

L. B. Baldwin to Mrs. J. Shea
OUR SINS ACKNOWLEDGED.

BEING

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN LEXINGTON, JAN. 12, 1815.

THE DAY OF THE

NATIONAL FAST.

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1815.

A SERMON.

ISAIAH 22: 12.

“And in that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth.”

THIS chapter is stiled the “burden of the valley of vision.”

Jerusalem was seated in the midst of surrounding hills, and because it was favoured with the revelation of God's truth and will, it was called the valley of vision. The calamities about to come upon the Jews in consequence of the Asssyrian invasion, are here pourtrayed in lively colours. ‘What aileth thee now, that thou art wholly gone up to the house tops?’ The houses in Jerusalem had many of them flat roofs, and were not furnished with windows toward the streets. Therefore upon any sudden alarm they were in the habit of repairing to the tops of their houses to make observations. ‘Thou art full of stirs, a tumultuous city, a joyous city.’ Jerusalem had been full of the hurry and tumult of business, and pleasure; but now their stir and tumult was of another nature.

In the 4th verse the prophet sheweth what is the duty of the godly, and especially of the ministers, when God's judgments hang over the land. ‘I will weep bitterly, labour not to comfort me, because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people. For it is a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity, by the Lord God of hosts, in the valley of vision, breaking down the walls, and crying to the mountains.’ One crying to another to flee to the adjacent mountain to escape destruction.

Notwithstanding the pious labours of king Hezekiah and the prophets, most of the people were destitute of faith and piety; and instead of uniting in fasting and prayer, with every token of godly sorrow and humiliation, to which the Lord evidently called them, they were generally indulging themselves in riot and feasting, and that from the most atheistical principles: 'Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die.' 'In that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth.'

Brethren, the American people are this day called upon by the frowns of heaven, and by the heavy hand of our God upon us, to the exercise of fasting, humiliation, and prayer. We have also been called to the same duties by the proclamation of the supreme magistrate of our country. Let us then betake ourselves to the performance of these duties, not with a lie in our right hands, nor with flattery upon our lips, but with the hearts of a people desirous to be made acquainted with our great national sins, to confess them, and to forsake them. We should remember that it is one thing to inveigh against vice, and that it is quite another thing to be penetrated with a deep sense of our iniquities. We are not met to criminate and recriminate one another, but to abhor ourselves and repent in dust and in ashes. Why is the Lord pleading a controversy with us? or what are the sins we, as a nation, have this day to confess, and of which we ought to repent? These are the momentous inquiries.

I. As a nation we have not acknowledged God the Saviour in all our ways, that he might direct our steps.

America is confessedly a christian nation. She is considered such by all the nations of the earth. But where are the records that substantiate the fact? They are deposited, to be sure, in that inimitable compact by which this is a great confederated republic. They are lodged in the faithful and devout bosoms of thousands of christians, of various denominations, who adore the Saviour of the world, and cease not to implore heaven's benedictions upon their afflicted country, and who are ready to sacrifice all that they hold dear on earth, yea even their lives, in its defence. But in which of our great national de-

rees, or national proclamations, or messages of our governors, is *God the Saviour* recognized? In none of them. With a solitary exception or two, any thing which has a religious bearing at all in these productions, is not characterized with aught that savours of christianity. We could not have expected less from Plato or Cicero, who both speak of a providence much in the fashionable stile of most of our American rulers: And I would be unworthy of the sacred place where I now stand, were I to except from this remark that very proclamation by virtue of which we are assembled here this day. How shall we acceptably confess our sins but in his name ‘who bore our sins in his own body on the tree?’ How shall we ask forgiveness, but through him who is the Mediator of the new covenant? How shall we supplicate for mercies for time to come, but in his name who has ‘ascended up on high, has led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men?’ I know these are antiquated truths, and by many of those both in and out of power, may be considered as the very fustian and rant of christian weakness and bigotry. That this sentiment is so prevalent is the very thing we lament. That the religion of the American rulers, if indeed they recognize God at all, resembles infinitely more the religion of heathens than of christians, forms one of those numerous items which ought to fill up our cup of mourning and sorrow to-day.

It may very well be doubted whether any thing can have a more baneful influence upon the cause of christianity, or more effectually blast the labours of christian men, than to see issuing from the pens of men high in authority a cold and frigid acknowledgement of the being and providence of God, when every word ought to have been a *burst of gratitude to a merciful God in Christ*, or the overflowing of a heart broken at the *foot of the cross*. Let us however mingle thanksgiving with our sorrows. Let us be thankful that many of our rulers have not hardihood enough to deny God openly. Let us mourn that so few of them have piety enough to lead them to acknowledge the God of the scriptures, ‘to glorify God even the father of our Lord Jesus Christ.’

At the moment when we were about to harness ourselves for the fight, and to hurl our defiance in the face of a powerful and insidious foe, was the God of armies in all our thoughts? Let our illuminations, our extravagant and heathenish expressions of joy, when the tocsin of war was sounded through our land, answer the question. Let our political intolerance, and our self-confident boasting, answer the question. In our estimation our means were ample, and our resources countless. We relied upon the wisdom of our senators, the weight of our coffers, and the prowess of our soldiers. Two of our resources have utterly failed us. While yet the proud recollection of American heroism remains, while we still retain the fond remembrance of the undaunted courage of American freemen, let us not forget that it is the Lord only that girdeth with strength. 'He must teach our hands to war, so that a bow of steel shall be broken by our arms!' It shall never be well with the American people, nor with the American rulers, until it become a general sentiment, until with heart and voice we cry out, 'Who is God save the Lord, or who is a rock save our God? For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle: Thou hast given me the shield of salvation; and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great.'

It is our duty to-day to recollect not only *general*, but also *local* circumstances which call for mourning and repentance. Here Kentucky has a source of bitterness and lamentation almost peculiar to herself. We form one, among a very few of the American states, who in our legislative capacity acknowledge no God, no Providence, no Saviour. The legislature of this state meet, they legislate, and adjourn, without once acknowledging God in all their ways, that he might direct their steps. Has the heavy hand of God upon us as a state during the present war, caused us to ponder our steps, and amend our ways? While multitudes of our fellow citizens have been slaughtered—while Kentucky, in the persons of her widows and orphans, is clothed in mourning and bathed in tears, have the people called upon God? have our rulers humbled themselves before the Lord, and sought unto the God of Jacob? At the moment when I address you; at a moment

big with danger, perhaps to our very national existence, is not the legislature of our state sitting in a hall never consecrated by prayer, passing laws and enacting statutes upon which, as a body, they have never implored the blessing of Heaven? Do they, have they for many years, as the supreme fountain of law in our state, acknowledged either the God of the heathens or of the christians? Shall the wandering sons of our American forests pour out their libations, and sacrifice part of that which they hold most dear, that the Great Spirit may thereby be rendered propitious to them in the chase? Shall the Pagan of the east uncover his head and invoke the name of his idol when he is about to encounter any new danger, or discharge any important trust? And shall the legislature of a christian country, of Kentucky, eagerly grasp the reins of sovereignty, and sit them down to legislate for their countrymen and for posterity, without once, in their official capacity, invoking the 'father of lights,' or casting an eye to him who is the great legislator of the universe, and the fountain of all law? Let not this practical atheism find an apologist among christians. Let us all blush and be confounded that existing facts have urged us to record our disgrace as a state in this matter.

Should a foreigner visit our capitol, would he not see our legislature begin and close all their sessions in such a manner as to leave him in doubt whether the people of Kentucky were not atheists? Surely it would never occur to him that they were christians. I know these are unpleasant truths. It were much more pleasant not to utter them. But remember, we are not met to flatter each other, but to confess to our God these our crying sins.— Verily 'the Lord of hosts calls to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackloth.'

II. The religious people of America, from one end of the nation to the other, are this day called to mourning and repentance, because they have committed their dearest earthly interests into the hands of men who are so generally inimical to the government of God, or at least totally indifferent as to the prosperity of the kingdom of Immanuel.

This is not a local remark. It is not the offspring of a party petulance, or an insulated policy. Look abroad throughout America—look every where, from the grand council of the nation, down to the smallest assemblage of men who hold their offices from the will of the people—and then say, has morality of character, inflexible integrity, not to say piety towards God, formed any part of our inquiries, as to the candidate's character, when we have stepped to the polls to the discharge of one of the most solemn political duties any freeman ever discharged?

On this subject the minds of the people of America have been poisoned; and sorry am I to add, that none have drank more deeply into this cup of poison than have many religious men. It has been trumpeted from one end of the continent to the other, that religion and politics have nothing to do with each other—that it is dangerous to unite them in any way. This sentiment had its origin in that philosophy which despised christianity. It was rocked in the cradle of French atheism; and has attained its present enormous size in the free climes of America. Because in Great Britain, and some other countries of Europe, an union had been formed between political regulations and their religious institutions, which has been highly injurious to the liberties of the people, and the free exercise of conscience; does it therefore follow that the mild, the benevolent, the peaceful religion of Jesus, and sound policy, are indeed not twin sisters?—that it matters not whether the man who is to legislate for us be an atheist, a deist, a gambler, a spendthrift, a debauchee, or a christian? The people of America have partially declared it matters not. Yes, the religious people of America have said it matters not. 'If a man's politics please us, if he will promote our views and our party, we care nothing about his atheism or impiety; these are matters between him and his God.' Thus we are impiously dissevering what God has joined together. We are practically declaring that the sanction of God's law is a useless thing. That honour is paramount to the fear of God, or the apprehension of a judgment to come. That the love of God and of virtue are feeble principles when compared

with what is called *patriotism*, which we make the acme of human greatness.

No person will do me so much injustice as to suppose, that because I speak of the intimate, and indeed, indissoluble union there is between a manly and ardent piety, and an equitable administration of our government, that therefore I am advocating an establishment of religion. No one would deprecate more sincerely than would I, any thing that might have, though it should be but remotely, the effect of an establishment. I would act thus not only because I am convinced this would be imposing a very unwarrantable restraint upon the consciences of men in matters of religion; but also because I am certain nothing ever has so much impeded the progress of christianity as establishments. It is not religion that stands in need of civil policy to aid her, or to add to her dignity and durability. She is a celestial goddess. She captivates by her own charms, and governs by her own power; and is destined to hold a universal empire, though her progress should be opposed by every form of worldly policy. But the poor imperfect systems of human government, these creatures of finite, short-sighted, and erring man; it is these that cannot stand upon their own feet, without the aid of religion. These, though cemented by the blood of millions, and fabricated by sages who have been blessed with the experience of more than half a century, must soon crumble to dust, or grow up into tyranny, unless consolidated by religion, unless administered by men whose hearts have felt the benevolence of the gospel. O! my country! that thy bleeding wounds, thy distracted councils, thy jeopardized existence, did not form an evidence so demonstrative of the truth of these remarks.

Brethren, notwithstanding all the fine things said in America about *integrity*, and *patriotism*, and HONOUR, it is an eternal truth, one which if I were able I would imprint upon every American heart to day, that men are to be trusted exactly in proportion as they are good, and men are good exactly in proportion as they fear, love, and adore him who is the fountain of excellence. I therefore conclude, that the liberties of any people are endangered when they are deposited in the hands of men, in whose

breasts the dominant principle is *self-love*; and who have not the fear of the living God before their faces.

This is a subject of vast magnitude. Religious men of all parties are called upon by every thing that is sacred in the christian name—by every thing that is invaluable in their unparalleled form of government—by their regards for the rising generation—but above all, by the sacred dawning of that bright day of glory, just about to bless the world, to lay aside, and forever to lay aside their party feelings and local views, and to unite in one grand effort to place the government of our country in the hands of men “who do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with their God.”

What has reduced our afflicted country to its present deplorable condition? The impiety of its inhabitants, but especially the profligacy of its rulers. I fear, I awfully fear the curse of heaven rests upon us as a nation. “Woe to thee O land, when thy king is a child, and thy princes eat in the morning. It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes strong drink.”

What are we to expect, when those who fabricate our laws, are the very first to violate them? When our youth, our families, our Seminaries, are all contaminated by the baneful influence of illustrious vice and wickedness. When it is manifest that profligacy of character is no hindrance, nay, that it is with us a kind of passport to office and to greatness, what shall we say? With what words shall we afflict our souls? “For the people turneth not unto him who smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of hosts. For the leaders of this people cause them to err, and they that are led of them are destroyed.”

I am asked, what is to be done? I answer, the duty of to-day is to “abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes.” The duty of to-morrow will be very different. It will be to pledge ourselves to one another, and to every christian man with whom we meet, that we never will again, neither directly nor indirectly, by any vote of ours, elevate to office any man who is profligate in his manner, or atheistical in his principles. Matters must come to

this. Thither they are every day tending. Religious people all over the world are flowing together, they are forgetting and foregoing all their party feelings and views; they are making every thing bend to the grand interest of Immanuel's kingdom. And shall they be inattentive to their most valuable earthly concerns? Shall the *hue and cry* of *priestcraft* and *establishments*, raised by interest and by guilt, frighten people out of their senses? Shall we not all see presently, that magistrates ought to be God's representatives in these outer parts of his dominions, and that in every deed a wicked ruler is as absurd and as odious a spectacle as a profligate clergyman? But religious people are urged to unanimity and exertion on this subject, by higher motives than any that I can present; namely, by the promise of God. "But the judgment shall sit—And the kingdom, and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people," [the rulers] "of the saints of the most high, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. Hitherto is the end of the matter."

III. A third thing which calls loudly for humiliation and prayer to day, is our national contempt of the Sabbath.

That God has given us an express command to sanctify the Sabbath, and keep it holy, we shall not stop to prove. That this command is obligatory upon us as a nation as well as individuals must be obvious upon a moment's reflection. The good policy of a strict observance of the Sabbath is quite as obvious, as are its happy effects upon the cause of religion. It may safely be said that correct morals, not to say a lively sense of religion, can never be long preserved where the Sabbath is openly, and without punishment violated.

Circumstances may occur, which may make it proper for a man to travel or to labour upon the Sabbath day. Such things occur very rarely. The state of the nation may imperiously demand that intelligence of importance should be conveyed from one part of the country to another on the Sabbath day. In time of war or other great commotions, such occurrences may be very frequent; but

in time of peace, or even in time of war, to sanction by law the transportation of the ordinary mail on the Sabbath, is, and ought to be deemed by every reflecting mind, as a gross violation of the Sabbath day. It is one we are called to mourn over this day; and I doubt not is one of those grand national crimes, on the account of which God is pleading a controversy with our rulers, and our nation. As if to teach us what a high estimate God puts on the sanctification of the Sabbath, there is none of his laws, the violation of which he more severely rebukes, or has more signally punished. Says the prophet Nehemiah, "Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, what evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day. Did not your fathers thus, and did not the Lord our God bring all this evil upon us and upon this city? Yet ye bring *more wrath* upon Israel, by profaning the Sabbath." Ezekiel xx. 19. "I am the Lord your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments and do them; and hallow my Sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the Lord your God. Notwithstanding the children rebelled against me: they walked not in my statutes, neither kept my judgments to do them, which if a man do he shall even live in them; they polluted my Sabbath, then I said I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish mine anger against them in the wilderness."

What shall we say when we come to take a review of the part the religious people of America have acted respecting the sanctification of the Sabbath? It is from this class alone of our fellow-citizens we are to expect a conscientious observance of the Sabbath day. Here have we not a right to look for it? Have we found it? Alas! we have not. For this, as a church of Christ, we ought to humble ourselves before our God this day. There is nothing more frequent among those who bear the christian name, than a profanation of God's holy day. By what other appellation can we call that idleness in which many spend the sacred hours of the Sabbath. Altho' it be a day of rest from ordinary labour, God never designed it to be a day of idleness. Yet how many divide the day between sloth and vanity; ei

ther dozing the tedious hours away on their couches, or passing from house to house seeking company as idle and as wicked as themselves? How slight a circumstance will form an apology for neglecting to attend the house of God? How vain, uninformative, and unhallowed is the conversation of our Sabbaths? With the word of God in our hands, the precious doctrines and promises, and prospects of the gospel before our eyes, how much are we at a loss to fill up the sacred hours of the Sabbath with suitable meditations, or to entertain ourselves and families with instructive conversation?

The Sabbath ought to be wholly devoted to the exercises of piety and devotion, "except so much of it as is to be taken up in works of necessity and mercy." Therefore with the rising sun should every christian heart ascend to a throne of grace. It is the return of that day when all the armies of heaven were marshalled to behold the grandest spectacle they had ever witnessed; to contemplate a subject more replete with blessedness and with glory, than was the creation of this world; even to behold him who had power to lay down his life, *resume* that life again, and thus to enter upon that career of glory and exultation which should furnish saints and angels with new songs and new pleasures forever. At that moment Adam and Abraham, and the millions of redeemed saints had a fresh pledge that their slumbering bodies should arise from their dust, and a glimpse of what should be their glory. Then was "captivity led captive, and death itself was swallowed up of life."—It is the return of that morning, when "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the sepulchre, and, behold there was an earthquake; for the Angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake and became as dead men. And the Angel answered and said unto the woman, fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, for he is risen as he said. Come see the place where the Lord lay."—It is the return of our weekly jubilee, a great festival throughout the

christian world, and to every pious heart ought to be “a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.”

I am sorry to be obliged to remark in this place, that there is a large class of religious people in our country,* who neglect to sanctify the Sabbath, from a kind of principle. Who believe that all days are alike sacred, and therefore give to their tongues the most unbounded license on that day, and to their children the privilege of going whither, and doing what they please. Such error and defection from the truth among christians are greatly to be lamented, and call upon us for deep humiliation. Let such christians reflect, that they are joining issue with infidels in a matter which most essentially effects the vitals of christianity, and that no church can long flourish, in which the observance of the Sabbath is not held sacred. It is remarkable that family religion, family instruction, and the sanctification of the Sabbath, are three duties which always accompany each other. They are kindred duties, which appear and disappear together. They form a just index by which to judge of the state of religion in any church, or any nation. We have learned from the prophets Nehemiah and Ezekiel, that it is awfully dangerous for any nation to violate God’s holy day; and we learn from God’s own words to Moses what shall be the fate of that man who makes light of God’s Sabbath.—“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, verily my Sabbath ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you

* On the subject of keeping the Sabbath holy, and especially of the transportation of the mail on that day, I am well aware, that men who are highly reputable for their piety and standing in the church, do differ from us. We would not permit this difference of opinion to be the cause of an alienation of christian affection; nor of preventing us from uniting in our humble confessions, and our strenuous endeavours to bring about a reformation of manners both in public and private life. We all believe that the observance of the Sabbath is, in some sense, of divine obligation—that it has been of incalculable advantage to the cause of christianity, and that any attempt to lessen in public estimation the sanctity of the Sabbath, must be injurious to good morals and real religion.

through all generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you. Ye shall keep the Sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you. Every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death, for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among my people. Six days may work be done, but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord; whosoever doeth any work in the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations for a perpetual covenant."

IV. "Because of *swearing* the land mourneth."

There are two kinds of swearing, both of which are profane and in a high degree sinful, and both of which call for mourning and humiliation this day. It is easy to swear profanely, though we be called to the act by proper authority. Every oath is in its own nature an act of religious worship. Whenever, therefore, an appeal of this kind is made to heaven without a just sense of the veracity, the purity, and omniscience of God, it becomes profane and wicked. And I apprehend no inconsiderable part of that perjury of which it is to be feared many are guilty, arises as much from a want of a just apprehension of the solemnity of an oath, as from any settled determination to depose to that which is not true.

Upon entering any of our courts of justice, from our high court of appeals down to our most inferior tribunals, one of the first and most glaring things that attracts our notice, is the very free use that is made of oaths, and the profane and irreverent manner in which they are administered. Oaths, we apprehend, are often multiplied unnecessarily; they are also frequently administered by boys, and in the most light and apparently thoughtless manner, and to persons who, it is to be feared, have not the least idea of the solemnity of an oath. Were our judges to occupy a small portion of that time devoted by them to listening to the mere altercation and quibbles of the bar, to instructing those who might need it, in the awful sanctions of an oath, perhaps they would prevent much sin, and hasten the progress of their business.

It must be quite evident to every attentive observer, that perjury is one of the most prevalent sins of our country. Owing to its frequency, it has become very difficult to obtain justice in our civil courts; and it may well be doubted whether our ecclesiastical courts are quite free from this crime. How often do persons upon oath, narrate that as matter of fact, which is no more than the offspring of their feelings and wishes, and thus sit down with all the guilt of perjury upon their heads; when verily they think they have been doing God service.

“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour,” is one of heaven’s binding commands. But alas! one, for the violation of which we as a people, have great reason to humble ourselves in the dust. By what milder name can we call that calumny and slander, for which political America, of all parties, is at this moment so famous. Calumny which puts at stake the dearest interests of society, and sports with every feeling and principle held sacred by the good man. Calumny which a love of party and of power generates, and which nothing else limits. Calumny which calls in question the purest motives, and attempts to tarnish the most sterling worth, and wrest from patient industry its hard earned reward. Calumny which with equal effrontery assails the tribunal of the incorruptible judge, and the desk of “heaven’s high messenger to guilty men,” and denounces all, denounces every one who presumes to punish or reprove the most flagrant transgressor, lest the odium should light upon the head of some favorite. I repeat it again, by what milder name than bearing false witness against our neighbour, can we call that censorious and intolerant spirit, which like a malignant demon, hovers over our country from Georgia to Maine, and which like an insatiate vulture is preying upon the vitals of American liberty and prosperity? Remember brethren, that one grand object of mingling our tears and our confessions this day as a nation, in the presence of Jehovah, is, that we may obtain from him a spark of divine light, by which we may see these our sins in all their malignity, and have our hearts melted into devotion towards God, and good will, charity and benevolence towards one another.

But again, how prevalent and how fashionable is what is commonly called profane swearing? It may very well be doubted whether in any country, and among a people no more numerous than are we, there is so much vulgar and profane swearing as in America. This is one among the few vices which is generally thought not to be disgraceful.

“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord thy God will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.”

The very terms in which this command is conveyed by God, contain an intimation that this crime would be thought lightly of by men. But God assures us that however the profane swearer may escape punishment from men, he shall not escape his righteous judgment. There are perhaps very few vices which have a more dangerous, and a more rapidly dangerous tendency, than profane swearing. Other vices are confined to this earth, to things sensible and present. The profane swearer marches up directly to the throne of God Almighty; steps boldly into his immediate presence, and curses him, and defies him to his face. A few impudent approaches of this kind, into the presence of the majesty of the Universe, emboldens the sinner, and qualifies him for almost any sin, particularly for the sin of cursing his neighbour, and defying the established forms and customs of social and religious life. This is a crime to which young men, from their natural vanity are peculiarly liable. In them it is doubly odious. To hear the old veteran in rebellion, who has a thousand times escaped that vengeance which he has defied; to hear him again blaspheme God and curse his brother, is to be sure shocking; but to hear imprecations proceeding from the lips of young men whose youth it might have been supposed, would have secured in them a reverence for every thing that is venerable and august, is peculiarly afflicting. To see talents and learning, and the fond expectations of parental piety, all evaporate in a volley of oaths. To see sprightliness and wit, and character, and feeling, and the hope of heaven, all sacrificed to the demon of profanity, excite commiseration.

tion and pity, which nothing but degenerate youth and fallen innocency can inspire.

It is utterly impossible that a man should be long profane, without becoming otherwise very wicked. The wickedness of America is to be ascribed, in part to our irreverence for the name, the titles, the works, the word, and the ordinances of God. How painful to hear our children so soon as they can speak, utter themselves in the language of hell? or to see men who stand high in society, and whose influence is almost unbounded, debauching the minds of listening and admiring youth, by the foulness of their conversation, and the profanity of their language? Did we expect to take up our final and eternal abode in that place ordained "for the devil and his angels," it would be but prudent to familiarise ourselves with the language of T'OPHET. But nothing is farther from our thoughts. The truth is, profane swearing has a natural tendency to destroy in our minds the belief of the being of a God, or the apprehension of a judgment to come, and so to convert us into a nation of Atheists.

Brethren, because of swearing, let the land mourn this day. "Let us put on sackcloth, from the greatest of us even to the least of us. Let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God, yea, let us turn every one from his evil way. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger that we perish not."

V. In the fifth place, Intemperance is one of our great national sins.

Our faculty of reason, is that which principally distinguishes men from the beasts of the forest. There is nothing therefore, which we ought so carefully to guard against, as that which, (though it be but for a moment,) deprives us of the power of reasoning, or approximates us in any of our enjoyments to the inferior creation. The drunkard and the debauchee consecrate the exalted powers with which their creator has endowed them, to the vilest purposes. This devotedness to excess, and to forbidden pleasure, never fails to bring in its train an host of woes both personal and social; woes, which like the descending

torrent accumulate as they progress. It is the unalterable law of our nature, that he who trespasses the bounds of temperance, shall for that trespass pay a high forfeiture. No man can take a more direct road to infamy and to misery, than that which pleasure points out. It is certainly no less wonderful than it is true, that most of our faculties of enjoying pleasure, continue to increase and strengthen themselves, long after our animal natures have attained what may be deemed their maturity; provided our enjoyments are marked by temperance, and restrained by wisdom and religion. The reverse of this remark is true, when pleasure, unbridled pleasure, is our object. The man of pleasure! It is hard to say whether he is most to be pitied or despised. His property, his health, his reputation, his family, his self-approbation, and his soul, are all, all sacrificed at the shrine of sensuality, "as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life," so posts the man of pleasure to destruction. In his heart he carries a poisoned and barbed arrow, which not even the lenient hand of conjugal affection can extract; for the smiles of his wife, and the prattle of his babes, both remind him that he has betrayed them, and that he is a villain.

The excessive use of ardent spirits is a crime for which America is famous both at home and abroad. Drunkenness is in all cases an odious vice. It is much less so, however, when seen among the poorer and more ignorant part of mankind. The ideas of these people are so few—their pleasures are so entirely of the animal kind, and the fountains of their felicity are so small, and so easily exhausted, that it is not so much to be wondered at, should they, unless restrained by the prohibitory command of God, and the sanctions of religion, resort to revelling and intoxication. These are the means of enabling them for an hour, to forget their burdens and their toils, and to enjoy a fancied greatness. But for men who have mental resources, for men whose enlarged and vigorous minds can grasp this world, can penetrate the deep recesses of the mountain, or play among the spheres of heaven; for men like these to besot themselves, to descend from their fine flights of rhetoric their enlarged political

speculations, to the intoxicating draught, is a thing so degrading that the heart sickens at the recollection, and we blush for humanity. The blush still deepens, and the regret is still heightened, when we reflect that Christ's church is tarnished with this odious vice. Here the heart of every good man among us begins to utter itself in the penitent language of Jeremiah upon a different occasion—
 'O that mine head were water, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.' An in-temperate christian! The man who in the day of his adversity, when his earthly fountains of felicity are exhausted, ought to 'trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God;'—who in the day of his prosperity, and of the gladness of his heart, ought to say, 'I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise unto my God while I have my being. I will be glad in the Lord.' Shall the man with these supports and these duties before him, resort at any time to the inebriating cup? An intemperate christian! Can that spirit, the fruits of which are, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, *temperance*; can that spirit ever have done his perfect work in such a heart? I fear not. 'Brethren, the night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.'

One word more on this subject, and we pass on. While our country is pressed on every side—divided in her councils—deranged in her finances—drenched in the blood of her citizens, and bathed in the tears of her widows and orphans, are there not in our own town, and throughout our state, regular and set meetings for the express purpose of gambling, and intoxication, and an indulgence in that mirth, which is emphatically stiled 'the laughter of the fool'? In these meetings is not the holy one of Israel made 'the drunkard's song'—every thing that is sacred ridiculed, and every thing that is wicked and disgraceful perpetrated? It is to the plastic hand of vice, exercised in

these nocturnal revels—to that union of interests which a congeniality of tempers and pursuits never fail to ingender, that we are to trace this lamentable fact; viz. That our dearest civil and political concerns are so often committed into the hands of men, who from their excessive fondness for the pleasures of the gambling table or the convivial board, are totally unqualified for the management of their own little personal concerns. Upon such shoulders however, part of the weight of this sinking Empire is devolved. Devolved too, by the free consent and suffrage of the people. Are drunkenness and debauchery, and gambling then no longer odious? Has vice, provided the sin be committed by the wealthy, the powerful and the illustrious, lost all its deformity? So it would seem. Brethren, if we are partakers of other men's sin, when we fail with firmness and affection to reprove them; of what shall we not be guilty, should we continue to heap upon vice, all the honour and confidence at our disposal?* It is the indispensable duty of every good man to discountenance vice, and promote virtue. In America, and in all republican countries, the virtuous part of the community have it in their power to promote the cause of religion, to be 'as workers together with him,' and this in a way, and to an extent, which people of the same character in monarchical governments do not possess. This is not among the least of the advantages of a republican form of government.

VI. As a nation we have failed sufficiently to appreciate our civil and religious privileges.

It is easily said, that the American people are the most free and most happy people upon earth. But where is the mind that is capable of grasping this subject in all its

* By what I here, and elsewhere in this discourse have said on this subject, I would not be thought to have a reference to our own quarter of the union only, much less would I be understood to mean that none but religious men should be appointed to office, or that religious men of one sect should be preferred to those of another; but I would be understood to say, that the man who is notoriously profligate in his conduct, or who is known to be hostile to christianity, which is surely the religion of America, cannot with consistency of character, be voted for by any christian.

bearings, and its magnitude? The closing scene of human existence is soon to be performed. The bright day of Millennial glory is now to break upon the world; God's 'king upon the holy hill of Zion' is about, in the person of his saints, to commence his reign of a thousand years. Things are to be put in order for the long expected annunciation: *'Let the hills be joyful together before the Lord: for he cometh to judge the earth; with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.'* In order that the political world might be prepared for all this weight of glory, might hail the coming of the great day of God Almighty, the kings and conquerors, the politicians and philosophers of the seventeenth century, must be taught a grand practical lesson upon the long contested subject, THE EQUAL RIGHTS OF MAN. God commanded, and it stood fast. The republic of America was born. The eyes of the whole world were turned to contemplate a scene, august beyond description, and as new as it was grand.—To behold a people governed but not oppressed, free, but not licentious, religious, but not superstitious. Genius patronized, learning flourishing, industry rewarded, and virtue respected.—To read the grand charter of the liberties of man in that inimitable compact, the Federal Constitution, the proudest structure of human wisdom; and then to turn them and read it over again, in the manly countenance, and cheerful aspect of every American freeman.—To see that in America, 'they sit every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree, and there is none to make him afraid.' Such were the privileges guaranteed to us by our matchless form of government, and for many years fully realized by a happy people. But alas! what a practical comment upon the depravity of fallen man, does the conduct of the American people now furnish? Like 'Jeshurum we have waxed fat and kicked.' We have forsaken God, who has made of an handful a great nation, 'and lightly esteemed the rock of our salvation.' The fathers of our revolution, the men who with their prayers and with their swords achieved for us our great deliverance, who built for us this fair fabric of American independence; these men have not all laid them down in their peaceful graves; before we their degenerate sons,

have by our wickedness, our love of power, and especially our party spirit, well nigh defaced the whole, and are at this moment in the most imminent danger of being buried in the ruins of that grand structure, which a few years ago was the admiration of the world, and the pride of every American. In vain do we criminate our foes. They too are proud, ambitious, and wicked; already have they drunk deep of the cup of trembling. But we are not called upon this day to confess their sins. Our business is with ourselves, and with our God. Therefore, let every man of us 'rend our heart, and not our garments, and turn unto the Lord our God, for he is gracious.'

VII. The religious part of American people have great cause of mourning and lamentation to-day, because they have failed to come forward with all that liberality and zeal for the promotion of religion, which the magnitude of the cause, and the eventful times in which we live, demand.

To this duty we are at this time called by more than ordinary motives. The example of the christian world is grand, and ought to be impressed on our minds. Yet how many of us content ourselves with admiring and applauding the liberal efforts of others in the promotion of christianity? We act as though we believed that all the wealth which God has so bountifully bestowed upon us was our own, and at our absolute disposal. We seem to have forgotten that we are but stewards for God, or that he will as certainly demand of us an account of what we have done with our money, as of how we have employed our time, or improved our talents. The cry of perishing millions reaches not our hearts. We content ourselves with saying, 'be ye clothed, and be ye fed.' There are some honourable exceptions to these remarks among the American christians. But alas! how few are they, when compared with the great mass of professors. To punish us for this neglect, God has brought war upon our land. By this means he has taken from us many times more than he ever required us to bestow upon charitable and religious purposes. It is at this time peculiarly, our duty to remember that 'the liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.'

In fine, let all our repentance, and all our confessions be done in sincerity and uprightness of heart. If we ever have been, if we ever intend to be humble and honest, we ought to be so to-day. One of the best evidences we can give of our possessing a proper spirit is that we are now willing to hear the truth, and to know the worst of the matter. Do we wish to reform? Let us begin by humbling ourselves before God. Next, let us freely indulge one another in that which God and our incomparable form of government, have guaranteed to every American; the privilege of speaking and writing as our conscience may dictate; of applauding or condemning men and measures without falling a sacrifice to our opinions, or our integrity. Let us next see whether we have not marred the fair face of American liberty by many a foul blot; and by one as black as *African bondage*—whether thousands of us in the face of God's command and our political creed, are not adhering to this sin with a tenacity which death only can dissolve. Let us enquire how we have treated the gospel, heaven's richest, best gift to fallen man. In a word, let us review our lives as American citizens—as the inheritors of better blessings than any nation has ever enjoyed—as a people who are at this moment sorely afflicted, and still more sorely threatened.

‘O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. O Lord hear, O Lord forgive, O Lord hearken and do, defer not for thine own sake, O my God.’ AMEN.