

AN
ORATION,

DELIVERED AT

ATTLEBOROUGH EAST PARISH,

ON MONDAY JULY 5, 1802.

AT THE

ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF
AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

By Rev. Nathan Holman.

WRENTHAM, (Mass.)
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1802



A N
O R A T I O N.

FELLOW CITIZENS,

WITH diffidence I rise to address you on a subject so important and interesting as that of our National Freedom and Independence. Patriotic hearts, wise heads and able pens have often been employed on the subject; and though they have pleased the ear, warmed the heart and excited the admiration of their fellow-men, yet their most lively descriptions have been faint when compared with the happiness and importance of our Country, the objects described. I am fully sensible that my feeble efforts will fall vastly below the dignity of the subject, and far short of the performances of much abler men. Yet I feel support from confidence in your candor; from a desire, so far as my time and abilities will permit, to gratify your wishes, and from the nature of the subject, which is always pleasing to patriotic minds.

Our Country, in the view of every unprejudiced, enlightened mind, stands on the pinnacle of individual and national advantage and happiness. We

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are a world by ourselves. No nation can invade us without crossing the wide Atlantic or still wider Pacific. The mighty Ocean, while it forms us many safe and convenient harbours, and affords the best opportunity for the most advantageous and increasing commerce with all the nations of the world, at the same time forms a strong and almost insurmountable barrier against the rage of every nation that *may* commence our enemy. Had it not been for this, in all probability, we, who are free and enlightened Americans, should to this day, and perhaps forever, been bound fast in the iron fetters of British ignorance and tyranny. Our local situation will afford us national safety so long as we remain one people.

We breathe the pure air of the temperate Zone. We are equally distant from the burning sands of the Equator and freezing winds of the Poles. While some of our fellow-creatures burn, every day in the year, under the perpendicular rays of the Sun, and others burrow, two thirds of the year, under ground, to secure them from intolerable frosts, we enjoy a pleasing variety of seasons.

We have a vast extent of territory and rich variety of soils. Our land is not divided into lordships and tenements; but every man, with a small share of industry and economy, may become lord of the soil on which he treads, and secure to himself every degree

degree of rational independence. This, I apprehend, is the only way to make men, in general, true patriots. Nothing will inspire them with love to their country like having some part of it which they feel to be their own. He who knows he must be a slave for life will care but little what master, or in what country, he serves. While many of our fellow-men are kept in ignorance and obliged to cringe under the lash of a cruel master, we enjoy all the means of information and call no man on earth master.

Our laws, founded in wisdom and executed with integrity, secure to us the perfect rights of free-men. They are made by ourselves and executed by men of our own choosing. They encourage every virtue and secure every right which can be enjoyed in a state of society. They protect our lives, property and all our dearest rights, while they deprive us of nothing but our vices.

While most of our fellow-men are at the disposal of a merciless Tyrant, we have no rulers but such as are amenable to the laws of the land, and must, at the will, of the people, become subjects to the laws of their own enacting.

We enjoy the pure religion of heaven unmolested. Tho' the constitution requires all to acknowledge and worship God, yet it leaves every one to worship him agreeably to the dictates of his own conscience.

science. While a large majority of the inhabitants of this world sit in heathenish darkness, or walk after Mahometan delusion, we enjoy the clear light of divine Truth to guide us to the realms of eternal day.

With these advantages, under the propitious smiles of heaven, our Country rises in wealth and power beyond a precedent. Since the termination of the war, which raised us to Freedom and Independence, vast improvements have been made in arts and manufactures. Great attention is paid to the education of youth, and useful knowledge disseminated upon the most liberal plan. He who grows up, in our land, without an education, must be willingly ignorant. Our population has increased with a celerity which exceeds calculation. Our settlements have spread far and wide into the wilderness. Solitary deserts are turned into fruitful fields. Flourishing cities are now built where the wigwam lately stood. And both in our old and new settlements such improvements have been made in agriculture and building as captivate the eye and astonish the minds of beholders. Our militia are trained to the arts of war, and in expertness already vie with the martial troops of the old world. Large additions have lately been made to our military stores, and our naval forces much increased, and yet every industrious, prudent citizen is growing rich.

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While most of the nations of Europe have been involved in a series of war, and waded thro' fields of blood, we have enjoyed uninterrupted tranquillity. While a powerful kingdom has, in vain, been making the awful experiment of maintaining civil government without the aids of religion, our government has been supported by the mild religion of the Gospel.

But in vain do I compare our privileges with those of other nations. We all know they are vastly greater than those of any other people under heaven. We all know that we are happy, independent and free.

The important question of the present day is, How shall we preserve our national rights and transmit them undiminished down to posterity? This is a question of the first magnitude. It must be confessed, that amidst all our prosperity and national increase we are still in danger. We are in danger, not so much from abroad, as at home. We are in danger of having soon to look back on the present as the golden age of America. We are in danger of experiencing the decrepitude of old age, before we arrive to a state of national manhood. Are there not already appearances which darken the prospect of our future happiness and glory? Does not uninterrupted prosperity begin to intoxicate us? Is not public opinion already polluted?

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Must we not fear the loss of the spirit of true religion, purity of manners and social order, which have been our union and strength, our honor and happiness? Is patriotism now sure of receiving its due reward, the approbation and gratitude of community? Does not party spirit, that bane of Republics, raise her hateful head, and stalk abroad without disguise? Are not the best men in office calumniated and abused? Are not false representations made both of men and measures? Must not every one who consents to serve his country, in office, expect to have his character tortured on the wheel of jealousy, and even his good name slandered and abused? Has not false reasoning, under the fictitious name of philosophy, gone abroad, with the *profession* of freeing men from superstition and raising them to a state of perfection, and at the same time with the *intention* to destroy the finer feelings and tender sensibilities of the human heart, and thereby to remove every restraint, and undermine the rights and security of civilized community? Are we not in imminent danger from the influence of these evils? They are threatening and growing, must we not provide a remedy for them? But can this be done? and how? This *might* doubtless be done, and fair America increase in glory to the latest posterity. And if similar causes are sure to produce similar effects, and the same cause the same effect, our way to
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remove the evils we feel and fear is plain and easy. We have only to cherish that spirit, take those steps and pursue that path, which brought our forefathers and us to our present state of national happiness and respectability. We must let reason have dominion over that spirit of innovation and change, which is the natural offspring of the depraved heart, and keep right on in the good old way.

The settlement of the United States stands high among the boldest enterprises which ever entered the human heart. It was prosecuted with a unanimity and fortitude which will forever do honor to human nature.

Our ancestors came over here, not from love of conquest, or desire of wealth. They had a nobler motive. They were influenced by the love of civil and religious liberty. They preferred liberty to ease, and freedom to worship God agreeably to the dictates of their own consciences, to the wealth and splendor of the Old World. This spirit animated them in all their sufferings, toils and dangers, and properly influenced their actions in all the departments of social and civil life. The spirit of genuine patriotism glowed in their bosoms while they laid the foundation of this great and happy nation.

Let us cherish this excellent spirit. Let us never pursue our own private, personal interest to the detri-

riment of the public. Let us prefer the happiness of our nation, and of rising posterity, to our own ease or emolument.

The first settlers of our Country felt the importance of securing the favor of God, and of training up their children in knowledge and piety. They therefore erected houses for the worship of God, founded seminaries of literature and established schools for the education of children. In families youth received a religious education, and saw, in their parents, examples of piety and order. They universally attended upon the public institutions of the sabbath. They adored the divine perfections, and supplicated divine blessings. They heard and practised the unalterable truths and duties of religion and morality. By these means the fear of God was placed before them, and the public opinion formed to a sense of order and propriety. All classes felt the importance of a pure example. Immorality and irreligion were held in universal disgrace. The votaries of infidelity, impiety and vice dreaded the light of the day, and sought darkness for their covering.

Let this step be taken to avert the evils and secure the future tranquility and glory of our Country. Let us realize the importance of securing the smiles of Jehovah, the God of our fathers. Let us hallow his sabbaths, present ourselves in humble
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adorations before his throne, and daily supplicate his heavenly benediction. Let us, who are now active on the stage, perform the duties of morality and religion, and set a pure example before the rising generation. Let them be the objects of our peculiar care. Let them be early taught the duties they owe to God and man. Let them be taught submission at home, that they may easily submit to the rational and salutary restraints of society. While vicious men are falsely reasoning on virtue, and thereby sapping its very foundation; while dangerous talkers, by their sophistry, are corrupting the simplicity of ancient morals, and spreading among young people opinions dangerous to the order, peace and happiness of our Country, let us counteract their evil designs by setting before them the nature and excellency of true virtue, and by instilling into their expanding minds the necessity and importance of civil government. Happy would it be for our land, if our youth were early taught the principles and design of our Constitution and Laws. Yes, happy if many farther advanced in life had this knowledge. Many who are fierce opposers of the Constitution and Laws of our Country have no knowledge of what they oppose. The time is come when there is no safety in forming our political sentiments from public News Papers. Did men form their ideas of government immediately from

from the Constitution and Laws; say much less about measures of government, and more strictly obey the laws themselves; discord would soon cease, and party spirit would wither and die. Would it not then be advisable for every Town or Parish to have in possession the Constitution, and both the Laws of the Union and State, and like Israel of old, meet statedly and read them in the audience of all the people.

Our ancestors, in all their elections, considered a good moral character as an essential qualification in a candidate. Men of exemplary life, were the only men thought worthy of public confidence. They resented every interference and imposition. The manifest desire of any one to get into office, was justly thought sufficient to keep him from any post of honor or trust.

Here is an example worthy of our imitation. Election to office, under a free government, is an object of greater importance than most imagine. Tho' offices are held but for a short period, yet much evil may be done in a little time. The work of evil is much easier than that of good. The axe soon destroys the tree which nature and length of time only can rear. The brand in an hour consumes the edifice, which years of labor and experience have erected. It is thus in the political and moral worlds. And tho' experience and time may correct the er-

rots introduced by injudicious, or designing rulers, yet the evils which attend this correction may be incalculably great.

The wisdom of Americans will therefore lead them to cautiousness in placing men in offices of honor and trust. Never enquire whether candidates for office belong to a particular party. Disdain the idea of this being a commendable qualification. But ask, Are they well informed? Have they judgment and stability? Have they wise heads, and patriotic, benevolent hearts? Do they fear God and work righteousness? Do they obey the laws themselves? Are their examples such as may be imitated by all, and yet the peace, order and happiness of community secured? Be satisfied in these particulars, and you need not fear in your elections. But in resting in any thing short of this, you depart from the example of your ancestors; deviate from the path which has led us to freedom and glory, and endanger our national rights. A man without judgment and stability is dangerous in office. He must be guided by others, and will float with the tide of popular opinion. He who has little or no knowledge of the Constitution and Laws is poorly qualified to manage the affairs of state. He who wishes the suffrages of his fellow citizens, means to serve himself, not his country. He who does not fear God himself will never be a terror to evil doers: He who is impatient of
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the restraints of the religion of the gospel, will forever struggle under the restraints of the mildest government in the world. He who will knowingly and willingly violate the Laws of our Country, in one particular, directly or indirectly, to serve his own private interest, would in the same way violate the Laws in every particular, to serve the same interest: He who obeys the Laws of his Country is a patriot, whatever name may be given him. He who knowingly disobeys, the laws in any particular, is an enemy to his Country, whatever his pretensions may be, and therefore unworthy of public confidence.

The founders of this great and flourishing nation were not only careful to elect to office virtuous and good men; but when elected they paid them proper respect. The public mind was not poisoned with groundless suspicions of evil designs in those whom they had chosen to manage their concerns. Speaking evil of Rulers was thought a malignant crime.

Let us in this particular revert again to the example of our venerable forefathers. Let us pay tribute to whom tribute is due; and honor to those who fill honorable posts. No man has ever been removed from office merely by virulent aspersions of his character. If we vilify, indiscriminately, those who fill the most important offices, the time is fast rolling on when we shall not be able to fill them with

any thing but villains. Let us watchfully wait till trust is actually violated, and treacherous measures adopted, before we cease to confide in our civil Officers, or fill the minds of others with groundless insinuations. Then let us take constitutional measures to remove them, before we excite the passions of the populace in opposition to the measures of government.

By these means, those who have gone before us have rendered the work of government easy, and themselves and nation happy. By this they secured the protection of the great Lord of all, who often interposed in their favor. By their patient industry, in manual labor they were prepared for the toils of war. Conscious integrity of heart inspired them with manly courage in facing their enemies. The habits of submission and order were so effectually formed in families and society, that notwithstanding they were untutored in the arts of war, yet they were easily commanded in the field of battle.

When the eventful period drew on, that our Country should assume her place among the independent nations of the earth, the influence of order and unity were fully displayed. Feeling the oppressive hand of a parent Country, Thirteen small States, before independent of each other, harmoniously united, not only in asserting their Colonial Rights, but in opposing the despotic powers of Britain.

ain. The strength of our Country was not estimated by our numbers, but by our principles, habits and union. By these we rose superior to the millions and wealth and artillery of Europe.

Having declared our national Freedom and Independence, we were obliged to defend them by the force of arms. WASHINGTON, with his little united band of Volunteers, went forth to meet the veteran millions of martial Britain. Like the stripling David, his weapons were but little more than sling and stones in opposition to the gigantic spear and shield of his enemy. But like him his heart was filled with the spirit of piety and patriotism, and his body encompassed with the shield of God. Soon the usurping, exulting Goliath of Europe, with his wounded head, groaned his last, on the naked ground.

Tho' in our painful and bloody contest for the rights of Freedom and Independence, darkness many times nearly surrounded us, yet every threatening cloud was tinged with the bright rays of union and the propitious smiles of heaven. Our resources were increased with the exigences which required them. Our Country-men, with few exceptions, were willing to yield their property and lives to the service of their Country, and spend and be spent in her cause. The great I AM succeeded every exertion of ours, till astonished Europe was convinced
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that the Lord was on our side, and the whole world constrained to acknowledge us Independent and Free.

Independence acknowledged, it became necessary to reduce the Union of these States, hastily formed, to regular system, that it might be safe and permanent. Here the wisdom of our nation was collected, the volumes of antiquity open before them, the experience of ages, the rise and fall of states and empires presented to their view. After mature deliberation, with WASHINGTON at their head, they were enabled to adopt a Constitution of government, which unites liberty with order, and the security of individual rights with the necessary force of the ruling power.

Under this Constitution we enjoy a quiet and manly exercise of the highest freedom, never enjoyed before by any people. Search the volumes of antiquity through, and view the globe around, and you cannot find a government which will bear comparison with ours. The united influence of the preceding causes has matured a state of social order and happiness nearer perfection than the world has ever known. The principal of these causes are domestic industry and order, religion, and national union. This three fold cord is not easily broken; but take away either of its parts and it becomes weak as a thread of tow.

While we encourage and promote industry and domestic order, let us strongly adhere to, and support the religion of our forefathers. Tho' christianity assumes no authority over the affairs of this world only that which arises from the influence of its doctrines and commands upon the lives of men, yet this influence is infinitely important. While the religion of the Gospel tends to replenish the heart with every virtue which adorns human nature or increases social happiness; at the same time it enforces the duties of rulers and subjects; by sanctions, which the occurrences of this world cannot weaken. In this view religion stands as the basis of civil government, and its connection therewith ought to be held as sacred and kept inviolate. The experiment of maintaining civil government without the aids of religion has lately been made, by a powerful nation in the Old World; and the scenes of oppression and cruelty, blood and massacre, which followed are too horrible to relate. Repeat not the awful experiment in our happy land.

Union *has* formed the strength of our nation, from its first settlement to the present moment. Union *must* form our strength in every future period. The moment these States become separate governments, we take an enemy into our bosom ten thousand times more formidable than the united rage of
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all foreign powers. One State might destroy more of the inhabitants of another, while any foreign nation was crossing the Ocean, than all Europe could destroy in *ages*, against the united force of our nation. Our Motto, at the declaration of Independence, "United we stand, divided we fall," needs, and forever will need to be deeply inscribed upon every American heart.

Tho' there *may* be men who have departed from the spirit of true liberty, and are designing, from sinister motives, to disorganize our union, yet most who appear to act this ignoble part are blinded by ignorance and led by delusive representations. Our ready way, therefore to remove this evil, is not to despise and load them with approbrious epithets, but to teach them the principles of true and rational freedom. Convince them that to live in society we *must* relinquish some of the rights of the savage; and that no government can be supported without some expence. Form their minds to too great a sense of the importance of seriousness and benevolence, activity and usefulness, to relish, or *even endure*, the fancied pleasures, either of useless indolence or dissipating amusements.

Let union be our study and the object of our promotion, in a constitutional way. I do not plead for the least unlawful indulgence. No observation

is more just or true than the following, "Unless we protect our laws, our laws will not protect us." If men will not be led by instruction, nor influenced by the blessings of liberty and the happiness of a nation, benevolence demands their restraint by exemplary punishments.

The picture of America, drawn by our ancestors, doubtless had its shades. But let us improve upon their example. Intolerance was the weakness of their age. But while we correct this error, let us beware lest we run to the other extreme of excessive indulgence. Superstition itself is much less dangerous than disregard to the concerns of religion.

The resources of our Country are now abundant, if the minds of the people can be kept fixed to their true interest, and their virtue and patriotism preserved. With these guards upon our nation we are safe from foreign powers. If we fall it will be by our own folly and vice. And shall we give up our invaluable privileges and dear bought rights, earned by the labors, and bought by the blood of our ancestors? Shall we, the second generation from those who fought, and bled, and died, to win the prize of freedom, like a prodigal son, squander this rich inheritance as soon as our fathers sleep in dust? Let every American bosom burn with manly indignation at the thought. If we do propitious Heaven will cease

to smile. And if we did not degrade ourselves below their notice, the shades of those who fought for liberty will return to haunt us; and posterity will surely rise to execrate us.

But if motives will not persuade, nor dangers deter; if we must run the race of impiety and folly, of party and faction, of dissipation and vice, which has ruined all republics before us, let the wise and good unite their efforts to procrastinate the downfall of this glorious empire; and to their utmost continue the reign of liberty, virtue and happiness. Yes, if called to, let us die in the cause of our Country, and sink with our sinking Liberty. Some surviving patriot will erect a monument to our memory, and inscribe upon it LIBERTY. In some future period, after many generations, in consequence of our folly, have groaned out their lives, under the heavy chains of slavery, some genius, like WASHINGTON, shall read the inscription and catch the genial fire. Tired of his slavery, and possessing a soul too big to wear his chains, he will again emancipate the world.

But shall free and happy America ever experience this? Forbid it Lord! Forbid it every one, who would be thought worthy the name of an American! We hope, we resolve better things. We shall yet realize our privileges. Dissipation and discord shall
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be banished our happy land. Anarchy shall never set foot upon our peaceful shores. The polluted fang of despotism shall be severed from his hateful shoulder, before it is reached half across the Atlantic. The fair tree of Liberty, planted and nurtured by our venerable forefathers, and watered by the blood of our immediate predecessors, shall never be cut down by our hands. Heaven avert the deadly blow! But firmly rooted in America, a soil congenial to its growth, pruned and nourished by our care it shall grow and flourish till its top shoots up to heaven, and its branches overshadow the world. All nations shall rest under its shadow; taste its delicious fruits, and be healed by its leaves. At which moment the kingdoms of the earth shall become the empire of the Son of God.

