

Samuel Popham
AN
Booth
Nov 2 - 1827

ADDRESS,

DELIVERED

BEFORE THE INHABITANTS OF STRATFORD.

JULY 4, 1827.

BY EDWARD RUTLEDGE,
RECTOR OF CHRIST'S CHURCH.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

NEW-HAVEN :
PUBLISHED BY A. H. MALTBY.
TREADWAY AND ADAMS, PRINT.
1827.

THE following Discourse was prepared, by the writer, in compliance with the request of his fellow-citizens, expressed to him a few days previous to the Fourth of July. It was composed amid the employments of clerical duty; and is now printed, not as a contribution to the stock of our literature, but in accordance with the desires of those to whom it was addressed.

ADDRESS.

FIFTY-ONE years ago from this day, the city of Philadelphia saw assembled in its court room, the most august and wonderful body of men, the world has ever beheld united for an earthly purpose. *August* that Congress was, from the lofty characters, the powerful talents, the splendid eloquence, and the magnificent schemes of the individuals who composed it, and *wonderful* from the union it exhibited, in sentiment and action, of men, whose religious creeds were so various, whose habits of thinking were so different, and whose intercourse with each other had been so limited, that previous to their meeting, for the noble purpose which then occupied their bosoms, they were not only strangers, but almost opponents to each other.

Go with me, my friends, and mark that illustrious assembly.—In the chair, a station nobler than monarchs ever occupied, sits a delegate from the puritan land, glowing

with all the zeal for civil and religious liberty, which impelled the pilgrims of New-England, to brave the perils of the mighty deep, and of the wilderness, untrodden but by the beast and the savage. Before him are arrayed the Catholic, the Churchman, the Presbyterian, and the peaceful Friend, all in deep musing on their country's welfare, and all resolved to merge each private feeling, each party name, in the one great absorbing thought of the common good.

A prayer is heard ascending to the Maker and Preserver of men, for wisdom, for prudence, for coolness in judging, and for strength in action, whatever the course might be, that should open to their view. A solemn pause ensues.— Jefferson, and Adams, and Franklin, your own Sherman, and Livingston, advance to the Speaker's chair: they hand in their report, and while the sentiments it contains "quiver on every lip, and beam from every eye," the animating conclusion is heard; "We therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in general Congress assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, and by authority of the good people of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, that these Colonies are, and of right ought to be free and independent States;—that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown."

A nation is born in a day. Three millions of hearts breathe the pure air of liberty, and the patriot's soul rejoices in the thought, that not only these new born repub-

licans, but coming generations, whose unnumbered multitudes are to cover our extensive territory, will be freemen, who bow to no king but the King of kings.

The intelligence of the above named grand and daring act, spreads from the solemn hall, to the most distant sections of our land; and as it goes, lights every countenance with joy, and nerves each heart with a strength it never felt before. Every mode in which delight can be expressed, is employed by our fellow-citizens to give it vent. By the populace, gladness is evinced in all the varieties of humble mirth: the soldier, although to *secure* the independence now *proclaimed* he must be exposed to danger and to death, causes the loud artillery to proclaim his joy: statesmen demonstrate their's by spirited resolutions of approval and self devotion; and the ministers of Christ, with hearts too full for utterance, sound their orisons, in the temples of Jehovah, which now they feel to be safe from the intrusion of human power.

Years have rolled away, and most of the individuals who then shared in this delightful feeling are gone. Of the statesmen who signed the charter of our Independence but one—the venerable Carroll survives. The heroes, who bled to secure us the blessings we enjoy, are rapidly diminishing. A new generation is occupying the station which our fathers held,—but the spirit of '76 remains. It is now operating throughout our country; pervading every distant settlement and animating every breast. It has brought us into this holy temple, to lift our voices in gratitude to Him who is

Governor among the nations, for all the good things he has done for our States : to implore his blessing on us in future, and to encourage in each other's hearts, that high-souled patriotism, which as enlightened, Christian Americans we all should entertain.

I have thought proper to address you on the present occasion, in compliance with your request, because there seems to my mind, a beautiful propriety, in observing this day with a certain degree of sacredness. It does not indeed inspire that awfully holy feeling, which comes over the soul, when God's own blessed day recurs, or, when the solemn seasons of the church are observed ; but in every good man's bosom, it should awaken emotions of pious gratitude, and call into existence deep and lasting thoughts of our dependence on God, for all our advantages. It should cause us to remember, that much has been done for us, and that in return, much will be required. It should place before us the strong conviction, that unless we cultivate that righteousness, which exalteth a nation, and shun sin, which draws down the anger of the Lord, our Glory will depart, and we shall sink in ruins, as every nation has, which, trusting to its strength and resources, neglected and forsook its God.

My endeavour will be, in the course of my remarks, while due honour is given to our fathers, to carry your minds beyond *them* to the great First Cause : to show, that the hand of Jehovah may be seen in the commencement, the progress, and the accomplishment, of that mighty succession

of events, which resulted in our freedom: to suggest some of the peculiar favours, exhibited from heaven, towards the people of the United States: and to urge on you, the importance of your becoming yourselves, and causing your children to be an enlightened, patriotic and virtuous people.

When the *causes* which produced our Revolution are enquired into politically, there is little difficulty in lighting upon them immediately, in some of those evil measures, which, for years preceding, had been adopted and persevered in by the British Cabinet. Taxation without representation; the Stamp Act, and the whole host of grievances enumerated in the preface to the Declaration of Independence, all readily occur to the mind. But the Christian looks still further. He sees the seeds of liberty, planted in this western land by the ever living God, at that moment when he here sowed the wheat that he had sifted from the whole world. When the Christian goes back to the settlement of our country he sees at once that a lofty destiny must be in store for *such* a land, peopled by *such men* as our fathers were.

Look at the character of the early Colonists, and say whether this is idle theory. They were not desperate adventurers, whom the love of gain had brought to these rich and boundless shores. They were not the miserable wretches, who, glad to shelter themselves from the sight of kindred and country, to free themselves from the restraints of law and religion, would fain bury their names

and their characters in our wilds. No, they were noble, holy men, who sought, in this new world, to establish a quiet home and a free church. They left their all for conscience and for God. We are accustomed to hear such language as this, concerning the puritans of New England, but it should by no means be confined to them. The pious Hugonot, who left the beautiful banks of the Loire and the Seine, that he might worship, in the forests of the south, the Protestant's God: the Catholic, who feared that his religion and his liberty would be crushed beneath the triumphant wheels of the reformation, and sought for them an asylum, in that section of our land which bears the name of his favourite Queen: the follower of Cranmer and Latimer and Ridley, who while he left his country brought with him the church of his fathers, and glorying in its purity, strove to plant it wherever he went: the sedate and enterprising Hollander—and the disciples of mild William Penn—all were influenced by the deep feelings of religion. Each of our numerous Colonies, and of the denominations of Christians by whom they were founded, had in their ranks and oftentimes at their head, enlightened, upright, independent and pious individuals. Well then may we say that the strength and beauty of our present political fabric is owing to its foundation being laid by great and good men;—men raised up by Jehovah for the purpose of rearing the banners of liberty, and guarding them, till they shall float over every land and every church;—men whose habits of thinking were liberal and free, and whose children, walking a soil unpolluted by the footsteps of a tyrant; breathing an atmosphere untain-

ted by courtly vice, would be ready, in the fulness of time, to govern themselves, and reject all authority but that of God, and the laws of their own formation.

When we inquire how it was, that an infant nation, composed of parts newly and feebly cemented together, without money, without arms, without military science and practice, could successfully oppose and triumph over its parent country, which, in the proud language of one of her statesmen, lately was able to stand against the world,—when we ask how was this possible? the politician's reply is ready:—'Our rulers were wise and prudent, our citizens were brave and united against the common foe; where money, the great sinew of war, was wanting, every suffering and privation were met, with the cheerful submission of the martyr who agonizes in a holy cause; above all, the leaders of our armies, and especially that chief without an equal or a second, possessed a skill that was almost super-human, and a devotion to their work that was untiring.'

Acknowledging most readily the correctness of this reply, as far as it extends; agreeing with the immortal Chatham in his splendid eulogy on our Congress at Philadelphia; believing that no nation, of ancient or modern times, has exhibited more bravery and self-devotion in its soldiery, more wisdom and valour in its generals,—I still would consider *these* only as instruments, and direct you to a higher, to a heavenly cause for our success. It was the Lord God of Hosts being with us that ensured our triumph, and unless he had kept the city, the watchmen would have

waked in vain. God raised up for our vast emergency, the great and patriotic men who presided in the American councils. *He* called from the banks of the Potomac, as clearly as he called Cyrus of old, the young Virginian farmer and surveyor; trained him in all the hardships of western warfare, for the future head of our armies, and when the hour of trial came, fixed the hearts of our States as the heart of one man, on the wise, and patriotic, and Christian hero. *He* brought an European ally, then in the pride of his power, to our aid. *He* interfered in our behalf, sometimes almost by miracle,—when for instance, as if to cover the American army's retreat from Long Island, a dense fog covered that whole region, while on the opposite shore all was bright and beautiful; a pillar of fire guiding the retreating soldiers of our States, and a pillar of cloud casting darkness on their foes. *He* was our fathers' strength in the hour of danger, the shield of their help, and the sword of their excellency. This our fathers felt, and when they arrived at the sea of blood and were about to plunge into its awful waves, they shrunk not back, because they felt, as Patrick Henry spoke, "that the same God who carried Israel in safety through the Red Sea, still existed in his glory, unchanged and unchangeable." To Him they committed their cause, and we with grateful hearts, should this day delight to acknowledge, that by Him it was brought to pass.

If the actors in our revolutionary drama, had been moved by the mad feeling which bewildered democratic France; if they had voted their disbelief of Jehovah's ex-

istence: if they had murdered the priests of the living God, and extinguished the lights upon his altars,—we now would have been groaning under the rod of a tyrant (legitimate or illegitimate the no less to be dreaded): the bones of our brethren would have been bleaching the green fields of some distant country, whither ambition had led them, or on the hills and vallies of our own loved land, where they had fallen in deadly, civil strife.

When we look at our present prosperity; when we see the number of our States and Territories more than double the original thirteen; when we observe our population swelling in the wonderful manner it does, and rolling its waves onward and onward to the Pacific; when we find every sea whitened by our commerce, and our richly laden barks riding secure amidst pirates and plunderers, under the protection of a navy whose prowess awes the world; when we behold our manufactories competing with those of Europe in the quantity and quality of their productions, and giving them salutary examples in moral discipline; when we perceive how rapidly our science and literature are paying off the debt, due by us, for the stores we have received from beyond the Atlantic; when we mark the ambassadors of the Saviour, going forth from our churches, to carry the Gospel to the heathen, we cannot but exclaim, whence are all these wonders? how is it that so young a people can be accomplishing so much?

Perhaps to these inquiries an answer is ready.—All that we have remarked in the growth and prosperity of our

country results from the freedom and excellence of our institutions; from the extent and fertility of our soil and the purity of our climate; from the distance that separates us from European turmoil, and which gave us, when all abroad was confusion, the carrying trade of the world; from the skill and inventive genius of our citizens, and from that common sympathy of our nature, that prompts us to communicate to others the blessings we are enjoying.

So far as natural causes are concerned, this answer is correct: but we should go further, to render it perfectly satisfactory, and *see, remember, and adore* the great *Mover of all these springs of our prosperity*. It was God, who cast out the heathen and planted us in this goodly heritage. He gave us, as a free gift, this wide-spread land, flowing with milk and honey, whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills we dig brass. He holds in his powerful grasp, those pestilential breezes, which might sweep our children from the earth, and causes the millions, who have been born under the flag of our freedom, to go out with joy, and make the wilderness rejoice and blossom as the rose. He rolls along our shores that mighty ocean which binds us in brotherhood with the older families of nations. He skirts our northern and western borders, with those inland seas and rivers, that bear on their bosoms enterprize, and wealth, and sustenance for a world. He calls into existence those brilliant and lofty spirits, who, as statesmen, and orators, and heroes, are ennobling our infant nation; and as mechanics and politicians and engineers, are benefitting the world. He caused our fathers to rear the schools and

colleges which are enlightening and preserving our numerous population. He planted here by his own mighty arm, the cross, that when it is lost in the darkness of superstition, or in seas of blood in Europe, as it already is in Asia, a world may look to it in this western land, see it towering above the hills, reflecting back its glory on the elder nations, and cheering into light and beauty, the new formed empires of the west and south.

When thus much has been done for us, by our ancestors and by our God, whose interposition is so signal; surely the thought must strike us, that we have been placed here and sustained for some important purpose; for some mighty destiny. If we are true to ourselves, these high designs will be realized. If we go boldly forward and perform our part, generations yet unborn will have reason to bless God for the events of this anniversary.

The thrones of Europe are tottering: her nations have arrived, or are arriving at that period, termed in individual life, the second childhood; while we are strong, and only commencing our career. Our country, in its giant infancy, spurns at the toys and trifles which are amusing decrepit age beyond the Atlantic, and grasps at all that is lofty and grand. Already the eyes of a world are fixed upon us, and if we advance in proportion to our former rapidity, there is no placing bounds to our glory and usefulness. We are commencing where others end. Instead of going through all those stages from barbarism to refinement, which other colonies and new formed States have travelled, we have at

our hands, all the treasures of science, and literature, and morals, which ages have been gathering.

“ We speak the tongue which Shakspeare spake,
The faith and morals hold,
Which the best saints have held.”

Our government, instead of advancing by degrees from imbecility to vigour, stands already a model for the imitation of new Republics, and for the admiration of the world. Our citizens, instead of slowly emerging from Pagan darkness, are surrounded with the purest and brightest beams of the Gospel, filled with the light, restrained by the commands, comforted by the atoning mercy, and cheered by the lovely promises of the Lord Jesus Christ.

On this day, consecrated to freedom, while we praise our earthly and our heavenly benefactors, let us resolve to go forward with “ God and our country,” as our motto, to consummate the great plans formed for our prosperity. Leaving it to the slaves of the east, to squander away their national festivals in idle profligacy, let our's be devoted to pious gratitude and lofty patriotism; to the formation of schemes for diffusing the light of education and religion; and to fervent prayers, that the God of our fathers would be with us, and our children. Thus shall we enjoy the light of that countenance, and the support of that arm, so necessary to our safety and our happiness. Thus, when darkness covers the old world, our mighty continent will be filled with radiance, ready to reflect it back; and, like the western sun, to throw over the east a bow of light and

beauty. Thus shall we contribute to the fulfillment of the prophecy by Bishop Berkley, one of our country's best of friends:—

“ Westward, the course of Empire takes its way,
The four first acts already past,
A fifth shall close the drama with the day,
Time's noblest offspring is the last.”

Let me see, and stretch thy wings,
Oh better portion trace:

Let me see, and stretch thy wings,

Let me see, and stretch thy wings,

C. W. M. S.

... from man the beam of God, with
... all understanding from you
... and the
... in the knowledge of
... and the Son from whom all
... the blessing of God Almighty
... the Son and the Holy Spirit
... you and remain with you
Always — A. M. C. S.

— — — — —