

ORATION,

DELIVERED AT THE

COLUMBIAN COLLEGE,

IN THE

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA,

July 4, 1823;

By JAMES D. KNOWLES,

MEMBER OF THE PROSODYAN SOCIETY.

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COLLEGE HILL, July 5, 1823.

SIR,

THE Committee of Arrangement, on behalf of the Societies which they represent, tender to you their most sincere thanks, for the eloquent and appropriate Oration, delivered by you, at the celebration of our National Anniversary.

We request that you would furnish us with a copy of the Oration, for immediate publication.

By order of the Societies.

ALBERT FAIRFAX,
IRA D. LOVE,
JOHN ARMSTRONG, } *Committee of the
Enosinian Society.*

JAMES F. GRIFFIN,
WILLIAM COLLINS,
JAMES G. BRYCE, } *Committee of the
Ciceronian Society.*

Mr. JAMES D. KNOWLES.

COLLEGE HILL, July 5, 1823.

GENTLEMEN,

THE obligations under which I have been laid, by the generous confidence of my fellow students, do not leave me at liberty to decline a compliance with the request, which, in so flattering a manner, you have conveyed to me. I commit a copy of the Oration to your disposal. It was composed amid the pressure of numerous duties, and may therefore claim an excuse for its deficiencies and errors. It contains, however, a frank expression of my best judgments and feelings; and it is my earnest wish, that it may meet with the entire approbation of my fellow students, and may contribute something towards pointing out more distinctly, while it aims to enforce, our duties to our common country.

I am, Gentlemen,

Most respectfully, yours,

JAMES D. KNOWLES.

MESSRS. ALBERT FAIRFAX,
IRA D. LOVE,
JOHN ARMSTRONG, } *Committee of the Enosinian Society.*

MESSRS. JAMES F. GRIFFIN,
WILLIAM COLLINS,
JAMES G. BRYCE, } *Committee of the Ciceronian Society.*

ORATION.

FELLOW CITIZENS :

THE patriots who published to the world the venerable instrument which has just been read to us, have, with a few exceptions, gone to their account; leaving us, their posterity, to enjoy the results of their toils, and the inheritance of their renown. Their anxieties and labours for their country's welfare have ceased—but their memory cannot perish. A mighty nation delights to cherish it. She has inscribed it on her monuments; and this day, over all her widely extended states, she invites her children to a festive commemoration of their fathers' deeds. History has recorded them; and, while mankind shall reverence virtue, and shall honour lofty and heroic patriotism, the founders of American freedom shall be held in grateful remembrance. Men are like the summer's cloud, which the breeze wafts away; but noble actions and elevated principles are not thus transient. They go down to succeeding generations, with the blessings which they have purchased, and holding forth the light of an inspiring example.

Another anniversary of our national festival calls on us for an expression of grateful joy. It is a day devoted to our country; to a review of her eventful history, and an admiring contemplation of our illustrious ancestors. We are invited this day, to trace, with rapid glance, her majestic march in the career of national greatness, and to pause, with filial fondness, to note the brilliant traits which adorn her character, and the vigorous energies which promise a bright race of glory. While the monarchs of Europe have leagued to crush the rising liberties of the old world, it is ours, in this peaceful retreat, to celebrate the triumph of freedom in the new. There is a moral sublimity in the spectacle of a great nation, animated with one spirit, uniting in one strain of gratulation and joy. It speaks of deep felt happiness; of the power of moral feeling; of the sympathy of kindred

hearts, sharing the same glorious recollections, and beating high with the same throb of patriotic emotion.

In all ages, and among every people, whether savage or civilized, love of country has been cherished with ardour, and rewarded with distinguished approbation. The state bestows on the patriot her first distinctions; beauty greets him with her sweetest smile; and the kindred Muses of History and Poetry take charge of his fame.

This love of country is capable of becoming an elevated moral feeling, rising high above sectional partialities. In no country ought it to be more pure and dignified than in our own. Every thing, in the review of our history, is fitted to ennoble the mind and delight the heart. No obscurity rests on the origin of our country. We are not obliged to trace back our ancestry, -through a series of dark and ferocious generations, to a barbarous horde of marauders. Our fathers were men eminent for all the endowments which dignify our nature. The history of our country unfolds, with every page, the brightest displays of heroic devotion, talent, and worth, which can be found in the annals of mankind. In her present condition and prospects, too, we find every thing which can attach our hearts to her honour and welfare. It is true, that love of country is less aided here, by local and traditionary associations, than in the old world. Our vallies and mountains, and forests, are not connected with a thousand romantic tales of ancient times. Our plains have not witnessed the border warfare of feudal chieftains; no castles frown on our cliffs; and no minstrels have here strung their harps, to celebrate

“Knighthood's dauntless deed, and beauty's matchless eye :”

Yet, for this reason, our patriotism is more the offspring of principle, is more enlightened, and more enduring. Our country is dear to us, in her virgin youth and loveliness, as the refuge of our fathers, as the home of freedom, as the ever-brightening abode of religion, refinement, and happiness.

The love of country finds an appropriate expression on those festivals, which almost every nation has set apart for the indulgence of patriotic emotion. But the events which these festivals are designed to commemorate, are, in general, widely different from those which, on this day of our country's rejoicing, awaken our sympathies. The transactions which this day brings to our recollection, present no circumstances which dim their lustre. No rival factions then struggled for victory. No demagogues strove which should rule

over their countrymen. It was not the blind, impetuous revolt of an oppressed people, exasperated to madness, and rising with resistless fury to cast away their chains. It was a war of principle. It was a contest for abstract rights. It was prompted rather by apprehension, than by experience; rather by prospective wrongs, than by actual sufferings. Our fathers never were slaves. They had lived and flourished under the protection of the British constitution, though with little more than a nominal dependence on the British crown. They loved their mother country with a filial affection. From the wilderness, they cast their thoughts over the ocean, to their native land, and delighted to feel that they were yet within the reach of her regard and protection. In her bosom were their fathers' sepulchres. There were the temples where they had worshipped God. In that beloved country, patriots had fought for freedom, and martyrs had died for the faith of Jesus. On that small theatre had been performed deeds of undying fame; and every plain and hill brought to their minds the "stirring memory of a thousand years." Their hearts yearned over these recollections; and a wish for separation was foreign from their thoughts, till encroachments on their rights roused them to resistance. Dearly as they loved the home of their fathers, they loved with a fonder affection that freedom which was their birthright, and their boast, as the countrymen of Hampden and Sidney. Nothing but a conviction that separation or servitude was the only alternative, could have impelled them to cut the tie which bound them to Great Britain. Remonstrances and petitions were employed in vain, till their patience was exhausted, and "hope deferred" quitted its last lingering hold. Their hearts felt a pang far more severe from the severance of sympathy and affection, than from an apprehension of the mighty power which they had defied. It was the solemn determination of freemen, who had weighed, with calm and collected spirit, all the sacrifices which they must make, and the dangers which they must encounter. With singleness of heart, they put all to hazard, for the preservation of those rights, without which, in the words of the martyr of Bunker Hill, "in vain had their fathers crossed the boisterous ocean, found a new world, and prepared it for the happy residence of liberty." They looked up, with humble confidence, to Him, who delights, by the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty. He had been their pillar of cloud and of fire in the wilderness; he had delivered them from the lion and the bear; and strong, in the strength of the

God of David, our youthful country went forth to meet the giant arm of England.

It is unnecessary, on this occasion, to dwell on the history of our revolution. Every one who loves his country is familiar with the narrative. His young heart was roused by the stories of battles and of sufferings which the surviving veterans of that stormy period narrated to him. With his earliest schoolboy lessons, he learned to admire the men who stood fast in the perilous struggle for freedom; and he wept, when told of disaster and defeat. We have scarcely needed the historian's pen; and when we are reproached that the story of our revolution has not yet been fitly told, we may reply, that the record is in our hearts. All those who shared in the contest have not yet passed away from among us. The fields of battle yet show the trench and the breast-work. We have all around us remembrancers of the event. Our flourishing cities, our widely extended and rapidly spreading States, our unrivalled institutions, our political freedom, our private prosperity and happiness, are all mementoes of the glorious period, and of the men who shared in the struggle for independence.

These institutions, these signal privileges, this beautiful country, which has been purchased by the blood, and adorned by the toils of freemen, it should be our earnest endeavour to preserve, as a sacred legacy, and to bequeath them to our posterity. We are made the guardians of the memory of our ancestors. The high destinies which the peculiar character of our country, her institutions, her situation, her resources, authorize us to anticipate for her, form a strong incitement to every patriot, to fulfil, in his appropriate sphere, the duties which the public welfare may impose on him; and earnestly to inquire, how the freedom and happiness of his country may best be preserved and perpetuated.

The abstract excellence of our institutions afford no security for their continuance. There is no efficacy in a beautiful theory. Other nations have enjoyed, for a time, the blessings of freedom, and the security of chartered rights. But these have passed away, like a cloud, before the first breath of popular commotion. In our system, the people are the only source of power. This fountain must be preserved pure, or the glorious legacy of our forefathers will soon become the prey of factious or artful men, and the very freedom of our institutions will expose them to a more speedy destruction. The people must understand and love their rights. They must possess firmness of principle to resist

every aggression, however specious in its approach, or moderate in its demands; a high-minded and uncompromising fortitude of soul, which disregards every attempt to intimidate or to seduce into a surrender of principle. It was this elevation of mind, this unyielding integrity of purpose, which nerved the arm and animated the hearts of our fathers, when they struck for freedom.

A vague feeling of attachment to our country, and even a sincere desire for her prosperity, are not alone a sufficient security for the upright discharge of the duties of a citizen. The solicitations of interest, the sway of prejudice, the narrowness of views, often tend, if not to unsettle moral principle, at least to betray into a contracted and temporizing policy. Love of country, unless controlled and directed by some higher principle, is, in fact, often injurious in proportion to its intensity. It leads to eager and indiscreet interference in public affairs. It produces a jealousy of public men, ever watchful and suspicious of their actions, and intolerant of their actual or imaginary errors, without penetration to discover the motives and scope of their policy, or to weigh the causes which may have led to disaster. It produces a sensibility to insult and injury from other nations, which leads, on the slightest occasions, to exasperation and revenge. It were easy to illustrate these opinions from history. In other nations, ancient and modern, an intrepid and enthusiastic love of country has existed. Could this alone have won or secured their liberties, they would have still flourished. Experience has taught the world, that even warm love of country may coexist with subserviency to the will of a tyrant, and may find its gratification, not in securing the rights and happiness of the nation herself, but in efforts to win for her the ascendancy over other nations.

Neither will general intelligence among the people, even when associated with patriotism, afford an effectual safeguard to their liberties. Knowledge, whatever be its quality or degree, can do no more than point out to us more clearly our characters and capacities, the worthiest aims for our actions, and the wisest methods of attaining them. It is not in itself a motive to action. It merely supplies to the will the means of judicious determination. It doubtless has a powerful tendency to elevate the mind, and to incite it to actions worthy of the dignity of an intellectual agent. But the history of mankind is full of proof, that the highest state of mental culture, and the widest range of literary acquisition, cannot unfetter the soul from prejudice, nor secure it from the perverse caprices of passion. Interest has, for the wise, the same charms; pleasure the same allurements;

pride the same flatteries; love and hatred the same powerful impulses, as for other men. A large share of the miseries of the world have been occasioned by the ambition and profligacy of genius; by "the fears of the brave, and the follies of the wise." Most men have sufficient capacity and light, to perceive the course of conduct which it behooves them to pursue. In their private affairs, many more are led to competence, by pursuing the dictates of sagacity and experience, than are betrayed into poverty by actual defect of understanding, or want of adequate information. It is notorious, that pauperism is generally, in our own country perhaps nearly always, to be attributed to vice and indolence; to a profligate disregard of "better knowledge." It is so in the more extended concerns of nations. These have more frequently gone to ruin, from the ambition of rulers, or the corruption of the people, than from any want of knowledge touching the judicious course of policy.

We perceive, then, very clearly, that virtue must pervade the popular mind. And what, I ask, is meant by virtue when applied to nations? It must mean, if it mean any thing, a powerful principle, which operates on men in every circumstance and condition; lays an effectual check on the passions; soothes the tempers; subdues the prejudices; rectifies the wills, and elevates the aims of mankind. It must "cover the whole area of human action," and liberate man from every bias which warps his understanding, and every passion which perverts his will. If it do not accomplish this, it is quite clear that men will still blindly err, and nations go to ruin.

Where is this powerful principle to be found? Do we seek it in the theories of philosophy? She has nothing to offer us but speculations, which do not approach the heart, and, besides, are wholly inapplicable to the mass of mankind. Plato may talk to us of his ideal republic, and Sidney may dream of his Arcadia; but the world of living and acting men must be governed by principles adapted to their actual condition and character. Shall we resort to some general system of ethics? Who shall be intrusted to form this system, and whence will it derive authority, and arguments to urge it on the hearts of mankind? The standard of morals varies with the opinions and habits of men. One man thinks ambition a virtue, or at least "the infirmity of a noble mind." Another views it as unjustifiable in its aims, and pernicious in its effects. One man countenances duelling. Another thinks war necessary and proper. A third sanctions the slave trade. A fourth condemns them all, as the offspring of ungoverned passions. Amid this conflict of opi-

mons, who shall take on him to decide, and how will he enforce his decisions?

We are brought again to the question, where is this powerful and pervading principle to be found? No where, my fellow citizens, but in the CHRISTIAN RELIGION. This alone furnishes a universal and invariable rule of duty, the foundations of which are laid deep and secure in the immutable nature of its Author. It comes armed with an authority which admits of no resistance. It is enforced by every sanction which can be drawn from the hopes and fears of man; by all the motives which descend to us from the glories of Heaven, and come up in awful array from the world of despair. This rule teaches every man his duties in every rank of life. It reaches the heart, and performs its work there, where alone the mighty operation can be efficacious. It subdues the passions, purifies the desires, enlightens the conscience, and lays a strong grasp on every unruly emotion of the soul. Here is the principle we need; and no nation can flourish where this principle is not in vigorous action.

Let, then, the true patriot, while he submits his heart and understanding to the truths of revelation, endeavour, as he loves his country, to extend the influence of piety. Let him not lend his ear to those visionary theorists, who talk of national virtue, irrespectively of religion. Their foundation is rottenness. *These political empirics overlook the capital circumstance, that men are corrupt; and attribute all their errors to a defect of education, to a mere obliquity of understanding, to an accidental subordination to appetite and passion. A system which is founded on a false apprehension of the real condition of man, and of the causes of his errors, can never improve the one nor correct the other.

These ideas are illustrated by a reference to the character of our ancestors, and to the history of our country. The early colonists were actuated by various motives. Some came for mere purposes of speculation and commerce. But most of them sought our shores, to find here, in the undisturbed solitude of the wilderness, an asylum from religious intolerance; a retreat, where they might quietly worship God; a resting place for the dove of peace, which fierce contentions had frightened from Europe. Most of them were Protestants; and if they did not all possess the stern and heroic devotion of the New England Puritans, they nevertheless brought with them their religious habits, and gave a strong religious cast to all their institutions. This is the true cause of the purity of morals, the general intelligence, the firm principles, the high and unbending fortitude

of our fathers. It was the sustaining power of religion which prepared them to put all to hazard for the maintenance of their rights; which carried them through a civil war, without its ferocious cruelties; which enabled them to effect a revolution without anarchy, and, at length, to harmonize jarring interests, and unite under a constitution of unrivalled wisdom, to form a mighty and happy nation.

In all the proceedings of the revolutionary period, we observe the constant influence of religion. The people, in some parts of the country, were aroused to resistance by the powerful appeals of their ministers. Sermons then breathed the fire of patriotism, and the contest partook of a sacred character. The pastor sometimes accompanied his flock to the field; commenced the battle with fervent supplications to the God of armies, and was every where over the field, to animate the living, and to administer to the dying the last consolations of a hope full of immortality. Congress, in the solemn instrument which has just been read, appealed to the "Supreme Ruler of the Universe for the rectitude of their intentions;" and, in the strength of this sublime feeling, they nerved their hearts for the coming tempest. May their successors ever share their spirit, and imitate their example. May they ever feel, with one of the sages of our country, that if "a sparrow fall not to the ground, without the notice of God, an empire cannot rise without his aid."

There is another consideration of high importance. The Christian religion is, in its very nature, eminently conducive to the production and strengthening of free opinions. One of its fundamental propositions is, that all men are by nature equal; and consequently are all entitled to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." It regards mankind as placed in the same condition, amenable to the same laws, and requiring the same moral remedy. Here, then, is the true theory of human rights, from the highest authority, and evidently designed for universal diffusion. Accordingly, wherever religion has flourished most, the greatest degree of freedom has been enjoyed. England is the freest nation in Europe, and there religion is found most unfettered. France, since Protestants have enjoyed toleration, has acquired a representative government; and the destruction of the Inquisition in Spain was speedily followed by the adoption of a free constitution. On the other hand, despots have ever sedulously aimed to exclude the Bible, and the pure doctrines of religion, from their dominions. This has been the policy of the papal power; and it was during its most uncontrolled dominion, that the darkest gloom of ignorance overshadowed Europe, and the sternest grasp of tyranny held the sway

over the nations. The reformation broke the spell, and the introduction of the word of God, and the spread of true piety, have led to that mighty series of revolutions, which is fast advancing in Europe to the destruction of every vestige of despotic power.

It is customary, on occasions like this, while contemplating the bright history, the vigorous youth, and the rapid march of our country, to indulge the imagination in visions of her future glory. This disposition has excited ridicule, as a national foible. But it is natural, it is fit and beautiful, to follow with our sympathies and hopes, the progress of our beloved country. We cannot behold the edifice rising, on its wide foundations, with so just and fair proportions, without thinking of the period when it shall lift itself to the clouds, and stand, in its majesty and beauty, the admiration of the world. We cannot refrain from anticipating the time, when the tide of population shall flow over the prairies of the west; when powerful states and flourishing cities shall rise on the banks of the Missouri and the Columbia; when a free, intelligent, and virtuous people, shall realize, in the progress of improvement, in the cultivation of science and the useful arts, in the prosperity of religious and literary institutions, and in the general thrift and happiness of society, the loveliest conceptions of Arcadian song.

These are themes on which it would be pleasant and appropriate to dwell. But I relinquish so grateful a task, and invite your attention to another range of thought, connected with the destinies of our country. I purpose to point out to you another distinction in reserve for her, more glorious in itself, more deeply important to the human race, and which affixes to our history, past and prospective, a higher interest, than any considerations connected with national prosperity.

The proposition which I wish to illustrate is this: That the Ruler of the Universe has established, protected, and prospered this nation, for the special purpose of making her a signal instrument in the political and moral regeneration of the world.

It is the misery of man, that he permits the veil which natural objects and subordinate agencies interpose, to conceal from his view the great Supreme. He observes the course of events, the convulsions which shake the world, and the complicated labyrinth of human actions, without looking beyond, to Him who sits in high authority over his universe, and manages all things for the advancement of his own designs. Were it not for this fatal blindness, the history of the world would present a most interesting and instructive comment on the principles of the Divine government. We

should see, that every event has had its appropriate bearing on that great result, which we are taught to believe is the steady aim of the Divine administration on the earth, "to make an end of sin," and introduce the peaceful kingdom of Christ.

No one, of the least discernment, can have failed to observe the manner in which God employed the ancient nations to accomplish his purposes. The Jews he selected, as a people among whom the true worship might be preserved, and, in the fulness of time, the Saviour might be born. This people he often employed to execute his pleasure; and, sometimes, to chastise the Jews, he made use of other nations. Cyrus and Nebuchadnezzar were unconsciously the instruments of his will. To advance his designs, and prepare the way for the coming of the Redeemer, the Greek empire was established in the east, on the ruins of the Persian. At length, Rome subdued the world to her sceptre; established her government every where; restored peace to the nations, and then the Prince of Peace made his advent to our world. All these events were predicted long before; and now that they have become matters of history, we can easily trace in them the overruling hand of God. It would be easy to show, that God has since maintained the same control over events, for the accomplishment of his purposes.

Let us apply this principle to our own country, and examine some reasons for the opinion, that for her is reserved a signal agency, worthy of that manifest care of Providence which her history exhibits.

In the first place, there is something remarkable in the period at which this continent was discovered. Had it been known in ancient times, it might perhaps have been peopled, instead of the feeble and scattered tribes originally found here, by a race of idolaters, bringing with them the customs of the old world, and establishing, over this beautiful land, their corrupt and despotic institutions. Here might have grown up nations as idolatrous as those of India. The Mississippi might have been as renowned as the Ganges, and our prairies might have been whitened with the bones of the worshippers of Juggernaut. Or, had the continent been settled in the darkest ages of Papal supremacy, there might have extended over this fair land, a population enslaved by superstition, destitute of intellectual and moral culture, and altogether unfit to be the assertors of freedom, and the efficient instruments of Providence. But the discovery was made at a peculiarly propitious period. At the close of the fifteenth century, the shadows of the dark ages had begun to disperse. Learning had revived. The human mind had

received a powerful impulse, and the chains of Papal power began to relax. The days of Luther and Calvin were at hand, and the way was in rapid preparation for the introduction of those free principles, and those enlightened doctrines, which contributed to form the character of the first settlers of our country.

It is a happy circumstance, too, that the first aims of Europeans were directed to South America. Had Pizarro and Cortez landed on our shores, and conducted their marauding bands over our states, exterminating the natives, and spreading ruin and despotism, we cannot say what might now have been the condition of this country. South America is yet in an unsettled state, and probably many years will elapse before her complete emancipation.

Montgomery has beautifully described Columbus, while meditating on his great expedition, as gazing, with eager anticipation, towards the new world which he hoped to discover.

"Lights of Heaven, he cried,
 "Lead on; I go to win a glorious bride,
 "By nature nurs'd beyond the jealous sea,
 "Denied to ages, but betrothed to me."

This bride our pilgrim fathers found on these unvisited shores. On her shady bowers no rude spoiler had intruded. None of the corruptions of the old world had found their way into her bosom. She was worthy to be the bride of our forefathers, and to become the mother of a race of freemen.

I need not dwell on the happy coincidence of providential circumstances, which have contributed to make our country what she now is. Every thing in her history, and her present condition, indicates the special care and favour of Heaven.

The part which our country has been designed to take in the political regeneration of the world, is no longer dubious. Here, for the first time, were the rights of man recognised as the leading principle of government. Here the standard of true freedom was first reared; and here one of the most effectual blows was struck, which have been aimed at despotism. Our revolution furnished for other nations an example and a sanction. The spirit of freedom is now making its way over the continent of Europe; and the old establishments of corrupt oppression are crumbling before it. The present struggle will undoubtedly end in the triumph of the rights of man, and in the establishment of governments, modelled, in their leading features, like our own. South America, from her throne on the Andes, has descried, at a distance, the light of our example; and her voice has been

heard, through all her provinces, calling on her children to awake to freedom. The summons has been obeyed; and, from Panama to Cape Horn—from the highest cliffs of her mountains to the deepest recesses of her mines, the shout and the struggle for independence have responded to her call. Greece, too, the land which we can scarcely mention without enthusiasm; where the mightiest spirits of antiquity flourished, and shed unfading glory on every path of science, and every province of thought and worthy enterprise, has roused herself from her ignominious slumber. She is now waging, with the devotion of Leonidas, a fierce struggle with her oppressors. She looks to us for countenance, for assurance, for aid. She, too, comes with all her ancient fame, to do homage to the wisdom of our ancestors, and here to re-light, at the altar of freedom, that torch which guided her ancient sons to victory, and only went out in the deep gloom of Turkish despotism.

In the next place, the idea that this country is to take a most distinguished part in the conversion of the world, receives strong confirmation, from the fact that the missionary spirit, which so eminently distinguishes our age, and which contains the promise of the complete triumph of Christianity in the world, first revived in this country.* Before Swartz and others commenced their labours, our Elliots and Mayhews were engaged in missions among our native tribes. It was a suggestion from President Edwards, that led to the establishment, by the Baptists in England, of the Monthly Concert of prayer, which was immediately followed by the adoption of measures, which have led to the mighty efforts and multiplied charities of the present period.

In the next place, our country has the advantage over every other, in the complete freedom of religious opinion. No sect has here the ascendancy. Here is no establishment, whose predominance is to be maintained at all hazards, and which forms a constant source of jealousy and exasperation. There are, consequently, much fewer obstacles to the blending of Christian feeling, resources, and energy in evangelical effort, than even in England. Every one who is acquainted with the state of things there, knows that the establishment presents serious obstacles to harmonious effort. The very nature of an establishment creates a division of interests, which, however slight, must impede in some degree the march of religious enterprise. The progress of those free principles which our revolution first established, will inevitably destroy all hierarchies and national establishments. This is doubt-

* The Catholic missions in the East, and the attempts of the Swedes in the sixteenth century to evangelize Greenland, cannot fairly be considered an exception to this remark.

less one of the methods in which the agency of this country has been employed for the promotion of religion. Our revolution, too, prevented the meditated establishment of a national religion here; and in this we may discern the interposition of Providence.

This religious freedom gives to our country a pre-eminent advantage, in the great work of evangelizing the world. To this we owe, in part, that in this country revivals of religion are more frequent and extensive than in any other; and the effect on missionary enterprises will not be less important. To these considerations is to be added the circumstance, that our country is in the vigour of youth, and possesses unbounded resources. Europe is oppressed with debts, with cumbrous institutions, with the accumulated corruptions of centuries. These give her many causes of domestic anxiety, and prevent the full exertion of her strength. To our country, therefore, seems reserved the high distinction of leading the van in the contest.

Her commercial and enterprising character, and her local position, too, are eminently favourable. Her ships now traverse every sea, and can, as easily as those of Europe, visit Africa, Asia, and the islands of the Pacific, in which the principal scope for missionary enterprise is to be found. But our situation gives us an advantage over Europe. We shall soon possess ports on the shores of the Pacific, and a passage will undoubtedly be soon effected at some point on the isthmus of Darien. We shall then be placed in the neighbourhood of the islands of the Pacific; and the passage to Asia, that great strong-hold of idolatry, will be rendered easy and expeditious; especially when the proud achievement of our countrymen, the steam-boat, shall be applied to navigation on the ocean.* This easy communication with heathen countries will incalculably facilitate missionary operations.

In Africa, too, there is a wide field for evangelical labours; and the circumstances in which our country is placed, indicate that she is destined to take a distinguished part in the moral regeneration of this injured continent. There is a fitness in the arrangement, that America, to whose shores so many thousands of the sons of Africa have been borne in slavery, should take the lead in arresting the guilty tide, and atoning for the unutterable wrong. She has actually commenced the work. The first legislative enactments to check the slave trade, were adopted by some of the colo-

* It appears, that the genius of Perkins has, in fact, already overcome the difficulties which have hitherto prevented the employment of the steam-boat for long voyages.

nies in this country, twenty years before the suppression of the traffic by the British Parliament. It was interdicted by Congress, the moment the constitutional limit expired; and at present our prohibitory laws are more severe than those of any other country.

But there is another consideration, which bears more directly on the point. The most effectual method of evangelizing Africa will doubtless be found in the establishment of colonies on the coast, from which the light of religion and science may go forth, like a lamp that burneth, over her benighted wastes. These colonies must, from the nature of the climate, be mostly inhabited by blacks, who, if previously furnished with adequate instruction, and familiarity with the usages and arts of civilized communities, would doubtless be most efficient instruments in the accomplishment of the great object.

The United States possess eminent facilities for the establishment of such colonies. In their immense black population, they will, for many years, find the means of furnishing colonists, inured to labour, familiar with the agriculture and some of the other arts of this country, and many of them sincere converts to the religion of Jesus. The work is already commenced. The American Colonization Society has established a colony at Cape Montserado, and appearances, at present, are ominous of its prosperity. This and similar colonies will furnish missionaries; and will be favourable situations for institutions, in which native youth may be trained for missionary toils; where the Bible and other books may be printed; and whence the waters of salvation may flow, to cheer and fertilize the desert with the beauty and fragrance of the rose. The British colony at Sierra Leone has already realized, in part, these anticipations. It is a flourishing religious community, and its influence on the neighbouring tribes is salutary. Intercourse has been established, adapted to advance the interests of the natives, to invite confidence, to exhibit the advantages of civilization; to display the power and extend the triumphs of Christianity. This colony, however, consists mostly of recaptured slaves, who cannot, of course, be prepared to act with the same success as the civilized blacks from this country. The colony must, moreover, find a limit in the suppression of the slave trade.

There is another department of evangelic exertion, of high importance, in which, we believe, our country is to take a distinguished part. The Jews are to be converted to the faith of the Gospel, and to acknowledge the Redeemer as their Prince and Saviour. These descendants of Abraham

are scattered over various parts of the world; and in every country but ours, they are the objects of popular prejudice, or legal disabilities. In Europe, where attempts are now in progress for their conversion, obstacles of the most formidable kind are found in the state of public feeling. Exasperated by the injuries, which for centuries their nation has endured, the Jews look on Christians with suspicion and hatred. On the other hand, the Jews have so long been regarded with aversion, that even Christians are scarcely prepared to treat them with kindness. These considerations have led to the formation of a colony in this country, whether the converted Jews may repair, and under the protection of our free constitution, receive religious instruction. Missionaries can here be educated, who will enter, with eminent advantage, on evangelical toils among their brethren in other parts of the world. The colony will be itself a missionary society; and in alliance with the benevolent in our own and other countries, may be expected to take an important part in leading the dispersed of Judah to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls. It may be added, as a significant fact, that the only Protestant mission at Jerusalem is under the direction of a society in this country.

We cannot further pursue this inviting subject. Sufficient has been said, to give strong corroboration to the idea, that God has destined this nation to be a signal instrument in the accomplishment of his purposes. And what, my countrymen, could constitute a brighter and more glorious destiny? What if she should rise, sovereign of the ascendant, and sway the sceptre of the world? What if she should become pre-eminent for all that is illustrious in science, and all that is liberal and accomplished in literature? How worthless would this distinction be, compared with that of aiding in establishing the peaceful kingdom of Immanuel; of blessing the earth with freedom and happiness; of becoming the benefactress of mankind; and, in fine, of restoring to our desolated world the smile of Paradise? Our hearts ought to rejoice in the contemplation; and we should all feel an additional tie to our country, and stronger motives to consult her true interests and her lasting happiness.

I make no apology for inviting your minds to these considerations. Though seldom found among the topics of discussion on this anniversary, they are not alien from the true purposes of the celebration. We should be unworthy of our pious and patriotic ancestors; ungrateful for the blessings which the hand of God so profusely scatters in our path, and unfitted to discharge the high trust committed to us as American citizens, should we, on this occasion, refuse to recog-

aise the hand which has led our country, through all her fortunes, to her present height of prosperity and happiness. If Demosthenes* could publicly acknowledge the benevolence of the Deity, manifested in the preservation of the republic; if Cicero could exclaim, when his country had escaped from the conspiracy of Cataline: "Ille, ille Jupiter restitit: Ille Capitolium, ille hæc templa, ille hanc urbem, ille vos omnes salvos esse voluit,"†—surely it becomes him, who on this day addresses his countrymen, to record, with grateful praise, the loving kindness of the Lord.

It is particularly incumbent on us, my fellow students, to indulge reflections of this kind. As members of an institution, which owes its existence to the enterprise and vigour of religious principle; which has risen amid the prayers of the enlightened and the good in our land, and which has been devoutly consecrated to the service of God, it is appropriate to our station that we catch the spirit of its founders. While pursuing, amid these peaceful shades, the delightful paths of science, let us remember that our country expects us. She looks to her educated youth, for the future functionaries of her government; for her teachers of religion, morals, and literature. Be it ours, then, to foster those principles which will prepare us for the upright and efficient discharge of all our duties. Let us love our country with a filial affection: while we refuse to share in the intemperate and interested excitements of party feeling. Let us love her for her own sake—for the sake of our ancestors—for the sake of posterity. She is worthy of our affections, and well deserves that we should toil to promote her happiness. Let us remember, that we can in no way advance her real prosperity, unless we aim to strengthen and perpetuate the principles of our forefathers, and above all, to extend the influence of true religion on the hearts and understandings of the people. Let us remember, too, that the brightest destiny of our country is connected with her religious character, and with the part which she shall take in the accomplishment of that great design of Heaven, with the progress of which the movements of our world itself are concerned; and at the fulfilment of which the nations of the earth shall be merged in the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ—and the voice of the archangel and the trump of God shall announce, that "time shall be no longer."

* *Αν τις ιδειν, Ο Ανδρες Αθηναιοι, δαξει μοι την, προσα τα: Θεων. εννοσαν Οικνησαν γενομενην τη πολει, &c.—1st Olynthian*

† Oration III. in Catalinam