

**DISCOURSE,**

ADAPTED TO

THE PRESENT SITUATION

OF

OUR NATIONAL CONCERNS,

PREACHED AT

*MARBLEHEAD, MASS.*

JULY 23, 1812,

APPOINTED

BY THE EXECUTIVE OF THIS COMMONWEALTH

AS A DAY OF

FASTING, HUMILIATION AND PRAYER.

.....  
BY FERDINAND ELLIS, A. M.  
.....

WARWICK PALFRAY, Jun. Salem, Printer.

1812.

**REV. FERDINAND ELLIS,**

**SIR,**

Permit the undersigned jointly to request you to favour us with a copy of your patriotic Discourse, delivered on the 23<sup>d</sup> inst. for publication.

With due consideration and esteem, we are

Your obedient servants,

**ISAAC STORY, Jun.  
WM. STORY,  
JACOB WILLARD,  
JOSEPH H. WHITE,  
JOSEPH BARKER.**

*Marblehead, July 27, 1812.*

**TO ISAAC STORY, Jun. Esq. WILLIAM STORY, Esq. JACOB WILLARD, Esq. DR. JOSEPH H. WHITE, and JOSEPH BARKER, Esq.**

**GENTLEMEN,**

In reply to your request of the 27<sup>th</sup> inst. permit me to say I still value the blessings of civil liberty as an inestimable treasure, and appreciate my privileges as a citizen accordingly. And the same motives which led to the delivery of the Discourse, together with the favourable opinion you are pleased to express, now induce me to submit a copy for publication.

Your obedient servant,

**FERDINAND ELLIS.**

*Marblehead, July 30, 1812.*

# DISCOURSE.



ISAIAH LVIII. 4.

*Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high.*

**A**LL things and events are subject to the controul of Deity. The mere light of nature demonstrates an almighty agency in the creation of the universe. But the same Almighty Being who creates, must uphold and dispose. Or in other words, the providence of God extends to all the works of his hand. No being in the universe, however exalted, can be independent of the great Supreme; no object, however minute, is unworthy his notice. Nations, therefore, as well as individuals, must acknowledge the power of the God of Heaven, who “weigheth the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance.” The smiles of Jehovah are the prosperity and exaltation of man, both in his individual and associate capacity.

These sentiments are the joy of the good man, who sees much confusion and perplexity in the world. An unseen, an Almighty hand directs or controuls the whole. God’s government, ever consistent with the perfection of his nature, is a righteous government. For thus sang the ancient christians; “The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of isles be glad. Clouds and dark-

ness are round about him : righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.”

But where, it will be asked, where is the refuge of the mourning offender? What averts the anger of a righteous God, that the vials of his wrath are not poured out upon rebel man? “It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.” Yes, my brethren, to the “riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering,” are we indebted for every blessing, whether temporal or spiritual. Let sinners, therefore, of every description; let also offending nations, “take with them words, and turn to the Lord:” let them “seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near.”

The pious, therefore, at all times, but especially in times of calamity and distress, will esteem it both a privilege and a duty, to humble themselves “under the mighty hand of God.” Fasting, humiliation, and prayer, are the blessed resort of the godly; these are sacrifices, with which Jehovah is well pleased.

But to pursue these reflections with advantage, and to embrace, in their proper order, the several topics suggested by the duties of this day, we beg leave to propose the following method.

I. We will consider some of the essential requisites to acceptable fasting.

II. We will notice some of the most prominent of those evils, which, at the present time, call for fasting, humiliation, and prayer.

III. Those petitions to Almighty God, which the existing state of things most clearly indicates. Thou Father of lights, preserve us from all error and sin ; guide us into all truth ; and conduct us in all the ways of holiness even to thine heavenly kingdom.

I. We will consider some of the essential requisites to acceptable fasting.

Here, let it be premised, as a fundamental principle, that every species of hypocrisy is sinful. "Wo unto you hypocrites," was several times repeated by the blessed Redeemer. And of hypocrisy, we may notice two kinds ; the first, when, in the duties of religion, we trust in a mere, empty form ; the second, when the real object is corrupt, though the profession may be according to truth.

Inspiration declares, that "God is a spirit : and they that worship him, must worship in spirit and in truth." A mere form, then, can never be acceptable to Deity. He requireth truth in the inward parts, that our hearts and professions may not be at variance. If any should choose to call this self deception, rather than hypocrisy, I have no material objection. Let it, however, be remembered, that in all errors of a moral nature, the perverseness of the will has a principal share ; that men are not infidels for want of light, but for want of love ; and that if moral truth be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.

But if to deceive, is to destroy ourselves, (I speak of things pertaining to God ;) how aggravated their guilt, who assume the appearance of religion from sinister motives ! who would seem devout, only to deceive ! For this kind of hypocrisy the Jews were

distinguished. Blinded, yea, infatuated, by their criminal prejudices, they could find, even in their holy religion, authorities for the death of its Author, the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

One of their fasts is described in my text. "Behold ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness." God grant the present day may not be improved to the unhallowed purpose of strife and debate. God grant that our clergy may show themselves on the side of truth and righteousness, and not refuse that respect to the constituted authorities of our country, which Christ and his apostles rendered to tyrants and despots. May divine love inflame the hearts of the righteous, in all their approaches to their God, and deep repentance drown the eyes of sinners, "in undissembled wo."

We have noticed two kinds of hypocrisy, and have attempted to show, that both are odious in the sight of that God, who searcheth the heart. There are also two kinds of sincerity. The one I shall call the sincerity of fear, the other that of love. What I have called the sincerity of fear, was manifest in Ahab, and also in the Ninevites. It led to an external reformation in both, and on account of it, the Lord did not inflict the threatened calamities. And surely, there must be a great difference between the blasphemous wretch, who seems by his crimes to defy Omnipotence, and the trembling, fearful soul, who walks softly, through the apprehension of the divine displeasure.

Nevertheless, it is the sincerity of love, which enters into the very nature of goodness and piety. It is love, which must assimilate the soul to its God.

“ This is the grace that lives and sings,  
 “ When faith and hope shall cease ;  
 “ ’Tis this shall strike our joyful strings  
 “ In the sweet realms of bliss.”

The conclusion from the whole is very obvious, viz. That while the hypocrite receives his due reward, (and the wages of sin is death,) the sincere, the truly pious, shall find audience and acceptance with their God, and at last inherit eternal joys. And as “ the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God stronger than men,” we may rest assured, that, however skilful any may be, in improving the religious prejudices of a people, to the accomplishment of sinister purposes, “ he that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh ; the Lord shall have them in derision.”

II. We will notice some of the most prominent of those evils, which, at the present time, call for fasting, humiliation and prayer.

War, with its horrors, will now pass in review ; war, the scourge of the nations, and the destruction of multitudes of the human family. Survey the field of battle, visit the besieged city, follow the vanquished in their retreat ;—all, all is fitted to fill the mind with horror. The glittering of arms, the trumpet’s blast, the cannon’s roar, terrify the imagination and appal the heart. But it can be neither religious nor patriotic, to attempt to work upon the passions, and virtually to found a retreat before striking a blow. Let our awakened fear prostrate our souls at the footstool of the Almighty, but let not our faintheartedness sink us in despair : for war, though an evil, and a great evil, is by no means the greatest. For one, I deprecate a war as sincerely as any man : I am not insensible to its calamities, and most devout-

ly pray, that it may soon be our happy privilege, each to sit “under his vine, and under his fig-tree, and none make afraid.” But while I perceive an entire distinction between subjection, and independence; a base submission, and an honourable peace; between the joys of civil, rational liberty, and the unavailing groans of merciless slavery; I would erase from my mind every idea of suffering, gird on the armour of self defence, and invite my fellow citizens to unite all their energies in the vindication of their dearest rights.

An unjust war is, indeed, the worst of temporal evils. For in such a case, victory would be defeat, and triumph an overthrow. But who, possessed of candour and patriotism, will even pretend, that the present war is of this complexion?

It is also the dictate of prudence, to avoid even a just war, when there is no probability of success: but even then, a people accustomed to be free, will never resign their liberties without a struggle. But in the present contest, such an event, if we may judge from the common course of things, can never be possible. To perplex and distress, is all that a powerful foe can expect; unless, contrary to our fondest hopes, treason should raise her hideous aspect, and the tenfold calamities of civil war invite foreign invasion. Instead, therefore, of cherishing our fear, or sinking in despondency, we would rather contemplate, not the merely probable, but the certain advantages which must result, if the war be prosecuted with harmony, firmness and vigour.

The attitude we have taken is fitted to teach our enemies and the world—that we are not the eternal dupes of diplomatic cunning—that we respect



ourselves—and that we have not forgotten the legitimate principles of freedom and independence.

Before we dismiss this topic, let us bestow a moment's attention on two particulars in the Proclamation which has called us together this day. "Whereas," &c. "against the nation from which we descended, and which, for many generations, has been the bulwark of the religion we profess." I well recollect the hue and cry about religion, occasioned by the election of Mr. Jefferson to the presidency. Religion, said they, religion is in danger; infidelity will overspread the land; and your bibles, yes, your bibles, will be violently taken from you, and consigned to the flames. But, strange to tell, not a bible has been burnt; religion has flourished in an unusual manner; and more have suffered from the decision of *religious* judges, and the oppression of *religious* tax-gathers, than from any other source.

But why are the particulars above mentioned brought into view? Was it through accident, or by design? They cannot be without meaning; what then is their import? How are they to be understood? Are we to exalt the British nation, and despise our own? Must we compliment the British government, and charge our own with ingratitude? Is it the intention, indirectly, to invite us, to day, to bow the knee before an implacable foe, fondly call her mother, and beseech her to attend to our religious education? *She* might not be "unskilful" in teaching us the advantages of a "lordly episcopacy," the unalienable rights of an established clergy, and the blessedness of paying tithes to those who "lord it over God's heritage."

But to recur to matters of fact. Ask the fathers of Plymouth, whether Great-Britain has been, in-

deed, "for many generations, the bulwark of the religion we profess." Ask them the cause of their flight to Holland; their feelings when betrayed by an English captain, to whom they had entrusted themselves, their families, and their property. Listen to their tale of wo, when, having agreed with a Dutch captain to take them to Holland, a part of them embarked, while their wives and children were left to the mercy of their persecutors, and being held by the "strong arm" of the law, were dragged from tribunal to tribunal, till cruelty itself was fatiated with their sufferings. The truth is, our ancestors, disgusted with the corruptions of the national establishment, sought to erect a church according to the laws of their divine Master: hence they were called *puritans*. But being oppressed, in consequence, by the power of a "lordly episcopacy," they first sought a retreat in Holland, and afterwards in the wilds of America, and for no other reason, but to enjoy liberty of conscience. From their mode of church government, they were called independents, or congregationalists; and hence the whole congregational denomination. Since that time it is well known there has been no alteration in the established church, except it may have become a little more tolerant; and to this day, the dissenting interest, consisting of Independents, Baptists, and Methodists, must be considered as the chief nursery of piety even in Great-Britain.

Say then, weeping, mourning descendants of Britain, are ye dissatisfied with the independence of our churches; the equal, humble rights of our Clergy; and their dependence on the favour of the Great Shepherd, and the affection of his flock? Would ye wish a National establishment? a Clergy supported from the public chest? Bishops and Archbishops?

Lords temporal and spiritual; with a secular Head, and armed with secular authority? O thou offended Majesty of heaven! thou God of our persecuted forefathers! "deal not with us according to our sins, nor reward us according to our iniquities."

And as it is certain we are not indebted to the mother country on the score of religion, so it is equally certain, that every other obligation has been doubly canceled. Upon this subject, the original declaration of independence is a most valuable document. During the revolutionary war, her fleets and armies perpetrated every cruelty; and on board one of her prison ships it is said that above eleven thousand Americans perished. Ye murderers! tho' your crimes are blotted from the memory of your friends, they are not, they cannot be, blotted from the records of heaven; and the vengeance of the Almighty must overtake your guilty land.

Since the revolution, her general policy towards this country, together with her repeated and wanton aggressions, admit no comment. And is it not a remarkable circumstance, that in 1805, when she commenced the system of plunder she has since so invariably pursued, the voice of all parties was "loud and deep" in expressing their abhorrence; whereas now, though her aggressions have been repeated an hundred fold, some should publish to the world, that she has "done us no essential injury?" For one, I am not able to perceive whence it is, that the first step in the same series should provoke resentment, and the last conciliate affection; why in 1805 and 1806, the whole commercial interest should urge the constituted authorities to seek redress, but since that period, say in 1811 and 1812, men do not hesitate in proposing a resistance to those laws, whose

only object was to obtain redress, "peaceably if they can, forcibly if they must."

An evil of the first magnitude, an evil which embitters all the rest, and which is fitted to excite every emotion of regret and sorrow, now demands your attention. The demon of discord yet stalks at large. Party animosity, not confined to the fireside, nor to the circle of the few, but extending its baleful influence even to the councils of the nation, would paralyze the arm of government, and thus invite, nay, even provoke, contempt and invasion.

To this, undoubtedly, as a principal cause, we may ascribe the present embarrassed state of our country. But for this, Great-Britain had, long ere now, been ashamed of her machinations. No authorized Spy could have found access to the houses or to the hearts of our fellow-citizens. No attempts to divide the Union had marked our folly and our ingratitude. Our flag had now protected our commerce, and our mariners, and every gale wafted the riches of the world to our happy shores.

Fellow-Citizens! listen to the voice of experience, attend to the dictates of wisdom; and let the miseries of our folly operate its cure. Say to the world, *of many, we are one*. Let unity of sentiment, and unity of effort, now correct the mistakes which have gone abroad; convince your enemies that no arts can divide, no menaces awe, no power be able to subdue, the unconquerable souls of freemen.

III. As proposed, we notice those petitions to Almighty God, which the existing state of things most clearly indicates.

And here, my friends, let us with one heart look to the Lord, "and beseech him, through the merit of

his Son, that he would forgive our ingratitude, and the innumerable transgressions of which we have been guilty." For, verily, we are a guilty people. God "hath not dealt so with any nation." And it is worthy to be noticed, that the very source of prosperity has proved a source of embarrassment: the Lord thus manifesting his abhorrence of our avarice, extravagance, and ingratitude. And even now, with respect to the most important blessings, no nation possesses them in greater abundance than the people of these States. Nevertheless, the scene is reversed, compared with the days that are past; and many, though now too late, repent their folly in not improving the sunshine of prosperity, so as to shield themselves against a day of adversity.

It is not to be disguised, that men have sought and obtained riches, not so much to be useful, as with a view to self-exaltation, to pomp and parade. Many, also, have hazarded their all, and perhaps much more than their all, in ruinous speculations, and reduced themselves to a state of bankruptcy; while a few, it is hoped, have turned their wealth into its proper channel. And it is much to be lamented, that pride and extravagance and arrogance in prosperity, have been succeeded, in adversity, by murmuring, discontent, and enmity towards each other.

A long catalogue of provocations might be added; but enough has been said to evince the propriety of repairing to a throne of grace, that we may supplicate the pardoning mercy of our Judge, and beseech the blessings of his love, for ourselves and for our country. On this day, and while engaged in these duties, we would not be unmindful of the constituted authorities of our country. Devoutly therefore let us

pray to God, "that he would give wisdom, integrity and patriotism to our National and State Governments, that the leaders of the people may not cause them to err." In fact, every part of this petition deserves to be repeated in our daily devotions. For at all times, and especially at the present, the President of the Union, the Father of his country; our Senate and House of Representatives, the Guardians of our rights; the Governors and Legislative Bodies of the several States, whose influence upon the general welfare will ever be great;—all, all must need the aids of wisdom, the influence and support of the most unfulled integrity, and the animation, the zeal, the ardour of patriotism. These, in fine, constitute fitness for office, and without them, a man can hardly be called a good citizen. And of the nature of patriotism, we can only say,—it is a generous affection, not confined to self, to a town, or a state, but embracing the whole of our beloved country.

"That the leaders of the people may not cause them to err." A word in season. For what greater political error, than to distract the public mind, impede the progress of measures adopted for the general safety, and indirectly to attempt a combination against the national voice? Freedom of thought, freedom of speech, and the freedom of the press—these are among our most important privileges. But in proportion as these are glorious, in the same proportion their opposites are inglorious; viz. licentiousness of speech, or of the press, and licentiousness of conduct. Guard your minds, then, against the poison of indirect insinuations, while you keep them open to the convictions of truth; and watch with a jealous eye those inflammatory addresses, whether from men in or out of office, in

which assertion is substituted for proof, your own administration criminated as the authors of all you suffer, while the wanton aggressions of a foreign foe are palliated and excused. Are there not other leaders, also, whose influence is great in "causing the people to err?" In a letter from John Henry, the authorized British Spy, to his employers, dated at Burlington, Vermont, February 14, 1809, he remarks: "I have remained here two days in order fully to ascertain the progress of the arrangements heretofore made, *for organizing an efficient opposition to the general government,*" &c. Towards the close of the same letter, after expressing some uncertainty as to the extent of the prevalence of certain sentiments, such as *neutrality* and an *alliance* with *Great-Britain* in case of a war, he adds: "I can only say, with *certainly*, that the *leading men of the federal party act in concert*, and, therefore, infer, that a common sentiment pervades the whole body throughout New-England."

The place of Henry's head quarters is well known, as well as the places to which, in his progress thither, he paid his principal attention. Let there be also an inquiry with respect to certain societies, which are fostered with so much care by a particular party—Do they date their commencement in the State of Vermont? In their progress did they proceed, *pari passu*, with the influence of the spy? What is the object? and what the exclusive privileges? It is stated by him, who had access to the houses and hearts of certain leaders, that they *act in "concert."* This circumstance confirms the opinion entertained by many, and drawn from observation and experience, that unless a man can accurately pronounce his "shibboleth," and especially if he dare avow republican sentiments, a mark must be set upon him, patronage is denied, and he, if possible, render-

ed an object of scorn and contempt, by those who lay an exclusive claim to all the wealth, to all the talents, and all the respectability. This "*organizing an efficient opposition to the general government,*" this "*acting in concert,*" measures so congenial to the views of the mother of abominations, wears a very threatening aspect, and should arouse the friends of their country to a *virtuous "organization," a patriotic "concert,"* that when the "enemy shall come in as a flood," the spirit of liberty may "lift up a standard against him." I conclude this article by asking, Would Washington dissolve the bonds of our happy union? Does benevolence lead to all the horrors of a civil war?

Another petition is now to be brought into view. For the Government of Great-Britain, let us devoutly pray, that God, who controuls all hearts, would inspire them with "just and pacific sentiments," not only towards us, but towards the nations of the earth. The Proclamation, indeed, places the President and Congress on the same ground with the Government of Great-Britain. By this arrangement, however, whether unintentional or designed, we are not bound to be governed. We know of no instance of aggression on the part of our own Government, upon any rights of the British Nation. There is not a single point in the controversy with Britain, which our Government could have yielded, with honour to themselves, or with safety to their constituents. So far, therefore, from precipitating their country into an unnecessary war, their forbearance has been termed pusillanimity, and only served to invite further and repeated aggression. The people, and even the parliament of England, are by no means satisfied with the course adopted by their ministry. And it is a truth, tho' a mortifying



one, that many of the people of Great-Britain, and even members of parliament, hold our nation and our national government in a more honourable point of view, than many who have been bred and nourished in its bosom. But the object of the latter is easily perceived. From contempt of ourselves and government, the transition to hatred and abhorrence is extremely easy; and a government more congenial to the pride and ambition of the few, may take the place of our republican institutions.

But should the British ministry prove as deaf to the thunders of war, as they have been heretofore to the invitations of peace; if the spirit of justice and peace has utterly forsaken her counsels; let us earnestly beseech the God of power to crown our arms with success, to dismantle their fleets by his tempest, and lay their haughtiness in the dust.

The patriot soldier, the mariner, all, all who are exposed to danger through the ravages of war, for them, for their lives, for their welfare, let us unitedly cry to the Lord of Hosts. Yes, fellow-citizens, let your warmest benediction rest upon the heads of those who sacrifice their ease, their domestic delights, and perhaps their lives, in defence of their country. Let their memory be blessed. Embalm the departed hero in the warmest affection of your hearts, and never consider yourself discharged from the debt of gratitude, while a relative remains to receive the tokens of your esteem. And let us request His Excellency to join in the petition, that the war-worn soldier may never again be defrauded of his wages, to pamper the lusts of fordid speculation. "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon," that after a series of unparalleled toil and suffering in the service of their

country; after marching barefoot in the dead of winter, and marking their way upon the frozen ground with their own vital blood; and after their country, through them, under God, had triumphed over every foe: the soldiers of the revolution could obtain but one eighth part of their hard-earned wages, while the residue was shared by the flatterers of a despot, and the patrons of monarchy.

In looking towards our western frontier, we behold the savage again thirsting for blood. But whence is it? What injustice on our part has thus excited their rage? Have their lands been taken without their consent? Have treaties been violated? This is not even pretended. When did an American army set foot upon their soil, until summoned to the field by the war whoop? Why then this solicitude lest they should be exterminated, and these pious breathings that justice might be done them? Every christian must rejoice to behold the *savage wilderness* blossom as the rose. But surely, the echo of the war-whoop, the bloody tomahawk, the reeking scalping knife, the murdered victim, demand that kind of justice which is rendered at the point of the bayonet.

But to complete the tragedy;—after witnessing the murder of a wife, a child, perhaps an infant torn from the breast; follow the exulting savage to the agents of that nation you are called upon to respect, as the “bulwark” of your “religion;” see the scalps of your family bartered for gold; and say, can language portray the wickedness of such defenders of the faith? With such men the best arguments are from the cannon’s mouth: and until the horrid practice shall cease, let the arguments be repeated, until every polluted fortress is razed to its foundation.

We are called upon to day, to sympathize with the oppressed in Europe, "whose most essential rights are wrested from them by fraud and violence." To this duty we are impelled by every feeling of our hearts, by every dictate of our religion. But how shall we make a selection? What portion of Europe is free? Where are even the favoured few, who do not groan under the iron yoke? Blush at your depravity, degenerate sons of liberty. Hide your heads in confusion, ye enemies of our republican institutions. Compared with any part of Europe, our country is a paradise. Make the only atonement to your country in your power, by a speedy return to duty; and to the God of your fathers, by repenting in "sack, cloth and ashes."

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts shall not be forgotten in the duties of this day. This state stood foremost in those days that tried men's souls, and her metropolis was justly considered the cradle of independence. We could then boast of an Otis, a Warren, a Hancock, of the Adamses, and a Gerry, as stars of the first magnitude in our political hemisphere. Let the spirit of '75 be restored. Fellow-citizens, will you now be *neuters*? Can you consent to the degrading, the infamous proposition? During the revolution, men of this stamp, men whose baseness and treachery would lead them to cellars and other lurking places, were held as infamous characters; a mark was set upon them, their denomination was tories. Let us ask no exclusive favours; but, as we hope yet to enjoy the blessings of civil and religious liberty, let us manifest a laudable ambition to share in the expenses, the toils and the dangers of the present contest, that shame and confusion may not be our covering, when the trump of fame

shall announce to the world, that **America** has triumphed.

To conclude. May the blessings of civil and religious liberty be extended throughout the earth. May the period hasten, when "the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the faints of the Most High." AMEN.