

AN
A D D · R E S S

IN COMMEMORATION OF
THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA :

DELIVERED IN THE NEW MEETING-HOUSE,

IN HIGH-STREET, NEWBURY,

AT THE REQUEST OF A RESPECTABLE COMPANY OF

AMERICAN CITIZENS,

UNITED FOR CELEBRATING THE
ANNIVERSARY FESTIVAL OF JULY 4th, 1808.

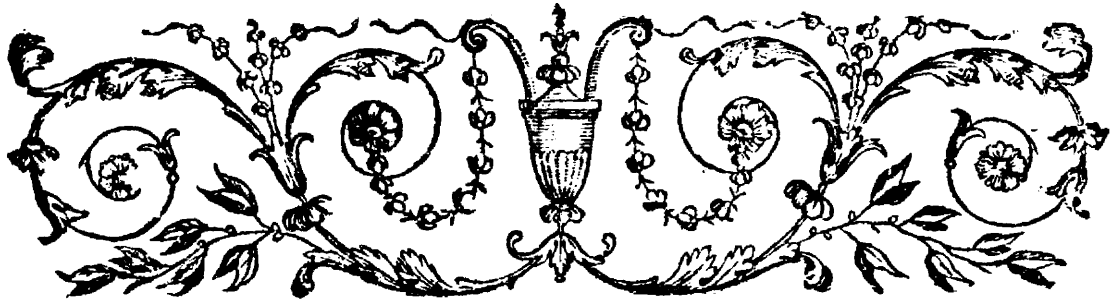
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V. D. M.

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FELLOW-CITIZENS,

THE memorable events from which the nations commence an era of happy time, have been usually celebrated with enlivened sensibility and zeal. No events have been commemorated with a nobler spirit of joy than those which have given establishment to national independence, liberty, and peace. In the joy of their hearts the people have covered the names and the deeds of those men, to whom they had looked as the saviors of their country, with unfading honors.

That the names of those illustrious Statesmen and Heroes, who have pledged their honors, their fortunes and their lives at the altar of freedom, may be transmitted to posterity with merited renown, they are gratefully enrolled in the records of fame. In almost every country and clime, the people have delighted to honor the patriots and benefactors, to whom, under heaven, they attribute their prosperity. Biographers and historians have preserved their memories in the pages of faithful history. Orators and bards have embalmed their names in affectionate effusions and grateful songs. Thus Britain has celebrated her Alfreds and her Edwards, her Sidneys, her Hamdens and her Pitts. Thus Russia has immortalized her Peter the Great, and France her Henrys. Thus Switzerland has sung her William Tells, and Holland that of the family of Orange. Yes, and the nations of the earth have, in their public festivals, frequently recurred to those causes, whose effects have terminated in mighty political revolutions. That liberty may be per-

petuated, the wise and the good, have joyfully occupied themselves, in a review of those patriotic exertions which have combined in effecting its establishment. For this purpose, days are set apart for the celebration of those noble, and heroic achievements, which ought to be held in lasting remembrance.

Were it proper to enlarge, I might appeal to the history of ancient nations in their most prosperous times. Would the time permit, I might present to you the citizens of Sparta, and of Persia, absorbed in a contemplation of the causes which had raised them to greatness and fame : I might exhibit to you the patriots of Greece, and of Rome, occupied in the celebration of events connected with their revolutions. But I will beg leave to detain you *only* with a transient glance at a narrative which is familiar to all our hearers : I mean, the history of the Jewish nation, which is preserved to us in the inspired volumes. From the memoirs of that people which are recorded in the sacred pages, it is plain that the institution of certain festivals, and the observation of instituted seasons, in commemoration of memorable events, are of divine origin. God, the great, the almighty God, having condescended to become the King, the Judge, and the Lawgiver of the Israelitish people, appointed a variety of interesting festivals, to be solemnized at stated seasons. The supreme intention of Jewish festivals, without controversy, was, to prefigure good things to come, in the kingdom and grace of the promised Messiah. This, however, was not their whole design. No, they were intended, and happily calculated to perpetuate the memory of God's mighty works, to strengthen their attachment to the true religion, to fan the fire of genuine patriotism, and cherish the spirit of fraternal love. Agreeably, when the Hebrews observed the feast of the Passover, and the feast of Pentecost, they were occupied in services that were both typical and commemorative. The feast of the Passover typified our redemption by Jesus Christ. The feast of Pentecost prefigured the descent of the Holy Ghost at Jerusalem, at a season never to be forgotten. In both, however, it is proper to remark a sacred respect to the moral and religious interests of the peo-

ple. The design of the first is, to perpetuate the commemoration of Israel's deliverance from the thralldom of Egypt, and the tyranny of Pharaoh. The object of the last was, to render thanks unto God for the quiet possession of that good land, which had been long secured to them by promise.

It is true, my respected hearers, we have no instituted festivals, no established rites, in the observance of which, we are now required to commemorate political revolutions, though unutterably momentous and interesting. In our country, however, the anniversary festival of American Independence, has been celebrated with a noble spirit of patriotism and joy. And were I permitted to speak of myself, I would not scruple to own to you, that I deem it right, with affectionate sensibility, to hail the day, the auspicious day, which gave sovereignty and independence to ransomed America. I frankly confess to you, I account it the duty of every true-hearted American, to elevate the raptures of this joyful occasion to the throne of that Supreme, who has hitherto been our country's guardian, and our country's God.

It is through the indulgence of heaven, Friends and Fellow-Citizens,—It is through the indulgence of heaven, that you are convened to celebrate the memorable era which announces the nativity, the freedom, the independence of our beloved republic. At your request, I have the honor to stand at the altar of God, and of my country, to aid you in the services of this interesting occasion. The principles which have guided my mind in all its contemplations, in reference to the exercises of this important day—the principles which shall now occupy and influence the effusions of my heart, in every part of the present exercise, are simple and easily defined. The station which I this day deliberately assume—the character which it shall be my prevailing aim to sustain, I will not blush to avow. Believe me, my respected hearers, I have not ascended the christian pulpit to-day as the eulogist of France or Britain. Nor have I arisen in this sacred desk, to arraign, or to criminate the na-

tions of Europe. It is as a citizen, a free-born citizen of America, that I stand now before you. A high sense of the eternal right which my fellow countrymen possess, to govern themselves after their own choice; an attachment to liberty, defined and rational liberty; a passion for independence; a love, a genuine, an imperishable love of my country—these, Americans, these are the principles and feelings which shall direct and influence the tenor of this Address. Nor are these the principles and feelings of the speaker exclusively. They were precisely the principles and feelings which, pervading the bosom of every true-hearted American, crowned with success our revolutionary struggle, and gave confirmation to that independence which we are now assembled to hail, and to celebrate.

Fellow-Citizens, a generous love of our country, a fervent affection for its rights and its privileges, an imperishable attachment to its freedom and its glory—these, are the passions which ought to animate us to-day.

Amongst the virtues which characterize and ennoble every good citizen of a free and happy nation, there is one which claims to be ranked in the first, the highest class. It is the love which every christian patriot bears to his own country. In the pages both of civil and of sacred history, we are furnished with instances which serve to illustrate and confirm this remark. To the history of the Jewish people, recorded in the christian scriptures, I again take liberty to invite your attention. There you have presented to you, very noble and striking examples of patriotism and public spirit. Observe those eminent men and distinguished patriots, whose characters and conduct are preserved for our instruction in the sacred record. Attend to them when they speak of their country. Behold the emotions with which they are animated whenever they pronounce the name of Zion and of Jerusalem. See with what new, with what encreasing ardor they are fired on these occasions. They are elevated to lively rapture, they are filled with joy and gladness. Listen to the language, the strong and penetrating language with

which they express their love to their country. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth."

The love of our country of which I speak, is an important branch of that general benevolence, due to all mankind, to the exercise of which we are urged in almost every page of the bible. Understood in this sense, it is not at all the same with that passion which sometimes prompts the people of one nation to sacrifice the rights of another, for their own aggrandisement. A hatred of other nations can never be pleaded as a test of love for our own country. Nor can an ambitious desire of making conquests, and laying other nations at the feet of our own, be ever entitled to the praises of patriotism and public spirit. An unbounded ambition for domination, whatever guise it may assume, or in whatever way it may manifest itself, is, in its nature, a criminal and pernicious passion. In every age, and in almost every clime, it has done incalculable mischief to the nations of the earth. But that love of our country which is genuine and real, is ever accompanied with a just regard to the rights of others. Thus attended, it is perfectly consistent with the spirit of pure and universal benevolence.

Of this endearing virtue, thus understood, the all-gracious Savior of men, who was a pattern of the most perfect goodness, hath set us very noble and alluring examples. He loved his country, and wept over it. Yes, he loved his country, and uttered that celebrated, that well known exclamation of true patriotism—"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that were sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not."

My brethren, we are assembled to-day on an occasion highly interesting to every true-hearted patriot. Like us, thousands of our fellow-citizens are convened in their several places of pub-

lic resort. One object should occupy us and them. From the altar of God and of liberty it behoves both us and them to take a spark of that holy fire, which can encrease and strengthen the flame of christian patriotism and love of our country.

This generous audience will pardon the freedom with which I have repeated the phrase, *our country*. I freely confess to you it is, in my view, a phrase unutterably important and interesting. *Our country* is a phrase of the most endearing import. It includes our friends; our acquaintance and kindred; our liberties and lives, our property and our religion—It includes, in short, our greatest, dearest, noblest interests—our temporal, our earthly all.

There exists not a people on earth—I shall not, I am confident, be suspected of saying too much when I assert—There exists not a people on earth, who ought to feel a more cordial attachment to their country, than the citizens of America should feel. Is there any where a people who have so little to gain, and so much to lose, by abandoning their country, or throwing off allegiance to the constitutions of government under which they live? No, there is not. Behold then, Americans, the sphere of action, and the path of duty, this day, prescribed to us. Anew let us imitate the patriotic men, who, on the fourth day of July, one thousand seven hundred and seventy six, dared to explain the wrongs of America and declare her independent of Greatbritain, and who, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine providence, for the support of this declaration, mutually pledged to each other their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honors. It was not phrenzy, brethren; it was “*undying Freedom’s life-enkindled flame*” that bid our heroes and our statesmen then declare our country free and independent States. And now we owe it to God, to ourselves, and to our children, in firm reliance on the same providence, to determine, as one man, to maintain the independence of our country, and to transmit to posterity the inestimable inheritance which God has given us.

Inestimable inheritance indeed ! The rights and the privileges, the freedom and the glory of America ; this is the treasure with which the Almighty ruler of the universe has distinguished our favoured land. This the fair inheritance which we are bound to transmit untarnished to succeeding generations.

Americans,—Liberty is a privilege in its nature inestimable. A privilege for which we have universally conceived an early and an ardent attachment. Our attachment to liberty, moreover, grows with our growth, strengthens with our strength, and continues with our life. The love of liberty is an affection which we inherit from our fathers. It is, to use the expressive language of a celebrated Patriot and Statesman : “it is interwoven with the ligaments of our hearts.” It is endeared to us by ten thousand tender considerations. So long as we are capable of possessing and worthy of enjoying it, it cannot, I am confident it will not be wrested from us. But a capacity for enjoying it must require just views of its nature.—The continued possession of it must ever suppose a well regulated state of the body politic.

To the reflecting and intelligent mind it is very natural here to ask—But what is that true, that rational liberty, which is essential to national prosperity and happiness ? Is this inestimable privilege incapable of being misunderstood ? Has it not, in fact, been frequently misconceived, or misrepresented ? It has been thought by many, and still is by some, that in order that liberty may be real, it must be absolute. But let it be asked, and let intelligence and candour impartially decide—What is absolute liberty ? If I do not altogether misconceive its nature, absolute liberty is absolute power. Between absolute liberty and absolute power my capacities are incapable of forming any clear distinction. Let it then be, for a moment imagined, that any one man should assume to himself absolute liberty, or let it be supposed that it should be claimed and exercised by an associated company of men, what would be the consequence ? It would follow of course, that all the rest must be in absolute slav-

ery. Or, to take another view of the subject—If it were supposed that all men, throughout society, were invested with absolute liberty, the issue must be, the state of society would be a state of absolute confusion.

I acknowledge, indeed, that all have equal rights, and equal claims to the enjoyment of them. But then, man is a social being. His principles of sociality urge him to seek union with his fellow men. When then, he is impelled by his principles, and his sympathies, by his necessities and fears, to enter into formed society, he resigns certain rights to be held in trust for his greater good ; and denies himself such gratifications as are deemed incompatible with the general prosperity of his associates.

Although it be admitted that the faculties, the powers, and the passions of all men are by nature, *substantially* the same—Although it be conceded, that all are equally entitled to the full exercise of their faculties, and to the enjoyments thence resulting ; yet, in order to prevent abuse and injury, liberty must be secured by a constitution—it must be regulated by a law.

I am fully aware that there have been some disposed to think that government is the only foe of which liberty has reason to be afraid. Hence the caution with which power is usually given to rulers. Hence too the barriers that have been erected against its abuse. Power indeed may be abused. But there is an infinite difference between the abuse of power, and the legitimate, the constitutional administration of a well organized government. Liberty, as well as good government, requires that the implements of retaliation and revenge be kept from the grasp of the enraged multitude. Liberty as well as good government requires, that the sword of justice be put into the hand of the civil magistrate. Liberty as well as good government requires, that we entrust our property to the laws, and our protection to the government.

To the lasting preservation of our liberties, it is not less necessary that we should, as citizens of America, respect and regard our constitutions of civil government, than that we should understand and assert our rights. In order to this, it is required of us, as a free people, to cherish a spirit of union and harmony. "The unity of government which constitutes you one people"—they are the words of the illustrious WASHINGTON, in his address to the American people—"The unity of government which constitutes you one people, is a main pillar in the edifice of your real independence, the support of your tranquility at home, and your peace abroad ; of your safety, of your prosperity, of that very liberty which you so highly prize."

The individuals who have not considered the subject, cannot easily conceive, will not immediately feel the importance and necessity of national union, and national harmony. But know, Americans, that national union is suited to have an important influence on all your enjoyments in times of prosperity and peace. It is essential to your salvation in seasons of perplexity and alarm. I will make no apology for addressing you again in the inimitable language of the renowned Patriot and Statesman, whose name I have pronounced above. "It is of infinite moment that you should properly estimate the immense value of your national union, to your collective and individual happiness ; that you should cherish a cordial, habitual and immovable attachment to it, accustoming yourselves to think and speak of it as of the palladium of your political safety and prosperity ; watching for its preservation with jealous anxiety ; discountenancing whatever may suggest even a suspicion that it can, in any event, be abandoned ; and indignantly frowning upon every attempt to alienate any portion of our country from the rest, or to enfeeble the sacred ties which should link together the various parts."

Such were the instructions, and such the admonitions of the immortal WASHINGTON. It is painful, it is distressing to think that

any arguments are needful to conciliate attention to counsels, so parental and important. But does union, that noble prerequisite to national prosperity, require to be urged by motives? Motives are not wanting. All the inducements of sympathy and interest, combine to invite, to constrain you to cultivate general union, and fraternal love, as a main prop of national liberty, independence and peace. Believe me, brethren, it is time, it is full time that our country should feel an immediate and particular interest in union. It is assuredly full time to rise above the dividing influence of distinctive appellations. You are called Federalists—you are called Republicans. It is permitted to you to retain the titles. “We are all Federalists; we are all Republicans.” But remember, I adjure you, there is another, an appropriate name which belongs to us in our national capacity. Already you have, I presume, anticipated my meaning—you already know it is the name of AMERICAN, I here intend. Enrolled under this name, we may become one undivided whole, animated by one common soul. Bound together by the gentle influence of a name so dear, so inspiring, there should be no place for discord or faction to reign; nothing to cause division; nothing to prevent the affections of all our citizens to mingle and unite together, like scattered drops of water, when they come within the sphere of mutual attraction. Thus would the cord of amity, tenderly, yet strongly, draw together the various portions of our country. Thus would subjects be united to the interest of rulers, and rulers attached, by enlarged affection, to those over whom they are appointed to preside.

These considerations speak a language to every intelligent citizen, at once persuasive, and easy to be understood. Impressed with these considerations, the continuance of union will become, in every virtuous mind, an object of primary importance, and patriotic desire. But there is one thing more. It is union that tends to make every free state strong and invincible. So just is the aphorism, *United, we stand; divided, we fall*. The power and ability of every member united, is the power and strength of a state or nation. This

is true, whether we consider this strength as consisting either in wisdom, interest, or bodily exertion.

It is, assuredly, unutterably happy, when the national government is well calculated to give efficacy—to give permanency to national union. It is here, I think, our constitution of government obviously and eminently triumphs. It is calculated to draw the bond of union around every section of our country, and to bless the cottages of indigence, as well as the abodes of wealth. The constitution of our government, like the sun in the firmament, extends its benign and cheering influences to all. It protects the poor in the possession of their legal rights; it restrains that insolence which is too often the offspring of accumulated wealth; it sets bounds to the prerogatives of power, and says, even to magistracy supreme, hitherto, and no farther does thy power extend. Here, then, the rich and the poor may meet and ming'e together, and thus be strong—be thus invincible.

Had this day, my respected hearers, returned auspicious as former anniversaries, I should have finished this address with an affectionate tribute to the former glories and future prospects of my country. But at a time in which dark and gloomy clouds hang over the hopes of our nation; when varied passions attribute this aspect of public affairs to various causes, my heart forbids me to close this exercise, without glancing a moment at the evil, and hinting the remedy.

That there is at this instant, a shaking among the nations of the earth, requires no confirmation. That embarrassments are felt, and fears excited in our own country, you need not now be told. Apprehension and alarm are alive in many hearts. We trace those evils to different causes. Some men exclaim, the unbounded ambition of one foreign nation has plotted against our freedom, our independence, and our peace. Others cry, the avarice and the injustice of another, have sought to reduce and ruin us. That schemes

of this kind have been devised, and their execution contemplated, may, for aught I know, be true. Yet I cherish a lively confidence in God, that if we cultivate the spirit of national union, and national virtue, schemes like these shall never, of themselves, be able to sap our establishments. If public danger rouses us to individual seriousness and piety—If it prompts us to the exercise of confidence in God ; reliance on his providence, and obedience to his voice, our constitutions of government, the independence of our country, will never be uprooted by foreign enemies, however powerful. The danger, my brethren, lies nearer home—It is to be found among ourselves. If you consult the records of history, you will find that the nations of the earth have risen to distinguished eminence, or sunk to contempt and misery, by the character they have formed for themselves, for virtue or vice, religion or infidelity. If you consult the sacred volumes you will be assured that righteousness exalteth a nation, and that vice is not only the reproach, but also a depression to any people. Impiety and immorality, are the eternal enemies of freedom. It is public depravity that has usually paved, and will, *forever*, pave the way for public calamity.

Whatever opinions may be entertained of the scenes which are now passing before us, or of the various actors that are occupied in them ; this I apprehend will not be denied—We are an ungrateful, undutiful, sinful people. Yes, my brethren, we and our country have sinned. The word of God declares it. The judgments of heaven attest it. Our own consciences bear witness to the truth. And if the heart of the speaker were at this moment suitably affected with the fact, he would lift up his voice like a trumpet, he would cry aloud and not spare—he would show his people their transgressions, and their sins. O, my Country, how hast thou sinned against thy guardian God. The God who girded thee in thy infancy—who shielded thee in the day of battle—who conducted thee to conquest, and exalted thee to the honour of an independent existence. Alas, my country ! how base thine ingratitude ! how aggravated thine impiety !

And is there no relief, no salvation for our endangered country? Is our wound incurable, that refuseth to be healed? No, eternal praises to the Lord it is not. If we now turn every one of us from our evil ways—If we turn to God with our whole hearts, our nation may yet be safe and happy—Our republic be yet prosperous and triumphant—Our independence still be fixed on a basis immovable and lasting.

In the lively hope of an issue so important and so happy, let us anticipate the scenes of future days, when the dark impending cloud shall be overblown, and years shall still revolve, bright with the splendour of Liberty's refulgent beams. Let us still indulge the hope, that our ransomed country shall be the seat of science, of religion, and of freedom, till the sun himself grow dim with age—till all the rolling wonders which surround this globe drop from their spheres—till final ruin, in her fiery car, pervades creation, and the stupendous works of nature are lost in chaos and the womb of night.

