

A THANKSGIVING DISCOURSE.

T H E

RULE OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE

APPLICABLE TO THE

PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES OF OUR COUNTRY.

DELIVERED IN THE

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF DETROIT,

Thursday, November 28, 1860.

BY GEO. DUFFIELD.

DETROIT:

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SECESSION:

ITS CAUSE AND CURE.



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FREE PRESS MAMMOTH BOOK AND JOB PRINTING HOUSE.

1861.

CORRESPONDENCE.

DETROIT, January 19, 1861.

TO THE REV. GEO. DUFFIELD,

DEAR SIR:

Having listened with pleasure to your discourse, prepared and delivered on the National Fast Day, and being of the opinion that many of the facts and suggestions therein contained, and much of the counsel affected by it might prove of service, if more generally circulated through the community, we beg leave to ask of you a copy of the same for publication.

Those of the undersigned, who likewise enjoyed the privilege of listening to your Thanksgiving Sermon in November last, would be pleased to have a copy of that also, in order that the two might be jointly published.

We remain, with much respect,

Your obedient servants,

H. H. WELLS,	D. COOPER,
HENRY A. MORROW,	J. W. TILLMAN,
GEO. W. HOFFMAN,	J. A. FARRELL,
N. MINER PRATT,	J. S. FARRAND,
C. N. GANSON,	A. KNIGHT,
C. H. BUHL,	W. S. PENFIELD,
J. W. BAGLEY,	MORSE STUART,
C. M. DAVISON,	C. VAN HUSAN,
F. J. DOUGALL,	GEO. S. FROST.

DETROIT, January 26, 1861.

TO H. H. WELLS, HENRY A. MORROW,

GEO. W. HOFFMAN, J. W. TILLMAN, AND OTHERS:

GENTLEMEN:

In the hope you inspire, that the discourses of which you request copies, "might prove of service, if more generally circulated through the community," it gives me pleasure to comply with your request.

With much respect and Christian regard,

I remain, yours, truly,

GEO. DUFFIELD.

THANKSGIVING DISCOURSE.

JERE. 18: 7, 8. "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them."

OUR annual day of Thanksgiving meets us under circumstances so strongly marked, and of such striking contrast, as to bid us "rejoice with fear and trembling." Seldom has there been a year so crowned with the goodness of the Lord, in many respects, as the past. "His paths have dropped fatness," and "the little hills have rejoiced on every side." Abundant, exuberant crops have poured plenty into the lap of the husbandman; the fruits of the earth have been reaped and gathered, and stored in richest profusion; commerce and trade had recovered from the embarrassments and distrust, for a year or two previous, so prevalent and perplexing; no pestilence has invaded our cities, nor disease of mortal malignity prostrated any wide extent of our country; nor epidemic any limited district. The seasons have been marked with health, and unusually exempt from extreme degrees of heat or cold, or sudden and violent fluctuations. Tempests and tornadoes, floods and

flames, have accomplished less than ordinary destruction. The ravages of death have been more than ordinarily restrained. The mortality of our city has been much less than usual, and no conflagration, or calamity of a public nature, has filled our habitations with sorrow. Although sad and painful calamities have here and there occurred, and we have been called, as a congregation, to mourn with parents whose hearts were broken by the untimely loss of a beloved and promising son; yet much fewer than in previous years, have been the visits required from us to the city of the dead. And although here and there, in the southern portions of our land, the showers of heaven have been withheld, the verdant field turned into a dry and barren waste, and the hideous spectre of famine reared her frightful form in some of our distant borders, yet has there been more than abundance to meet the deficiency of provender and provisions thus caused, and a prompt exercise of generous liberality, to prevent and mitigate the threatened suffering. "The pastures have been clothed with flocks, the valleys, also, have been covered over with corn," and the shout of joy, and the song of praise, have ascended from nearly every corner of our land.

Amid these tokens of unmerited goodness, however, are to be seen indications of a fearful and portentous nature. It has been a year of religious declension. But few revivals of religion have blessed the churches. The zeal and prayerfulness of many have subsided into monotonous formality. "The solemn feasts" and Sabbaths have by many been forgot-

ten. The sanctuaries of the Lord have been desecrated; few have come to the solemn assemblies. Vice and immorality, in various forms, are on the increase; intemperance laughs at the restraints of the law; public opinion sustains not its enforcement; professors of religion extensively frowned upon and condemn attempts for that purpose. The Sabbath has become a day of traffic, of sensual indulgence, and of noisy amusement, and drunken excesses and brawls; and places of corruption, whirlpools of perdition, spring up around, while magistrates, ministers of justice and law, and multitudes that name the name of Christ, rest at ease, and consent and "love to have it so." Party political strifes have greatly neutralized christian influence. The wicked have walked on every side, and vile and unprincipled men have been exalted, by catering to the corrupt passions and depraved appetites of the lovers of strong drink. Nothing, comparatively worth speaking of, is done to stay the tide of intemperance and of Sabbath desecration, which are sweeping so many of our youth and others to the drunkard's grave. God's gifts have been abused. His mercies have been despised or forgotten. "Dumb dogs, that cannot bark," have stood as sentinels of the press; and the work of corruption, the ravages of intemperance, the increase of crime, move forward without molestation, or hindrance of any great efficiency from officers of justice, churches of the living God, and christian professors generally.

These are alarming requitals for the goodness and mercy and loving kindness of the Lord. Suddenly, and most unexpectedly, in the midst of abundance,

a cloud of gloom and darkness overspreads the sky. Extraordinary dispensations of Providence excite alarming apprehensions. The bonds of Union, that have for nearly three-fourths of a century held us united as a confederate government of free and independent States, become relaxed, and threats of severance and separation are heard. A panic in the commercial world produces dismay; State securities and stocks of every sort are depreciated; an inflated currency excites distrust; business and trade have become stagnant; embarrassments are thrown in the way of forwarding our abundant crops to market; exchange, for a season, is rendered almost impracticable; the Lord has blown upon men's anticipated gains, and "he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes." Consternation seizes the wise and the wary; confusion takes the place of confidence; and the providence of God is heard to "*speak concerning the nation*" and government, not as it was hoped it would, to plant and prosper, but "to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy."

It behooves us, on such an occasion as the present—met as we are to render thanks to God for mercies abounding—to ponder also, and seek to profit from judgments impending. God, in a season of prosperity, security and increasing sinful provocation, has suddenly given warning of approaching judgments. He thus calls to repentance and reformation. If they are not so improved, men may please themselves with hopes of deliverance or safety, and think, by their wisdom and skill, to prevent or counteract threatened ills; but the wisdom of the wise will be

found foolishness, and the resources of the mighty utterly weak and unavailing. There is but one way of averting the Divine displeasure, and escaping from impending judgment; that is, repentance and reformation. "If the nation," saith God, "against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." Such is THE RULE OF HIS RIGHTEOUS PROVIDENCE. We invite your attention to it AS APPLICABLE TO THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES OF OUR COUNTRY.

I. The rule itself becomes a righteous God, in His government of the world. There is, in the minds of men, an inward sense of right—a deep and abiding conviction—that they should suffer, who, having been previously warned, will not repent of their sins. It is not necessary that one man teach this to another. It is inseparable from our intelligent nature. Every man intuitively feels, in his own conscious convictions, with respect to himself and others, that impenitent sinners, incurable by divine warning, are proper objects of the divine displeasure. Impunity, under such circumstances, would prove a great temptation to atheism. It is right and becoming, therefore, that God, in His own time and way, should vindicate His faithfulness, by executing His threatenings. For, if men can at any time banish the fear and restraint of impending judgments, and persuade themselves there is no danger of coming wrath, no God that judgeth righteously on the earth, there is nothing too vile, dishonest, profane and flagitious, they will not eventually consent to and commit. "Because

sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

It is with nations as with individuals; long continued prosperity, and escape from threatened and impending judgments, amid growing vice and immorality, tend to hardness of heart, profligacy of life, imperious oppression, increasing corruption, and provocations of crime. Those that love and fear God, who prize His gospel, and seek to do right, instinctively cry to Him for redress, deliverance, and safety, when provoking sins and abounding crimes prevail. The Spirit leads them thus to pray, and God has promised to hear their prayer. Should iniquity always triumph, and impunity in this world always accompany provoking crimes and a corrupt administration of government, the temptation would be too strong for the faith of weak believers. Hence the interpositions of severe and sudden wrath, occasionally, by signal and righteous judgment, where warnings and impending evils have not produced repentance and reformation. It is right and becoming in a holy God, who has said He will "avenge His elect that cry unto Him day and night," thus to vindicate His faithfulness and glory.

II. In applying this rule to the circumstances of our own country, there are several inquiries of importance for us successively to consider; and,

First. What indications are there of iniquities so abounding, and of judgments so impending, as to call for speedy repentance in order to escape greater

evils? As to the first part of this inquiry, we remark, that there is no need for us to enter into a specific enumeration of all sorts of crimes, in their varieties, observable at this day in our country. We may differ also from others and many, in our estimate of particular vices in society. It will be sufficient, briefly, to state a few things, which, the sacred Scriptures teach us, indicate a corrupt state of society, requiring repentance and reformation for deliverance from impending judgments.

1. The first is, when all sorts of crimes are on the increase. Such a state of things indicates a general corrupt state of society, like that of the prophet referred to in Israel, when he lamented, "Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters, they have forsaken the Lord; they have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger; they have gone away backward."* That vice and immorality are on the increase in our land, none can deny. The statistics of crime, the columns of the daily gazettes, prove it. It is not designed to intimate, that, as a people, we are as corrupt as are other nations which might be named, or as we may yet become without repentance and reformation. But there are few provoking sins condemned in the word of God, and known to be worthy of punishment by man as well as God, that are not to be found in the catalogue of our guilt as a people. From the most impudent and law-defying atheism—that has attempted to impose upon the common sense of the communities in our

* Isaiah 1: 5.

large cities, especially New York, by claiming the protection of our federal constitution for theatrical exhibitions, and musical concerts, and lager beer festivals on the Sabbath, in open defiance of municipal law and public sentiment, under the blasphemous pretext of these things being their worship and their rights of conscience—down through the vilest intemperance, sensuality and uncleanness, to every phase of dishonesty, deception, oppression, and moral degradation, may we trace the black and odious list. Who will dare to make it a plea with God on our behalf, that we are free from prevalent profanity, horrid oaths and blasphemies, open and wanton desecration of the Sabbath, filial disobedience, contempt of parental authority, bloodshed, murder, drunkenness, licentiousness, lewdness, repudiation of marriage contracts, adultery, theft, burglary, swindling, wholesale fraud and gambling of every hateful sort, oppression, slavery, with all its catalogue of abominations, falsehood and defamation of every type, and avarice with its endless cruelties and exactions? Not one. Not only have these sins a growing prevalence, indicating a corrupt state of society, but a second indication of this observable is, that:

2. All sorts of persons, and every grade of society, are involved in them; many by their own personal guilt; still more by not doing what they can to prevent them in others. All sorts of persons, in every profession and vocation, are found consenting to the relaxation of law, and to the venality of officers of government. The proof of this is to be seen; in elevating corrupt men to places of trust and power; in

not testifying openly and publicly against the vices prevalent; in indifference and refusal to adopt and co-operate in measures for the execution of law; and in not mourning for what they cannot remedy. And not only is the world around full of such sins as are its own, appropriate to men of unbelieving minds, and unrenewed by the spirit of holiness. But,

3. A third characteristic is, that churches, and professors of religion extensively, are not free from a participation in them, but practice such as are peculiar to them—pride, vanity, boasting, ostentation, self-righteousness, luxury, covetousness, ambition, sensuality, conformity to corrupt fashions, and drinking usages, formality, deadness and coldness in religion, indifference to the cause of God, the claims of the Sabbath, and public morals, rivalry, proselytism, want of cordial co-operation, self-applause, loss of zeal for God and Christ, seeking their own ease, hypocrisy, and making religion often a cloak for unrighteousness, or a stepping-stone to commercial, political, or social ambitious preferment. These things are so obvious, that all the fair glosses of a mere profession of religion cannot conceal them. Thus is Christ wounded in the house of His friends; and many of the wicked stumble, and find occasion to reproach and blaspheme, and proclaim themselves skeptical and devoid of confidence altogether in relation to real vital godliness. Certainly such things call for repentance, and cannot be sufficiently bewailed. Sad evidence is there, not only that the foolish, but that all the virgins, wise and foolish, slumber and sleep while the Lord delayeth His coming.

4. Beside these, we may discern indications, that, in some respects, our sins, more strictly national, are becoming more than ordinarily aggravated, and that in despite of solemn warning. Intemperance has been, and yet is, one of our national sins. It has been fearfully rebuked by the annual immolation of 100,000 of our fellow citizens, by the steady increase of onerous taxes, by crowded jails and poor houses, by the multiplication of the insane, by demands for lunatic and drunkards' and other asylums, and by the lawlessness, and murders, and other crimes it produces. Yet public opinion treats it as a matter of indifference; will not sanction and call for the enforcement of the prohibitory liquor law; elevates to office men that treat it with contempt; sustains and justifies public functionaries sworn to enforce the laws, who perjure themselves by not doing it; looks, with allowance and approbation, upon the conspiracy of liquor dealers to defy the law and tread down the Sabbath; and countenances the vending and use of adulterated and poisonous mixtures, known, and publicly proved, to be abominable and murderous frauds practiced on the community. With all the clear light upon this subject, and the numerous rebukes, which God in his providence administers for this sin, it is no small aggravation of our guilt, that such a state of things, on the part of rulers and ruled, should continue.

Another of our great national sins, becoming more and more aggravated, is the growing practical contempt for the moral obligation of contracts. The federal government violated the

faith of its treaties with the Cherokee Indians. Official oaths are extensively disregarded. A man's word in business, especially his promise, was once extensively regarded as good as his bond. Honor and honesty were safeguards of social compacts. But now, no man regards himself safe from imposition and unfaithfulness to promises and contracts, except in so far as he can vindicate his claims and rights by process of law. Even securities, given according to law, for the faithful performance of official duties, or in private contracts, are regarded as worthless, and laughed at both in the church and in the world. Subscriptions, on the part both of religious professors and irreligious men, even when expressed in promissory notes, are repudiated without shame and compunction. Men accept of places of trust, and ridicule the idea of their being required or expected faithfully to discharge their duties. Stations of influence, places of power and patronage are sought, not for the public good, but for personal advantage. Covenant engagements, and the duties thence arising, even among church members, are esteemed but light affairs, relinquishable at will. Religious professors, in managing voluntary societies, and religious associations and congregations, under various pretexts, pervert funds, alienate property, and set examples of robbery and fraud, allied to the swindling operations of unprincipled men in banks, and other corporate companies. The provisions of Federal and State constitutions are disregarded; and Legislative enactments and judiciary decisions are framed to render them worthless. Honest, confiding,

conscientious, order-loving and law-abiding citizens, are betrayed and robbed by the promises and schemes of speculators. One generation begins to sneer at the idea of compacts being binding on them, which have descended from a former. The son repudiates the obligations of the father. Many repudiate their own, and fail, or make assignments, after having covered up whatever property they can conceal, and eventually are found to have purchased their own notes at heavy discounts, and defrauded their creditors. "Judgment is fallen in the streets, and equity cannot enter." The very ligaments of the social state are sundered. Even the marriage compact begins to be regarded by many as binding only as long as convenient.

Another of our great national sins beginning to develop itself is the avaricious pursuit of gain. Commercial greatness is the idol and ambition of all our chief cities. Desire for wealth, in rapid and large accumulation, renders many ready to prey, each upon his neighbor, and laugh at the idea of honor or honesty in commercial transactions, beyond the flagrant offenses which can be detected and punished at law. It is becoming characteristic of us, as a people, to sacrifice time, social and domestic comfort, and to neglect the means of moral and religious improvement, in the mad and hot pursuit of wealth. Nothing but amusement attracts the masses; science and religion have but few votaries that can give an evening or two a week for improvement. God has rebuked this spirit, again and again, by the embarrassments of trade, the revul-

sions in the market, the panics started, the depreciation of stocks and property, and the destruction of confidence and credit in business. Yet no change, no repentance, no reformation takes place, but the absorption of mind and heart, and the rush, are as great as ever, and greater, after extravagant profits and illicit gain, whenever the pressure of impending judgment is lightened. After repeated warnings, such things greatly aggravate the guilt of that "covetousness which is idolatry."

It is scarcely necessary to add, that slavery, with its accompaniments and consequents, is another of our great national evils and God-provoking sins. But the violence of party strife, the alienations and rivalries, the jealousies, and fears, and reproaches, and collisions of interest between those involved in it and those relatively affected by it, and the contests for political victory, in the absence of moral influence and fraternal sympathy and good will, have thrown far back, apparently, the day of repentance and reformation. Passion has taken the place of reason. Prejudice has overpowered conscience. Christianity has been invoked to subsidize oppression. Churches have been rent. Alienations have been rendered apparently incurable, and loud threats are heard of secession, separation, and dissolution of the Union. These things are omens of dread import, and they suggest a second leading inquiry:

Second. What are the ordinary impending judgments, foretokening approaching crises of distress, calamity or ruin, and which can only be prevented

by repentance? Judgments, as we learn from the sacred Scriptures, are either of a temporal or spiritual nature. Of the former, are seasons of affliction, wide-spread disease, especially visitations of pestilence, seasons of want and privation, when the Lord turns His hand upon men's gains, withers their crops, blasts their fields, destroys their business, and renders their labor and industry unproductive and valueless. A third method is when He sends the ravages of mildew and various insects, droughts, floods, tempests, tornadoes and such like, that cause suffering and famine to a greater or less extent. A fourth is, when He lets loose the restraints of His providence, and allows assaults and injuries and fell passions prevailing, to lead to war. Another method is to make rulers a curse, and cause the people to suffer from mercenary cruelty and oppression by ruinous policy adopted, or utter recklessness and profligacy, and infidelity in the execution of their trust and responsibilities. And still another and disastrous method is, to inflict spiritual judgments, by withholding His Holy Spirit, so that the churches, becoming cold and dead, corrupt, and copying the fashions of the world, make a profession of religion such a formal, hypocritical thing, that it loses all its moral power and redeeming influence.

All these things are tokens of the divine displeasure. Whenever and wherever they occur, loud are the calls of God to immediate repentance. We need not say, that in retracing the history of the past sixty years, we can discern all these things to have occurred among ourselves. Seasons of agricultural,

manufacturing and commercial prosperity, through years of general health, have been followed with seasons of disease, commercial disaster, visitations in different forms of pestilence, partial famines, war, and general anxiety and distress. Seasons of great and extensive revival and religious awakening, have been succeeded by those of stupor, worldliness, sensuality and selfishness, awakening the uneasy fears of watchmen stationed on the walls of the church, and others seeking the honor of God and the salvation of men.

Divine Providence has afflicted us as a people in the most marked manner, again and again; and the present money panic, in the midst of abundance and animating prospects of commercial prosperity—occurring in a day of religious declension, and immediately consequent on political contests and jubinations—seems to be the very voice of God, proclaiming His displeasure, and calling to repentance. We may think, and say, that it has been unnecessary, and refer it to this cause and the other; to political intrigues, or the rage of disappointed partisans, or cupidity of scheming speculators; and we may say, as we read the movements of Providence, that they who have sown the wind, are reaping the whirlwind. But the fact is not to be questioned, that suddenly, as by the violent jerk of a powerful bit in the jaws, the prancing fiery steed has been reined in, and made almost to fall, so has the commercial world been arrested, and made for a moment to stand amazed and tremble. It is the call of God: “Repent, and turn yourselves from all your trans-

gressions, so that your iniquity does not prove your ruin." Warning after warning has been given—rebuke after rebuke, and now, unexpectedly, in rapid succession, in the midst of rejoicings, and when least expected, it is repeated, as though some fearful crisis in Providence is at hand.

What that crisis is, is obvious to every intelligent observer of passing events. It is the dissolution of the Union, that binds together in harmony and prosperity this great confederacy of free and independent States. Such an event could not fail to produce results in every respect to be deprecated, if not fatally disastrous to the future well-being of these United States, severally as well as collectively. The history of the revolution, and of the trials and frequent agony of the great father of his country, raised up and sustained so wonderfully by a gracious Providence, during the years of contest with Great Britain, proved the perils and perplexities of a mere States' compact and legislative council, which formed the bond of union among associated colonies, or brought men together by pressing exigencies. The federal constitution, framed with so much care and wisdom by the great patriots and statesmen assembled in convention in 1787—the names of many of whom emblazon the annals of our country's fame,—and adopted successively, with amendments, suggested by different individual States, became a bond of union of such enhanced force and aptitude, that when consummated by the organization of a federal government, was thought and proclaimed by multitudes to be perpetual and indisso-

luble. It has been the element of our greatness and glory as a free and independent nation—the very centre of endless processes of our country's industry and prosperity. Like the heart in the human body, which sends its throbbing pulsations through all the arteries and veins, bearing life, nourishment and vigor, so has it, through all our civil, political, commercial, financial and productive systems, united and assimilated increasing millions in one vast giant confederacy, which has stretched its vigorous growth across the continent, nearly from the frozen region of the north, to the torrid equatorial climes. Its power and glory have astonished the world, as by the blessings of Divine Providence it has turned the desert into an Eden, and made the wilderness to blossom as the rose. Like the Orient sun, it has poured forth its radiant beams, waxing in its strength, as its splendor advanced, from hemisphere to hemisphere, and illumined the globe. While wretchedness, tyranny and crime settled in deep midnight gloom on other lands, and wars and desolation filled their inhabitants with consternation and horror, here all was prosperity and happiness, grandeur and glory, under its vitalizing power. Like the gravitating force which gives stability to the earth, it has been the *primum mobile* of our Union, which nothing but violence, like earthquake throes, could rend. The volcanic fires of mad, impetuous passion alone, confined and struggling beneath our foundations, and not external violence, are the only source of danger to the stability and perpetuity of that constitution, which, for

nearly three-quarters of a century, has harmonized and united this great confederacy.

But now alarm exists extensively, lest dangers from this source are close upon us. Quivering shocks, spasmodic tremblings, and heaving undulations, have sent the thrill of terror into myriads of palpitating hearts. The governing authorities, the veteran statesmen, the wise and sober counselors, and devoted patriots, are not without solicitude and fears. Should passion reign, and the great God of nations, who has hitherto protected and preserved us, withdraw His guardianship, our securities are gone. If once "He arises to shake terribly the earth," our lofty, proud and stable edifice must topple to the ground. Who can estimate the ruin that a few moments of such earthquake shocks, the revolutionary violence of wild, careering fires of passion, may produce? Time may indeed repair them; but at what an immense expenditure of life, and property, and labor! The rending of the bonds that hold these States in union, the secession and separation of one or more, by open, violent rejection and defiance of constitutional compacts, must prove the first throes of disastrous revolutions, in long succession, beyond all power of human sagacity to foresee, or human wisdom and might to arrest and counteract. Thus did they in the history of the separation of the tribes of Israel. Our prosperity, our safety, our hope as a nation, depend upon a wisdom and a power that can hush the hurtling tempest, and quench the smouldering, struggling fires, or open some volcanic vent, like the safety valve, and bid them exhaust

themselves at their leisure. God alone can give the wisdom to do this. He, only, is competent to apply the hand that shall save. The rule of His providence, illustrated and established in the history of other nations, and as mighty as our own, is applicable to us in present circumstances. "At what instant I speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom; to pluck up and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto it." Repentance and reformation, sustaining an appeal to Him, will as truly save our country now, as it ever did Nineveh, or Israel, or Judah, or our sires of revolutionary piety and patriotism.

Third. But here a third question is pertinent: How are such repentance and reformation to be secured? It will be, as it often has been, asked, how are we, as a people, to turn from the evil which has caused God in His providence to pronounce against us? One party says, abolish slavery; another says, violate no longer constitutional compacts. Crimes and recriminations have thence arisen. Taunts, jeers, reproaches, daring and provoking challenges, on the one hand, exasperate and madden. Unfounded allegations and passionate phrenzy, excited by misapprehension, misrepresentation, suspicions, and fallacious reasonings, on the other hand, are thrown back with intense violence. Interests are found in conflict. Reason is blinded by passion. The complications and surroundings of the policies of antagonistic parties admit not of prompt, easy, categorical adjust-

ment. Morally and religiously, judgment, conscience, and feeling, among great masses of our population, are found at variance.

The question of slavery has already divided North and South, as really in a moral, and ecclesiastical, and social point of view, as were the tribes of Israel separated in the days of Rehoboam, and Jeroboam. And Jerusalem and Samaria were not more effectually made the seat and centres of discordant and uncongenial, moral and commercial systems, than the agitation of this subject seems to have prepared the way for Charleston and New York, or Boston to become the focus, of rival opposing and antagonistic systems of religions, as well as of political and commercial influence. The breach in the confederacy of the twelve tribes of the Jewish nation—which confederacy, to some extent, formed the model, and suggested many of the principles incorporated in our own—became irremediable, from the moment that the religious and social feelings were alienated, and gathered around Mount Gerizim and Mount Moriah, as the seats and centres of rival and opposing systems of spiritual influence. In such a state of things, amid the ruins of divided churches, the question becomes agitating and alarming; is it possible, can any thing be done to prevent repellent and abhorrent feelings, sustained by rival and opposing fanaticisms, from producing lasting and incurable alienations and disunions? Here, here precisely, is where we feel that the greatest danger lies. The South have their religious views and feelings, accordant with the teachings of their pulpits, and the

trainings of education, on the subject of slavery. The North have theirs. Neither seem prepared, soberly and considerately to apply the spirit of Christ and the teachings of the Scriptures, in the exercise of forbearance and brotherly regards, for the solution of the various entangling and intricate questions of sin and duty connected with it.

The spirit of repentance and reformation in both is indispensable, for the exercise of sound judgment and a good conscience in the premises, and for securing the help and favor of Divine Providence. But our case is by no means desperate. There are some things which can be done, and the religious and christian portion of the country must initiate them.

Let it be made known and fully understood, that the compromises of the constitution shall be faithfully kept and honestly carried out, so that an example be given, of practical respect for the sacredness of social compacts, and of an abiding sense of moral obligation. Let party spirit and sectional strifes give place to patriotic love of country. Let angry denunciations, and a bitter spirit of mutual crimination and animosity, be supplanted by the friendly feeling of one common citizenship, and the regards of fraternal good will and affection. Let a reckless partisan and venal press be rebuked, and a public sentiment be formed, founded on truth, and right, and loyal attachment to the Union of these States. Let the patriotic devotion, which inspired our sires with invincible attachment to one common cause and country, inspire their sons, and make us

true to the constitution and government they founded. Let there be a return to the principles and policy which characterized the administration of Washington. Let the government be administered, not for private emolument, or party victors, or sectional interests and ambitions, or theoretical purposes, or schemes of political aggrandizement, or territorial acquisitions and conquests; but for the public good. Let moneyed aristocracies, and chartered monopolies, and secret conspiracies of trade, and transported nationalities, and privileged and corrupt corporations, bow before the majesty of a virtuous people, bent on the maintenance of equal rights, and the diffusion, as far as practicable, of the greatest amount of equality in social condition, in wealth, and in education. Let men of integrity, and worthy of trust, be elevated to office, and none be called to discharge the functions of authority, who are ignorant, incapable, and reckless of social and moral obligation. Let the judge, or legislator, or public functionary, known to receive a bribe, or make his official duty truckle to his selfish and pecuniary interest, be punishable for criminal offense, and forever ineligible to any office. Let the laws be faithfully executed by the officers appointed for that purpose. And let penalties, specifically provided for by law, be imposed on every officer, sworn to perform the duties of his office, who neglects, fails, or refuses to discharge the same, or to render the service required by the law for its enforcement.

The want of concurrent fidelity on the part of magistrates and officers, in the enforcement of law,

will be sure to frustrate any and every attempt at general repentance and reformation. The spirit of lawlessness abroad in the land—which tramples compacts under feet, and defies the execution of laws for good order and the general good—is the legitimate result of examples, set by governmental authorities, from the highest to the lowest, who have betrayed and abused the trust reposed in them as public functionaries and guardians of the general weal. When magistrates and public officers are profane swearers, Sabbath breakers, drunkards, liars, scoffers at religion, covetous, oppressors, and violators of law themselves, the greatest obstacles are thrown in the way of public repentance and reformation. The guilt of perjury is thus superadded to all other miscarriages and personal sins. Wrath from God accumulates rapidly against a people that will consent to such a state of things.

Ministers of religion, and people at large, must aim at, and carry on a work of repentance and reformation, where such things exist, if they would turn away the judgments of God, impending over a guilty land. No work of repentance or reformation ever was carried on among a people, where the laws against flagitious immoralities were not enforced, and men entrusted with power did not evince that it was their determination to have offenders punished. Joshua, David, Hezekiah, and others, accomplished wonders, by their zealous fidelity in the discharge of their official trusts and obligations. And true, reliable, and faithful rulers yet can accomplish marvelous results. Let but the Sunday laws, and the pro-

hibitory liquor laws, and others against vice and immorality, be faithfully executed, and we shall quickly see a work of repentance and reformation prevail to turn away impending judgments from the land.

A very large amount of our national guilt is to be traced to the Sabbath desecration and intemperance, that have disgraced our halls of legislation, from the Common Councils of our cities, up to the State Legislatures, and the Congress of the United States. No wonder if God, in His providence, should turn His hand against us, to smite us with the rod of His displeasure, and let the demons of discord and confusion loose among us, if we neglect the obligations of morality and good faith. He does not ordinarily bring wasting and desolating judgments on a people or nation, without having given previous warning of their approach; and never without good reason for it. For 120 years, He admonished the world for its wickedness, before He overthrew it with a flood. Sodom and Gomorrah perished not, till after they had rejected the counsel and admonition of Lot, and utterly corrupted themselves. Jerusalem and Judah, Samaria and Israel, Egypt and Nineveh, and Tyre, and Babylon, and Greece, and all the great nations of antiquity, which have perished, had their warnings and seasons of repentance and reformation, that postponed for a season the crisis of their ruin. That came not, till they became regardless of warning, and hardened themselves in their wickedness.

The nations of modern Europe have had their days of warning; and judgment has delayed, as they have repented and turned from their wickedness. We are yet a young nation. Our crimes have not yet filled up the cup of our iniquity. God has lavished favors on us. No nation under heaven has shared so largely of His bounties as we have done. He has been loath to give us up. The corner stone of our great edifice was laid in faith, and prayer ascending from the hearts of many devout patriots and saints of God. He has yet much people in this land. The gospel here is yet cherished, and spreads its hallowing influence among us. Schools, colleges, institutions of learning, charity, and piety, rear their attractive towers. Churches of the living God flourish, and multiply still among us. Again and again has He poured out His Spirit upon us; and the people having extensively repented and turned from their wickedness, He has turned His wrath from us. God seems loath to abandon us. He loves us for the fathers' sake; and He is saying: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? My heart is turned within me: my repentings are kindled together."

Much as there is ground to fear, there is still more for hope. We have His pledge, that if we repent of the evils we have done, He will repent of the evil He thought to do unto us. If He has sent a panic, originating in political causes, to alarm and excite dismay, He has done it, under circum-

stances when its results may be most easily obviated. In the midst of plenty, in the midst of rejoicings, the alarm is sounded that we be not surfeited with excess. And can we not discern obstacles, marked and peculiar, thrown by His providence in the way of impetuous passion, and of the wild and frantic strife for which the bugle blasts have here and there been already blown? The contrast of condition, in fiscal matters, between the North and South, has thrown power into the hands of those called to forbearance and prudence, and taken it from those whose voice is lifted up for severance and disunion. Foreign and domestic exchanges are greatly in favor of the former. The materiel of prosperity is profusely laid to their hands. A wholesome check is given to reckless banking. Never could there have been circumstances less propitious to division, and less open and public pretext for violence. Political parties broken into fragments! The dominant majority in the choice of their chief magistrate at a fearful dead lock, as to power to do harm should they be so disposed! Division of counsel and confusion of purpose among the separatists! Our great national Congress on the eve of assembling! The Federal Executive authorities, calm, firm, and determined to exert their power wisely, energetically, and without unnecessary irritation and exasperation! The chief magistrate elect, uncommitted to violent measures; untrammelled by party discipline; untarnished by reproach even from his foes; unshaken in the confidence of his friends; undisturbed by the noise of

surrounding excitement; unmoved in the majesty of dignified composure and silence; and quietly waiting the summons of Providence, to assume and discharge the solemn and heavy responsibilities to be devolved upon him! Can we not see in all this, the ordering of a propitious providence? God, as it were, is waiting for this great nation to turn from its evil, and thus give Him occasion for prolonging His care, and turning away the evil He had seen that we were bringing on ourselves!

Should we not, then, in our grateful offerings this day, for the lavish bounties He has scattered round us, deeply ponder the rule of His providence, applicable to our present circumstances as a nation? And, while repenting of the evils we have done and consented to, should we not hopefully lift our imploring and believing cry,—“Spare, Lord, our guilty land; give not thy heritage to reproach; suffer not the tie that binds us as one to be rent asunder! But, as thou hast been our fathers’ God; and led them through the wilderness; and established them in this good land; be thou also the God of their children; and to generations yet unborn, transmit, unbroken, unharmed, and enhanced, the privileges, liberty and union of these confederate States.”

OH, GOD! look down upon the land which THOU hast loved so well,
 And grant that in unbroken truth her children still may dwell;
 Nor, while the grass grows on the hill, and streams flow through the vale,
 May they forget their father’s, or in their covenant fail!
 God keep the fairest, noblest land that lies beneath the sun:
 “Our country, our whole country, and our country ever ONE.”