



ABSTRACTS OF

TWO SERMONS BY REV. THOMAS HOOKER.

FROM THE SHORT-HAND NOTES OF MR. HENRY WOLCOTT.

[The following abstracts of two sermons by the Rev. Thomas Hooker, were deciphered from a manuscript note-book which belonged to Mr. Henry Wolcott, jun., of Windsor, now in the library of the Historical Society. This volume, of about five inches long by four wide, contains 380 pages, closely written, in cipher—comprising notes of sermons and lectures by Mr. Warham and Mr. Huit, of Windsor, and Mr. Hooker and Mr. Stone, at Hartford, from April 19, 1638, to April 29, 1641, in regular course. These notes give the dates, texts, and general outline of each discourse; and the questions discussed at the meetings for conference and for catechising, &c. The alphabet made use of is nearly the same with that of Willis, (published in 1607,) but the great number and variety of arbitrary signs introduced by the writer, makes the task of deciphering a difficult one. On the first leaf of the volume, Mr. Wolcott has recorded the date of his birth, in the words, "The day I was born was the 21 of January, 1610;" and this entry, which is the only one of a personal character in the volume, serves to fill a lacuna in the Wolcott genealogy. The same cipher was largely made use of by Mr. Wolcott, in his business memoranda and on the pages of his ledger, (now in the possession of the Society.) The custom of taking notes of sermons brought short-hand into very general use, among the Puritans. The will of Mr. Francis Hall, of Stratford, (who died, at an advanced age, in 1689,) gives all his books "that are written in characters" to his wife, and is subscribed by his "name, legible, and in characters" which nearly resemble those made use of by Mr. Wolcott.

Mr. Hooker's letter in reply to Gov. Winthrop, (which constitutes the first article in this volume,) supplies information, not hitherto possessed, respecting the organization of government and the election of the magistrates and deputies who composed the General Court of April, 1638. To this court, undoubtedly, though the records are silent on this point, was intrusted the formation of the first constitution, which was formally adopted in January, 1639. Mr. Hooker's sermon, or rather lecture, was delivered on Thursday, May 31st, 1638, at an adjourned session, probably, of the April

Court; and was apparently designed to lead the way to the general recognition of the great truths which were soon to be successfully incorporated in the Fundamental Laws. The second of the two sermons here printed was preached on the day of the first general election under the constitution, April 11th, 1639, when Mr. Haynes was chosen governor. Mr. Wolcott's notes of this discourse presented unusual difficulties to the decipherer, who has been compelled to mark (by inclusion between brackets,) several words as doubtful, and to leave occasional blanks. J. H. T.]

BY MR. HOOKER, AT HARTFORD, MAY 31, 1638.

Text: Deut. i.: 13. "Take you wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you." Captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds—over fifties—over tens, &c.

Doctrine. I. That the choice of public magistrates belongs unto the people, by God's own allowance.

II. The privilege of election, which belongs to the people, therefore must not be exercised according to their humours, but according to the blessed will and law of God.

III. They who have power to appoint officers and magistrates, it is in their power, also, to set the bounds and limitations of the power and place unto which they call them.

Reasons. 1. Because the foundation of authority is laid, firstly, in the free consent of the people.

2. Because, by a free choice, the hearts of the people will be more inclined to the love of the persons [chosen] and more ready to yield [obedience.]

3. Because, of that duty and engagement of the people.

Uses. The lesson taught is threefold:—

1st. There is matter of thankful acknowledgment, in the [appreciation] of God's faithfulness toward us, and the permission of these measures that God doth command and vouchsafe.

2dly. Of reproof—to dash the conceits of all those that shall oppose it.

3dly. Of exhortation—to persuade us, as God hath given us liberty, to *take* it.

And lastly—as God hath spared our lives, and given us them in liberty, so to seek the guidance of God, and to choose *in* God and *for* God.

BY MR. HOOKER, AT HARTFORD, APRIL 11th, 1639.

Text: Exodus xviii.: 17, 18. “And Moses’ father-in-law said unto him, The thing that thou doest is not good. Thou wilt surely wear away, both those and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone.”

Doctrine. I. That in the very best of a man’s performances there are, many times, more blemishes than a man is readily aware of.

Uses. 1. This should make us not to be confident in all those courses that we take up with most care and most [zeal.]

2. Matter of abasement and fear in our best [purposes.]

Doctrine. II. That the most conscientious governors or rulers may do some, and that when he is most [zealous.]

Uses. 1. We may therefore not think the worse of a governor because of some weakness.

2. To advise those that are in the place of government, to seek to Heaven for help.

Doctrine. III. That a weaker man, in some affairs and at some times, may offer seasonable advice to one that is far wiser.

Use. To teach every one of us how to carry with us teachable hearts in and

Doctrine. IV. [Not intelligible.]

V. That government, it is heavy and burdensome.

Uses. 1. Of instruction: how to [honor] our choice of magistrates.

2. Of exhortation: (1) to the people, how to carry themselves to governors: (2) to magistrates; they should look upon it as a burdensome thing.



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