

A

DISCOURSE

DELIVERED IN NEWBURYPORT,

JULY 4, 1814,

IN COMMEMORATION

OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE,

AND OF THE

DELIVERANCE OF EUROPE.

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DISCOURSE.

REV. XV. 3, 4.

—*Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.*

Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

AMID the fluctuations of human things, and the calamities which oppress our species, the contemplative mind is often perplexed, and the feeling heart ready to sink. But how consoling is the thought, that *the Lord reigns!* that the same power, wisdom and love which made the world, are employed in its *government*; and that the final issue, even of the darkest dispensations will be bright and glorious! How animating the reflection, that in this tumultuous region, the **PRINCE OF PEACE** has erected his benign empire; and will extend it, until it shall embrace the whole family of man.

Such are the reflections which this inspired passage awakens; and which, while they afford to the benevolent heart a constant feast, are calculated at once to enliven and to regulate our feelings, on this great occasion.

The crisis at which we assemble, is of a peculiar character. It has much to animate. It has much to depress. Reflections crowd upon the mind in an overwhelming variety. Emotions spring up in the heart, too big for words to express, and almost too strong for nature to support. I feel, my respected hearers, that the task assigned me is impracticable. The sensations of the moment impel me to abandon it in despair. But the occasion has other claims; and I submit.

Though the day of our nation's birth returns upon us shrouded in gloom, it is a day dear to the hearts of freemen. It calls us back to scenes on which memory loves to dwell. The fourth of July, 1776, constitutes a distinguished epoch in the annals, not only of our country, but of the world. The Revolution to which it gave birth, was in every view extraordinary. In the purity of its principles, in the grandeur of its design, in the magnitude and extent of its consequences, it stands unrivalled on the page of history.

Behold a youthful nation, bound to the parent state by the strong ties of interest and affection; submitting to maternal severity, until remonstrance is vain, and redress hopeless. See her at length casting off her allegiance, not in a delirium of rage, or despair, but under the tranquil conviction of duty, and with firm confidence in God. See her, for the pure love of liberty, meeting every form of danger, of privation and distress; see her rising stronger from defeat; drawing courage from the depths of despair; and finally reaching, through a sea of blood and suffering, the haven of independence and peace.

He must be an atheist, who in scenes like these, discerns not the finger of God. "No people," said the Father of his country, "can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand which conducts the affairs of men, more than the people of the United States. Every step by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation, seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency."

Among the strongest proofs of this divine interposition, we notice that assemblage of sages, of patriots and heroes, who have acted an illustrious part on this vast theatre. They were some of the choicest gifts of Heaven to our favored country. Their fame suffers nothing in comparison with that of the first worthies of Greece, of Rome, or of Britain. While their talents and services achieved the freedom and felicity of the nation, their virtues shed a glory round it, which the lapse of ages cannot obscure.

Where, in all profane history, ancient or modern, shall we find the warrior, the patriot, who vies with the man whom a just and grateful country has pronounced "first in war, first in peace, first in the hearts of his fellow-citizens."—Our Revolution should be endeared to us by the thought that it elicited the great talents, and displayed to the world the unrivalled virtues, of WASHINGTON. It should endear our freedom and independence, that they were given us by Heaven through *his* beloved hand. It should endear our government, that it rose under his auspices, and was long administered with unparalleled success,

by his wisdom and patriotism ; while his example and precepts furnished the maxims by which rulers ought to govern, and nations may become great and happy. It should endear our country, that it is the place of his birth, the depository of his ashes—the country for which he toiled, and watched, and wept, and prayed ; and for which he fondly hoped, that her liberties would be immortal.

Can it, my hearers, be believed, that a nation thus munificently blest by Heaven, will be at once abandoned? Has the temple of freedom and empire been erected in this western world, by such hands, and with such bright omens, only to be demolished? Have our patriots toiled, and our heroes bled in vain? Shall the hopes of our country, and of mankind perish together?

Let it be remembered that the settlement of a considerable portion of this community originated in the most exalted motives which can influence the mind of man. *Religion* was the object. *To Christ and his Church*, the pious pilgrims consecrated their labors, their sufferings, their all. They thought little of country, of friends, of earthly delights ; and little of the ocean and the wilderness, so they might see that cause flourish, which to them was dearer than life. They laid the foundations of religious, and of civil liberty deep and firm. Wonderfully did God prosper them ; and not them only, but their children, and their children's children. We, at this distant moment, reap the fruits of their piety and patriotism. And may we not hope that our posterity will reap

them too? May we not hope that for this region, signally favored from the first, God has still designs of mercy? May we not cherish the consoling thought, that here religious and civil liberty shall in union be transmitted down to the latest posterity?

We will never despair of our country. We will hope, even in the darkest hour. As the friends of the ancient Zion hung with melancholy pleasure over her dust, and stones, and ruins, we will cling to the *public cause*, in its lowest depression. Nor will we ever forget the distinguishing kindness of Providence to our fathers, and to us.

Let us then, this day, offer on the altar of God our united and fervent thanksgivings for the rich and various blessings which He has bestowed on our nation; especially those prime blessings which the day commemorates; our national sovereignty, freedom and independence. Let us renewedly commit our beloved country to his guardian care; beseeching him that its calamities may be removed, its peace restored, its liberty and happiness perpetuated.

But while our hearts beat with unutterable feelings for our country, we cannot forget that we are members of a larger family. Real patriotism naturally expands into general philanthropy. We turn our eyes to Europe; and what do we see? A hundred millions of our fellow-beings released from the most cruel and degrading bondage. How transporting the thought! Where is the human bosom into which it does not pour a tide of overwhelming joy? But peculiar and transcendent is the claim on the sensibilities of Amer-

icans. This claim, my friends, you have felt, and acknowledged. It is a declared and prominent object of your assembling this day, to render praise to God for the deliverance of suffering Europe. Nothing could be more delightful; nothing, I might add, more indispensable. By all our revolutionary struggles and sufferings, by all that we have known of the bitterness of oppression, and the joys of freedom, we are bound to sympathize with our European brethren, both in their unparalleled distresses, and their astonishing deliverance. Yes; we will delight to catch the accents of exultation and of praise which are borne to us on every wind; every pulse of our hearts shall beat in unison with the transporting song; and all our voices shall join to swell the mighty chorus of thanksgiving to the God of mercy.

That you may more fully perceive and feel the reasons of our present joy, pause a moment, my brethren, and contemplate the recent condition and prospects of Europe. Turn your eyes first to France. France, the scourge of other nations, was herself preeminently wretched. Like a painted sepulchre, she was fair to the eye; but the splendid covering concealed a mighty mass of corruption and death. The most ruthless of despotisms crushed the spirits of her people to the earth. To speak their sufferings, was treason. Thought itself was enchained. The miserable victims of oppression were compelled to stifle their sighs and groans in their bursting bosoms. Myriads of youth were periodically torn from their anguished friends, to butcher and be butchered, in other climes.

Thus, pouring forth her armies on every side, this

nation spread extensive destruction around her. Year after year, Europe exhibited one wide and frightful scene of war and desolation. Her ancient landmarks were removed, her venerable institutions demolished, her treasures wasted, and her very blood poured out like water. With impartial, unsparing ferocity, kingdoms and republics were bound in chains, and trampled under the feet of the conqueror. The liberties of Holland were strangled in his embrace, and her territory annexed to his overgrown empire. Switzerland and the Italian States were completely reduced under his control. Denmark received law from his will, and yielded herself an instrument to his designs of universal conquest. Sweden, after an unavailing struggle, gave up the contest in despair. The German confederacy, a principal bulwark of European liberty, as it was the great instrument of preserving the balance of power in that region, was dissolved. Austria and Prussia, foiled in repeated conflicts, seemed at length exhausted, overawed and humbled. Portugal, it is true, had expelled the common enemy from her borders; and Spain was engaged in a glorious contest for her sovereignty and independence. Yet who dared hope that the success of these gallant nations would be more than temporary? Who doubted that their liberties would ultimately descend to the same grave which had buried the liberties of the other nations of Europe?

One nation there was, indeed, on the continent, not completely enslaved; one sovereign who had not cast his crown at the feet of the tyrant. The Emperor of Russia yielded awhile to urgent circumstances; but

soon finding that between resistance and unconditional submission, there was no medium, he made the choice to be expected of a generous mind.

His insolent foe is filled with rage. He collects an army unparalleled in modern times, for its numbers ; and still more formidable for its discipline, its valor, its habit of conquest, and familiarity with blood. He marches to the North, breathing out threatenings and revenge ; confident of trampling down his Imperial enemy, confident of seeing continental Europe at his feet. Nor does there appear to human eye, any powerful obstacle to the accomplishment of his ferocious design.

Such were the state and prospects of Europe, two years since. Such the evils which oppressed, such the appalling dangers which encompassed her. Those, indeed, who have attended to the progress of events, must perceive that the portrait is, in every view, faint and imperfect. Let it be added, that this fearful system of despotism, while it enslaved mankind, aimed, and with fatal success, to deprave their sentiments, to corrupt their morals, and destroy their souls. It waged implacable war with every principle of religion and virtue. Its prime agents and supporters were generally monsters of impiety and vice. They laughed at the precepts and sanctions of religion ; and they steeled their hearts against the sensibilities of nature. They feasted on the groans, they rioted in the blood, of their fellow-creatures. They therefore found a constant *interest* in effacing from the minds of men every moral impression. Mankind must be depraved to the utmost, lest *they* should be regarded with detestation

and horror. Every vestige of virtue must be banished from the globe, that they might rule it without disturbance.

Who can doubt, that could a volume be written, detailing the history of Europe for the last twenty years, the world would stand aghast? It would display such varieties of suffering, such refinements in wickedness, as would appal the imagination, and sicken the heart. How dark and desolate, my brethren, was the prospect, when this state of things seemed fixed and permanent; and when, look where we would, no hope, and scarce a possibility of relief, presented itself to the mind!

But joy to Europe! joy to the World! The God of Mercy has looked upon his suffering human family. *From the height of his sanctuary he has looked down, to hear the groaning of the prisoner, and to loose those that were appointed to death.* He has confounded the oppressor, and delivered the oppressed. Russia, where the tyrant had fondly anticipated his proudest victory, was the scene of his defeat and humiliation. There the tide of conquest and of empire began to roll back. The bravery of an exasperated foe, aided by famine and cold, soon destroyed that immense army, which had carried terror and death in its train. Its haughty leader, stung with disappointment, grief and shame, sought his safety in a disgraceful flight.

The Russians, not content with deliverance and safety for themselves, meditate the sublime design of giving liberty and peace to Europe. Led by the illustrious ALEXANDER,* they march forth; and where-

* It is delightful to remark, that this amiable and magnanimous Sovereign, the Deliverer and Delight of Europe, is distinguished for his reverence of the *King of Kings*. Witness the scene

ever they march, prostrate nations rise, and hail them as their deliverers. Germany, Holland, Switzerland burst their chains. A common impulse animates Europe. France herself opens her arms, and embraces the conquerors as friends. A bloodless Revolution is accomplished. The tyrant is hurled from his usurped eminence, and stripped of his guilty honors. The man who so lately had thrones and crowns at his disposal, and whose word conveyed terror to distant nations, is compelled to owe his life to the victor's mercy. Astonishing change ! Let us, my hearers, look beyond all human instruments, and adore, in these stupendous scenes, the wonder-working hand of God. Behold that **ALMIGHTY BEING** who has declared : *The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted.—Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty ; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name ? for thou only art holy ; for all nations shall come and worship before thee ; for thy judgments are made manifest.*

Could I suppose that there is a single person in this assembly who doubts whether the change we have been considering, be auspicious or not, I would sug-

near Leipsic, where we find him, with his royal brethren, on bended knees, in the open air, giving thanks to the God of victory. Witness too, his Proclamation, occasioned by the invasion of his empire by the French—a proclamation which closed with this remarkable prayer : *“ Almighty God ! Turn thy merciful eye to thy supplicating Russian Church. Vouchsafe courage and patience to thy people, struggling in a just cause ; so that they may thereby overcome the enemy ; and in saving themselves, may also defend the freedom of kings and nations.”*

The writer confesses that the perusal of this proclamation and prayer darted into his mind the first ray of hope for the liberties of Europe. But who could have anticipated a salvation so sudden, and so complete ?

gest the single fact ; that it gives to Europe the blessing of *peace*. How inestimably precious must this blessing be to those who have suffered the accumulated evils of a protracted and most bloody war ! *Our* conceptions, my hearers, on this subject, are extremely inadequate. Is it not a prevalent *sin*, that we have been too little affected with that waste of human life which the recent war has occasioned in Europe ? Place yourselves a moment, in thought, on a field of battle where the ground is strewed with more than twelve times as many human beings as inhabit this town ; most of them lifeless corpses ; and a considerable portion of the remainder, in the agonies of death. Such a scene was actually witnessed after the memorable battle of Borodino.—It is stated as a fact, that in the course of the two last years, more than a million of soldiers were raised in France alone, to recruit her armies. Of these more than one half have probably perished. And when it is considered how regardless of religion, how unprepared for their final audit, soldiers too generally are, surely every feeling heart must exult with unutterable transports, that this tremendous evil is arrested.

Peace will undoubtedly have a favorable influence on science and literature ; and still more emphatically, it may be hoped, on *morals*. The deleterious effects of war on morality could scarcely be delineated in a volume. It directly tends, in various ways, to pollute the mind, to harden the heart, to weaken the moral sense ; in a word, to cherish all the worst passions of the human breast. The war just closed was preem-

inently of this description. For it constantly exhibited to view a character stained with enormous crimes, yet decked in all the embellishments of power, of bravery, of success, and of admiration. What a polluting spectacle to Europe and the world, was the adulation lavished on such a character, by orators, and poets; by rank, genius and learning!

In fine, may it not be hoped that the recent revolution will have a most auspicious influence on Religion? Will not that infidelity and atheism which have so long filled the world with crimes, with blood and destruction, be regarded with universal disgust and horror? Will not the nations of Europe, long scourged by so many calamities, and now blest with such surprising mercy, be purified, be reformed, and brought to lie humbly at the feet of the Sovereign of the world? May it not be hoped that some portion of those immense treasures recently devoted to the destruction of man, will be converted into an instrument of spreading the gospel of peace and salvation round the globe? As, immediately before the first advent of Christ, the temple of Janus was shut, and peace overspread the world, may it not be believed, that the present peace will prove no distant harbinger of his coming again, in the power of his grace, and the universal extent of his kingdom?

Have any indulged a sort of attachment to the Ruler of France, and are they now rather grieved than gratified at his fall; and this under the idea that he was a chosen instrument of the Most High, to accomplish great effects, especially in *punishing* the nations? We admit that he was an awful scourge of God;

a minister of his wrath against guilty nations. It is one of the glories of the divine government, that it can and does accomplish its purposes of punishment through the medium of some of the guiltiest of the species. Just so among men, the execution of malefactors is generally assigned to persons taken from the dregs of society. But when the dreadful work is accomplished, and the executioner laid aside, will not every good mind rejoice and be thankful?

Do any object, that to rejoice in the recent triumphs of the allied powers, is to rejoice at the success of our enemies? Let me ask: Suppose it were a known, or a highly probable fact, that these successes would terminate in our injury; still, are we on that account wholly excused from rejoicing? Am I permitted to grieve that a great good has come to my neighbor, or to the community, because thereby some degree of inconvenience accrues to myself? No; the great law of love calls me to rejoice. But the fact just supposed, is by no means admitted. We believe, and are confident, that our principal dangers have resulted from the great enemy of liberty, of republics, and of human happiness. We know that accumulated injuries and insults have been received from him; and we may well suppose that more were meditated. Our joy, then, at his downfall perfectly becomes us, not only as philanthropists and Christians, but as patriots.—The effect which this event may have upon our negotiations with Great Britain, we cannot certainly estimate. So frequently, and so entirely have all human calculations been baffled of late, that they perhaps are the wisest, who are the least confident respecting the

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future course of events. One thing is certain. If *peace* is the blessing for which above all others, our country pants, the late Revolution in Europe is calculated rather to hasten, than to retard it.

Let me now invite you, my hearers, to behold, in the great events we have been meditating, a signal and animating proof of the *divine government over our world*. With aching eyes, we have seen in Europe, for many years, the triumphs of unblushing vice, and unbridled power. We have seen a bold, unprincipled adventurer, vaulting into the most brilliant throne upon the globe, and exercising a despotism over mankind, equally unexampled and intolerable. Under its baleful, blasting influence, thrones were subverted, republics blotted out of existence, and the direst ravages made on human virtue, freedom and happiness. Europe was bound with fetters of iron; and every effort of resistance seemed but the more closely to rivet her chains. Indeed, the usurper, flushed with reiterated victories, was pressing, with rapid strides, to the subjugation of the world. The nations trembled at his approach. Horror brooded on every countenance, and despair benumbed every heart. Liberty seemed breathing her last sigh; and hope herself was ready to bid adieu to the world. Such was the tremendous crisis. But in a moment, the scene is changed, and the tyrant is cast down. Are we not constrained to exclaim, *This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes*. Can we doubt that the Majesty of the universe has interposed for the express purpose of vindicating his all-governing providence, his eternal justice, in the eyes of his creatures? Henceforth, let

the guilty great feel their meanness, and tremble amid their highest elevations. Let the *ungodly, who prosper in the world*, behold the fate which sooner or later must be theirs. Let the impious oppressor, the haughty tyrant, know that there is a God in heaven; and that *those who walk in pride, he is able to abase*. Nor let the oppressed and suffering ever more despond. There is an eye that beholds their wrongs. There is an arm to redress them. They have a Friend and Patron in the Sovereign of the world; and in his appointed time, He will raise them up from the dust.

What an affecting comment is furnished by the recent state and sufferings of Europe, on the *depravity of human nature*. For twenty years, has this fair and cultivated portion of the globe been involved in war. During this period, more than ten millions of human beings have been prematurely hurried into the eternal world. Such are the awful fruits of sin. Such the ferocious dispositions of our fallen nature.

“There is no *flesh* in man’s obdurate heart :

“It does not feel for man.”

Indeed, what has our world been from the first, but an *aceldama*? What is the history of mankind, but a recital of the ravages of ambition and cruelty, on human happiness and life? It is a fact not to be mentioned, or thought on, but with horror, that the number of mankind which has perished, since the creation, by war, is more than one hundred times as great as that of all the millions who now inhabit the globe! — Do you require another proof of the dire depravity of man? Receive it in this fact: that heroes and conquerors, who have generally been a kind of pro-

professional butchers of the human species, have almost engrossed the admiration and applause of the world. These are the beings who have been eulogized by orators, celebrated by poets, and who have blackened, with their guilty fame, the pages of history. O when will the world be wise? When will it learn that true glory lies not in *destroying* men's lives, but in comforting and saving them—in imitating not the Prince of darkness, but the Prince of peace? When will it perceive that, compared with the guilt of those heroes whom they are prone to admire, the guilt of the ordinary murderer, who dies at the gibbet, whitens into innocence?

Further; let us learn the true source of national prosperity and happiness. Inspiration declares it in a word. *RIGHTEOUSNESS exalteth a nation.* Another lesson, it is true, has been taught in Europe. Modern philosophy, trampling on this sacred maxim, and the book which contains it, undertook to diffuse happiness among the nations, and to *regenerate* the world, by a system of rank atheism. The experiment has been made. And now behold the result. Read it in that scene of blood, of devastation, of varied, accumulated misery, which Europe has exhibited for more than half an age. What loud and solemn warning is thus given to the world! And how emphatically is this warning addressed to us as a people! For we have but too readily caught the contagion of European infidelity and licentiousness. As a nation, we have forsaken the God of our fathers; and He has forsaken us. We have disobeyed his voice; and He

has suffered us to walk in our own infatuated counsels. We have trampled on the holy maxims and precepts of his word; and we are now reaping the bitter fruits of transgression. My hearers, if there be any hope for our agonized and bleeding country, it must spring from repentance; deep, thorough, general repentance and reformation. Without this, peace itself, should it come to us, would scarcely be a blessing. Returning prosperity would but too probably harden us in sin, and precipitate us in the downward path of ruin. Oh, shall we not, as a people, humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God? Shall we not, while *his judgments are made so manifest, come and worship before him, and glorify his name*, and hallow his sabbaths, and keep his judgments, and his ordinances? Might but this be the issue of our calamities, our present despondency would vanish, and hope, like lightning in the gloom of midnight, would again cheer our disconsolate nation.

To conclude: we may see what is the only remedy for the sins and miseries of our restless world. It is the gospel. It is real Christianity. The gospel while it reconciles man to God, sets him at peace with his brother man. It subdues those turbulent passions of the soul, whence wars and contentions arise. Thus it cuts off the streams, by drying up the fountain. It inspires the dispositions of kindness, compassion, forbearance, equity and universal love. Did it every where prevail, in its purity and power, the world would be in perfect peace. Mankind would constitute one affectionate, united, happy family. Earth would resemble heaven. How inspiring

the thought, that such a delightful period is promised in the infallible word; that it is hastening on; and that even the darkest, direst events that pain the heart, shall help to introduce it! O come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! **DESIRE OF NATIONS!** Ascend thy universal throne! Sway thy resistless sceptre! Heal a bleeding world!