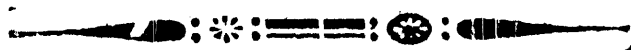


AN
ORATION

DELIVERED IN THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH, NEWARK, NEW-JERSEY,

ON THE
FOURTH OF JULY, 1804:

BEING THE
28th ANNIVERSARY of AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE



By THOMAS T. KINNEY.

—NEWARK:—

PRINTED BY TUTTLE & PIKE,
AT THE SIGN OF FRANKLIN'S HEAD,

.....

1804.



Mr. THOMAS T. KINNEY.

Sir,

The Committee appointed to make arrangements for the celebration of the 28th Anniversary of American Independence, feel it a duty they owe to you, to their fellow citizens, and themselves, to request a copy of your Oration for publication—a compliance with our request will oblige

Yours, &c.

THOMAS WARD,
AARON JOHNSON,
DAVID C. BALDWIN, } Committee
of
Arrangements.

Newark, July 6, 1804.



Messrs. THOMAS WARD, AARON JOHNSON, & DAVID C.
BALDWIN.

Gentlemen,

In compliance with your request, I herewith transmit you a copy of the Oration, delivered by me, on Wednesday, the 4th instant.

Your humble Servant,

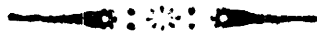
THOMAS T. KINNEY.

Newark, July 7, 1804.





ORATION.



FRIENDS AND FELLOW-CITIZENS,

ONCE more have we assembled to celebrate the Anniversary of our Freedom's birth. Again have we convened to commemorate that eventful period, which wrested us from the fangs of Despotism, generated our national existence, and eventually entitled us to the glorious epithets, **GREAT, UNITED and FREE.**

Is there one bosom present that does not glow with the genial warmth of joy, in contemplating this unrivalled scene? In this *vast assemblage* of Freemen, might I recognize *one*, whose breast it not fired with the gladsome emotions of unadulterated happiness? No! each heart within these walls, vibrates with lively sensations of rapture, and joyfully hails the arrival of this memorable day.

Permit me, my friends, on fancy's airy pinion, to waft you o'er the beatified plains of our favoured country, and direct your views to a great, a noble scene—six millions of people, fired by the flame of patriotism, joining in one general transport of joy, at the return of a period distinguished by its propitious influence on the freedom of man—who consecrate it to festivity, and hallow it by their gratitude. Great and glorious epoch! Infatuated tyrant! though human blood and cur's gen'ral hate

marked thy conquering course—though prostrate millions may have yielded to thy mighty power, and bowed submissive to your will—*here*, in this happy land. thou art derided and despised ; *here* no easy prey will satiate thy despotic spirit ; *here* the proud, the lofty fabric of freedom firmly stands upon the rock of patriotism ; *here* undaunted hosts of freedom proudly laugh at the powers of confederated tyrants !

When I cast an inspecting eye o'er my country, and witness the glory which marks the progress of her national career, the prosperity which pervades her acts, and the tranquility which inhabits the abodes of her citizens, my youthful bosom burns with a rapturous enthusiasm, the legitimate offspring of gratitude and joy. From the sanguinary scenes and desolating wars which have recently devastated Eastern empires, our favoured country has been happily exempt. While the groans of oppressed millions, and the tremendous thunders of embattled hosts, have wafted in rapid succession along European shores, *here* has peace, the mild and benignant harbinger of felicity, liberally dispensed her blessings. While the accursed devastations of tyranny in the East, have prostrated the lofty dome and lowly cot, or crimsoned the verdant face of nature with the enriching blood of murdered humanity, *here* has security taught us so be happy ; *here* does the towering fabric, the village cottage, or the stately forests, waving their lofty heads in all the majesty of nature, proclaim the freedom and felicity of this rising empire.

The Government under which we live is perhaps the best qualified for dispensing national felicity of any system of rule, recognised by the annals of History.—The elements of its existence possess all that simplicity and energy, which, in combination, ever cause the most salutary effects, and promise the longest duration

to the works to which they are attached. The *equal interest* and the *equal rights* of all men, form substantial Pillars of the fabric, while *Public Good* constitutes its broad and immoveable base.— Let the deluded advocates of monarchy and despotism decry the tendency of equal rights; let them denounce the indigent as herds of *Swine*, and exalt the opulent to the fascinating eminence of *Lord and Master*; let them delineate the energy of their favorite institutions; let them imprecate all popular systems, and in harsh tones of thunder, anathematize their existence—*Republicanism* will survive the curse, and erected on the broad base of **UNIVERSAL JUSTICE**, proudly deride their impotent powers.

It is a position susceptible of unequivocal demonstration, that all men possess an *equal interest* in government, and an *equal right* to its immunities.—Notwithstanding Reason and Experience have combined to fortify the doctrine, still do we hear it derided and denied: the ignorance and indigence of the inferior classes in society constitute the basis of opposition, upon which every species of ridicule, calumny, and declamation is erected. But an impassionate glance at the situation of society in this country, will at once unfold the fallacy of this flagitious dogma.—The man who is adequate to the discharge of his requisite duties cannot be termed ignorant.—*that man is relatively as wise as Jehovah himself**.—In representative systems the duty of a cit-

* *The sentiment here conveyed, although great pains have been used to misrepresent and pervert it, is strictly correct.—The comparison may apply equally with man and his maker, as with man and man: the most ignorant person in creation is relatively as wise as the most enlightened; and the man who can discharge the duties incident to his station, is relatively as wise as his Creator.—No matter how much superior the wisdom of the one is to that of the other; it cannot destroy altogether the relation.—I protest against the idea of profanation.*

tion is great, important, and interesting : no *one*, however, is more so, than the discriminating choice of rulers. An exercise of the right of suffrage is the most important act in the catalogue of civil duties ; and the man who is competent to its execution, is sufficiently enlightened for the performance of any requisition.—The question may now arise, Are the people of these United States sufficiently intelligent to elect their rulers ?—It is an obvious truth, that I may be competent to designate a man of wisdom, without being wise myself. Allowing then that the people are not strictly wise and enlightened still it is evident they may be capable of declaring who are so. This capacity originates in the peculiar blessings of a republican government. Reflection is freely exercised ; the freedom of speech and press affords an extensive field for mental exercise ; every movement of those in possession of power is freely canvassed, & published from one end of the empire to the other ; information is liberally diffused ; a promiscuous intercourse among all persons and a mutual interchange of sentiments arising from the equality that exists among our citizens, contributes powerfully to a just estimation of character and talents ; the information acquired by one is not confined within the contracted circle of his own breast, but he comes widely diffused and disseminated ; a mutual benefit is enjoyed from mutual researches and enquiry—taking these circumstances in combination, and they powerfully fortify the affirmation, *The people are adequate to the election of their rulers.*

Lest however a doubt should remain, I adduce the authority of the profound & distinguished Montesquieu.—“The people are extremely well qualified for choosing those whom they are to entrust with a part of their authority. They have only to be governed by circumstances which they cannot be strangers to, and by facts that are obvious to sense.”* Will the authority of this celebrated writer be disputed ? If such was *his* dispassionate sen-

**Montesquieu, Spirit of Laws, Vol. I. Book II, Chap. 2. page 10.*

ment, am I not authorized to pronounce my principles substantiated? Let us then hear no more of the people's ignorance; their information qualifies them to elect their rulers, & by voting for this, it renders them competent to discharge every duty required. No longer let us hear, their ignorance precludes them from a proper exercise of an equal right, & consequently that an enjoyment of it unjust and wrong. Such dogmas will meet the contempt they merit from a great and enlightened people.

But we are told, the indigent do not possess an equal interest in government, and consequently are not entitled to an equal right to its benefits. A more flagitious, despotic, and anti-republican principle never saluted the ear of man.

For the protection of *life, liberty, and property* was government instituted; the man therefore who possesses either is entitled to an equal participation in its benefits. If a contrary doctrine prevails, property alone can qualify for the enjoyment of those benefits; property alone can create an interest and confer a right: life and liberty are at once divested of their claims to an enjoyment of immunities, which their superior value entitles them to receive; wealth will form the criterion by which merit and worth of character is to be estimated. An establishment of this doctrine will tend to the total demolition of our liberty—to a total disregard for life. The combined influence and worth of the two latter, will be subjected to the power and influence of the former. The influence of property in any community is sufficiently extended, exclusive of any aid or force which government may impart to it; and poverty is sufficiently loathsome, without disqualifying its victims for the possession of political rights. *Shall a human being be punished for his poverty?* None but an infatuated fanatic will dare to answer me in the affirmative—Yet it is a lamentable truth that even in our land have these principles been propagated and cherished. Humanity, blush at thy depravity! Aristocracy, avoant with thy pernicious dogmas.

But for a moment let us suppose political rights do attach to

the possession of wealth ; that the rights of property are erected into a distinct, separate, and abstract interest.

The rich are even now sufficiently proud and arrogant to *despise* the people—but give them the ascendancy which this interest will unquestionably create, and they will immediately *oppress* them. Possessing greater rights, they possess greater power—and possessing greater power, they certainly possess the instrument of oppression : Arrogant now, they will be despotic then. But abstract the rights of property from the common stock of rights, and one of the most odious features of despotism is delineated—privileged orders and arbitrary distinctions (the immediate representatives of monarchy) must evidently receive existence. For surely conferring greater privileges upon one man than upon another, is drawing an evident line of distinction ; and when drawn between any body or sect of people, it immediately renders the most powerful a *privileged order*. In every government where these distinctions are recognized and cherished, hostile interests, inveterate resentments, and pernicious contests must necessarily exist ; and it is a truth well substantiated that a republican system can illy sustain the consequences resulting from repugnant interests. One common, general, and universal interest, should bind together the great body of the people, and that interest being once severed and divided, the very essence of the institution is demolished. Jealousies, enmities, and inveterate resentments would eventually ripen into open and unqualified rebellion. The indigent, viewing the habitual exercise of political rights by the wealthy, would experience a poignant pang at the depression of the ir state, and entertain a desire to humble their proud oppressors, by tumbling their lofty bulwarks in undistinguished ruin. Like a combustible volcano, one solitary spark thrown among them, and the widest desolation, conflagration and destruction would ensue. Unconnected to the government or to each other by the ties of a general interest, and impelled by the joint and powerful impulse of ambition and avarice, every opposing object must be prostrated ; every vestige of order or subjection must be annibi-

lated ; the steel of brother must drink a brother's blood ; each gale of air would waft to our ears the piercing shrieks of murdered infancy, or the agonizing groans of mangled and expiring age, while LIBERTY or DEATH echoing through the streets, proclaim the great resolve of an injured people. The hand of oppression in order to enforce subjection and secure a tottering power, would press with redoubled vigor ; animated by the hope, of maintaining, and roused by the fear of losing all authority, the conflict would receive additional force, and eventually terminate in unqualified vassalage, or turbulence, anarchy and destruction ! Is there a human being present, is there an American within these walls, who can contemplate this faithful delineation of anarchy, and still advocate doctrines which conduct to its existence ? If there is, to him would I say, *thou art a traitor to thy country's freedom.*

Even in our own land have we heard these iniquitous dogmas avowed : a land, which proudly boasts of having prostrated every ensign of despotism, and adopted the pure unadulterated maxims of *Liberty and Equality*. Yes, even from the distinguished and honorable station which I now occupy, we have heard anathemas against the people's rights, and imprecations liberally bestowed upon their advocates. The respect due to age might in part palliate the iniquity : unfortunately however no such palliation exists—let the contempt of an insulted but-enlightened people, screen from severer punishment the infatuated being.

Although I stand here as the unequivocal asserter of equal rights, still I do not desire to inculcate that levelling spirit, which tends to the total prostration of magisterial authority. If our magistrates are disrespected, their acts will be disregarded—laws will lose their efficacy—Anarchy must ensue ; and in this turbulent period, when the human soul foams and rages under the dire agency of tremendous passions ; when ambition, avarice, and jealousy combine their deleterious influence to bewilder the understanding, and darken the rays of reason—then I say, will some bold aspiring adventurer dart from the convulsed mass, with an impetuous blow crush the last vestige of freedom

and boldly grasp the sceptre of power.—Guardian Genius of my country ! protect, ah, protect her from this awful catastrophe !

For one moment permit me to direct your attention to the unrivalled prosperity of our empire.—Happy, happy beyond description !—*Here* the splendid appendages of despotism are unknown ; *here* the equal rights of man are recognized and cherished ; *here* the pure principles of republicanism predominate, and flourish in all their vigor ; *here*, (listen ye powerless advocates of monarchy,) *here* the *people* are GREAT, SOVEREIGN, & UNLIMITED IN POWER ; *here they are masters !* But ah ! rejoice ye friends of freedom and of man, for *here* a Jefferson lives and rules.—The happiness, prosperity, fame, and glory of his country speak his best eulogium. Governed & guided by him, our infant empire is rapidly tending to the pinnacle of terrestrial glory ; it is fast approximating to the most exalted station, among the numerous empires of the world.

Indulge me but a moment more. Happy thrice happy day ! when ages upon ages shall have rolled away, and when countless centuries shall have successively descended to moulder in the tombs of their predecessors, thy fame will survive in all its lustre—future generations will chaunt anthems of transport at thy dawning, and hail with rapture thy annual return. Those patriot inspirations which inspired our fathers to announce our freedom, will by thy return be rekindled in the bosoms of their posterity—will prompt them to perpetuate that government, for the attainment of which, their ancestors fought, bled and died. Then will our freedom and felicity have attained an unexampled eminence—they will acquire a foundation which the combined powers of confederated despots will be unable to subvert—then, ah ! then, will the beatified spirits of Washington, Warren, and Montgomery, standing on the azure battlements of Heaven, smile with celestial joy at the unfading glory of their country ; a glory, which shall survive till the last convulsive pang of expiring nature, and only be lost in the general dissolution of dissolving Worlds. FAREWELL ! ENCHANTING MEDITATION FAREWELL !