

A

DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED AT CONWAY, N. H.

ON THE FOURTH OF JULY, 1811.

—●—
BY NATHANIEL PORTER, A. M.
—●—

~~~~~

PORTLAND:

FROM THE GAZETTE PRESS.

# A DISCOURSE.

JEREMIAH VTH CHAP. 31ST VER.

*And my people love to have it so.*

**BRETHREN**, friends, and fellow citizens ! In obedience to your call, I appear in the desk a public speaker. In the habit of complying with invitations, to lead in those religious exercises, which look with any favorable aspect, on your eternal or temporal welfare, I obeyed your summons, and appear before you in this place.

This day associates a train of ideas, which are solemn and joyous. This day witnessed the birth of our nation ; saw three millions of people emerge from obscurity ; claim the native rights of man ; renounce all political connection with an imperious, oppressive nation, and boldly assert their independence.

Not only did the 4th of July, '76, introduce the United States to a rank among the nations of the world ; but formed an epoch, from which we may trace a long chain of events, some of which have been fortunate and pleasing, others, the reverse.

Our exemption from the calamitous wars, which have ravaged Europe ; our national wealth and grandeur ; the spirit of enterprize, awake through the Union, owed their existence, under a superintending God, to the particular condition in which the bold transactions of the 4th of July, placed our country.

Thus we trace the doings of that memorable day, to the will of a governing God ; to the beneficent Author and Guardian of our lives, liberties, and enjoyments. Yet, they rise to our first view, as the

project of human wisdom ; the result of mature deliberation in the leading characters of the times. Human agents were employed to effectuate the purposes of heaven.

That which gave energy to the declaration of the august fathers of the 4th of July, '76, was the choice of the people, which embraced it. Feeble indeed had been the doings of that day, and wholly abortive, had they not been sanctioned by the body of the nation. The people chose to have it so.

The people are the source of power in every nation ; the strength of every kingdom is lodged in their hands, whatever may be their form of government. Potentates, though they were wise as angels, and possessed all the integrity and benevolence that ever adorned a human character, could never effectuate the good their patriotism might wish, unless the body of the people should second their views, and aid them in the execution of their plans. Royal tyrants could never inflict misery on their subjects, but with their consent. The sufferers always prefer the calamities they feel, to any resolute, manly exertions to produce a reform, or extricate themselves from those miseries. The character of a people takes its complexion from that of the government, or from the character of those who administer the government. This, however, is when they acquiesce in that state of things which their rulers devise.

In whatever nation things are so managed, or public concerns are so conducted, as to damp the spirit of enterprise, cut the sinews of revenue, dry up the sources of wealth, reduce the people to poverty, degrade, and almost beggar them, the words of the text will apply "the people love to have it so." More particularly will the words apply to a people, whose government is elective, and where a constitutional remedy is easily applied.

In the verse preceding the text, the prophet complains of a thing committed in the land of Judea, which was wonderful and horrid. Prophets prophesying falsely, or circulating lies among the people, and, an order of men, by those means, getting power into their hands, and wickedly bearing rule.

It appears that the corrupt rulers of that day, had crowded themselves into office, or acquired their authority and influence, by means of abominable falsehoods, framed and put in circulation, by a set of busy, lying, self-created prophets. And, says the text, My people love to have it so.

The body of the people easily believed those lying prophets ; were willingly deceived by the falsehoods, which were intended to impress the public mind, in favor of certain ambitious characters, and open a way for their advancement to the honors and emoluments of office, which was “ a wonderful and an horrid thing.” The people were pleased with such things ; they were flattered, amused by these lying prophets, and supinely submitted to the vile characters, who had acquired their authority by such base and abominable means.

It is not to be understood, that natural evils, whether public or private, are the immediate objects of a man’s low desire or choice. But, when those measures, which directly lead to those evils, or have an obvious tendency to produce them, are preferred to all others, and when the calamities resulting from them, are tamely, if not cheerfully submitted to ; it may truly be said, that “ people love to have it so.” They that hate me, love death, says Solomon. Not that death was the immediate object of their choice, or love ; but they preferred the path which led to death. Death is the wages of sin, and those who choose the ways of sin, do, in their choice, embrace its wages.

The calamities which followed the abominable

thing alluded to in the context, whether it were the blundering, or oppressive conduct of those, who had got the reins of government into their hands, by the hateful arts of dissimulation and falsehood, could not, in themselves, be objects of desire, or complacency with those suffering Jews. Yet, as they embraced the lies, which were meant to beguile them, supported and caressed the instruments of their woes; the words of the text are applied to them, "they loved to have it so." As they supported the very measure, which produced their distresses, they did prefer that state of things.

Some of the links in the chain of events, connected with the transactions of the 4th of July, '76, may, with propriety, be brought into view, upon this Anniversary.

The dissolution of our connection with Great Britain, by the declaration of independence, seemed as a spur to zeal, and increased the animation of every grade of citizens, who, with a few exceptions, entered into the views of the then leading characters, and supported their claims, with a resolution, ardour and perseverance, which, under the auspices of a beneficent God, were crowned with a success, which astonished and abashed the foes of America, rejoiced the heart of Europe, and laid a foundation for the peace and happiness of a virtuous and enlightened people, till kingdoms and empires should be no more.

The transactions of that auspicious day, opened a fair, a pleasing prospect to the views of millions; a prospect of free commerce with all the world; a commerce unrestricted by the capricious regulations of a parent state, always too jealous of our growing numbers, strength and wealth. Hope and expectation, were alive in every patriotic breast, in every enterprising mind.

The most sanguine hope was realized, by the industrious farmer, merchant, and mechanic. While

war impoverished and wasted Europe, and this country maintained a strict and honorable neutrality, wealth flowed abundantly to the coffers of the industrious and enterprising ; and all classes of people felt its meliorating effects.

This state of things, with a few scandalous exceptions, was pleasing to the body of the people ; they loved to have things as they then were. *So perhaps it might still have been, had that love continued in the same channel, or been directed to the same objects, and embraced the measures necessary to such a state of things.*

The declaration of that ominous day, was not only the step of our ascent to a reputable rank among nations ; but opened a way, and even laid a foundation of forming treaties with foreign nations, on the footing of reciprocal advantages.

An alliance was formed with a nation, which, though attended with some minor advantages, at that eventful moment, has since been so managed, as to be a curse, rather than a blessing. By that alliance, the bosom of our country was opened to hoards of spies and pimps ; to men of black intrigue ; to the very dregs of a nation of incendiaries, whose faith is, and ever was deceptive, and whose object has ever been, to divide, to weaken, to set the government at variance with the people ; and thus, at some convenient period, bring them within their own rapacious grasp.

The purest motives, undoubtedly, led the fathers of our country, to form that alliance, then thought necessary to the support of our just claims. That alliance was accepted by the people ; all appeared willing and desirous it should be so, and thus gave it the stability of a supreme law.

Divide and conquer, has long been the motto of France ; and, whenever they have been able to sow the seeds of political discord, in a soil congenial to

their growth, and have followed with their armies ; life, liberty, property, laws, and whatever is sacred and dear to man, have been prostrated in the dust ; have fallen a sacrifice to their insatiable ambition, avarice and cruelty.

How far France, by her base intrigues, has stirred up division in this country, and blown the sparks of party spirit to a flame, may be learned from their own declaration, more than ten years ago, and by events we have since witnessed. It was then said in France, and to those commissioners, of which the present Governor of Massachusetts was one, that the French republic, had too great an interest in the United States, for the government to make war upon them ; and boasted that their diplomatic skill, had not been employed in vain, or to that purport. Tho' that declaration, at that time, was not believed, yet it has since been proved, to be a lamentable truth. *And that which may perhaps, be thought still more lamentable, is, that this is embraced by the choice of the people.*

In the year 1783, the independence declared on the eventful day we celebrate, was acknowledged by the only power, which had contested our claim. Then, the citizens of the Union sat down, “ under their own vine and fig tree, while there was none to make them afraid.” Peace and harmony reigned, from one extremity of the territory to the other ; and one patriotic soul, seemed to animate the whole.

The American flag was acknowledged and respected on the seas, and in every foreign port, the Barbary powers excepted.

That was the morning of our existence as a nation ; fair and serene as the unclouded day. Those were among the halcyon days of America. The sweets of liberty and independence, were tasted and relished by the people, who were highly pleased with that state of things ; and rejoiced in the hope of growing power, wealth and prosperity.

The fairest, the most perfect foundation ever laid, for the happiness of society, or welfare of man, may be incumbered with a superstructure, composed of such materials, as to disappoint the public expectation, and defraud the hope of individuals. Of this nature was that compact, framed on the doings of the memorable July 4th. By which thirteen independent sovereignties, were leagued together, for mutual safety and defence. That instrument was calculated for a virtuous and enlightened meridian ; adopted to answer the honest intentions of its compilers, in a nation free from prejudices ; whose passions were subject to the government of reason ; and who were ready to sacrifice private views and interests, to the general welfare, or submit to local inconveniences, to promote the prosperity of the whole. It was destitute of energy, and like the natural body without the spirit, dead. It was totally inadequate to the purposes which were proposed in its formation, or expected from its operation.

The unhappy effects of a government without energy, were soon felt. Alarming symptoms of decay appeared in the confederated body ; a reform was projected ; the frame of the compact was essentially altered, or a new one framed and submitted to the people. And, though its adoption was, by many, strenuously opposed ; yet, after a fair and candid discussion, was received as the Constitution of the Republic, and carried into operation. This was a new order of things, embraced by the choice of the people.

When the man, who justly merited the confidence of the nation, was placed in the chair of state, by the unanimous suffrages of the people ; talents, integrity, and genuine patriotism, moved the wheels in the political machine.

Soon were the meliorating effects of this new order of things felt in every limb of the Union. The



spirit of enterprise awoke ; industry received a new spur, and joy pervaded all departments, and all habitations, with the exception of those, who are enemies to order, who delight in troubled waters, whose element is confusion. A grateful multitude saw with heartfelt satisfaction, the beloved hero, who, when loaded with the honors of war, sheathed the victorious sword, and retired to a private station, the chief executive of their growing empire. They cheerfully entered into all his views, and supported his administration. That was a state of things, which met the love, was embraced by the choice of the people.

Under the administration of Washington, the nation acquired a high degree of credit and respectability, and grew in wealth. The interest of the public debt was discharged, and the principal said to be reduced.

The public revenue, was then, comparatively small ; the expenditures necessarily great : greater than the necessary expenses of any subsequent administration. An Indian war was carried on, which cost the government large sums. An insurrection raised in the bowels of the Union, [in which the present Secretary of the national treasury took an active and leading part,] was crushed at great expense. Treaties were formed, light houses built, fortresses strengthened, and the country kept in some posture of defence, which must have been attended with great expenditures. Yet, by the economizing plans then adopted, the treasury was supplied to meet the exigences of the nation.

When Europe was involved in a ruinous war, a strict neutrality, by the vigilance and decisive conduct of the Executive, was observed on the part of the United States, in spite of the impudent attempts of intriguing foreigners to the contrary. This position gave opportunity to enterprising citizens, to en-

rich themselves, and their country, by becoming carriers for the belligerent powers.

The offices in government, were filled by men of wisdom and virtue ; integrity, talents and patriotism, were the only recommendations to offices of trust and responsibility. Faithful men filled the departments of state. No fraud, no embezzlement of the public interest, were known. A system of revenue was so formed, as to be adequate to all the wants of government, and calculated to gradually remove the public burden, and enrich the nation. Questions pending in the councils of the nation, were decided on the fair scale of reason, - or carried by conclusive argument. What people on earth, could but love to have things so ? Who could but choose a state of things, which was productive of the greatest national good ? It was approved ; it met the love of all. As in the days of David, “ whatsoever the king did, pleased all the people ;” so, whatsoever was done, under that administration, pleased the people.

In the next administration, the tide of our national prosperity, received an alarming check. The powers at war, trampled on the laws of nations ; violated the rights of neutrality, and wantonly committed depredations on the hard earned property of Americans.

When a remedy of this evil was sought by fair negotiation, the least abandoned of the two great contending powers, attended to our just complaints ; amicably adjusted differences with our government, and promptly restored the property, taken contrary to the rights of neutrals. The other power, insultingly continued her spoliations ; till convinced, by the spirited measures of our government, that she could no longer insult an independent people with impunity, she then acceded to terms of accommodation ; but has not restored the plundered property.

Those spoliations greatly lessened the revenue ,

which, with the large sums expended to form a navy, to protect commerce, and support the dignity of the nation, reduced the administration to the painful alternative of borrowing money, to supply the wants of government, or resorting to direct taxation. The latter was preferred.

As taxation is a mode of raising a revenue, never very popular, so this sat uneasy upon the minds of many, and even of some who appeared to be friends to the government. Of this, and some other things, the foes of the administration availed themselves, and increased the popular discontent. A new order of things was introduced. A change in the administration took place ; a change of political measures of course followed. And it was evident enough, the people loved to have it so.

The country had, at no time, been wholly free from Absaloms, who, under a mask of zeal for the public good, insidiously endeavored to overthrow the existing order of things.

The illustrious Washington did not escape the tongue of slander ; nor his wise measures, which placed the country on a safe and reputable footing, the pen of censure. His public conduct was attacked, by those who are included in the exceptions before made.

How a change in the administration was effectuated, will not be made a subject of inquiry in this place. I would only observe, the context will furnish the best key to the means by which it was introduced. But by whatever means the change was brought about, it grew out of the bold transactions of the 4th of July, '76, and the people did love to have it so.

At the commencement of the present order of things, the public treasury was so supplied, as to meet every immediate want of the government ; and a revenue was, at the same time, increasing with a

rapidity, without, perhaps, a parallel in the history of nations. Lands, according to statement, have been sold, to the amount of more than thirty millions of dollars. To which may be added, the proceeds of a part of the navy, built by the preceding administration. In the space of ten years, there have been no wars to maintain\* ; no insurrections to quell ; nor a cent expended for the protection of trade. And yet, it appears, the treasury is exhausted, and the government under the necessity of borrowing millions, to meet the exigences of a single year. And, in the sense in which the text has been explained, the people love to have it so.

Whatever the cause may be, our country appears this day, in a very awkward and critical situation. Insulted abroad, degraded at home, and contemptible in the eyes of every thinking foreigner. The sources of revenue destroyed, the treasury empty, and commerce, which furnished employment and support to thousands of citizens, greatly embarrassed, and without protection. The measures which were formerly adopted and pursued, in a similar case, are set aside ; and a different mode of conduct towards foreign aggressions, is observed. Without deciding on the wisdom or policy of the present train of political measures, I only observe, the body of the people, in the true sense of the text, love to have it so.

A link in the chain of events, produced by the exercise of the power assumed on the 4th of July, the moral and religious state of things, is not the least noticeable.

At that eventful crisis, we find this order of things, not unsimilar to that of the Jews, at, and after their emancipation from Egyptian bondage. A Moses, in the state, and an Aaron, in the church,

---

\* The battle at Tripoli, had escaped the Author's memory, at the time of penning this discourse ; hopes the inadvertence may meet the pardon of a candid public.

were happily united, in leading the people of this christian country, in the paths of order and virtue. Officers in the church and state, combined their influence to promote the peace and happiness of the people, in their civil and ecclesiastical state. Each moved in his own sphere, without invading the province of the other. Their influence was united, while their departments were distinct.

This was an order, which seems to have been copied, from an institution of Israel's God. And hence I conclude, the wisdom, and salutary tendency of such an order, will never be called in question, by one serious advocate for divine revelation.

When the magistrate patronizes religion, exemplifies its virtues, provides for its teachers, by requiring the prompt fulfilment of every voluntary contract, made to support the institution of public worship, and protects the worshippers of Jehovah from insult, it bears a strong resemblance to the ancient order which God established, and which he has never revoked ; but has declared it to be his will, that it should continue under the gospel dispensation. This order of things, met the approbation of the body of people.

The outward peace and prosperity of a community, are the immediate objects in the view of the magistrate. It is his particular province to prevent, or punish fraud, and every disorder, by which the peace of society is disturbed, or its safety endangered.

The immediate object of the ministry, is to regulate the heart, mend the temper, and meliorate the morals. Either of these alone, seems to be inadequate to the preservation of social order and happiness. And it was, no doubt, on this ground, divine wisdom and benevolence, combined them in the Jewish economy.

All nations find it necessary, to add the influence

of a religion, which binds the consciences of men, to the authority of the magistrate, to secure obedience to the laws. The sanctions which enforce obedience to the precepts of religion, are more impressive and powerful, than are those penalties, which sanction the laws of the state.

When there is a Moses, in a christian nation, to use his influence in favor of religion ; to patronize its institutions, and encourage its instructors ; when the civil fathers of a community, add their sanction to moral virtue, by exhibiting its character in their department ; when they reverence the name, the sanctuary, and institutions of the Lord ; when they are patterns of religion in their walk ; and when spiritual guides enforce the precepts of it, with the powerful sanction of the gospel ; it has a happy tendency to spread the influence of real christianity, to all descriptions of men in a community. And when a people accede to such a state of things ; or, in the style of the text, love to have it so ; every social blessing may be expected, and their expectations will not be disappointed.

The most superficial examiner will perceive, by the history of the Jewish nation, that its general character may be known, by that of its political and spiritual guides. When these combined their influence, and united their exertions, to promote the temporal good, and spiritual welfare of the people ; the latter, in most instances, seconded their views, and aided their endeavors, and the land enjoyed peace and prosperity.

When wicked men held the reins of government, the body of the nation aped their evil manners, grew corrupt, became vicious and miserable. Some instances, in the Jewish history, are found, in which the people did not enter into the views of their church and state officers. These are found, more particularly in their journey through the desert.

They rebelled against Moses and Aaron. By the false reports, and glaring suggestions of ten persons, who were sent as spies, the whole congregation were thrown into a state of rebellion against their rulers. The rebels were destroyed ; the stedfast few, possessed the fertile land.

On the other hand, there are instances, in which a people have not followed their infidel, demoralized magistrate. Cruel tyrants, have sometimes been dethroned, by their oppressed subjects. But ordinarily, rulers and people have but one character ; and this is according to the leading features in that of the former.

If the Moses of a christian community withdraws his fostering hand from the institutions of religion ; if he throws the influence of his example into the scale of infidelity, vice and dissipation ; a large proportion of the community will be likely to follow him. And when they do, it is because they prefer that demoralized state of things, or love to have it so.

A few names, who do not defile their garments, by a departure from the law and testimony of their God, may be as the salt of a community, to preserve it from total moral putrefaction. This, however, will not save a dissipated people, from the tokens of God's anger, or his testimonies against a general decay of religion.

It is well known, that the national constitution recognizes only a Moses, or civil magistrate : Aaron, or a religious order, is not known. While some of the states have acknowledged both, the magistrate, in others, has lifted up his hand, to depress the institutions of religion. Retrospective laws have been put in force, calculated to weaken the hands of religious instructors. When the authors of such measures are supported and caressed, it shows that the people enter into the same views, and prefer that order of things to any other.

Life and death, are before our country ; these are at the option of the people ; and that which they prefer, will be their portion.

The adoption and pursuit of a train of measures, which have the highest tendency to promote religion ; to preserve, or mend the morals, and to secure public peace and happiness, is the people's choice of life. To depress virtue, corrupt morals, and leave the industrious without protection, is to love death.

May the people of these states, never be left, to prefer a train of measures, which tend to impoverish, degrade, and ruin them.

May science and virtue, walk hand in hand, through every section of the Union. May this land of our fathers, be preserved from an unprincipled magistracy ; from tyranny and oppression ; from anarchy and confusion. May the Zion of God be delivered from those illiterate, disorganizing vagrants, who aim to divide, weaken and destroy, regular christian societies ; that on their ruins, they may raise their own popularity and interest.

May the people never be so forsaken of God, or blind to their temporal and spiritual welfare, as to follow and second the views of such a vile description of men. For if such an order of things meets their choice, the land must mourn. And, though it would be their own chosen way, they would have reason to rue the day, which gave them a national existence, as did the perfect man, the day in which he was born. This, God forbid.

May the means of national peace and prosperity, be embraced through every section of the land ; the day which gave us a rank among nations, be kept in joyous, grateful remembrance ; and the people love to have it so, till time shall be no more.

---

NOTE. Those passages in *italics*, were omitted in the delivery.