

**346 BC**

**THE ORATION ON PEACE**

**Demosthenes**

**translated by Thomas Leland, D.D.**

**Notes and Introduction by Thomas Leland, D.D.**

**Demosthenes (383-322 BC) - Athenian statesman and the most famous of Greek orators. He was leader of a patriotic party opposing Philip of Macedon.**

**The Oration on the Peace (346 BC) - One of the orations spoken to the Amphictyonic Council after Demosthenes had won his way within the circle of the Greek states and the issue against Philip was no longer between Greece and Macedonia but between the Greek and Macedonian parties in Greece.**

## INTRODUCTION

### To the Oration on the Peace

THE Athenians sent those succors to Olynthus which were recommended in the preceding oration (The Third Olynthiac Oration). But they could not defend that state against its domestic enemies; for, the year following, two of its citizens, Lasthenes and Euthycrates, betrayed the city to Philip. He razed it, threw part of the inhabitants in chains, sold another part, and distinguished the two traitors only by the cruelty of their death. His two brothers, who had been harbored in Olynthus, he also sacrificed to his jealousy and revenge.

These events, no less than the repeated instances of Demosthenes, prevailed on the Athenians to declare war against Philip in form. Hitherto he had kept some measures with them, and had sought various pretences for glossing over his hostilities; but now he fell with the utmost fury on all their tributary states, and obliged Demosthenes to appear once more in the assembly, to persuade the Athenians to defend the islanders and their colonies which lay on the Hellespont. But scarcely had the war been declared, when the vigor of their enemy, and their own fickleness and indolence, made them weary of it. Ctesiphon and Phrynon were sent to sound Philip's dispositions towards a separate peace. This was as he could wish. The Phocian War was at present the object of his views; and his arts had just regained the Thessalians over to the confederacy, who had been prevailed on to stand neutral. To the Athenian ministers, therefore, he made such professions, that Demosthenes and nine others were sent to negotiate the peace; who proceeded as far as they were authorized, and returned with Antipater, Parmenio, and Eurylochus, on the part of Philip. Ambassadors were sent soon after from Athens, with full powers to conclude the treaty. In the first of these embassies Demosthenes had met with some Athenian prisoners in Macedon, whom he promised to redeem at his own expense, and took this opportunity to perform it; while his colleagues, in the mean time, were to proceed with all expedition, in order to conclude with Philip. Three months elapsed, however, before they came to an audience with the king, who was all this time making himself master of those places in Thrace which the Athenians claimed as their right. At last the terms of the treaty were agreed to; but by affected delays, and by corrupting the ambassadors, he found means to defer the execution of it until he had advanced his troops into Thessaly, in order to proceed against the Phocians. He then conducted the peace; and, on their return, the ambassadors who had conducted the treaty (and Aeschines in particular) expatiated on his candor and sincerity. They declared at the very time when he was giving Thebes the most solemn assurances that he would exterminate the Phocians, that his sole views were to screen this people from the fury of their enemies, and to control the insolence of the Thebans. They also vouched for his performing several things in favor of the state, not formally stipulated in the treaty. Thus were the Athenians amused, and Philip suffered to pass the straits of Thermopylae, and to pursue his march into Phocis.

His reputation and approach struck such a terror into the Phocians, that, although they received a reinforcement of a thousand Spartans, they yet sent to treat, or rather to submit. He allowed Phalecus, with eight thousand mercenaries, to retire into Peloponnesus; but the rest, who were inhabitants of Phocis, were left at his mercy. The disposal of these he referred to the Amphictyons, from an affected regard to the authority of an assembly composed of the representatives of the states of Greece. They thundered out the severest decrees against this wretched people. Among other things, it was enacted that they should lose their seat in the Amphictyonic council, and that the double

voice which they had enjoyed in it should be transferred to Philip, who, by the same resolution, gained the superintendency of the Pythian games, which the Corinthians forfeited by taking part with the Phocians.

The Athenians had not been present at Philip's election into this council; and probably, to avoid all opposition, he had assembled only such Amphictyons as were devoted to his interest. He thought it proper however, to send circular letters to the absent states, inviting them to assemble at Delphos, and to ratify his election.

Athens, among others, received the invitation; and as Philip's ambitious designs could be no longer concealed, many were for violent measures. The proposal raised a ferment in the assembly, which seems to have breathed nothing but indignation and opposition. On this occasion Demosthenes thought it his duty to moderate their heat; and in the following oration endeavors to prevent their being betrayed into any rash and imprudent measures.

THE ORATION ON THE PEACE Pronounced in the Archonship of Archias, three years after the Olynthiac Orations \*(1)

ATHENIANS! I see that this debate must be attended with many difficulties and great commotion; not only because many of our interests are already given up; and therefore unnecessary to be now laid before you; but because it is impossible to agree on such expedients as may secure what yet remain: but that a variety of clashing opinions must divide the assembly. Then, to advise is naturally a difficult and distressing part. But you, Athenians, have rendered it yet more distressing: for all other people naturally seek counsel while affairs are yet depending: you deliberate when the event hath made it too late. Hence hath it happened, through the whole course of my observation, that the man who arraigns your conduct is heard with esteem, and his sentiments approved; yet have your affairs ever miscarried, and the objects of your deliberation have all been lost. But, although this be too true, still I am persuaded (and from this persuasion I arose to speak) that if you will put an end to tumult and opposition, and grant me that attention which becomes those who are consulting for their country, and on so important an occasion, I have some points to urge, some measures to propose, which may serve our present interests, and repair our past miscarriages.

Sensible as I am, Athenians, that to expatiate on those counsels one hath formerly given, and to speak of one's self, is the most successful artifice of those who dare to practise such artifice; yet to me it is so odious, so detestable, that, although I see it necessary, yet I loathe it. However, it will assist your judgment, I presume, on this occasion, if you recall to mind something of what I formerly have mentioned. You may remember, that during the disorders of Euboea, when certain persons persuaded you to assist Plutarchus, \*(2) and to undertake an inglorious and expensive war, I was the first, the only one who rose up to oppose it, and scarcely escaped their fury, who for a trifling gain were urging you to many highly pernicious measures. In a little time, when the load of infamy had fallen on you, and that you had suffered such treatment as no people ever received from those they had assisted, you were all made sensible of the iniquity of your seducers, and the justness and integrity of my counsels. Again, when I saw Neoptolemus the player, \*(3) in that full security which his profession gave him, involving the state in the greatest distress, and, in all his public conduct, devoted to Philip, I appeared, and warned you of the danger; and this from no secret motive, no private enmity, \*(4) no officious baseness, as the event itself discovered. But it is not the defenders of Neoptolemus that I accuse (for he was not depending on a single one), but you yourselves; for had you been spectators in the theatre, not engaged in affairs of the highest and most intimate concernment to the public, you could not have heard him with more indulgence, nor me with more resentment. And now you all know, that he who

then went over to the enemy, pretending to collect some debts, that he might bring them hither, as he said, to enable him to serve the state; that he who was perpetually inveighing against the cruelty of accusing a man for thus transferring his effects from that country hither; the moment that a peace freed him from all apprehensions converted that estate \*(5) into money, which he acquired here, and brought it off with him to Philip.

These two instances which I have produced show with what fidelity and truth I spoke on those occasions. I shall mention one, and but one more, and then proceed to the point now to be debated. When we had received the solemn ratification of the treaty, and that the embassy returned home; when certain persons assured you that Thespia and Plataea were to be repeopled; \*(6) that if Philip became master of the Phocians, he would spare them; that Thebes was to submit to his regulation; \*(7) that Oropus was to be ours \*(8) that Euboea should be given up \*(9) to us, as an equivalent for Amphipolis; with other such insidious promises, which, in spite of interest, of justice, and of honor, drove you to abandon Phocis; I never attempted to deceive you; I was not silent: no; you must remember I declared that I knew of none, that I expected none of these things; but thought that whoever mentioned them could scarcely be serious.

And these instances of my superior foresight I do by no means ascribe to any extraordinary penetration: I speak it not from boasting or arrogance: nor do I pretend to any superiority but what arises from these two causes. The first is fortune; which I find more powerful than all the policy and wisdom of man: the other, that perfect disinterestedness with which my judgments are ever formed: so that no man can hold out any advantage to my view to influence my public conduct.

Hence it is, that on all occasions of debate your true interest strikes my eye directly. But when a bribe is, as it were, cast into one scale, it then preponderates, and forces down the judgment with it: so that it is not possible that a person thus influenced can ever offer good and salutary counsel.

And now to give my sentiments on the present occasion. Whether subsidies, or alliances, or whatever schemes are concerting for the public good, one point must be secured- the continuance of the present peace. Not that it is so very excellent, or so worthy of you: but, of what kind soever it may be, it were more for the interest of your affairs that it had never been concluded, than that now, when it is concluded, you should infringe it: for we have suffered ourselves to be deprived of many advantages which would have given our arms much more security and strength.

In the next place, we must be careful not to drive those to extremities who are now assembled, and call themselves the council of Amphictyons; nor to afford them a pretence for a general war against us. Were we again engaged with Philip for Amphipolis, or any such private matter of dispute, in which neither Thessalians, nor Argians, nor Thebans were concerned, in my opinion none of these would join against us; and least of all- let me be heard out without interruption the Thebans: not that they wish well to us, or would not willingly recommend themselves to Philip; but they are perfectly sensible (however mean their understandings may be thought) that, were they to engage in a war with you, the evils would all fall on them; \*(10) the advantages others would lie ready to intercept.

They would therefore never be betrayed into such a quarrel unless the cause were general. In like manner, another war with the Thebans for Oropus, or any such private cause, could not, I think, distress us: for there are those who would join either with us or them, to repel an invasion; but, in offensive measures, would concur with neither. This is the true nature, the very spirit of alliances. There are none so much attached to us or Thebes, as to desire that we should maintain our own power, and triumph over our

competitor. To be secure, they would all wish us for their own sakes; but that either of us should reduce the other to subjection, and so be enabled to give law to them, not one would bear.

Where then lies the danger? What are you to guard against? That general pretence for uniting against us which the war now in agitation may afford the states.

For if the Argians, \*(11) and the Messenians, and the Megalopolitans, and such other of the Peloponnesians as are in the same interest, should make it a cause of quarrel, that we have sought a treaty with the Lacedaemonians, and seem to have favored their designs; \*(12) if the Thebans, incensed as they are said to be at present, should become yet more incensed at our harboring their exiles, \*(13) and taking every occasion of declaring ourselves implacably averse to them; if the Thessalians should resent our reception of the fugitive Phocians; and Philip our opposing his admission into the council of Amphictyons; I fear that, to revenge these private quarrels, they may use the authority of this council to give sanction to a general war against us; and, in the violence of resentment, forget even their own interest, as it happened in the Phocian War. You are not ignorant that the Thebans and Philip, and the Thessalians, although they had by no means the same views, have yet all concurred in the same scheme of conduct. The Thebans, for instance, were not able to hinder Philip from passing, and becoming master of Thermopylae, nor from coming in, after all their toils, and depriving them of the glory (for, as to possessions, \*(14) and the acquisition of territories, the Thebans have succeeded happily; but, in point of honor and reputation, they have suffered most shamefully). If Philip did not pass they were to expect nothing: it was highly disagreeable to them; yet for the sake of Orchomenus and Coronea, \*(15) which they greatly desired, but were not able to take, they chose to endure all this. And yet there are persons who dare to assert that Philip did not surrender these cities to the Thebans freely, but was compelled. Away with such pretences! I am satisfied that this was equally his concern with the gaining the straits, the glory of the war, the honor of deciding it, and the direction of the Pythian games; and these were the greatest objects of his most earnest wishes. As to the Thessalians, they neither desired to see the Thebans aggrandized, nor Philip (for in their power they saw danger to themselves); but two things they greatly desired- a seat in the council \*(16) of Amphictyons, and the wealth of Delphos; and thence were they induced to join the confederacy. Thus you may observe that private interest oftentimes engages men in measures quite opposite to their inclinations; and therefore it is your part to proceed with the utmost caution.

What, then! saith someone, shall these apprehensions make us yield to his demands? is this your motion? Not at all! I only mean to show you how you may maintain your dignity, avoid a war, and approve your moderation and justice to the world. As to those violent men who think we should brave all dangers, nor foresee the difficulties attending on arms, I wish them to consider this. We allow the Thebans to possess Oropus: were we asked the motive, we should answer, To avoid a war. In like manner, by the present treaty, we yield Amphipolis to Philip; we suffer the Cardians to be distinguished \*(17) from the other inhabitants of the Chersonesus; the King of Caria \*(18) to possess Chios, and Cos, and Rhodes; and the Byzantines \*(19) to cruise for prizes; and this because we think that peace and tranquillity will produce more advantages than violence and contests about these points. And if thus directed in our conduct towards each particular state, and where our interest is highly and intimately concerned, it would be perfect weakness and absurdity to provoke the resentment of them all for a shadow. \*(20)

## NOTES

### To the Oration on the Peace

\*(1) Libanius and Photius have taken pains to prove that the oration to which we refer above ought not to be ascribed to Demosthenes. We might well enough defend ourselves by alleging, that it has been generally esteemed his, and, as such, has constantly maintained its place in his works. This would be sufficient for our purpose; but, in truth, the arguments on which the opposite sentiment is built are so easily overturned, that we might be justly blamed for neglecting so favorable an occasion of setting this point in a true light. Demosthenes, say those who will not allow this oration to be his, charged Aeschines with betraying his country, on account of his recommending warmly a peace with Philip; they cannot therefore think that Demosthenes would run openly into those measures which he had so lately and so warmly decried; or that he, who on every other occasion singly opposed Philip, and ran all hazards to bring him into odium with the people, should now be single on the other side, and attempt to cross the disposition of the Athenians, in favor of peace and Philip. These objectors forget that Demosthenes was a patriot as well as an orator; that he did not pursue Philip with implacable hatred because he was king of Macedon, but because he thought him both willing and able to obstruct the designs of Athens, and even to reduce her, from that splendid pre-eminence which she now held in Greece, to the ordinary rank of a state, in name free, but in truth dependent on him: this was the motive of Demosthenes's heat on other occasions; and the motive of his coolness now was the strict alliance between Philip and the other Grecian states, which rendered it a thing impracticable for Athens to contend with him and them alone. Besides, as he rightly observes in the harangue, it would have been ridiculous for those who refused to enter into an equal war for rich cities and fertile provinces, to have rushed suddenly into a most unequal contest about an empty title, or as he emphatically expresses it, "To take away the shadow of Delphos from him who was master of Delphos itself." We therefore acknowledge this to be the oration of Demosthenes, because he was worthy of it. It is scarcely worth while to take notice of a small mistake in this remark. Libanius does not deny that Demosthenes was the author of this oration. He allows it to have been written by him, but is of opinion that he never ventured to pronounce it. \*(2) Philip had long regarded Euboea as very proper, by its situation, to favor the designs he meditated against Greece. He therefore took pains to form a party in the island, and fomented divisions and factions in the several states of which it was composed. Plutarch, the governor of Eretria, one of the principal cities of Euboea, applied to the Athenians for assistance against some attempts of Philip, and obtained it; but afterward (having probably been gained over to Philip's party) he took up arms against the very auxiliaries he had invited. But this perfidy did not disconcert Phocion, who commanded them. He gained a victory over the Macedonians, and drove Plutarch out of Eretria. Phocion was afterward recalled, and Molossus, his successor in this war, was defeated and taken prisoner by Philip. \*(3) This Neoptolemus was also a great tragic poet, though the orator only mentions the less honorable distinction. Not that the profession of a player was held in disesteem in Greece. Players were the favorites of princes, and were raised to the highest employments in the state. This very man was nominated, the year before, one of the ten ambassadors that were to conclude the peace with Philip. \*(4) Probably this is a repetition of the very words of Neoptolemus's party. \*(5) The text has it, ousian phaneran. The Athenians distinguished two sorts of goods or estates- apparent, by which they understood lands; and non-apparent, that is, money, slaves, movables, etc. \*(6) Thespia had been razed by the Thebans under Epaminondas. Plataea had been

twice destroyed by them; once, when Archidamus, king of Sparta, obliged the Plataeans to surrender at discretion, in the fifth year of the Peloponnesian War.

The Thebans, who were then joined with Lacedaemon, insisted that they should be exterminated. The treaty of Antalcidas restored them; but this did not last long; for, three years before the battle of Leuctra, the Thebans reduced them to their former wretched state, because they refused to join with them against the Lacedaemonians. \*(7) In the Greek it is *dioikein*, *administraturum*. Philip made use of this soft expression, to persuade the Athenians that he would reduce the Thebans to reason, and put it out of their power to undertake any act of outrage or injustice; and, at the same time, to avoid alarming the Thebans or alienating them from his party.

Wolfius thinks that *dioikein* is put for *dioikizein*, and translates it *dissipaturum* that he would exterminate the Thebans. \*(8) This city had been taken from the Athenians, the third year of the one hundred and third Olympiad, by Themision, the tyrant of Eretria, and afterward put into the hands of the Thebans. Their mutual pretensions to this city had oftentimes embroiled these two states. \*(9) For he had by this time gained a great authority in that island, and stationed his garrisons in most of its cities. \*(10) Sparta only waited for this rupture to assert its power once more: and from Philip's former conduct, it appeared very plainly that he knew how to avail himself of such a quarrel. \*(11) When the Spartan power was broken by Thebes, these people, who had been dependent on Sparta, asserted their freedom. This occasioned some contests, which still subsisted, and in which the Spartans were favored by Athens. \*(12) The designs of the Lacedaemonians, of reducing these people to their former subjection. Tournel translates *ekdechethsai*- to approve. Suidas renders it stronger, to forward, to promote: *ekdechethsai*, significat aliquid ab altero accipere, quod ipse deinde tractandum suscipias. Wolfius applies *ekeinois* to the Argians, etc., and translates the passage thus- *propter acta quaedam sua impedita*. -

\*(13) Many of the cities of Boeotia favored the Phocians in the sacred war.

But when this war was ended, and the Thebans became masters of these cities, they treated the inhabitants with great cruelty, and obliged them to take shelter at Athens. \*(14) All Phocis was given up to them immediately after the war. \*(15) The Phocians had taken these two cities from them the year before. \*(16) Of which they had been deprived by the Phocians making themselves masters of Delphos, where this council assembled. \*(17) This is explained in the introduction to the Oration on the State of the Chersonesus. \*(18) Mausolus, king of that country, had assisted these islanders against Athens in the Social War; and when, at the conclusion of this war, the Athenians were obliged to declare them free and independent, their ally made himself master of them. On the death of Mausolus, his wife Artemisia maintained his dominion in these new conquered islands. She survived her husband but two years, and was succeeded by her brother Hidrieas, who reigned in Caria at the time that this oration was pronounced. \*(19) These people had also revolted from the Athenians, and joined with the islanders in the Social War: how far, or on what pretence, they were suffered to commit those outrages on the seas, does not appear. -

\*(20) In the Greek, *Peri tes en Delphois skias*- for a shadow in Delphos: that is, for an empty title of Amphictyon, or of a protector of the temple of Delphos.

## **THE END OF THE ORATION ON THE PEACE**