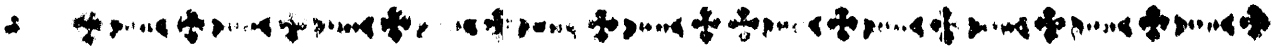
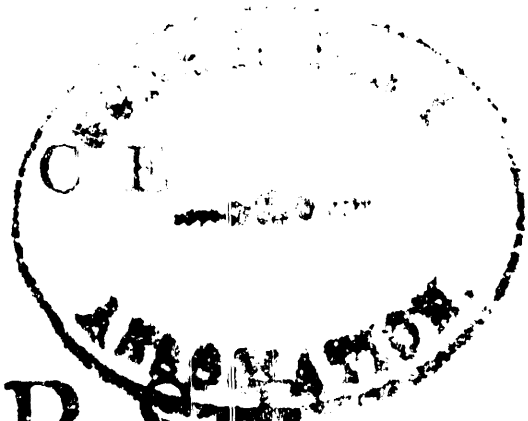


MR. LEONARD'S  
DISCOURSE.





THE  
SUBSTANCE  
OF A

# DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED AT POULTNEY,  
VERMONT,

*IN THE NEW MEETING-HOUSE,*

ON THE

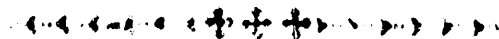
*Fourth of July, 1804.*

BEING THE TWENTY-EIGHTH ANNIVERSARY  
OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.



BY SAMUEL LEONARD,

PASTOR OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
IN POULTNEY.



*SALEM.*

PRINTED BY DODD & RUMFORD.

1804

IN COMMITTEE OF ARRANGEMENTS.



RESOLVED, That Messrs. PLINY ADAMS and THOMAS TODD, be a *Committee* to wait on the Rev. SAMUEL LEONARD, with thanks for his services this day, and request of him a copy of his *Sermon* for the press.

POULTNEY, *July 4, 1804,* )  
5 o'clock, P. M. )

A True Copy from the Minutes,

JONAS SAFFORD, CLERK

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A  
DISCOURSE.

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PSALMS, CXLVII. 20.

WE HAVE NOT HEARD SO WITH ANY NATION; AND AS FOR HIS JUDGMENTS THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN THEM. PRAISE YE THE LORD.

**N**O science opens a more extensive field for improvement than the history of nations. By the aid of the historian, we, in a sense, converse with all generations from the beginning of time. Thus assisted we see men in their rude uncultivated state, without arts, unpolished by science, unrestrained by social compacts, and unameliorated by civilized life. Here we can read human nature, undisguised

by deceit, acting out itself, in a thousand different shapes, and disclosing all the latent windings of the heart. On the historic page we may see mankind emerging from barbarism gradually rising into society, and assuming national dignity and importance. Here also we may see the high summits of grandure, to which states and empires have arisen, and the means which have contributed to their greatness : and from the same source we may mark their decline in its various stages ; and the incidents which have proved their downfall and final overthrow. Added to the above, from the faithful pen of the historian, the providence of God, in his dealings with the nations and kingdoms of the earth, is strikingly exhibited, affording to the mind every advantage of improvement in the knowledge of his glorious government, and sovereign dispensations. If history lays open such a field for acquaintance with men and manners, and with God himself, it cannot be consulted with too

great avidity : especially, those parts of it which are best authenticated, and comprise the most interesting events.

THE historic parts of the bible, which were written by holy men, as they were moved by the *Holy Ghost*, must have the first claim on us, because in them is justly stated, without the least glow of false colouring and affected redundancy on the one hand, or an instance of undue omission or abridgement on the other. Without undervaluing the unwearied labors of uninspired historians, I shall avail myself of the record God has given of his dealings with the *Jews*, his select people, of their misimprovement of his wonderful works, and of the feelings, a retrospective view of the whole ought to inspire. This being done, we shall be presented with a mirror in which we may see an assemblage of obvious realities, both pertinent to ourselves, as men and citizens, and to the country at large. All will allow, on reflection, that the text admits of a treatise of this kind.

And that the discourse may appear natural, and, in a measure conclusive, I shall arrange my observations agreeably to the following order :—

FIRST—I shall notice the particular dispensations of Divine Providence towards the *Jewish* nation.

SECONDLY—I shall mention some of the means by which that nation rose to an exalted pitch of eminence and greatness.

THIRDLY—I shall notice this nation on its decline, and the line of pursuit which proved its final ruin.

FOURTHLY—I shall subjoin the pertinent application of the whole, to the past and present state of this country, and the dealings of ALMIGHTY God towards us. And,

FIFTHLY—Shall conclude, with apprising the auditory of those expressions of praise due to the great arbiter of nations, from a retros-

pect of his holy and righteous judgments which he has so wonderfully displayed.

I shall begin,

FIRST....With noticing the peculiar dispensations of Divine Providence towards the *Jewish nation*.

THE sovereignty of God is very apparent in distinguishing his people, the *Jews*, from all other nations of the world. Why he should select this nation to be his peculiar inheritance, above every other, is a matter past all possible developement of human reason, and can have no other solution than this—it was the good pleasure of his will. The rectitude of this part of his administration none will dispute, who have a just apprehension of his works and word. The sovereignty of God is not an arbitrary unreasonable exercise of power. It is power guided by infinite moral excellence. In many instances, it is beyond human conception, but never contrary to reason. Sovereignty, thus



defined, is apparent in every part of this lower creation. The different talents and circumstances of individuals ; the great disparity between the various nations of the earth, in regard to the means of improvement, and the unequal distribution of wealth and honor, meet in confirming this truth, that God is not amenable to creatures ; but exercises an uncontrollable sovereignty over all. Such a display of himself, he has made in his peculiar dealings towards the *Jews*, in distinction from other nations. The *Jews* sprang from the same common parent as the rest of mankind ; and partook as deeply of the apostacy as any other people ; and of course, their having been signalized by God, could not be ascribed to any superior virtue of their own, or any distinct claim they had upon his protecting goodness. The self-moving grace of God sovereignly interposed, plucked them from the idol temple, and made them the peculiar favorites of heaven. Moses addressing this people observes, “ The

“ LORD thy GOD hath chosen thee to be a spe-  
 “ cial people to himself, above all the people  
 “ that are upon the face of the earth. The  
 “ LORD did not set his love upon you nor  
 “ choose you because you were more in num-  
 “ ber than any people, for ye were the fewest  
 “ of all people. And thou shalt consume all  
 “ the people which the LORD thy GOD shall  
 “ deliver thee. And the LORD thy GOD will  
 “ put out these nations before thee, by little  
 “ and little. And he shall deliver their king-  
 “ dom into thine hand, and thou shalt destroy  
 “ their name from under heaven. There shall  
 “ no man be able to stand before thee.” It is

true, that other nations, in their turn, rose to  
 very considerable heights of greatness and re-  
 nown. The *Assyrian empire*, founded by  
 NIMRON, flourished for a long time :—After  
 this, the *Persians*—the *Greeks*, in their turns,  
 and the *Romans*, and other smaller kingdoms.  
 But no nation like that of the *Jews*, did God  
 take under his peculiar patronage.

Their civil government was different from all other governments. God was its founder. It was an entire *Theocracy*. The LORD himself was their king and counsellor, and to him they had recourse in all their important emergencies. This was peculiar to the *Jews*. God never dealt so with any other nation. He spoke to them face to face. The standard of the LORD was fixed in the midst of their camp. He gave them that good land he promised, and went before them in a pillar of a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night. The LORD fought all their battles, and made their name great and terrible among the heathen. As it is written in the 44th *Psalms*, "How thou didst drive  
 " out the heathen with thine hand." EZEKIEL says, "The heathen shall know that I am the  
 " LORD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes." "Who is there of all  
 " flesh," says MOSES, "that hath heard the  
 " voice of the living God speaking out of the  
 " midst of the fire as we have." In the

SECOND PLACE....I shall notice the means by which the *Jewish nation* rose to an exalted pitch of eminence and greatness. As has been said their civil government, was a *theocracy*—the LORD himself being their king. Yet they did <sup>not</sup> arrive to their high state of prosperity without the intervention of means. Miracles were wrought for their deliverance, and to give testimony that the LORD was with them. Yet there was a certain way or line of providence, in the pursuit of which, they arose from small beginnings to an exalted state of respectability and renown. By what means they ascended the pinnacle of fame is the question before us. and it appears to me to be a question easily solved : It requires no more than a candid attention to facts to have the whole matter stand before us in a clear light. Their government stood on a broad basis—it knew of no jarring discords. Their civil and religious institutions were happily united and aided to the upbuilding and support of each other. Moses was at

the head of the civil department, and AARON conducted the business of the priesthood. And yet they did not consider themselves separated in any such sense as to imply a distinct interest. Their grand object was one and indivisible. Their code of civil laws made ample provision for those who served at the tabernacle, while the priests, in their turn, were occupied in communicating moral instruction, in regulating every part of religious service, and in urging those solemn duties obligatory on men towards God, and one another. The fostering hand of each being extended for mutual aid, produced harmony of views and the most perfect union. And all know where there is union in a nation there will be strength. Harmony and connection of interest between these two grand departments, the civil and religious, was the glory of the *Jewish theocracy*. Their mutual dependance on each other, made the interest of both the interest of each; what helped the one did also the other; and what was

prejudicial to either both were equally desirous to remove out of the way. To prove these remarks to be true very little need be said.— All who read the bible know that MOSES and AARON acted in connection ; and how often it is repeated, “ The LORD said unto MOSES and AARON to speak unto the children of *Israel*.”

ANOTHER mean by which this nation arose to an exalted pitch of prosperity and greatness, was the strict attention which was observed in the promotion of wise and good men, at the head of both civil and religious departments. It was not deemed enough to have the best of constitutions ; it was necessary that good men should hold the reigns of government. MOSES therefore was raised up by God, a man endowed with extensive natural and acquired abilities, and of the most distinguished piety, to lead in the civil concerns of the nation. Forty years he presided over them ; during the whole of which time he administered according to the most equal jus-

tice. During the same period of time, AARON was in the Priest office, feeding the people of GOD with heavenly truth, and contributing to the good order and well being of the nation. Here it may well be observed, that both MOSES and AARON were particularly cautious that those who filled the more ordinary stations, in the inferior departments, should be men of piety and virtue. If at any time, the wicked obtruded themselves into office, on discovery of the fallacy they were immediately removed. In proof of this, you will notice the twelve spies MOSES sent to search out the land of *Canaan*. All except JOSHUA and CALEB brought back an evil report. These men were heads of their respective tribes. Confidence was reposed in them. But on detecting their treachery they were all destroyed. Hear the words of the ten treacherous spies, "The  
 " land through which we have gone to search  
 " it, is a land which eateth up the inhabitants,  
 " and all the men we saw in it, are men of

“ great stature. Even those men that did bring  
 “ up the evil report died of the plague before  
 “ the LORD.” Wicked men, by the *Jewish*  
*Theocracy*, were not allowed to stand in the  
 Priest-office. NADAB and ABIHU offered  
 strange fire before the LORD ; and there went  
 out fire before the LORD, and devoured them  
 before the LORD. Having these posts of trust  
 filled by men of religion, who had the fear of  
 GOD before their eyes, was for a long time the  
 glory and felicity of that nation, and was a  
 mean of raising them to an exalted pitch of  
 prosperity.

ANOTHER thing which contributed to ren-  
 der them great and happy, was the peculiar  
 guard exercised against foreign influence and  
 manners. Those who had the management of  
 civil and religious affairs, kept a constant  
 watch against the practices of the heathen na-  
 tions round about. Men are naturally prone  
 to idolatry, and therefore, all familiar inter-  
 course of the *Jeus*, with other nations was



forbidden. They viewed nothing more prejudicial to their civil and religious establishments, than the introduction of the customs of their idolatrous neighbors. To guard against these, they inculcated the uniform worship of God, in collecting together, to pay him their public homage.

ATTENTION to the religious education of youth was another mean of their preferment. They first dedicated their children to God, and they were taught by those who ruled over them to inculcate upon them, the duties of religion. As we find in the 6th Chapter of *Deut.* “ And thou shalt teach them diligently  
 “ to thy children, and shalt talk of them when  
 “ thou sittest in thine house, and when thou  
 “ walkest by the way, and when thou liest  
 “ down and when thou risest up.” They were taught fully to believe that early education was of vast consequence to a nation. They viewed their future prosperity in a great measure, depending on this thing.

WE may notice another thing yet which tended greatly to their prosperity. The minds of the people were guarded against exercising needless discontent under the restraints of law. It is true there were at certain periods murmuring and bitter complaining : But it was rather transient and short-lived. It did form a prominent feature in their national character during their prosperous state. Whatever might be the feelings of individuals, it is certain the government itself viewed nothing with greater abhorrence than an unwillingness to submit to law and order. When this nation was rising into importance and in the most flourishing state, there was no general disposition to thrust those who ruled over them from office. KORAH, DATHAN and ABIRAM made an attempt on the Priest-office. But the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up. ABSALOM raised a conspiracy, in which he lost his life. They did not make a sport and jest of virtuous and good rulers—they did not

lift up their hands for the factious office hunter, and open their embrace to demagogues, and sycophants. Those who feared God and hated covetousness, were sought out to fill the offices of church and state. And in these, they confided their invaluable rights, so long as they continued prosperous and happy. The foregoing are some of the steps pursued by the nation we are contemplating, which led them to the exalted height to which they arose.

THIS leads me, in the *third place*, to observe the same nation on its decline, and the line of pursuit which led to its final ruin.

UNDER this head, it is not necessary to be very lengthy. Turning the tables, and viewing the contrast of those means by which the nation was rendered great and happy, will do much at once to enlighten our minds, to perceive the causes which led to its decline. After the death of JOSHUA, during the time of the *Judges*, the progress of the nation, towards the pinnacle of greatness was gradual.

Sometimes it appeared nearly stationary : but on a general scale, it was on the advance. Thus it continued till the greater part of SOLOMON'S reign had elapsed ; at which period it began to decline. After the death of SOLOMON and when REHOBOAM came on to the throne, the affairs of church and state were thrown into a wretched condition. Through the imprudence of this young inexperienced prince, ten tribes revolted and followed JEREBOAM the son of *Nebat*. Now the glory was departed, which never again was restored to the nation. Though the hand of GOD was in this, yet we may see, if we will suffer our minds to reflect, the causes of their decline.

ONE of the principal causes of this decline, was an uneasiness with the government which was over them, both civil and religious. A laxness was introduced, and a lawless spirit prevailed. The institutions of GOD became wearisome, and the temple worship was viewed a burden. We find them often accused of

worshipping in the groves and high places, which was provoking to God, and insured his sore displeasure. A fondness for change in the Priesthood prevailed, and JEREBOAM promoted the lowest of the people to the sacred office. And it was but a short time before the whole of the ten tribes had forsaken the religion of their fathers and sunk into idolatry. The public mind became so corrupt that religion was out of the question, as to being a desirable qualification in the officers of state. Wicked usurpers, who by popular intrigue, ingratiated themselves into the feelings of the people, were promoted, while the virtuous were treated with scorn and derision. This apostacy, in opinion and practice, sunk the nation from the height of its former greatness to the depth of ignominy and wretchedness: they soon became slaves to every base and hateful passion, and learnt all the views of the heathen. JEREBOAM set up his idol temples in the different parts of his kingdom; and reverence

for GOD, who had so often interposed in their behalf, was obliterated from the mind. Pious education was wholly omitted, and the youth were permitted to grow up in ignorance of GOD, without ever being told of his marvellous works. They did not realize the judgments foretold by MOSES and their venerable forefathers, which would light upon them, on their forsaking the worship and service of the true GOD. They were shut up from all perception of these interesting realities. To describe them in modern language they were deists or cosmopolites, depending on their own short sighted reason to guide them and mark out their paths. And this their wickedness proved their ruin.

I SHALL now descend to the fourth particular. Which was to subjoin the pertinent application of the whole we have been observing, to the past and present state of this country; and the dealings of GOD towards us, which are deserving of special notice. The

words of the text may be used with application to this country, compared with the rest of the nations of the earth. It may, in truth, be said, if we look back to the first settlement of *America*, "That God hath not dealt so with any nation." It is not pretended there is an exact likeness between God's dealings with the *Jewish nation* and this country; and yet in many things there is a striking similarity.— Compared with other nations, they were signa- lized, and so have we been. Theirs was an age of miracles, ours is not; and yet the gen- eral providence of God towards both, in many important particulars, is very uniform. They rose from small beginnings; so did we. They were surrounded with heathen neighbors, who harrassed them, and endeavored to effect their utter destruction. So were our forefathers.— The natives threatened them with an entire extirpation. The *Israelites* depended on the LORD to fight their battles. Our forefathers depended not on an arm of flesh. God wrought

remarkable deliverances for his people, the *Jews*. So he has for the people of this country. From the family of JACOB there arose, in a short time, a great nation. So from the little handful who came to this country, a few years ago, hath arisen a great and powerful people. The *Jews* were oppressed in *Egypt*, and not allowed the enjoyment of their civil and religious privileges. So were those who emigrated to *America*. GOD prepared for them the land of *Canaan*, in which they should be unmolested in the worship and service of GOD. So our forefathers who first came to this country, though called to endure severe hardships, were happy in this, that they could worship GOD agreeable to the dictates of their own consciences. Of these likenesses I give only a succinct, imperfect representation; but nothing appears more real. I have rehearsed over some of the means by which the *Jewish nation* arose to its exalted pitch of prosperity and greatness. We have noticed



the following particulars, which now invite our recollection. Their civil and religious institutions were united and administered reciprocal aid. Pious and wise men were advanced to posts of trust and preferment, in church and state. They were on their guard against foreign influence and intrigue. The religious education of youth was particularly regarded ; and during their prosperous state no general restlessness, under the restraints of law, prevailed. They were not corroded with ungrounded suspicions and jealousy ; but confided in those who had proved themselves faithful to manage the affairs of church and state, without seeking for new masters ; and besides, they submitted to all necessary expences for the support of civil and religious order, without murmuring or shewing any marks of discontent. These principles, and this line of pursuit under God, were the very means by which they became great, respectable and happy. And these, in sum and substance, are the

identical principles and views to which we ascribe the high state of prosperity and national importance to which this country has arisen. Let *New-England* serve as an example, as we are, many of us, natives of that part of *America*. Those people at first adopted an excellent mode of civil and religious government.— Church and state administered to each others reciprocal aid. What was for the interest of one was the interest of the other. They sought out pious and good men to whom they committed their civil and religious concerns. They kept themselves uncorrupted by foreign influence, both in principle and manners. They taught the youth to fear God and respect their rulers. They were willing to submit to the restraints of law ; and no discontent and ungrounded suspicions were suffered to break forth. No intriguing politician and office seeker was countenanced ; but all such characters treated with deserved contempt. The necessary expences for the support of civil and reli-

gious order were not viewed a burden, but discharged with punctuality and dispatch. Adherence to these things was the mean of their rising with astonishing quickness, to an exalted summit of national tranquility.

BUT alas ! are there not symptoms of a sad declension and departure from this bulwark of national dignity and safety ? Is there not a beginning to revolt from the aforementioned principles ? And are not these ancient customs deemed as oppressive and foolish ? Religion is no longer considered desirable in those who fill the chair of state. It is considered rather a restraint on genius. Men are willing to submit their interests into the hands of those who know not God nor keep his commandments. The doors are thrown wide open to Lyco-phants, vain pretenders and deists to come in and lay hands on the sacred *Paladium*. The ministers of religion are set at naught, and a dissolution of religious institutions threatened. There is an increasing disposition to neglect

those very means to which their present greatness and prosperity is to be wholly ascribed. Since the same God governs who has always governed, have we not just occasion of alarm? If we take the measures which proved the ruin of one nation, what can prevent our coming to the same end? Men may have plausible pretensions for relinquishing former customs though ever so good. The ten tribes had such pretensions in the days of JEREBOAM :—But when they gave up their ancient, civil and religious establishments, they plunged into the deep gulph of wretchedness and ignominy.—This will certainly be the lot of this country, if we take and pursue the same steps. How far we are inclining to this evil course, let candid observers coolly judge.

THE light which God is communicating to us is much greater than the *Jeres* enjoyed. And did God appear to take vengeance on them, when they forsook him, how much more intolerable may it be for us? We need not think

that we are out of danger because our ruin is not yet accomplished. God suffers long, and is kind ; but he will not withhold his anger forever. It is not too late yet to secure his protection ; nor are we ignorant how to secure it. The same courses, for substance, pursued by our venerable forefathers, will meet his benediction. He smiled on them ; if we imitate their examples, he will smile on us. The contrary will lead to infamy and ruin.

BUT let us, *fifthly*, in the conclusion of the subject, enquire respecting those expressions of praise, due to the great arbiter of nations, on a retrospect of his holy and righteous judgments, which he has so wonderfully displayed. God makes astonishing exhibitions of his character, in the rise and fall of states and empires ; and vindicates his holy sovereignty to the most consummate perfection. As he makes kingdoms and empires to differ, pulling down one and setting up another ; so he imparts all his special favors according to the good plea-

sure of his will. He rules in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth ; nor will he give his glory to another. Whatever be the fate of nations and kingdoms, he will be glorified in the salvation of his people, and in the ruin of those who rise up against him.

IN all the great revolutions which take place among nations and kingdoms, and in all the successes with which men are favored, there is an overruling hand. Does the general come off victorious ? Does the statesmen conduct affairs to the best advantage ? We may consider that in this very victory and conduct, God's agency is concerned. All the wisdom, skill and strength, which are to be found in men is derived from God. He teacheth the warrior to fight : He giveth understanding to men, or they will be simple and know not what to do. " Those advocates for liberty, whose names are this day precious, and " through whose instrumentality our indepen-

“ dence is established, derived all their skill,  
 “ prowess and zeal from that ALMIGHTY BE-  
 “ ING who directs all the affairs of men.”

THE wise man, under the guidance of the spirit of truth, as well as his own observation, says, “ I returned and saw under the sun, that  
 “ the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to  
 “ the strong.” This was true in our late struggles for our rights and privileges. Our success was not owing to any superior strength of ours.  
 “ *We* were feeble. *Britain* was strong. *We*  
 “ were inexperienced in war. *They* were in-  
 “ ured to it. *We* had at the same time a go-  
 “ vernment to form; but *they* could avail them-  
 “ selves of the energies of one which had been  
 “ established for ages. Yet *we* gained our ob-  
 “ ject, while *they* had to relinquish *theirs*.—  
 “ Though we had a WASHINGTON at the head  
 “ of our army, it was the LORD alone who gave  
 “ us the victory. He had said, LET AMERI-  
 “ CA BE FREE ! and *Great-Britain* could not  
 “ hold her in chains any longer :” And all the  
 praise is due to him.

WHILE we are convened to commemorate the divine goodness to us in times of distress, may our hearts be filled with holy joy, and our minds elevated to shout his praise. May nothing be done this day thro' strife or vain-glory. To cultivate peace, friendship and freedom ought to be the desire of every heart. In retrospecting on the past events of Divine Providence, we are assisted how to shape our course in future. In view of the events we have been describing, we need not hesitate what resolution to form, and where to take our stand. Let us improve the present opportunity, in gaining instruction from what is past, how to live in future. If we wish to see virtue in the nation of which we are a part, let us be virtuous ourselves.

*FINIS.*