither we
nor our fathers were able to bear; we see no eccle-
siasticlal tribunals erected among us: This we take
to be an invaluable liberty; may God enable us to
stand fast in this liberty, that this yoke of bondage may
never be imposed upon us!

Another of our ecclesiastical priviliges, is the
liberty of choosing our own ministers. This is a right
founded in reason, in scripture, and the undoubted
practice of the church, in the primitive ages. When
an apostle was to be chosen, the whole number of
disciples were applied to, who appointed two as can-
didates for the office. The church was likewise
directed to look out among them seven men for
deacons. The primitive bishops, or pastors, were
undoubtedly elected by the suffrages of the churches,
to which they ministered. This liberty is yet pre-
served in these churches, and is one of the best means
of preserving a pious and painful, laborious and hea-
venly ministry; and of making a religious people.
Our ministers are never imposed upon us by royal
authority, by bishops or lay patrons. We call to
the ministry-men that, we know, are approved of God; furnished with gifts and graces for this work. Nor can it be supposed that the people, who have so much regard for christianity as to desire a ministry at all, will become ever so corrupt, as to prefer vicious and immoral men to take the care of their souls. This is a liberty of inestimable worth. Again,

The ordination of our ministers by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, or ordinary pastors of the church, is another part of the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. And if any should, on this account, reproach us, with the want of a regular and valid administration of the word and ordinances, they would do well to consider, that the ministers of almost all the foreign protestant churches receive no other than presbyterian ordination. The illustrious protestant churches of Scotland, France, Holland, Switzerland, Germany, Poland, Hungary and Denmark, have had only this ordination. They who object a want of valid administrations to us, on that account, would, therefore, do well to remember, that thereby, they do virtually excommunicate, almost all the foreign churches in the world, except the church of Rome, that mother of harlots and abominations of the earth. * Besides,

* "The Danish church is at this time governed by bishops, " but they look on episcopacy as only an human institution; and the first protestant prelates of that kingdom were ordained by Bugenhagius, a mere presbyter—"see the dissenting gentleman's answer, p. 84.

It is incontestably evident, that the first reformers in England held the identity of scripture presbyters and bishops; and looked on episcopacy in England only, as a mere civil appointment.—Dr. Bancroft, in a sermon in 1588, first maintained, that the bishops of England were a distinct order from priests, and had superiority over them jure divino.
When our ministers are ordained, and take upon them the oversight of the flock of Christ, they do not spend their time at a distance; in secular employments, in the courts of princes, in parliaments; or in foreign embassies; but they constantly reside among the flock; and, as far as their circumstances permit, they give themselves to reading, to meditation and prayer; preach the word, visit the sick, comfort the sorrowful, and diligently employ themselves in those holy ministrations, which may edify and comfort the people of their charge. We have no example of a non-resident minister, or of several ecclesiastical livings given to one man, to enrich him, while he is living at ease: A practice loudly complained of by the best men, and scrupled by the best ministers at home, and doubtless an awful hindrance to the salvation of souls.

The discipline and censures of our church are not in the hands of bishops, or lay chancellors, or other officers, and the admonitions and censures of the church administered by them; but every church, according and directly from God. "This was new and strange doctrine to the churchmen of these times. It had been always said, that the superiority of the order of bishops, above presbyters had been a politic human appointment, for the more orderly government of the church, begun about the 3d or 4th century; but Bancroft was one of the first, who, by the arch-bishop's direction, advanced it into a divine right." His sermon gave great offence; but this doctrine was afterward promoted by Laud; and others, as fixing the episcopacy on the surest foundation. However, it is doubtful, whether there has been in England, to this day, properly any public express assertion of the divine right of prelacy, either by parliament or conversation. Can any such thing be found in the 39 articles, or in the Homilies, or in the form of ordination, or in the common prayer-book? — Vid. Neal, vol. 1. p. 330, and Dr. Chauncy's excellent discourse on the validity of ordination by presbyters.
according to apostolic example, claims it, as a gospel appointment to maintain the holy discipline of Christ in his church. As members one of another, they maintain a holy watch over one another; reprove, admonish or cast out from their communion, according to the power given his churches, by our Lord Jesus Christ.

The communion of the body and blood of Christ is not, in our churches, enjoined by civil authority, to be given or received as a qualification for secular offices; our ministers are not obliged to administer the elements to any that come. We are not obliged to see wicked and profligate men around the Lord's table, demanding the holy supper as a qualification for the profitable employments of this world.*

The government and censures of our churches are not carnal, but spiritual. Our Saviour declared that his kingdom was not of this world: Agreeably, we disclaim all right to inflict corporal pains and punishments; or to deprive men of their money or estates. When we excommunicate an unworthy member, and cut him off as a rotten branch, we only judge him unworthy of fellowship with us in holy ordinances. We dare not pretend to the sword, lest we perish by the sword. We know no such thing here as an ecclesiastical censure's, disabling a man from asserting his natural rights, from being a witness, bringing an action against a trespasser, or making him liable to imprisonment for non-compliance; the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but spiritual.

We are not confined in the worship of God to set forms of prayer, established by human authority; but according to the example of Christ and his apostles,

F. 2

* Vid. Dissenting gentleman's answer, pag. 25.
and the primitive church, we offer our religious services in a more free and liberal manner; in a language expressive of the fulness of our hearts, and suited to the various occasions and subjects of prayer; by which we find our hearts affected, and our spiritual edification promoted.

We do not observe days and times; the fasts, festivals and holidays in honour of Christ, or the saints, which have no foundation in the new testament, nor in apostolic antiquity; but were invented in the times of popery. The Lord's day alone we esteem as sacred, and, this day, after the example of the apostles, we religiously observe, in honour of our Lord Christ:—The rest, though they have a show of humility and piety, yet, not being the institutions of Christ, but the inventions of superstitious ages, we dare not impose or observe.

A decent and reverend order we observe in our public worship, but the nearer we come to the simplicity of gospel times, we account it the better. We allow to no man, or body of men, nor to any authority, civil or sacred, any power to decree rites, or ceremonies, or forms of worship, or administration of sacraments, which are not found in the gospel. It is enough to engage us to reject them, not that they are not expressly forbidden, but that they are not enjoined. We have no power to add, or observe the inventions of men, for decency or ornament, let the pretence be ever so plausible. Hence our administration of the word sacraments and prayers is frugal of all human adornings; of those ceremonies, &c. which we account the relics of superstition, and which were once subservient to that idolatry which deformed the house of God.
In fine: We claim and exercise the liberty of a still further reformation, and a nearer approach to gospel order, when we shall receive further light. We do not pretend that our churches are perfect, and that no change could, in any respect, be made in our discipline, for the better: In some respects, I am persuaded, we might come nearer to gospel order. But where is there perfection, in this world? Where is the church, in this world, that is perfectly, in all points, conformed to the gospel? Some things needed to be set in order, in the churches planted by the apostles, and watered under their eye. We pretend not to infallibility; we seek further direction, and nothing hinders our improvement in the worship and discipline of God's house. We are not obliged to ask the liberty, or wait the motion of our superiors whether we shall reform what is amiss. We are not liable to an interdiction from authority, civil or ecclesiastical, when we would embrace what, appears to us, agreeable to the will of Christ, and for spiritual edification.

These are the sacred liberties in which we glory; we are not ashamed of our profession, or afraid to defend our gospel order. In the peaceful enjoyment of these liberties, and the maintenance of our gospel order, for several generations past, we have experienced the spiritual presence of Christ, in his ordinances. God hath blessed his word and ordinances, to the edification and comfort of thousands, already, as we believe, gone to glory. And though no church can boast of universal piety in its members, yet, blessed be God, we have great multitudes obedient to the faith; our churches have rest and are edified; and, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, they are multiplied. And, while the purity of divine worship is maintained,
Religious Liberty.

maintained, we doubt not of the fulfilment of the glorious promise of the head of the church: _Lo_ I am with you alway, even to the end of the world. Amen. Be it unto thy servants according to thy word.

There are not wanting, even in our day, those, who adventure to represent the planters of these colonies, and their posterity, in the very worst light; as though they had lost their native religion, abandoned the worship and lost the knowledge of God, are become heathens themselves, are found living in many places in _dissolute wickedness_, and the most _brutal profigacy of manners_, and _laughing at the bible._

* But

Reference is here had to the two last sermons preached before the incorporated society for the propagation of the gospel, in foreign parts: In the former of which, preached by the bishop of Gloucester, is this unkind, and we think, injurious reflection upon us. "Thus it came to pass, "that the very people, whose fathers were driven for "conscience sake into the waste and howling wilderness, "is now as ready to laugh at that bible, the most pre- "cious relic of their ruined fortunes, as at their ruffs "and collar bands."

In the latter of these discourses, preached this very year, by the bishop of Landaff, are such expressions as these: "To the adventurers, what reproach could be cast bea- "vier than they deserved? Who, with their native foil, "abandoned their native manners and religion, and e'er "long were found, in many parts, living without re- "membrane or knowledge of God, without divine wor- "ship, in dissolute wickedness, and the most brutal profi- "gacy of manners. Instead of civilizing and converting "barbarous infidels, as they undertook to do, they became "themselves infidels and barbarians," &c. — The _injustic_ and _cruelty_ of such reflections, as pointed at the New-England colonies, are _judiciously_ exposed by Dr. Chauncey, in a letter to a friend, published since the preaching of these (my) discourses.

Nor
But God knows how unjustly these things are said of us, in this land. More was never done by a people, according to their ability, to uphold religion: Our churches are numerous; scarce any part of these settlements is destitute of a settled ministry; our churches are adorned with worthy and respectable pastors, who feed the people with knowledge and understanding; And as much of the form of religion is found amongst us, as in any part of Christendom. We are obliged to such as are not ashamed to vindicate our reputation, and plead for our sacred liberties.

We freely confess, that, however uninviting a worship, quite simple in its nature, a ministry strict, like ours, of secular honours and emoluments, may appear to others, yet to us, who embrace religion as the way to heaven, and not to the great things of this world, our gospel order and worship is exceeding dear. * We rejoice; we bless God for these liberties.

Nor can we comprehend what can be the design of such repeated misrepresentations of us, unless it be to shew the necessity, and to help forward the great design of extending episcopacy over the colonies; which business accomplished, his Lordship (of Landaff) declares, "then the business of this society will have been brought to the happy issue intended."

* The general regard; that this people have to our present religious liberty, is justly set forth by Dr. Chauncey, in his aforesaid remarks on the bishop of Landaff's sermon.—"We (says he) in these parts, not only know the errand of our fore-fathers into this country, but have been well indoctrinated in the principles of christian liberty. We prefer our own mode of worship and discipline, to that of the English church; and we do it upon principle, as really believing that it comes nearer to the purity and simplicity of gospel direction. And, as
Religious Liberty

Liberties, as one of the principal glories of our land. If there be any who would gladly see our spiritual freedom taken away, and these American churches subjected to episcopal jurisdiction, we hope their numbers are comparatively small: And we trust in God, and the King, that all attempts to wrest our liberties from us will prove ineffectual. We have had kings, the fathers of sacred liberty: Such was the glorious William III, such was the illustrious George I, such was George II, than whom, a more amiable and happy prince never sat on a throne; such a sovereign, is now on the British throne; with such princes may the kingdom be blessed so long as the moon shall endure.—I come in the last place to shew—

IV. THAT it highly becomes us to understand and be thankful for our privileges, and to stand fast in the LIBERTY wherewith Christ hath made us free. God, my brethren, hath called us to liberty—in a wonderful manner did he bring our fathers into this land of liberty, and now, for more than an hundred

these are the generally prevailing sentiments in New-England, and their conduct has all along been generally conformable hereto, we have no fearful apprehensions of a departure herefrom; but are rather fully persuaded, they will stand fast to their principles, and closely adhere to that mode of worship, which has hitherto been in use among them, whatever attempts may be made to turn them aside,” p. 53.

And again, p. 47. “It may be relied on, our people would not be easy, if restrained in the exercise of that liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free; yea, they would hazard every thing dear to them, their estates, their very lives, rather than suffer their necks to be put under that yoke of bondage, which was so sadly gall- ing to their fathers, and occasioned their retreat into this distant land, that they might enjoy the freedom of men and christians.”
dred years, hath he continued us in the full and per-
fect enjoyment of our religious liberties—no weapon
formed against us hath prospered. Let us under-
stand our liberty, let us prize it, as one of the great-
est blessings; let us improve it to the noblest pur-
poses, and stand fast therein.

Far be it from me to encourage a spirit of bit-
terness, or censoriousness towards such as differ from
us; the religion of our common master forbids all
anger, malice, judging, and cenfuring one another.
We should walk in love with all that call on the
Lord Jesus Christ with a pure heart. Among all
denominations of christsians, there are to be found
serious men and women, the true children of God.
We are not to wonder that persons commonly pre-
fer the mode of worship in which they were edu-
cated. The church of England we honour as an il-
lustrious branch of the reformation (altho' we think
there is room for a still further reformation). Many
of her ministers of this, as well as of former ages, we
honour, as divines of great learning and piety; and
many of her members we sincerely respect, as per-
sons of sincere piety, goodness, candour and modere-
tation. Religion is never a proper occasion of strife
and angry contention. We should do good to all,
with grace, mercy and peace from God the Father,
and our Lord Jesus Christ, to all that love the Lord
Jesus in sincerity.

It seems to be an infelicity, inseperable from our
present imperfect state, that wise and good men can-
not always think alike. This is doubtless permitted,
that there may be place for the exercise of mutual
candour and forbearance: It is an unhappiness that
God's children deeply lament; hereby their longing
desires are led forth after that land of light & love,
where
where the misfits of ignorance and mistake will be
done away; where they shall be of one mind, and
unitedly worship the Father, in that house not made
with hands, eternal in the heavens.—In the mean time,
it is greatly to be wished, that good men of all de-
nominations, might rightly consider the infirmity of
the present life, love as brethren, living in the exer-
cise of candour and forgivenes. Whereunto we have
already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us
mind the same thing. But this notwithstanding, we
may know and esteem our privileges; we may hold
them fast as one of the richest gifts of God: Oh! lib-
erty of conscience; the purity of God's worship and
ordinances, is one of the greatest blessings on earth.

Parents, aged persons, and persons of superior
understanding, should be particularly careful to re-
commend our sacred liberties.—It might be of great
service, to tell your children of the great design of
our fathers coming over the wide Atlantic—the diffi-
culties which brought them from their native land—
the hardships they underwent in settling this howling
wilderness—the patience with which they endured
them, while they had rest and freedom in the wor-
ship of God—with the excellency of our worship and
discipline, and its agreement with the word of God.

Our young people also should learn to know our
liberty. The pure worship of God, for which your
fathers gave up their native land—abandoned the
land of their fathers sepulchres—ventured over a
tempestuous ocean—expended their substance—set-
tled themselves amidst savages and wild beasts, and
maintained dreadful wars with the natives—the pure
worship and gospel liberty, for which our fathers did
these things, doth, at least, deserve a serious regard.
Should we, or any succeeding age, despise our liberty,
an invaluable Blessing.

fo dearly bought, what do we, but trample upon our fathers dust, and disturb the ashes of our godly ancestors, who purchased this land for us at so great expence? Surely, the religious liberty, and gospel order, which they purchased for us, at so dear a price, deserves our serious respect, and is not, vainly and inconsiderately to be given away.

These churches, from the beginning, have been furnished with as able and useful ministers, as any churches in the world; and such, I hope in God, they are supplied with at this day. It will therefore be one means of retaining our liberties, to encourage their hearts & strengthen their hands. While they labour in the word and doctrine, it is the wisdom of the churches to esteem them highly in love, and to make their circumstances easy unto them. Under the present ecclesiastical constitution, your ministers have not the prospects of rich benefices; of amassing riches; of sumptuous tables and flately equipage;—our stations are not places of ease and profit; but of labour and diligence. We seek not the great things of this world; we gladly renounce all hopes of these temporal emoluments, that our ministry may be useful to your souls, and your liberty may be preserved. All we expect, all we desire for ourselves, and families, is a decent support, a freedom to attend the duties of our office, and the means of making such provision for our families, as our neighbours, in common, are able to do, in secular life. It would be cruel hard to deny this, and more we do not expect nor desire. Some other establishment might make us rich and independent, but we desire no other, we seek no other; we seek not yours, but you; you find none more solicitous to preserve your sacred priviledges than your ministers.
fters, who alone could form expectations from a change. Gratitude and love will then engage the people of this land, to comfort their ministers' hearts; to afford them a respectful subsistence; to place them out of circumstances of distress, that they may make full proof of their ministry; save their own souls, and them that hear them.

MAY I be allowed, with all humility to add;—that it highly becomes our civil rulers, especially the representatives of this people, to watch over our sacred, as well as our civil liberties. Far be it from me to desire that the civil arm should be stretched out to punish heretics; human decrees are not the means to propagate the religion of Jesus: For this, we desire but the weapons of light and truth, the sword of the Spirit, and the liberty of free enquiry. But yet the magistrate is to be the minister of God for good; by upholding mankind in their Christian liberty; by defending Christians from exterior violence, by supporting schools and colleges for training up our youth for the work of the ministry; and by giving due encouragement for men of ability to undertake the sacred employment. We wish never to find authority invested in men, unfriendly to the sacred liberties of their country; that would discourage a serious ministry, or would meanly sacrifice our sacred rights for any temporal advantages to themselves.

Stand.

May I be permitted to add; It was an evidence of the noble and liberal spirit of our fathers, not only that they so early founded a seminary of learning, for the education of youth for the ministry; but also that they, by a law, obliged every town to keep a grammar school. This hath proved of excellent service, not only for fitting children for the college, with very little expense, by which
STAND fast, may brethren, stand fast in your sacred liberties: Understand your freedom; honour your noble ancestors, keep close to Christ, and preserve his institutions in their purity: Be discreet and steady in the exercise of your liberty. Brethren, be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

Our liberties, both civil and sacred, are truly our own; they are what our fathers dearly bought; they descend to us as a patrimony purchased at their expense. They were driven by spiritual tyranny from the land of their fathers sepulchres. Encouraged by the Royal Grant of full liberty of conscience, at a vast expense they transplanted themselves and families over the extended ocean, they subdued the wilderness, built them houses, planted them orchards, defended themselves against the savages, and widely extended the British dominions, at their own expense, without any charge to the country, from which they came. They for more than an hundred years, defended their own settlements, and waged defensive wars with the barbarous Indians, in which some thousands of our brave inhabitants have perished.

means a greater number have been educated; but also as it hath afforded a suitable employment for young men, after they have passed through the college; and they have been able to maintain themselves, while following their studies for the ministry. And without this provision the churches would never have had the services of many, who have been burning and shining lights in this country. If therefore any of our people do, or shall, desire to obtain a repeal of this excellent law, we must either suppose them to be deceived by the artful infinuations of ill designing men, or they betray an insensibility of the interest of their country, and an illiberal spirit, quite unworthy of their noble ancestors.
ed. It is computed, by an author of superior station and abilities among us, * "that from 1675, when "Phillip's war began, to 1713, five or six thousand "of the youth of the country had perished, by the "enemy, or by distempers contracted in the ser-
vice; nine in ten of these would have been fathers "of families, and, in the course of forty years, have "multiplied to near an hundred thousand souls."

And in our own days, two or three thousand young men perished at, and after, the siege of Louisbourg, in 1745. And perhaps the loss of the New-England colonies, during the last war, in battles, sieges, and by sickness, could not fall much short of ten thousand men; yea the aforementioned Historian supposes, "it is probable, there would have been two hundred thousand souls more, than there are, at this time, in New-England, if the French had been driven from Canada an hundred years ago."

To God almighty we have forfeited every bleffing: But of man we hold our liberties as an hereditary right; as the inheritance of our dear ancestors, dearly obtained with their blood and treasure. We have ever been a loyal people; we think our seves happy under the British government; we have never forfeited our privileges; we have enlarged the kingdom, and are yearly enriching our mother-country; and should any attempt be made to reftrain us in the exercise of our liberty, we should be deeply grieved, and think ourselves very hardly dealt by: Despised be the base soul who shall, like Esau, for one morsel of bread, fell his birthright.

As our numbers increase, it may be expected they will increase, who are indifferent to things of a

spiritual nature, and liberty of conscience will proportionably be despised: But it is with the greatest pleasure, we see, at this time, our numbers increase, numerous churches rising in the wilderness, firmly united, with us, in the same mind and judgment, and our Colleges supplying them with able and promising Pastors; so that to them is applicable that of the Prophet, Isai. 35. 1, 2. The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Sharon and Carmel; they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God.

This is one of the first Towns, which our fathers planted in the wilderness; it hath ever enjoyed a safe protection from the barbarians. The preaching of the word, and administration of ordinances was early set up, on this spot of ground. No churches have enjoyed more excellent advantages than this, under the able and long ministry of the renowned Eliot and Walter, assisted by the worthy Weld, Danforth and others.* Under their long and

* The church in Roxbury was gathered in July 1632, and then the Rev. Thomas Weld, invested with the pastoral office; but in 1639, he returned to England.
In Nov. 1632, the Rev. John Eliot, was made a teacher of this church—he died May 20, 1690.
Sept. 24, 1650, the Rev. Samuel Danforth, was ordained pastor; and died Nov. 19, 1674.
Oct. 17, 1688, the Rev. Nebemiah Walter, was ordained pastor; and died Sept. 17, 1750.
Oct. 19, 1718, the Rev. Thomas Walter, was ordained co-pastor; and died Jan. 10, 1725.
Nov. 7, 1750, the Rev. Oliver Peabody, was ordained pastor; he died May 29, 1752.
Religious Liberty

and eminent ministry, we believe, many were made meet, to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, whom we expect to meet in heaven. To their instructive ministry it is, under God, to be ascribed, in some measure, that this people have been so remarkably steady to the principles of our puritan fathers, and that we walk in gospel order, with so much unity and love; behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.

Our fathers where are they, and the prophets, do they live for ever? They are long since fallen on sleep, and gone to Christ, and have left their fair inheritance to us their children. Let us not forfake the God of our fathers, now the wilderness is become a fruitful field. They had their failings, but their virtues were eminent; they loved God, they loved his ordinances, here they found rest and pleasure. A new country, the bare necessities of life, a land full of savages, where they had undisturbed communion in gospel ordinances, was dearer to them than the garden of the world, while they wanted the food for their souls. Thus faith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Oh let us remember from whence we are fallen, and repent and do our first works. Let us love the word and the ordinances of Christ, as they loved them. Let us strive to revive primitive religion, and approve ourselves the worthy children of such virtuous ancestors. The Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.

Brethren, ye are called unto liberty, only abuse not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love
Serve one another. Let us, by no means, turn the grace of God into licentiousness; let us steadily attend the word of God; devoutly observe his institutions.—Let us abound in the fruits of righteousness; in that piety, honesty, love and goodness, which will recommend our worship to all that behold our good conversation in Christ. Let us not rest in the form of godliness, denying the power thereof; Let us see that we have that heart-purity, which is more than any external form; for unless we are real, hearty, devout Christians, who worship God in the spirit, we may perish from the purest church in the world, and all these sacred liberties will avail us nothing to our salvation.

Blessed be the Lord, that hath given rest unto his people—the Lord our God be with us, as he was with our fathers, let him not leave us, nor forsake us.

A M E N.
The HYMN, sung after Sermon.

ARISE, O King of grace, arise,
"and enter to thy rest,
Lo! thy church waits with longing eyes,
"thus to be own'd and blest.

"Enter with all thy glorious train,
"thy spirit and thy word;
"All that the ark did once contain
"could no such grace afford.

"Here, mighty God, accept our vows,
"here let thy praise be spread;
"Bless the provisions of thy house,
"and fill thy poor with bread.