

## CELEBRATION OF THE ANNIVERSARY OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE

SPEECH BY ELDER GEORGE A. SMITH, DELIVERED IN THE BOWERY,  
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Reported by G. D. Watt

My Friends—I arise on the present occasion to address you, with my heart filled with emotions that are not easily described, apart from feelings which pervade my mind resulting from the present celebration of the anniversary of our country's independence. It is with a high degree of pleasure that I witness such an immense assembly, and compare it with celebrations of this ever-memorable day which I have attended in my native State, in my early life. The anniversary of the day on which our fathers declared the independence of the American States I have ever felt a disposition to celebrate, whenever circumstances and situation would possibly admit of it, as the day on which our fathers declared the independence and freedom of millions of people yet unborn. It was a great step for a few colonies to take, to attempt to wring from the hands of the king of the most powerful nation upon the face of the earth their liberties, the right of self-government—of choosing their own rulers—those inalienable rights which belong to man, and are the boon of his Creator, and which kings had held in their grasp for ages. Our revolutionary fathers were unwilling longer to be ground down by iron rules and cast-iron notions of one stupid and corrupt ruler that oppressed them, and struggled for their freedom. Under the guidance and fostering care of the God of heaven, these colonies were made

free—free to act in obedience to all those principles he has given the sons of men their agency to act upon.

This is a great illustration of the importance and power of the principle of union. When the signers of the Declaration of Independence put their names to that heaven-born instrument, they were perfectly aware that the success of their cause depended upon their being united. It was absolutely necessary that they should all hang together; for if they did not, they were perfectly sensible they would all *hang* separately. The united colonies at that time were ready to sustain the leader of the revolution almost *en masse*. There were a few districts where divisions took place, and those divisions caused more cruelty, bloodshed, and sorrow than any other circumstance pertaining to the whole revolutionary struggle.

By this grand step our fathers secured to us the right of self-government. However much wicked men may have opposed and abused the institutions the revolutionary fathers have established and put in motion—whatever corrupt officeholders may have done in violation of them, the great point is gained which enables the American people to choose their own rulers and produce such a form of government and such protection as are necessary for their growth, their freedom, and their continual well-being.