

*Mr. Sam. Austin*  
*from his friend the*  
*Hon. Samuel May*

AN

**ADDRESS,**

PRONOUNCED IN

**WORCESTER, (MASS.)**

ON

**The Fourth of July, 1825,**

BEING

**THE FORTY-NINTH ANNIVERSARY**

OF THE

**Independence of the United States,**

**BEFORE AN ASSEMBLY CONVENED FOR THE PURPOSE OF CELEBRATING  
THIS EVENT RELIGIOUSLY.**

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**BY SAMUEL AUSTIN, D. D.**

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**Published in compliance with a vote of the Gentlemen immediately  
engaged in the Celebration.**

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## ADDRESS.

APOLOGIES from the speaker, on occasions like this, are seldom welcome, and rarely of any advantage. I will only remark that the exigences to which your Committee were reduced, principally in consequence of the failure of the Rev. brother who was appointed to address you at this time, and the peculiarly grateful circumstance that the celebration is of a religious character, are the only considerations which could induce me, at this period of my life, and in the present state of things, to appear before you in the suggestion of such thoughts as a few detached moments have allowed me to collect. It really seemed wrong that the public testimonials which were expected should utterly fail.

The event which we commemorate is familiar to all of us. It ought to be so. It ought to be preserved in our grateful recollections, and transmitted in every manner of impressive instruction to following generations. It stands, and it must stand, as an event of high interest in the records of our country, and in the estimate of the

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world. As the years have revolved it has been, and through succeeding years, till time shall be no longer, it will, with its relations and effects, unquestionably continue to be, the hallowed theme of the orator and the poet, the patriot and the Christian. Names sacred to a just fame, who had a primary agency in the revolution it involved, must continue to be memorialized by every kind of public attestation short of a religious homage.

The birth of our nation is not to be ascribed, in the slightest degree, to a party influence; and the annual celebration of it ought never to have been profaned by excitements originating in party feeling. It is an event wholly of public concern, and every sentiment that is publickly uttered respecting it should be such as can be accorded by ingenuous and impartial attachments only.

*We* have assembled to commemorate this event religiously; not merely as members of the civil community which has received and enjoyed the blessing of such an independent existence; but rather and properly as members of the great human family, bound to them by relations superior to all temporal ties; as creatures, lovers, and worshippers of that adorable being who is God over all blessed forever; as constituting a section of his immense and holy empire; and as sharing in the labours, and hoping to participate in the ultimate triumphs, of those who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises. Party consider-

ations, it is obvious, must be altogether intrusive here. Every feeling of our heart must revolt from them. Nothing can agree to the object we have in view but enlarged and disinterested affections, the full influence of that charity which is the bond of perfectness. This charity "thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." It leads the subjects of it to be "kindly affectionate one towards another, in honour preferring one another." It binds and harmonizes, by a common interest, an interest which benevolence only can embrace, and which transcends in value infinitely all that is earthly. It flows out in kindness to an embittered enemy; and it is its peculiar prerogative, instead of rendering evil for evil, to overcome evil with good.

Our religion, thus pure as the breath of heaven, does oblige us, my brethren, to repent of our sins, to deny ourselves, to take up our cross daily, and patiently and circumspectly to follow Him who hath overcome the world. It enjoins that we exercise ourselves in this, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men. But it requires us, with equal force of obligation, to dismiss forever that sorrow of the world which worketh death. It surrounds us with light and truth, and endless sources of holy satisfaction. It spreads before us a banquet of love. It speaks to us in music, ten thousand times more exhilarating than that which awakens the mirth of the ball-room. It furnishes us with

the reason, the object for, and even makes our virtue essentially to lie in, "rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory." It tells us that "the joy of the Lord is our strength."

As this is an annual festival, corresponding in no inconsiderable degree with the festivals which the Church of God has in other ages religiously observed, I will, as evidently agreeing to the purpose for which we have assembled, attempt to state to you some of the reasons which are presented, in the birth of our nation, for that joy which your religion warrants, and that praise in which it will necessarily flow.

I cannot but suggest, in the first place, as an important religious truth, and as the basis of every other consideration pertaining to it, that it was not a casual, but a providential, event. It did not properly originate in, and result from, the contingent volitions of men. The Declaration of our Independence was indeed the deliberate act of the population of the country, in the persons of their representatives; and we will never cease to honour those men, for their uncommon intelligence, wisdom, and fortitude. We believe there seldom, if ever, was collected so much personal merit in any preceding deliberative assembly convened for a nation's political salvation.— We believe that the combined energy with which the declaration was supported was becoming its nature, and singularly efficacious. But we devoutly and gratefully acknowledge the hand of God in this event. He inspired the noble reso-

lution, and his stretched-out arm brought it to its desired result. In acknowledging this, we mean to acknowledge more than that common agency by which all things subsist, by which the laws of nature go forward, the seasons revolve, and human life is sustained. There are certainly *special* providences, providences in which the hand of God is conspicuously seen, in which his power, and wisdom, and goodness, and faithfulness are eminently illustrated and glorified, and which, in an uncommon manner, and on special grounds, demand our profound attention and the tribute of our praise. Thus the deliverance of his chosen people from Egyptian bondage, and their final conquest and quiet possession of the promised land, had every attribute of a remarkable interposition. It was celebrated in sacred song, as such. It was required to be memorialized by the observance of a public institution. Thus the restoration of the Jewish people from the Babylonish captivity was abundantly predicted, and is as abundantly adverted to, in language of exultation and praise, as a remarkable interposing providence, in which God eminently appeared in his glory. Thus also, subsequent to the advent and ascension of our beloved Lord, the spread of the gospel and the wonderful extension of the Church among the Gentiles was a remarkable interposition of the hand of God which we cannot but gratefully distinguish from the ordinary events of his agency. It is then proper to speak with a special emphasis of the provi-

dence of God, and to mark its specially gracious characteristics in the birth of our nation. He willed that the bond which held us in subjection to a foreign and oppressive power should be broken. He willed that we should be a separate, and, in respect to the other nations of the earth, a free and independent people. And he willed it for an end infinitely transcending all that comes within the conceptions of the mere politician. He willed it for that end in which his infinite benevolence has its complete gratification. He is wise in counsel, and excellent in working: wise in counsel, because he acts from intelligence which traverses all the relations which subsist amongst his creatures—which has perfectly and constantly in view all things, past, present, and to come, and which cannot err; and from the impulse of infinite and pure goodness: excellent in working, because the means are all of his devising, perfectly adapted to the end designed; and, as managed by him, of infallible efficacy. He declareth the end from the beginning, saying, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." He ruleth among the nations, setting up one and putting down another, as pleaseth him. He is King of kings, and Lord of lords. Those who act the most conspicuous part on the theatre of the world, and who proudly arrogate to themselves eminence and glory, and sometimes divine honours, are as entirely in his hand, are as really instruments of accomplishing his counsel, as the multitude who servilely



bow at their feet. He saves and he destroys; he wounds and he heals; and none can deliver out of his hands. He is our God, and we will praise him--our fathers' God, and we will exalt him.

The Bible we receive as an inspired revelation of his character and counsels to men. And it is one of the most prominent doctrines taught in this book, that the redemption of the Church is the great end, at least with respect to this world, which he has in view in all the dispensations of his providence which affect it. Christ is head over all things unto the Church; and the Church is his body, the fulness of him who filleth all in all. Hence it is denounced, "The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee, shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted." And hence the prediction, and the warning to the rulers of the world, founded upon it.--"Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings; 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, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

Inspired and uninspired history is to the Christian supremely interesting in this view. Each

of them, particularly the former, presents that grand series of events by which this admirable work of grace has been carried forward. The Church appears to have been perpetuated through every age as the special charge of the Almighty. Though feeble to human appearance in the extreme, and constantly in circumstances of exposure, weakened by treasons, hypocrisies, and alienations within, and assailed by a host of adversaries from without, she has continued to live. She has survived the wreck of the greatest empires, and been steadily advancing to that increase of numbers, of light, and strength, and spiritual beauty, in which she presents herself now to our joyful notice. Guided by the instructions of the scripture, and by that wonderful series of accordant facts which history details, can we doubt a moment, my brethren, that the extension of the boundaries, and the increase of the spiritual glory, of the Church was the specific object her King and her God had in view, in placing us in a situation in which we might, relying upon his protection, control our own interests, and put at defiance the oppressors of mankind? All the antecedent circumstances and events which connectively prepared the way for it, the principles and the manner of our becoming an independent people, and the unexampled civil and religious prosperity we have experienced during the forty-nine years we have enjoyed this independence, agree perfectly to this sentiment. Taking the event into view in the

religious aspect of it, with all its correlate circumstances, it naturally carries us into the adoption of the language of the ancient Church, "Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people. Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known. Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron."

This feature in the history of our country, and in the revolution, which put us in the possession of national independence, has been too much overlooked in the addresses which have entertained the public in these annual celebrations. Leaning strongly to considerations and objects merely political, as best agreeing to the biasses of the majority of the people, and as if things temporal constituted the supreme concern of man, the peculiar aspect of the revolution, as marked with religion, has been unreasonably, not to say impiously, cast into the shade. Why this so general reversion of the objects of our thought? What comparison can a mere civil institution, however well it may be organized, whatever temporal hopes it may suggest, or whatever secular advantages it may in fact yield, hold with that kingdom which is properly the kingdom of heaven, and which we are assured can never be moved? Let every man understand that but for the influence of our holy religion, and the purpose of God respecting his own Zion, never would the design have been formed to plant a settlement like that which the pilgrims

sought and established on the barren shores of New England. Never would the perils of the enterprize have been so undauntedly looked in the face, and so patiently and perseveringly sustained. Never would the only asylum which creation seemed to provide have been so promptly and so wisely occupied. Never would the savage tribes have been so extensively and so effectually conciliated. Never would have existed the strange phenomenon of the rise of a free and prosperous community, so deeply imbued with the Christian spirit that even their civil enactments, and every shape and tendency of their economy was intentionally and distinguishably regulated by a sacred and supreme respect to religion. Never would such eminently excellent institutions, giving a peculiar and most propitious tone to public feeling, and casting so singularly favourable a character upon the successive generations of our countrymen, have existed. Never had the public mind been kept so perpetually and so vigilantly awake to whatever concerned the highest advantage of the whole, or been so admirably harmonized in securing it. Never had civil and spiritual despotism been so vigorously and so successfully resisted. Never had the population of this country felt that universal thrill of sympathy, or been so extensively roused by it to harness themselves for the battle, and to venture their all, when the metropolis of this then province was occupied by the troops of England, and it was threatened to be

overwhelmed in one general conflagration. Never would we have heard of Bunker-Hill, or its monument. Never would the joint appeal have been so prayerfully and so successfully made to Him who rideth in the heavens by his name Jah, who is the ever faithful guardian of Zion, and who rebukes kings for her sake. Never had such generous sacrifices have been made on the altar of liberty. Never had the principles of just government been so well understood, or presented in so fair a form of administration. Never had the shrewd guesses of political writers on the other side of the Atlantic been so confounded, had it not been for the influence of evangelic truth, and had not the ensigns of salvation been waved through our land. In short, never had we existed and maintained our existence so long as an independent and flourishing republic. What, my brethren, could have kept the ship of State so long and so securely at her moorings but the hand of God moving by the wisdom he inspires?

Does any one imagine—can any, at all versed in these subjects, be so miserably ignorant of the insufficiency of mere political establishments which originate in the crude conceptions of worldly wisdom, and are subject to the caprice of changeful and aspiring men, as to say, that they either meditate or can gain such achievements? Solon, Lycurgus, and Numa are names of celebrity as human lawgivers. But what did they contrive, what did they effect, comparable

with that fair fabric of rational liberty and equal government which has been reared in this country? What an intermixture of imposture, imbecility, vice and crime, in the theories they imposed! We must not forget that a debasing idolatry, which had falsehood and cruelty written upon the front of it, was a vital principle in the governments they devised. Ancient Greece stands in the annals of history as republican and free: but how slight and transient was the bond which held together the Grecian States! How convulsed were they by a perpetual series of intestine and foreign wars! What was Sparta but a band of freebooters? Athens, that proud city, where the philosophers talked their moral gibberish to their pupils—where the populace were turned upon the fingers of her impassioned orators, and where the ostracism sent into banishment the best of her citizens—what was the posture in which Paul found it? Did he not find it wholly given to idolatry? Do we not know that Corinth was a sink of sensuality, and polluted by those crimes which are its invariable attendants? Rome was a republic. It was gigantic: it spread itself, by a long series of conquests, over half the globe: it was the fourth beast of Daniel, dreadful and terrible and strong exceedingly, and it had great iron teeth: it “devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it.” Policy was never, it is true, more thoroughly understood or carried into such wonderful effects as in the Roman republic. Her

Senate kept the world in awe. Her capital was enriched with all that art and nature could yield. The trophies of her victories were hung up in every vestibule. Her generals led captive kings and queens in splendid triumph through her streets. But what was there that was Roman on which the eye of Christian benevolence can fix with satisfaction? A rancorous hostility, which separated into opposite factions the patricians and the plebeians, continued for ages. Roman virtue was well expressed in the denunciation of one of her most eminent Senators, "*Delenda est Carthago.*"

Switzerland and the United Provinces of Holland are the best, and almost the only valuable examples of republican government in modern Europe; but they owe nearly all that is good in them to the influence of the Christian religion.

Such then are the superior honours we award to the religion we profess, the sneers of skepticism notwithstanding. And we will not suffer these honours to be torn from her brow.

But I have better things still to say of our national independence, as religion is concerned in it. We shall here speak in our own peculiar dialect, and bring into view scenes which are specially dear to our hearts. Not only was there a powerfully religious influence perpetually acting in the antecedent course of things, during the revolutionary struggle, and in the consummation of it, to which, under God, we

believe our national existence, with all its powers and means, is to be principally ascribed; but there was forever secured, by the force of public opinion, and that permanent constitution of government which the collected wisdom of the country produced, an unrestrained religious toleration. The gospel has, in consequence, been here perfectly unmanacled. Christian benevolence has had its full scope, and Christian zeal has seized the occasion and put into action the means. God meant it should be so. He designed that this should be a prominent effect of the revolution, and that, in connexion with it, there should be opened a broad space, where his word might have free course, run and be glorified; where his Church might proceed, not in the attire of a harlot, but in that of a chaste and lovely virgin; where Christianity might conspicuously appear in the sublimity of its doctrines, and the excellency of its effects; where the good contained in the promise might be realized, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose: it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon: they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God."

God has been, in the high sense of the passage, as the dew to us. His Spirit has been poured from on high in a manner and to an extent which



we may safely affirm has had no parallel since the days of the apostles. In consequence, there has been a glorious flowing together of repenting sinners to Zion, which has diffused ineffable satisfactions among all her people. Turn your eye, my brethren, over the States north of the Patowmac and the Ohio; traverse the whole region from Passamaquoddy to Washington, and from the shores of New-England to the Mississippi. It is true that there is much to deplore. There is darkness to be dispelled, and there are wastes to be reclaimed. But consider how thickly planted, and how much beautified with salvation, are the Churches of our Lord Jesus Christ. Consider what a vast augmentation, from the little band of pilgrims to this host of lovers and worshippers of the God of Abraham. Who that loves our American Zion—who that loves Zion, wherever she may be found, can but say, with Balaam, forced into favourable predictions which he did not himself well understand, “How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob; and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the vallies are they spread forth, as gardens by the river’s side, as the trees of lign-aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar-trees beside the waters.”

And is not the gospel spreading its glorious effects among thousands and thousands of the aborigines of the wilderness? Have there not been gathered from among them some very desirable examples of a consistent and amiable piety?

Have not some of their children been found among the ambassadors of the Lord of Hosts? And is not all this to be considered as within the compass of God's designs in putting us in possession of the means, and the uncontrolled right to apply them to objects of benevolence, as our consciences should dictate? Nay, my brethren, are we not at liberty to go farther still than all this, and to connect the astonishing things that have been brought to pass in Europe, and indeed among the nations and tribes of the earth extensively, in the spread of the light of evangelic truth, subverting idolatry, and gathering sinners into the fold of the Shepherd of Israel, with the event of our rising into an independent empire, and with the obviously salutary influence of the religion of the gospel upon the population of this country? Besides the numerous societies that have been formed among ourselves, the circulation we have given to the scriptures, and the many efficient and faithful missionaries that have gone out from us, is it too much to believe, that Christians in Europe have been put upon those enterprizes which we admire, and which are accomplishing so much that piety delights in, partly at least, by the spectacle which this country has furnished? Could it be that the contrast, which an unadulterated Christianity had produced among us, to the demoralizing and sanguinary convulsions, which, under the influence of an impious philosophy, shook Europe to her foundations, could come up to the view of saga-

scious politicians and considerate Christians, without forcing upon them more powerfully the conviction, that religion, as taught in our bibles, is the life of man, and the security of States, and must be spread through the world? There are certainly connective influences in the scheme of Providence. There are, according to Ezekiel's vision, wheels within wheels; and they perform their revolutions in perfect order, and in the concurrent accomplishment of the purpose of Him who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will.

With respect to the future, it is an immense field, in which anticipation has delighted to range. I depend on nothing but the purpose and promise of God. Political prophets may spin out of their own brains delineations of great and wonderful things, which will never be realized. They may be certain that whatever is at once republican and American must be superior to whatever has been seen in the old world.—But God “frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad: he turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish.” What he has purposed will be accomplished, and no more; and his word is our only source of information respecting that purpose. There it is declared that “peace shall be extended to Zion as a river, and the glory of the Gentiles as a flowing stream—that the kingdom, and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of

the saints of the most high God, and they shall possess the earth." There is enough in these assurances for faith to anticipate with respect to this world. And I simply ask the question,--- Have not the numerous Christians in this country had, and what hinders but they should have--- must they not have, till this grand spiritual occupation of the earth is effected, an important instrumental agency in bringing it to pass? Can we bring such a stigma upon our reputation, or deprive ourselves of the honours of such an achievement, by drowsily losing sight of the object, or suspending, for a moment, our efforts?

I ought, perhaps, my brethren, for a short space, to descend from these high considerations, to notice what has been accomplished, and seems to be in the way of a more extensive accomplishment, by means of our independence, in renovating the civil state of the world, and improving the temporal condition of man. Our religion teaches us to rejoice in all that is really good, though it may have its place in this world only, and though it may not be intrinsically of a religious nature. Christian feeling always interposes to relieve; and the heavier the burden is that is thrown off, the more it is gratified. How tremendously heavy is that burden which civil and spiritual despotism has imposed for ages upon almost the whole population of the globe! The world has been a sort of universal bastille, in which have been chained down to darkness and wretchedness nineteen twentieths of the human

race. Superstition and idolatry have spread, and excluded all that is true, and wise, and good, almost from the face of the earth. But what an electric shock has been felt around the thrones of despots, in the halls of the Inquisition, and in distant regions of heathenism, by the force of that triumph of rational liberty which has been gained here! What light has, in consequence, been spread, and what mighty energies have been put into action, not in all cases successful, but in many gloriously so! What was it that kindled the fire of liberty in France, and which has in fact, notwithstanding the passing away of those charming prospects that were once presented, so materially improved her condition, but the sparks which were caught from the altar on which such sacrifices were offered in this country? What roused so many efforts for the extirpation of despotism and superstition in Spain, Italy, and some parts of Germany, but the excitements which the triumphs of liberty here have produced? Is it not to be ascribed, in a very considerable part, to our influence, as enjoying the felicities of the true religion and a free government, that Greece is roused to emancipate herself from the oppressions of Turkish domination, and that that vile thing, the Ottoman Empire, and that viler thing, the Mahometan imposture, is wasting away?

Next, turn your eye to those vast and beautiful countries where the Andes lift their lofty pyramids, and rejoice in the success of those pa-

tient and persevering efforts which have been excited there. Mexico is also to be viewed as having secured to herself independent empire.— In short, our own emancipation was virtually the emancipation of this whole western continent.—But I forbear; and it is time that I should close.

Let the day inspire us with that joy of the Lord which is our strength. “God hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad. He hath not dealt so with every people: praise ye the Lord. Let Israel rejoice in him that made him. Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.” Praise him with a concert of voices, expressing a perfect concurrence of pious affection. “Praise him in the sanctuary. Praise him in the firmament of his power. Praise him for his mighty acts. Praise him according to his excellent greatness. Praise him with the sound of a trumpet. Praise him with the psaltery and harp. Praise him with stringed instruments and organs. Praise him upon the loud cymbals. Praise him upon the high-sounding cymbals. Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord.” And by all means let us *live* as well as speak his praise. Let us put our religion, which is his most reasonable service, into its full influence over ourselves, over those committed to our care, and, as far as we can, over the favoured country we enjoy. O that it had its genuine dominion over all the population of these United States, and were cherish-

ed both by the high and the low, as the grand, vivifying power by which individuals and communities are to live. Then would personal liberty be as certainly secure, without distinction of colour or origin, and be as fully enjoyed as public, and every stain upon our national reputation be cleansed away; and we should indeed be that happy people whose God is the Lord.