

AN  
ORATION

PRONOUNCED AT FRANKLIN

ON THE

FOURTH OF JULY, 1803.

THE

ANNIVERSARY

OF THE

INDEPENDENCE

OF THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

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By GAIUS CONANT.

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PRINTED AT PROVIDENCE,  
By NATHANIEL HEATON, JUN.

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FRANKLIN, July 4th, 1803.

AT a Meeting of a Number of the Inhabitants of the Town  
of Franklin, *voted*, to choose a Committee, to wait on Mr.  
GAIUS CONANT, and thank him for his patriotic  
ORATION, delivered this day, and request of him a  
Copy for the Prefs.

WILLARD BOYD, *Clerk.* Mr. LEWIS FISHER,  
Dr. NATHANIEL MILLER } *Comm.*  
Capt. JAMES METCALF, }

FRANKLIN, July 4th, 1803.

GENTLEMEN,

THE late hour of the day, in which application was made  
to me as an Orator, I hope, will be admitted, as some a-  
pology for the imperfection of this hasty production: such  
as it is, with diffidence, I submit it to your disposal.

GENTLEMEN, I am, with respect,

your obliged and very

humble Servant

G. CONANT.

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AN  
O R A T I O N.

**W**HY this concourse, this parade, these festival preparations? Why was the morning dawn hailed by the roaring of cannon? Why sounds the trump of Jubilee from Maine to Georgia, from the Atlantic to the Mississippi? Why is this house, dedicated to ALMIGHTY GOD, this day, filled with all classes of citizens? Why appear the militia, the bulwark of the nation, in the habiliments of war? Why sparkles the eye of beauty with more than usual lustre? Why sits the placid smile on the visage of our fathers? These questions, naturally, arise in the breasts of the gazing youth, and demand an answer; an answer cannot be too often repeated: It is the birth-day of our nation, our sovereignty, and independence. Twenty-seven years have elapsed, since we were pinioned with the manacles of slavery; since the fractional surplusage of our hard earned property was snatched from our coffers and lavished on the proud sons of *Albion*. On that ever memorable

day, the fourth of July, seventeen hundred and seventy-six, the worthies of America, in Congress assembled, threw off the yoke of tyranny, spurned at the impositions of a corrupt court, and declared these States free, sovereign and independent. This is the occasion, this the reason of the present festive appearance; and well may we rejoice. It becomes us as men, as citizens, as christians, to recognize with joyous emotions, the happy effects, which have been produced by a separation from Britain. It would be ingratitude to him who wields the sceptre of Empires; it would be deprecating the merit of the fathers of our country; it would be injustice to ourselves; it would be the most stupid insensibility to pass this day unnoticed. Let this day ever be unto you a memorial. Never let the political sun pass the zenith of the fourth of July, without an oblation, at the shrine of liberty.

On similar occasions, it has been the practice to launch forth into invectives, against that government, by which we were once subjugated; to detail the numerous acts of injustice, fraud and oppression, which were practised on the loyal subjects of King George, in America; to enumerate the various causes that brought on the revolution, and recount the dangers, fatigues and hardships, with

which we had to struggle to free ourselves from bondage: These things have been too often rehearsed, too deeply imprinted on your memories, to need a repetition. Suffice it to say, we have gained our independence. But, my fellow citizens, are we to sit down here, secure, heedless and unconcerned? Are we assured that our privileges will never be infringed? that a blow will never be aimed at our liberties? that our independence will never feel a wound? Are our sea coasts sufficiently fortified against invasion? Is there nothing to be apprehended from the belligerous powers of Europe, that have footing on this continent? Is there not a Lion at our head, that would feed sweetly on our carcase, could he make us a prey? Is there not a serpent at our feet that begins to charm and would intwine us in its hundred folds? Are there not powerful enemies within, as well as without, who are secretly aiming to undermine the constitution? who preach the doctrine of levelism, and would destroy those distinctions in society, which have a foundation in nature? But, do not imagine, that it is an object at this time, to alarm your fears, to interrupt your feelings on this joyous occasion, by creating unnecessary suspicions. This is a time for cool deliberation. We may reflect, we may consider, we may anticipate. It is

wisdom to be in our watch-towers, while the surrounding elements are in commotion. It is prudence to observe the movement of the enemy, to guard every avenue, by which our liberties are accessible.

The page of history unfolds to us the several causes which have led to the rise and fall of empires, and affords an instructive lesson to the present generation: We are to imitate their virtues, and shun their vices; we are to follow those examples, which have been conducive to their happiness, prosperity and renown, and avoid those rocks on which they have split.

The great Engine, which has proved so destructive to nations of antient and modern date, is a spirit of Innovation, a theme to which your attention is called for a moment.

Attended by her hand-maid, deception, the genius of Innovation walks forth in disguise; she assumes an hundred different names and forms; and while her avowed profession is to build up, her secret aim and intention is to demolish. There is no age, nation, cline, sex or profession, but what has felt more or less of her pernicious influence. To where liberty holds an abode, she often resorts under the specious name of reform. Pride, ambition and avarice, allure many to her standard. At one time, under the title of omnipotent Reason, she rides

forth shouting *liberty* and *equality*, all distinctions are to be levelled, all law, religion, morality and order, are to be sacrificed at her imperious will: At another, with more than pedantic air, she pleads the rights of women. *She*, whom nature and revelation have destined to move in the humbler walks of life, is to lead forth armies to battle, sit in council and direct the affairs of state.

Ever pregnant with revolution, and subversive of all law, order and government, the genius of Innovation has been walking up and down the earth for these six thousand years, seeking whom she may devour. After affecting her nefarious design in the garden of Eden, we pass over her intricate windings, and train of evils, till she takes her abode in Greece. Sparta, one of the most powerful and wealthy of the Grecian states, for five hundred years, enjoyed the most perfect liberty: But as soon as the doors were thrown open to the genius of Innovation, the citizens became restless, the wise and wholesome laws of Lycurgus were violated, their oaths, which had been administered with so much solemnity at the temple of Delphos, were profaned, and *Lacædemonian* liberty was exchanged for *Macedonian* slavery.

Rome, for many centuries, was the seat of liberty, the nursery of the arts and sciences, the school

of statesmen, warriors and philosophers, the centre of commerce, yea, the Empress of the world; but *she*, "whose force and policy, no power could withstand, not that of Greece nor Carthage," at length, yielded to the all devouring jaws of Innovation. Having extended her conquests into Persia, an influx of foreigners and eastern luxuries immediately succeeded, her industrious habits gave way to idleness, her morals, to debauchery and revelings, her laws fell into contempt, and Roman liberty, which had become a proverb, was extinguished by the bloody reign of the *Cæsars*.

Long did the genius of Innovation, under the mild reign of Louis Sixteenth, lurk in the philosophic cells and Jacobinic clubs of France. Voltaire and D' Alembert, at an early period, declared an attachment to her cause and enlisted under her banner. Those were soon joined by her professed friends and humble followers, Turgot, Condorcet and Tom Paine. Aided by the united exertions of philosophy and infidelity, she laid her plots as deep, as they were black and nefarious. The infernal design being ripe for execution, the genius of Innovation, the arch-fiend of democracy steps forth from her dusky retreat, trumpeting the rights of man. Here opens the flood-gates of Gallic blood, the dogs of civil war are let loose, and



the Guillotine moves to the song of liberty and equality. Havoc, murder, rapine and conflagration follow in dreadful succession. No marriage covenant, no religion, no God, is huzzaed from the impious mouths of the Grand Council of state. Revolution succeeds revolution, till *Frenchmen* have to cower beneath the more than kingly sceptre of the renowned *Corfican*.

Having visited the ancient republic of Venice, and brought her to comport with Gallic policy, the genius of Innovation, next, hovers over the craggy mountains of Switzerland; "The torches of modern philosophy and the firebrands of revolutionary fanaticism" are artfully disseminated among the "rustic retreats" of the *Helvetic Union*, the once happy abodes of order, industry and morals. The honest yeomanry, unaccustomed to the arts of war, police and dissimulation, soon experienced the fraternal hug, and fell a prey to the intrigues of her perfidious neighbour. "The Satellites of the Directory, in a few days, demolished the work of centuries."

Passing over Holland, which experienced much the same fate, we enter upon England. *England*, fostered in the lap of pleasure, triumphant on the seas, courted by the most potent monarchies on earth, with a constant flood of wealth wafting to

her shores, now, departs from her accustomed habits and established modes of government, and pursues measures as despicable as they proved destructive and humiliating. Her inordinate desires and ambitious views were not equalled by the influx of wealth which was constantly pouring into her treasuries. The genius of Innovation, ever active in her office, whispers into the ear of Parliament, taxation, *taxation on America*, and encrease your funds. The infection takes, tea and stamp Acts, immediately follow. Armies and navies are despatched to enforce what the hand of injustice had imposed. America arises indignant, asserts her rights, repels aggression, whets the sword of Justice, and severs the unnatural tie by which we were linked to Britain. With the loss of her American Colonies, a hundred thousand lives, a million of money, and disgraced in the eye of the world, England retires to brood over her misfortunes.

If such has been the fate of European nations from a spirit of Innovation, has America nothing to apprehend? Are the waters of the Atlantic a sufficient barrier against the contagion? Is there wisdom and virtue enough in the people, to bid defiance to the grand enemy of mankind? If, in abiding by the established customs and religion of our ancestors, by a close adherence to the Consti-

tution, the United States have been raised, by one administration, from the most abject circumstances to the pinnacle of prosperity and renown; Are we assured that our future rulers will be influenced by the same virtuous sentiments?

Fellow Citizens! be on your guard, a serpent lurks in the Elysian Fields, in the Eden of America. The golden age is past, the sun of Federalism is set, the genius of Innovation approaches. The era of democracy commences, the visionary theories of philosophic madness are embraced, and religion and government totter on their base. "The warning voice of experience" yields to the "inventive faculties of genius," "firmness" gives way to "fancy, discretion to discovery, and demonstrated right to ingenious novelty." The charter of our liberties is arrested from the affectionate bosom of its friends, and cast at the feet of the destroying angel. A deadly blow is aimed at the Constitution, by a massacre of the Judiciary. The doors of honor and confidence are set open to the fugitives of Europe flying from the justice of their own country. That merit, and those talents, which, during the reign of Federalism, would have recommended a man to public favors and honors, will now expose him to executive jealousy and persecution. Those demagogues, those retailers of pub-

lic scandal, those calumniators of American worthies, those blasphemers, those sons of debauchery and infidelity, who now share the presidential confidence and patronage, dared not, under what they styled the reign of terror, even lift up their heads; Well may they denominate it a reign of terror, "a terror to evil doers!" The bewitching charms and fascinating influence of the genius of Innovation rests on the Grand Council of the nation, the cause of democracy is to be cherished, with closed doors, the moderate sum of two million secret service money is slipt into the pocket of the Inventor of dry docks.

But, Fellow Citizens, the description is too painful to pursue. It is time to awake from sleep to rekindle the dormant sparks and stifled fire of Federalism, and blow it into a flame.

Methinks, this day, I see the departed spirits of the IMMORTAL WASHINGTON and of those patriots that fell in defending their Country, bending from the skies, calling aloud to the injured sons of freedom, and rallying them to oppose the innovating spirit of the day.

