

AN  
ORATION

UPON THE

*INDEPENDENCE*

OF THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

DELIVERED AT LITCHFIELD, N. H.

*AT THE REQUEST OF A COMMITTEE OF ITS INHABITANTS,*

*BEFORE A VERY NUMEROUS AUDIENCE,*

July 4, 1803,

Being the 27th Anniversary.

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BY HON. CLIFTON CLAGETT.  
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JOSEPH CUSHING, PRINTER, AMHERST, N. H.

1803.

# *Request of the Committee.*

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*Litchfield, July 4, 1803.*

SIR,

AGREEABLY to the desire of a great number of the Citizens of this and the neighboring towns, the Committee of Arrangements for the day, present you their thanks for the very appropriate, ingenious and highly agreeable Oration, this day delivered by you upon the INDEPENDENCE of the United States of America ; and request of you a copy for the Press.

We are, Sir, with esteem,  
your humble Servants,

SIMEON KENDALL. }  
THOMAS BIXBY. } *For the Committee.*

HON. CLIFTON CLAGETT, Esq.

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*July 6, 1803.*

GENTLEMEN,

IN compliance with your very polite request, I present the Copy desired ; and, while conscious that the hasty performance alluded to falls far short of what the subject deserved, I feel highly gratified that any thing therein contained should add to the pleasure, or meet the approbation of my fellow citizens.

With sentiments of respect,  
I am, Gentlemen, their and your  
very humble Servant,

CLIFTON CLAGETT.

*The Committee of Arrangements.*



AN

# ORATION.

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*MY RESPECTED AUDIENCE,*

**W**HILE I view so numerous and so respectable an assembly, and perceive their attention to the speaker of the day ; while I contemplate the joyous occasion of our meeting, the novelty of my own situation, and the late uncertainty of having the honor to address you, I regret the want of opportunity to have paid that attention to the subject, which its importance merits. But, impressed with a firm reliance upon your candor and generosity, I shall attempt a very few remarks relative to the happy anniversary we celebrate.

**AND,** in order rightly to appreciate your National Independence, while enumerating some of the great and inestimable privileges and blessings flowing therefrom, it may not be amiss in a brief and cursory manner to notice some of the efforts by which it was attained.

Two Centuries have not elapsed since your venerable and pious ancestors, oppressed and persecuted by their government, fled from their native land and took refuge in this, then a barren and inhospitable wilderness.\* Here, though more than three thousand miles distant from their parent state; though uninured to the inclemency of the seasons, enfeebled by famine, and wasted by pestilence; though surrounded by ferocious beasts of prey, and more ferocious savages; yet, surmounting these unparalleled difficulties, and confiding in the protection of heaven, here they settled a colony; here they sowed the seeds of freedom and planted the TREE OF LIBERTY. Here with their weapons of defence in their hands they earned their scanty subsistence by the sweat of their brow; and here they grew and multiplied, until “a king arose who knew not Joseph.”†

\* THE month of April, 1607, is the epoch of the first permanent settlement in this country.

† JAMES I. the reigning monarch at the time of the settlement of the Colonies, balancing between a bigotted zeal for persecuting the people, then called puritans, and an insatiable thirst for colonization, assured the Plymouth Company, who had fled to Holland, but had petitioned him for liberty of conscience, that he would connive at, and not molest them, on account of their religious sentiments, when settled here; and he kept his word. Open hostilities did not commence till the reign of George III.

But here, alas, they soon experience the envy and frowns of their parent state; their hard earned liberties are too soon assailed; “the king and parliament of Britain claim and exercise over them a supreme legislative right; they alter their most valuable laws, and the fundamental forms of their governments; tax them without their consent or representation; keep among them standing armies in time of peace; deprive them in some instances of their inestimable and inherent right of trial by a jury of their peers; annul their charters, and transport them beyond seas, to be arraigned at a foreign bar for pretended offences.”

THESE, though but part of their grievances, were too humiliating for Americans to bear; they protest; they remonstrate; they humbly petition for redress, but are answered by injury, and coercion ensues.

Now scenes, unprecedented in the annals of time, unfold to view. Great Britain, the mistress of empires, forgetting the fostering care, and parental nurture of her colonies, blockades your ports; invests your towns; invades your country. Your brethren are slain. These were times which tried men's hearts, and called for wisdom and energy, as well in the cabinet, as in the field.

BEHOLD your civil fathers racking their invention, and exerting every nerve to its greatest tension, to devise means to defend and save your invaded country. See the supplication of your ambassadors for the aid of a foreign court\* unavailing, until ARMIES of your enemies had capitulated.† Behold your brethren, destitute of the implements of war, *beating their plough-shares into swords, and their pruning-hooks into spears*; flocking to the standard of liberty, and rushing against British veterans and mercenary savages.

VIEW yonder eminence in your vicinity, *Bunker's monumental Hill*. There your brave heroes greatly fell amidst their more numerous slaughtered foes.‡ See columns of fire ascending from your devoted, ruined towns.¶ Hark! What clashing and thunder of arms resound with awful echo

\* THE court of France.

† FRANCE refused her aid until after the surrender of Chamblee, St. Johns and Montreal, and the memorable capture of Burgoyne and his army.

‡ ONE thousand Americans on this height were, on the 17th June, 1775, attacked by 3000 of the flower of the British troops. 1054 of the latter and 139 of the former, among whom was the brave and patriotic WARREN, fell in this unequal contest.

¶ Charlestown, New-London, &c.

through the ambient air, while wondering nations wait the doubtful issue. At length, heaven be praised, victory declares for LIBERTY.

Now behold your infant country emancipating herself from slavery, by the conquest of her enemies. The auspicious day arrives. INDEPENDENCE is declared.\* A nation is called into existence.

YONDER bright luminary has made but twenty-seven annual revolutions, since Columbia arose, as out of chaos, and took an exalted station among the nations of the earth; proclaiming liberty, both civil and religious, to all her sons.

AMERICANS, arduous indeed were your efforts for liberty; incalculable was the price, but invaluable the acquisition, and glorious the consequences of your Independence. More than six millions of free and enlightened people, now inhabiting the United States of America, are enjoying national blessings, emanating from it; and are exalted to privileges above all other nations of the earth. Your Constitution of Government, the wonder of nations, the pride of republicans, the palladium of liberty, is the result of it. By this constitution a republican government, which is

\* JULY 4th, 1776.

the nursing parent of science, and the birth-right of Americans, is guaranteed to you and your posterity. You are in the full enjoyment of personal security, personal liberty, and the right of personal property. You have it in your election to do every thing which a good and virtuous people would desire to do ; prohibited from acts only, which would be injurious to yourselves. While these rights remain inviolate, you are free from tyranny and oppression ; for tyranny and oppression must operate, if at all, in opposition to some of these. You have attained an high national character ; your credit is established with foreign nations ; and you are highly respected. Your commerce is greatly extended ; property is valuable ; labor and exertion receive their reward. Your population and national greatness are increasing beyond all calculation. Riches, plenty and happiness are flowing in upon you in abundance ; and, being protected by laws of your own enacting, you dwell in safety under your own vine and fig-tree, enjoying the rich fruits of your labor ; and nothing can molest or make you afraid.

THESE invaluable privileges flow from your Independence ; but under divine Providence are secured to you by your CONSTITUTION *alone* ; and, while this remains unimpaired, your freedom is sure ;



but, if *once* destroyed, in all human probability *tyranny* would grow out of its ruins. The history of ages past, nay, our own observations in latter times, teach us that republics, whose citizens have not been united in virtuous, civil and religious principles, have fallen ; that they have lost, but never regained their liberties.

THEN, my Fellow Citizens, while with gratitude and reverence we bow before the Great Author of all our privileges and blessings, and give thanks to him for his munificence to us, let us be careful to shun the rocks upon which others have split ; let us cherish those principles which are essential to, and inseparable from our happiness. Let attentive nations see that there is virtue in Americans ; and, as you have taught them how to *acquire*, so teach them how to *maintain* their rights and liberties.

RALLY round your Constitution. View it, as the ark of your political safety ; and, like a band of brethren, descended from the same common stock, unite to support it, and save it from infraction. Then your Independence, and all your invaluable and dear bought rights and privileges will be secure.

As essential to this, protect from reproach those, your faithful servants, who have been inde-

fatigable in their efforts to maintain that necessary and beautiful equilibrium of power in the three grand constitutional branches, the legislative, executive and judicial departments in your government, striving to continue them distinct, and to prevent their collision. Consider them, and all others, who have labored to preserve the fundamental principles of your constitution inviolate, as among your *best friends*. Shield them from the malevolent tongue of slander. Hereby you will stimulate them and others to persevere in your service ; but denying such protection will discourage them.

Avoid factions, political divisions, and party spirit. They are the scourge of society, and the bane of freedom. They have prostrated many a fair sister republic, not only in *ancient*, but, alas, in *modern* times, and sacrificed them upon the altar of despotism.

VIEW with suspicion and disgust the demagogue, who under the specious veil of patriotism, sows the seeds of discord in your communities. He seeks not your happiness, but the gratification of his own or some other's ambition. "His mouth is full of deceit ; the poison of asps is under his tongue."

JUSTLY appreciate your liberties and glory in your exemption from tyranny ; but be admonished to discern with precision between liberty and licentiousness ; and, while you religiously support the former, cautiously to avoid the latter, lest anarchy and confusion ensue. For be assured, that “tyranny,” with all its its hydra heads, “is preferable to anarchy, and even a *bad* government is better than *none*.”\*

IMPRESS upon the minds of all a due sense of order and subordination to civil government, and a punctual observance of the established moral and religious institutions and laws of the land ; for “genuine liberty never can exist in any country, unless protected by law, and aided by morality and religion.”†

ENCOURAGE literature, and continue useful seminaries of education, as essential in free governments. Let pure republican principles be disseminated, and they will be admired and practised.

“CULTIVATE peace. Be prepared for war. Extend commerce. Observe good faith, but avoid alliances with foreign nations ; and guard with vigilance against their arts and intrigues.” It is

\* Blackstone.

† Ibid.

the parting advice of your late beloved WASHINGTON. Depend not upon the aid of foreign arms ; but support your navy ; and remember that you have a militia of patriots, who inherit the spirit of their fathers, and whose intrepid valor made invading veterans flee in dismay. Encourage this native martial spirit in your citizens ; it is laudable ; it is under Providence your safety.

PROMOTE all useful knowledge, practical morality and piety ; but discountenance vice, immorality and infidelity ; particularly those profane, impious and deistical publications now industriously circulated. They tend to eradicate that pure religion, which was the stay and the staff of your pious fore-fathers, and is the “hope of Israel.” They are aimed, as a vital blow to your present and future happiness. Treat them and their authors, if possible, with the contempt they deserve.

*FINALLY.* My Fellow Citizens, let us promote and inculcate religion with all its concomitant moral and social virtues. These impress upon the hearts of men the strongest obligations to support order and civil government, and are in themselves essential both for time and to prepare us for eternity. Then “wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of our times, and

the fear of the Lord our treasure.” Then may we have confidence, that the same Almighty Being, who preserved our venerable and pious ancestors from their enemies ; who was to them as “ a pillar of a cloud by day, and of fire by night ;” who so often “ made bare his arm for their salvation,” will remember their offspring ; will continue to us his mercies ; will preside in our councils ; and order all our ways. Then shall we dwell in safety under the protection and blessing of the same Almighty Being, “ who rules among the nations of the earth ; whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and of whose dominion there is no end.”