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# TWO SERMONS

DELIVERED AT

*MORRIS-TOWN, NEW-JERSEY :*

TO WHICH IS ANNEXED

## AN ADDRESS

TO THE

**PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATION**

*IN THAT PLACE.*

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BY

**REV. SAMUEL FISHER, A. M.**

*Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Morris-Town.*

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**MORRIS-TOWN :**

● PRINTED BY HENRY P. RUSSELL.

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**T**HE following discourses were written for the benefit of a private Congregation, and not for the Press. The writer has not the vanity to suppose, that they contain any thing new, or peculiarly meritorious, which gives them a claim to the attention of the Public.

With a sincere desire to discharge the duty of a faithful Minister of Christ, these discourses were written and delivered. Notwithstanding this, however, they have subjected the writer to severe censure ; and the discourses themselves have been grossly misrepresented. He has been charged with deviating from the path of his duty as a Minister of the Gospel, in order to introduce *political discussions* into the sacred desk. To enable his friends, therefore, to contradict the misrepresentations that have been made, and to give all an opportunity of judging as to the correctness of the above charge, he has, with much reluctance, submitted the discourses to the public eye.

He is sensible that many alterations might have been advantageously made : but a desire to have them appear before the Public, as they were delivered, without altering a single sentiment, has prevented him from making those corrections which he should, otherwise, have deemed necessary.

In adverting to our national sins in the Fast Sermon, the writer is sensible he has used great plainness of speech. By some, no doubt, his language will be thought too harsh and severe. But when he considered the strong current of popular opinion in palliation of certain crimes, which are fashionable amongst the great ones of the earth—crimes, which are committed not only with impunity, but even without incurring public disapprobation—and yet, crimes of a crimson hue, on account of which, it is verily believed, God is now pouring out upon us the vials of his indignation, he felt it his duty to lift a warning voice, and to bear testimony against them, in language that could not be misunderstood.

In the latter part of the Address, the writer may be thought by some to speak too freely in his own praise. Those who are best acquainted with him, however, will do him the justice to say, that it is a subject on which he is not apt to dwell. But, in reply to several unjust and illiberal remarks which his enemies had made respecting his conduct as Pastor, it was thought proper to say things, which, under other circumstances, and especially in a young man, would have savored too much of a want of modesty.

These Sermons are the only ones, which, to the writer's knowledge, have subjected him to the charge of preaching politics. How far, therefore, the charge is supported by facts, the Public will now be able to judge.

*Morris-Town, February, 1814.*

*Much good destroyed by one Sinner.*

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**A SERMON**

***PREACHED AT MORRIS-TOWN,***

**Lord's Day, April 5, 1812.**

**BY**

**REV. SAMUEL FISHER, A. M.**

*Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in that place.*

## A SERMON, &c.

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ECCLESIASTES, ix. 18.

*“ But one sinner destroyeth much good.”*

**AS** all mankind are engaged in the pursuit of happiness, it must be highly desirable to be well acquainted, not only with those things which tend to promote it, but also with those which tend to its destruction.

As, on the one hand, an acquaintance with those things, which tend to increase our felicity, will the better enable us to obtain the great object for which we live ; so, on the other, a knowledge of those which have a tendency to destroy our peace, by leading us to avoid them, will promote the same desirable object.

Upon a subject so important, no person can be wholly indifferent. If correct information relative to this matter, may be obtained, it is presumed that all are not only willing, but desirous to obtain it.

But, my friends, this information, so desirable, a merciful God has vouchsafed to his rebellious creatures, in his holy word.

In the sacred scriptures, the road to happiness and the road to misery are clearly pointed out. We there learn that the path of virtue leads to happiness and peace ; but that the path of vice leads to wretchedness and woe. In the text, the Holy Spirit points us to the great destroyer of human felicity—it is *SIN*. “One sinner destroyeth much good.”—The character of a sinner, therefore, must be odious to all those who love the promotion of happiness.

That we may have a distinct view of the sinner, in all his deformity, I design, in pursuing this subject,

I. To enquire who may, with propriety, be denominated *sinner*s, in the sense of the text.

And,

II. To point out some of the ways in which *one sinner* is capable of destroying much good.

I. I am to enquire who may with propriety be denominated *sinner*s, in the sense of the text.

God is the creator and sole proprietor of all things. Hence that relation which subsists between him and his intelligent creatures, lays them under obligation to yield an entire obedience to all his commands. The want of this obedience, or a transgression of God's commands, is *sin*. Saith the Apostle John, “Sin is the transgression of the law”...(1 John, iii. 4.)—

Strictly speaking, therefore, the whole race of Adam are sinners ; the followers of Christ, who have been born of the Spirit, as well as those who still continue under the dominion of a carnal mind—" For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God,"\* and " there is not a just man upon earth, who doeth good and sinneth not."†—But the term *sinner* is more generally used, in the Bible, in a restricted sense, in opposition to *saint*. In this sense, it is undoubtedly used in the text.—By a sinner, therefore, in this passage, is meant a person who is still in a state of nature, entirely destitute of spiritual life ; in opposition to one who is denominated a saint, in consequence of having been born of the Holy Spirit. In this sense, a sinner is one who is possessed of no moral goodness ; but acts, upon all occasions, from a principle of pure selfishness. Hence, the welfare and happiness of others is regarded, by a sinner, no farther than as they are viewed by him as tending to promote his own. On this ground, it will not be difficult to perceive, how that " one sinner" may be capable of destroying " much good." A sinner may be justly denominated an enemy to human happiness, and a destroyer of that which is good ; for, by being devoted exclusively to self, he sets

\* Rom. iii. 23.

† Eccl. vii. 20.

up a less good in preference to a greater, and thus manifests himself an enemy to the happiness of the universe.

But I proceed, as proposed,

II. To point out some of the ways, in which one sinner may destroy much good.

These are two-fold—as it respects himself, and as it respects others.

1. As it respects himself, a sinner is capable of destroying much good. By transgression he deprives himself of the happiness of a *conscience void of offence*. The pleasure which is afforded by a good conscience, is equalled only by the pain which results from conscious guilt. The breast of the good man is the abode of peace and tranquillity; while that of the sinner is like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and dirt. The approbation of a good conscience affords a pleasure of the most exalted kind: it soothes the soul under the trials of life, and enables it to look into futurity with calmness and composure;—while, on the other hand, the stings of remorse destroy the happiness of life, and render the prospect of death distressing beyond description. Those who have experienced the pangs of conscious guilt, can realize that, in depriving himself of the approbation of a good conscience, a sinner destroys much good.

**Again.**—A sinner, by his iniquity, deprives himself of the approbation of good men. All men are influenced, more or less, by a desire to obtain the good opinion of their fellow-men.— Though there are some who affect to disregard and even to contemn the opinion of others, yet it is fully believed, that no person, in heart, feels willing to be hated and despised by those with whom he associates. The various, and sometimes very unbecoming expedients, which men make use of to secure the good opinion of others, prove it to be an object which is earnestly desired. And the approbation of *good* men, is really a good which all ought to seek. But the sinner, by his wicked conduct, completely deprives himself of this good; for the righteous can never be pleased with wickedness, nor take complacency in the sinner's character: so far from it, the character of the sinner must appear odious in their view, because it is a character displeasing to God. If the sinner felt as he ought, he could by no means take complacency in his *own* character. The sinner, therefore, destroys much good by depriving himself of that heart-felt satisfaction which the approbation of the virtuous and the good is calculated to afford.

**Again.**—A sinner, by his transgressions, deprives himself of the approbation of God, and

that unspeakable comfort which true religion imparts to the soul. We are all the creatures of God, and accountable to him for our conduct. We must one day stand before his awful bar, and there be judged, and receive an adjudication for eternity according to our works, whether good or bad. It is, therefore, a matter of vast importance, that our conduct be such as to meet the approbation of our God. If our conduct is such as God approves, we can look forward with calmness to our final retribution. The day of judgment, so far from being an object of terror to the good man, is, on the contrary, an object of hope, of joy, and of triumph. But, to the wicked man, it is a day of terror and amazement; because, by his wickedness he has deprived himself of the approbation of his God. In addition to this, he loses the comfort of true religion. Though he may be surrounded by worldly companions, and possess, in great variety and abundance, the comforts and conveniences of life, he is, nevertheless, entirely destitute of true felicity. The pleasure which he derives from the things of time, and which he calls happiness, but ill deserves the name...It is mere animal gratification...It is short-lived, and affords the soul no permanent felicity...It is far outweighed by the pain which it produces. The sinner

learns, by unhappy experience, the truth of that solemn declaration of scripture, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."\* But, in the religion of Christ, there is true enjoyment. The happiness which it affords is satisfying to the soul. Peace is its genuine offspring....A peace which a change of worldly circumstances cannot essentially affect, and which misfortune's blasts can never destroy.

To this peace, the sinner is an utter stranger; and when the follower of Christ attempts to give him a description of it, he speaks in an unknown tongue, which he cannot understand.—Hence, he is often disposed to ridicule the idea that Christians enjoy any happiness, which is peculiar to them as Christians. So true it is, concerning the child of God, that "a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy."†

Religion affords the good man great comfort under trials. It teaches him to view the hand of God in every afflictive event. He knows that whom God "loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth;" and he cheerfully acquiesces in the afflictions sent upon him, as designed to prepare him for his heavenly home. He believes, with the Apostle, that his "light affliction, which is but for a moment,

\* Isaiah, lvii. 21.

† Prov. xiv. 10.

worketh for" him "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."\*—In the midst of tribulation, therefore, he is often enabled to rejoice with unspeakable joy. But the sinner, by his wickedness, deprives himself of all this comfort ; so that, in this respect, he may be said to destroy "much good."

The Christian is supported by the consolations of religion in the trying hour of death.—He can view its approach with calmness and composure. Considering death as his passport to glory, he can even welcome its approach.—Resting on his Saviour's arm, he is borne triumphant beyond the grave, and safely landed on the shores of a glorious immortality.

Of all this comfort the sinner deprives himself ; and, what is of still more importance, he destroys his own soul ! But who can estimate the good destroyed, by the loss of a single soul ? It is infinitely beyond the reach of human intellect, to make the computation. If, on the one hand, we take into consideration the "eternal weight of glory" to which the new-born soul is heir ; and, on the other, the depth of wretchedness and woe, into which the impenitent sinner will be plunged, we shall have only a faint idea of the immensity of good which one sinner is

\* 11 Cor. iv. 17.

capable of destroying, with respect to *himself*.

But the destructive consequences of sin do not stop here ; which leads me,

2. To show, that one sinner is capable of destroying much good, as it respects *others*.

There are many situations, in which sinners may be placed, which will afford them an opportunity, both by precept and example, of destroying much good.

*First.* A wicked man, at the head of a nation, has it in his power to destroy much good. The more exalted the station which a person occupies, the more extensive will be his influence. If, therefore, a wicked man is placed at the head of a nation, he will most certainly be the means of destroying much good. It is utterly impossible for a sinner to live the life of a *saint*, or to set a *Christian* example. Though, from mercenary motives, he may desire and *attempt* to conceal his true character, he will not long be able to do it : the veil of *hypocrisy* is too thin to conceal his deformity. His wicked heart will show itself, and he will have great influence in contaminating others. A wicked magistrate will generally choose counsellors, whose principles are consonant with his own ; so that the character of the court is usually similar to that of the prince. The common people, likewise,

are exceedingly prone to ape the manners of those in power. A wicked ruler, therefore, will have great influence in giving diffusion to vice. By infidel principles...by a disregard of the Sabbath, and a neglect of the institutions of religion, he may set an example which will be eagerly followed by thousands: In consequence of which, vice and immorality, like streams from a polluted source, will soon spread their contaminating influence through the nation.

In this way, thousands may be allured into the path of destruction, through the influence of "one sinner."

*Secondly.* One sinner at the head of a society, may destroy much good.—Melancholy experience has taught every person of observation, that not unfrequently the peace and harmony of a whole town or society has been greatly interrupted, through the influence of one restless, wicked man! The extent of the evil is usually in proportion to the extent of his influence.—Besides, as all men are greatly influenced by the examples of those with whom they associate, and as the natural heart is inclined to vice, one sinner may have it in his power to destroy much good in a society; especially by leading astray the young and inexperienced.—The doctrines of infidelity are so consonant to the feel-

ings of the natural heart, that the youthful mind is exceedingly liable to be led astray by them. Hence, thousands of promising youth have been ruined by one artful unbeliever. By his lessons of infidelity he poisons their principles, and by his vicious example he corrupts their morals; and thus becomes the fatal instrument of destroying their souls. By neglecting the institutions of the gospel—by making a mock of the religion of Christ, and by treating his disciples with contempt, he may be the means of leading the inexperienced to neglect and despise the means of grace which God has appointed; and thus, in all probability, shut the door against the salvation of their souls.

In short, the ways are various, in which one sinner, in a town, or society, may destroy much good.

*Thirdly.* One sinner at the head of a family is capable of destroying much good.

Children are greatly influenced both by parental instruction and parental example. Parents, therefore, prove to their children, either a blessing or a curse, according to the instructions which they impart to them, or the examples which they set. If they are careful to store their minds with virtuous principles, and to set before them an example of piety, they will prove an unspeakable blessing to their children. Such

parents are usually rewarded, even in this life, by beholding their children, as they advance in years, walking in the paths of virtue ; for, saith the word of God, “ Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”\* But, on the other hand, if parents are negligent in duty—if they omit family religion—if they neglect to cultivate the minds of their children in early life, and to store them with virtuous principles—if they neglect to give them pious instructions—if they set before them evil examples, they prove to their children a curse, rather than a blessing. It is not difficult, therefore, to perceive, that one sinner, at the head of a family, is capable of destroying much good. There are, no doubt, multitudes of miserable wretches, in the prison of despair, who lost their souls, in consequence of parental unfaithfulness.

Thus, in the various ways, which I have noticed, it is abundantly evident that “one sinner” is capable of destroying “much good.”

### IMPROVEMENT.

1. If *one* sinner destroyeth much good, it is melancholy to reflect how much good is destroyed by *all* the sinners in this assembly. We have reason to conclude, that there are many present, who have never been renewed by the spirit

\* Prov. xxii. 6.

of God. But all such are "alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts."\* "There is no fear of God before their eyes."† Their bosoms never swell with the emotions of pure benevolence. Being devoted exclusively to self, God views them as the enemies of human happiness, and the destroyers of that which is good.

The character of a sinner can never be viewed with complacency by a pure and holy God.—God is the fountain of goodness ; he delights in the diffusion of happiness ; hence, he must forever be displeased with the destroyers of that which is good.—Let me, therefore, admonish those, who sustain the character of sinners, seriously to reflect, how much good they are daily destroying. By living in sin, you deprive your own soul of much comfort, and, by an evil example, you may be the wretched instrument of destroying the souls of many others. Awful indeed will be the account which you must render, at the bar of God, if you persist in impenitence. The very good, which you have destroyed, will be a swift witness against you, in the day of final retribution.

Again.—If the consideration of the good which is destroyed by all the sinners in this as-

\* Ephes. iv 18.

† Rom. iii. 18.

sembly, is so painful—how much more painful to reflect upon the immense quantity of happiness which is destroyed by a world of sinners? Millions of sinners, in different parts of the earth, are continually destroying their own souls, and leading to destruction millions of others. And wilt thou, O sinner, add to this immense destruction of good? Is not the destruction, which has already been made, sufficiently great? O, be satisfied with the loss of happiness which thou and others have already sustained! Turn from the path of iniquity. Seek the Lord, by unfeigned repentance, and he will give rest to your soul.

2. We are taught, by this subject, the importance of choosing religious rulers. Persons, as we have seen, derive influence from the station which they occupy; and the extent of that influence, will, in some measure, be proportioned to the height of their elevation. When, therefore, we consider the important consequences, which, in this respect, depend upon the appointment of rulers, we shall perceive it to be a concern of no small magnitude. If we desire the promotion of happiness, and the welfare of souls, we shall be always anxious to raise to places of power, those who, by their upright deportment, manifest that they are men of piety. The God of Israel hath said, “He that ruleth over men,

must be just, ruling in the fear of God.”† If such ought to be the character of *rulers*, then certainly such ought to be the character of those who are selected for this purpose. Those who have the appointment of rulers, are under as strong obligation to choose those who fear God, as rulers are to fear God, when chosen. If, therefore, we raise to places of power, wicked men, we are, in a sense, responsible for all the good which, by their wickedness, they destroy. When, therefore, we consider how much good is destroyed, and what an extensive spread is given to vice, by the exaltation of a sinner, it ought to lead us to be very cautious in the choice of those who are to fill conspicuous stations. One sinner, in such a station, is capable of immense injury to the cause of Christ, and to the welfare of a people. His wicked conduct, like that of Jeroboam of old, being imitated by the people, may entail a curse upon them, even to distant ages. These remarks, let it be distinctly understood, are not directed exclusively to any one party, or description of persons. They are applicable to persons of every party, of every sect, of every denomination. They are applicable to us all, as moral beings, and accountable to God for our conduct. The indifference of those who are the professed followers of Christ, upon this subject,

† 11 Sam. xxiii. 3.

is truly astonishing. Many, whom charity leads us to esteem as Christians, seem to intimate, by their conduct, that if the persons whom they elevate to conspicuous stations, agree with them upon the subject of politics, it is of no consequence, in a religious point of view, whether they are Pagan, Infidel, or Christian ; whether they are moral, or immoral. But, my brethren, we cannot suppose that *that God*, who is *angry* with individual transgressors, *every day*, will, at the same time, be regardless of national sin. And where shall we look for national sin ? In a government like ours, it lies at the door of individuals ! With individuals, therefore, reformation must begin.—Are we even now threatened with the horrors of war ? Has our prosperity already received a severe check ? Why is it thus ?—God is chastising us for our national sins.—How, then, are we to avert impending calamities ?—Must we clothe ourselves with the habiliments of war ? This, no doubt, must be done. This, however, will not save us. We need a more impenetrable shield than human art can construct. We need the favor and protection of the God of armies ; for, “ Wisdom is better than weapons of war.” To God we must look for assistance. But how inconsistent, how absurd ! one moment to be looking to God for his favor and protection, while, the next, we are exerting ourselves

to raise to power, men who, we have reason to believe, have no fear of God before their eyes!—men who daily live in the neglect of those duties, and in the perpetration of those crimes, on account of which, God threatens us with judgments!—It seems as though the attention of a Christian need only be turned to this subject, in order to convince him of his duty. If we examine the history of God's dealings, with his people of old, we shall learn, that, though wicked rulers were usually the instruments of divine vengeance, the people themselves, in all those cases, were ripe for the judgments which God brought upon them. Their wicked princes were sent in wrath.—If, therefore, we desire to experience the protection of heaven, it becomes us to manifest a sincere regard to the honor of God, even in the exercise of our right of suffrage.

3. We learn from this subject, that *parents* and *heads of families* fill a very responsible station. On their faithfulness in the discharge of their duty, in a great measure, depends the welfare and happiness of children and domestics.

In early life, when the mind is tender, it is most susceptible of the impressions which are made upon it, whether good or bad. Hence, God has wisely instituted the family circle, that children may early enjoy the benefits of parental in-

struction. It becomes all, who are parents, therefore, to be faithful in the education of their children. They ought early to instruct them in the truths of our holy religion...to store their minds with virtuous principles, and to set before them a godly example. If they are unfaithful in these respects, their negligence may be of lasting detriment to their children. The evil, resulting from a wicked example, is beyond calculation.—It is to be expected, that children will eagerly pursue the path of vice, when vice is countenanced by parental example.—In this way, one sinful parent may destroy much good.

Again.—Some there are, who are not only unfaithful themselves, but are extremely inattentive to the characters of those, to whom they entrust the education of their children. Too often the profane, the intemperate, and the unprincipled are selected as their instructors, and the guardians of their morals!—But will a profane man be likely to discountenance profanity in children? Will the intemperate man be likely to teach them habits of sobriety?—Parents ought seriously to reflect, that, by their negligence in this respect, they may be instrumental in destroying much good, as it respects the welfare of their children.

Finally.—If so much good is daily destroyed by sinners, all who are the real friends of human

happiness, ought to pray for the outpouring of the spirit of God. Nothing but a revival of religion will prevent the destruction of good, and avert impending calamities. Let us, then, one and all, prostrate ourselves before the mercy-seat, and plead, with the Prophet:—"O, LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years ; in the midst of the years make known ; in wrath remember mercy."\*—AMEN.

\* Hab. iii. 2.

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*Christ the refuge of his people "in troublous  
times."*



## **A SERMON**

**PREACHED AT MORRIS-TOWN,**

**MAY 14, 1812,**

**It being a day set apart by the Presbytery of  
• Jersey, as a day of Humiliation,  
Fasting and Prayer.**

**BY**

**REV. SAMUEL FISHER, A. M.**

*Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in that place.*

## A SERMON, &c.

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ISAIAH xxvi. 20, 21.

*“Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee ; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity.”*

**T**HE prophet Isaiah, in the preceding context, after having taken a view of the just judgments of heaven, brought upon the wicked for their sins, proceeds to comfort the people of God, by the promise of a signal and glorious deliverance. In this he probably referred, in the first place, to the deliverance of the Jews from the land of their captivity ; but, in the next place, and more particularly, to the Sabbath of the world...the thousand years of rest, so often foretold in the word of God, when the dispersed and despised descendants of Abraham shall be gathered into the fold of Christ ; and, with them, the fulness of the Gentile nations. Then will the time come, when, according to the prediction of this same prophet, God will destroy, in Mount Zion, “ the face of the covering cast over all nations, and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth.” Then may the

people of God, with propriety, adopt the language of the prophet, in the preceding chapter : “ And it shall be said, in that day, Lo, this is our God ; we have waited for him, and he will save us ; this is the Lord : we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”\*—But lest his people, expecting the immediate approach of these happy days, should be off their guard, when troubles assailed them, God forewarned them, in the text, that the world would be visited with grievous calamities, previously to the approach of that long-expected day.

“ Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee ; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity.”

In pursuing the subject, it may be proper to notice,

I. The speaker.

II. The persons addressed.

III. The nature—and,

IV. The reason of the exhortation.

I. Let us enquire who makes this address, “ Come, my people.”

By a reference to the nature of the prophecy contained in this chapter, it will appear manifest, that the person who here speaks by the

\* Isaiah xxv. 9.

prophet, is the Son of God—the second person in the trinity, who, from eternity, was designated in the council of heaven, to be the Saviour of sinners, and the head of the church. Though he had not as yet become incarnate, he had, nevertheless, often appeared amongst men, in some visible form, for the purpose both of mercy and of judgment.

To Moses he appeared, in the burning bush, as the deliverer of his people, and the avenger of their wrongs. To Abraham he appeared as the destroyer of Sodom, and the deliverer of righteous Lot. The saints who lived before his incarnation, were redeemed by his blood; they were saved by his merit. It was their faith in a Saviour to come, that enabled them to inherit the promises. They were Christ's people in as peculiar a sense as Christians are, since he "was manifest in the flesh." Having "redeemed" them with his "precious blood," no other being could, with so much propriety, style them "my people."—Hence, the speaker is Christ.

II. The address is made to the Church.—From the days of righteous Abel, to the present time, Christ has always had a Church in the world. In the darkest times, and in the most gloomy periods of the world, Christ has always had some true followers; and these have ever been the objects of his peculiar care. God's

people have, indeed, sometimes been filled with desponding fears, as though their divine Redeemer had forsaken them ; yet He, faithful to his promise, has always watched over and preserved them. Zion hath, in her despondency, said, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." But what saith the answer of the Lord ?—"Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb ? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands : thy walls are continually before me."\* And saith the Prophet, when addressing Zion, "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye."† God has ever been exceedingly careful and tender of his church. Though reduced to a very small number in the time of Noah, he would not "destroy the righteous with the wicked." Noah and his household must be safely enclosed in the ark, before the deluge of waters is brought "upon the world of the ungodly." The storm of divine vengeance, which was gathering over Sodom, must be stayed, and its polluted inhabitants must be spared, until righteous Lot makes his escape from the devoted city. When the hand of the Lord was stretched out upon Egypt, it was to deliver his church from cruel bondage, as well

\* Isaiah xlix. 14, 15, 16,

† Zach. ii. 8.

as to punish her foes. He gave his people a safe passage through the Red Sea—he accompanied them in their march through that long and dreary wilderness, and at length put them in possession of the promised land.

In every age Christ has been with his people, to guide them in safety, and to shield them from harm. When about to bring judgments upon the wicked, he warns them of approaching danger.

“Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee.” This leads me,

III. To consider the nature of the exhortation here given.

As men, when a storm is approaching, are accustomed to retire to their houses, and seek a shelter from its fury; so God, in view of the calamities which he is about to bring upon the wicked, warns his people to seek, under the covert of his wing, a secure and safe retreat.

The exhortation implies,

1. That it is the duty of God’s people to withdraw from the company of the wicked, and, as much as possible, to avoid intimate connexions with them. “Evil communications corrupt good manners.”

If the children of God form alliances, and are intimately connected with the wicked, they will

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be exceedingly liable to be led astray by them. But if, through the instrumentality of such connexions, they are led into sin, they must expect to suffer, when God executes his judgments upon the wicked. Hence, God admonishes his people concerning Mystical Babylon—"Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."\* If, therefore, Christ's people would escape the judgments which are coming upon the ungodly, they must avoid, as much as possible, their wicked society and conversation.

2. The exhortation implies that it is the duty of God's people, when threatened with calamities, to retire to their closets for fasting and prayer. It is sin that draws down upon the earth the judgments of heaven; and sincere repentance and deep humility are the only sure preventives. When, therefore, dangers threaten, the people of God ought to retire to their closets, and weep, and mourn, and fast, that impending judgments may be averted. When wickedness greatly abounds either amongst individuals, or in the nation at large, there is then a special call for Christians to enter their closets for fasting and prayer; because troubles and calamities may soon be expected.

As sin, in individuals, is connected with mis-

ery ; so, in states and nations, there is an established connexion between national sin, and national calamity. If, therefore, nations would escape the righteous judgments of God, they must, as nations, humble themselves on account of their sins. In no other way can they reasonably expect to escape the calamities threatened. This leads me to observe,

IV. That the reason, why the people of God are admonished to enter into their chambers, for humiliation and prayer, is, that they may escape the dangers which threaten them : “ For, behold the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity.”

God is said to come out of his place, perhaps, in allusion to princes, “ who come out of their palaces, either to sit in judgment, or to fight against their enemies.” Thus God often sees fit to come out of his place, to punish the world for iniquity. But, on such occasions, he does not forget his church. He gives them warning to separate from the wicked, and to retire to their hiding-place, that, by penitence and prayer, they may find, under his protection, a safe retreat.

Thus, when about to destroy the old world, he gave timely notice to his servant Noah, and commanded him to build an ark “ to the saving of his house.” So, when about to execute his judg-

ments upon Sodom, God gave a seasonable intimation of the solemn transaction to righteous Lot, that he might separate himself from his polluted neighbors, and not be involved in their awful doom. Our blessed Lord, likewise, before he left the world, forewarned his disciples of those direful calamities which were coming upon the Jews at the destruction of Jerusalem. He gave them a sign, by which they might know when to withdraw themselves from that devoted city. And in every period of the world, God has been mindful of his church.

The present is an age, in which God is manifesting his indignation, by scourging, in a most awful manner, the nations of the earth, for their sins. And, perhaps, we have reason to expect even greater calamities than these before the commencement of the Millennium.

In making inquisition for blood amongst the nations, God has not suffered us to pass unnoticed. Already do his judgments seem to be suspended over our heads : yea, God appears to be coming out of his place to punish us, as a nation, for the ungrateful return we have made for the manifold favors which he has bestowed upon us.

But, in the midst of threatening dangers, his people will not be forgotten. Even now, by many admonitory providences, he is calling upon

his children, in this country, to enter their chambers, and to shut their doors about them, that they may be hid when his indignation passes over the land.

1. God is admonishing us by distressing sickness. In many parts of our land, new and uncommon disorders prevail to an alarming degree, and sweep off, suddenly, multitudes of our citizens. The grave is continually seizing upon its prey. To punish us for our sins, God has commissioned "the pestilence that walketh in darkness," and "the destruction that wasteth at noon-day."\* It must be acknowledged, that, in this respect, God is now calling upon us to humble ourselves before him.

2. The sublime manifestations of God's power, in the tremendous earthquakes which have convulsed this part of the world, during the past winter and spring, are solemn, admonitory providences, that loudly call upon us to humble ourselves before God.

The frequency and violence of these phenomena, in the southern and western states, are unparalleled in the history of our country. Especially, the late distressing earthquakes in South-America, by which two towns, with their inhabitants, have been sunk, and thirteen others almost entirely destroyed, together with thousands

of the inhabitants, teach us, in very forcible language, how easily the Almighty can find instruments to punish the nations for their sins.

3. The severe national embarrassment, with which God is visiting us, together with the horrors of war with which we are threatened, are a loud call, in Providence, for us to humble ourselves for our sins.

Our prosperity, for several years past, has been unexampled. "But Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked."\* In our prosperity we have forgotten the God of our mercies. We have attributed to ourselves, what we ought to have attributed to our Heavenly Father. God is, therefore, apparently about to bring down the pride and arrogance of our hearts. The prospect before us is truly alarming. Almost the only two nations, where the religion of Christ is maintained in its purity, are about to turn their swords against each other, and to embue their hands in one another's blood. A spirit of infatuation seems to have seized upon both ; and, without repentance and a thorough reformation, we have reason to fear that God will blind them both for their destruction. In this respect, therefore, we are certainly called upon to humble ourselves before God.

4. The famines....the bloody wars....the perplexity and distress of nations, with which a

\* Deut. xxxii. 15.

large portion of the world is at present visited, teach us, most clearly, that God is coming out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their sins. The present, therefore, is the time for the people of God, in this land, to enter into their closets, and plead that the indignation of the Lord may pass over without lighting upon our guilty heads. Perhaps the Lord may be intreated to spare us, as a nation, and not punish us according to our deserts. But if his fierce anger cannot be abated, nor his desolating judgments averted, his children, by sincere repentance, will secure to themselves a safe retreat.— They will undoubtedly be called to endure trials and afflictions, when God visits the nation in wrath; but if they are encircled in the arms of divine love, afflictions, and even death itself, cannot hurt them. Soon they will experience a glorious deliverance. It is only “for a little moment” that they are called upon to hide themselves. The whole time that any of God’s people ever endure afflictions, may with propriety be termed “a little moment,” compared with the long eternity of felicity that is to follow. But, my brethren, the only place of safety, even for God’s children, is in the closet of penitence and humiliation. And, in the providences which have been noticed, God seems *now* to give his people warning, to prepare for his righteous vis-

itation. No child of God would be disposed to call in question the justice of his Heavenly Father, were he to punish us, as a nation : and no attentive observer will be at a loss to discover the causes of those calamities, with which we are already threatened.

These may be found,

*First...*In our national infidelity and disregard of God.

This seems to stand at the head, as the source of all our other crimes. For this, we have reason to expect the righteous judgments of heaven.

Though this world is not the place of retribution, as it respects individuals ; yet, as it respects nations, it most undoubtedly is. A nation can be punished, in their national capacity, only in this world.

As, on the one hand, God never casts off a righteous nation ; so, on the other, he never permits a wicked nation to escape with impunity. The enquiry, therefore, as to our situation in this respect, is both solemn and interesting. In a government like ours, the moral character of the nation may be judged of, by the character of the rulers ; because the rulers are elevated to power by the people themselves. They have the liberty of making choice of such men as are agreeable to their *own taste*. In order, therefore, to learn whether we, as a people, have not

actually cast off the fear of the Lord, we have only to take a survey of the character of those, whom, by our suffrages, we have elevated to power.

A view of our national Council, must, it is believed, convince every unprejudiced person, that, as a nation, we are *practically* infidel. It is true, there are a number there, whom we have reason to conclude are *righteous persons*;—enough, it is hoped, ultimately to save *Sodom*; but not enough, it is to be feared, to avert impending calamities. If we were to separate from the number of those, whom we have placed over us as rulers, the *professed infidel*...the openly *vicious* and *impure*...the *Sabbath-breaker*...the *profane swearer*...the *gambler*...the *intemperate*...the *duellist*...the *murderer*, and all those who *uphold* and *countenance* persons of this description, we have reason to fear that a small minority would be left behind.

It is not pretended that a majority have actually committed these open, flagrant crimes—It is not pretended that a majority have actually embued their hands in their brother's blood;—but it is maintained, that such is the disregard of the commandments of God, and such is the want of Christian morality, that a majority is found, who uphold and countenance those who have actually done it.

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That the *murderer* is there, is too palpable to be denied. He not only walks, with impunity, the floor of Congress; but is seated on the bench of justice, in the highest court of the nation.\* But, my brethren, those who connive at wickedness, and screen the workers of iniquity from the punishment due to their crimes, are, in the sight of God, actually guilty *themselves*.— In this respect, therefore, it is impossible for us to deny, that, as a nation, we have cast off the fear of the Lord.

*Secondly....* NATIONAL INSINCERITY is another sin, on account of which we ought to humble ourselves before God.

This has long been a crying sin of the nations of Europe, for which they are, probably, now suffering the vengeance of heaven. In the most pompous, flattering language, they profess their

\* The man who kills his antagonist in a duel, is deemed a *murderer*, and justly incurs the penalty of death, both by the laws of God and man; and it will be an unavailing plea, with that God who has solemnly declared, "The murderer shall surely be put to death," (*Num. xxxv. 16*)—to urge that he who took the life of his neighbor, perpetrated the bloody deed in private combat. Public opinion may indeed be so corrupted, as to acquit him of blood-guiltiness, and he may be permitted to escape with impunity. But the very circumstance that public opinion upholds and countenances the perpetrators of such crimes, is "proof positive" that, as a people, we have actually cast off the fear of the Lord.

On the highwayman, who, impelled by a thirst for gain, takes the life of the unwary traveller, public opinion, at once, pronounces the sentence of death. To spare his life, would be deemed a crime; but to set him up to decide upon the lives and fortunes of his fellow-men, would be thought monstrous: And yet, the *honorable* sinner, who, to revenge a public or a private insult, with cool, deliberate malice, takes the life of a fellow-creature, though his guilt is of a ten-fold deeper die, is still caressed and applauded, and even suffered to retain his seat in the council of the nation.

But if all the sinners in the nation were *honorable sinners*, it would neither extenuate our guilt, nor mitigate our punishment; "for there is no respect of persons with God."...*Rom. j. 11.*

sincere regard for each other's welfare : they pretend to have a most ardent desire to live in peace and harmony ; while, by their conduct, they give evidence that war and bloodshed are in their hearts. Too often have they been guilty of the grossest national falsehood, merely to gloss over those barefaced crimes which they meditated. In the correctness of these remarks, as it respects European nations, persons of almost every description stand ready to concur.— But is it not too true, that we also, though young as a nation, have already made rapid progress in the same arts of deception ? Why else are our profession and practice so often at variance ?— Can we expect that *that* God, who has manifested so much displeasure at individuals, who bear false witness against their neighbor, will be utterly regardless of national falsehood ?

*Thirdly....* NATIONAL INGRATITUDE is another sin, for which we have reason to fear that God will visit us.

God has done much for us as a people. He protected the bark of our ancestors, and guided it in safety to this then wilderness world. He gave them a permanent settlement in this goodly land. He saved them from savage violence. He delivered them from the arm of oppression which was raised to crush them ; and he has greatly prospered *us*, their posterity, as an inde-

pendent people. But, for these numerous favors as a nation, we certainly have been ungrateful. The glory is given to human agents, while the hand of God is overlooked. Hence, while much is said concerning what *we* and our *fathers* have done, very little regard is paid to the agency of God. We puff and swell with a sense of our importance, and are ready, on every occasion, to trumpet forth our *own* praise, for our valorous exploits; but seem almost entirely to forget, that the hand of God ought to be acknowledged in all these things.

Whilst the heathen nations, in times of trouble, humble themselves before their gods, which yet are *no Gods*; and express their gratitude upon the receipt of favors—whilst the Mahometan nations bow, in humble adoration, before their Prophet, the author of their delusion, and seek his protection—whilst the Catholic nations, whom we believe to have swerved from the faith, once delivered to the saints, are careful to perform their idolatrous rites, to secure the intercession of the Virgin Mary in their behalf—We, who profess to be a Christian nation of a purer *cast*....we are silent in times of trouble!\* It was not so with our fathers. They knew the

\* The writer believes he is correct in stating, that, for more than ten years previous to the delivery of this discourse, the Government of the United States did not, in a single instance, by any public act, make their acknowledgments to God, either by an expression of gratitude or humility.

fountain of their mercies ; and, as a people, they acknowledged the Lord. In times of difficulty, they sought his aid ; nor did they seek in vain : He heard their cry, and granted deliverance.— To the same God, we, their degenerate sons, must seek, if we would escape the calamities which are threatened.

*Fourthly.....*SABBATH-BREAKING and PROFANE SWEARING are very prevalent sins, which call for penitence and humility. That day which God sanctified and set apart for his more immediate service, is awfully profaned by us, both as a nation, and as individuals. And by reason of swearing, it may truly be said that “the land mourneth.” Multitudes, instead of employing their breath in the service of God, spend it in profaning his name. They heed not that solemn declaration, “The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.”

*Fifthly....*INTEMPERANCE is a crying sin of our land. Thousands of precious souls are yearly sacrificed at the shrine of this most odious and detestable vice. If we continue to progress as fast as we have done for several years past, we shall soon become a nation of drunkards. In the guilt of this loathsome vice, this Congregation is deeply involved ; for such is its awful prevalence in some of our borders, that if the destroying angel were to pass over, for the purpose of

separating the infected from the sound, we have reason to fear that very few would escape.\* In this respect, therefore, we are loudly called upon to humble ourselves before God.

Thus it is manifest, from the aboundings of iniquity amongst us, that, as a people, we are fast ripening for some signal calamity. The overflowing scourge will soon pass through our land, unless we prevent it by timely repentance. With what propriety, then, does God call upon us, at this time, to humble ourselves before him. "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity."

When so black a cloud hangs over our heads, well does it become us to weep and mourn. O that we all might, this day, in sincerity, adopt the language of the prophet, and plead—"Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach."†

**AMEN.**

\* It is proper, here, to inform those, who are unacquainted with the habits of sobriety which generally characterize the Citizens of Morris, that the above remarks are peculiarly applicable only to a distant limb of the Congregation.

† Joel ii. 17.

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