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THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD, THE SURE AND ONLY STAY OF
THE CHRISTIAN PATRIOT IN OUR
NATIONAL TROUBLES.

A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE
TENTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA, SEPT. 14,
AND IN THE
WEST SPRUCE STREET CHURCH, SEPTEMBER 28, 1862.

BY
HENRY A. BOARDMAN, D. D.

PHILADELPHIA:
WILLIAM S. & ALFRED MARTIEN.
1862.

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D. S. 2 x 0.1

PHILADELPHIA, September 30, 1862.

REV. HENRY A. BOARDMAN, D. D.

Dear Sir—Your Sermon on the *Reign of God*, as connected with our present troubles, deserves a much larger publicity than can result from twice preaching. It ought to be read and considered, as well by those who love God and their country, as by those who are too apt to forget him. It would seem to be a vain hope to escape from our entanglements, and to exhibit “the uprising of a great nation,” until we sincerely and humbly adopt the motto, “In God is our trust.”

We therefore request that the manuscript may be placed at our disposal for publication.

JAMES POLLOCK,
JOSEPH PATTERSON,
GEORGE H. STUART,
S. A. MERCER,
ARCHIBALD McINTYRE,
ARTHUR G. COFFIN,
SAMUEL ASBURY,
HENRY D. SHERRERD,
JAMES WARRIN,
W. DWIGHT BELL.

PHILADELPHIA, October 2, 1862.

Gentlemen—It would be superfluous to speak to you of the tone of despondency which has for the last six months pervaded the public mind respecting the war. The sermon which you desire to publish had its origin in the prevalence of this feeling—then, I may add, at its height. Our army had just been expelled from Central Virginia; the national forces in the South-west were resigning their dearly bought conquests; and the Northern States were threatened with invasion. On every side we encountered inquietude, distrust, and vague presentiments of fresh calamity. Every one felt the need of some sure resting-place. I felt it myself; and wrote the sermon for my own relief, and the comfort of my people. I had no thought of its going further. Your kind note assures me that it has been helpful to you, and may be to others. I shall rejoice if it prove so. For notwithstanding the recent victories with which God has been pleased to crown our arms, the cloud is not lifted from the public mind. The future lowers very darkly upon us; and there is neither peace nor hope for us except in the reflection, “THE LORD REIGNEETH.”

I cheerfully place the manuscript in your hands.

Respectfully and faithfully yours,

HENRY A. BOARDMAN.

To the Hon. JAMES POLLOCK,
JOSEPH PATTERSON, Esq., and others.



S E R M O N .

Psalm xcvi. 1, 2.

THE LORD REIGNETH: LET THE EARTH REJOICE; LET THE MULTITUDE OF ISLES BE GLAD THEREOF. CLOUDS AND DARKNESS ARE ROUND ABOUT HIM: RIGHTEOUSNESS AND JUDGMENT ARE THE HABITATION OF HIS THRONE.

WE have here one of the favourite themes of the sacred writers, the universal dominion of God. It is a subject they present to us in every form, whether of simple didactic statement, history, song, or prophecy. This need not surprise us. A devout spirit *must* dwell with habitual and grateful joy upon the reign of God. It belongs to the earliest aspirations of the new-born soul on earth; and it inspires the loftiest anthems of saints and angels in glory. If I add, that it is of all others the subject which must come home to *our* bosoms just now, you will every one respond to the sentiment. For there is nothing of which we need more to be reminded in our present circumstances, than that "THE LORD REIGNETH;" that even when "clouds

and darkness are round about him," and his dispensations are veiled in mystery, "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne;" and that his reign is, therefore, a just cause of joy to all the earth.

One of the expressions used by the Psalmist on this latter point requires a word of explanation;— "Let the earth rejoice; let *the multitude of isles* be glad thereof." The words "isles" and "islands," which are of such frequent occurrence in the Old Testament, do not ordinarily denote a tract of land surrounded by water. That is sometimes the meaning, but the Hebrews used the term so translated, to denote sea-coasts in general—any shores washed by the sea; and so, maritime countries. In several passages, the special reference is to the coasts bordering on the Mediterranean; while in others, it is to be taken without this limitation, and as equivalent to "the Gentile nations." Of this we have an early example in Gen. x. 5: "By these were the *isles of the Gentiles* divided in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations." And in the same way we are to understand the text: "Let the multitude of isles—let the Gentiles of all lands—be glad thereof; let all kindreds and nations rejoice that the Lord reigneth."

"THE LORD REIGNETH." We have this truth

often repeated. "The Lord is King for ever and ever." "For the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth." "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" "Our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased." "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine: thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted above all." Testimonies like these—and the Bible is full of them—can import nothing less than that the Deity exercises an absolute control over all creatures and all events. He governs the worlds, material and immaterial. He governs brutes, and he governs men. He governs individuals, and he governs nations. He governs angels, and he governs devils. His supremacy extends to every mote that floats in the sunbeam, to every tiny globule that sparkles in the foam of the sea, to every transient emotion that flits across the breast of man or angel. Nothing exists but by his ordination. Nothing happens but as he bids or permits it to happen. The same hand which upholds the universe and keeps the stars in their courses, guides the falling sparrow.

It must be so. An infinite and perfect God must

✓ exercise an absolute and universal dominion. He must be present in every part of the universe. He must know everything that occurs. He must direct and control all things. Otherwise his own plans would be liable to interruption, and his happiness would be marred. That he has a plan, is a necessary sequence from his perfection. His wisdom will select the means for carrying it into effect; and his goodness and righteousness make it certain that these means, and the plan itself, will be adapted to promote alike his own glory and the welfare of his creatures.

His sovereignty, I have said, extends as well to nations as to individuals. The one includes the other. If he governs individuals he must govern nations, and *vice versa*. What is the Old Testament history but an illustration of this idea? Going back to the flood, the earth is divided among the sons of Noah. The nations springing from their loins are assigned each its proper territory. After four centuries, Abraham is called, and then, for two thousand years, a single nation fills the field of vision: all other nations are treated as if of no moment, except in their relations to the chosen people. Now they are made the tributaries of the Hebrews; and anon they are used to scourge them. To-day they fight them; to-morrow they hew their wood

and draw their water. But when their work is done relatively to the Jew, they disappear from the scene, and are heard of no more.

Even the great empires of the globe pay the same homage, involuntary though it be, to the Divine supremacy. It is a reflection of pregnant import, that the same irresistible will which ruled over Edom and Moab, controlled Babylon, and Media, and Greece, and Rome. As if to shut the mouths of those who might be disposed to exclude his providence from the wonderful events which marked the history of the four great monarchies, their annals are written in advance by the pen of prophecy. God tells the world what he was *going* to do with these mighty empires; that when the predictions were fulfilled, they might own his hand in the consummation, and confess that "THE LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT REIGNETH."

The argument from this source is irrefragable. The Book of Daniel, read in connection with authentic uninspired history, supplies a complete moral demonstration of God's control over nations and of his agency in all, even their minutest affairs. For it must be apparent, that if his prescribed plan had happened to omit the career of a single individual belonging, if you will, to the Medo-Persian empire, or the most trivial measure in its public policy, that

oversight might have changed the whole current of its affairs, and so caused the prophecy to miscarry. When it is considered what the rise, progress, and overthrow of a nation involves—what an endless variety and complexity of interests, plans, and passions; what diversified pursuits, institutions, and organizations, social, commercial, literary, political, and religious; amplified by its relations with other nations, and, still more, by having each individual of the millions who compose its successive generations left to his own free will,—when we take this view of a nation, we cannot but stand amazed at the prescience which can forecast its destiny, and the infinite intelligence and power which can shape its fortunes precisely to the appointed end. This is what we know the Deity has done in respect to the nations embraced in the fulfilled prophecies; and we are equally sure that he does it in respect to every nation. The supervision he exercises over its affairs is not remote and general; but practical and constant. It pervades the entire structure. It touches its every interest. It guides its every movement. He holds it as in the hollow of his hand; and without him it cannot lift a finger; it cannot even breathe.

✓ This—nothing less than this—is meant by the Scripture doctrine that “THE LORD REIGNETH.” And if this be its meaning, we are prepared to hear that

“clouds and darkness are round about him;” in other words, that many of his dispensations are veiled in mystery. No one who accepts the doctrine with an intelligent faith, could expect anything else. For consider,

The infinitude of God. “Canst thou by searching find out God?” The loftiest angel could not do this. The loftiest angel is but a child in knowledge here. What can we do, then, in comprehending the ways of the infinite One?

Consider, again, *the extent and grandeur of his domain.* We are no more to sever our globe from the rest of the universe, than we are to isolate one province or nation of the globe from the residue. His government is one. It comprises the various kingdoms of the earth, and it comprises, no less, the remainder of our planetary system, and all the stars and systems which adorn the skies, and every sphere that revolves in those distant fields of space which no telescope has ever brought within the reach of mortal vision. It is one realm, under “one blessed and only Potentate.” He created it for a common end. He governs it according to a single plan which comprehends all its mighty interests, and makes its every grand and every trivial agency subservient to his ultimate design.

To say this is to affirm that he must at times be

robed "in clouds and darkness." It were arrogating a divine prerogative to suppose ourselves capable of grasping all the movements of a government like this. The event which confounds your wisdom and tries your faith, has relations you do not understand. You do not see all its bearings even upon our own national welfare. How can you trace its effects upon the other portions of the human family—upon Europe—upon China—upon Africa? And if you could unravel this net-work, what could you know of its possible results in some of these distant orbs which pay allegiance to the same august Sovereign, and constitute a part of the same empire, with ourselves?

This argument is enforced by the reflection, that the present is confessedly *a preliminary dispensation*. "Lo, these are *parts* of his ways." Everything we see, is in order to something we do not see. The present is for the future. Inscrutable providences are like Scripture prophecies—their interpretation is to come. We are under a Teacher too wise to give us the problem and the key together. When his plan is completed, we shall see and confess its wondrous symmetry and beauty.

That we should encounter these mysteries is further to be contemplated as *a necessary part of our moral training*. We are sufficiently prone to indulge pride, and self-will, and impatience, and selfishness.

It would not abate these evil tendencies if everything in God's providence were made plain to us. We need dark and inexplicable events, to remind us that we are in the presence of a Power greater than ourselves: to mortify our self-consequence: to foster in our breasts patience and submission: and to nourish a filial trust in God's wisdom and righteousness, even when "his way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters."

I have treated the text chiefly in its bearing upon nations;—*God's dominion over nations*: for it is this question which most deeply concerns us at this juncture. It has been shown that his government extends to nations; and that in his dispensations towards them we must expect inscrutable providences. A cursory review of any period of the world's history would supply illustrations of these topics. He has not governed the nations as we would have governed them. There are events in the history even of the chosen people which amaze us—which would certainly have amazed us had we been living when they occurred. Of these none is more remarkable than the *early disruption of the nation*. After the unexampled care and culture he had bestowed upon them—the wonders which marked their exodus from Egypt, their miraculous support in the desert, their victories over the heathen, and their successful

occupation of Canaan; after the temple was built, and their complex and imposing system of worship established, and the new epoch in their sublime career inaugurated by the brilliant reigns of David and Solomon—the natural presumption must have been that the nation would at least be preserved in its integrity for centuries. Instead of this, Solomon is scarcely laid in his tomb, before a rebellion takes place in which ten tribes combine to throw off the theocratic yoke, and thenceforward the kingdom is divided. Even to this day the breach has never been healed; and History, vigilant as it is, has failed to preserve any record of ten-twelfths of the ancient seed of Abraham. Is it possible to recall this passage without feeling that “clouds and darkness are round about him”?

So, at a later period, with the seventy years captivity. No one will impugn the righteousness of this visitation, for their cup of iniquity was full. Still, when we remember his previous dealings with them, his promises, and especially the promise of a Messiah, and the overflowing wickedness of the nations at war with them, it cannot but appear mysterious that he should suffer their land to be laid desolate, the temple itself destroyed, and the people dragged off into a distant and cruel bondage. Had

we lived then, our feeling would have been, "Clouds and darkness are round about him."

With this feeling, indeed, we must read no inconsiderable part of modern as well as ancient history. The course of events has not been in the line which our wisdom and our sense of right would have prescribed. God's ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts; or the earth would present a very different spectacle from that which meets our eyes to-day. While we feel thus in reference to various other countries, our own troubles clothe the sentiment with a peculiar solemnity. This cruel war confounds us. Its first gun sent a shudder through the land. We could scarcely trust our senses that a civil war was upon us. Compelled to admit this, our next thought was that it must be very short; that with our vast resources we could bring it to a speedy end. But it lasts far beyond our calculations. We are baffled, and often defeated, by a power every way inferior to us. Twenty millions of men are held at bay for eighteen months by six millions. We talk of victories; and our own capitals tremble at the tramp of invading armies. Wise men stand amazed at the current of events. Every one asks of his neighbour, What does it mean? Devout Christians are saying, "We had not thought he would deal thus with us."

It is something to know—it is a great deal to know—that His hand is in it all. “THE LORD REIGNETH.” This is really our only sure source of consolation. We have looked to earth, and it has failed us. We have turned to our rulers; we have thought with complacency of our skilful captains, of our well-appointed armies, and our invincible fleets. We have felt that with such defences the government *must* be safe, and this rebellion be promptly suppressed. These confidences have been shattered. Fearful and anxious, we cast around for some other and better support. And here we find it: “THE LORD REIGNETH.”

“If he does “reign”—reign with that absolute and ubiquitous supremacy which has been ascribed to him—then this war has not come without him. He is in all our triumphs, and not less in all our reverses. The very causes which have brought us into our present condition; the alleged official incompetency and mismanagement, the ignorance, the jealousies, the grievous mistakes, the possible disloyalty—all are within his domain. His “reign” comprehends them all; for “none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?” Had it seemed good to him, this unnatural war would have been brought to an end within two or three months. That it is still prolonged, shows that while the

parties to it are aiming at their ends, God has his purposes to accomplish also. And we may be sure that until they are accomplished, the work of sorrow and death will go on.

If there be anything sad in this reflection, there is more of comfort. It is in fact, as already hinted, the only real comfort that is left us; the conviction that we are in his hands, and that he will order all things as he deems best. There is no agency, great or small, concerned in this war, which he does not control. He is in the council-chambers of our rulers. He is with our hosts in the field. He is with the armies that are assailing our cherished Union, and threatening to devastate our towns and cities. All are in as entire subjection to him, as are the forces which carry forward the tranquil operations of the natural world. Except with his consent or by his permission, no plan can prosper, and no blow take effect, whether for or against us.

It were, indeed, a mockery of God to expect him to work a miracle for our help; we can only count upon his aid when we are doing all we can ourselves. But the efficiency is his; and the results are his. He can save by many or by few. Under his shield three hundred Hebrews shall vanquish the tens of thousands of Midian. And this feat may be renewed on other fields; while without his

favour, a colossal army may flee before an imaginary danger. He who says to the turbulent sea, "Thus far shalt thou come, and no further," can say the same to an invading foe; and the submission shall be as prompt in the one case as in the other. If I iterate this thought, it is because there is no truth of so much moment to us at this crisis.

The review we have taken, shows that God is dealing with us as he has dealt with other nations; that we ought to expect events which would seem dark and inexplicable; and that such events bring their lessons with them—lessons which it cannot be safe to neglect.

The most serious aspect of these late reverses is that which links them with God's sovereignty. Unless we have failed entirely in our exposition of the text, these trials betoken another controversy to which we are a party, in comparison with which the conflict that engrosses us is of secondary importance; or rather, which imparts to this conflict all its significance. I refer of course to God's controversy with us. If he were reconciled to us, this war would not last long. "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." The sentiment must be as applicable to nations as to individuals. What could any earthly power do against a people who had God on their

side? What did they effect against Israel? "When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people, he suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reprov'd kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." Psalm cv. 13—15. It must be because there is sin lying at our door; because we have not humbled-ourselves aright under his rebukes; and we are not brought back in love and loyalty to Him, that his hand is still stretched out against us. Absolute as is his supremacy, and inscrutable as he must be to our reason in many of his dispensations, it is nevertheless an established principle of his administration, that he will bless any nation which faithfully honours him, and return to the nation which penitently returns to him. "The Lord is with you while ye are with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you: but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you." If pagan Nineveh found this true, no Christian people need scruple to avail themselves of it. The ten tribes would doubtless have experienced his clemency, had they sought it. But among all their kings, there was not a single good one. There was no repentance, and therefore no restoration.

But some one may ask, Why attribute these reverses to the Divine displeasure, when they are

clearly traceable to human agency? Why not charge them to the imbecility, and the ambition, the personal feuds, and political intrigues which have brought them upon us? I answer: 1. It is not the province of the pulpit to discuss such topics in these relations. 2. There is no intention to exonerate any one who may have had a criminal agency in causing these calamities. Let the tribunals arraign and punish them. 3. But if you could point out with unerring certainty all who have been concerned in precipitating these disastrous events upon the country, it would no more exclude a Providence than you can exclude a Providence from the lightning and the earthquake. God works by agents of all kinds; as well by men's vices as by their virtues; as well by their ignorance and their ambition, as by their patriotism and their science. And we cannot suppose that he would have permitted such instruments to produce such effects, unless it were a part of his plan to use them in reproofing the sins of this nation.

If this be a proper view of the subject, our duty is plain. We must "*search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord.*" The loss of his favour will explain everything that has happened. And the grand aim should be to learn how we have lost his favour, and by what means we can regain it. This

is too large a theme to be discussed within the compass of a few pages. But there is one feature of our government too closely connected with this question, and too conspicuous, to be passed by in silence. I refer, as you will readily suppose—for the topic is a familiar one—to the absence of any adequate recognition of the sovereignty of God, and the religion of which he is the author and object, in our Constitution, and in the practical administration of our political system. It may be conceded that the spirit of Christianity is to a certain extent incorporated with our institutions. The legal recognition of the Sabbath, the oath on the Holy Evangelists, and the appointment of Chaplains, are, so far, an acknowledgment of the Christian religion. But our national charter pays no homage to the Deity. His name does not once occur in the Constitution of the United States. And, as if to confound the charity which would refer this omission to some accidental agency, the same atheism is repeated and perpetuated in another form no less excusable. The coinage of money is one of the inalienable prerogatives of political sovereignty. The solemnity attached to the function has been recognised by most nations, ancient and modern, Jewish and Christian, Mohammedan and Pagan. For a sort of universal instinct has consecrated the coinage of the world to religion.

You have but to look at the money of any people, to know at what altars they worshipped. But *the coinage of the United States is without a God*. The startling remark has been made by an able numismatist amongst us, that if our nation should perish, and nothing be left of its history but our coins, the future antiquarian could never learn from them whether we were a Christian or a heathen people. The presumption, from the emblems impressed upon our money, (which are heathen, if they have any theological character,) would be in favour of our paganism. This is not a trivial matter. For while the *Dei gratia* of a currency may consort with regal and popular infidelity, the entire absence of all such emblems and legends from the coins of a nominally Christian nation, must be taken to indicate as much a want of reverence for the Deity, as a want of respect for the common religious sentiment of mankind. Is it too much to hope that this opprobrium may be wiped away? If we have never been taught the lesson before, we are admonished of it now, that

“THE LORD REIGNETH.” Has not the time come to make our formal national confession of this fundamental truth—to impress it upon our coinage!—to insert it (peradventure it may not be too late) as the Key-stone of our riven and tottering Constitution? If the country is not ready for these two simple but

significant steps in the direction of Christianity, we have been chastened to very little purpose.

But let it not be imagined that there is nothing else to be reformed. It must be recorded to our shame, that the Christians of our country have been criminally remiss in respect to their social and political obligations: and to this neglect it is largely owing that God's authority has been so much contemned amongst us. "There has been no time (observes an admirable writer) since our origin as a nation, when the united voices and efforts of the Christians of this country could not have accomplished any object they desired, provided the measure was conceived in the true spirit of Christian wisdom and toleration. There has been no time when it was not the duty of the Christians of this country to consider, under the full light of that Christianity which beamed upon them undimmed from the word of God, what policy and what measures were best fitted to improve and preserve our political institutions, and what course of government or legislation would most improve the moral, religious, and social well-being of the whole people."* These just observations have lost none of their force by reason of the lapse of ten years since they were penned. They had no reference to a "Christian party in politics;"

* "Politics for American Christians." Stephen Colwell.

much less to that phantom of "Church and State" which has inspired the declamation of so many place-hunters. They were levelled at an evil of gigantic proportions, viz. the unfaithfulness of the Christians of our country to their political duties. Professing to regard Christianity as the paramount concern of man, and to recognise the Divine protection as the only security for nations, they have, to a great extent, abjured politics and left the management of our affairs to whoever might succeed in seizing the reins. As a general thing, they have shunned nomination to office, and taken no pains to insure the election of suitable men. They have not brought their influence to bear, in any suitable degree, upon the course of legislation, so as to guard the interests of morality, and foster the healthy, conservative element in our institutions. They have too often sacrificed either to personal ease or to party, what was due to their country; and by their silence connived at that frightful corruption which has of late years spread like a leprosy through the whole domain of our politics. What wonder that the nation should come to deny that "THE LORD REIGNS," when his own people fail to acknowledge it? What marvel that His rights should be trampled in the dust, when those to whose watch He has confided them betray the sacred trust?

If this is strong language, the occasion will

justify it. This desolating war compels every thoughtful man to inquire into the causes which have produced it. And one of the earliest conclusions forced upon us, is, that our government is racked and shattered, because the Christian men of the land, and those who are in sympathy with them, have put forth no proper exertions to take care of it: because they have been too much engrossed with other pursuits, to keep the nation, as by a united and persistent effort they might have kept it, from that fatal deterioration which follows the general denial or disparagement of God's sovereignty, as certainly as darkness follows the withdrawal of the sun. It is not meant by this that there is no real religion amongst us; nor that the churches of our country have entirely failed of their mission. Far from it; the gospel has achieved many of its noblest triumphs here. But whether from a mistaken view of its legitimate sphere, or from other causes, the Christianity of the land has stood so much aloof from our politics, that although, in a sort, a nation of Christians, we are, in a very qualified sense only, a Christian nation. However this war may terminate, we have a dismal future before us, unless the *religion* of the country means hereafter to make itself felt in our public affairs as it has not been during the last half century. So little, in fact, has

the nation been imbued with a proper religious sentiment—with the feeling, “THE LORD REIGNETH”—that our most characteristic sin is found in the general prevalence of a spirit which is the very opposite of this, the spirit of self-sufficiency and rude boasting. No one will ask for argument on this point. We have gloried in ourselves—in our liberty, our intelligence, our enterprise, our prowess, our constitution, our Union—until all Europe has jeered at our vanity and anathematized our arrogance. No people except the Hebrews ever had so much to keep them mindful of the presence and the goodness of God: “for what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God has been in all things that we have called upon him for?” But the munificence of his bounty has only made us more supercilious; and while accepting and using his blessings, we have offered incense to our own superior virtue as the procuring cause of them. If there be any so blind that they have not seen this sin before, they may read it now in its punishment. God has smitten us in our most vulnerable part. Our idols are in the dust. Our glorying is turned to shame. We are beginning to learn that “THE LORD REIGNS;” and that he is “a jealous God, who will not give his glory to another.”

If we are learning this, we have struck the only trail which can lead us out of this labyrinth of woes, and conduct us to an honourable peace. There must be no abatement in the measures adopted for the public defence, but rather increased energy and augmented preparations. But we must return to God. This is the vital thing. We must restore to him the sceptre we have profanely attempted to wrest from his hand. We must acknowledge his sovereignty, and lay our honours at his feet. We must submit in humility to his rebukes, and penitently plead with him to withdraw his rod. At whatever cost, through whatever depths of self-abasement, we must regain his favour. And we shall do it, if we seek him as we ought. "He hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight." This is the acknowledged design of the afflictions with which he visits his people as individuals, to humble and purify them, and bring them nearer to himself. And we are warranted in putting a similar interpretation upon the calamities with which he scourges Christian nations. Whenever these afflictions have produced their proper effect upon us, we cannot doubt that our Heavenly Father will lay aside the

rod with which, in such righteous severity, he is smiting us.

There are two or three obvious considerations which lend countenance to this belief. One is derived from our past history. We need not go into details. As was just now observed, the annals of the Hebrews excepted, there is no nation whose origin and progress have been marked by so many wonderful interpositions of God's hand. The colonizing of this continent, the Revolution, the organization of the government, and the unexampled growth and prosperity of the nation, have too often been dwelt upon in this relation, to make it necessary to recite particular events here. It is not reasonable to presume that He who has built up so costly and beneficent a fabric, will suffer it to be destroyed before it has completed its first century.

For it is not simply a political structure. Even in this view we cannot be at fault in supposing that it has exerted a most benign and powerful influence upon the cause of civil liberty throughout the earth. But God has a *Church* in this land. In another connection I have spoken of its omissions and failures. But imperfect and unfaithful as it has been, it comprises some millions of individuals, who either profess the name of Christ, or constantly

celebrate his worship. This Church has not wholly neglected its work. It has done much to provide the ordinances of religion for our own expanding population. It has given the gospel to many pagan lands. It has enjoyed numerous unequivocal tokens of the Divine favour. Can we believe that He who died to ransom his Church, and who is "Head over all things to the Church," will abandon *this* Church? Or can we doubt that he will show himself "favourable to our land" for the Church's sake?

I merely suggest these thoughts. They may prove nothing. But they forbid us to despair of our country. They reprove our unbelief, and bid us "trust in the Lord God of our fathers," even though we cannot pierce the clouds and darkness which are round about him. These clouds will pass away. Our beloved country will yet come forth from this baptism of blood, purified as gold that is tried in the fire; and our Father's face will again smile upon us, a wiser, meeker, and better people.

But whether these grateful anticipations are to be realized or not, let us "*rejoice*" that "THE LORD REIGNETH." Amidst the tumult and alarm, the sorrow and suffering, which surround us, this one thought comes to the heart, like the dove with its

olive-branch across the surging waters. He who controlled those angry waves and guarded the ark, is still on the throne.

“He sat serene upon the floods,
Their fury to restrain;
And He, as Sovereign, Lord, and King,
For evermore shall reign.”

Here the Christian will find rest: his Father reigns. We may trust our country in his hands. He loves all that is good in it far more than we do. He is more the Friend of human freedom and happiness than we are. He knows just what this nation requires in order to prepare it for its future mission. And he will suffer nothing to happen to it which is not adapted to work out his own purposes, and contribute to the ultimate and universal triumph of his CHURCH, the grand and absorbing interest of earth—for which alone the earth is preserved.

I know it is easier to inculcate this trust than to exercise it. Standing where we do, sense and faith are in conflict. We would commit our country to God's keeping. We would rejoice that he reigns. But it costs a struggle. The feeling is, “Lord, I believe: help thou mine unbelief.” But this is our

only resource. The issue is with him. His will must and will prevail. "The floods lift up their voice, the floods lift up their waves; but the Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea." And if we cannot consent to his sovereignty, and trust him with our country's destiny, there is nothing left to us but the gloom of unbelief, and a prolonged harvest of discontent, and terror, and bitter tears. But we can trust him. We will trust him. We *know* that he will not forsake us. With all the tribes of earth we will exult in his dominion. "THE LORD REIGNETH: LET THE EARTH REJOICE; LET THE MULTITUDE OF ISLES BE GLAD THEREOF. CLOUDS AND DARKNESS ARE ROUND ABOUT HIM: RIGHTEOUSNESS AND JUDGMENT ARE THE HABITATION OF HIS THRONE."

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