

**A SERMON DELIVERED BEFORE HIS
EXCELLENCY JOHN DAVIS, GOVERNOR, HIS
HONOR SAMUEL T. ARMSTRONG, LIEUTENANT
GOVERNOR, THE HONORABLE COUNCIL, AND
THE LEGISLATURE OF MASSACHUSETTS, ON
THE ANNUAL ELECTION, JANUARY 7, 1835**

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A sermon delivered before His Excellency John Davis, governor, His Honor Samuel T. Armstrong, lieutenant governor, the honorable Council, and the legislature of Massachusetts, on the annual election, January 7, 1835 by Jonathan M. Wainwright

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JONATHAN M. WAINWRIGHT

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INEQUALITY OF INDIVIDUAL WEALTH THE ORDINANCE OF PROVIDENCE, AND ESSENTIAL TO CIVILIZATION.

A

SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE

HIS EXCELLENCY JOHN DAVIS,

GOVERNOR,

HIS HONOR SAMUEL T. ARMSTRONG,

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR,

THE HONORABLE COUNCIL,

AND

THE LEGISLATURE OF MASSACHUSETTS,

ON THE

ANNUAL ELECTION,

JANUARY 7, 1835.

BY JONATHAN M. WAINWRIGHT, D. D.
Rector of Trinity Church, Boston.

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1835.

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Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

IN SENATE, JANUARY 8th, 1836.

Ordered, That Messrs. WILLARD, GRAY, and G. BLISS, be a Committee to wait on the Rev. JONATHAN M. WAINWRIGHT, and present him the thanks of the Senate, for the discourse delivered by him yesterday, before the Government of the Commonwealth, and to request a copy thereof for the press.

Attest,

CHARLES CALHOUN, Clerk.

Wm. C. C. Jones 1934.

*Inequality of individual wealth the ordinance of Providence,
and essential to civilization.*

S E R M O N .

Deuteronomy, xv. 11.

THE POOR SHALL NEVER CEASE OUT OF THE LAND.

FROM these words we must of necessity infer that there existed amongst the Jews a marked inequality in the distribution of wealth ; and moreover, that this condition of things was not accidental or temporary, but was to be regarded by them as perpetual. The same prominent feature being equally discernible in our own and in all other communities of civilized men, two questions obviously claim our attention. First, is this distinction between the rich and the poor essential to the improvement and happiness of man, or may we anticipate its removal at some future period, and under some more favorable combination of the elements of the social compact? And again, if we cannot reasonably look forward to its removal, but are constrained to believe that it is a distinction arising out of the nature of man and the present order of God's providence, can such a con-

clusion be adduced as an argument against the wisdom and goodness of that great Being who created man, *and hath determined the bounds of his habitation.** Thus a very important and interesting subject of discourse is suggested to us by the text, and one which I trust will not be deemed inappropriate to the present occasion.

I am aware that it is a difficult and delicate one to treat of, and also that it may require the introduction of topics not generally regarded as within the province of preachers of the gospel. [A]† As, however, the civil authorities of the State must be supposed to acknowledge the truth and excellency of religion, when they come up to the house of God annually, in solemn form, as the opening act of their session, it would seem to be a fit opportunity to exhibit religion in what may be called its temporal aspect, as advancing and sustaining principles essential to the welfare and happiness of civil society. This I conceive it does, when it recognizes and sanctions the principle of inequality in the distribution of wealth amongst men; and when it declares, both in express terms, and by the particular duties it enjoins on the rich and on the poor, that this is to be acquiesced in as a permanent condition of society. But it may be said, that religion recognizes and

* Acts, xvii. 26.

† See Appendix.

sanctions many other things, which, in the present advanced state of knowledge and morals, are either not essential to the welfare of civil society, or else are absolutely detrimental to its true interests; as, for example, a kingly government, and the condition of slavery. It is incumbent therefore upon the advocate of religion, who believes that the declaration of the text will remain true while this state of probation lasts, to vindicate the Divine Benevolence in this respect; and to show, that if it is ordained that *the poor shall never cease out of the land*, it is so ordained because such an appointment is essential to the true happiness and progressive improvement of the human family. This will be the object of my discourse, and I respectfully request for it the candid and patient attention of this distinguished audience.

In pursuing my design, I shall, in the **FIRST PLACE**, interpret the broad assertion contained in my text, and suggest some important limitations that may be reasonably prescribed to it.

SECONDLY, I shall endeavor to prove that the inequality of condition, which it implies, is essential to the political, the intellectual, and the moral and religious improvement of the human race, and,

LASTLY, I shall point out how the more grievous and repulsive circumstances attending upon this con-