

# DISCOURSE,

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ON THE

## ANNIVERSARY FAST.

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BY HUMPHRY MOORE,

MINISTER OF THE CHURCH IN MILFORD.

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Know ye not your own selves? — ST. PAUL.

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# FAST SERMON.

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ST. MARK, *iii.* 24.

*IF A KINGDOM BE DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF, THAT  
KINGDOM CANNOT STAND.*

**T**O trace the *rise and progress* of republics and empires is instructive and interesting. It is instructive, because it may be learned by what means individuals have been united and holden together ; and by what means they increased their interest, power and respectability. The craft or wisdom of some, and the stupidity of others ; the honest intention of a few, and the injustice of many may be discovered. It is interesting, because from the errors of other nations, it may be known how to avoid them ; and from their wise policy, it may be known how to turn it to the best account. It is less pleasing to follow nations in their decline to their fall, and see the end of human greatness ; to trace effects to causes, and learn what is the destruction of nations ; but the disagreeable task is not without useful information.

To remove a disease, it is necessary to know its nature. To know its nature, it is often necessary to know its cause. To know how to unite dissenting parts, it is important to know the causes of disunion. In every nation there is more or less of division. But under no government is there so little restraint upon aspiring ambition, and so great power of raising internal commotion, as under a republican one. It is with governments as it is with other things. The best are often perverted to the worst purposes.

Ignorance of part of the people is one occasion of different opinions, different pursuits, and contentious divisions in a nation. There is but a small proportion of people, who are sufficiently acquainted with the principles of governments to judge accurately of their comparative merits. There is but a small proportion of people, who are so well acquainted with the principles of their own government, that they know when they are observed and when they are disregarded. Some of this large proportion suppose the principles of their government are violated when they are not. Others suppose they are not violated when they are. These people are too unlearned to know half of their ignorance. They talk much about subjects, concerning which they have heard others talk. They say the same things, which *they* say, or they say directly the opposite. When they speak upon affairs of state, they often use words without sense.

They display zeal without knowledge. When amendments of an established constitution of government are to be made by a nation, a majority of which is of this description, it is dangerous to amend.

People, whose minds are not considerably enlightened by knowledge, are often dissatisfied with their present condition; and they would shake a whole nation, if by chance the convulsion might better their private circumstances. They are fond of novelty; and change is their governing principle. Ignorance is too foolish to be consistent with itself. It is divided; and it occasions division. Its subjects advocate one side or the other, as accident will have it. When they have inlisted on one side, they are generally too blind to see, too hardened to feel, and too stubborn to be converted. They are proof against argument; and they treat knowledge as a dangerous thing. They make more noise and disturbance than all the wise and good men of a nation can quell. They feel wiser than their rulers. They would fain make one change more, and take *their* place.

The art of subtile and designing men is another cause of national division and discord. There are men in every nation of a haughty and ambitious spirit, who are impatient under restraint; who wish to possess elevated stations for the honor of them; to avoid the control of others, and to make them subservient to their own views and

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designs. They do not inquire whether those measures are adopted, which are best calculated for the interest of the nation. But their inquiry is, whether there cannot be an overturn, that they may turn uppermost. A few such men, if they possess distinguished talents and acquirements, can turn a nation upside down. They can sound an alarm at any time. They can rally the people around them, enquiring, what is the matter? They tell them that there is wrong management at the head of the state, or at the head of the nation. The credulous people are glad to believe it; and if they can only have leaders, they will do any thing.

There is not room on only one side to employ all of an aspiring genius. They of course make as many sides as the case will bear. If one cannot succeed on one side, he will change ground, and try another. They are not content to go alone. By their subtle influence they drag numbers after them. By this mean people become divided in sentiment and in practice. They cherish a bitter, envious and malignant disposition toward each other. In electing officers for government, they appear in many instances not to strive so much for wise and good men, as they do to try the strength of parties. The majority triumph over those, who have been less intriguing and successful than themselves. This fans the fire of party spirit; and keeps alive that spark, which was

blown from the infernal regions to this our world with unhappy success. Elections to office have almost ceased to be an honor. They have almost ceased to be a mark of distinguished merit. They are only a mark of the side, to which the elected belong.

The greatness of the number of foreigners in our country, is another occasion of the division, which disturbs our nation. Those, who were brought up in a distant land, under governments different from our own, and whose customs and sentiments are peculiar to the places, in which they were educated, are ill calculated to strengthen our union. Emigrations from foreign nations to this country will probably consist of those, whose crimes rendered it unsafe for them to continue in their own land; and of those, whose ambition has been disappointed at home and wish for promotion in a young country. The respect, which our countrymen have for things far fetched, will easily lead them to imbibe the sentiments, and adopt the customs of their new neighbors. Their influence, without any great struggle, will prevail; division will take place; opposition will increase, till the pure seed of American principles is choked and overgrown by thorns of foreign growth. Our country has suffered much from this source; and it is threatened with still greater sufferings. Our country is the best soil on earth for the raising of free men; and the importation

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of subjects only pollutes the land, on which they are reared. To prefer strangers to our own kindred ; to prefer foreigners to the men nourished on the bosom of the only free country in the world is unnatural, is abominable. It is too degrading for a people who boast of their equality, liberty, and distinction. To love our neighbor as well as ourselves is all that is required. We ought not to love him better.

The local situation of people is an occasion of difference of political sentiment, and of division in a nation. In a widely extended territory the natural advantages are considerably different. One part of a country may be most favorable to commerce ; another part to agriculture. One part may be best calculated for the production of one article ; another part for the production of other articles. The greater the country is, the greater is this difference, and greater will be the variety of interests. There will of course, be a difference of political opinion, a difference of schemes, and a difference of pursuits. If political opinions are many, they are generally reduced to two classes. The smaller, to gain strength, annex themselves to the larger, whose views and designs are most similar to their own. The object of each part is to strengthen itself ; and it does not hesitate to injure its opponent to promote its own cause.

The whole extent of territory, which is under one government, is subject to the same general

laws. The same laws will not favor equally a nation, whose employments and natural advantages are different. We expect to see each part of a country using its influence to promote its own interest. We expect to see parties in a nation divided almost by lines. We are not surprised when we see them selfish. Satan is so consistent with himself that he endeavors to promote the advancement of his dark regions. What would be our surprise, if we should see the prince of darkness opposing his own cause and interest ; and if we should see men imitating the absurdity of the infernal prince. and opposing their own individual and general interest ! It is easy to account for that difference of political sentiment, which arises from natural causes. But when there is difference without a cause, philosophy herself pauses ; and stands astonished and ashamed.

It is less difficult to discover the effects arising from a difference of political opinion, than it is to discover all its causes. It is more agreeable to discuss the subject, rising theoretically to its nature, than it is to descend and follow it experimentally in its various and devious windings.

Difference of opinion and action upon the subject of government is productive of innumerable evils. That social and friendly intercourse, which people have enjoyed, is interrupted. Those

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friendly expressions of words and countenance, which were before met, are turned to silence and sullenness of looks, or to fiery and abusive language. If they be too wise or too cowardly to make an open attack, their tongues are busy in retailing the bitterest and blackest defamation. Social harmony is disturbed ; and kind offices give place to mutual jealousy and injury. But, as people make this trouble for themselves, it is unreasonable for them to complain. It would better become them to be content and enjoy it.

Division and opposition upon political subjects occasion division and opposition upon subjects, in which people were before united. On these subjects they oppose, not because they think differently ; but they oppose for the pleasure of opposition, and to frustrate the designs of those they hate. Their disturbed minds never feel better than when they occasion unhappiness in others. Contentions of this kind often prevent industry ; and it is not unfrequent that they occasion large expense. By this mean private prosperity is retarded, and public interest is endangered. When a spark of domestic contention is struck, there is fuel enough to preserve the fire ; and there are not a few, who stand ready to blow the flame, till they destroy themselves ; or till they so weaken their bonds of union, that a foreign nation, taking advantage of their divided power, compassionately takes them under her

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own direction ; or more compassionately dooms them to destruction, as not worthy of national rights and privileges. Read the history of nations, and you find that when they have divided their strength, they either fall a prey to intestine commotions, or they are destroyed by a foreign power.

It affords no benefit to trace evils to their source, and retrace them in their different courses, unless by a knowledge of the nature of evils, it be learned how to avoid them. By seeing the causes of national division, it is discovered what causes will produce national unity.

General information has a tendency to unite the individuals of a nation. Knowledge enlarges the mind and extends its views. A people well informed despise those little, niggardly plans, which ignorant men would readily adopt. They would not calculate for a year only. They would calculate for many years. They would calculate and prepare for war as well as for peace. They would calculate for the future growth, strength and safety of the nation ; and they would not censure their rulers, if *they* did the same.

If people were enlightened by a considerable degree of knowledge, they would not need to depend on the hearsay of artful men. They would not confine their attention to the informa-

tion of one part ; but they would attend to both. They would then see deeper into subjects. They would probably see more alike, when they view subjects through the light of knowledge, than when they view them through the thick darkness of ignorance. They would be better able to discover what is their interest ; and they probably would more unitedly pursue it. They would then know what advantages and what disadvantages were peculiar to the different parts of a country ; and they might better agree what allowances ought to be made. General knowledge is essential to civil liberty ; and it tends to harmonize and cement the individuals of a nation.

Prescriptions may be given for national unity ; but unless people believe and practise the christian religion, the prescriptions of men are vain. Unless they imbibe and cherish the pure principles of christianity, they will be selfish. This principle will divide a nation according to individual or party interest. They will maintain their opposition so long as they are actuated by this principle. If people adopt the rule given to men by Jesus Christ, they will not monopolize all the advantage themselves. They are willing that their fellow creatures should share it with them. They are not so narrow spirited that they would endeavour to promote one part of a nation to the injury of the other part ; but they are willing to

allow that liberty to others, which they enjoy themselves; and they would not infringe upon that equality, which the God of nature gave them at their birth. If they feel the power of religion operating in their hearts, they will exercise some charity and tenderness toward those, whose object is the same with their own, but who differ in opinion respecting the means of obtaining the object. If they use christian moderation, instead of enlarging the breach by harsh and irritating language, they would use means to close it. They would consult general good as well as private interest. This principle is the only sure bond of national union. Other principles will fail; but this will endure till time shall be no more.

By a unity of sentiment, of power, and of operation, a nation increases in property, in the arts and sciences, in respectability; and it enjoys the precious fruits of its united exertions.

Look back to those ancient nations, who were most distinguished for extent of empire, wealth and refinement. You see them, at first, few in number, collected by mutual consent, and bound together by their own laws. By adherence to their constitution, by unity of sentiment and unity of interest, they increased rapidly in numbers, and in power. They all aspired at one object, which was the national interest. As if they all were actuated by one soul, they agreed in sen-

ment, and coincided in operation. While this spirit remained with them, they grew powerful. They stood immovable. But, at length, they became corrupt in their morals. They became a sickly mass. The spirit of unity departed from them; and like Sampson, whose locks were shorn while he was upon the lap of sensuality, they fell a prey to their own imprudence and to surrounding enemies.

Observe the modern nations of Europe. Those, who stood united, remained unmoved, while that quarter of the world was shaken to its centre. Where are those happy republics, which once defied the power of kings and slaves, and triumphed over the madness of their enemies? We look for them; but we look in vain. The places, which once knew them, know them no more. The lean kine of all devouring despotism have eaten up these well favored republics; and they are lean and hungry still. We admire that spirit of unity, which raised them to eminence; but we are touched with the emotions of pity and indignation at the expulsion of that spirit; and we almost execrate the hand, which spared them but to see their own destruction.

Why do we go to remote ages of antiquity? Why do we cross the Atlantic? Our own country is our subject. A spirit of unity and religion bound together our ancestors, who crossed the

boisterous deep, and began to cultivate a new world. The same spirit abode with them and prompted them to noble actions, till they threw off the yoke, to which they never would be broken, and redeemed their birth right. They drove back the savage heathen. They cultivated the soil. They bequeathed us a goodly land and liberty. They sealed their last will and testament with their blood. When they left the world (if the expression may be allowed) they cast back their mantles upon their offspring; and we may suppose they prayed that a double portion of their spirit might rest upon them. But, good God, the mantle is rent! The spirit is gone! and we, unworthy of our parentage, like rich, ungrateful heirs, quarrel about the legacy! Do we not by our ingratitude trouble the slumbering remains of our fathers? The tombs, the monuments of our patriots, who fell martyrs in the cause of our country and freedom, reproach us for our degeneracy. Could their souls look down from the world of spirits upon this tumultuous country, would they not cry, halt! Destruction is but a step before you! O, ungrateful sons, we left you all your hearts could desire. We gave it to you by will and by deed. But ye have forgotten our toils and sufferings. Ye have forgotten your interest. Ye have forgotten yourselves. By repentance and tears invite back that spirit of unity and peace, which ye have expelled from your

country. Cherish it and keep it. Retrieve your characters by retracing your steps. Cultivate religion; so that, at the last convulsion of expiring nature, when all other republics shall be in the grave and see corruption, your republic may be changed in the twinkling of an eye to the more perfect government of the kingdom of heaven.