

MERCIFUL REBUKES.

A

SERMON

ON THE

LATE NATIONAL FAST.

BY

JOHN M. KREBS,

PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN RUTGERS-STREET.

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S E R M O N

PREACHED IN THE

RUTGERS STREET CHURCH, NEW-YORK,

ON FRIDAY, MAY 14, 1841,

ON OCCASION OF

THE NATIONAL FAST

RECOMMENDED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES;

AND REPEATED IN THE SAME CHURCH ON THE SABBATH EVENING FOLLOWING.

BY JOHN M. ^{Chase} KREBS,

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH.

"You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." AMOS 3: 2.

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Checked
May 1913

S E R M O N .

JEREMIAH ii. 19.—Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee : know therefore and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts.

“**SIN is a reproach to any people.**” It is both ruin and disgrace.

In due time, God will make it apparent, in the conviction and punishment of every transgressor, that there is an inseparable connexion between sin and suffering. The most striking and intelligible manifestation of this fact is reserved for the day of universal judgment and eternal retribution. Then, every man shall give account for himself; every man shall be dealt with personally and singly; every man shall bear his own sin and receive its full requital.

But it is a principle of the divine administration, to make demonstrations of the connexion between sin and suffering, at least in some degree, in the present world. His judgments are abroad in the earth, that the inhabitants of the world may learn righteousness.

This is especially, and necessarily, the case, with respect to communities. They are composed of individuals, some of whom may escape the effects of public judgments that are sent for the chastisement of public offences. But as communities are organized for certain purposes, in which every individual is in-

terested, they present a public aspect ; and, however numerous their constituents, not only are they united together for a common destiny, but they become *one*, as a body politic. They feel that they are one. They are treated as one. The body politic is, as it were, one person, for the purposes of their incorporation. And as these purposes are mainly, if not entirely, of a merely temporal character, such as national defence, peace, wealth, liberty, fame, and the like,—while the *individuals* of whom they are composed, and their personal and isolated relation to the providence, the justice, the grace, the bar and the throne of God, may both here and hereafter be singly treated with a particular and independent reference to their own particular character and conduct,—the *community* or the *nation*, of which they form a part, shall be treated as a whole, with reference to its interests as a nation, and to the prevailing character and conduct by which it is distinguished. If, as a whole, it be a righteous nation, it shall be exalted. If, on the contrary, it be a wicked nation, it shall be punished. The reward and the punishment may involve such tendencies or elements of personal advantage or loss to individuals, both as to their temporal and to their eternal destiny, as sometimes necessarily result from the conditions and liabilities of social existence, without respect to individual character. But it is as a whole, that God deals with the people. And in this aspect, the whole is capable of reward or punishment, of prosperity or adversity, of perpetuity or of destruction, only in relation to the present world. Bodies politic, smaller or greater, are incorporated and organized, as to their elements, union, and destiny, only for this life. They

are dissolved by the breath of eternity ; and in all the conditions, influences and destinies of the last judgment and of eternity, nations, merely as such, have no share and no relations. There is, indeed, one exception. It is the holy nation, chosen out of every nation and kindred of the earth,—the general assembly and church of the first-born. This is the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the Great King, whose people are all righteous, and their names are written in the Lamb's book of life. This community, "adorned with shining grace," shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, and shall be his inheritance and abode forever.

When we speak, therefore, of the judgment of nations, of the sins of nations, or of the righteousness of nations,—while we mean that sin, in every relation is *sin*, and that it invites punishment,—we would be understood as affirming that, from the necessity of the case, the righteousness of a nation can be followed with prosperity to the nation *as such*, only in this life, consisting of such elements as liberty, peace, wealth, &c., and that the sin of a nation is, in like manner, visited with the loss or destruction of those immediate and temporal immunities, advantages and elements of mere temporal aggrandizement, for which it exists as a nation,—and its national independence and existence may be among its losses or elements of its punishment. Its sin is national ; its punishment is national ; and, as such, its punishment is therefore necessarily confined to the present world :—and therefore, too, it is to be expected that its punishment will be most accurately and certainly administered. *Individuals* may escape the full vengeance due to their

offences, until they reach the bar of God. *Nations* must meet that vengeance here. Their punishment must be complete ; and it is equally inevitable.

It is true, that even in the case of individual sinners, transgression is sometimes followed by striking punishments. Not only as they have contributed to the sum of a nation's guilt, and are involved in a nation's punishment, but as they sinned personally and independently, God has made his vengeance tread swiftly and surely upon the heels of their crime. But for the reason I have already given, and because nations appear before us on a large scale, we have a better opportunity of at once recognizing the fact that sin and suffering are inseparably connected.

The Providence of God has direct means of inflicting its wrath. He may pour out a deluge upon the earth ; he may withhold the genial influences of the rain and the dew ; he may send the desolating plague. And by these agents, he may scourge the guilty men and the guilty nations that have provoked his displeasure.

But he has also another method of inflicting punishment, which comes in such a shape and by such an agency and instrumentality, that we can be at no loss to recognize the rebuke of God for sin. The punishment corresponds directly with the personal or national offence. It is adjusted to it. It grows out of it. What is the doctrine taught by the consequences of some of the vices of men ? The drunkard and the unclean, waste property, destroy health, abridge life, ruin reputation, imbibe loathsome disease, and so get wounding, dishonor and shame, as the reward of their iniquity, " receiving in themselves that

recompense of their error which was meet." "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways."

Such was the fact in relation to the Jews, in the days of the prophet Jeremiah, according to his declaration in the text.

The people had greatly sinned against the Lord, by their ingratitude, apostacies and idolatries. And when God scourged them by bringing against them a foreign invasion, they still persisted in their rebellion against his throne. Unconvinced by his repeated judgments; insincere in their repentings; unhumbled by his rebukes and exhortations; breaking all their covenants with God; they forsook their own mercies, and appeared to be given up to a reprobate mind and a hard heart. Instead of returning to the Lord in their danger, they sought aid from their heathen neighbors; and their sin in this respect brought upon them additional trouble. They introduced into their land a people who vexed and disturbed them; and as they were defeated, enslaved, impoverished, and even insulted by the most contemptible of their professed enemies, so were they deceived, forsaken, or distressed by those who pretended to be their friends. All this was brought upon them for their transgressions. Forsaking the Lord, casting off his fear, indulging their malignant iniquity, they found in the evil and bitterness of their calamities, the tendency of sin to make men miserable. "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee."

The force of this statement consists in this: That, as sin destroys and ruins hereafter, so does it correct and reprove here. Sin shall bring trouble. Punishment shall follow sin so inevitably, that sin itself may

be said to punish the transgressor. The punishment of guilty nations is, in kind and circumstances, so directly answerable to the sins which they have committed,—so directly flowing from them, or so accurately adjusted to them,—that you may recognize the sin in the punishment. Conscience awakened by trouble made the brethren of Joseph to say one to another : “ We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear ; therefore is this distress come upon us.”

It has appeared to me, that not only may many facts and delineations of the history and character of the Israelites, and the dealings of Providence with them, be taken as descriptive of ourselves, but that the very principle disclosed in this text is illustrated and confirmed by the experience of this nation.

Although, as I have intimated, nations as such seem to be more especially and necessarily requited by the judgments of God in the earth, it is to be remarked, (1st.) That nations and the individuals composing them are so closely related, that, in the dealings of Providence with them, now seeming to affect the whole community, as a whole, and now affecting more especially the individuals, it may sometimes be difficult for us to trace out and appreciate the operations and details of the general principle that I have assumed. There is, too, a counteracting influence exerted by individuals in a nation, for whose sake, God withholds or suspends his judgments, or even allows a temporary prosperity. (Gen. 18: 20-32, Isaiah 65: 8.) (2d.) As individuals have a direct future responsibility to the bar of God, they may often seem to

escape the more visible and severe expressions of the judgment of God here ; and they may be pampered with prosperity as the ox that is fatted for the slaughter ; and moreover, while the world envies or upbraids, “ the hearts of many may know their own bitterness,” and “ a stranger intermeddleth not with their joy.” (3d.) That Providence, by the visitations of his judgments, indicates the character of his government ; and often gives just so much of trouble as may serve to point men to that future retribution which shall visit all the sins of all men and shall perfectly requite that guilt which, so far as we see, escapes adequate punishment here. That escape is a temporary exemption which confirms the necessity of a future judgment,—and which, if it did not exist, for the wise and gracious purposes it is designed to subserve, would do away the necessity of a future judgment ;—and thus the present dispensation, instead of being a dispensation of trial, of probation, of discipline, of mercy, and of reclamation, would be a dispensation under which sin would be immediately followed by its full punishment, and death and ruin would fall upon the guilty nations and upon the guilty men that are upon the earth, and would sweep them away with an irresistible, an universal, an irretrievable desolation. It would depopulate the earth in a moment. There would be none redeemed. There never would have been any redeeming influences ; no goodness leading to repentance ; no rebukes to humble and forewarn men, and so teach them to return and be reconciled to God ; no calls and invitations ; no tender entreaties ; no Saviour ; and no atoning sacrifice. All would have been prompt destruction — all would

have been a dispensation of unmitigated wrath. (4.) It may be added farther, that while a nation is filling the measure of its iniquity, yet, although it should be doomed to destruction ultimately, God is long-suffering and patient; he withholds and delays the final and universal overthrow; while, in the meantime, he inflicts disaster, rebuke, and suffering. It is "the coming event casting its shadow before;"—it is the voice of warning;—it gives space for recovery; and it is a state, not of hopeless loss, but of partial and temporary bereavement;—and in all this, God is subjecting a people to a fair trial to see if they will repent. A permanent or occasional repentance will result in a permanent restoration to prosperity under his favor, or to a temporary alleviation of their distresses, as the case may be. But, persisting in sin, the time will come when his vengeance shall overthrow. He bore long with the Jews. One whole generation were destroyed, although they wandered forty years in the wilderness ere they were all dead, but their children continued the nation; and their posterity, for fifteen hundred years, were continued as the nation,—while, during this time, they were first harassed and troubled for their sins, then driven into exile,—then restored,—made tributary,—and finally subjugated, and their nation and city overturned, and their whole national independence, polity, and homes destroyed, and their very soil given up to the oppression and inhabitation of the heathen.

We have been invited by the Proclamation of the President of the United States, to observe this day as a day of Fasting and Prayer. And I deem it proper here to transcribe the recommendation of our Chief

Magistrate, as suggesting the views, emotions, and deportment that become us on the present occasion :

TO THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES—A RECOMMENDATION.

When a Christian People feel themselves to be overtaken by a great public calamity, it becomes them to humble themselves under the dispensation of Divine Providence, to recognize His righteous government over the children of men, to acknowledge His goodness in time past, as well as their own unworthiness, and to supplicate His merciful protection for the future.

The death of William Henry Harrison, late President of the United States, so soon after his elevation to that high office, is a bereavement peculiarly calculated to be regarded as a heavy affliction, and to impress all minds with a sense of the uncertainty of human things, and of the dependence of nations, as well as of individuals, upon our Heavenly Parent.

I have thought, therefore, that I should be acting in conformity with the general expectation and feelings of the community in recommending, as I now do, to the People of the United States, of every religious denomination, that, according to their several modes and forms of worship, they observe a day of Fasting and Prayer, by such religious services as may be suitable on the occasion ; and I recommend Friday, the fourteenth day of May next, for that purpose ; to the end that, on that day, we may all, with one accord, join in humble and reverential approach to Him, in whose hands we are, invoking Him to inspire us with a proper spirit and temper of heart and mind under these frowns of His providence, and still to bestow His gracious benedictions upon our Government and our Country.

JOHN TYLER.

WASHINGTON, April 13, 1841.

While the death of our distinguished ruler has furnished the occasion of this recommendation, our attention is directed to the consideration of our unworthiness, and to the frowns of Providence in other relations ;—and a wide field is thrown open for our review to-day. This death is a heavy affliction,—a national bereavement ;—and such expressions of humiliation as this case requires, are properly prompted by a larger view of many dispensations of mercy and

of judgment which have characterized the history of this nation.

It becomes us to be humbled. It becomes us to repent. It becomes us to call upon God in the day of trouble, and to cast ourselves and our beloved country on the merciful protection of the great Governor of nations.

But while I say this, I would also say, that in view of what we are, and of what God has hitherto done for us as a people, we have far less reason to mourn for actual judgments than for the manifold sins that have provoked these frowns,—yea, that have provoked far more calamitous judgments than any that we have ever felt. And we are in great danger, at this moment, of humbling ourselves more for our disasters than for our sins, and of incurring the charge, “Thou hast preferred sin before affliction,”—as we are prone to be more anxious for relief from suffering than for deliverance from the sins that have brought our suffering, and are apt to forget our mercies, under the pressure of our present sorrow.

God has not requited us according to our iniquity. He has not destroyed us as a nation. What he has done thus far, has been in a way of kind rebuke, of fatherly chastisement, of merciful correction. These rebukes and chastisements have been mingled with direct mercies, accompanied with alleviations, signalized by deliverances,—notwithstanding that, throughout our course, we have provoked him to vex us in his hot displeasure.

When God planted this nation, and cast out the heathen before our fathers, he gave them a wide land, a soil, a climate, a magnificence of natural scene-

ry, so various, beautiful, fertile, and healthful, that it may support and furnish enjoyment for every delighted sense of hundreds of millions of people.

Our founders were men sagacious to lay the foundations of a great empire ; ardent lovers of freedom ; true patriots ; and sincerely religious. Witlings may sneer,—ingrates may slander those men and those generations. For, as in Egypt, a new king arose who knew not Joseph, so are there among us the degenerate sons and base detractors of the pilgrim fathers and primitive generations of our land ;—wretches—I retract not the word, whatever of base and degrading imputation it conveys,—who, without the genius, industry, sublime devotion, and exalted faith of those early times, seek to obscure the contrast of their own baseness, by witling sneers and foul opprobriums lavished against men of whom the world was not worthy,—who, too ignorant to know of what they affirm ; too weak to imitate their courage, that gave occasion for Bancroft to say, that “ coward and Puritan never went together,” and Macauley, speaking of the despised “ round-heads” of England, who made the proud cavalier wince, that “ those had little reason to laugh who encountered them in the hall of debate, or in the field of battle ;” too indolent to copy their zeal ; too far removed from their high measures of virtue, and too dull to appreciate their excellence ; too selfish to sympathize with their generous emotions and sentiments ; and too stupid to emulate their knowledge ; make more glaring the fearful contrast of their own imbecility and insignificance, when they dare to slaver with their foul slime the characters of men, whose names will stand high on the catalogues of patriotism,

of science, and of religion,—whose names are emblazoned in the records of impartial history, and in extorted laudations of men who were no friends to their principles,—who have been held up for admiration by the advocacy of the most gifted scholars and writers of the present day in England and America,—and whose enduring monuments are with us in their institutions, their colleges, their school houses, their churches, and in the influence of their enterprise, and in their stern and incorruptible morality, that have been impressed upon the history, the conduct, and the sentiments of their children, and upon their country.

God has known our land in mercy. Leaving out of view other conflicts, defences, and triumphs, two successful wars have been waged by this country with the mother country, in vindication of our freedom, and for the establishment of our independent rights and immunities as a nation. Our constitutions are of our own framing, and they secure the life, the liberty, and the property of all the citizens. Religion is free : its rites are observed ; its course has been progressive ; the gospel has been glorified ; and its support is voluntary and uncompelled. Temples and ministers, schools of learning, achievements of art, accumulated wealth, increasing population, and, thus far, the successful working of our institutions, all meet our eye, and attest the goodness of the King of Nations to this favored people. I do not mean to say that there have not been occasional disasters and drawbacks,—that God has not sometimes punished us and made us mourn. But our course has been a career of progress, of increasing prosperity. And

I do feel as if, after all that makes us sorrowful and ashamed in the rebuking Providence of God, we have more occasion to be thankful than to repine,—more occasion to be humbled for our sins, than, as I fear we too often are, merely humbled for the pressure of some calamity that bears no comparison with our guilt, and is itself more a mercy than a judgment.

Amid all its sins, and all its rebukes, we have but still to look upon the blessings of our land; and, instead of repining, and feeling that all is lost, we must acknowledge the goodness of God, and feel that even where our own wickedness is correcting us, and our own backsliding is reproving us, and we know and see that it is an evil thing and bitter to have forsaken the Lord our God, and that his fear is not in us,—yet this very chastisement and these frowns, are not the elements of ruin; they seem rather the elements of a benignant influence which is meant to purify and purge us from our sins, and to produce in us the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Why what a spectacle is presented, for example, in the very circumstances that more especially suggest the observance of this day! These very institutions of American freedom that, to the minions of royalty, have seemed a mere mockery, an unsubstantial and tottering fabric, soon to fall and crush us, and scourge us back for refuge to the protecting arms and tender mercies of despotism,—yea, that have been viewed with apprehension even by their ardent admirers, who periled “life and fortune and sacred honor” for them, have survived many a rude shock, proved their fitness for the purposes of government and defence, and disappointed many a gloomy

foreboding. Under their operation, the adult males of our people, within the last twelve months, met every where in great masses, excited and agitated with a heaving enthusiasm that might seem to portend the mighty desolations of a volcano. And yet we laid down to sleep, and they laid down to sleep, every night, dwelling in peace and safety, and securely kept from the fear of evil. This excitement was kept up month after month; and in the issue, the great question, a question involving so many public and private interests—"Who shall be Chief Magistrate of this Nation? and which of the two great parties into which the country is divided, shall bear the political sway and control the destinies of the country?"—that question was settled by the mere simple operation of the majority of the people casting their peaceful suffrages in favor of the illustrious citizen whose *untimely* death, I may call it, is among the calamities we this day deplore. There was argument and appeal, and often base and impure motive in the flaming appeal,—and yet, what were their weapons? There was no appeal to arms; no bloodshed. A simple scroll of paper, no bigger than an infant's finger, thrown by each qualified citizen into the ballot-box, relieved the swelling enthusiasm, and the conflict was over. It was a beautiful sight, and cheering as it was beautiful, notwithstanding all the fierceness of party spirit, and the frequent drawbacks that distinguish popular elections, to see the freedom of discussion, the peaceful assemblages, the order of the preliminary contest, and the silent but effective appeal to the ballot-box expressing the will of the people, and how calmly and quietly the whole country immediately settled down, content

and submissive, if not universally gratified by the result. On the fourth of March, he whom the will of the people had thus designated, enters peacefully upon his high functions ; exchanging the courtesies that become the generous rivalry of American gentlemen, with his distinguished predecessor in office ; and that predecessor standing beside him in the presence of the people, and, as it were, honorably and gracefully divesting himself of the mantle of authority, and throwing it upon the shoulders of his successful competitor. The nation is settled down in peace. And when again, within a brief month, it pleased the Almighty God to rebuke us by taking away our chosen ruler, there was no necessity even for gathering the people to express their will again—they had done it effectually before ; and by the wise provisions which I cannot but think God taught our rulers to enact, the functions of him who died incumbent in the Presidency, peacefully devolve upon him who had been appointed for the contingency ; and it is the process of a moment. There is no revolution ; there is no hinderance ; there is no delay. There is nothing to regret, beyond the natural regret for the unexpected departure of our lamented chief. And while his successor's life is spared, we are spared, at least for a time, from the tempest of political agitation, on which we look back with wonder, as from a haven of peace ; and the government goes on—and the nation goes on—and the people go on, uninterruptedly ;—would to God, I could add, not only rebuked, but humble—not only favored, but thankful—not only expressing dependence, but feeling it—not only outwardly prostrate, but prayerful—not only confessing sins, but forsaking them—not

only fasting and eating bitter herbs, and feeling sore for that it is an evil thing and bitter to provoke the frowns of the Lord,—but keeping such a fast as God hath chosen—to loose the bands of wickedness—to rend the heart—to mourn with godly sorrow—to return unto God and give him glory ere he cause darkness—to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.

I have thought it meet to say thus much, and to call your attention to our real position, and in illustration of the fact, that while we acknowledge the rebukes of the Lord, in this death of the President, and in other disasters that have befallen our country of late years, God seems to be dealing with us not for our destruction, but in a way of merciful chastisement. It is his wont thus to do. And while we are lamenting the pressure of adversity, we ought not to be regardless nor unthankful, in respect to manifold elements of blessing.

Grant that we have not such prosperity as we seemed to have in other times. Grant that there are commercial embarrassments, and pecuniary losses, and unsuccessful plans, and defeated hopes. This is nothing new. It has been so more than once in the history of our country. There have been sins before our day, and disasters and trials have been sent before today. And besides, we ought to remember with gratitude that we *have had* great prosperity, and many blessings,—even though it has pleased God to abridge and remove our blessings. Was it not goodness while we had it? “And shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?” He is good when he gives, supremely good; nor less when

he takes away. It becomes us to say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away : blessed be the name of the Lord." Besides, what has he taken away? Not all. He has not sent wrath to the uttermost. We have heard no prophet saying, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed." And even if we had, a sincere repentance would obviate the ruin. Grant that we are suffering; that in the rebuke of the Lord, many have lost; and that all are affected by the ramified influences that operate through the civil and political connections which involve us all in our social liabilities. Yet we may not repine, nor murmur. Think of the good that is left; of a country prosperous in the main; of plentiful harvests; of public health; of peace; of a free constitution; of the means and institutions of education; of a nation humbling itself before God, at the recommendation of its rulers; of religious influences and institutions; of a body of religious ministers and religious people who, with all *their* defects and sins, are nevertheless potent in the agencies and instruments of blessing and salvation, as would have been ten righteous men in Sodom, and as the salt of the earth. However great our disasters, yet the presence of these things is good and an earnest of good. "As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it; so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all." The Church of God is the salt of the earth. For the Church, the nations are preserved, and for the glory of God, his Church itself is kept from the temptation that shall come upon all the earth. Disaster is not ruin. Else should we not be here to-

day in humiliation and supplication before God. We are yet on praying ground, and on pleading terms.

I do not mean, on the other hand, to deny that God is rebuking and chastising us. That which he has done in time past—that which we confess he is doing now—is the rebuke courted by our sins, and these sins and these disasters are the drawback in our character and in our condition.

And we have sins that invite yet greater distress—far greater. If persisted, they must destroy us, as sin has destroyed others. Judgments unimproved may provoke further and final ruin. If confidence is to be put in the word of God; if its great principles be intelligible; if the faithful history of the past reflect light on his purposes, and indicate what the unchangeable God will do again;—it may be that we too are reserved—only reserved—for a day of slaughter, for another illustration to be added to many other illustrations of the Divine threatening, that “the nation and kingdom that will not serve him, shall utterly perish.”

“——Grant that our end
Is distant, and that prophecy demands
A longer respite, unaccomplished yet;
Still there are frowning signals, that bespeak
Displeasure in His breast, who smites the earth,
Or heals it, makes it languish or rejoice.”

But thus far it is rebuke; his judgments are tempered; “He stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind.”

I have spoken of sins that bespeak the displeasure of the Almighty. And the principle contained in my

text, leads us to expect that we may trace out some of these, when we contemplate the forms and manner in which we are rebuked. "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee." The practical purposes and benefits of this exercise in which we are engaged, require that some particular notice be taken of the sins and rebukes which form a part of our character and condition.

Without pretending to deal out the judgments of God, or even to measure them, we may, nevertheless, see so plainly some of the connections between the elements of punishment and the elements of our sin, that there is no evading the conclusion, derived from some of the dispensations of Providence toward us, that *God has a controversy with this nation*, and that he is employing our own wickedness to correct us, and our backslidings to reprove us.

Without going too far back in the history of our nation, let us specify some of its prominent sins,—*sins as they are defined by the law of God*; and, without any rigorous regard to systematic arrangement, select a few of these which may serve as specimens to illustrate our subject.

It may here be remarked, and especially as it may obviate the necessity of dwelling on illustrations that seem to grow under our meditations, that sins seldom exist singly;—they brood from their prolific source and are catenated;—each one has a natural relationship to another, and tends to association with other and distinct sins. And these too become reciprocally both the crime and the punishment. One form of daring sin provokes the Almighty to give up the offender to the dominion of other sins,—so that

aggravated iniquities cluster around the transgressor, which are to be regarded, both as the accumulating elements of his guilt and of his punishment at the same time. "Because they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind to do those things which are not convenient."

Now one of the prominent features of our public guilt is the prevalence of IRRELIGION.

In speaking of the public, formal acts of this nation, I am not exactly prepared to say, as some have said, that the Constitution of the United States bears upon its front the stamp of bald atheism. It contains indeed no formal and express recognition of the Being of God. How this occurred, I am unable to explain. It may have been unthought of by the framers—but it was a singular forgetfulness of Him whose name was invoked in the Declaration of Independence, who had given them such signal victories, who had made them a nation, and so recently delivered them from the jaws of anarchy. It was singular also, for there were in that Convention men who were religious, and some who openly referred to their dependence upon the divine wisdom, and successfully urged the Convention to appoint public daily prayers for the divine guidance of their counsels.

And here let me say, that, in framing the constitutions of some of the old thirteen states, or in settling their polity as independent states, the separation of religious establishments from the state was, in some measure, the result of formal petitions to that effect, from large bodies of the clergy. Such was the fact, I know, with respect to the Presbyterian ministers of Virginia. I believe it was so in New-York. Those

men who have been stigmatized as the crafty intriguers for a union of church and state, were men,—I now speak of nearly all the great evangelical denominations of the time, and especially of the Congregationalists and Presbyterians,—were men foremost in the works and conflicts of patriotism, in “the days that tried men’s souls.” It was Presbyterianism as to doctrine, and even a modification of it as to government, which settled New England, and made it the garden it is. And, without disparaging others, I claim for the denomination to which I belong, a large share of that influence which has produced the order, happiness and prosperity of the middle and western portions of this country. *Presbyterianism* is eminently a system of public and private virtue. Patriotism owns it as her own ally and friend. To her, civil and religious liberty, under God, owe much of their present large extent. She sent these fountains of blessedness through England in despite of the Tudors and the Stuarts; her own Scotland cherishes her as the guardian of the freedom which she purchased for that land with her blood, and for the Lordship of Christ in his own heritage in that land, she is at this moment periling every temporal immunity; her principles and valor are indelibly interwoven with the self-denying and successful struggles with which Holland vindicated her liberties from the oppressions of “kingly and of priestly tyranny;”—and in the war of the American Revolution, the daring and generous heroism of her sons, her members and her ministers, in this land, stands nobly emblazoned among the soldiers, the statesmen and the patriots of those times. When others proved traitors and fled, or fought the battles of ty-

ranny, they stood faithful. Bear with me further in this digression, while I give you an incident furnished by another hand. "When the Declaration of Independence was under debate in the Continental Congress, doubts and forebodings were whispered through that hall. The House hesitated, wavered, and for a while, the liberty and slavery of the nation appeared to hang in even scale. It was then an aged patriarch arose; a venerable and stately form; his head white with the frost of years. Every eye went to him with the quickness of thought, and remained with the fixedness of the polar star. He cast on the assembly a look of inexpressible interest and unconquerable determination; while on his visage, the hue of age was lost in the flush of burning patriotism that fired his cheek. 'There is,' said he, when he saw the House wavering, 'There is a tide in the affairs of men,—a nick of time. We perceive it now before us. To hesitate, is to consent to our own slavery. That noble instrument upon your table, which insures immortality to its author, should be subscribed this very morning by every pen in the house. He that will not respond to its accents and strain every nerve to carry into effect its provisions, is unworthy the name of a free-man. For my own part, of property I have some,—of reputation more. That reputation is staked, that property is pledged on the issue of this contest. And although these gray hairs must soon descend into the sepulchre, I would infinitely rather they should descend thither by the hands of the public executioner, than desert, at this crisis, the sacred cause of my country.'"

—Who was it that uttered this memorable speech,—potent in turning the scales of a nation's destiny, and

worthy to be preserved in the same imperishable record in which is registered the not more eloquent speech ascribed to John Adams on the same sublime occasion?—"It was John Witherspoon,—at that day the most distinguished Presbyterian minister west of the Atlantic ocean,—the father of the Presbyterian Church in the United States."

But to return. Those men had suffered too much from the abuses of this adulterous union, and especially from the arrogance and bigotry of the prelati- cal establishments, even in the colonial state, to wish for the continuance of the union of church and state. They had faith in their holy religion, and in the God who revealed it, to believe that he would prosper it without state patronage; and all they claimed was protection.—But in respect to the omission of which I have spoken, it might have been, that when the framers of the Federal Constitution were determining that religion should be free and independent of the control of the state, and that in turn no religious creed should control the state, they deemed it requisite to omit every thing that might give to that noble instrument, any other than a simple political character. It is, I think, an unhappy defect,—and if I have assigned the true reason of it, it was a needless scrupulosity. In so far as that omission is considered, it has this aspect,—that while it was meant to avoid sectarianism, the public fundamental law of the nation gives, apparently, the sanction of its approbation to the sectarianism of atheism,—a form of bigotry which has showed itself at least as dangerous, as fanatical, and as bloody as any of those professedly Christian creeds which are more commonly alleged to be sectarian, bigoted

and dangerous;—and it looks thus far as if the public conscience recognized no God. I dare not impugn those wise and patriotic men. Yet I cannot refrain from saying, that it seems an unmeet defect. A state document emanating from the Turkish sultan would invariably begin—“IN THE NAME OF GOD.” And how much more beautiful would this fundamental law have seemed, had it begun with some such acknowledgment as that which prefaces the fundamental law of Israel: “I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” Which, by the way, is the basis of our law.

But, upon the other hand, it is to be observed that that very document recognizes the Christian Sabbath in the provision which excludes it from the number of days to be counted during which the President may retain a bill that awaits his signature in order to become a law—and if he retain it beyond that number of days, it becomes a law without his power to veto it.—By the Constitution, conscience is free, and religion is recognized and protected. And this provision is eminently for the benefit of the godly; for the ungodly have no scruples that need any such provision as this. The utmost concession *they* needed and all that they have got, is a mere exemption from the compulsory support of any form of religion;—and surely they are welcome to so poor a boon as this.—The National Legislature does not sit upon the Lord’s day, except occasionally in very extreme cases, when it is about to be dissolved. Its daily sessions are opened with prayers, and it provides for the worship of God and for the preaching of the Gospel in the Capitol

every Sabbath day during its sessions. The public offices are closed on that day.—And the same thing may be said, I believe, of all our state legislatures, as far as adjourning on the Sabbath is concerned; and in some of them also, are daily public prayers by the ministers of religion. And if I am not mistaken, Christianity is recognized as a part of the common law.

But while this is the case, and notwithstanding these acknowledgments, our public men, and our people exhibit too frequently an irreligious sentiment, for example in their ordinary treatment of the Lord's day, in other relations. They may cease from their usual occupations,—and yet is that day desecrated by attention to various forms of business, or by being devoted to pleasure, or occupied in travelling; and these things are all against the express letter of the law, which God enacted for the Sabbath. “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.” But I shall have something further to say on this matter, in another place.

But the public acknowledgments which are sometimes made concerning the being and government of God, infrequent as they are, (sometimes extorted by conscience, sometimes merely formal, sometimes in concession to the religious sentiment of the Christian public,) are far too apt to be a pure deism. Perhaps this arises from the fact that there seems no occasion nor call for specific reference to the peculiar character and claims of God as he has revealed them in the gospel, though they may be understood:—but it seems more natural to suppose that it arises from the general omission to study his character and claims, where only they are to be understood, or to study them with

the spirit which he promises to favor with his salutary illuminating influence. For true it is that the God whom men acknowledge is very often not acknowledged by them according to that glorious character in which inspiration presents him; and a Mohammedan or a Pagan might in such acknowledgments easily go as far as many who are nominally Christian. It is not so difficult, nor out of place to speak of the God of the Bible, "the true God and eternal life," as may be supposed. What was more graceful, beautiful, or impressive, than the distinct acknowledgment by the late President, on the occasion of his inauguration, that the *Christian* religion was his creed, and that he recognized its authoritative principles as the guides of his conduct as a man and as a magistrate? And who can but honor the just and Christian sentiments of the President's proclamation appointing this national fast? In it is a distinct recognition of the Christian's God. And it expressly commends itself to the observance of this nation as a *Christian People*. And I may adduce as additional illustrations, the excellent evangelical tone of the proclamations of the Governors of New-York and Connecticut, not to mention others, when they appointed the time for the annual thanksgiving, last year. Nor would I omit the conduct of the Legislature of Maine when they received the news of the President's death, in resolving to proceed to one of the churches in the city where they were assembled, to offer up prayers as a body before the Almighty throne. And the Legislature of the State of New-York, then in session, resolved to invite one of their chaplains to preach a discourse appropriate to the occasion. Such things are cheer-

ing from the rulers of our land. Would they were more frequent.

No; this is not a nation of atheists. Nor is our government nor our constitution atheistical. We do not give them up in humble concession to the arrogant claim of infidelity. We have much sin, that is inconsistent with all our public professions and acknowledgments. We have much that is hypocritical, insincere and ungrateful in our practice. But *Christianity* is the recognized basis of our laws and institutions; and *this is a Christian nation*. It so avows itself. This National Fast, although the first national act of a similar kind for nearly thirty years, was such an avowal. And it is cheering to know that it has met with so universal a response from all parts of the land. And the general solicitude to know what were the religious views and deportment of the late President, and the interest with which every incident that bears on his religious character and preparation for death has been searched out and garnered up, are the pulsations of the national conscience, and a proof that there is a deep conviction of the truth and importance of religion throughout the national mind. We have not yet *Resolved* that there is no God and that Christianity is a fable; nor have we written over our grave-yards that death is an eternal sleep, nor destroyed the holy Sabbath, nor openly set up a goddess of reason, nor invented the theophilanthropy that puts the ministers of religion to death; nor have the lantern, the sucking-boat and the guillotine been employed to instruct obstinate men in the nature of "Liberty and Equality," and in the virtues of atheism hypocritically professing democracy.—No: we have

no state religion ; but we have something better,—a religion which repudiates state-patronage,—which can afford to sustain itself,—which even illustrates its sublime “chivalry” as the “cheap defence of nations.” Religion is not dead. Witness its magnificent temples erected by the voluntary contributions of its friends and votaries : witness its body of zealous and laborious ministers,—“I magnify mine office”—content to rely on that inheritance which Christ gave them, the free affection of those whom they serve in the gospel (Matthew x. 8—10) : witness its influences on social and domestic life, on public virtue, on science and art, and on law and literature : witness its precious revivals and its progress : witness its noble efforts, amid the outcries and ravings of the dogs of Edom that bark around its walls, saying, “Raze it, raze it even to the foundations thereof,” where its undaunted enterprise, not content to live nor even to sanctify our own country in every part, but like a strong man rejoicing to run a race, goes forth upon its illustrious and beneficent career, striving to give the gospel to the whole earth, and to reclaim this whole apostate world to its allegiance to God.

But, for all this, as I have said, there is much practical as well as theoretical irreligion. Read the 58th chapter of Isaiah as descriptive of our character and duty, just here. We are like a nation that “sought God daily and delighted to know his ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God ; they asked from him the ordinances of justice.” Our irreligion is seen in the neglect by thousands of the commanded worship of God ; in their desecration of the Sabbath ; in the

fearful prevalence of profane swearing, so that "by swearing the land mourneth;" as well as in oppressions, violence and bloodshed; in the scoffing impiety of avowed and even organized infidelity; in the bugbear cry of church and state,—the plausible and hypocritical pretence for opposing and restraining the enterprises of Christian benevolence, while professing much anxiety for the purity of religion, and as if religious men were of all others the very least qualified to manage its interests, and to keep it pure!—in the bold and bald maxim that religion and government have no connection,—and in many other sins which accompany or flow from the practical atheism of the unrenewed heart. This is the source and fountain of all other sins. And too sadly do all these things reveal the state of the national heart.

We might in this connection contemplate also *our insincerity and ingratitude* to God. His mercies have not received that requital of service and praise which they demanded. We have too often ascribed them to them that were no gods. Protection, defence, victory, deliverance, enlargement—these have been his gifts to us,—while we have caused him to serve with our sins, and wearied him with our iniquities. When he appeared in rebukes, his judgments were disregarded; in the day when the Lord God of hosts called to weeping and mourning, behold joy and gladness, eating flesh and drinking wine; or if we sought him, we flattered him and lied unto him, and soon as the calamity was overpast, returned like a deceitful bow to our former courses. He has scourged us with foreign invasions; but he suffered himself to be entreated, and he freed our shores from the polluting footstep of the

invader.—He has brought against us the incursions of the savage; and again repelled him and made safe our frontiers.—He has sent pestilence again and again into the land; and speedily removed it when we besought his pity.—He has threatened us with famine and with cleanness of teeth in our cities, and made blight and mildew and destructive insects to destroy our harvests; and again he removed “his army” and poured plenty into the land.—He has vexed us with the apprehension of anarchy and disunion, under the old Confederation; and then established and united us under the federal Constitution.—He has vexed us with insurrections; and then subdued them by the majesty of the law and by imparting good sense and patriotism to the misguided votaries of the demagogue.—He has touched the sources of our commercial prosperity, by our foolish counsels, by embargoes, by wars, and by the self-infictions of excessive speculation,—so that our ships rotted at the wharves; and again he opened our ports, and cleared a pathway for us in the sea, and with favoring gales, we spread our canvas to the breeze of every ocean. The fire desolated our own city; and while we did right to repair the evil, we said, “in pride and stoutness of heart, The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones; the sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars.” All this he has done, and we repented not nor gave him sincere thanks,—and “for all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.”

And then what *self-dependence*, what pride and boasting,—as if our might got us our blessings, or could defend them,—and as if the sun hardly ever

shone upon any land but this. What confidence in our own wisdom,—what reliance upon our own arm,—what trust in our party-leaders and statesmen and institutions;—and here, for our rebuke we have been visited with the evil results of fatuitous counsels, with internal derangements of our business concerns, with pecuniary losses, with the defalcations of public men, custodians of the public treasure, and with the waste and extravagance of improvident legislation;—and as if too blind and infatuated to see our vast real resources, we grope in the midst of abundance, and are at our very wit's end to know how the country is to recover from the prostration and embarrassment under which it is groaning;—while to crown all, in signal rebuke and salutary warning, the very man whom the nation called as a political saviour had scarce entered upon the toils of his office, when they were called to mourn for his death,—for “his breath was in his nostrils, and wherein was *he* to be accounted of?” And what does all this mean, but that God would have us to “wait upon him, for the Lord is our defence, the Holy One of Israel is our King.”

COVETOUSNESS is a prominent sin of this nation. And this “idolatry” of wealth has been met and rebuked. “For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and I smote him.” It is a prolific sin. “The love of money is the root of all evil.”

It has prompted to that unbridled speculation,—in lands, in stocks, in gambling,—which has resulted in such individual losses, and debt, and peculations, and forgeries; and in the waste of banking capital, and the robbery of the poor, the widow and the orphan; and in the wreck of great financial interests; and in

the destruction of credit; and in the ruined fortunes and ruined reputations of men who were but last year on the pinnacle of public esteem, but now have fled from justice, or are menaced with the felon's prison.

It has prompted the sin of *Sabbath-breaking*. The government of the country obstinately refused to restrain the public mail on the Sabbath day; and thus it destroyed the Sabbath of every man engaged in the Post Office department, or it disfranchised every conscientious citizen of his constitutional right to hold office like other citizens, saying to him: "If you will not violate the Sabbath you shall not serve the government in this department at all." And the plea was the advantage of commerce,—as if that, even if true, could justify such unconstitutional infringements, and such infringements upon the authority of God's holy law. And that department which was to have grown rich by this increase of its facilities, accommodations, and business, and boasted "force," has, it is believed, carried on this operation at a positive loss, and is deeply involved in debt. Happily, public sentiment and pecuniary interest, recently combined, have effected at least a partial reform, so that in many routes there is now no Sunday mail. And in reply to memorials for its restoration, the Postmaster General has plead the embarrassments of the Department as an invincible reason for the discontinuance. And who have suffered more than that very commercial community whose interests were so clamorously urged in behalf of this violation of the Sabbath,—this legalized infraction of God's law,—for the sake of fostering the feverish appetite for gain that, in its "haste to be rich," could not bear to be deprived even for one

day, and that the Lord's day, of the "commercial intelligence," whose rapid and unceasing transmission was the signal for enlarged "enterprise" and speculation, and—final explosion? Another fact. In constructing great public works, such as railroads and canals, more than one State, either in foolhardiness, or for the lust of revenue, resolved to use these works on the Sabbath, and to make a gain of sin. But where are the fruits? Not merely are they disappointed by their unproductiveness, or by the diminished revenues caused by the general involvement of the country,—but it would sometimes seem as if frost and flood and tempest had been purposely let loose to injure them, so that they have been rendered useless when they were most wanted; and frightful expenses have been incurred for their repairs. It may be thought that all this is sheer fanaticism, and that there is no real connection between such things and the sins of which I have spoken. I do not pretend to measure the judgments of the Almighty, nor to direct them. But it is well to meditate on the sure history of the past, and to consider the principles of God's administration of human affairs as they are there disclosed. After the captivity, when Nehemiah was engaged in repairing Jerusalem, and in reforming abuses, he testified against the bearing of burdens and the traffic by which the Sabbath day was profaned: "Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath." And what was the beacon

by which he thus warned them? God had said: "If ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the Sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched." And the threatening was accomplished within ten years thereafter, by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. While there are instances of *pious individuals*, who are *tried* by affliction, as was the case of Job, God seems not thus to treat *nations*. *They* are rewarded when they do well: they are punished when they do ill. And although it may be denied that these specific embarrassments and *series* of troubles which have come upon us, are meted out specifically for our sins, they all prove how completely we are in the power of God, and that it becomes us to fear him and to respect his laws.

And while I am upon this subject, I would observe farther, that some of the States of this Union, while prosecuting the important and valuable work of internal improvement, necessarily unwieldy and expensive, have been tempted to proceed with injudicious haste, and needlessly to attempt too much at once, and even to anticipate the time, if it ever come, when some of their works will be useful; and they have made most lavish expenditure and loaded themselves with a frightful burden of debt;—and all their *Sabbath gains!* have not sufficed to prevent them from deep embarrassment in paying the interest of their public debt. And they have debased their currency, ruinously depreciated their own stocks, scarcely met their public engagements, ruined their credit

at home and abroad ;—and still, under party toils and influences, they are blundering on, as if infatuated, with miserable expedients of relief, which only disgrace them more, and injure their creditors, and demoralize their citizens, and corrupt and impair the sense of justice and of the obligation of contracts, and sink them deeper and deeper in the abyss of debt. And all this, be it remembered, when there is nothing needed but a well-directed industry, instead of the feverish anxiety to be rich without labor, and a prudent economy, and an honest and fearless resort to their superabundant internal resources, in order to meet every engagement and effect every public improvement, with the same ease and on the same principle that on a well regulated farm secures every proper and necessary agricultural improvement.

And yet farther, what is the obvious tendency and sure result of a system of Sabbath violation, which desecrates the day, impairs the authority of God's law, and utterly destroys means of grace, and so weakens the moral sense, in so far as concerns the agents and servants on these great lines of public travel?—will it make them honest and faithful to their trust, or will it prepare them for neglect and defalcations? Surely, for all this, and for the great corruption of manners which is thus widely spread, will not God visit, and, in ways unthought of, yet most natural and irresistible, cause the fruitlessness and loss of all this sin to appear? Some, if not a few of the companies who own railroads, &c., have adopted the principle of honoring the Sabbath day, and I believe it will be found, on comparison, that they have

in every way more prospered than those which have pursued the opposite system.

Covetousness has much to do, also, with the rabid and baleful influences of *party spirit*.

The monster Party! Aside from a blind prejudice for *names* and mere abstractions, what is it often but lust of office, and rapacity for the spoils of victory? Men have got too indolent and too proud to work for bread, and so defile themselves with the dirtier work of party toils, for the sake of the poor crumbs of office. It is a shame and a sin, that, in our days, such myriads are thirsting for the mere loaves and fishes of the public service. I do not object to a man desiring to be employed in the public service. It is as lawful and honorable as to be a tiller of the soil, or to practise the healing art, or to engage in any other useful employment. But it is the spirit that pants for every vacancy,—that supports and overthrows administrations for the sake of office,—a lust like that of Ahab to dispossess the virtuous Naboth,—it is this casting an evil eye of covetousness upon offices already well filled,—that seeks not for the public welfare,—but to the injury of the incumbent and for the selfish gain of the partisan competitors;—it is this of which I speak,—as the increasing degradation of my countrymen,—

“ ’Tis my perfect scorn,
Object of my ineffable disgust.”

This is the great principle which they call patriotism, —to live, as they think, more easily than by laboring with their hands. I am ashamed of my countrymen,

who can make themselves the slaves of party for such an object. For they sell their independence, they cringe before the footstool of power, they lick the hand that feeds them, they are the parasites of the great, and the detractors of the good, and lies and perjuries too often are the *materiel* of their warfare. And it was shameful to know, that after a great contest, in which the people were *proclaimed* as triumphing over party and spoilsmen,—after such appeals to patriotism and to republican virtue and primitive simplicity and disinterestedness,—the course of the President elect to the capital was infested by office-beggars,—and that there he was besieged and blockaded by them,—and they invaded his hours of business, and his brief hours of needful relaxation, and his domestic privacy, and his Sabbath seclusion,—like the frogs of Egypt, in his floors and chambers and kneading-troughs. Let no man say, that this portion of the pressures and toils and excitements of his office had no influence in exhausting his strength and hastening his death. Such is one of the phases of covetous partisanship. And do not mistake me. It was not the people who did this. The people had no care for office; they cared only to get what they thought would prove a good government and faithful public officers. The disgraceful avidity was confined to those who are the curse of all parties and the ruin of popular government in the end,—to those who are mere political demagogues, and would-be placemen, who, if refused office by the man whom they had claimed as the head and representative of their pure and patriotic principles, would be ready to turn against him, and to join the next cabal for his

overthrow. A few years back have seen this disgrace and opprobrium in unexampled measure. It is the lust of office that proscribes men for opinion's sake; that, instead of displacing the unfaithful to their trust, retains them for party services, and appoints for party services, makes political victory the argument for dividing the spoils, and gives up the land to be the "prey of contending factions, and the public interests to be the sport of voracious demagogues."

Nor is this the last phase of the evil of party spirit. Its influence is seen in the legislative halls of the country, where Senators forget the decencies of debate, and the sweet charities of social life give way for that species of honorable murder called duelling, and even for the ruffian assassination of a member of one of the Southwestern legislatures, by the Speaker, in open day, and on the very floor of the House; and where grave measures of public policy and interest are considered and decided, not according to the merits of the case, but according to the will of party and the bearings of the case upon party advantage or party prejudices. Thus men will be on all sides as the moon changes, and as the leaders change and dictate,—their object is to be on the side of power, or they are with the expectants of power—and they vote and speak (not avowedly) with this view—and the argument and the vote of to-day is, without perceptible reason for the difference, the very antipodes of the argument and vote of yesterday or last year, or—no matter when, but not far enough back in antiquity to make us forget them. And how has party separated good men, who ought to be side by side, doing nothing against virtue, and goodness and religion, but every thing for

them. It separates chief friends; it ruffles the serenity of intimate intercourse; it makes good and sensible men impugn the motives and impeach the good sense of each other; it parts Christian men and Christian ministers from each other; and worse than this, because they have been whipped into party ranks, or have prejudices for party names—they will consent, nay, propose and advocate, and vote for the exaltation of the vilest men, for foul-mouthed infidels, and for debauchees, and for irresponsible men, bankrupt in fortune, bankrupt in honor, bankrupt in reputation, whom they would not trust with a dollar of their own money, that they may be guardians of the public money, and may legislate, or administer office for the public good! It used to be that “where the wicked abounded on every side, the vilest men were exalted.” But in our day, good men, Christian men, separate from each other, and are found, now as this party and now as that requires, upholding and electing, not the virtuous and the upright, but the immoral, the profane, and the profligate and the impious. Oh, if good men differ on the merits of candidates, let them do it honestly and intelligently, because one is better qualified, and is reasonably preferred; but let both the candidates for their support be such men that either, if elected to office, will be a public blessing,—sagacious, good, industrious, an example to the people, fearing God and hating covetousness, a terror to evil doers and a praise to them that do well. Such are the men that such a country as ours needs. Pray and *act* so that our “officers may be peace and our exactors righteousness.” And the time would fail to speak of the press, demoralized by this same covetousness of party;

of the invasions of the sacred inclosures of domestic privacy ; of the hyena spirit that even violates the grave and preys upon the good name of the dead ; of garbling and misrepresentation, to bring honest men into odium, and make them offenders for a word and responsible for assertions they never made ; and of all the vile arts which, it is so freely charged by contending parties, have corrupted the ballot-box and the elective franchise. Oh is it so, and is this the fruit of that beautiful promise :

“ Here shall the Press the people’s rights maintain,
Unaw’d by influence and unbrib’d by gain ;
Here patriot Truth her noblest precepts draw,
Pledg’d to religion, liberty, and law ? ”

There are two other points on which I meant to touch as illustrations of covetousness. One is the oppressions of the Aborigines of this land, the Indians, the native lords of our primeval forests. I will simply say, that this nation has sinned deeply against that injured race. We have got possession of their lands, (much indeed by fair purchase, and it is conceded that such is the fact in regard to the fifty-one millions of acres acquired under the treaties effected by the late President as Commissioner for that purpose,) but we have allowed them also to be robbed of their domain and expelled from their homes by vile frauds ; they have been neglected ; they have been cheated ; they have been brutified by the intemperance which the white man taught them. Is it wonderful that our own wickedness should reprove us ? William Penn had no war with his Indians, because he was their friend and treated them fairly and generously. But •

not such have all our people been. And from the bloody massacre of Braddock's field that avenged wrongs perpetrated in the colonial state, and the frightful defeat that under St. Clair still later punished us, and, omitting other details, down to the long, vexatious, fatal and disgraceful war in Florida, here is another scourge which God has employed to reprove us for our wickedness. The other point is that of Slavery. And here, without being called upon to enter into the question of its lawfulness, under certain modifications, I can merely say, that the system, as it is established in this land, aside from its anomaly and inconsistency with our boasted assertions of the rights of man, involves certain tendencies to evil which seem inevitable. It upholds pride and tyranny, fosters indolence, promotes extravagance, and so tends to poverty. It degrades the slave, unmans him, reduces him to a mere chattel,

“Chains him, and tasks him, and exacts his sweat
With stripes, that mercy, with a bleeding heart,
Weeps when she sees inflicted on a beast.”

And to repress the sense of injustice and oppression, and lest the latent spark of manhood should be kindled within him, codes of laws are framed, which are full of cruel restraints and demoralizing influences, which keep him in abject degradation, and threaten with inhuman penalties even his best and most innocent affections. And does not God requite the *abuses* of this system, in losses, fears, insurrections and disquietudes?—and who knows how soon, stirred up by the irrepressible sense of injustice and by insidious and wicked incendiarism, in fearful atrocities, such as

St. Domingo beheld, such as gleamed before the startled vision of the sons and daughters of our own Southampton ?

Nor can I dwell upon the luxury and dissipation of the times ; the ruin and waste of intemperance ; and the corrupting immoralities of the stage, and its enormous expenditure, greater in this single city, and greater for the gains of a few foreign dancers, whose merits and virtues all lie in the expertness of their heels, than is contributed by the whole of the Church to which we belong, to all our benevolent efforts to spread the gospel, and for the support of all our Colleges and Seminaries. But time fails. "By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood," and the land is defiled, and God's judgments are upon it.

An ample field of inquiry yet lies beyond this wide range, in which we have meditated at this unusual length. But I dare not, I would not trespass farther. Let me, however, be indulged while I again remind you, for needful explanation, that all this is not inconsistent with a patriot's and a Christian's hope, for the prosperity and perpetuity of this favored land. We are in a mixed condition of sin and virtue, of evil and of good. And, taking us as we are, it does seem to me, as if God did mean our very rebukes for our good, and while he warns us of our sins, designs to exalt us--in righteousness.

He has done so much for us. He has kept us from many sins and many evils that characterize the old world, in which the history, the peopling and the civilization of the world begun. He has overturned many

nations there, but he has not included our name, as with a frightful particularity he has included the names of the nations descending from the Medo-Per-sian empire, in a catalogue fraught with lamentation, and mourning and wo—which has partly been fulfilled, and part of which remains among the unfulfilled prophecies. And as if, when all other nations were tried, and failed and were blotted out, God in the mean time had concealed from the knowledge of the old world this virgin land, and then caused it to be discovered in due time, and planted it with the virtuous and pious descendants and best lineages of the old and worn-out empires, and started here a new experiment of government and of religious institutions, that here “incense and a pure offering may be offered unto God”—and now that every sea has been traversed and exploration fails to discover other habitable lands, may it not be that here, in the free land of the setting sun, and ere the destinies of earth are finally consummated—here, indeed, the beautiful prediction of the Bishop of Cloyne shall receive its fulfilment :

“Westward the star of empire takes its way,
The first four acts already past,
The drama hastens to its close,—
Time’s noblest empire is the last.”

Shall we see the glorious consummation and partake the joy? The Israelites that murmured and provoked God ten times, in the wilderness, *wandered forty years and died,—but they saw not the promised land.* It may be so with this generation. Ours is the imperfect, the fluctuating, perhaps the preparatory state. And for our children and posterity, other and

better generations to come, it may be reserved to see this land exalted in righteousness and made the "glory of all lands." God grant it, that, though to *us*, because of our sins, it may not be vouchsafed, they may see it and enjoy it—that it may be said of a truth for this beloved land, "Look upon Zion the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down, not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. But there the glorious LORD will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams, wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; HE WILL SAVE US."

Let us close. In this consideration of the sins and rebukes of the nation, it becomes us, my hearers, to think of our individual contributions and shares in this great aggregate of guilt and shame.

Let this Church think; what has she done to shut up the windows of heaven, that the reviving and converting influences of the Divine Spirit are stayed? What have her families done, that the youth unnurtured in religious truth, untaught by religious example, and taught to be worldly and irreligious and lovers of pleasure, by their own parents, grow up in enmity against God, and prepare sorrow of heart, and the dishonoring of the gray hairs of fathers and mothers in Israel? Let the members of this church and congregation think, "Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this land? what meaneth the heat of this great anger?" And let them remember now to search out their own sins, and to repent and put them away. Fasting, the

abstinence from food, is not merit, nor expiation, nor penitence. It is an appropriate token of bitterness of spirit. The outward act is for this single day. But to what purpose is our sacrifice, if the heart be not broken and the spirit be not contrite; if our repenting is for a day; and we go to-morrow again to our worldly and sinful ways, and provoke God to cause a worse thing to come upon us?—"As many as I love," says God, "I rebuke and chasten; be ye zealous, therefore, and repent." While yet his wrath is burning with a gentle flame, turn unto him with weeping and mourning; put away the evil of your doings; break off your sins by righteousness; seek his forgiveness for all the past through the atoning blood of his dear Son, and the renewal of your hearts through the influence of his Holy Spirit; and then your fast will be acceptable to "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy."—He, from his "high and lofty place," will look down upon you,—for "to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at my word;" yea, He "dwells with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the spirit of the contrite ones. For I will not contend forever, neither will I be always wroth; for the spirit should fail before me and the souls which I have made. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth and smote him; I hid me and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that

is far off and to him that is near, saith the Lord, and I will heal him."

"But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

Oh! that ye were wise, that ye understood this, that ye would consider your latter end.

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