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THE STATESMAN AND THE MAN.

A DISCOURSE

ON OCCASION OF THE DEATH

OF

HON. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS,

DELIVERED IN WASHINGTON, FEB. 27, 1848,

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PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

WASHINGTON:

PRINTED BY J. AND G. S. GIDEON.

1848.

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DISCOURSE.

PSALM xxxvii, 37.

MARK THE PERFECT MAN, AND BEHOLD THE UPRIGHT; FOR THE
END OF THAT MAN IS PEACE.

THE week that has passed since we were last assembled here has been one so marked with signal memories and events, that it would be impossible to leave it without notice. It is seldom that religion connects itself so distinctly both with our own thought and experience, and with the striking incidents of our nation's life. It is seldom that the associations of a single day, or a single week, have in them so much that presses solemnly upon the mind, and exalts it with a serious yet composed and joyful faith. The season, always greeted with the glad and loyal welcome of every patriotic heart, as the commemoration of the birth of our country's greatest man, has been rendered doubly memorable now, by the announcement which has made the nation's heart return in part from its fever-dream of war to the purer hope and glad anticipation of peace, and by the quiet and gentle departure from life of the most venerable and distinguished of our public men. These three, brought together in

point of time by the good appointment of Providence, are closely connected, too, by a chain of moral association, which compels us to feel how fitly they belong together.

With devout, subdued, and serious thought, we meet to take counsel in the house of God, as may be fit, on an occasion like this, of mingled gratitude and solemnity. The final seal is set, by the hand of God, to the record which bears the name of him whose obsequies we have just observed, as the last survivor of that company whose counsels gave form and strength to the young Republic. Under the auspices and by commission of WASHINGTON, the young man began, more than half a century ago, his career of honorable public service. Within the week he has laid that commission down; and without a spot on his fair fame, leaving no one line recorded which, dying, he could wish to blot, the venerable patriot has passed away, and full of years and honors has been gathered to his fathers. Lovely and pleasant is the memory of their lives, and in death they are not divided.

I do not come here this day to flatter the dead. He needs no feeble words of praise from me. His praise is most fitly spoken in the hearts of a mighty nation that mourn for him; in the record of public and private acts, that shall last as long as the history of our land; in the remembrance of every true word he has spoken, and every noble deed he has done; in the substantial justice of the

world's approval, which gathers up each trait of integrity, public spirit, high-mindedness, and Christian fidelity, to adorn his memory now. Let these speak of him, now that he is gone. Let the unbought and willing testimony of those who have known him best be the memorial of the esteem so laboriously and honorably won. This is not the fit time or place, either for the recital of the great events in which he bore a part, or for passing judgment upon those qualities and acts which have been before the world's great tribunal for more or less of almost the whole period of our nation's life. In silent modesty we would stand before the awful presence of the dead. The marble scroll of history contains his best and only fitting eulogy.

Yet it cannot be that the spirit of such a man should pass away without the distinct and solemn record, for which this is the fit time and place, of the great and impressive lessons which his life is teaching us. We have followed him, with the watchful eye of personal interest and friendship, during the last years of his mortal pilgrimage. We have seen his venerable form, as he stood among us, reverent before God, upright and firm before men; and have joined with him as he shared the devotions of our Church. We fondly remember how, but a few weeks since, (till he felt his duty to be to worship in the spot which was his, as it were, by prescriptive right,) neither age and feebleness, nor storm and darkness, detained him from his accus-

tomed place on the Lord's day. And now that that spot is left vacant, and his long career is closed, we call to mind, with fresh interest, the touching circumstances of his departure. Like a soldier, he has fallen at his post. In the midst of duties active and laborious, even to a younger man, in the very moment of discharging his high legislative function, the hand of death was laid upon him. And as not a day of his life, for more than half a century, but was given in some way to the service of the Republic, so a merciful Providence permitted that on no spot but one bearing the name of the Father of his Country, and in no other apartment but in the Capitol of the American people, he should finally yield his breath. Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so watching.

In the solemn memories of the occasion there is not room for one sad or gloomy thought. The life of a good man is a precious legacy, which he leaves to his country and mankind. In the appointment of death as the bound and visible termination of life, mercifully ordered as it is, how rarely is it ordered with such exceeding gentleness—so fitted every way to raise our thought above the necessarily mournful aspect of its outward presence, to that world of eternal reality of which it is but the prelude and the veil. How rare it is, that every one's spontaneous feeling declares, that just so and no otherwise, to the smallest circumstance, was it fitting that the good man should be called away.

While he was here, we cherished and revered his presence, as a precious memorial of the past. Now that he is gone, and that the irresistible hand of God has been laid visibly upon him, as it were, before our very eyes, we feel that it was not a destroying, but only a sanctifying touch. We bow, as before the passing shadow of the Almighty; and, filled with a solemn yet grateful faith, we say, The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!

→ JOHN QUINCY ADAMS was born on the eleventh of July, 1767, eight years before the commencement of the American Revolution; and, while still a child, accompanied his father on a diplomatic mission to Europe. Returning so thoroughly instructed in the language and learning of other nations, that for a long time, as he said, he had to translate his thoughts from a foreign tongue before uttering them in his own, he passed through the customary grades of literary honor in his native Commonwealth; and, attracting the favorable notice of WASHINGTON, was already the Representative of the Nation at a foreign Court, before the age of twenty-seven. From that time to this, a period of fifty-four years, or two-thirds of his extended life, he passed through almost every grade of public honor. Through them all he carried the plain simplicity of a republican citizen, the stainless honor of a patriot, the incorruptible integrity of a Christian and a man. Having filled the high station of

Chief Magistrate of the Union, he returned, after a short respite, to public life, the watchful and jealous Guardian of what he held to be Right and Justice, as a Representative of the People. And here Death found him—a sentinel never off guard; a servant always ready for his Lord's coming; a man too severely true to desert a single point of duty; a Christian of too clear and lofty faith to be startled or dismayed at any thing Life or Death could bring. Such, in the fewest words, was the man whose recent departure we commemorate this day.

In looking back upon a public course so long, that he is already advanced in years who can remember its beginning, we are forced to feel how very imperfect justice, at best, can be done in the slight sketch which the present time allows. It is not the outward facts, of which history is but too profuse, and respecting which men's judgments vary, that we would notice now, but the inward meaning, the moral and spiritual reality, which lies behind, and forms the bond of connexion among them all. It is with the personality of the man that we have to deal; and with those secret principles of faith, truth, nobleness, justice, love, which the moral sense of mankind recognises. Respecting these there can be no diversity and no dispute.

Those who have known Mr. ADAMS, however slightly, must have felt how strongly he was imbued with all the *moral* characteristics of the New England Puritanic faith. A solid and impregnable for-

tress of religious principle was built, grounded on the very rock-foundation, the primitive formation (so to speak) of his soul, as a defence forever to the moral virtues which Christianity loves. Not more tenaciously did the Greek soldier cling to his country's liberty—not more obstinately did the early martyrs of Christianity keep in their heart the truth for which they gave their body to torture and flame—not more resolutely do men of Science at the present day, with unfaltering reliance on truths already disclosed, push their researches into regions of stupendous vastness and baffling perplexity, than did this true New England man hold fast the faith he had received. So strong and enduring is the influence of the method or the example the Pilgrims left. The form of opinion might change. Speculations and heresies might invade the intellect and find harbor there. Wide experience and mature reflection might overthrow the close wall of separation which fenced *them* round, and made them aliens from almost all the world. But that indomitable faith survived, none the feebler for its change of form. It held fast its own moral characteristics, of unshaken independence, of unwavering devotion to truth, of untainted loyalty to justice and right. I shall not stop to consider now what errors may have mingled with the assertion of that faith, whether in the Pilgrim founders of the Old Colony, or in their perhaps less intrepid sons. Still less is it my purpose here to undertake its eulogy or de-

fence. But such as it was, with its dogged persistency, with its quickly-kindled devotion to a great Idea, with its staunch loyalty on the whole to liberty and truth, that primitive faith in Christian Righteousness still remains. It runs in the blood, and shapes the discourse, and in some way controls the action of the best New England men. And of such was he. His slight frame and trembling hand—it seemed as if a child might turn him. But in the cold quiet eye, in the lip and voice, there were signs that assured you of a spirit that all the terrors of earth could not quail, nor all the ordinary seductions of earth move the smallest hair. Whatever else might pass away, you felt that the intrepid determination of his mind, like an Egyptian pyramid, would stand the same. As he moved among us, the moral of his life was like the wonderful battle-cry of Napoleon,—“From that pyramid forty centuries are looking down upon you!”

It was a part of the same obstinate and unyielding faith, that in all the duties of life, in every station, he maintained an exact, almost military precision, even to the smallest details of conduct. Even the habits of his domestic life were marked by strict and unvarying punctuality. At sunrise and sunset, while at home, he was ready on the watchtower of his favorite hill. On Sunday he was never absent from his wonted place, and never failed to be the preacher's courteous host. Of the innumerable persons he must have known in his extended inter-

course, of the immense correspondence he must have carried on, not an individual or a line seems to have been forgotten. Each was duly registered on the written tables of the brain, or in its own place in the well-ordered file. In its almost mechanic precision, his memory reminds one of those miracles of man's science and skill,—of the wonderful engine which presents, free from any possible error, complex columns of calculated mathematical tables, without stop or limit; or of the cathedral clock of Strasburg, which registers the close of every day, and year, and century, and has a wheel waiting to introduce a new series of figures, when the second millennium of the Christian era has elapsed. The amazing extent of his historical research, and accuracy of his knowledge, have become proverbial. I allude to them here, as another illustration of this fundamental quality of his mind; the same tenacity and determination being displayed in these, so closely associated with, and so distinctly characterizing his moral and religious principle.

It was in strict accordance with this, that his life contains one of the strongest admonitions and rebukes, any where recorded, of the indolent habit of mind, which makes the great multitude of men, in the stress of business, excuse themselves from any effort at the improvement of their intellect. Probably Mr. Adams never in his life uttered a direct sarcasm or rebuke upon the indolence of those whom he must constantly have met, and whose thrift-

less intellectual habits and utter neglect of culture he would have so thoroughly condemned and despised in himself. The only admonition he gave was his example. It is hardly necessary to allude to the many ways in which he vindicated the power of the mind to achieve its triumphs by toil, and successfully placed his name among those eminent in "the pursuit of knowledge under difficulties." Hardly any external difficulty is so great as the constant home-pressure of affairs; and in the face of it he accomplished prodigies of literary attainment, winning the reputation of having perhaps the largest range of thorough information of all men living. Owing to his imperfect knowledge of English, when, at the age of eighteen, he returned from the Continent, he did not secure the highest honors of the University, which he most richly merited; yet, a few years later, he was the brilliant and successful Lecturer, at that very University, upon the powers and delicate graces of the English tongue. Constantly urged by the press of a multiplicity of occupations, which might have wholly absorbed another man, he yet never discourteously neglected the duties of one in the midst of social life; while, in addition to all the rest, he preserved an accomplished scholarship in the learned tongues. And, while weighed down by the onerous duties of the highest public station, he was well known to be a constant student of the Scriptures, critically, for two hours of every day. The used key is always bright. The never-flagging,

always faithful and assiduous exercise of his intellectual power, kept it always in trim and fit for service, to his extreme old age. By a testimony as generally bestowed as it was honorably merited and received, the unanimous consent of our generation has accorded to him the title (which Milton, with the privilege of genius, has forever associated with the Attic Isocrates) of "the old man eloquent;"—a wreath of civic laurel, that to all future time shall make memorable our late friend and fellow-citizen, side by side with the statesman of ancient Greece.

But it would be an unworthy commemoration of this son of New England, in this Capital of the American Nation, not to add the far higher glory which his later years achieved. He has chosen to be remembered here, not as the President of the United States, but as the uncompromising Defender of human Liberty and human Right. This too was part of his stern, inflexible principle. It was no boyish enthusiasm with him. That, if it ever existed in him with great warmth and force, had been subdued, at least to a common observer's eye, by the long experience of life. Neither was it the contemplative and religious meditation on abstract principles, or sentiments of humanity, philanthropy, and the like, which make so many sincerely zealous in behalf of a great idea. It being my fortune, near six years ago, to form some personal acquaintance with the lamented Channing, about the time that I first knew Mr. Adams, I was very strongly im-

pressed with the contrast between the mild, contemplative, placid, hopeful faith of the retired Thinker, and the sombre and sorrowful, almost desponding view taken by the Statesman, who for half a century had constantly mingled in the busy affairs of men. In the words of the record made at the time, "He has taken the world on its blackest and roughest side, and for him there is no sentiment, no enthusiasm, almost no hope; but stern, grand, moral censorship." This is but the impression of an hour; by no means a true account of the spirit of the man; yet it sufficiently indicates a trait more apparent perhaps to a stranger, than to a familiar friend. His devotion to the cause of liberty and right, amounting sometimes almost to enthusiasm in its earnestness, had nothing in it of the mystic's dream, or the secluded man's unpracticality. It was downright, severe, uncompromising *principle*,—less fair and captivating, perhaps, to the imagination than a sentimental and refined philanthropy, but involving the very fibre of the sinewy texture of his mind.

When, seven years ago, he stood after an interval of two and thirty years before the Supreme Judicial Tribunal of the United States, to plead "on the behalf of thirty-six individuals, the life and liberty of every one of whom depended on the decision of the Court," he spoke in the name, not of the pleasing sentiment of an ideal humanity, but of JUSTICE, "the constant and perpetual Will to secure to every one HIS OWN right." His plea matches what he con-

siders a false "sympathy" against a real "right." He has "avoided a recurrence to those first principles of liberty which might well have been invoked," and entreats "that this Court would not decide, but on a due consideration of all the rights, both natural and social, of *every one* of those individuals." I have cited these expressions, less for the sake of the special instance,—though that was a noble illustration of his adherence to the inflexible principle of Justice, utterly irrespective of all distinctions of race, class, or condition,—than because they indicate a very prominent and distinguishing feature of his character. With the urbanity of the gentleman, the liberality of the scholar and man of science, the cordiality of a friend, the charity of a Christian, there was combined in him a truly Spartan firmness of resolve and inflexibility of will. His virtues were of the hard antique mould, though penetrated and suffused with delicacy of sentiment, and the spirit of a genuine Christian love. Let it never be omitted, as a fundamental element of his character, and a distinguishing feature of his position, that he was (within the legal and constitutional limits which he always held sacred) the steady invariable champion of man's liberty and right; and that, in vindicating these, he was often called to display as high order of moral courage, as can ever find play in the field of civilized polity.

A glance upon the positions now asserted and illustrated, as to the personal and public character

of Mr. ADAMS, will show that they were all branches from the same stock — offshoots from the same root—that root planted in the very earliest years of his life, and with all its fibres and ramifications interlacing the entire fabric of his intellectual and moral being. The germ of it all was the primitive puritanic New England faith,—divested in his case of many of the theological forms and opinions with which, in past ages, it was associated, yet at heart the same through all its outward change. With him, as it must always be, it was essentially a *religious* faith. Men's dispute about the forms, dogmas, technicalities of theology, is one of names. He, like every good man, was more solicitous about the thing. It was the alliance of the soul with God ; it was the dependence of the spiritual faculty of the man on the infinite source of absolute truth, love, and right. So religion always is at heart, whatever be the bitterness of men's controversy, or the diversity of their creed.

Mr. ADAMS was emphatically, and in the best sense, a religious man. His religion was one of trust, and hope, and principle. Nothing else would have made him so true to himself ; so faithful in the manifold relations of life he sustained ; so constant, cheerful, and unwavering in his anticipation of a future world ; so touchingly composed and resigned at the moment his mind was trembling on the verge of unconsciousness. His patient, self-collected spirit, his moral resolution, his habitual devotion to

truth, to goodness, to Almighty God, all marked him as a religious man. And surely, in the example of a life so long, so consistent, so honorable and useful throughout, and in a death so placid, as it were sinking away in the sweet unconscious slumber of a child, there is all a good man can wish for encouragement—all a Christian can ask as a confirmation to the faith of his fellow-men.

And now a few words in conclusion. It is but tracing the appropriate moral of the occasion which commemorates the life and the death of two such men, to ask, What is the great want of our American people, at this day and hour? It is, examples like theirs, of Christian Manhood. It is, a generation of men like them, unswerving in principle, unflinching in trial, unbent by idle relaxation, unflinching to meet the responsibility which the issues of the time are forcing upon them. We cannot, especially in view of such a life and death as theirs, separate the religion of the Man from the religion of the State. It is needed by both alike. It is one and the same thing to both alike. The Man cannot dwell in honor, security, and peace, without it. The State cannot so much as be kept in being—cannot be saved from disaster, wreck, and dissolution, by any thing short of it. Politicians cannot save the State. Sentimentalists cannot save it. Impracticable Theorists cannot save it. Each, under Providence, may do some little share; but

no one is enough, not all together are enough, without the lofty, earnest, religious spirit which should animate the Statesman and the Man. The work is to be done in real life, in a nation's life; and it can only be done by a thoroughly true-hearted man. God grant us the gift of more such men! Such is the appeal which comes irresistibly from every earnest mind, echoed back from the moral consciousness of all who are alive to the peril and the responsibility of the time. It is not arrogance or bigotry that dictates words like these. They are the utterance of the fervent hope, long deferred, which good men cherish, of the true glory and destiny of our land. They are the too sorrowful confession, going up now from almost every heart, responded to, in various tone, of sorrow or rebuke, from almost every public press. What does all this sad confession mean? Does it mean that one or another business interest of the country will suffer harm? Does it mean that any party or section of our citizens is in league with foes, and in disguised hostility to our own land? Does it mean that one or another section or party would draw the sword and kindle the torch of civil strife, and would look on, cold-blooded, to see the domestic misery of the rest? Is it any such partial, such unnatural form of evil that lies at the bottom of the general complaint and fear? Oh no! It is the confession, wrung from the conscience of our people, of its own moral want—deeply felt, though ill understood. It

is the confession of our need of Christian Manhood, —of a truer nationality,—of a public character, moulded by and resting on the broad, universal ideas of truth, of justice, of humanity, of God. That is what we want. Not any partial, half-way, superficial reform in politics or in society will save us; but the creating of a spirit so wide, so deep, so vast, so high, that it shall take in every measure of healthy, earnest Reform, as its natural and inevitable result. Differences of opinion there will be; but let there be unity of faith at heart. Diversities of operations there will be; but it should be the same God that worketh all in all. To use the noble expression of the Apostle Paul, what we want is nothing more nor less than the measure of the stature of A PERFECT MAN.

This is the one fundamental want of our country and our age. And how shall this want be met? *A moral want is never supplied but from a religious source.* Religion must be restored to its rightful place in the empire of the heart and the life. Religion must exercise its sway over our people. The nationality we want, the only one of any true glory or advantage, is a religious nationality. Great Christian Ideas lie at the foundation of our Commonwealth. Let these be held sincerely, and embodied in our public faith. A nation, to thrive and grow and be strong, must be bound together by religious ties, and founded in some way on religious ideas. Religion, true or false, has been found in

every age and in every shape. Among the Pagan tribes of Palestine, it was the grim superstition which worshipped brazen idols, and made sacrifice of children in fire and blood to Moloch, god of War. With the Greek, it was the religion of a sectional and narrow Patriotism, fierce, jealous, and vindictive; or else of Art, speedily enervating and corrupt. In Rome, it was the worship of the impersonated State, united with boundless lust of conquest. In Carthage, it was the worship of a god of Gain. Bloody, profitless, and horrible have been the superstitions that have usurped Religion's place. But the religion of this people must be different from any or all of those. Our faith, so far as we have a faith, is in a God who is perfect Wisdom and perfect Love. The glorious ideas that lie at the foundation of our State, the American ideas, declared in our Declaration, established in our Constitution, are the Christian ideas of Liberty and Human Right. I will not affront your understanding by any defence of these. They are your own profession, the corner-stone of your political and religious fabric. The State will stand or fall with them.

I do not claim, like a sectarian or bigot, that any one source or edict must give outward shape to our opinions, or our mode of worship. I do not say that the Puritan Church, or the New England idea, must be at the foundation of our national fabric. But, whatever our faith be, it must *be a*

faith, and it must be one including those great American ideas. Whatever else it may include or exclude, it must comprise those. They are our creed. They are the embodiment of our political faith, where it harmonizes and coincides with our religious faith. Here, at least, these are and should be, one and the same. Bound together, uplifted, strengthened by faith in God, in Liberty, and Right, there is no such thing as failure or defeat for us. Without it, we are what our Republic may perhaps seem to the eyes of the envious world, — torn, distracted, anarchical, weak.

As Christians and as men, let us reflect sometimes on the coincidence between our political and our religious faith. Especially let us consider this momentous question: How is such a faith, in any practical, vital, efficient form, to take root and grow? This can only be from the sincere, earnest, absolute devotion to it of us, individually, as men. Think by it: speak by it: act by it. The harmony we need, in our counsels and in our action, will come of itself, so only the faith has a being first. Here, again, is our great need of earnest, resolute, Christian Manhood,—which can dare to stand alone,—which can say, as a noble man said, who took refuge among us from tyranny abroad: “Sir, I cannot stay to argue the reasons now, but I have such faith in it that I am willing, now, or at any time, to lay down my life for it.” Why should it be that the battle-fields of Mexico are displaying instan-

ces of heroic self-devotion to wounds and death, in defence of other men, or in vindication of the country's supposed honor, and that the more glorious triumphs of peace and Christian polity should not have power also to call out the same unwavering and self-sacrificing devotion to Justice, Humanity, and Truth?

For every example of integrity, of moral fidelity, of religious trust, let us thank God, and take courage. Our chief cause of gratitude to Him this day is, that he has so long permitted a Man to dwell among us. Another cause of thankfulness, in the memory of the week that has removed him from us, is, that a century and more ago He raised up another Man, on the shore of this broad river, to be the herald and the champion of our country's emancipation. For these two Men let us render to-day our devout acknowledgment. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace.

How honorable is the willing and spontaneous testimony which has just gone up from the heart of this people, as it did near half a century ago, to the reality and the power of such public virtue. "Thank God," (is the warm and honest expression of one of our public papers a day or two since,) "Thank God, we are not all stocks and stones." No; we are living men, with hearts formed to love and revere the right—men who must honor true nobleness in every form—men who cannot help but pay

homage to the high and resolute spirit of a Christian Statesman. The virtue of such a man is not a name, or an empty dream, but a recorded fact. "The end of that man is peace!" Peace to the memory of the illustrious dead! Peace, the new-born hope of which was the old man's last salutation upon earth! Peace, the joy of the nations, the prayer of humanity, the benediction of angels, the promise of God, the herald of Christ's kingdom among men! Happy the man whose last conscious thought was occupied with the country's return to peace and amity—whose last broken words told the serene composure of his soul! Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them!





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