

# ORATION

OF THE

REV. EDWARD N<sup>ew</sup> KIRK,

DELIVERED JULY 4, 1886,

AT THE REQUEST OF THE COMMITTEES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL,  
CIVIC SOCIETIES, MILITARY ASSOCIATIONS, &c.

---

ALBANY:

PRINTED BY L. G. HOFFMAN.

1886.

E286

A3

1836

Office

515234

F18, 37

Rare Bk Rm

By a joint request of the Corporation, and the Civic and Military Associations of Albany, the following Address was delivered. At a subsequent meeting of the Corporation, their Committee were ordered to request a copy for publication, as expressed in the following note.

*Albany, July 19th, 1836.*

To REV. E. N. KIRK,

DEAR SIR—It gives me great pleasure to inform you, that at a meeting of the Common Council of this City, on Monday last, a resolution was unanimously adopted, authorising the Committee appointed by them to make arrangements for celebrating the late Anniversary of our National Independence, to request from you for publication, a copy of the Oration delivered by you on that occasion.

With great respect I am,

Your obedient servant,

JAMES GIBBONS,

In behalf of the Committee.

*Albany, July 20th, 1836.*

To ALDERMAN JAMES GIBBONS,

Dear Sir—I am happy in the opportunity of expressing through you to the gentlemen whom you represent, and to my fellow-citizens, my strong affection and gratitude for their kind reception of my honest but unpretending efforts to utter salutary warnings and counsels. It has endeared them to my heart, and greatly encouraged me to consecrate every power to the good of our much loved country.

With high esteem,

Your friend,

E. N. KIRK.

# ORATION.

---

## FELLOW-CITIZENS,

You have shown, in selecting your speaker ; that this day gives prominence to all that is American, and merges every other distinction. You have exhibited a generous confidence in giving this platform to one who has never disguised his personal sentiments on any of the exciting topics of the day. If that confidence is betrayed, it must be a sin of ignorance ; the heart shall give it no sanction. I greet Americans this day. We meet on the broad ground of our political brotherhood. And while we survey our common inheritance, our common history, our common dangers and duties ; let the bands of that brotherhood bind our hearts more and more closely. My wish is, neither to advocate nor to oppose the measures and principles of any party ; but to confirm us together in the belief and the love of those great principles which we hold from our fathers and from the magna charta of our rights.

A prophecy was proudly uttered in Europe by a thousand tongues, when they first saw our constitution. Such a government, said they, opens the door too wide for those agitations and revolutions which are the indispensable instruments of ambition. They said—you have swung loose from the restraints of monarchy, only to plunge into the anarchies of de-

mocracy. My friends; will that prophecy be verified? If so; we have lost more than we have gained. If so; let the voice of praise and thanksgiving no more salute the returns of this day. Oh no; better were it, that we had never thrown ourselves from under the despotic dominion of George III.; better have lived under the shadowing wing of his standing army, than to have in their extremes those very principles which in their medium are our glory, and our blessing. Democracy run mad—Republican institutions in the hands of a people who have sunk from the pure inspirations of patriotism, to the grovellings of selfishness—shall it ever be?

Americans, it becomes us this day, to take a sober view of our condition in its relations to the past and the future. Let us begin to put away the declamations which befitted our national and personal infancy. It was natural, at first, to make this a day of “pomp, shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires and illuminations from one end of the continent to the other;” a day of social mirth and enthusiastic congratulations. It was natural to make the loud roar of cannon give utterance to feelings which language was too poor to tell. It was natural for the men who had just returned from the horrors of a dangerous, toilsome and doubtful war, flushed with victory and amazed at their own success, to make their anniversary speeches consist of eulogiums on our heroes, reproaches of Great Britain, and even indiscriminating congratulations and hopes. But these themes must gradually give way, like the toys of childhood, to the more sober and practical topics which the all-revealing hand of time is exposing to our view. Yet I mean not that the past should be forgotten. There are many reasons why we should do as the Jewish fathers were commanded by God to do; when their children inquired what

they meant by the festivities of the Passover. Then the events of their national deliverance were to be narrated; that the memory of God's goodness might never perish from the nation. There is an expression in the remarkable letter written by John Adams on the 5th of July, 1776, which shows the propriety of still recounting the deeds of "the Revolution." He says—this day ought ever "to be commemorated as the Day of Deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to Almighty God." And these acts of devotion, to be intelligent, must be founded upon a knowledge of the facts of that deliverance. There are also moral features of our history, which should encourage our friends, and instruct our enemies. In this view I will select one aspect of that history, as it appears full of promise for the future.

Let us go back somewhere for a starting point, in the troubled winter of 1760, and run hastily to the present day. This, in fact, commences the first period of distinctively American history. For ten or twelve years, the colonies had been developing energies and resources which attracted the sagacious eye of Lord Chatham.

About that time commenced the period of discussion and excitements in which the minds of men were rapidly opening to the dawning light of civil freedom. In that period, none of the features of the revolution were yet seen; but then were actually formed that oneness of purpose and union of heart, which afterward so characterized the "time that tried men's souls." We find the second period commencing in the spring of '75, when on Charlestown Heights, at Lexington and Concord, the volcano burst from its long confinement, and dashed its destructive elements against the colonial government, and the armed power of the home government. Be-

hold the veteran armies of Great Britain, under the guidance of the ablest generals of Europe, masters of our strong holds; her powerful navy hanging upon all our coasts, and penetrating our rivers. The colonial army was poorly equipped, poorly armed, poorly fed, and poorly paid. The country was filled with those, who from principle, or cowardice, or mercenary motives, strengthened the British cause. The Indians, too, were hovering upon all our borders, themselves sufficiently numerous and cruel to give uncommon horror to that day of distress and darkness. Mark that as the second period, in which the intellect of this infant nation was absorbed in the single interest of self-defence and the defence of human rights. Let those who hold us in unfair contrast with European nations, and in contempt, because our social elevation and national literature are immature, throw themselves back in imagination, sixty years; and as they march along the line of American history, learn this,—when our countrymen undertake to grapple with difficulties, they *do it*, and do it effectually. If they undertake to make an efficient agriculture, sufficient for the basis of a growing commerce, from the rocky soil of New-England, they *do it*. If they undertake to repel the aggressions of a despotic prince, backed by a powerful cabinet and army, they pledge themselves, their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor; and then they *do it*. When that work is finished, and a new set of difficulties arise, then, true to the maxim—one thing at a time, and do it well; they give themselves to the task of forming a new government, a government adapted to the circumstances of a people occupying almost a continent, isolated from the old institutions of Europe, and from all its corrupt political and religious establishments. In this crisis, our fathers made a fuller exhibi-

tion of moral sublimity than in the former. That might have been done and endured by a people possessed of merely physical hardihood. But this displayed the highest exercise of intellect and self control. France, South America and Greece, went through scenes like our revolution. But neither of them could abide the test of that second, unsettled state of society, which follows a successful revolution. None of them was prepared for institutions as free as ours. At that time, our fathers were called upon to decide in theory against the doctrines of the world—what are the true limits of personal independence and civil subjection. Without a model, they were to form the institutions which should suit a present population of thirteen states and three million citizens; and be adapted also to the wants and circumstances of fifty sovereign states; and three hundred million people. Let me inquire—did they not do this well? If we had not a Milton nor a Bacon; had we not a Hamilton, a Madison, a Jefferson, an Adams; nay, a galaxy in the department of political literature? Our finances were embarrassed, and all but hopeless. Then, there was found a Morris, whose financial labors and talents, place him in a niche of fame, unblushing by the side of Pitt and Neckar. And the great body of the people too, displayed uncommon magnanimity. Was ever a people suddenly released from all the restraints of their accustomed government, animated with recent victory, divided in sentiment and in local interest; was ever such a people turned so easily and quickly from the bustle of war, to the calm pursuits of peace? All over the land, north and south, east and west, see them beating their swords into ploughshares, their spears into pruning hooks. See them at once faithful to the great republican principle of submission, to the majority, calmly accept-

ing, despite of their difference of judgment, the form of government adopted by their representatives. It is one of the sublimest portions of American history, to see the whole nation, citizens and soldiers quietly submitting after full discussion, to their own chosen constitution and laws. See our Washington retiring to the comparative obscurity of a farm. Not less remarkable is the history of our foreign affairs. It was wonderful that this infant republic should so soon command the respect of every civilized court in Europe; and obtain by its able diplomacy, a reciprocation of commercial rights and privileges. After the formation of the federal constitution, the fourth period commences; characterized as the season for reducing to practice, what before was only theory; the season of commercial enterprise, of adopting a system of practical political economy, adapted to our peculiar situation. Masters of the noblest section of the earth's surface, the best fitted by its extent and resources to sustain a mighty nation, fitted for a highly intellectual nation, from the leisure afforded by the facilities for cultivation, construction and transportation; owners of a territory stretching from ocean to ocean, from the great chain of lakes to the Gulf of Mexico; it was demanded of us, that we should bend our energies to those internal improvements, which, by shortening the distance between human bodies, strengthen the chords that bind human hearts. These two were the important objects which then employed the ablest minds. The one has secured a series of parliamentary discussions, judicial decisions, presidential messages, and other state documents, which England's first statesmen have magnanimously commended. The complicated rights of citizens and of states, the ownership of property, the extent and limits of political obligations are becoming

more and more fully understood. We are rapidly clearing the soil of this vast territory, dividing its ownership among our millions of independent citizens, rich and poor. We have now the most perfect and widely extended facilities of navigation and land carriage, natural and artificial, begun or in progress, that is known in the world; binding the extremes of our land to the centre, by canals and rail roads. This department of national enterprise moves with almost the rapidity of magic. Let me ask, have we done this well? We began the republican confederacy embarrassed in our finances. We have, in little more than half a century, established our credit around the globe,\* placed our government out of debt, and drawn the capital of Europe here to aid in accomplishing our vast systems of internal improvement. Have we then gone so successfully through the varied scenes and duties of four periods; have we done all well that pertained to our necessities; if God has smiled upon us in all the past, is it extravagant to anticipate the same in the future? if it shall appear best to make the next a period of education and of the cultivation of science and literature; what shall hinder our doing that well too? When we were in war, God gave us a Washington; when we needed a government, we had as noble a congress of statesmen as ever controlled the destinies of a nation. Pardon me, if these statements appear extravagant. They are honestly believed. When we came to the arts of peace; one of us plucked the thunderbolt from heaven,

---

\* It is said, in conversation, that one of the most able and wealthy financiers of Europe, has declared, he would, since the great fire in our metropolis, trust the merchants of New-York, more readily than any others in the world.

and gave it to his child for a plaything. It was he, of whom France has beautifully said,

*"Cælo rapuit fulmonque sceptrum Tyrannia."*

He wrested the thunderbolt from heaven, and the sceptre from tyrants.

One of us threw away the oars and sails of fifty centuries, and taught our ships to plough our mighty rivers and lakes against wind and current. When we wanted sound heads and honest hearts to manage our diplomacy, and play an even hand with the trained disciples of the Machiavelian School, we received them from a benignant Providence. Let our many friends in Europe rejoice with us in the benignity of that Providence. If we have enemies; let them contemplate facts with an impartial eye. We have been a wonderful people; and we may yet be greater, and better, and happier, than we have been, and than all others have been before us. Providence has done every thing for us, and promises to do every thing. I have spoken of the prophecies of our enemies. Those prophecies are not to be treated with contempt; for, on certain conditions, they will be fulfilled; and their non-fulfilment is equally conditional. They have erred in judging of our government in the abstract, and as adapted to their population. And equally erroneous must be our prophecies, if they are founded upon merely the abstract view of these institutions. There is unquestionably much vain boasting of them, and vain confidence in them, as well as in ourselves. What is a republican government? It is an instrument admirably contrived for the promotion of human happiness. But an instrument always implies an agent. And a good instrument loses all its value, by being in bad hands. What is there, for instance, in our admirable judiciary system, if our

judges become corrupt? What is the value of trial by jury, if juries are composed of men who disregard the sanctions of an oath; or if our court-rooms are to become the scenes of popular clamor and brow-beating? What is the right of speech and opinion, or the freedom of the press, if mobs are to become legislature, judiciary and executive, and to be secretly sanctioned by men who ought to be ashamed, and are ashamed of their connexion with them; if men who stand high, and cry—"the constitution, the constitution," will thus stab it in its vital parts? What is the elective franchise, and the universal right of suffrage, if the greater part of the people have either not intelligence enough to judge the merits of candidates, or patriotism and virtue enough to resist the bribes of demagogues? They are only the stake for which the more skilful play the game of intrigue, fraud and falsehood. They only tend to bring into office men who will pander to their vices and confirm their blindness and prejudices, to secure their support. Let me repeat it; you are possessed of the most perfect political institutions that man ever enjoyed; institutions, under whose influence may be trained the noblest people the earth has ever sustained. But there is no magic in these institutions. They are, after all, dead instruments. Like the best tempered sword, useless in unskilful hands; mighty when wielded by the valiant hand of the trained. There are two elements of national greatness. A good constitution is the first. A people who will use it aright, is the other. The one was consummated by the labors of our fathers, vindicated by their sword, and bequeathed to their posterity, a monument of the highest human glory. But have we now, and shall we have hereafter the second element of political elevation? This appears to me the subject of deep-

est interest to this nation—the formation of a national character. In that we shall doubtless unanimously agree. Whether we shall also agree as to the features of that character, and the means of forming it, remains to be seen. There are certain great principles which must be established and adopted, and practised by this whole country, to secure the perpetuity of our government. I shall frankly state my own views, without forcing them improperly upon others; satisfied with the privilege of suggesting them to such an assembly, and on such an occasion.

A numerical majority determines every thing in this country. If that majority are capable of exercising proper vigilance, and if they are patriotic enough to exercise it, and to see that the constitution and laws are rightly administered; the most sanguine need ask no more. But if the bare numerical majority who can swear citizenship, are sunk either in intelligence or virtue, too low for this; we are wrecked, inevitably lost; the day star of hope sets in the east; the cause of human freedom is sold into the hands of some despot; and he the worst of despots, a republican king, who will kindly take the crown at the urgent hands of a people who confess that they cannot govern themselves. Probably few have held this fact vividly before their minds—no matter who may now fill your offices; your judges may each be a Mansfield or a Marshall; your President a Van Buren or a Harrison; your present legislators like the congress of '76; it all furnishes no security, if a bare majority of votes can be found, who will sacrifice our country for the bribes or the entreaties of the basest demagogues. With this fact vividly in view; let us look at another. We have made a bold experiment. Our arms are opened to the world. We have said to its every inhabi-

tant—no matter what your views of liberty and government and duty; only come among us and become a citizen. It matters not though you have no interest in the soil, nor any other local interest, no family, no property, no feelings in common with us; though you be a refugee from justice; nay, though you have just eluded the hands of the executioner. It matters not what are your moral principles, what your connexion with foreign institutions; nor what your secret commission from them; come in among us, and you shall have an equal voice in determining the political destiny of this country. Your vote may affect the property and business of the country most seriously; and though you have neither property nor business; your vote shall go as far as that of the most deeply interested in property and trade. Nay, we go farther. We say to the despots of the continent; organize your measures, and transport your men no matter who, nor what they are; empty your prisons and poor-houses, and swear every minion upon your altar; bind his heart and conscience to your own cherished tyranny, and then send him here; and he shall scarcely have landed, before we will seat him in the places of political power, by giving him as much control of the government through the ballot-box, as our best and most enlightened have. Now understand me, fellow-citizens; I am not complaining; for I never shrink from carrying out my principles to their legitimate extent. I am a true republican, and know no way to be one, but by admitting universal suffrage; and requiring of a man nothing but the act of naturalization to constitute him a voter. Yet I say—it is a bold experiment. It is fraught with dangers; and those dangers ought to be surveyed with an anxious eye. The majority, in this country, must be made and kept sufficiently intelligent and virtuous to

preserve republican institutions. If they are not men of principle; they will not require their rulers to be such. If not well instructed, they are incompetent to judge the conduct of their rulers. Now, what shall we do to secure this great end? How can we guard our country and its beloved institutions from those very dangers which are incidental to their peculiar excellence. Perhaps some regard all this as a display of exceeding sensitiveness, discovering danger where none exists. If what has been already hinted, is not sufficient to excite alarm, then I point to other facts. There is constantly an imagined or real collision of interests between North and South, which has already severed the chord of union so that a single strand held the fragments together. The great subject of slave holding and the slave traffic must enlist strong feelings which nothing but uncommon discretion can keep from a fatal collision. There is danger in the fact, that those most unprepared for freedom have a powerful tendency toward licentiousness. There yet may arise great difficulties from the conflicting constructions of the constitution in reference to the several limits of the powers of the three great branches of government, legislature, judiciary and executive. There is danger from the fact that the Chief Magistrate can be re-elected, while his power over the funds and offices of government, and over congressional bills is all but absolute. This feature of our constitution may yet shake this government to its foundation. But I am not competent to expatiate upon most of these, so as fully to show you what evils may arise from them. It is sufficient to have mentioned them here, and to urge them upon abler advocates, as topics on which they should enlighten our citizens. I know not but I might shew you that our government has a tendency to give a hotbed stimulus to

some of the bad passions of the heart, and especially, to the excessive love of power. If a Catholic chooses to use the principle of universal suffrage; we have given him full opportunity to play on the people, and in fact, have rather tempted him to do it. But it comes more within the scope of my professional duties to have noticed another source of danger. And to that I will request your more minute attention. And I here repeat the oft uttered cry, there is danger of a union of church and state. I believe it fully and painfully. But be assured, fellow citizens, it is not from any existing religious denomination. It is perfectly unreasonable to suppose that any one of these will ever outnumber the others combined together with each other and with those who belong to no religious denomination. And yet, until they can do so, they cannot become an "established religion." No; but our danger lies in these general principles. No government ever did, or ever can exist over a widely extended and heterogeneous population, without the aid of a true or a false religion. That religion must either be interwoven with the government, or it must exert its saving influence by its own internal power. And the sum of our argument shall be—that you are not to decide, whether there shall be any religion in the country and actually influencing the governing and governed; for a religion the people will have. The heart will ache and sigh and stretch forth its hand until some religion comes to its succor. You can do many wonderful things; but this is beyond your power. But what you may and must decide, is—whether that religion shall be christianity, sustained by the choice of the citizens, and acting on them independently of the government; or a false and debasing religion made the instrument of political domination. It can be demonstrated that this re-

public owes its glory, in a great measure, to christianity. The germ of much that is noble and lovely and invaluable to us, was once contained on board the May Flower, among the band of pilgrims, and transplanted to the cold, barren rocks of Plymouth. Christianity nurtured and watched and reared it there. And that hallowed influence is still the strong, conservative principle that holds us together. But a powerful interest is enlisted to destroy the influence of christianity. There is a bold and reckless spirit of atheism and anti-christianity among us. It resembles, and in part springs from that which saturated the mind of France during the deceitful calm and prosperity of the period immediately preceding her frenzied revolution. It comes to our young men, full of flattery and with the semblance of independent thought; while it is as perfect a system of dogmatism and creed-teaching and credulity as ever was practised by Druid priests or Moham- medan teachers. It comes to them at a time when the cords of moral government drawn by the hands of Christianity, are most unwelcome in their restraints upon the passions; and it proclaims—liberty from such a thralldom. It is hailed and sanctioned and promulgated chiefly by foreigners who are strangers to our religion and to the spirit of our political-institutions.

None hails this birth day of Columbia with a gladder heart than your speaker. Who can but rejoice to see a barque freighted with the magna charta of human rights and with the dearest human hopes, manned by the sons of freedom, wafted by the prosperous gales of heaven, over a smooth and smiling sea; who can behold it without joy and gratitude? Sixty years ago this day, it was launched amid storms, and in one of the darkest nights of time. For more than five years

the storm, swept almost unceasingly. But the day at last broke in calm and heavenly brightness. Clouds have sometimes darkened it since. But to-day there sails on no waters a lovelier thing than the Republic. Hardy and happy are her crew. Rich, rich in her treasure, solemn is her trust. Humanity has commissioned her to preserve and defend its dearest earthly interests. But from the "look-out" to which you have to-day appointed me, I see the breakers. Amid the noise of your business and mirth you cannot hear them; from the places of your daily avocations you cannot see them. But, called upon to exercise special and far-reaching thought on this subject; commissioned to the "round-top," fellow-citizens, I must be faithful to the trust. **BREAKERS—ROARING, RAGING BREAKERS!** See there the wrecks of human governments. Mark too that friendly light which a benignant God has placed amid the fearful scene. If you believe not, come up hither. Do you see that wreck splendid in its fragments? It was once the pride of the Pharaohs. There is Babylon's glory. There the nation whom neither philosophy, nor refinement, nor the arts could steer from the fatal reef. Blessed with the counsels of Solon, Socrates, Aristotle, Lycurgus; mighty in arms, unrivalled in genius for poetry and statuary and architecture; there she lies with many a noble column, shattered yet beautiful.

"Once proud in freedom, still in ruin fair,

Thy fate, O Greece hath been unmatched in glory and despair."

Look, look all along the foaming waters. And do you mark that our helm is set to that very point. We may not live to feel the dreadful shock which will make this very sphere tremble. But if it does come; this nation will fall

like a world from its orbit. Its dashings will be horrible as if the ribs of earth were starting and crashing. The dying throes of this nation will be the convulsive agonies of a giant. Ask old Time—what cast down those nations in their pride and strength? He answers; the personal depravity of the governing, whether they were monarchs, the aristocracy or the people. The pride, the ambition, the avarice, the licentiousness; in a word, the immorality of man has been the common conqueror and destroyer of nations. And it is truly wonderful that the nations have not long since turned from devouring one another, to make a common attack upon this their common foe. These communities were once confident of permanent prosperity. Each in its turn, said, I sit queen of the nations, and none shall disturb me. They trusted by turns, in learning, wealth and military power. But it failed them all. There is one principle, which with all their wisdom they had never learned;—that God administers his righteous retributions to nations in this world. And this principle has not yet sufficiently filled the mind of this country. What can the power of a nation avail it, when the Lord of hosts clothes himself in judgment, and comes down upon the wings of the wind, accompanied by ten thousand thousand of his mighty angels to make inquisition for blood? Read the dreadful prophecies against these great nations of antiquity, and then turn to the records of history and learn the first lesson of political science; that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Where are the nations of antiquity? Gone—dashed in pieces as a potter's vessel. Babylon and Jerusalem were secured by the strongest defences known in ancient times. Alexander lifted the empire of Macedon to the highest point of power. The Roman empire had no fears

the weak and crouching  
Once the Pope  
and all Europe awoke and rushed to  
He sat as God in  
the arm of his political power is  
have all passed away.  
the world tremble. Now  
His day had  
The heavens contended with him,  
his proud head was shaken, and he became an easy prey to  
the allied armies. His dynasty fell with him; and the mili-  
tary power of France became comparatively the contempt  
of Europe. From amid these wrecks and ruins of human  
pride and human institutions, which verify his word, the  
venerable Sæer lifts up his voice—"Thus saith the Lord; let  
not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty  
man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his rich-  
es. But let him that glorieth, glory in this—that he under-  
standeth and knoweth me; that I am the Lord, which exer-  
cise loving kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth,  
for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." To clothe his  
sentiments in modern phraseology, man and nations have no  
sufficient ground of confidence, but in the proper influences  
of that gospel of mercy by which God governs them that  
trust and serve him. "Be wise now therefore, O ye princes;  
be instructed ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with  
fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son lest he be  
angry, and ye perish from the way, while his wrath is kin-  
dled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in  
Him."

Here I am probably at issue with some of my audience. I

am sorry to be so, and on a point of less magnitude, would not this day have introduced a controverted sentiment. But if this people are to become atheists or if they are to reject Christianity, let them do so in fair view of both sides of the question; and then, having done my duty, and throwing myself back on my personal hopes as a christian, I abandon my country. Is it asked; why do you introduce the subject of religion this day? My reply is—that if now on abstract consideration, I were about abandoning christianity, I would, in honor and in gratitude, lift here a monument, and write upon it my country's deep indebtedness to christianity, that happiest delusion which had ever been imposed upon man. My reply is—that man's political relations can never separate him from the moral government of God. It is a false view of man as he ever has been, and as he is, to suppose that his political happiness can be enduring, while his religious obligations are disregarded. I plead not this day, as a sectarian, as a teacher nor as a professor of the christian religion. I speak as a man and a patriot. With my firm belief, that our country is lost, as soon as christianity has failed to control us as individuals, or at least, the moral majority of us; I must be indulged thus to speak. Is it asked—what are you pleading for; a state-religion; christianity embodied in the government and sanctioned by it? No, I abhor such unholy amalgamation; root, trunk and fruit. What then do you want? I want to speak of our danger. I wish no legislation on the subject of religion, no civil penalties for religious opinions, no hindrance of discussion by speech or the press. Let religious or political heresy be preached any where and by any one; let the most extravagant sentiments on any subject be preached by man or woman, any where and by any one; if no con-

which may be avoided; you may dread it, you  
 may fear, and speak and write against it; but leave it oth-  
 erwise untroubled. That is the true doctrine of civil liberty,  
 the principle of the American constitution. It may  
 be considered a temporary and limited evil. But Jefferson  
 told the whole truth in that one important sentence; error is  
 never dangerous when the truth is left free to combat it. It  
 may do some injury. But that evil cannot be compared with  
 that which would flow from altering the constitution, or from  
 violating it by Lynch-law and "mobocracy." Deeply as I  
 dread the influence of religious scepticism, I more deeply  
 dread the spirit of persecution and bigotry which meets it  
 with any other than the moral weapons of truth and love.  
 This is not what we want. But we believe, that if christianity  
 withdraws its saving influence from our land; if the moral go-  
 vernment of God, administered by Jesus Christ, ceases to mould  
 the character of the individuals who compose this nation; if  
 your Sabbath is blotted out, your preachers silenced; your  
 fears and hopes of immortality ridiculed; your children train-  
 ed, at best, under a heartless, Christless morality; you will then  
 have the materials of the most fearful anarchy time has seen.  
 Some Caesar or Cromwell or Napoleon must seize the helm  
 to guide us away from the rocks and whirlpools of anarchy:  
 and then he may make his government like Rehoboam's;  
 whose father's yoke was heavy, but his little finger was thicker  
 than his father's loins; his father chastised them with whips;  
 but he with scorpions. We must be a religious people, or  
 the time is not far distant when the last Fourth of July Ora-  
 tion will have been delivered; unless the tyrant of that peri-  
 od should find and see some miscreant parasite, in mockery  
 to desecrate this consecrated day, by eulogies on the monar-

chy of the once republican America. You must have one of two great principles—self-government, or the government of force. The very soil of Columbia would refuse to sustain the latter. And we are now making with the other, the last experiment of civil liberty, so far as the principle is concerned. Every form of government by brute force has been tried. Every thing but a government separated from christianity and yet moulded by it; has been tried. Nothing else ever yet tried by man, has secured self-government sufficient to sustain a purely representative government. The private influence of christianity is then your sheet anchor. Never, oh never venture on time's rocky and tempestuous coast without it.

Pardon me, fellow citizens, that so much of your time on this joyous day, has been occupied with hearing this sound of alarm. Were I speaking only for the fourth of July, I could have moved the air with sweeter sounds, and played a softer or a bolder melody. But I speak of and for the generations which come yonder in the far future. They have no part in the transactions of this day; but their investment is yet more vast than our's.

But you are not unwilling to hear of dangers. Dangers do not trouble noble minds; but form and exhibit their noblest traits. We should be willing to believe that there are dangers, and to see them distinctly. In fact, many among us are even predicting that the time of our destruction is near at hand. But merely to appear wise, to shrug the shoulders and predict evil, is as unmanly on the one hand, as it is on the other to shut the ear against every friendly admonition, and refuse to hear any other voice than that of the flatterer. Our institutions are in danger, because they are human, and

partake of the imperfections of their founders. But dangers constitute a part of our discipline. Our greatest and best minds were brought out by difficulties encountered, and by dangers anticipated. I have spoken of them, that they may be seen; and that we may meet them in time.

One object should then call forth the united and ardent exertions of this people.

*Our whole security is found in forming and perpetuating a VIRTUOUS NATIONAL CHARACTER.* There are a great many other important objects. But their importance is subordinate. And as it is important; it is also the noblest object to which the energies of a nation can be directed. I repeat it, and hold it up before my countrymen as an object worthy of the the most ardent ambition. Let us together undertake, with the blessing of God, to form a national character which Time shall love to hold up as the model of unborn millions; let ours be a history which he shall love to write upon our mountain tablets of granite. Here is an object for which none are too exalted, none too low. Here is a work in which no nation has fully preceded us. None has ever lifted a monument whose glory will vie with this. We have a constitution and laws nearer perfection than any have reached before; now it only remains that that constitution and code be committed to a people prepared to use them; and we have attained a height as stable as it is unrivalled. Egypt trusted to her pyramids for enduring fame, Greece to her temples and statues, Italy to her literature and paintings, France to the record of her conquests. But none of them aimed at the happiness of their citizens. The Czar of Russia made a noble effort to civilize his subjects. Sparta framed all her laws for the formation of a national military character. Great

Britain, and especially Scotland, have deserved well of mankind for their efforts to enlighten and elevate the mass of their people. But Prussia stands yet unrivalled in this noblest enterprize of governments and men. Prussia has begun to dig, not in the quarries of marble, but of mind. She is rearing, not castles nor coliseums, but a nation of enlightened and christianized men. And it is not among the least of France's honors that she has placed herself at the feet of this pioneer nation, to learn the art of educating as well as governing her citizens. It is true, many of our citizens have long reflected and intensely felt on this subject. Some honorable efforts are now in successful operation. But as a nation, we have never been aroused to it. If I mistake not our citizens; it only needs to be held up through the length and breadth of this land, and there will be but one heart and judgment. I know, my countrymen will love to belong to one great political party which shall not separate them from one another in sentiment or action, and whose title shall be synonymous with—American. Oh, could I this day consult the mighty dead; did the spirits of our pilgrim fathers in the north and the south hover over this assembly; were the martyrs of liberty here; were the patriotic and brave men of the revolution here; I would ask, without fear, their sanction. Yes, by the mercy of God, I can appeal to the living, to this little fragment of that noble generation.\* To you I turn; for your presence here seems to give reality to our history; and to transport us back, where we are surrounded by that wonderful race of men. O yes; to you I appeal; you have toiled and wept and prayed over this country, when it was struggling doubtfully for an independent existence. But now your

---

\* Alluding to the four revolutionary heroes present.

work is done; your political Sabbath is come. You have entered into your political rest, and your works do follow you. To us is bequeathed the work and the responsibility. Yours was the stern work of war. Ours are the employments of peace. And now tell us—have we lost your noble spirit—have I not pointed the right course to your children, when I have urged them to form a noble and a homogeneous national character? Fathers, is not this the top-stone of your loved edifice? Is not this the consummation of your toils and sacrifices; shall we not hereby prove ourselves worthy of our ancestry?

Perhaps it is not an honorable tax upon your kindness and patience, to detain your attention while I expand this topic into a statement of the specific steps for accomplishing this great object. If I *may* be allowed; they shall be briefly laid in your view. I begin with

1. *Piety.* If pagan Cicero or Socrates were haranguing his countrymen; he would say more than this. I should be ashamed as a christian, to say less. Here we must begin. The very necessities of man's nature as a moral and religious being demand this. It is but cheating him, to talk of his political blessings, if you deprive him of all the redeeming and sustaining influences of true religion. Irreligion and immorality are self-destruction. But more than this, as has been remarked; there are certain influences of the moral government of God and of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which must be blended in their operations upon man, to make him a fit subject of a free government. There is not, and cannot be a sufficiently powerful hold upon the hopes, fears and consciences of the mass, even for political purposes, from any other source. Piety must be the first element in national character; for God

sits upon his throne in the heavens, and visits upon the combined nation the sins of individual members. Go, laugh at the lightning, and defy its stroke; but mock not, provoke not the righteous Judge of men and angels. We need piety as patriots; for the arm of God has ever been this nation's bulwark, and ever must be. To look for his help, then; we must possess that piety which pleases him, and which prays to him. Yes, if the men of this nation are ashamed to pray, or hate to pray, God will let us fall. The despiser of prayer is he who would cut the cords that bind us to the throne of God's mercy, and let us drift, the sport of winds and waves. The piety that will save us, must consist of a deep sense of indebtedness to God for the past, and of dependence upon him for the future; and a deep sense of responsibility to him. All classes must feel this, - and especially men of influence, and pre-eminently the conductors of the public press. - Our piety must embrace justice to our neighbors, justice to nations, fidelity in fulfilling promises, and the scrupulous observance of treaties. The institutions of Christianity must be cherished; the Sabbath of God must be a day of corporeal rest, and of mental elevation above the business and pleasures of this world. There must be an ascendancy of the intellect and conscience over the animal propensities, and of the benevolent over the selfish feelings. Let another feature of our national character be,

2. *Love of the constitution*, enlightened and ardent. Our fathers loved it, because it is a good theory. We love it, because it is the very instrument of our prosperity and happiness. Let us form a great party composed of every citizen of the United States; every member of which shall study and stand by the constitution. We will allow room enough for diversity of sentiment in the construction of that instru-

ment; but in all its plain, clear points, we will know but one party; and that party shall be dearer to us than any minor one with which we are united on particular points of construction and policy. Let us regard the constitution as a solemn covenant between each and all the fourteen million inhabitants of this land, which no one can honestly violate without the consent of the whole. No temporary expediency, no important end to be immediately secured, must justify, for an instant any infringement of its sacred principles. I speak of an intelligent attachment to it; for no other is of any value. We ought to understand the true limits of the powers of the state and federal governments, the delicate boundary line between personal freedom and civil subordination. The unbiased administration of justice, civil and criminal; the right of personal liberty and of trial by jury; the inability of the same citizens or of any self-constituted tribunal to become law-makers, judges, jury and executioners; the freedom of opinion, discussion and publication; these are points sacredly shielded, and rights solemnly guaranteed by the constitution. But they have all been trampled under foot, with the tyrant's plea of necessity. If this is pursued a little further; we are ruined. We must be protected by law in the discussion of any subject in this country, or we must abandon the constitution. And then I admit, that at the same time we ought to give the world a model of the manly, courteous, candid and skillful discussion of difficult and delicate subjects.

We have another means of forming national character, which I cannot now state at any length proportionate to its importance. It is,

3. *National Education.* Not that it appears desirable for the general government to form a system; but rather that it

should be done for each state by its own government. All of them should engage in it with system and with as much uniformity as possible. It should probably be here as in Prussia, a distinct department of the state government. It should be so organized as to secure the education of every child. In one sense the government should consider the children their property, as the Lacedemonian government did literally and absolutely. If parents will educate their own children, that exonerates the state. But as every man and child is King in this country, we want no uneducated king. We want the poor to have opportunities for the best education for the station in life which they shall be qualified to fill. No expenditures of money can be unnecessary or wasteful, that are demanded by this object. We expend millions to erect fortifications of mortar and stone. Let us spend twice as much to construct the bulwark of well educated mind. Libraries furnished with the very choicest food and medicine of mind should be accessible to every body at the public expense. Lyceums should open their doors to all classes. We want schools for making enlightened mechanics, farmers, merchants and laborers. The constitution and an outline of the laws, the rights and duties of citizens, the history of our nation should be graven on every American mind. The intellect, conscience and heart must all be educated together, and even the body, so far as we are able to effect it. So minute ought education to be, that we should have a nation of strong, agile, graceful men; to say nothing of what might be done to finish the native elegance of the other sex. If Providence has given man a frame capable of elegance and strength, and agility; it is for some kind and wise purpose. Let us then train it so. And if we should bestow such care on the body, let the

care of mind be greater in proportion to its relative value. A strong and enlightened public conscience, is indispensable in this country. We want minds that will avoid wrong because it is wrong; or our laws are a rope of sand. All the noble feelings of the heart which pertain to man as a member of community, or of the domestic circle, should be trained. Subordination to the government of the family and of the school room, prepares the future citizen, whether he is to be in authority, or under it. The duties of parents and children and men to men, and to God, must be taught and impressed by precept and example. And while the public schools are well sustained, let voluntary schools go on in improvement more rapidly than the others can. Let the Sabbath Schools be called nurseries of patriots. Let the parents in whose bosoms the feelings of patriotism glow this day, go home and educate under their own roof, the inheritors of American liberty, and the American constitution.

As I look at this wasting group of patriots; (for there are but four where I had looked for ten;) as I search for their companions; as I mark, that although Time has been commissioned to strengthen the republic, he is also charged to spare none of its fathers; my thoughts turn to the young men of our land. I see a departure among them from the spirit and practice of the fathers, which augurs unpropitiously. Our independence was achieved, our institutions were formed by the united counsels and efforts of the country. It was never entrusted to a few. And so far as it is so at any time, we become virtually an aristocratic government, whatever its name or form. Of all classes of men who may be supposed justifiable in such neglect, the profession to which I belong, may be ranked first. Yet I claim no such exemption, nor al-

low myself in it. We have no right to give up this whole matter to the few who choose to make themselves statesmen, and who, after ranking in one or the other leading political party, make mere blind instruments of the rest of us. I know all our young men have a superficial acquaintance with politics, and are warmly enlisted in a party. But parties in church or state are no incubes upon the body politic. We do not want them. We want every man competent to form a judgment for himself, so far as his powers and opportunities allow; and any further than he can act intelligently, not to act at all. It is an utter mistake to suppose that we enjoy a privilege in voting for candidates in any case, where we are incompetent to judge either the demands of the office, or the competency of the candidate. And yet this is one of the evils of party; an evil to the leader and the led; to the leader, by inducing him to resort to falsehood, management and low cunning, that he may enlist the ignorant; instead of a manly, noble appeal to the thinking and intelligent. It is an evil to those who commit their political thinking and responsibilities to other hands; that they are machines, not free and intelligent guardians of their country's welfare. Let the young men make themselves masters of our history and constitution; let them combine together to form a national character which shall command the admiration of the world. Young men of Albany; turn your eyes to these venerable veterans. Search their bosoms, and see the comminglings of painful and joyful recollections, of delightful and fearful anticipations. They are just departing from us. What shall I say to them? Tell me; will you accomplish the work so well begun, so much prospered of heaven? Yes, venerated men. Dismiss your fears. Give up your anxious cares. Now turn your thoughts to that bright and peaceful world, where cares shall no more vex you, and where you shall enjoy the freedom of the sons of God; where the foot of tyranny never trod. Go, go in peace and dwell with the Captain of your Salvation, and keep an eternal jubilee. We will guard the republic. We will hand your sacred treasure untarnished and unspoiled to your and our posterity.