

A
DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED AT

BERLIN, July 4, 1810,

ON THE

ANNIVERSARY OF

American Independence ;

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MINISTER OF BERLIN.

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A

DISCOURSE.



ESTHER IX. 19.

Therefore the Jews of the villages, that dwelt in the unwalled towns, made the fourteenth day of the month Adar a day of gladness, and feasting, and a good day.

AMONG all nations, at certain periods of their political existence, we notice a remarkable coincidence of events, forming an epoch in their history, which stands as a national monument, whereon to inscribe and transmit to posterity the wonderful works of God. Such, to the Jews dwelling in the dominions of Ahasuerus, was the fourteenth day of the month Adar, which witnessed their surprising deliverance from the bloody machinations of Haman. Such also, to the people of these United States, is the fourth of July, 1776;

a day which will swell with triumph the bosoms of succeeding generations, and whose annual returns will be celebrated with undiminished joy, so long as liberty and independence shall be dear to Americans.

OUR fathers, who fled into this wilderness from the hand of religious intolerance, brought with them an unconquerable love of freedom. They knew, and they felt, that no people ever had a better right to this blessing, and were resolved never to resign their claim to it. In tracing the records of this country, we find a noble spirit to have existed from its earliest colonization : “ a spirit always vigilant and active, ever constructing barriers against European influence, cementing opposition to it into a principle of patriotism, spurning every concession remotely implicating the independence of their establishment, and hazarding at all times every thing dear to preserve for their offspring a pure and unincumbered inheritance.” To this spirit which they bequeathed to posterity, we owe, under providence, the blessings of this auspicious day.

FOR several weighty reasons, this ought to be regarded and celebrated by Americans as *a good day*.

It is a good day, as it reminds us of the surprising deliverance wrought for us.

I SHALL not attempt to point out the causes, or trace the events of the revolutionary war. It is of more importance, because better adapted to

subserve moral purposes, to eye the hand of providence, and endeavor to awaken gratitude to the Supreme Disposer of all things.

THE events of that war which crowned our independence, and placed it beyond the reach of danger from foreign aggression, attracted, as much perhaps as any war ever did, the wonder of mankind. They beheld with astonishment the successful efforts of a people, hitherto unknown to a greater part of the civilized world, against a nation the first in arts and arms, whose warlike achievements had carried the terror of their name to remotest regions. No wonder curiosity was awakened, and expectation roused with the hope of something great and interesting to man.

IN a review of past transactions, what can be more proper than the grateful acknowledgment of the Psalmist? "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say; if it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us; then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us: then the waters had overwhelmed us, the proud waters had gone over our soul. Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers. The snare is broken, and we are escaped. Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth." So aptly do these words describe our state and circumstances, that the interval of three thousand years vanishes, and we almost mistake them for the pious expres-

sions of an American sage, recounting the mercies of God to his beloved country.

WHEN we consider the power and resources of the hostile invaders, and compare them with the condition of thirteen separate colonies, between which opposite interests and local prejudices almost forbade a union; without authority to raise or means to support an army; destitute of military stores, and uncertain where or how supplies were to be obtained; we are surprised that the independence our fathers nobly dared to assume did not perish in the birth. But heaven was pleased to affix its seal to the glorious act, and that seal no power on earth has been able to break. From first to last, our revolution, was a scene of wonders. May we not entertain the hope, that the invaluable privileges, which have come into our possession thro' a long train of remarkable providences, will not be resigned as the sport of a few years? Is there not reason to believe, that great things are ordained in providence to grow out of that transaction, which encircles with a crown of glory this good day?

AGAIN, this may be deemed a good day, as it shews the comparative excellence of our situation above that of other nations.

It was once the prayer of an eminent statesman, to which with responsive vows to heaven let all our hearts accord: "May glory dwell in our land!" But wherein does the glory of a land consist? Not in the exterior advantages of soil

and climate. Not in unbounded opulence. Not in extent of territorial jurisdiction. Not in domination. Least of all in conquest. To shed torrents of blood, and spread desolation over the face of the earth ; to fill with wretchedness the abodes of innocence and peace ; and to wrest from unoffending nations that liberty and independence which are the birthright of man—if this be glory, it is such as none but infernal spirits should boast, who go about seeking whom they may devour.

THE legitimate glory of a land involves the freedom of its government and the rights of its citizens. A land of slaves has no glory. There is indeed an excess of liberty which borders on licentiousness, and sooner or later ends in despotism : But liberty reduced to a system—liberty confined within the limits of constitutional and legal restraints—liberty, which has no other centre but the enlightened will of the nation, no other object but the common good—such liberty is above all price, and should be the dearer for its being a rare bequest.

WHERE else shall we seek those privileges, political, civil and religious, which are freely enjoyed among us ? Africa, sunk to the lowest point of depression, offers nothing but what excites disgust and aversion. Asia, the ancient seat of empire, next claims attention. But there, alas, the human race groans under the iron rod of oppression, and hath no helper. In Europe, the best civilized and most enlightened part of the eastern continent, we look for something better.

But even there, in many places, despotism holds its leaden sceptre over prostrate man. In others, the rage of conquest has buried in ruins institutions the most ancient, and produced a violent change. And where government exhibits a greater portion of freedom, it is blended with the impure relics of that old system of feudal vassalage, from which that quarter of the globe emerged some centuries ago. Concerning the other parts of this great continent, nothing particular need be observed. It is in confederate America, I repeat, where the inquisitive traveller will find the balance nicely poised between power and privilege; where government exists without tyranny, liberty without licentiousness. Happy people! whose lines are fallen in so pleasant places. Happy people! if we have wisdom to discern, and virtue to maintain, the singular advantages allotted us.

FURTHER, this is a good day, because it brings home to our bosoms, and imprints with renovated force on our hearts, those principles, which are necessary for transmitting unimpaired to posterity the privileges of a free and independent republic. Among the chief of these, let me particularize PATRIOTISM and RELIGION.

THERE is nothing of which we more loudly boast, and yet nothing which seems to be less understood, than the nature of true patriotism. Patriotism does not consist in being of that or the other party. It knows no party. It is an utter stranger to every species of political intrigue. It seldom engages in high debate; and it is never

seen in the secret conclave, or the midnight caucus. It has no man's person in admiration because of advantage. Like charity, it is "without partiality, and without hypocrisy." In a word, it is that sober love of country, which cannot be bribed, and will not be intimidated; which, amidst the clash of political discord, is the parent of calm and steady measures; and which leads a man to pursue with perseverance, but by such means only as have the sanction of truth & integrity, what in his conscience he believes to be for the public benefit. Such is the spirit of patriotism. May this good day witness a happy revival of it!

LET me also name to you religion. This is one of the main pillars, on which rest the order, peace, and stability of republics. As well might we hope that our bodies should continue healthful and vigorous after the animating spirit was fled, as expect that a people should remain free and happy without the aid of religion. Let atheistic and infidel principles be generally adopted and assume a practical character, and all that is lovely, desirable, or useful in a social state will speedily wither and die. Like the chilling blasts of winter, which spread desolation through the vegetable kingdoms, such to the morals and happiness of society will be the disbelief of religious truths. This good day cannot fail to remind us, how greatly we are indebted to the moral influence of divine institutions for the distinguishing blessings of our land.

B

ONCE more, this is a good day, as it sees us in the enjoyment of peace.

PEACE is one of the greatest of our national blessings. To be convinced of this, I need only point you to the evils resulting from war. See the desolations it hath wrought in the earth. See once flourishing kingdoms reduced to a state of awful ruin. See their princes in captivity, their populous cities become ruinous heaps, their young men slain with the sword, and their fields, lately smiling with harvest, now drenched in blood and strewed with the dead. Blessed be God! while other countries have been shaken as with an earthquake, and nations once renowned in history are clad in sackcloth for the loss of their independence and dearest rights, to us it is given once more to celebrate in peace the birth day of our national existence.

If a correct opinion may be formed from certain publications, there are not wanting among us those, who are unwearied in their attempts to plunge us into war with that nation, which presents the only barrier against universal domination. Alas! shall Americans be engaged in demolishing the last fortress of European freedom? Shall they help to break down the mound, which confines the overwhelming torrent? Is war a blessing to be sought? Must the public feelings be wrought up for a state of hostilities? "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." How greatly are we indebted to a good providence, which, when the event we have so much reason

to deprecate seemed inevitable, repeatedly interposed to prevent it? This is the Lord's doing; else had our passions, irritated and inflamed, precipitated measures, which might have changed to bitter lamentation the rejoicings of this day.

But I will detain you no longer, than while I ask your attention to a few reflections.

1. If this be a good day, it should never be forgotten in the annals of America. It ought to be kept in grateful remembrance from age to age. Parents should teach their children, how that the Lord heard us in the day of our distress, and delivered us from all our fears. Do we venerate the descendants of Israel, who, ages after the event, rehearse with emotion the story of their deliverance from servitude in Egypt, and peaceful settlement in the land of Canaan? and shall not we, with gratitude expanding our hearts and joy glistening in our eyes, celebrate the day, which laid the foundation of these rising States? Had they their fourteenth day of the months Abib and Adar? We too have our fourth of July, a day marked as good in the calendar of Providence: Let it not fail to refresh our minds with the memory of the mighty acts of the Lord.

2. If this be a good day, let it call forth the voice of praise and thanksgiving to Almighty God. "Great things hath the Lord done for us, whereof we are glad." But let not the gladness of our hearts terminate on the benefit received, much less evaporate in noisy mirth; rather let it

rise to God, and carry us as it were up into heaven, to present at the footstool of the throne of the universe the tribute of pious gratitude. "Not unto us," we unitedly cry, "not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake." Such an act of praise to God is our reasonable duty, and it will render this day of the gladness of our hearts pre-eminently a good day.

3. Is this a good day? then see that nothing indecorous in the mode of celebration mar the beauty of it. It will perhaps be deemed too assuming in an individual to dissent from the public voice; but is there not some ground for enquiry, whether the mode for celebrating the day generally in use be such as may best promote the design of it? Rejoice we may and ought; but it should be with pious joy, a joy chastened with holy fear and reverence of the Divine Majesty. In observing it as a national feast there would be singular propriety; but it should be "a feast unto the Lord." Refresh ourselves we undoubtedly may; but then it should be under the apostolic restrictions. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Any thing beside, or inconsistent with this, cannot be acceptable, or of beneficial use. Is the moral Governor of the world honored by noisy expressions of tumultuous joy? Is he pleased with acts in which reason has less share than animal propensities? Are our patriotic feelings strengthened by the effusions of the hour? Is there no danger of encouraging a spirit of dis-

sipation? But I forbear. For myself I freely own, that I have usually retired from scenes of this kind not satisfied on reflection, that the best mode has been adopted of proclaiming the pious gratitude and joy of our hearts.

4. If this be a good day, it becomes us cautiously to shun whatsoever might endanger the advantages resulting from it. In this connexion give me leave to mention the animosity and party rage, which seem so deeply to have infected the American public. That union constitutes the strength of a nation, all allow. That a kingdom rent by internal divisions totters to its fall, none are so hardy as to deny. Surely then those have been ill employed, who by deception and artifice have been increasing an evil, in a view of the consequences of which true patriots cannot but tremble. How much better would all have been employed in seeking to tranquilize the public mind, and in cherishing a spirit of conciliation, without which we are in danger of exchanging our present enviable situation for anarchy and despotism? Let me call on you, my brethren, by the love of our common country, to be firm and united in those principles, which have deservedly acquired you much praise; but be candid towards such as differ from you in sentiment, and by all means shun subjects of irritation and strife. O that this day might witness a coalescence of all genuine Americans! that honest men of all parties would meet and unite on the ground of common utility!

5. LET this good day lead us to anticipate the period of universal peace, liberty and happiness, which is reserved for future generations. As believers in divine inspiration, we are led confidently to expect such a period. Man made in the image of God, shall not always be crushed under the foot of tyranny. The creature, whose nature the Son of God took on himself, shall not always groan for deliverance in vain. That gospel, which Christ came to preach and to establish, shall one day prevail, and banish all evil from among men. The mighty plan is adjusted in every part, and is now in actual progress. Aided by the telescope of prophecy, lift up now your eyes, and catch a distant gleam of the long expected era, when partial evil shall become universal good; when peace and order shall rise out of this troubled scene, and wars cease from the ends of the earth, yes, my respected auditors, wars shall cease. Eternal truth hath fixed in its immutable decree the day, when men shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, and shall learn war no more. Hail, auspicious day! Hail, glorious offspring of evangelic grace! Then, emancipated from the shackles of despotism and the horrors of war, oppressed humanity shall enjoy a calm season of repose. Then shall be blown the trump of Jubilee, and the joyful tidings again echo through the universe, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will to men." Let not fear dwell on the difficulties to be surmounted, or unbelief

whisper a doubt. "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." "The Lord will hasten it in his time."

WHAT revolutions and strange events are yet to precede that time, we may not so much as conjecture. But how much will it be for the honor of our country, if the event we commemorate shall in any measure be instrumental in opening and preparing the way for these august scenes? While the thought cheers our hearts, let it call forth our best exertions for the interests of our country and of the world.

FINALLY. May the good day we celebrate lead all of us to correspond in our practice with these grand designs of providence. As free, let us not use our liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. As citizens of Zion, let us be holy, harmless, undefiled; adorning a profession of godliness with good works. As members of the community, let us act with a good conscience, aiming by all suitable means to encourage and promote useful knowledge and liberality of sentiment, to cultivate the social and moral virtues, and above all, to strengthen in our own and the hearts of others the bands of religion, by which men are united in the pursuit of "things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." Then may we hope for the

continuance of peace and truth in our day. Then, the close of our probation being conie, we shall exchange earth for heaven, the imperfect freedom of men for “the glorious liberty of the sons of God.”

END.

