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"TRIAL AND DUTY."

A SERMON

PREACHED IN

West Arch Street Presbyterian

CHURCH,

ON THE

DAY OF NATIONAL THANKSGIVING,

NOVEMBER 26th, 1863,

BY

J. EDWARDS, D. D

PASTOR.

PHILADELPHIA:

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1864.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

REV. J. EDWARDS, D. D.,

Dear Sir.—Believing that the principles set forth, and truths uttered in the Discourse delivered by you this morning, would if circulated in a printed form, do service to the great cause for whose triumph a patriotic and loyal people are now contending, the undersigned earnestly solicit a copy for publication.

J. M. OLMSTEAD,
C. B. DUNGAN,
S. A. COYLE,
JOHN GILBERT,
JAS. POLLOCK,
ROBERT CORNELIUS.

Philadelphia, Nov. 26, 1863.

1737 Filbert Street, Philadelphia, December 18, 1863.

Gentlemen:

The sermon preached at West Arch Street Church on Thanksgiving Day is herewith submitted, at your request, for publication. From various causes I was able to give much less time than usual to its preparation; which I fear will be but too evident when it appears in print. Yet if, as you suggest, it may "do service to the great cause for whose triumph a patriotic and loyal people are now contending," I may not withhold it.

It is matter of satisfaction to me, Gentlemen, that I am not in this discourse speaking out for the first time on the great matters involved in our present national struggle. You can bear testimony that while I am not given to the discussion of secular or political themes in the pulpit, I have from the first of our public difficulties given utterance not uncertain, and not unsound I hope, to all the doctrine and duty of Christian loyalty.

Very truly, yours,

J. EDWARDS.

To REV. J. M. OLMSTEAD, D. D., C. B. DUNGAN, ESQ., S. A. COYLE, ESQ., JNO. GILBERT, ESQ., HON. JAS. POLLOCK, ROBT. CORNELIUS, ESQ.

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SERMON.

ESTHER, 4: 14.—“ * * And who knoweth, whether thou art come to the Kingdom, for such a time as this ? ”

ESTHER is Queen in Persia. She is the chosen, preferred wife of the capricious, despotic Ahasuerus. That she should ever attain to this position, is remarkable. When we remember that she is the daughter of a despised race in captivity and exile ; when we consider the competition for the prize ; when we imagine with what a soured, captious spirit the monarch probably undertook the selection of a second consort, her elevation to royal estate forms a chapter in the Romance of History, and is a striking illustration of Truth stranger than Fiction. She has now been probably for some considerable time accredited in her rank. Curiosity, envy, opposition, in whatever form, have subsided into acquiescence, and she wears her purple diadem with as little question and with as much^r comfort, and hope as diadems, perchance, may ever be worn. But “ all is not gold that glitters,” all is not real that seems. Royal estate is not always royal power, and the time comes, when both her position, her influence and herself are to be tested. Has she power as well as position ? Will the love of her monarch husband brook her interference in matters of royal prerogative ? And has she worth within as well as state around her ? Has she carried her religion with her into the palace, and will she be true to her training in “ the covenants of promise ? ” To these and such questions, time at length brings the answer, and thus comes it to pass. The favorite and Prime Minister of the King Ahasuerus, is one Haman. He is an Amalekite ; possibly a descendant of that very King, Agag, whom

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Samuel, the prophet, "hewed in pieces before the Lord." Before him, of course, as being the King's favorite as well as high officer, both neck and knee must bow as he walks along. In the outer courts of the palace "sitting at the King's gate," is a certain person named Mordecai, known to be a Jew, but not known as kinsman or even as countryman to the Queen. He does not pay honor to this Haman. In sturdy assertion of the ancient commission of his race (given of God) against Amalek, he neither rises up nor bows down, to do reverence to any descendant of a doomed nation. Haman feels the slight, appreciates it, and resents it in the very sublimity of malice. He too, it would seem, resumes the quarrel of his ancestors and projects vengeance on a national scale. He procures from his sovereign a decree for the extirpation of the whole race of the Jews in all the hundred and twenty seven provinces of the realm. The fatal day is determined by lot; the King's signet ring is given to make valid the missives, and the posts are hastened abroad to give publicity to the edict. "The city of Shushan is perplexed" and the land thrills with the new terror. Mordecai and other Jews, walk the streets in sack-cloth, fastings, tears and cries, and when the Queen inquires the cause, he informs her of the decree, warns her that she too is included in its word of doom, and urges her to use the influence of her high estate, to avert so fearful a calamity; suggests that Israel, shall certainly be delivered by some one else, if not by her, and that if she will not be the deliverer she shall not share in the deliverance; adding the words of our text, "and who knoweth, whether thou art come to the Kingdom, for such a time as this?"

"Such a time!" What was the interest, the importance of that time? We can discern and can tell to-day more clearly than they who were actors in it. We see that this is the outbreak of an old and far reaching antagonism. It is not merely the pride of one man, taking vengeance upon the pride of another man; not merely Haman, against Mordecai, but Amalek, against Israel, and, in specimen, the world against the Church, evil against good, man against God, and against His grace, "that bringeth

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salvation." Shall the decree take effect? Then the powers of darkness shall hold the throne of their cruel usurpation by a new tenure for lengthened ages. Then Israel being largely cut off, the blessings of the covenant shall fail, if not forevermore, yet for so long a time that the hope of an expectant world will die out, to be succeeded by universal unbelief, and that in its turn by universal despair. In the sequel of "enlargement and deliverance" we accept the divine enforcement of the decree of Cyrus, on behalf of Israel. Its reading in the ears of the world was, "Touch not mine anointed and do my prophets no harm." And is time often thus freighted? Aye, not only often but ever. There is various and wondrous meaning in events. There is principle, there is duty, there is possible martyrdom in them. Time is trial to all and always. This is what we mean when we speak of our present life as a state of probation. It is at once rebuke and ruin to be weighed in its balances, and found wanting.

We may not waste time in speculating how these things may be; in musing of seminal principles ever reproducing themselves among men; of transmitted characteristics which induce in each generation, the affinities and the collisions of former periods; of some Platonic year, in whose vast revolution, Providence exhausts its combinations, and resources, and has but to begin again as at the first. The ever ready, and far richer philosophy, of Revelation awaits us. First. There is a God in Heaven, whose Kingdom ruleth over all. "Such a time as this," and all times are in His hand. Earth's most distinct and most distinguished epochs, He taketh up, even as He taketh up the isles, as a very little thing. They are mere items in His administration scheme, mere points in those lines of convergence and of progress, which meet in the future supremacy of His grace, and the ushering in of His Glory, Events which to us are as the accidental, shifting conjunctures of the toy kaleidoscope, are in truth but successive indications, of a vast, far-reaching, most wise and most beneficent **ETERNAL PLAN**. His wisdom sees all, and for all, forever. "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things." Second. We are

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specifically included in this vast sovereignty, the subjects of its power and of its policy. We owe a perpetual homage to God. His high sovereignty and our duty to Him meet in every moment, and this it is which makes the incidents of human life both significant and solemn. We sustain a responsibility to God, which has reference to both the past and the future. Our next duty is to be ascertained by a reference to both these. Duty is simply, obedience to God's gracious will. In this high sense, none of us liveth or dieth to himself. And history is accordant herewith. The great are they who have directly or indirectly contributed to fulfil God's purpose of grace, concerning man, and thus to make earth what it should be. The good are they who accept and who show the workings of grace in their souls—specimens in advance of what earth shall be.

But to return. We read Esther's trial in the form, the pressure and the hazards of her duty. She must stir up her soul to recognise God, in the gathering and the guidance of her people. She must in her heart identify herself anew with her people, who are also the people of God, assuming her share of their mission, their privileges, and their perils. She must weep in this day of their weeping, and exert herself in this day when the exertions of each and of all are demanded, to save the life of the nation. And she must do all this, in the face of possible martyrdom. Her predecessor refused to come into the King's presence, and fell a martyr to self-respect and womanly propriety. Is it certain that she herself may not, upon the very threshold of her adventure, fall a martyr to her too free approach, to the imperial presence? Her trial was to know her duty and to dare undertake it. Her form of trial was the hazard of her own life at present in the attempt to provide for the future life of her people. Her spirit is essentially that of martyrdom. It is the height of heroism. "I will go unto the King * * AND IF I PERISH, I PERISH."

Such is the oracle upon whose responses, we this day wait. What saith this Scripture to us?

We too have come to a kingdom. Children of oppression and

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of exile, we have emerged suddenly and strangely to national greatness. The vast area of country, the genial climate, the teeming soil, the outcropping, mineral wealth, the facilities for manufacturing and for commerce, the institutions so singularly just and beneficent, in which the people are a presence, a power, a sovereignty, all these have made us great among the nations, the glory of all lands; have invited population, have stimulated and rewarded enterprise, have generated wealth. In all things material and political, our land has been, until but now, a very Beulah, a wedded land, smiling before God and before all people in bridal and in regal attire. The original unwillingness of nations or of dynasties to recognise us, has subsided to general and, in many cases, into glad acquiescence; while the early wonder at our rise has grown and deepened with our advancement, and doubt as to our right, our power or our future has become but another name for envy and hatred of us. That we have fairly "come to the kingdom" is an accepted fact.

And now comes the hour when we are to be tested. We are to be shaken, not for our fall but for our establishment. "That which cannot be shaken may remain." We are to be proved, not for our shame, but that we may come forth as gold. *What are we?* Are we mercenary and sordid, loving and pursuing money as an end; or are we on occasion large-hearted, public spirited and lavish to pour forth our money as a means? Are we selfish and sensual; or can we deny ourselves to luxury and pleasure, to comfort and ease, at the bidding of duty? Are we boastful and vain, frivolous and fickle, living only for an unworthy present and guided only by a base expediency; or are we sober, earnest, firm and just, with high aims, noble resolves and a national conscience disciplined in the principles of eternal rectitude? Are we a nation of gamblers, repudiators, duellists and oppressors, or do we respect and illustrate honesty, industry and economy; are we slow to wrath because self-controlled and self-respecting; and are we true to our theory and declaration of human rights, and is oppression not the spirit of the people, not the policy of the government,

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but the accident of circumstances, not at once under our control? Are we a government, or are we a mob? Have we laws defining obligation and guarantying right, or is our legislation the mere formal exponent of some present expediency and the tactics of the hour? Can there be the virtue of patriotism in a popular government, and can there be treason and rebellion which can be defined in their enormity, indentified and punished? Do we understand and appreciate the genius of our own institutions; and are we sincere and consistent in our Catholic Republicanism, or do we assert only a limited, a class Republicanism, that is to say, an Aristocracy? Is Liberty truly national with us, and is man as man, a candidate for its immunities among us? *Whence are we?* Many nations, many schools of politics and of religion were shaken and sifted for the seed-corn of whose planting we are the growth; which of these has possessed the assimilative power, has swallowed up all the rest and given to us our line of descent, our true characteristic? Are we distinctively English, Scotch, Irish, French, Dutch, German, Swede, Norwegian? Are we Papal, Protestant or Infidel? Are we fugitives from justice or emigrants from oppression? Are we restless agitators, rebel fanatics or patient martyrs? *And whither do we tend?* Are we seeking to open up in this new world a continuation of the old rut in which the small, slow coach of human progress has worn its painful and perilous way; or are we with our "mudsills" founding a broad guage railway for direct, safe and swift progression? Do we carry with us the lessons of the past, lessons taught everywhere in God's word, but made the faith and hope of the world only when that word became man's universal possession at the Reformation—lessons rooted in our memory by the harsh discipline of disabilities and penalties, of fines and stripes, of bonds and tortures, of the Tower and the Inquisition, of block and gibbet and stake—lessons of the worth and the deservings of man—lessons of Justification by Faith and consequent Freedom of Conscience? Are we true to our training, and can we show that we have been trained in the right way, and to the right end?

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Are we warned by the errors and ills of the past, and are we in harmony with, and are we in adaptation to, God's revealed will for the world's future? Are we a Protestant and a Missionary people? Such is the cross-questioning to which we are now subjected. And willing or unwilling, we must give answer. These are points upon which the world waits for information, that it may judge and class us in its history and philosophy as Greece or Carthage or Rome or Mexico—one or another of which it suspects us to be. Upon these points the providence of God toward us hitherto is to be vindicated, and His providence toward us in future to be foreshadowed. If we prove true to a good past and true to a good future, our trial shall be found to praise, honor and glory; we shall be pronounced good and great.

Ostensibly, the matter of our trial is small. It is inaugurated simply by two political parties changing places. Both profess, and with equal zeal, to be republican, staunchly true to our national antecedents and to the genius of our institutions. It is a question of interpretation and of tendency.

Really, the antagonism, wide-spread and variously complicated, includes the whole law of man's relationships—the relationship of man to man, of man to the state and of nation to nation; and the law of man's progress—the mode of his right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Economically, it is Slave labor against Free labor. Politically, it is the power and domination of classes against the rights of persons and general liberty. Historically, it is one of the latest struggles of the Feudal System, and is a reminder of the collisions of the Cavalier and the Roundhead. It sets before us the mystery and the anomaly of proscribed races.

While scanning the elements and the philosophy of our political difficulties, and while struggling to assert a true sovereignty of the people and to enforce the authority of law, we are suddenly brought face to face with a matter which conservative policy would hitherto save from discussion in the pulpit, the church-court and the hall of legislation, viz: the enslaved condition of

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four millions of Africans in our midst. The logic of war, "short, sharp and decisive," soon discovered and exhibited this as the great and real question in debate, and we have been forced, despite of ourselves, to look into the future and ask if it be the will of God that this Slavery shall continue to the end of time, or whether there comes not a day of emancipation and elevation to the African. And we have been moved to look around us and to note whether the time have not already arrived for the tendency of our national principles and institutions, civil and religious, to reveal itself in the breaking of every yoke and letting the oppressed go free. And military necessity, outstripping the provisos of statesmanship, has in the hands of God commenced the sudden, effectual solution of the problem.

Before us is an alternative of free states and free men and protection of human rights and facility for human progress, or states and men without freedom and without progress, festering in corruption and wasted in violence.

The case is critical. Stupendous frauds, unblushing falsehood, insolence and cruelty strangely rampant, have inaugurated a policy and an organization which have given us these years of direst civil war. And the issue is NATIONAL LIFE OR NATIONAL DEATH. Such is the portent of the smoke and blood of all our battle-fields. We must carry on this war—which we did not occasion and did not begin, but from which we may not shrink—with this solemn issue before us and until this issue shall be decided.

These make the form and the manner of our trial. These are the elements of our times. We have "come to the kingdom for such a time as this." Thank God, that thus far no great administrative mistake, no signal national unworthiness has appeared, to shame us. Thank God, that as yet we have not dishonored our ancestry of the Reformation, the Covenant and the Commonwealth, nor libelled our own Declaration nor Constitution.—Thank God that we have been enabled to accept chastisement that has humbled us to Him, and discipline which has made us

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patient and steady and strong, and that we have perceived and met unflinchingly each development of our trouble.

And now what remains but for us to know and do our duty in order to be assured of ultimate triumph and an honorable peace?

1. Our first and great duty is to God. It is time to seek the Lord, and the earlier in our affliction the better for us. We should know Him and recognize Him in these events; we should honor Him and turn to Him in sincerest, heartiest homage and obedience. Not that the State should now, or ever, establish religion and enforce its forms by civil pains and penalties, but that as a people, whose organ the State is, we should be humble, penitent, devout. Let us confess the State to be God's ordinance, and that "religion," no less than "morality and knowledge is necessary to good government." Let it be confessed that religion has a civil value and redounds to the good of the State as well as the individual; that it is unpatriotic to be wicked; that he is a bad citizen who is a bad man. "When the host goeth forth against thine enemies, then keep thee from every wicked thing." Surely this is no time to profane the great name of God or to wink at profaneness or blasphemy. This is no time to ignore, much less to sneer at or to defy his providence, to prate of heavy battalions compelling His favor, or idly to talk of "organizing victory," when His hand is so heavily upon us. This is no time to undervalue or to neglect the ordinances of His grace, when the exigencies arising in time of war and the greater exigencies that must ensue upon the ending of the war, threaten to put all our foundations out of course. No, no, we can never do without religion—less now than ever. Nor will mere reputable professions and common-place attainments in piety suffice. Personal piety, high, firm and aggressive is the great duty of the hour. Mighty believers, men who "live by faith of the Son of God," men mighty in the Scriptures, men of princely might in prayer are called for to be pillars in a shaken Church and to be shields and swords to an imperilled State. We glory in having a righteous cause, but it were even better for us to be a righteous nation.

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It is more important to do right than to be right. "When a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." "The people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits." It is for the impenitent then to repent and believe the gospel. It is for the cold-hearted and the half-hearted to return to their first love. It is for every good soldier of Jesus Christ to "put on the whole armor of God." Let the name of God be hallowed. Let the day of God be honoured and sanctified. Let the grace of God be both loudly praised and largely offered. So shall He make good to us His word, "Them that honor me, I will honor."

2. Second only in importance to this is our duty to be loyal. Public attention has quite recently been directed to this word as one that is unsuited to our land and to these times. An oracle which has by the press been published everywhere among us, has pronounced that this expression belongs properly to the serf and to the subject of monarchical despotism, but does not comport with true American dignity and with true Republican feeling. And the sage author of this criticism, pluming himself upon his discovery, invites us with him to discard its use. Not yet, however, and not at such bidding. The word is as apt as it is legitimate. It imports the presence, the righteousness, the wisdom and beneficence of LAW in the land, and it breathes of that good citizenship which submits to Law in its requirements and upholds it in its ministrations. Law is supreme, not passion, not interest, not expediency, not faction, not force. This is the creed and this the hope of the loyal man—*Let us be loyal*. Loyal to that noble Constitution which enshrines our national life. Loyal to that policy and to the specific enactments which our people pronounce in the name and strength of the Constitution, through their Representatives. Loyal to the distinguished citizen who has been duly, that is, in all and the only forms known to us, called to be President of the United States, and who has thus far administered public affairs with such pureness, wisdom and energy. I confess that I cannot make the discrimination so earnestly in-

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sisted upon by some who profess that they sustain the Constitution but not the Administration. What then is the Administration but the Constitution incarnate—the Constitution rendered visible and efficient—the machinery of our nation's life. In time of peace we may safely differ as to the utility of a measure or the details of a policy, but in the time of civil war, in the face of such a gigantic rebellion, when the question is national life and integrity, to pause, to falter, to cavil upon the basis of old party issues is no part of true patriotism—is practical connivance at national downfall and disgrace. Let us be loyal to our Government in the abstract and the concrete, theory and practice, Constitution and Administration, President, Flag and all. Let us vindicate and enforce the supremacy of law among us. Let us illustrate that high form of self-respect which honors and upholds the men and the measures of the people of whom we are a portion. Let us show to a witnessing world that a popular government is yet a strong, self-sustaining government; that a high national sovereignty is compatible with distributed centres of local limited sovereignty, and with an ultimate sovereignty in the individual citizen; and that States which are "distinct like the billows may be one like the sea." Let us show that a people may be at once self-appreciative and self-restrained. Let us exhibit public virtue, which is but another name for conscientious patriotism. Let us ignore old party differences. Let us be divided by no narrow politics. Let us love our country, sympathise in her troubles, serve her interests. Let us visit with popular indignation and scorn, and with condign punishment, the spy and the traitor, and with these the mercenary contractor who defrauds his country in the hour and the matter of her necessities. **LET US BE LOYAL.**

3. In the third place, let us learn to appreciate man. The religious, the scriptural estimate of man is the true one. He is God's special handy work. Divine limning has shadowed forth in him a divine portraiture—he is made in the image and likeness

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of God. He is the object of God's special care and love. He is now far fallen from his first estate of honor and excellence, he is involved in a great catastrophe; sin has entered into the world and death by sin, to jar man's relationships, embitter his pursuits, dash his joys and madden his heart, yet as offset and cure for all this sin and misery a mystery of mercy, a Glorious Redemption is revealed. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life." The soul of man, undying as its divine original, has susceptibilities and capacities which eternity alone can fully develope and God alone can fill. Upon his course of earthly probation is suspended all this vast destiny, this law of progress as upward or downward, this life or death eternal. Thus we measure the worth of man. By the dignity of his origin, by his august nature, by the infinite price of his redemption and by his peerless destiny he rises in our regard until his life, his liberty and all his rights, personal and relative, become precious. It is only thus that human life and human rights, can either attain or retain their normal value. By these let us be instructed in man's worth. And then a thousand proprieties of life and usage, as to the guarding of human life and comfort—a thousand charities for the relief of human woes would at once modify our systems of travel and of labor, would bless the Soldier in the camp and the hospital, and bless, too, the Soldier's dear ones at home.

One of the anomalies of the ruin which sin has wrought in the world, is that so often there have been found in history certain races proscribed by general consent from common rights courtesies and charities. The negro is the proscribed one of our day, and it is in reference to him that our duty of a catholic philanthropy specially binds us. It is for us to recall that he is made in God's image, that he is endowed with immortality, that he, equally with any, may be a subject of the grace of Christ and a "a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed." He can receive the Holy Ghost. He can believe on the Son of God. He can shed the

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tear of true penitence. He can thrill with the love of God shed abroad in his heart, and can rejoice in hope of the glory of God. He can reach heaven, with abundant entrance to its society, service, triumph and blessedness.

And is it not time for us now to consider the true design and aim of our free institutions. Do we really and sincerely eschew a government for or by a class? Is ours a citizenship and a freedom for man as man, limited only by the ignorance and the wickedness which may disqualify him for it. Then is it not time that we should remove every disability from the negro race, that in common at least with the Indians they may upon due improvement of mind and heart become candidates for a share in American citizenship? Is it not time, in short, that negro slavery and the proscription of the negro race were ended among us? We have shown the world that different nationalities are genially fused among us, and that rival sects, may be equally protected by the State. We have declared that the civil condition of the citizen shall be determined by his deservings. It is now for us to say whether such toleration and protection should not be extended to all the families of the race, or whether this wise philosophy and these large immunities shall be alone for the Anglo Saxon.

4. In the last place, "such a time as this" demands that we be in earnest on our country's behalf, that we be consecrated to our country's service and salvation. Never yet have we indicated a hearty and an adequate estimate of our country's worth and our country's danger. Do we indeed remember that our government in its form and spirit is a near approach to that divine model which was given to God's Israel, as most fitted "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord," and to enshrine the only faith that saves, and that it is, as it has ever been, the wisest and most beneficent government in the world? Do we understand that the pending struggle is for the partition and the overthrow of this government, that it may be superseded by another, a cruel counterfeit? Do we realize that the humiliation of this government

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is the downfall of popular liberty in Church and State—the quenching of the hope of nations? Then it is the religious duty of every citizen, as he fears God and as he loves his kind, to be consecrated to his country's cause. By the cheerful tax, by the well-considered loyal vote, by voluntary, and prompt enlistment, let us strengthen the resources of our Executive and hasten, as far as may be, the end of the war.

GOD BE MERCIFUL TO US AND BLESS US; AND CAUSE HIS FACE TO SHINE UPON US.—*Selah.*

THAT THY WAY MAY BE KNOWN UPON EARTH, THY SAVING HEALTH AMONG ALL NATIONS.