

RIGHTEOUSNESS

THE FOUNDATION OF NATIONAL PROSPERITY.

A SERMON

DELIVERED IN THE RUTGERS-STREET CHURCH, ON THURSDAY,
DEC. 10TH, 1835: THE DAY APPOINTED BY THE
GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF NEW-YORK,
FOR THE ANNUAL THANKSGIVING.

BY JOHN M. KREBS.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

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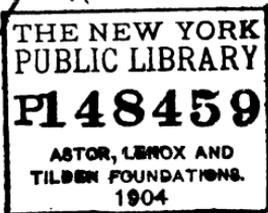
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Checked
May 1913

a. h.

J. O. Krebs



TO THE REV. J. M. KREBS.

DEAR SIR,

A desire having been expressed by many of your people that your sermon delivered on the recent day of public thanksgiving might be published, and believing as we do that its perusal would be interesting and profitable to the congregation generally, we take the liberty of requesting a copy for that purpose.

We are, Rev. and Dear Sir,

Very truly

Your friends,

BENJAMIN WEBB,
 WM. WOODHULL,
 J. K. COWPERTHWAITTE,
 STEPHEN C. LYNES,
 E. PLATT, JR.,
 GAIUS FENN,
 JEREMIAH VANDERBILT,
 JOHN BREMNER.

New-York, Dec. 14th, 1835.

TO MESSRS. BENJAMIN WEBB, &c. &c.

DEAR BRETHREN,

The sermon of which you have requested a copy, is at your service. I have not had time to re-write it for the press, but as you design it for circulation among my own people, for whom it was prepared, and very few of them heard it when it was preached, I hesitate less to accede to your desire, and accordingly herewith transmit the original MS.

With pleasure, reciprocating your affectionate assurance,

I am,

Your friend and pastor,

JOHN M. KREBS.

New-York, Dec. 15th, 1835.

S E R M O N .

“ Righteousness exalteth a nation : but sin is a reproach to any people.”

Proverbs xiv. 34.

WE have been invited by the executive of this state, as well as by the municipal authorities of the city where we dwell, to unite with our fellow-citizens, this day, in appropriate manifestations of gratitude to Almighty God, for the mercies and blessings which distinguish our history ; and especially for the favours bestowed upon us by the bounty of Heaven during the past year. I trust that our own feelings cheerfully respond to this invitation ; and that your presence in the house of God, is a token of your just appreciation of the Author of *every good and perfect gift*, as well as of your Christian and Scriptural impression of the full value, comprehensiveness, and methods of his mercy, and of your obligations, spontaneously to acknowledge and praise him ; and not less of that mode of thankfulness which is most acceptable in his sight : which is to *worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness, and to give unto him the glory due to his holy name.*

While the circumstance of our assembling, in cheerful acquiescence with the suggestion of our rulers, is in entire accordance with our sense of its propriety, directed by that wise and dignified signal which is given from the high places of the land, as to the time adapted for convenient concert in this exercise, we are guided also by the principle of this solemnity, and a consideration of all our relations, to a review of a wide and extended field—ranging from

our individual condition, in all its varied aspects, through our circumstances as members of families ; of social communities ; of civil and political societies ; until our view is circumscribed, at the very least, by the boundaries that enclose our whole nation. We are citizens not only of this favoured city, or of this great state, but of the country—a wide-spread empire, whose territory stretches from the Atlantic shore to the unfréquently visited regions west of the Rocky Mountains, and is terminated only by the waters of the Pacific. We are a part of a people, varying in character as our land differs in soil and climate and productions, from the cold and contemplative citizen of the North, to the ardent and impassioned inhabitant of the South, and the hardy and adventurous pioneer of the West—a great, a growing and a happy people,—whose enterprise is in every land, whose *home* stretches towards the frozen snows of the pole ; but who yet find a kinsman and a friend and a fellow-countryman, in him whose dwelling is fixed at the mouth of Oregon or on the borders of the Gulf of Mexico. As members of this wide empire ; as portions of this great and homogeneous population ; as common participants in the common interests, for weal or for wo, of this vast nation, we meet this day to forget the little and selfish interests of person and party ; to render thanks to that God who hath determined the bounds of our habitation, and *hath given us a goodly heritage, and caused the lines to fall to us in pleasant places.*

We might employ the whole time appropriated to this service, in descanting on our privileges and blessings. And indeed, as a nation, what abundant and incalculable benefits have been bestowed. Our land has teemed with plenty ; our harvests have been rich ; our manufactures increased ; and thus provide for us the necessaries and even luxuries of life to overflowing. Our merchants are princes, and their commercial enterprise has aided to enrich the nation, by exchanging the products of many climes, and facilita-

ting the mutual supply of each class of our people, with the superfluous productions of every other class. Peace permits us to *sit under our own vine and under our own fig tree, and none to make us afraid.* A just and equal government protects our rights; and a national debt of millions entirely liquidated by the wise policy of rulers that are our own public servants, and a treasury overflowing, while the people are exempted from oppressive taxation, permit the improvement of all the natural advantages of our country, for intercourse or for defence. Education more diffused than in any other nation; advancement in arts and sciences; unexampled health in the city and the land; the steady and onward progress of reform in regard to various destructive vices; the correction and elevation of public sentiment; attention to the dangers that secretly or openly menace us; the freedom of religion, and the defence of the rights of conscience; the public acknowledgment of God and of our holy religion, in its general claims, in the midst of much real unbelief, by our people and by our authorities, in decent external respect for the *supreme authority* of the great Governor of the universe; are some of the prominent reasons why we should think of him, and as a civil and a religious community enter his courts, record his goodness, and *pay our vows in the presence of all his people.* Peculiar praise is due from us, who come this day into his house, in *the multitude of his mercies.* *For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? What nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous? He hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; he hath blessed thy children within thee. He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat. He sheweth his word unto Jacob, and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments they have not known them.*

But it will be to little purpose to review the instances of Almighty goodness, if we are excited only to transient emotions or expressions of gratitude, evanescent as the breath that sounds them forth, and passing away as soon as we ourselves have returned from the sanctuary to the ordinary pursuits and enjoyments that daily fall to us. Let us contemplate them often; and still recognise the Giver in the gift; and, that we may be the more profited in studying the *connection between duty and blessing*, let us endeavour for a while, to make the most advantage of our present assembling, and look at the **MEANS OF OBTAINING AND SECURING THE CONTINUANCE AND BEST ENJOYMENT OF THOSE FAVOURS WHICH THE BOUNTY OF HEAVEN SO LIBERALLY BESTOWS.**

For this purpose I have selected the words of the text, as suggesting the right improvement of the occasion, and leading us to thoughts and resolutions of wisdom.

RIGHTEOUSNESS EXALTETH A NATION: BUT SIN IS A REPROACH TO ANY PEOPLE.

Greatly exalted as we are, and destined, we humbly trust, to a high elevation in coming ages, it is not my design to attribute our blessings to the possession on our part of any extraordinary claim to righteousness. The origin and history of our nation, and the cause of our prosperity, are not unaptly portrayed in the language of Moses to the children of Israel. *The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people. But, because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.* We have been the recipients of favours undeserved. *God, by his grace, hath made us to differ.* He has had purposes of mercy, for our fathers' sakes that owned him, and fled to this land, to worship him in freedom, *in spirit and in truth.*

He upheld their descendants for the sake of their pious ancestry, and because he would bring us through trials, and wars, and various disasters, to make of us a great nation, and cause us to subserve a high end, of being the conservators and depositaries and promulgers of the principles and influences of true freedom and genuine religion over the world. We have sins to deplore, instead of being proud of our righteousness; and to us *belong shame and confusion of faces*, for much ingratitude, folly, ignorance, and irreligion, and at best, great imperfection.

Yet God has blessed us, through an established constitution, by which he is not unmindful or forgetful of what elements of righteousness are discerned among a people. He rewards us not according to our sins; he is better to us than we could deserve. And he will (as he always has done) reward a people, by his providence and mighty arm, and through the natural operation of contingent causes, for so much of a disposition to acknowledge him as does exist in a community in general, and especially for the sake of his own children in the midst of the community; and on account of great ends to be accomplished in making a people virtuous, subduing their corruptions and pardoning their sins. *If we forsake him, he will forsake us; if we acknowledge him, he will conduct us safely by his mercy and goodness, and by the support of his right hand. Let us be taught therefore what is the good and the right way; for consider how great things the Lord hath done for you.*

But let me here interpose a remark. We are sometimes told that religion has nothing to do with the discussion of the operations and relations of civil polity; that it is an unauthorized interference by ecclesiastical men, to speak of the affairs of civil governments and political communities; and it is often taken for granted, that the rules and principles of the Christian religion are inapplicable, of no force or binding obligation, in matters which purely concern the political advantage and temporal prosperity of the

state, by any means that seems calculated to secure that designed exaltation.

Now if it be meant that religion is not to sanction or promote, and cannot sanction or promote, that exaltation which is gained by disregarding the principles of eternal justice; by undue encroachments on the rights of others; by accumulating grandeur and power in the hand of tyrants; by shameless transgression of the precepts of the Bible in positive enactments; then indeed religion lends no aid to such means of advantage—and she opposes them. But may she not do so? And at the same time show how genuine prosperity may be gained for a people, by the cultivation of that true righteousness which is their glory and the means of their noblest exaltation? And in this, is she operating beyond her proper sphere? If *kings and rulers and judges of the earth take counsel against the Lord and against his anointed*, does that dethrone him from his sovereignty; abrogate his rights; depose his authority; and “snatch from his hand the balance and the rod,” and strip him of that power which he employs to set up princes and again to *dash them in pieces as a potter’s vessel*? By no means. We may arrogantly presume it. But God is on the throne nevertheless. *He hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.* He holds the universe in his hand. *He takes up the isles as a very little thing. The mountains flow down at his presence.* And he has established the principles, and manages the providence, which are concerned, alike, in the fall of a sparrow, in the judgment of men, in the government of the church, in the rise and fall and destruction of empires, and in the creation and annihilation of all the worlds that revolve in the great and unmeasured panorama of the universe. *Be wise now, therefore, oh ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling.*

“But why should ecclesiastical men discuss the ques-

tions which relate to the causes of national prosperity and decline? The 'kingdom of their Master is not of this world!' and this is an interference which must, in the nature of things, indicate a design to control men's consciences, and secure, as a result, the subjugation of political rulers and legislators to the peculiar views of sectaries." Indeed!

Are truth and justice, then, sectarian? And has a citizen, a ruler, a legislator, a soldier, a private member of the community, no obligations to be virtuous in his conduct; and free from impiety; and to respect the Sabbath? to refrain from blasphemy; to honour superiors; to be gentle; to indulge no murderous design; to respect the rights of property and the safety in person, character, and privilege of every other citizen; and the just rights of the citizens of every other land? Yet that is what righteousness requires of every man, and in every relation of life. Why do you, my hearers, present yourselves stately in the sanctuary? Is it not, professedly, at all events, to worship God, and to learn the methods of your duty to him, to your families, to your fellow-men, to your country? Is it not that you may become better husbands, better neighbours, better citizens, and true philanthropists? Strange logic which dis-severs religion from its morality; and would separate the consideration of a nation's greatness from its connection with the fixed causes and divinely sanctioned means of its most exalted promotion.

And yet, such is the blindness of men, that they overlook the elements of true greatness and real advantage, and perversely forget the means that truth, and experience, and religion indicate as the necessary and indispensable means of that desirable acquisition. How many come to the sanctuary, and profess a desire to *behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple*. Yet, if the appeal and instruction of the minister do not accord with their preconceived opinions; if it encounter their prejudices; if it come

into collision with their selfish interests ; if it interfere with their sins ; and call them to the practice of a more exalted piety, and of a purer morality than they are willing to pursue, or find it convenient to maintain, how apt to blame the truth as officious and intermeddling, as requiring men to be *righteous overmuch*. And so they satisfy themselves in customary indifference ; or sin ; or with faith, that for size is *like a grain of mustard seed*—only never enlarged ; and they are offended or disgusted with the principles of godliness—as if they were never intended to regulate men's business, pursuits, pleasures, or any part of their conduct ; nor to be operative in their families ; nor to influence them as rulers or subjects, or masters and servants, or buyers and sellers—in short, as men immortal, and destined in eternity *according to the deeds done in the body* : and thus they lay the truth bleeding under their feet, and with the blood of its dishonour defile their own conscience, instead of asking humbly, What saith the Lord ?—what say the Scriptures ?—what says eternity ? the soul ? virtue ? prosperity ? the providence and promise of God ? *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?*

Religion, my hearers, is intended to fit men for every sphere and duty of life : and it has as much to do in teaching men their duty and obligations as citizens, as legislators, as governors, and as people, as it has in explaining and enforcing the duty which we owe to one another as husbands and wives, and parents and children, and neighbours and friends ; or the duty which we owe to God, the great lawgiver, and judge of every relation. And to say that religion has nothing to do in teaching men their relations and involved duties, privileges and destinies, as members of the political community, is as much out of the way as to say that it has nothing to do with their duties in their more confined relations of life ; as absurd, in short, as to say that it has nothing to do with their morality and virtue.

But it falls in equally with this vindication, and subserves

the illustration of the text, to say that the principles of the Gospel, when operative in men, are the very influences that make men virtuous, and fit them for their duties, and annex their efforts to those on which the public welfare depend. A *pure heart*, a *good conscience*, and a *faith unfeigned*, secure morality and every grace which is associated with the *charity* of the Gospel. And where these are in exercise; just in proportion are the constituents and elements of social exaltation exerting their power, and blessing the land where their subjects and possessors reside.

Besides: Christian ministers and Christian professors are a part of the nation, in a sense peculiar—in the ratio of our constitutional rights, and different from the mere toleration that may be vouchsafed to Christians in other lands. Our destinies are involved in those of the nation; our own responsibilities are identified with those of the nation; on our own righteousness, partially, and in proportion to our number and influence, the prosperity of the nation depends; our influence is to be exerted for good, or may be perverted to evil; if the nation is exalted, we are exalted *with it*, *in it*, and as being *of it*; if it suffer, we also suffer in the same degree. Should the free institutions of our land ever be overthrown; should the nation be visited for its sins, in the loss of its glorious privileges, there is perhaps no class of persons more likely to suffer than those whom the Gospel has taught most highly to value the inestimable rights of conscience and the freedom of speech—and all history and the nature of things marks out the lovers of Jesus Christ and the friends of evangelical righteousness as just that class. None have ever so energetically vindicated the rights of man; none so ardently panted and laboured for freedom; none more enthusiastically asserted the value of republican institutions; none suffered so much from the oppression of tyrants; or received so much the hatred of atheistic turbulence, anarchy, and misrule. “I was born a freeman”—I use the patriotic and fervent lan-

guage of an eloquent minister whom many of you know and love—"I was born a freeman, and, by the grace of God, I mean to live and die one." We have therefore a right, an interest, and a duty to prompt us to the manifestation of personal righteousness, and to exhort others to cultivate that *righteousness which exalteth a nation*, and avoid that *sin which is the reproach of any people*.

Great deference is due, moreover, to the example and sentiments of the author of our text. He, as well as his father, was a mighty king; and both have left their testimony to the connection between godliness and the public prosperity. Solomon was also the wisest king and the wisest man that ever lived. And if he has assumed the task of instructing us by the light of experience and the inspirations of the King of kings, the lessons which he inculcates are worthy of repetition by us, and the truth which they convey of the highest importance to be regarded.

I remark finally, upon this topic, that the simple fact, easily demonstrated, of a necessary connection between righteousness and national prosperity, is of itself an argument why it should be insisted upon by those who are at once interested as men in that prosperity, and are set for the defence of the Gospel and the vindication of its comprehensive blessings. This connection urges upon our patriotism and upon every philanthropic feeling to present the sources of a nation's greatness, and to show how the sanctions of religious truth concern and suggest the means, and minister in procuring the glory of our beloved country.

Religion has connections with everything. It teaches us to avoid sin, and to use our blessings aright. It concerns private and public morals, and private and public happiness. And well were it, if mere politicians, who seem to dread the encroachments of religion, should study its sacred relations, and refrain from intermeddling with, or encroaching upon it or the rights of conscience, and would obtain a right to appropriate its benefits by embracing its offers

and yielding to its claims; and thus fully understanding its comprehensive nature and influences.

In illustrating the proposition of the text, it is not necessary formally to explain the terms. Their meaning will be sufficiently evolved, as we contemplate the connection which is predicated concerning them in the declaration of the wise monarch of Jerusalem. Let us present a few considerations which may serve to fix our minds on the practical bearing of the truth here asserted.

I observe, that **RIGHTEOUSNESS, BY ITS DIRECT NATURE, IS CALCULATED TO ADVANCE NATIONAL EXALTATION.**

Where this prevails, men understand and act in conformity with the prescriptions that are adjusted to their relations to each other, and to the country of which they are constituents. The influence of the Gospel upon its subjects is to make them sober, chaste, contented, humble, industrious, domestic, gentle, benevolent, and just. If they are self-denying, they provide for the peace and satisfaction of their own minds, and have no motive to trespass on the rights and happiness of others; the meek and gentle affections are peculiarly fitted to secure domestic peace and comfort. Benevolence prompts them most energetically to perform the duties of good neighbourhood, and secures a permanent cultivation and support of all the "sweet charities of life." Where these exist, how blest is the community that is favoured with their presence. How preventive of crime; of pauperism; of disease; how powerful to restrain excesses; how valuable in turning the good gifts of Providence to the best account. In a community, under the influence of righteous principles, where the great maxims of the Bible are the guides of men's conduct, faith exists between man and man; and the just subordination of the inferior to the superior is preserved. There, the parent and the master of the family guides his household in the fear of the Lord, and gently leads his children and dependants in those *ways which are pleasantness, and those paths*

which are peace: training them in the *nurture and admonition of the Lord*. There the magistrate dispenses equal justice: he bears not the sword in vain; *he is a terror to evil-doers, and a praise to them that do well*. There the legislator and the ruler takes as the basis of his enactments, and as the maxims of his government, the sacred precepts of the law of God. He acknowledges him *by whom kings reign and princes decree justice*. He feels his accountability to a higher throne than any that is founded on earth. Under his authority, vice is restrained and virtue encouraged. Unhallowed ambition dares not oppress his own people; nor covetousness prompt to invade the territories or infringe upon the property, or assail the happiness of other nations. And if righteousness universally prevailed, *the spear should be beaten into the ploughshare, and the sword into the pruning hook, neither should they learn war any more*. There, too, the people reverencing the authority of *the powers that be*, should pray for them, and in requital lead a *quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty*. They would *render to all their dues; fear to whom fear is due; tribute to whom tribute; custom to whom custom; honour to whom honour*. There the arts of peace must flourish; there the sciences be amply cultivated. Where *the Spirit of the Lord is*, there true liberty would dwell; there the rules of justice would be understood and practised—the judge would take no bribe—the advocate [never pervert justice—the widow and the stranger would never be defrauded; there agricultural and mechanical industry would receive the just recompense of their labour; there commerce would show the integrity appropriate to her enterprises; there benevolence would relieve the destitute; and there, intemperance, with its horrid evils, would no longer lift its hydra head, and shed its baleful influences on the bodies and souls of unhappy drunkards, nor gain support and countenance among the men of the world, or the men of the church; there truth would prevail; there reli-

gion would suggest and sanctify the pursuits and the pleasures of men; and there the Most High would be worshipped: his *people would be all righteous*—Zion the city of our solemnities would be a quiet habitation—her sons would be at peace—her truth beam like the sun—and her ministers *clothed with salvation, her people should shout for joy*—and the Lord in the midst of her would be her glory and her defence. Why these things would be themselves the exalting of a nation, as well as the means of its highest possible prosperity. And whose imagination does not outstrip the effort of my weak tongue, and paint in loveliest colours the elements of that nation's glory, where God is honoured and served, and where his providence gives energy to every cause of blessing, and “scatters plenty o'er a smiling land”—makes her *place of defence the munitions of rocks*—owns her as his—and writes the decree of her perpetuity and immortality, in broad lines of heavenly radiance, on the firm foundations of his throne.

I do not deny that there may be seeming exceptions in the providence of God. I know that sometimes injustice and violence have given a temporary prosperity to proud and wicked nations. That God has sometimes upheld them for a while in great splendour for effecting the high designs which lie concealed and gather strength, in that hand where rise the emblematic horns of omnipotence, and there are *the hidings of his power*. Nor on the other hand, that nations distinguished for righteousness have had occasional disaster. But this was for sin—for the correction of iniquity—or for their more adequate preparation for subsequent prosperity. While, in the former case, the aboundings of vice, the secret, undermining influence of sin, identified with the judgments of God, have led to the decline and overthrow, in fearful succession, of the most powerful empires and the most ancient kingdoms. Look not alone at Greece and Rome. But see the utter desolation of Egypt, of Edom, of Assyria, of Tyre, of Jerusalem herself—their ruined palaces; their scattered

hordes ; the fragments of their proud splendour, and relics that deride their ancient power and arrogance ; the broken pillars ; and the poisonous reptiles that prophetically mark and barely identify the sites of their ancient greatness—and ask them why did they not stand for ever ? why, ages ago, were they overthrown ? Their destruction, and the manner of it, are a standing monument of the truth of the Bible ; and it fell out in confirmation of the truth of God's warning, that *the nation and kingdom that will not serve him shall utterly perish*. There is nothing in the exceptions remarked which impugns, nothing which does not fully support the idea, that the highest advancement of which a nation is capable, is inseparably connected with the practice of that righteousness which the God of the Bible has defined and commanded.

The providence of God is more marked and intelligible in the principles which affect the destinies of nations than it is in those which regard individuals among men. It is true, that *there is a reward for the righteous*, and that the judge of all the earth has appropriate judgments to manifest his abhorrence of vice even in this world. But individuals are so secluded ; their course is so difficult to be marked ; and we are so incapable of penetrating to the hearts of men, and investigating all the aspects and relations of their history in the present life, that we do not always see the connection between piety and its rewards—between vice and its retributions. Besides, the perfect adjustment of punishment to crime is reserved for another world ; and there the inequalities of the divine administration which we apprehend in his providence here towards individuals will be completely rectified. But it is not so with nations. Their existence is temporal. Their prosperity as such is limited to the scene and relations of their existence ; and their punishments are adjusted by the same law. If they are prospered for righteousness, their prosperity may consist with individual sorrow and distress ; if punished for sin, their affliction may be consistent with in-

dividual advantage; and they may be punished by the removal of their best population; or their social destruction may comprehend the individual loss of their pious members, (as far as earth is concerned, and who are advanced to glory,) while the individuals who are associated with them in their common country, shall be cut off in their sins, and swept into the ruin of eternity. And a nation, though not destroyed, is yet greatly afflicted, for the hatred and persecution of its pious population, by the very removal of those whom they designed to expel or exterminate. The remark may be illustrated by a reference to the effects of the revocation of the edict of Nantz, by which the very salt of her land was cast out of France to bless other countries; and *her* misfortunes have not ceased to this day. But it appears from regarding the constitution of nations and the necessary circumstances of their existence, that the providence of God, must, in its relations to them, be most completely and intelligibly adjusted to their character; that national sins will be punished by national misfortunes; and national virtue be rewarded by national prosperity.

AND HOW WELL DOES THIS REPRESENTATION AGREE WITH THE WHOLE HISTORY OF THE WORLD. In every nation of ancient times, where regard was had to virtue, in that proportion they enjoyed the favour of God. Where they dishonoured him, and yielded to unrighteousness, they were overthrown. Look too at modern times, where especially the principles of the Christian dispensation are fully developed, and mark the truth, in every land which has been characterized by a good degree of national righteousness, that there God has sent prosperity. The nation as such, that has honoured God, he has honoured. And nations that were blessed with the presence of the true followers of Christ in the midst of them, have been preserved and blessed for their sakes—as the casket is defended on account of the precious jewel which it enshrines. See Holland, Scotland, England. See the United States, our own land, from the time of the landing of the pilgrims at

Plymouth to the close of the revolutionary war ; and since then, the prosperity of our country under the federal constitution. I ask what remarkable coincidence of their prosperity with the regard which is there had for God, is contrasted with an equally remarkable coincidence between a prevalent superstition or irreligion, and the inferiority of South America, and Spain, and Italy, and France, and the lands which stretch far east and south towards the rising, and under the torrid sun.

There is one fact which is worthy of special notice. In the French revolution the mad atheism of the people rushed furiously to the extreme of crime, to the most horrible excesses of fiendlike wickedness : and openly defying the God of heaven, they derided his religion, his institutions, his ministers, his word, his own existence ; and standing in the face of day and of Heaven, they hurled their blasphemous defiance against his throne, and bade him show his truth, and power, and being, by striking them dead. God "made no sign," such as they impiously demanded. But how has that nation fared ? What became of that generation of bloody men ? How did they perish by each other's hands ? And that impudent but beautiful woman, who stood on the altars of God, and received the adoration of Paris, and of her apostate archbishop at their head, as the goddess of reason, died in a mad-house, after 17 years deprivation of that very reason which she and the mad idolaters of France had deified. And what has France gained by her revolutions, and her struggles for freedom ? She denied God—and no stability, no blest influences of religion, no elements of true and abiding greatness have yet been imparted to her. And now contrast with this the history of this favoured land. With all our sins, how has the Lord been her glory and her protector. She was settled by races of pious men. The era of her revolution was an era of piety, and righteousness pervaded her counsels—and the prayers of her generals invoked victory on their standard from the God of battles. Recur

to the period when Benjamin Franklin acknowledged the need of Divine guidance in the delicate business of settling the federal constitution, and remember how the convention that formed it felt the value of prayer, in the success which finally gave that masterpiece of political wisdom to be the guarantee of our nation's freedom; securing to us the fit possession of essential liberty, civil and religious; and yet sufficiently recognising Christianity as the law of the land; repudiating atheism, it guards the conscience of the humblest citizen. What is our whole history but a proof, that imperfect, poor, and heartless often as our national righteousness has been, and many as our sins have been, God has not forgotten his people, and has redeemed and illustrated the promises of his word. Read the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy, and see how fully he has unfolded our duty, and warned against rebellion; and compare the delineations of that prophecy with the history of the Jews to this day.

While *righteousness exalteth a nation*, let us seek to practice it, and to extend the love of it. The Gospel of Christ directs us to the most appropriate methods, and unfolds the most impressive motives of pursuing and diffusing the influences of that *holiness without which no man shall see the Lord*. Earthly prosperity is but an emblem of heavenly glory, and the exaltation we seek should be that of eternity at the right hand of God, and through the saving mercy and righteousness of Jesus our crucified Redeemer. Thus shall we secure our highest peace; thus bless the land; *serving our generation by the will of God*. Let the consideration of his mercies impel you to gratitude. And if there be anything in the present aspect of our affairs that detracts from the cheerfulness of the present occasion, ask yourselves how far you are responsible for existing infelicities in our social condition. If we are not perfectly exalted, it is because we are far from being perfectly righteous, and *our sins* are permitted to chastise us.

SIN, says the wise man, in our text, SIN IS THE REPROACH

OF ANY PEOPLE. It is the *disgrace*; it is the *ruin* of any people.

It is true of the *church*: let her members take heed—and while we behold the *divisions of Reuben*, and the *affliction of Joseph*, let there be great *searchings of heart*, and *grief*,—that we may know why, and meet the causes which make the *ways of Zion mourn*, and spoil the joy of her solemn feasts.

It is true of the *nation*—of any nation. What a *shame* that profanity, Sabbath-breaking, insubordination to the law, intemperance, atheism, and manifold ingratitude to God, should unblushingly exhibit their hideous aspects, in the midst of a people so favoured of their Lord. And why may not our disgraceful iniquity one day become our *ruin*? What sins that rebuke us, may not become the executioners of God's vengeance? What may not *intemperance* bring to pass of wo and disaster? what the machinations of an *alien hierarchy*, the ministers of superstition, and the agents of foreign despots, unless the enslaved and degraded victims of popish superstition can be reached by the Gospel and converted to Christ? What may not *infidelity*? And have we no sin, to be recompensed on account of the systematic *oppression* of the aboriginal inhabitants of America? none for the wrongs of Africa? Well might a late distinguished statesman,* in view of unrequited and persisted wrong and oppression, well might he exclaim, and couple the exile of the Indian with the bondage of the slave, "I tremble for my country, when I reflect that God is just." I am no apologist for *wrong measures* of mistaken men in the North to operate on the slavery of the South—but I am no apologist for slavery—and to the owner of the slave and the slave legislator, would address those coincident motives of religion, humanity, patriotism, and interest, which, urged with the solemn affection of truth, might induce him voluntarily and conscientiously, and with the

* Jefferson.

earliest practicable expediency, to *break every yoke and let the oppressed go free*. I cannot believe that the enslaving of my neighbour is the method that righteousness and true liberty point out to teach me my dignity as a freeman.* It might make me an aristocrat or a despot, but never a republican. And in this connection, we may deplore the unauthorized infliction of personal chastisement and of death itself, by irresponsible bodies of men, assuming to anticipate the operation, or to remedy the defects of the law; and be ashamed that mayors, and judges, and honourable legislators, and reputable citizens, should undertake in organized masses, without the authority of the law, to interfere with the constitutional right of freedom of speech conferred on every citizen, and amenable only to a jury of his peers. We may justify what we deem to be the extremity of the case; but our short sighted folly may be rebuked to-morrow, by some misguided and infuriate mob attacking our own dearest rights, if their exercise should happen to bear some aspect displeasing to the many-headed monster.

Nor can freemen permit the excited advocate for slavery to extend his authority into a free state, and legislate away the freedom of speech and the press. Nevertheless must all our rights be exercised with reference to the general good, and in perfect subordination to the supremacy of the law; while the benevolent and just principles of the Gospel must dictate the practice of that righteousness which will guide us in duty, and save the North and the South from reproach and desolation.

How, too, may party spirit and party *ambition* divide our councils, or punish excess by political phrensy, and precipitate to measures of incalculable disaster. How proud have we not been, how boastful of our liberty and prosperity, which we almost make licentiousness and the occasion of impiety. *Pride goeth before destruction, and a*

* See the late message of the governor of South Carolina.

haughty spirit before a fall. And do we not often forget God, and defy his laws? pervert and deny his truth? assume his friendship for sin, and his approbation of the dishonour of his name, and imagine that he will for ever preserve us? But who has told us from Heaven, fondly as we love to say and believe it, that we, our country, and her institutions are necessary to the purposes of God? Was Jerusalem, the holy city? were the proud republics of old? Then, why did they fall? If we provoke him, he will chastise us; and the church of God may be called upon to *glorify him in the fires.* Religion never flourished as in the days of her sore oppression by men. Those were the times when *faith* recorded her heavenly origin; *subdued kingdoms; wrought righteousness; obtained promises;* those were the days when a generation of Christians appeared, *of whom the world was not worthy.* And as for the *tumults of the people,* let it not be forgotten that all the elements of their prosperity may readily be destroyed; that it is no paradox to say, that, possessing free institutions, they may be a nation of slaves; that freedom itself, alas! so little understood and oft perverted, is not so much an ultimate blessing, as an opportunity, an occasion of reaching to the highest dignity which fits our nature; of making earth glad with holiness and peace; of filling eternity with the praises of those who are ransomed from the tyranny of sin, and rejoice in the *glorious liberty of the sons of God.*

But again; may not God punish us for our foolish pride, by involving us in the sin and disaster of an unnatural war with a nation to which we are bound by many ties and fraternal associations? Our perversion on the very subject may chastise us. I would not rush to war on a punctilio, nor simply for a slight wrong, where forbearance would gain more dignity than retaliation; and I am free to confess, that so far as regards the immediate relations of the subject, the recent message of the President of the United States, places the country and the government in an atti-

tude most honourable, and throws upon our ancient ally the wrong, and all the injury and responsibility of possible hostilities. Yet when I look at all the relations of the subject, and in the light of eternity, I know no greater absurdity than that of war among civilized nations. War in defence of a just cause, I doubt not is coincident with the approbation of God towards the right—

“Thrice is he arm'd that hath his quarrel just”—

and he may send us victory and fill us with renown ; but he sometimes permits disaster to be the result even to the party that hath his cause just, as a chastisement for sin in other relations. But look at the details. When we glorify our victories, when we boast the renown of our warriors, and demand the world's approbation of our national honour vindicated, and bid it accord the illustrious meed to the prowess of our commanders, our capitals may be illuminated in the triumph and enthusiasm of the general joy, but how forgetful are we of the broken-hearted widow and the famished orphan, whom the chances of war have miserably bereaved. National glory cannot heal their sorrows—it cannot restore the mutilated limb of the prostrate soldier—it cannot stifle the groan which pain expels from the wretched inmate of a military hospital—it cannot repair the vice, and cure the wickedness that will accompany the camp, and increase in flagitiousness, and “make the meat it feeds on.” No, it can none of all these ; and while we yield to the stern necessity that demands this accumulated evil, and are not authorized to say that God has no attributes that can take part with us in such a controversy, yet as a minister of the *God of peace*, and speaking for him, I am bold to exhort my country to *study the things that make for peace*, and avert while they can the horrors of war. An ardent and enthusiastic patriotism may welcome its annunciation, but its approach is the herald of *lamentation, and mourning, and wo*; and while we may, may we implore that God would deliver us from the necessity of encounter-

ing the appeal to arms. There is more prosperity, and exaltation, and goodness, and glory, and honour, in peace secured by righteousness, than there is even in a righteous war.

I speak of this subject, and of every other reviewed this day, as a man, as a patriot, an American, and a freeman, and as a Christian, under my responsibilities to God, as his minister, appointed to warn men, and tell them their danger, when the Lord informs the watchman that the sword is coming. Forget not the many sins which may provoke God—the many ways in which he may punish. We have no security but in righteousness. Our high aspirations concerning this beloved land may all be blasted. God has destroyed nations *not a few*, and if this nation serve him not, *it shall utterly perish*: and nothing can save it, if he decree its overthrow. Our sins can smite us; our victories can destroy us; our freedom can ruin us; our institutions can fall and crush us in their destruction. That religious liberty so dear to us can be taken away; and God may cause his church to pass through deep affliction, that the covenant of his peace may be fully established.

But, beloved, let us hope and labour for better things, and *things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak*. Only trust in the Lord, and serve him, and he will preserve us. He will make *our sons as plants grown up in their youth; our daughters as corner stones polished after the similitude of a palace; our garners shall be full, affording all manner of store; our sheep shall bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets; our oxen shall be strong to labour; there shall be no breaking in nor going out; nor complaining in our streets. Pray ye too for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love her; peace be within her walls and prosperity within her palaces; for our brethren and companions' sake, let peace be within her. Because of the house of the Lord our God, let us seek the good of our land. Oh happy is the people that is in such a case; yea happy is that people whose God is the Lord.*