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**Mumford, Paul M.**

**An Oration, Spoken in the Second Baptist Meeting-  
House.**

**Newport, [R. I. ], Farnsworth, 1801. 23 pp.**

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ETHICAL SOCIETY, 3 F...  
AN

July 1801

# ORATION,

SPOKEN IN THE

SECOND BAPTIST MEETING-HOUSE,

AT NEWPORT,

ON THE

FOURTH OF JULY, 1801,

PURSUANT TO A VOTE OF THE TOWN.

By PAUL M. MUMFORD.

S 4  
F 1 11

How does the lustre of our Fathers actions,  
Through the dark cloud of ill that cover'd them,  
Break out and burn with more triumphant brightness.

NEWPORT  
PRINTED BY OLIVER FARNSWORTH  
M, DCCC, I

Newport, July 6th, 1801.

DEAR SIR,

THE Committee, appointed by the Honorable Town-Council, do, as directed, present you their thanks, in behalf of the Citizens of Newport, for the excellent ORATION which you delivered, in compliance with their wishes, on the 4th instant, the Anniversary of American Independence; and request of you a Copy of the same for the Press.

We are,

With sentiments of unfeigned esteem,

Your's, &c.

WILLIAM DENNIS,

JOHN CAHOONE,

DAVID MELVILL, jun. }

Committee.

PAUL M. MUMFORD, Esq.

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GENTLEMEN,

IF any thing can give value to my life, or has the power of endearing it to me, it is the favor with which my fellow-citizens "have been pleased to look towards me." I say *favor*: I consider it as such; because it involves a token of their *esteem*, to me the most valuable of worldly treasures. To the request of the Honorable Council, which as their Committee, you communicate, I cordially accede; believing it was intended as a *tribute to sincerity*. Though the sentiments which I had the honor of pronouncing at the late Anniversary of our National Independence, were not contemplated as ever to reach the Press; yet it would be impossible for me to resist such a compliment, from so venerable a source, and so grateful to my feelings. Forgetful of the many imperfections which their appearance in print may betray, they are humbly submitted.

Accept, I pray you, for yourselves, and those in whose behalf you appear, the unfeigned expression of my acknowledgements.

PAUL M. MUMFORD.

Newport, 6th July, 1801.

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## ANNIVERSARY ORATION, &c.

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*Friends and Fellow-Citizens,*

IN compliance with your will, I rise the humble echo of sentiments to which the day is dedicated; and which, like the zephyrs of the morning, dilate in innocent pleasure, diffusing freshness, and fragrance. As yonder sun in his Eastern height, beams light and hilarity through the chambers of night, and wakes the repose of their slumbering tenants; so the invigorating influence of the present anniversary, as recorded in the annals of our Country, in its regular return, revives the feelings and the principles, by which we claim to be Americans. It is esteemed a prerogative, to those who are nobly attached to social duty, more pre-eminently glorious than could be derived from royal patents, that in the revolving circle of time we are annually presented with a day, signalized by the virtues of our Fathers, and hallowed by the genius of *Liberty*; on which the nobler faculties take the lead, expanding o'er the human race, as one extended family, and in generous pleasure mark the improvements of their condition.

WE are assembled, fellow-citizens, to commemorate our *Independence*, as a *Nation*, by which a magnanimous people were advanced from

bondage. The review, f<sub>1</sub> said as it is, involves many melancholy traits occasioned by an arduous and bloody Revolution, through which it was secured. The gloomy tints of devoted suffering, glance on the darkened mirror of remembrance, and create a flow of emotions, solemn and serene—which, mingling with a consciousness of rectitude, and the exalted sensations of eventual victory, constitute an enjoyment worthy of human nature, and acceptable to its author. Though there are many, perhaps, here present, who have mourned the fate of a fond father, a beloved brother, or more tender friend, swept from the catalogue of existence by the unprincipled arm of despotism ; though the tears of sorrow and sympathy have not yet forgotten to flow at the recollection ;—there is comfort in the reflection, that they were *voluntary* sacrifices in defence of their Country, and the rights of mankind ; that their names are endeared to posterity, and embalmed in gratitude and esteem ; that their blessed spirits are reclining in the bright portals of celestial bliss, and smile in conscious security, that the cause, for which they suffered, is established, and that the vengeance of tyrants can no longer reach them.

SUBMITTING, then, to the Supreme disposer of events, and satisfied that his dispensations, whatever appearance they may wear to mortal eye, are wisely ordained to promote the most substantial good of men, let us attempt to unfold a theme the most illustrious and interesting, which the history of Nations affords.

It ranks among the number of our misfortunes, fellow-citizens, that an era the most auspicious to Liberty ; that the birth day of a Nation ; on which millions of men emerged from an abject state of Colonial depression, and assumed the majestic attitude of continental independence : It ranks, I say, among the number of our misfortunes, that so auspicious an event ; the anniversary of our political existence ; the moments of our fondest hopes, are often seized upon, and monopolized by the rapacity of factious impostors, and prostituted to abandoned purposes. It has too often been our lot, when invited to attend the celebration of this day, to have our principles arraigned, and our feelings insulted, by the lofty impertinence of some crouching satellite of satellites, whose canine genius, set on by political Nimrods, in obsequious celerity, yelps for the immolation of virtue, and the extinction of right.——

“—— all is false and hollow ; though the tongue  
Drops manna, and can make the worse appear  
The better reason, to perplex and dash  
Maturest counsels :——”

I am warranted in these observations, by recent examples, which evince their truth ; and being truths which relate to the object of the present assemblage, it has become my duty to make them ; a duty which I shall pursue in its strictness.

An imperfect organization of a few of the facts which relate to the commencement, and the progress of these States ; together with a few hints of the different principles, by the collision of which, the event we celebrate was produced

(and by the continuation of which, we have politically been "born again" into a new, and regenerated life) hastily thrown together, without symmetry or grace, will comprise the present report. And I regret that want of time, or ability, precludes me from affording one better adapted to the refinements of sentiment and literary taste.

There was a time, when America was without a name, and her shores were solitary, and dismal : When her best soil gave its substance to unfruitful trees ; and the fairest flowers of the valley "wasted their fragrance in the desert air." It was set apart in the original decrees of destiny as the refuge of *liberty*. Its discovery was attended with many singular events, and excited many speculations. The prowling monster of oppression, that roamed the eastern world, reared up its haggard form, and stretching its baleful eyes, surveyed in grim concern, the looming continent. The oppressed, who had been held in shackles of slavery, burst them asunder, and rose, in confidence and courage, to redeem their rights and their existence. Always consistent in zeal for domination, many attempts by the crown of England were made to people it ; but in vain. In vain were men embarked under the influence and patronage of a king ! They fell victims to disaster, and disease. The corrupt motives, by which the impulse that brought them was communicated, imparted a bane that sunk them in the dust. No possible adjustment of flesh and blood, in human composition, could

withstand the peculiarities of its clime, but such as was the temple of those principles, which have exalted its name, and made it respected. *Puritan* was the genius that effected its population, and, I trust, *pure* is the genius that yet presides over, and preserves it.

The reign of James the First, is remarkable for religious persecution. There was at that time, in England, a class of men who held a repugnance to the Romish church as then established, and to popish ceremonies which they deemed idolatry. Numbers of them were destroyed, without form or ceremony, as impious heretics, till the desperate remnant, superior to the "ills that covered them," resolved to explore the wide wastes of a new discovered country, rationally judging, that at the distance of 3000 miles, they would be beyond the grasp of intolerance, where they might enjoy, in security, the immunities of their nature. The hardships they had endured, producing a spirit of inquiry which taught them to reason for themselves, it would have been astonishing had they not brought with them opinions favorable to *liberty*. Possessing an intuitive knowledge of government, they knew very well that it was the common birthright of man ; and that every attempt to restrain it, by unconstitutional, and unreasonable means, was a violation of the compact which forms the ligaments of society.

However repeated their transmutations, as to the forms of their police, one principle seems



carefully interwoven in them all, viz. exemption from foreign, *and oppressive taxation*. Early did this jealousy arise, and early was the right asserted. “What is good land (said they) without good laws? It were madness to leave an improved country, to plant in a wilderness, and give an absolute power to another, to tax us at pleasure.” Natural right, and human prudence are opposed to such doctrine. Such were their protestations against the inroads upon their privileges; and hence it is clear, that from the first moment of their settlements, they understood their relations to the mother country; the nature of their duties;—the extent of their rights; were apprised of the dangers that would invade them; and grew up in a determination to repel attempts of the kind, from whatever quarter they might arise, even at their first appearance.

How delightful is the sound of *Liberty*! How rich, and substantial the enjoyment that is derived from its possession! Pronounce it to the slave: He hears it in stupid apathy: To *him* it has lost its charms. But the lowly cottager, while performing the round of his narrow inclosure, followed by the innocent pledges of his early vows; or the more humble hermit, seated in the silent serenity of solitude, in strains of unadulterated sentiment, express its value. It is a gem of immense and equal value to every grade in the scale of human being;—a common right which, like the blessing of health, no commutation can compensate, and is indispensable to every enjoyment. The moralist may analyze the

mind ; exhibit the dependency of passion in connected order, and calculate the impulse to duty. The philosopher may expostulate on fortitude, and teach forbearance. But the more exalted energies of *freedom* do not require their explanations. As self evident truths, they mock the dull formalities of language, and cleave to the finer perceptions of sensibility. Shall it be invaded by the daring strides of ambition ! The thought carries *indignation* to the heart.

The progress of liberty in the American States has been such as to furnish its true characteristic. Partaking of human nature, it is essentially the same in all countries, but favors the clime in which it is nourished. In the free, and salubrious air of America, it is natural to suppose that it exists in full vigor, and the highest perfection. Considering too, the qualities of mind which impelled to its early population, and which are not to be eradicated from the breasts of Americans, we feel a satisfactory confidence that the force of faction, and the arts of intrigue, will be exerted in vain.

The imperious policy of Britain, beheld with envy, the rising prosperity of the colonies ; and affected by a distempered jealousy, that the artificial authority it held up, would be inadequate to the designs that were entertained, of converting them to a source of revenue, lost itself in rage. Their respective demands arose in alternate gradations, till the one, in infatuated zeal, asserted the right of "*binding in all cases*

*whatever ;*" and the others, forced by necessity, solemnly declared to the world their right of freedom and independence.

It is not the present purpose to enumerate the grievances inflicted in a thousand shapes, by which they were driven to a Declaration of Independence : They are yet fresh wounds, still bleeding in the sensibilities of Americans, which time can never heal, and which nothing could alleviate but the successes they have procured. They are recorded in dusky pages, over which weeping humanity will bend for generations to come. Is it said that the Parent state was actuated by maternal care to secure a rude and misguided offspring in the blessings of prosperity ? With as much ascendancy of reason it may be said, that the barbarities, practised by West-Indian planters, upon the wretched Africans, doomed to their inclemency, are acts of tender mercy and affectionate fraternity. Did the Parliament of England upbraid the Provinces with an intention of throwing off their allegiance and their subjection ? As well might the Provinces reproach that Parliament, with an insidious design of reducing them to a state of absolute slavery and unconditional submission. When royal agents, in secret conclave, were bartering your lives and property ; when the atlantic was vexed and fatigued by the frequent delegations of oppression, destined for the then hapless shores of America ; when the interior of the country was darkened, and polluted, by the accumulation of ministerial tools, who were spreading abroad to spy out your liberties, and to embarrass your

councils ; when argument was answered by the glittering array of military marches ; when the terrific sound of *rebel subjects*, was echoed “ to and fro,” with impious intent to dishearten and divide ; what was the light in which that Parliament and that ministry appeared ? And what, fellow-citizens, were your sensations ! The first may be imagined : The other I will answer. To answer it, is the honest pride of an American heart. They were as they *yet* are ; and composed a warm desire, and invincible determination, to maintain, at every risk, the rights with which nature, and nature’s God have indued the sons of men. Delusive was the miscreant hope of fastening on this country the cords of bondage. In masculine strength and irresistible energy they were burst asunder, and the brutal host, in the cowardice of guilt, abandoned their project, and fled beyond the horizon.

Truth, however, prompts the remark, that it was not a contention against the *People* of England ; no more than the war of extermination, which has been carried on by that country, for eight years, against the Republic of France, is *their* war : No, the *People* of England were averse to the aggressions which issued in the severance of an Empire. The brightest talents of that nation, as they have protested against the enormities, which, of late, have deluged in blood one half the globe ; so they, then, were advocates of the American cause. It was a struggle against privileged orders, which have ever sought the destruction of human happiness : It was a strug-

gle against the voracious policy of Britain, which by a settled delusion of the divine right of kings, and hereditary Government, has laid the liberties of its subjects in chains. The People of every country are allied by the vital currents of same interest—same danger;—the danger of being built upon too oppressively. They are the broad base; the massy doric of embellished orders, those “stupendous fabrics” which boast of lords and kings. Their labors dissolve in the constitutional economy, and transfusing the apertures of financial animation, go to adorn the exterior, and perpetuate the lassitude of political parasites, who bask in favor.

It would be difficult to take a position so elevated as to give a general outline of the Revolutionary scenes that would do justice to those who conducted the important drama. The points that have been considered, were not selected as prominent features, but as the more latent causes by which it was produced, which furnish the fairest example of that species of liberty, that the citizens of the United States have ever claimed and supported. Though the wide-spread & convolving dispositions of the great body of the people were collected in “an ark of covenant” established by the confederation, the organ of which (the continental Congress) stood an Apollo of wisdom, and a colossus of majesty, and firmness; though their judicious negotiations with foreign countries, aided and accelerated the final success; though the singular, and successive captures of the British Hannibals,

Burgoyne and Cornwallis, comprise a constellation which adorns our history, and gives rank to the American name among military nations : tho' it be a fact that more than *eleven thousand*\* of our brave countrymen, in disease and famine, breathed their last on board the Jersey prison-ship, whose bones, for years, lay whitening in the sun, on the shores of Long-Island : tho' the blood of our citizens, murdered in inexorable cruelty, after surrendering, and while supplicating mercy, yet stains the site of Fort-Grifwold, & cries from the ground in execration to the name of Arnold : though many of our populous towns, ravaged, and despoiled, by every device which abandoned mercenaries could invent, are yet mournful mementos of the days of your adversity : though the foul & dingy features of British abominations, in projects of subjugation and servitude, rise up in cloudy gloom on every side : though all these are distinct topics, a minute delineation of which would extort tears of unrivalled resentment, and renew the emotions, by which our Independence was supported ; too much crowds upon the view to allow them the time they would require.

Such, fellow-citizens, is a feeble and imperfect sketch of the principles, and the operations which conducted to our National Independence ; distinguished above all others, the day we are assembled to celebrate ; and held a radiant course to its final acknowledgement by that

\* Ramsay's History Vol. 2, page 285.

Power, which in lofty menace, and arrogant assumption, strove to reduce us to the vile condition of vassals. It has been usual on this occasion, to idolize certain characters, and to wing the envenomed shafts of detraction against others. To stigmatize men who "deserve well of their country" with illiberal epithets, and to breathe upon their virtues the corrosive sublimate of meditated calumny ; while prostitution and fraud were winked at, and encouraged. But it is a joyful hope which the events of this day inspire, that the true distinctions will soon be made, when a mark shall be set upon the forehead of vice ; when gilded pomp shall no longer pass current for worth ; when falcon fancy shall cease to quarry upon principle ; the temple of Janus be closed forever, and double minded duplicity, pierced by the keen glance of detection, end its career. While the most generous effusions of the heart, in extacy of gratitude, present their tender monitions in behalf of the paternal patrons of *liberty*, and plead that they may not be forgotten ; more generalizing reason, though equally ready to pay the tribute of thankfulness, apologizes for the seeming neglect, by suggesting the dishonorable connection it would create with those, to whom the rattling tongue of adulatory eloquence has so often chanted sophisticated praise. Live on then, ye venerable *Fathers*, "and as ye move, our happiness increase." Thou effulgent orb of philosophy, and model of rectitude, from whose comprehensive and benignant faculties, the memorable instrument proceeded, in which our Independence broke upon the

world ; who holdest the most distinguished station in the esteem of thy fellow-citizens and their national council ; thou real Patriot, and friend of man : To thee, as the faithful delegate of heaven, do we look with animated hope, that thy precepts, and thy example ; thy watchful care, “ and affectionate concern ” for the prosperity of the people whose confidence has covered thee with glory, will go far in the establishment of “ peace upon Earth, and good-will among men.” Thy merits, and the merits of those united with thee in *duty*, and in *principle*, need not the adventitious aid of verbal perspective ; they will receive, from a free and enlightened people, their appropriate reward, in silent soliloquies of unfeigned devotion.

However hopeful our prospects at the cessation of hostilities, still there were angry and portentous clouds resting upon the political horizon. Though the veteran combatants, who had studied woe, and threatened devastation, were withdrawn from our coast ; and though *it had pleased Divine Providence to dispose the heart of George the Third to forget all past misunderstandings* ; still the anxieties of doubt, and the pains of solicitude were not at an end. The bosoms of our patriots yet throbbed with apprehension, and were more anxious in proportion as they had been successful. The sense of common danger, which had compressed opinion to one cemented mass, having passed away, a relaxation ensued, teeming with destructive consequences. Those inducements by which their views were



