

**A SERMON, PREACHED  
AT THE ANNUAL  
ELECTION, MAY 25, 1831**

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A Sermon, Preached at the Annual Election, May 25, 1831 by Leonard Withington

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**LEONARD WITHINGTON**

**A SERMON, PREACHED  
AT THE ANNUAL  
ELECTION, MAY 25, 1831**



**SERMON,**

PREACHED AT THE

**ANNUAL ELECTION,**

MAY 25, 1831,

BEFORE

**HIS EXCELLENCY LEVI LINCOLN,**

GOVERNOR,

**HIS HONOR THOMAS L. WINTHROP,**

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR,

THE HONORABLE COUNCIL,

AND

THE LEGISLATURE OF MASSACHUSETTS.

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BY LEONARD WITHINGTON.

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**Boston :**

DUTTON AND WENTWORTH, PRINTERS TO THE STATE

1831.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

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IN SENATE, MAY 26, 1831.

*Ordered*, That Messrs. WEBB and MERRILL, be a Committee to wait on the Rev. LEONARD WASHINGTON, and present him the thanks of the Senate for his discourse yesterday delivered before the Government of the Commonwealth, and to request a copy thereof for the press.

ATTEST,

CHARLES CALHOUN, Clerk.

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*N. B. Several paragraphs in the following discourse were omitted on delivery, for want of time.*



## DISCOURSE.

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TITUS II. 15, LATTER CLAUSE.

LET NO MAN DESPISE THEE.

IN preparing a discourse for this anniversary, I have been at a loss on what subject to address you. The duties and dangers of a political life might seem at first view to be most appropriate; but these have often been discussed;—and I do not feel as if I could afford much light to the subject. The tribute to the memory of our fathers has been duly paid. Our free institutions have been commented on and praised, until in theory at least, they ought to be understood and appreciated. Besides, I have felt it was somewhat hazardous for me, a speculative man, coming from the shade, to attempt to instruct those, who were legislators by profession, and have long been engaged in the school of real life. I remembered the story of



Hannibal and his rhetorician ; and I was anxious to select some theme which I understood. I hope, I shall not be considered as forgetting the objects of this day, when I inform you,—that I come to speak in defence *of the clergy of our land*. They are constituent members of the State. They have their rights and duties like other men. Their motives have, I fear, sometimes been misunderstood. If religion has a connexion with government, and if the characters of those who administer the sacred functions have a connexion with religion, then my subject is not wholly foreign to the purposes of this day. Fathers of our land, legislators, I solicit your patience, while I speak of those, who bring down the sanctions of Heaven to earth, in order to support your laws.

One objection, however, meets me on the outset. It may be thought that I am pleading my own cause—that, being myself of this profession, I am too deeply interested to speak with impartiality and truth. It may be so. I know the weakness of human nature. I know the blinding power of self-love. St. Paul himself, when he is vindicating himself to the Corinthians, repeatedly throws in the parenthesis—I speak as a fool—intimating, I suppose, that no man can talk much of himself without speaking as a fool. If this is to be my un-

fortunate lot ; if I have chosen this respectable assembly to be only as a theatre to rise in and display my folly,—I beseech you to remember that egotism is always weak. Cast your eyes on the infirmities of human nature. Remember your own. And after all who should defend a profession, except those who belong to it. They have felt its injuries. They have watched its progress. They best know its cares and labors ; its perplexities and encouragements ; its sorrows and its joys.

Is it best, that there should be such a profession as a Christian Ministry ? This question can be answered only by asking another. Is the religion of Jesus Christ from Heaven or of men ? If the religion of our fathers was false, why then its ministers are a set of useless impostors, which the sooner we remove the better it is for our land. But I have thought, that no class of men have so much reason to believe in religion as our statesmen ; for there is no one science, that leads so directly to its sanctions as that of legislation. A most convincing proof of the truth of revelation might be drawn from a view of society. It is far better than the material world. The material world only shews the existence of God with some of his general attributes, such as his wisdom and power ; but the political world is an *actual* specimen of the

operation of his laws. What is the Bible but the unfolding of a great government, shewing the necessity of laws to the welfare of the universe,—acting on the hopes and fears of men by punishments and rewards,—seating the great law-giver on his throne ; and pointing us to that final court of justice where we must all be tried ? Religion is but an extension of that very science in which every statesman is engaged. It is the *perfection* of those principles which you are debating in your halls of legislation and courts of justice every day. The only difference is, God refines on these principles and applies them to the heart. In this science you may pick up a thousand illustrations and a thousand proofs to support the truths of revelation. The gospel is based on the depravity of man. It is a remedial system to lead him from his fallen state to immortal glory. And who has more proofs of the depravity of man than the statesman ? Who should feel more the need of this refining power ? In settling the question of human depravity or informing a right conception of how that depravity operates, I would give more for the observation of some experienced statesman, like Sir Robert Walpole, than for the theories of all the metaphysicians that ever wrote. Politicians, too, more than any other men, have felt the ne-