

AN
ADDRESS,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE
REPUBLICAN CITIZENS

OF
CONCORD, N. H.

ASSEMBLED TO CELEBRATE THE ANNIVERSARY OF
AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE,

FRIDAY, JULY 4, 1806.

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By THOMAS WATERMAN,
MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL IN BOIF, N. H.

AMHERST:
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ADDRESS.

SIR, BROTHERS, AND RESPECTED FELLOW-CITIZENS,

I SURVEY this numerous assembly with pleasing sensibility. I cordially participate that national exultation, which the recurrence of this anniversary cannot fail to excite in the breasts of my auditors. The publicity of my present situation, and a conscious incapacity for the task assigned me, occasion however some abatement of my pleasurable feelings. But as your friendly solicitations have invited me to attempt to lead your reflections on this day of national recollection, to *proceed*, rather than to *apologize*, is my present business and duty.

INSPIRATION teaches that God is love; and the first sensations, recorded of the Deity, are those of complacency and benevolence. "And God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good." If the original prevalence of perfect rectitude and happiness were a source of benevolent satisfaction to the best of Beings, it must be an exercise congenial to a renewed mind, to survey with delight the extirpation of evil principles in any degree, and the diminution of those experimental calamities, which are their inevitable attendants. Evil, like a subtile but virulent poison, pervades the en-

fire system of human action and enjoyment ; its criminality has deservedly forfeited eternal happiness ; and its contaminating influence perverts or destroys every temporal blessing. But in no department of social connexion do the vestiges of human depravity appear more conspicuous than in the multiplied errors, defects and miseries, which it has introduced among mankind, as members of empires, kingdoms, and political bodies, under various appellations. To this primary source (whatever may have been the proximate causes) may be traced the origin of the oppressor and the oppressed, of the tyrant and the slave. To behold then this kingdom of darkness enfeebled in any of its branches, or circumscribed in its extent, must afford a pleasing spectacle, not only to the patriotic, but to the philanthropic and the christian bosom.

To-day, fellow citizens, America displays this august spectacle. To-day she reverts her retrospective eye to that memorable era when it might be affirmed, that "a nation was born in a day." We are now assembled to commemorate the nativity of a nation distinguished by its territorial extent, by the enjoyment of unparalled privileges, and by its probable influence on the condition of civilized society. I shall not take up your time by a needless detail of circumstances, which terminated in the attainment of your independence. It would be impertinent to describe battles before those, who were themselves the actual combatants ; and superfluous to rehearse the prudent councils of the cabinet, or the brave achievements of the field, in the presence of those, who were the sages of the one, and the heroes of the other. The world has long since appreciated the merits of the cause, and witnessed the happy result of the conflict. Let me then rather engage your attention, while I suggest a few thoughts on the fitness and pro-

pricty of the independent station we occupy among the nations, the invaluable blessings, with which it is attended, and the weighty obligations imposed upon us by this auspicious dispensation of an over-ruling Providence.

The independence of the United States is a situation not only essential to our existence and dignity as a nation, but must appear a matter of obvious propriety, when every local circumstance is duly considered. It is true these states were peopled in a great measure by emigrations from Great-Britain; but the mere circumstance of emigration does by no means include a necessary obligation to indefinite dependence and subjection. A late man of genius, as eccentric as brilliant, the celebrated Edmund Burke, made an attempt to disseminate a political tenet, no less wild and extravagant than the doctrine of transubstantiation, enforced by the church of Rome, of which he was generally supposed to have been a member; *viz.* that one series of human beings possessed a right to controul the wills and conduct of all their successors to the end of time. But common sense derides this political Adam, disclaims all affinity to such a progenitor, and leaves his inventor to provide him a place among the fictitious saints of his own catholic calendar.—The nature of the colonial relation between emigrants and the mother country was understood and explained by the ancient Greeks on a more liberal and beneficent scale. Thucydides, in his history of the Peloponnesian war, recording the hostilities, which took place between the city of Corinth and the island of Corcyra, (a former colony, which had assumed independence) introduces the Corcyrean ambassador at Athens as thus expressing his sentiments on the subject of colonial dependence: “Should the Corinthians accuse you Athenians of injustice for inter-

“fering in the affairs of their colonies, let them
“learn, that a colony payeth honour and regard to
“the mother country, so long as cherished by her ;
“but when injuriously treated, it justly becomes
“alienated. For colonists are sent out in order to
“better their condition ; to enjoy equal rights with
“those that remain at home, not to be made their
“slaves.”—But America possessed other claims to
the enjoyment of independence besides those arising
from successful resistance of injustice and oppression.
Had the arrogance of a British parliament never
prompted them to a wanton attack upon colonial
privileges, by an attempt at inequitable taxation ;
had the monarch’s perception of his real interest
been more acute than it was on that occasion, or
has ever appeared since ; had his ears been more
candidly open to the remonstrances of the injured ;
had all occasion of hostility been for that time obvi-
ated ; still the United States would not have been
long retarded in their career towards national inde-
pendence. Their geographical position, their exten-
sive territory, their increasing population, their in-
ternal resources, and above all their high and gener-
ous spirit, forbade that they should permanently re-
main the contented satellite of a little distant isl-
and. But injury and insult accelerated an event,
which the silent operation of time would have effect-
ed with equal certainty. America was called either
to kiss the rod, or smite the arm that held it : she
chose her alternative ; she resisted even to blood ;
heaven crowned her valour with success ; and she
now stands forth among the nations, like a colossal
statue in the midst of a group of images less than
the life. But it will be asked, what are the benefits
resulting to this country from the attainment of in-
dependence ? To this inquiry we reply, in the first
place, that, under the sanction of this dignified posi-

tion among the nations, America has traced out, nay, like Prometheus, has animated with political life, a constitution, and a government formed upon its principles, which has imparted more happiness to those, under its benign operation, than all the proud structures of despotism ever afforded since Adam was expelled from the bowers of Paradise. As a celebrated political writer observes, (and history affixes her authentic signet to the veracity of the remark) "the majority of regal governments sprang from the successful depredations of the heads of banditties: their power was the effect of force; and their domination being established by their victim's inability to resist, the fortunate chief sunk the appellation of a robber in the title of a monarch: the reptile cast his slough, and shone in a new cuticle." How different the origin of the present government of these United States! A nation's suffrages, free as the vital air, select and delegate the virtues and talents of the country, to form the constitutional basis of their future government; a WASHINGTON presides. At length the product of their united patriotism and wisdom appears; it is canvassed, discussed, accepted, acted upon: Say, fellow-citizens, has it not rendered you happy? has it not preserved your freedom? Who, unless the minions of a court, or the more abject tools of those minions, would exchange the liberal and manly spirit of the American commonwealth, for the arbitrary edicts of imperial France, or the ruinous plundering system of British taxation?

But another view of the benefits arising from the independence of these states may be exhibited, inasmuch as that happy event has secured our religious freedom, and placed spiritual affairs where they ever ought to stand, under the sole controul of conscience and the dictates of voluntary

choice. Persons, not actually conversant with the abuses of old governments in matters of religion, can scarcely regard as credible the outrages, which they have for ages perpetrated against the sacred rights of conscience. The cry of the church has been loudly vociferated by some of the most impious and profligate of the human race, as a successful expedient to delude, oppress and plunder the truly religious members of the community. But what church is it that such devotees design to support? is it the pure spiritual gospel church of Christ? is it that evangelical kingdom, which is not of the world; which assumes no dominion over faith, no controul over property? No, verily; those ecclesiastical establishments, which delight most in alliance with secular tyranny, have scarce a principle in common with pure and undefiled religion. With regard to the doctrines of the gospel, it is evident that in many instances they have denied the truth, and are turned to fables. Their pompous titles and meretricious dignities are repugnant to evangelical simplicity; their cardinals, archbishops, and the whole of the hierarchal retinue, deserve no better title than spiritual comedians, who "fret and strut their hour upon the stage;" whose insatiable rapacity has acted over again in Europe the impudence of Eli's sons, whose audacious language to the people was, "Nay, but thou shalt give it me now, if not, I will take it by force."—But the glorious revolution in America, the establishment of her independence, and the enlightened principles of her republican constitution, have vindicated at once the rights of God and of man. As an ardent friend and humble dependant on the pure religion of the cross, I rejoice that divine truth *here* exerts her mild and energetic influence. This is an invaluable consequence of the blessing we this day commemorate. Were not this

country independent ; were she still in subjection to a foreign sceptre, some legate from Rome, or some vicar-general from Lambeth, might undertake to dictate our creed, or enact canons to regulate our discipline and worship. To what excess ecclesiastical intolerance has been pushed by the ministers of a state religion, I need not inform those, who are versed in the history of Europe. The systematic barbarities of the inquisition ; the dragoonings of Lewis XIV. and other persecuting princes ; the tyrannical usurpations of protestant hierarchies ; and every assumption of right to interfere with the religion of another in any mode or degree—are all predicated upon the same false principle, that human authority possesses a right of coercion in spiritual concerns. This absurd and pernicious tenet is boldly opposed by the constitution of America ; and this opposition both in theory and practice constitutes, in the speaker's apprehension, one of the most estimable benefits of our political emancipation.

Our time will not permit to particularize nor even to mention the numerous advantages resulting from the possession of independence. But there is one monster laid prostrate by that grand event at the foot of rational liberty, over whose fall every feeling heart must indulge in rational exultation : I mean the useless and despicable distinctions of aristocracy, and the unnatural law of primogenitureship, by which they are uniformly and indeed necessarily supported. It has been said with great propriety that aristocracy has never more than one child, to the aggrandizement of whom every other feeling must be sacrificed. But, thanks be to heaven, the American republic infolds *all* her children in the embraces of her love, and forgets none of their interests in the distribution of her parental bounty. She leaves to monarchical governments the base policy of improv-

crushing all the members of the principal families in the community, to enrich the eldest sons, in hopes that the disinherited and destitute branches may be entangled with the greater ease in the web of ministerial corruption. She has forever annihilated those useless and debasing titular distinctions, which have dishonoured society. From the republican calendar the *noble* is expunged to make room for the *man*; and, instead of gazing with stupid wonder at tinsel stars, which jewellers create, we think our admiration better directed in contemplating those real luminaries, which God has formed, and placed within the inspection of mortals for useful and beneficent purposes.

THESE, my fellow citizens, are some of the blessings connected with the establishment of the independence of this happy land. They are blessings of the first magnitude in the social scale: their reality is beyond dispute; and I am persuaded, every bosom feels that their value is beyond estimation. . May I not address this assembly in the words of Brutus to the Roman citizens, on the catastrophe of Cæsar's assassination? "Who's here so base, to choose to be a bondman? If any, speak; for him have I offended. Who's here so rude, that would not be a freeman? If any, speak; for him have I offended. Who's here so vile, that would not love his country? If any, speak; for him have I offended." If, as I trust, no character so odious can be found in this assembly, then none have I offended. The portrait of our national prosperity, now exhibited, displays the chaste features of truth; and every heart, zealous for his country's welfare, will exclaim, with the Venetian patriot, "esto perpetua."

THE subject of this day's contemplation holds out, my friends, a pleasing encouragement to every fu-

ture effort of patriotic exertion. Divine revelation, that best of instructors, admonishes us not "to despise the day of small things." America, in her zenith, walking in the brightness of political glory, both describes the path, and administers by her success a strong incentive to inferior planets, just visible in the horizon of freedom. Let none then be discouraged in any stage of the salutary process: the royal David never regretted that he formed the plan or collected materials for the superb temple at Jerusalem, though the honour of the actual construction was reserved for his son and successor. It is very unfair and desponding reasoning to infer, that, because every thing aimed at is not immediately acquired, nothing beneficial to the interests of society can have been obtained. For my own part, though from a very juvenile period of life I have indulged an uniform predilection for the republican system, founded upon conviction, (which every year confirms) that it is adapted to diffuse the greatest portion of enjoyment through the community at large; yet I can rejoice in the amelioration of the condition of the human species, under whatever form of government that improvement may appear; nor can I admire the depth of that man's understanding, or in the least sympathize with his feelings, who affects to deplore the subversion of the Bastille, and sigh over the expulsion of a race of weak and worthless tyrants, because the conqueror at Marengo and Austerlitz, the scourge of the Vandals of Europe, has been subsequently elevated to an imperial throne.

IN taking leave of this respectable assembly, may I be permitted earnestly to recommend to them a manly, undisguised, yet liberal adherence to those republican principles, those elements of political science, which we this day decidedly avow. Beware, fellow

citizens, of sinking the dignified character of the patriot into the insignificant personage of the mere blind partizan. Let your affections be fixed upon principles, and your attachment to individuals be for their sakes, and in due subordination to them. It was once asked of the protestant divines by a conceited papist, "Where would have been your religion if Luther and Calvin had never existed?" To which the ready Chillingworth returned this apposite reply: "It would have been where it always was, and still is to be found, in the holy word of God." And should there be any present disposed to demand, what will become of our principles when our present patriotic rulers shall retire from the helm of state? We reply, they will remain unaltered in our hearts; they will be cherished with the most lively affection, while the irresistible will and energy of a free people will enforce them in practice from generation to generation. Let the friends of liberty then never forget, that fidelity to their principles is the grand connecting bond of republican cohesion. In dispersing a corrupt administration, and chasing unprincipled or incompetent individuals from office, we do but dissipate a cloud, which may collect again, and obscure our horizon with a deeper and more threatening gloom; but, in rallying around the standard of never changing truth, in devoting ourselves to the cause of freedom, whoever may be the temporary ministers of her blessings, we shall perpetuate our honour and our happiness; we shall uphold the morning star of liberty in its present bright ascendant; we shall preserve the sun of our national glory in its vertical noon-day lustre.

AMERICAN REPUBLICANS, accept this small tribute of friendly congratulation from a grateful stranger, who tastes with you the blessings he has feebly at-

tempted to celebrate; who never forgets to offer praise to the great Governor of the universe for the social enjoyments possessed under your admirable constitution, and truly republican administration; who sincerely honours your magistrates as the ministers of God to him for good; and fervently implores perpetual blessings upon this favoured land of your inheritance. May He, who holds the destinies of nations and individuals in his sovereign hand, watch over us for good; and, after enjoying under his smiles, the benefits of our earthly Canaan, may he receive us as citizens “of those
“ new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth
“ righteousness.”