

BY HIS EXCELLENCY

Richard Skinner,

CAPTAIN-GENERAL, GOVERNOR, AND COMMANDER IN CHIEF IN AND OVER THE STATE OF VERMONT,

A PROCLAMATION.

AS it is our privilege to rejoice in the mercy of God, and to celebrate with thanksgiving and praise his beneficence; so it is our duty to recognize his justice, in the afflictive dispensations of his providence; and to mourn under his judgments. By sacred history, and other infallible testimony, we are taught, that from an early period to the present, believers have either statedly, or occasionally; nationally or individually, set apart a portion of time, not otherwise sacred, for humiliation, fasting, and prayer; and that the solemn observance of such religious rite, is not only approved, but required, by Him, who hath graciously condescended to reveal to us his holy will; and who, when in a state of humiliation, having taken upon himself our nature, hath furnished the most signal examples of mortification of the flesh, and abstinence from worldly indulgence.

Divers are the causes for which fasting is enjoined, and the purposes for which it hath been observed. It is designed as a token of repentance for sin—as a confession of ill desert of favor—as a mode of supplicating mercy and forgiveness, the removal of divine judgments, the bestowment of necessary help:—as an acknowledgement of dependence upon God, resignation and submission to his will.

By long and uniform practice, the people of Vermont have unequivocally expressed their belief in the propriety of holding an annual fast. Therefore, in conformity to their views and desires, thus manifested; and at the request of the executive council, WEDNESDAY, the ELEVENTH day of APRIL next, is appointed as a day of FASTING throughout the state: and all classes of citizens, ministers and people, are requested to celebrate said day, by abstaining from the ordinary use of food; unnecessary labor and recreation; and by publicly assembling for religious devotion, humiliation, and prayer: and if our minds are deeply and suitably impressed with a belief of our obligation to observe this rite, and our hearts warmed with its important objects, it will indeed be “an acceptable day to the Lord.” On this occasion it becomes us to enquire, whether we have not personally, and collectively, reason to humble ourselves before Him, whose grace alone upholds our being; and who hath styled himself *a heart-searching and rein-trying God*. A recurrence to approved moral and religious maxims, as a test of our real worth, is altogether suitable in prosecuting the enquiry. If a gentle and forgiving temper hath not prevailed against a revengeful and relentless disposition; if we have not labored for peace, but have countenanced strife; if the blessing of vigorous health hath been employed as an instrument of depredation and violence; if enviable attainments in knowledge have been perverted to purposes of overreaching and deception; if our tongues have not been the true index of our hearts; if our lips have been contaminated with the words of insincerity; if prejudice hath been permitted to stifle the claims of justice; if private interest hath been preferred to public good; if, in the exercise of power, we have not aided the cause of humanity, benevolence and liberty, but have joined hands with the ministers of oppression, cruelty and slavery:—if our store-houses have been shut against the intreaties of the poor; if, of our earthly treasure, we have grudgingly administered to the support of His cause, whose are “*the cattle upon a thousand hills*.”—if, instead of feeling and manifesting dependence and unworthiness, we have possessed or exhibited an independent or self-sufficient spirit; if we have not realized our need of, and obligation for divine assistance, but have disregarded, or lightly esteemed, the hand that sustains, and the arm that protects us; if we have not experienced heart-felt submission, and cheerful resignation, under every providential dispensation, but have harbored in our breasts, impatience or repining; if we have sought more the favor of man than the favor of God; if our desires for holiness have been subordinate to our desires for the world; if humble repentance hath not subdued self-righteous confidence; if christian fortitude hath not withstood the infidel’s scoff; if the reproving whispers of conscience have been silenced by the din of sensual attendants; if the light of purifying faith hath not dispelled the gloomy mist of unbelief;—with penitence, let us, at the throne of mercy, implore forgiveness, and humbly pray for divine direction in the path of duty.

As our interests, whether temporal or spiritual, are controlled by the Supreme Disposer of all events; the vicissitudes with which they are attended, are to be noticed, as tokens of his approbation or censure. Although our secular concerns have hitherto generally been marked with prosperity, yet they are not wholly unstained with the spots of adversity. In the time of harvest we were cheered with the prospect of plenty; but the early commencement and extreme severity of winter, hath dampened our joy, and may justly be regarded as a reproof for our ingratitude, and a manifestation of divine displeasure. Many of our friends, with whom we have recently shared the joyous festival, now writhe on beds of sickness or sleep in death; and in proportion as the ensigns of divine wrath, disease, pain and death, are displayed amongst us, are the evidences of our abuse of favors increased. In applying our minds to that all important subject, in which is involved our everlasting welfare; few and feeble are the evidences exhibited, of ardent desires, and holy zeal, for the cause of Zion. The refreshing seasons of spiritual life, and heavenly joy, have been succeeded by cheerless days of careless indifference, and criminal apathy. The influences of the *still small voice* are resisted; the pathetic intreaties of *Gethsemane* and *Mount Calvary* are disregarded; and the warning thunders of *Sinai* are unheeded. With humble contrition, let us repair to our sacred temples, on the appointed day; and with unwavering faith in the atoning Mediator, unite in confessing our numerous transgressions, and in imploring forgiveness. Let us beseech the compassionate Saviour, who hath witnessed our infirmities, to shield us from the arrows of divine vengeance; and to remove the afflictive hand of justice. Let us pray that the labors of the husbandman, and every description of well directed industry may be encouraged and rewarded—that the calamities of war may be averted—that intestine dissensions may be allayed; and that the rights of all may be duly regarded. Let us pray for the prosperity of our literary, civil, and religious institutions—that from our schools, academies and colleges, may issue healthful streams of science and morality—that our legislature may pursue, with undeviating steps, the path of public good—that our courts, in which are deposited our property, our liberties and our lives, may administer justice with wisdom, integrity, and firmness—that ministers of the gospel, may, by distinguished intelligence, piety, and faithfulness, merit and receive, the respect and support, which their important station demands—that false teachers may be arrested in their course, and inclined to embrace the truth, as it is in Jesus—that the heaven-born desires of those who have labored, and generously aided, in forming and supporting associations, to extinguish error and delusion, may be fully accomplished—that immortal souls, now languishing in the shade of superstition and ignorance, may be invigorated by rays of revealed truth; and that all may know the Lord, “from the least to the greatest.”

GIVEN under my hand, at Manchester, this twenty-third day of February, in the year of our Lord Christ, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-one, and of the Independence of the United States, the forty-fifth.

RICHARD SKINNER.

BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR,

ROBERT TEMPLE, SECRETARY.