

AN

ORATION,

DELIVERED IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
AT NEWARK, JULY 4th, 1803, BEING THE  
ANNIVERSARY OF AMERICAN  
INDEPENDENCE,

BY LEWIS MORRIS OGDEN, A. B.  
STUDENT AT LAW.

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF A NUMBER OF  
THE GENTLEMEN OF THE TOWN.

*"The better please, the worse displeas'd  
"I ask no more."———*

---

—NEWARK—

PRINTED BY JOHN WALLIS.

[1803]

best copy  
available

---

# A N O R A T I O N.

---

IMPRESSED with a due sense of the honor once more conferred on me, I stand a second time before this respectable audience, to exert my feeble powers in celebrating an event fraught with consequences most beneficial to the human race—an event which severed my country from a haughty parent, and gave her a rank among the nations of the earth.—I should sink under a task which demands the efforts of a genius sublime as his who planned and executed the mighty scheme of our Independence, were I not cheered with the consciousness that my errors will meet with candor, and my exertions, however far below the dignity of my theme, be received with the allowances always due to youth and inexperience.

In commemorating the birth day of that manly and rational freedom, which gives dignity to human nature, and value to existence, it were a task worthy of one far abler, than myself to enquire into the true principles of civil liberty, and to distinguish them from those false and destructive dogmas which have disgraced the present age, and given I fear a fatal and deadly stab to the best rights of nature and humanity. To separate Freedom and Licentiousness; to draw that nice and almost imperceptible line which forms the barrier between no less than happiness and misery; and to instill into my fellow freemen a noble ardour for truth and justice, is to rear the Temple of Liberty on its noblest, firmest basis; it is to erect it on a foundation which shall withstand the shock of ages, and triumph over the omnipotence of time—

Let it not discredit my opinions on a political subject, that I am young and inexperienced ; for the principles I am about to advance have been consecrated by the most illustrious and virtuous of every nation, and of every age.—Neither let me incur the censure of any man, should my opinions not correspond with those he has been accustomed to cherish.—In this good land, as high as it is happy, and as virtuous as it is great, every man claims as his unalienable birthright, the liberty of freely speaking what he freely thinks.

The rights of man are of two denominations, as man has a two fold nature—he is either a solitary individual ; or he is a member of a Corporation.—As an independent individual he has a right to all he can acquire ; as a member of a corporation he has only a right to what he can acquire without trespassing on others.—In society, therefore, his rights become relative and confined, and consequently in questions that relate to man in society, we are not to enquire what are his abstract and solitary rights, but what are those rights which may be allowed him consistently with the common advantage. Our individual rights ought to be considered as so completely subordinate to the interests of the whole, and consequently so distinct from our individual interest, that our first care in forming ourselves into a Political body, must be the establishment of a Power which no individual can possibly resist.—

Natural liberty has been defined, the right of common on a waste ; but civil liberty is the safe, exclusive enjoyment of a cultivated enclosure.—The rights then which constitute our civil liberty, are the only rights worth maintaining, and these are properly the rights of the People. The very word people presupposes society, and consequently subordination ; and man, as a part of the people, has his civil rights to consider, which include as much of his natural rights as are wholesome and salutary in his present circumstances.—Nor can man in this situ-

ation, be said to be removed out of a state of nature; for it is only an improved state of nature, to which he has advanced.—The weakness of infancy, the vigor of manhood, and the wisdom of age, are all in a course of nature; and the real import of the term is so far from being confined to a state of uncultivated independence, that art and habit do in fact belong to our nature and are a part of our original constitution. It is this spontaneous faculty of improvement, that is the distinguishing property of man, in opposition to the brute: A state, therefore, to which the exercise of this attribute exalts him, cannot be otherwise than a state of nature to man, and consequently the rights which belong to this state are natural rights; and our civil rights are the rights of nature and of man, in those circumstances of improvement to which the exercise of his natural faculties has raised him. Let us no longer then be imposed upon by those savage theories about natural liberty and the rights of man.—Let us consider our rights as merged in our interests, and let us disclaim all those boasted rights which are incompatible with our real happiness. The right which we ought to contemplate with the greatest satisfaction, is the right of restraining by mutual compact and general consent, those unsocial rights which ought no where to be exercised but in the wildest licentiousness of savage life.

Let it not be inferred from these principles, that I do not venerate civil liberty, and the rights of the people. As an American, I reverence rational independence; but I have learned to know, that rational liberty implies restraint, and that the rights of the people require to be secured by a strong and energetic government; which government, to endure, must be accommodated to man's nature, and the mixed circumstances of his condition here. It must be built on no abstracted doctrines of right, but on the more solid grounds of expediency—It must suppose and allow for human passions and human frailty—It must maintain a controul over these passions by directing

them to mutual opposition—It must turn them, when it can, into favorable channels—It must proceed upon a supposition that industry begets property—property, inequality—inequality, ambition—It must conciliate, and not oppose these natural tendencies, and enable itself to withstand the shock of unavoidable ages, by warily providing against them.

Politics are no abstract things ; they exist only in their relations to positive facts and occurrences. In the air of speculative possibility they cease to breathe ; they contain no metaphysical demonstrations, no immutable maxims, but are contingent and variable as are all the natural and moral circumstances of man. Nothing is true in Politics that is not experimentally good, and every thing is Politically false that is practically injurious. And thus we see that the principles of government, for which the wild speculists of the present age are searching into remote and occult causes, are in fact deposited in every man's bosom. The sense which our present race of speculative politicians would give to the Rights of Man, renders them as unwarrantable as the divine right of Kings, and is certainly an error far more dangerous in its consequences, as it leads to that worst condition of humanity, a condition of anarchy and confusion. But whatever qualifications others more reasonable annex to this phrase, it is the last imprudence to hold it forth to the people as expressive of the object for which they are to strive. The rights of man to their conception, suppose an equal participation of luxury and power ; not understanding that power implies subordination, and luxury owes its existence to the distinction of orders in society,—That in levelling the rank they rob themselves of employment, and that in raising themselves out of their sphere, they would annihilate that description from which arises the plenty they are so eager to enjoy.

When a people rise from a sense of grievance, their objects are clear and definite; but when their minds are possessed with an enthusiastic and undistinguishing zeal for speculative opinions, they have no reason in their claims or rule in their actions. Urged on in the dark with wild and ungovernable impetuosity, they suppose every thing an enemy which they happen to encounter, and destroy in a moment what ages are insufficient to repair. It was this wild pursuit of the imaginary theory of Equality, utterly impossible to realize, which lately deluged a populous country with blood, and had like to have annihilated one of the mightiest nations of Europe. All the horrors of Despotism ever known or heard of, accumulated into one mighty mass, would not amount to that vast and incalculable sum of ills which the operation of these wild speculations heaped upon the human race. Language is yet without words to paint the enormity of crimes, which from their never before having disgraced and degraded humanity, are yet without a name. Who has not heard of Lyons,—the rich and happy Lyons,—now no more? Her Altars and Churches—Monuments and Temples—all swept into undistinguished ruin—all level with the dust! Who has not heard of her inhabitants, industrious and innocent, almost in a moment swept from the face of the earth? Men—women—children,—all! scarce one left to tell of the hapless end of his friends and his brothers—and to point, if haply he hath not wept himself blind—to the spot where once flourished Lyons. You will ask, my countrymen, who were the actors in this, the deepest tragedy ever exhibited on the theatre of the world? Perhaps some hereditary and bloody enemy, greedy for spoil and thirsting to gorge himself with blood and rapine, suddenly in the dead of night, when no moon or stars shone in the heavens, broke in upon the devoted city and committed the deadly crime? Or, perhaps some mighty earthquake with gigantic force hurled her proud towers on the heads of this devoted people? Ah, no! No foreign foe desolated Lyons, no mighty earthquake levelled her with the dust! This sad ruin was the offspring of those wild the-

ories and fantastic day's dreams of universal equality, which were the baleful sources of so much misery in that unhappy country—that marked so many thresholds with blood—that sent the peaceful and happy from their homes—that were so fruitful in cold massacres and street butcheries—and that dictated a series of lengthened cruelty, wonderful for the unanimity with which it has been characterised, and the spirit of cool deliberation in which it proceeded. When my enlightened countrymen behold such example, of the miseries attendant on false principles of civil liberty, they will know how to value the true,—they will cherish with the fondest veneration that constitution which has conducted them to a haven of happiness the most secure, and to a point of elevation the most exalted. They will annihilate the sacrilegious wretch, who shall dare to lift his unhallowed hand against the fair fabric, and consecrate him to immortal infamy. Another and fruitful source of the miseries of man, is party rage; an enemy that sooner or later destroys every valuable principle of civil liberty, and saps the foundation of every free government. To prove this, we need only unfold the page of history, and instance the fate of the three most celebrated republics of antiquity. If we examine into the causes which either immediately or remotely led to their destruction, we shall trace them, as all arising from the influence of party feuds. Athens, the cradle if not the birth place of the arts and sciences, fell a victim, not so much to the ambition, as to the fears of individuals. Her heroes found no safety from services, but by becoming the masters instead of the servants of the people, because of the influence of party spirit; the populace were taught to believe that their best benefactors were become the enemies of their liberty. Hence spring jealousies, heart burnings, and all those wild ungovernable passions, which form the many headed monster of civil dissension. Wild uproar stalked in the face of day, both sides resorted to arms, and the victor became the tyrant of the very instruments of his elevation.



Carthage, which succeeded Tyre in the commerce of the globe, rose rapidly in power and riches, and disputed with Rome the empire of the world. Led by the immortal Hannibal her armies loded over the fertile plains of Italy, and threatened her proud capital with swift destruction. Already the Roman Eagle clapped his wings for flight; already her proud towers nodded to their fall; when in the centre of Carthage arose dissensions which saved Rome. The mighty Carthaginian chief was stopped short in his career for want of supplies. He retreated, and was finally overcome, and in a few years Carthage was no more.

The liberties of Rome, the predestined mistress of the world, were often martyred at the shrine of party rage. It was this which accomplished the banishment of Camillus,—and her guardian hero, now no longer there to protect her, Rome sunk under the fury of the Gauls, and became a prey to the devouring flames. It was this which generated the struggle of Sylla and Marius, which ended in the domination of one of the bloodiest tyrants recorded in the annals of history—and finally, the dissensions of Pompey and Cæsar, ended in the establishment of an absolute monarchy. On the plains of Pharsalia lies buried the genius of ancient Rome—on that memorable day, the sun of her liberty went down, never to rise again.

With such awful and memorable examples of the fatal effects of disunion before them, every honest American ought to despise the miserable and dangerous maxim, which declares, that parties are necessary to the preservation of a republic.—Those who expect to be gainers by working on the malignant passions of mankind, and who hope to rise on the wreck of civil liberty; those only have dared to insinuate so deadly a poison into the hearts of my countrymen. The very existence of a free government, depends on an union of principle in the minds of the people. It is the master column which supports the fabric, and this once gone, it soon lies prostrate in the dust, to be embles the sport of every breath of popular opinion.—

Unite then, my countrymen, and be happy forever. It is only internal division, that can sap the foundation of your prosperity, and wrest from you the blessings you enjoy. The sword of a foreign enemy we dread not; secure in the bonds of union, firm is our strength; our peace and freedom immortal. The world may confederate its powers, and proudly threaten our destruction—we laugh them to scorn. Strong in the bulwark of millions of united freemen, the guardian genius of our native land, high towering on his rock of adamant, shall scatter the accumulated host, and vindicate the freedom of his country.

Spurn, my countrymen, as the greatest curse to a free country, at the black calumnies which hireling printers daily disseminate to poison your minds, create dissensions, and render your country a mark for the finger of scorn. However these men may boast of their patriotism, be assured they are vipers that gnaw at the very heart of our rational freedom—that are lying in wait to fatten on the spoils of your happiness. The crimes of these men have at length arrived at that degree of enormous magnitude, as to threaten the dissolution of every ligament of society. They proudly lord it over the fair field of honorable fame, and pluck with unlicensed hand from the brow of the hero, his wreath of well earned laurel. Seeing, as we daily see, that no tie of honor or of conscience, nor even the sacred behests of the law, can for a moment influence the conduct or prevent the crimes of these your mortal enemies, it becomes the duty of every honest citizen who loves his country, to unite in expressing that detestation which ought to follow the names of harpies who feast on murdered reputations, and gorge on the fair fame of our best and worthiest patriots. The murderer who stabs his enemy in the face of day, and the cowardly assassin who shelters his crimes in the obscurity of night, are elevated in the air as objects of retributive justice, and consigned to the rack of everlasting infamy. But the man who, under the mask of patriotic motives, levels the arrows of deadly

calumny, full at the hearts of those whom worth or talents have elevated into consideration, and with a stroke of his pen, blots the fairest records of honorable service, is permitted to strut in the open face of day, and to boast of his love of our country and his veneration for truth!!! Who now, shall tread the path of honor? Who shall devote a whole life to his country's welfare, if instead of fame and reward, he reaps a harvest of infamy, sown by the hand of perhaps a stranger, an alien, who sought and found a refuge in our native land, whose protection he repays by destroying the reputations of her chosen sons, and sowing divisions among her happy people? My countrymen, the cure of this evil is speedy and sure—these men exist but from your bounty; withdraw that and they sink into that deep obscurity from whence they ascended, and from whence they ought never to have been allowed to rise. While WASHINGTON, the great and good father of his country lived, calumny brooded silently in her den, or breathed only in whispers, which the wretched authors never dared to acknowledge. But it is the lot of man to die, and Washington, although it was written in the book of fate that his name and virtues should be immortal, could not resist the law of nature. When his great spirit sought its kindred skies, the mild genius of truth and moderation seemed to forsake our country forever! Since that sad hour, no character, however dignified and virtuous, has escaped the most wretched malignity of falsehood;—the hirelings of party have been ever on the watch for errors, and if the inevitable weakness of human nature unhappily did not furnish topics of abuse, the impotence of disappointed malice, broke forth in a torrent of bitter calumnies. Oh Washington! If it is permitted thy mild spirit sometimes to watch over the welfare of America,—thine only and beloved offspring—how wilt thou sorrow to behold thy brothers in arms, thy dearest friends, become victims to the vilest of the human race!—Yet far be it from any citizen of a free country, to attempt to destroy the liberty of the press; it is only its licentiousness which ought to be restrained. Its liberty consists

in freely publishing whatever is true—its licentiousness in the propagation of falsehood. While it restricts itself to the former, it ought to be cherished as the friend of man; but when it degenerates into the latter, it ought to be abhorred as his most virulent enemy. Having thus as far as my weak powers would support me, endeavored to point out the road by which we may still continue to advance in prosperity and happiness, attend me a moment while I congratulate you on another and splendid anniversary of this auspicious æra. Seldom on the great theatre of the world is to be seen a more glorious spectacle, than this day exhibits to the universe; a mighty nation with one consent, celebrating the birth day of their independence, and assembling together in temples and in fields, to offer up to the Great Benefactor of the Human Race, their overflowing gratitude.

My heart expands, while I contemplate the solemn scene, and recognize myself an actor in the sublime drama; and it is here I receive a lesson I will never forget, a lesson of love for my country and reverence for her constitution. Next to Him who wields in his hand the fates of nations, our gratitude should be paid to the Mighty Chief who piloted us through many a rugged sea, into the haven of security—Need I pronounce his hallowed name! Is it not written with characters, never to be obliterated, in every heart that now beats with transport at the recollection of his virtues? Yes! his country's benefactor, needs not my voice to waken the remembrance of his unequalled virtues in the hearts of his countrymen. Here while solemnizing the æra of that happiness which he gained for us, every heart that is cold must be insensate to gratitude, and unworthy of freedom. Here, within these venerable walls, consecrated to religion and virtue, to both of which he was a shining ornament—while every glistening eye is raised to heaven—let every heart greet the father of our country with HAIL—and FAREWELL!

July 4th, 1803; Newark, }  
New Jersey }