

ORATION,

DELIVERED

IN

HEATH

ON THE

ANNIVERSARY OF

American Independence,

JULY THE 4th, 1807.

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By JONATHAN GROUF, A. M.
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MDCCLII.

INDEPENDENCE.

ON Monday the 4th of July, A. D. 1803. the Anniversary of the Independence of the United States of America, was celebrated in *Heath*, by about seven hundred Ladies and Gentlemen, respectable citizens from that and the neighboring towns.—The morning was ushered in by the firing of cannon, beating of drums, and other martial Music (from Capt. FALES' Company of Artillery, and Capt. LEAVITT's Company of Infantry,) when a Procession was formed on the Green near the Meeting-House, and elegantly arranged to the best advantage by Capt. ROGER LEAVITT, in the following order—Capt. FALES' Artillery in the front of the Meeting-House; then Capt. LEAVITT's Infantry—Civil Magistrates—Commissioned Officers in general—Citizens at large: the whole forming three sides of a square, and extending from the Meeting-House door, to Mr. TUCKER's Inn.—The whole column took distance and faced inward, and in that order the President and Orator—Clergy—Committee of Arrangements, and 130 Ladies were conducted by the Music from Mr. TUCKER's Hall through the Column into the Meeting-House. The particular denominations in the Column beginning in the rear, closed, faced to the Right and Left, and followed the Ladies, 'till the whole were seated by order; when after Prayer, and the performance of several pieces of Music, an ORATION, was delivered by the Rev. JONATHAN GROUT, and received with that attention and satisfaction it justly merited. The services being closed by singing a piece entitled, "Independence," which did great honor to the Choir of Music, the whole Assembly returned in reversed order—The Ladies were conducted to Mr. TUCKER's Hall, and the Gentlemen under an extensive bowery on the Green, under which Seats and Tables were prepared, and an elegant Entertainment provided, and the following Toasts were drank under the discharge of Cannon and the resound of Instrumental Music.

1. *The Fourth of July*—May the annual return of that auspicious day which gave America an exalted rank among the nations, be hailed with transport by every friend to liberty.

2. *President Jefferson*—May his administration be patriotic, discreet, and upright.

3. *Governor Strong*—Mild and firm, may he long remain a chief pillar in our political fabric.

4. *Militia of Columbia*—May they conceal the military accomplishment of the soldier, under the mild virtues of the citizen.

5. *Soldiers under Arms*—May the spirit of heroism ever glow in your breasts, and a resolution to live free or die.

6. *The American Flag*—May it ride triumphant through the field of Mars, and never want bold tars to defend it.

George Washington

7. *The Memory of the departed WASHINGTON*—May the influence of his counsels be as lasting as his fame was brilliant.

8. *The Honorable John Adams*—May reflection on his past services in the cause of American liberty, fill every patriotic heart with gratitude and esteem.

9. *The Clergy of Columbia*—May the Almighty be their friend, and they friends to religion.

10. *The Civil and Religious institutions of our Ancestors*—May they be as lasting as their influence is salutary.

11. *Commonwealth of Massachusetts*—May it ever be distinguished and distinguishable in the cause of freedom, moral justice, and the rights of man.

12. *The United States*—May the seventeen links be all of republican gold, and form an indissoluble chain; let them adopt the policy of no nation, but improve by all.

13. *The American Fair*—May they be nurses of Heroes, Patriots, and Statesmen.

14. *The Cheshire Cheese*—May the Mammoth of Monticello be fed on the well dried Cheese of Federal Republicanism, and not stuffed with the soured curds of democracy.

15. *The Youth of Massachusetts*—May their policy, like that of our Fathers, be to cherish virtue and suppress vice.

16. *The World at large*.—May truth and friendship pervade the earth, and may all nations be freed from war, oppression, personal slavery and religious tyranny.

17. *The late Army of the United States*—May the memory of those heroes whose lives have been offered on the altar of independence, be engraven on the heart of every American.

A VOLUNTEER TOAST—By the Rev. Mr. SMITH.

May the flavor of this good Wine teach us the happy effects of industry—the thunder of the Cannon, the strength of our country—and the brilliancy of the ladies, the sweets of domestic happiness.

The services of the day throughout were religiously observed with unanimity, civility and decorum, and strict attention paid to order, without the useless fashion of bursts of applause and clapping of hands.



AN

O R A T I O N.



FRIENDS, AND FELLOW-CITIZENS,

THE Anniversary of a day, which gave birth to the liberty and independence of three millions of Americans, cannot be deemed uninteresting, or pass by us unnoticed. No, my friends, we feel our country's cause our own.

THOUGH no less than twenty-seven revolving years have completed their course, since the establishment of our national independence, yet the circumstances which led to it, I trust, are by no means forgotten. Look around upon this numerous audience, and where can we discover a countenance, which does not beam with rays, expressive of the patriotic feelings of the heart?

Does not the same spirit, which inspired our fathers in their struggles for liberty and independence, now animate us, their sons, with a like zeal for the preservation of those dear bought privileges? Like them we feel for our country. Upon the mere contemplation of the 4th of July, the genuine spark of '76 enlivens; upon the ushering in of the day, it kindles to a flame; catches from bosom to bosom; we meet, and with a pleasure unknown to any but patriotic breasts, hail the auspicious epoch; an epoch, from which we may date the political nativity of this great nation;—an epoch which gave birth to one of the most excellent constitutions of government, and

opened to the most rapid national prosperity of which we have any account in the annals of fame.

BUT here let us for a moment pause, and consider the hand to which we owe this rising greatness. Was it by our own strength, that we gained this happy freedom, and rose to such a distinguished rank among the nations of the earth? No, the hand of Providence was as conspicuous in this, as in the instance of Israel's being delivered from Egyptian bondage, and conducted to the land of Canaan. While weak in ourselves—without resources—without arms for defence, and but simply babes in martial skill, kind heaven interposed in our behalf, and thus we gained the long desired freedom from the cruel grasp of proud Albion's tyrannic hand. The blessing we possess, but the hand which bestowed it, was divine. Not then unto us, but unto God, be ascribed the praise and the glory.

THE day then, which we have convened to celebrate, may well be held dear by every true born American, not only as it points to the origin of our political existence and national greatness, but as it reminds us of our great obligations of gratitude to God, from whom "cometh down every good, and every perfect gift."

WE ought then to respect the day, not as a mere farce accompanied with riot and drunkenness; but as did Israel the day of their signal deliverance from the oppressive hand of unfeeling Pharaoh.

HERE we shall find opening to our view a field for the most enlarged contemplations;—interesting objects presenting in crowds to engage our attention. But the limits proper to be observed will rather at this time induce me to select one out of the many, to give our thoughts the lead on this joyful occasion. That, which I have chosen is liberty, a subject, which, whether understood or not, is in every man's mouth, and the object of every man's wish—a liberty, which

was purchased with the crimson blood of many worthy patriots—a liberty which we perhaps enjoy more fully, than any nation on the globe—a liberty, happily guaranteed to us by our Federal Constitution, and which, we hope, through the benign auspices of heaven, may, for centuries to come, be preserved uncontaminated, and prove the basis of increasing prosperity, and rising glory to our country.

In treating this subject, I propose, 1st. To inquire into the nature and extent of that liberty, the enjoyment of which may rationally be expected under the best form of government : And 2d. To shew how happily our Republican Constitution, beyond that of any other description, is calculated to secure to us such an inestimable privilege. And then to close with a few observations, which the subject may suggest. 1st. Then we may inquire into the nature and extent of that liberty, the enjoyment of which may rationally be expected under the best form of government.

It may, perhaps, facilitate our enquiry to premise, that, whatever may be said with regard to natural liberty, or of all men's being born equally free, the nature of society is such, as begets not only an expediency, but a necessity of subjection. When we consider the natural propensity of man to evil, it must, at once, appear reasonable, that certain rules, or regulations should be adhered to, in order to prevent each from infringing on the other's rights ; or, in other words, to secure to each the peaceable enjoyment of whatever he ought, as a member of society, to claim. Accordingly, reasonable men are willing as members of society, to give up some of their *natural* claims, especially such as are useless, or impracticable, for the sake of holding, by special and sure tenure, certain rights and privileges, which they deem more valuable. These fundamental rules or regulations, are what we understand by a form, or constitution of government ; and the object is, the promotion of happiness in socie-

ty. And the more effectually this object is promoted, the better we consider the form of government. In this we shall all undoubtedly agree, however differently we may think with regard to the particular form, best suited to the attainment of the object. Hence that liberty and that only, which is consistent with the greatest good, or happiness of society is rationally to be expected under the best form of government. Nay, it is the only liberty, which those who feel for themselves, for their families, and their country, can desire.

Our question then may be brought to this, what kind of liberty is that which is most conducive to the happiness of society ?

A MOMENT'S reflection upon the subject will readily lead us to perceive, that this must be a kind of liberty in some degree limited. If existence of order, peace and prosperity, be admitted as necessary to constitute the happiness of society, as it undoubtedly will, it must follow, that a liberty to subvert either of these would be diametrically opposed to its object, viz. the happiness of society. Accordingly the liberty under consideration must be limited. It may extend as far as is consistent with the preservation of the order, peace, and prosperity of society ; but no farther. A man then may enjoy liberty to possess and improve all his reserved rights ; but not to infringe upon the rights of others. He may have ample liberty to do good, but not evil ;—to speak the truth, but not slander ;—to be useful in society, but not a nuisance. This is perfectly agreeable to the liberty, which is granted to the children of GOD. And surely no constitution of government can be supposed better adapted to the state of man, than that which has an infinitely wise GOD for its author ; and no liberty better calculated to favor the happiness of society, than the liberty allowed under such divine constitution. In the language of Paul to his brethren of Galatia, you will permit me then to say, “ Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty ;

only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another."

HENCE, the unrestrained, absolute liberty of individuals, for which some contend, cannot be expected under any form of government, by which the happiness of society is, in the best manner, promoted and secured. Nay, may I not with safety say, that such unlimited, uncontrollable liberty is inconsistent with the very nature of society. It is rather chimerical than real. It may exist in the heated brain of an enthusiastic politician—it may find place in the unbridled imagination of an enraptured Poet; but it has no real existence in any state of society. It is a thing impracticable in itself, and every effort to obtain it, would totally destroy its end. Were we to suppose all the members of society thus free, and all prosecuting their supposed rights, would they not unavoidably infringe upon, and destroy each other's freedom? Or, again, if men were to have such absolute freedom, as imports their having a right to every thing, it would follow that they must all have an equal right to the same thing; consequently no one could have a distinct, or particular right to any thing.

FURTHER, as an unrestrained, absolute freedom implies not only a *right* to possess, or enjoy; but a *power* to improve such right. Were all to assert their claims, or to attempt the exercise of such supposed power, what would be the consequence? Would there not be such a clashing, as would totally destroy the liberty of all with regard to possessing or enjoying any thing? or if were some one, by superior personal force, to actually gain possession, where would be the liberty of the others? In short, this scheme of unrestrained absolute freedom, in every view we can take of it, presents itself as contradictory and impracticable. It holds up the idea of great liberty, where there is no real liberty at all—a right to possess every thing,

while there is no power to possess or enjoy any thing. Hence it must appear that the liberty to be enjoyed in a well regulated society, is not an absolute freedom, but that, which is limited by the best interest of such society. It is a liberty which has the happiness of society for its object. It is a liberty unrestrained on the side of good, but restrained on the side of evil. Possessing this we have all freedom to possess and improve our rights in peace and safety, but not to infringe on those of others—to promote good order, but not to subvert it—to cherish peace, but not to disturb it—to seek our country's honor and advantage, but not her infamy and ruin—to abound in every good word and work, but not to injure ourselves or our fellow-creatures.—This, and this only, is the liberty, that is truly desirable, and to be expected under the best form of government. Though it may not be equal to the wishes of men of licentious principles and unbridled passions, yet it is completely ample to satisfy the desires of those, who are governed by reason, religion, or sound judgment.

WE may now proceed as was proposed, 2d. To shew how our Federal Constitution, formed upon republican principles, is peculiarly calculated, beyond that of any other description, to secure to us the enjoyment of the most rational and desirable liberty.

HERE a very extensive field opens, and we might naturally be led, had we time, to take a view of all the various forms of government, which have existed, as far back as history would enable us to trace them, and to consider their various operations and effects upon the happiness of society. But time will not admit of expatiating. We can only take a cursory view of some of the most distinguished forms, and compare them with our own.

THE original forms of civil government, as far as we have means of information, we have reason to suppose, were but few. The following, perhaps, were

the principal, viz. Monarchy, Aristocracy, and Democracy. These names are each of Greek extraction.

MONARCHY signifies the rule of one, or that the supreme power is vested in a single person. Aristocracy signifies the government of nobles, or the better sort. And Democracy imports the government of the people.

THESE have, however, been mixed, compounded, and varied, so as to receive a variety of different names. Of Monarchies, some are limited, and others not. The kind of government existing in China, and many other places, is termed absolute Monarchy. This is so styled on account of their being nothing to limit the will of the Monarch. This form of government might as fully favor the liberties of the people as any, if the Monarch were always possessed of wisdom and goodness equal to his power. But such is human nature in this depraved state, as rarely affords a character of this description. Consequently, the liberty of the people, under this species of Monarchy, rests upon a precarious foundation, and is but too seldom enjoyed. Another sort termed limited Monarchy, which is the present established government of Great Britain, may be so modified, balanced, and administered, as, in a very considerable degree, to favor the liberties of the people. But, after the most which can be said in favor of it, it appears to abridge the lower classes of the people of many advantages, which are enjoyed under pure Republican forms of government. To name but one: In governments of this description, candidates for offices of public trust are brought into view, and regarded for their noble birth, to the neglect of genius and virtue. Consequently, genius and merit in persons of low birth are more overlooked, and the commonalty fail of the liberty of sharing so equally in the public representation, as is common under Republican governments.

THERE is another species of Monarchy, or rather a corruption of limited Monarchy, which is called tyranny. This takes place, when the King or Monarch assumes and exercises power, not vested in him by the constitution. This, from its very nature, cannot fail of militating against the liberties of the people.

THE Patriarchal government, perhaps, would as properly fall under the first kind of Monarchy. The Father being absolute over those, who come within his jurisdiction. This, no doubt, operated well, when there were but few families, and the heads of them like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But the present state of mankind is such, that a government of this description might not so well suit. Aristocracy, the second original form mentioned, some have thought to be peculiarly favorable to rational liberty. It no doubt, many times, promotes the happiness of society. For it possesses most of the advantages of Monarchy, with less danger, to the people, of the loss of liberty. Notwithstanding, as it confines the people, in their choice of rulers, to the class of nobles, the liberty of the commonalty, as was the case in limited Monarchy, seems to be, in some measure, abridged.

DEMOCRACY, with respect to liberty in elections, seems peculiarly favorable. It would no doubt, operate well, had it sufficient energy. Every citizen, let his parentage be what it may, as soon as he has attained to proper qualifications to recommend him to the public confidence, stands fair for a share in government. This opens a door for the encouragement of merit, and in this respect, proves favorable to liberty. Under this form of government, things often, for a while, wear a pleasing aspect. The greatest difficulty attending this kind of government, is that it is not calculated to bear any considerable height of prosperity. As prosperity increases, pride and ambition are apt to rear their heads, and when disap-

pointed, which frequently happens, they lead to factions, which for the want of energy in the government, issue either in anarchy, or despotism, which must unavoidably, prove subversive of the liberties of the people. Hence, tho' this form of government, while it remains uncorrupted, may prove very advantageous ; yet failing for want of energy, it leaves the liberties of the people very insecure ; and commonly proves of but short duration.

To secure the advantages of each of the original forms, without experiencing their disadvantages, recourse has been had to the expedient of mixing and compounding, as was before observed.

THOUGH the mixed forms of government are usually denominated Republican, yet where they favor more of one of those original forms, than the other, they frequently are distinguished by an additional epithet.

THE original government of Rome, which lodged the supreme power in the hands of the king and nobility, might be termed a Monarchical Republic. When the supreme power is principally lodged in the hands of nobles, or a senate, with but little balance from the other two forms, it is often called an Aristocratic Republic. Of this kind, nearly, was that of Venice, before it was surreptitiously taken by France, during the revolutionary war, and ceded to the Emperor of Germany. The Duke, or Doge, seemed to have very little or no prerogatives, as was the case also with the Commons, the power, being principally, in the hands of the nobles.

IN the ancient Republic of Carthage, where the balance of power was lodged more in the hands of magistrates, chosen by the people, it answered to what is often termed a Democratic Republic.

THE Roman Republic so frequently quoted, was different from the original form of government in that country before mentioned :—It was constructed more

upon the pure Republican principles. They had Consuls, or Dictators, who appeared in the state of princes—Nobles, that composed the Senate, and Magistrates appointed by the people, called Tribunes. The power being nearly equally lodged in the several branches—each mutually serving as a check or balance upon the other.

THIS form of a Republican Government, seems to have the advantage of those already considered. It extends the basis of the constitution wider, and consequently renders it more firm. It comprises the conveniences of every form ;—such as the lustre of a court—the grandeur of nobility—the ease and freedom of the people ; while at the same time, it is better guarded against the common misfortunes of other governments. Each part in the constitution being suited to balance the other.

PERHAPS none of the Republics, either ancient or modern, more nearly resembles our own than this. And according to history it was peculiarly favorable to the liberties, prosperity, and happiness of the people. Ours appears in no respect inferior to it, but on some accounts more advantageous. The checks and balances are, every way, so equal, that the most happy operation is promised. If any one in either of the branches of government should be found to violate his trust, or act repugnant to the constitution, provision is made for his being regularly impeached and discharged from office. Each branch is so independent of the other, that they respectively have full and complete power to execute any business in conformity to the constitution without control. But the moment they exceed the limits of the power constitutionally vested in them, they are liable to lose the whole. This is calculated to give superior energy to government, and at the same time, to effectually guard the liberties of the people. But that which more particularly characterizes our Constitution, is, that while the members

of two of the branches are periodically elected, the members of the other, viz. the Judiciary, constitutionally hold their offices during good behavior. This raises the Judiciary above the influence of popular opinion, which is often shifting, and therefore, affords a more permanent guard for the security of our liberty. The tree of liberty appears happily guarded on every side, and in the most happy situation to flourish and bear fruit. The benefits thence resulting are by no means partial, but general. Not only the liberty of the Executive is secured, and that of the Judiciary, but also the liberties of the Commonwealth at large. All have an equal share in the advantages. Every member of the body politic being thus suitably cherished, the whole grows up equally, and hence acquires superior force and energy. It consequently must appear that our Federal Constitution, beyond any other of a different description, is calculated to secure the rights and liberties of the people, for it enables to repel with greater force, the weight of foreign invasions, or the more easily to quell domestic broils and seditions. Well then we may say, that it is as truly indicative of wisdom in the cabinet as the establishment of independence was of valor in the field.

WE may now close with a few observations, which the subject may naturally suggest.

1st. IN the description of that liberty which may rationally be expected under the best form of government, do we not discover the nature and extent of that liberty, with which we in this land, are favored? What liberty could be desired more? It is the liberty, for which our fathers fought and bled, and which satisfies the desires of every honest man. It is a liberty, that was bought with a price and handed down to us as a precious legacy. Long may we hold it dear! Let it not be said, that the blood of our fathers was spilt in vain! Or, that we have sold our birth-right for a mess of pottage. Possessing full liberty to

improve all our rights, let us harbor no wish to infringe upon the rights of others. To do this, would be to desire the sacrifice of rational liberty to be made upon the paltry shrine of beastly indulgence. Let us then guard against the idle dreams of intriguing libertines, and shew to the world, that we are true born Americans—that we choose to be men, and not brutes.

2dly. OUR subject may suggest to us the gratitude we owe to God for the privileges we enjoy—we are as trees planted by the rivers of waters ; much fruit then may be expected from us. We are favored with a happy constitution of Government, which guarantees to us the most desirable liberty, both civil and religious. And hitherto, by the divine blessing, it has proved favorable in its operations, to the prosperity of our country. Under it the christian religion, which inculcates the noblest sentiments for the support of Republican governments, as well as for the interest of the soul, has, notwithstanding the artifice, intrigue, and more open, bold, and unremitting exertions of disorganizing demagogues, been still preserved.—The tender plant of science has rapidly grown—spread its branches—put forth its buds—expanded its blossoms—and now teems with salutary and invigorating fruit, by which the taste is gratified, and the body politic strengthened. The commercial interests of our country have wonderfully flourished—its population has been rapid, and its wealth incalculably increased. The howling forests have become fruitful villages ; thinly inhabited villages, populous towns ; and inconsiderable towns incorporated and opulent cities. In a word, the prophetic prediction has been literally fulfilled : The wilderness has become a fruitful field, and the desert made to rejoice and blossom like the rose.

3dly. WHILE we are enumerating the advantages we enjoy under our happy constitution, let it be remembered that its beneficial operations depend much upon a wise administration. As there are but very

few forms of government, which, if administered by wise and good men, are found to injure the peace of society, so good systems of government, in the hands of bad men, may be so warped and misconstrued as to infringe upon the rights of the people. It will then be wisdom in us, not to neglect our right of electing, but improve it to the best advantage. Let us turn our attention to men to fill our public offices, in whom wisdom and goodness unite.

FINALLY, while we are contemplating upon the noble privileges, and happy prospects of our country, let us consider what proved the support, and what the downfall of the most promising ancient Republics.

WHILE morality was cherished they lived and flourished, when that was neglected, they quickly fell. The reason is morality is the very soul of a Republican government. Remove this, and agreeable to the observation of a late writer, Government will be like a carcase without a soul. It will soon by its putrefaction, breed the most disgustful vermin, such as intrigue, discord, oppression, and despotism. And as long as government retains its vital principle, *morality*, so long it is connected with religion. Religion and government will go hand in hand as in the days of Moses and Aaron. Both are designed for the happiness of the people. Let us then as we regard our constitution, and value the privileges which it secures to us, endeavor to cherish those religious principles, which must prove its support, and shun those vices which tend to its downfall. Do we regard our country, our families, or ourselves—let us choose the ways of wisdom and copy the example of Christ, whose life was the most complete portrait of genuine patriotism; then shall we support the basis of our constitution, and secure for our souls a treasure, which will remain unhurt amidst the convulsion of elements, “the wreck of matter, and the crush of worlds.”