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M'Chord, James.
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1815.

NATIONAL SAFETY:

A

SERMON,

DELIVERED IN THE LEGISLATIVE HALL,

BEFORE THE HON.

THE

LEGISLATURE OF KENTUCKY,

(IN PURSUANCE OF THEIR REQUEST,)

ON THURSDAY, THE 12th JANUARY, 1815:

OBSERVED BY THEM AS

A DAY OF

NATIONAL FASTING.

BY JAMES M^CCHORD.

(PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.)

*"Give unto Jehovah, O ye mighty, give unto Jehovah glory
and strength." Psalm xxix, 1.*

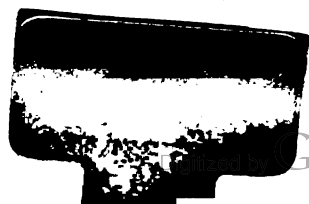
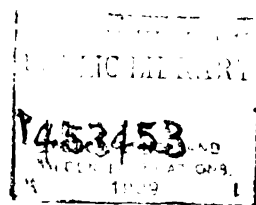
LEXINGTON, (KY.)

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1815.

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A SERMON, &c.

"Thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule."—

DAN. iv. 26.

"WHEN Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died." Such was the reflection of a prophet of later times, on the character and history of a tribe in Israel that had inherited much of the favor and distinction from on high which were once the portion of its amiable progenitor. The lesson thus incidentally inculcated by the prophet, has its claims on the attention of every human being, under every set of circumstances, throughout every age. So remote is a spirit of haughtiness and self-sufficiency from the rightful pretensions of our dependant nature, that the feelings as well as judgment instantly revolt at the slightest indication of the ungracious temper; and the moral and immoral, as if by universal impulse, lift up at once the instinctive voice against it. This feeling, so natural, so common, so appropriate, is not without its sanction in the general aspect of the providence of God. He has himself recorded it that "pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall:" nor does it require a very minute

or very patient inspection of his ways, in order to be assured that, sooner or later, he vindicates his sovereignty in the discomfiture of vain confidence, and asserts the energies and glory of his government in the abasement of the proud. Indeed, in a world like ours, sufficiently disposed, notwithstanding all its helps, to depart from the knowledge of the Most High, it is not easy to conceive how the sense of his supremacy could be preserved at all among the nations, were it not that a watchful and jealous care represses, by obvious and well-timed visitations, dispositions which can hardly flourish but by forgetfulness of him, in the realization of whose glories the spirit *must* be abased, and at the remembrance of whose sovereignty vain-confidence *will* be paralyzed.

Here then is the foundation of the broad and scriptural principle, that whatever be "the ills that flesh is heir to," whether in an individual or in a national capacity, they flow directly from the sovereign appointment of Almighty God. He chastises in his mercy, for the recovery of the wanderer: or he hardens to destruction, for a beacon to the world.

It is under this interesting and instructive point of view, that we are taught to contemplate the remarkable occurrence recorded in the passage of which our text forms a portion. Few of you need be told that the words just read are a part of the prophet Daniel's interpretation of a vision, which unfolded to the most celebrated of the Chaldean monarchs the future destinies of his eventful life. The empire over which he reigned was the most extensive and powerful known to ancient times. Within a century after the deluge, its capital was founded on the plain of Shinar; and circumstances recorded of the times of Joshua, before Israel was established in the land of promise, bear testimony to the arts, and to the commercial enterprize of Babylon the Great. The records of antiquity throw but a feeble, and indeed rather perplexing light, on the events of

her early history. It would appear, however, from a careful comparison of the various slender, and sometimes almost contradictory notices which have been handed down to us, that in an age very remote, the seat of empire was transferred from Babylon to Ninevah; and that about six hundred years afterwards, viz. in the year A. C. 606, the successful rebellion of Nebopolassar, at that time hereditary Satrap of Babylon, deprived the Assyrian monarchy of its ruler and its capital, and restored to the city on the plain of Shinar its ancient pre-eminence over the cities of the East. Of this Nebopolassar, or Belesis as he is called in some fragments of antiquity, Nebuchadnezzar was the son. Early associated with his father in the government, and possessed of a capacity equally eminent in the arts of war and peace, Babylon rose, under the auspices of his genius, to a height of power and magnificence unknown to former times.

Ordained of God to become the scourge of the nations, especially on account of their multiplied idolatries, the lengthened period of twenty-seven years bore witness to the uninterrupted series of his triumphs. City after city sunk down before his engines: throne after throne crumbled at his touch. The Jew and the Gentile were infatuated to provoke him; and none that dared provoke him escaped the perdition of his grasp. Thus goaded on by an ambition which knew no bounds, and emboldened by a success which the wisdom of God permitted as the terrible instrument of his own righteous judgments, the nations far and wide felt the thunder of his power; while, insatiate and unwearied, he rolled before him the full tide of his fortunes, and stalked the Apollyon of the Asiatic world.

No one can be surprised that with the spoils of so many nations, and by the labour of so many captives, Nebuchadnezzar should have so strengthened and adorned his city, as to render it one of the greatest

wonders of the world: or that he should have obtained from the flattery, and even justice, of his subjects, the honour of being denominated its second founder. Much less can we wonder that the man who had done this, should have become thoroughly intoxicated with his splendour and successes; especially when it is considered that peerless as he was, he was still the worshipper of an idol God.

The pride of the Chaldean, however, was so much the more inexcusable, and the idolatries he practised so much the more criminal, inasmuch as he had attained to some knowledge of his maker, in consequence of his conquest over the land of Judea. It is abundantly evident from the order which he took relative to the prophet Jeremiah, that he was well acquainted with his character and functions; and must in this way have learned at least something of his creator, and of the reasons of his own unrivalled success. From many other Jewish prophets, some of whom are known to have been inmates of his palace, he must have learned much more. Nebuchadnezzar, however, acted up to the spirit of worldly minded men. He revelled on the spoils his creator had bestowed: in some moments of deep interest he sought Jehovah as his helper: but as for the general tenor of his life, it passed on in deep forgetfulness. And now, the work of desolation ended, it was time that the scourger should himself be scourged. We are accordingly informed that in the visions of God an intimation was conveyed to him of the approaching judgment. A warning highly proper, considering the important purposes which Nebuchadnezzar had fulfilled, and the highly distinguished station which he occupied. A warning, too, not less merciful than proper, because he had omitted from year to year to profit by the lessons which he had already learned. It is an account of this signal warning, together with the interpretation of it by the prophet

Daniel, and notices of its no less signal accomplishment, that occupies the chapter from which our text is taken.

The denunciation or the fulfilment of that fearful threatening are not, however, to constitute the subjects with which it is intended to occupy your thoughts. It may be sufficient to remark that it was literally accomplished in the deep humiliation of this man of pride. In an age in which the benevolence of Christianized feeling had provided no asylum for the most wretched of our race, and when the abject spirit of nations born to slavery precluded the slightest thought of putting constraint upon a despot, even though that despot should be mad, he was suddenly deprived of reason; and for seven dismal years, an outcast from humanity, he roamed at large among the beasts of the field, sustaining himself as he might upon the fruits of the earth, "and wet with the dew of heaven."

But this dispensation, however, unusual and severe, was intended towards the Chaldean and toward the people whom he governed, as a dispensation of mercy. The righteousness of God did not hurl him headlong from the throne which he had occupied with so much pride, in order to consign him to hopeless ignominy. For in the vision it was intimated, and in the interpretation it was declared, that when taught to fill his station with a more becoming spirit, and in a less exceptionable manner, the rod should be withdrawn: "thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule." The prediction of mercy was in due time verified. At the end of seven years his reason was restored; and the humbled monarch "lifted up his eyes to heaven, and blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him that liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and whose kingdom is from generation to generation." From that time forth he

appears to have pursued, in humility and prosperity, "the noiseless tenor of his way," till gathered to his fathers in a good old age.

The events thus hastily and imperfectly sketched have long since ceased to have the smallest bearing upon the course of human things. The very memory of this ponderous hammer of the earth can scarcely be said to live but in the sacred page. And even the almost indestructible monuments of his grandeur, the lake-like trenches, the massy walls, the Alpine gardens,

"Are sought in vain; and o'er each mouldering tower,
"Dim with the mist of years, grey flits the shade of power."

But the lesson which was inculcated by the chastisement of Nebuchadnezzar has lost nothing of its force—nothing of his value. And if an apology be deemed necessary for founding the reflections most appropriate to the solemnities of the present hour upon a detail of circumstances such as we have noted, rather than upon some single simple expression conveying still more explicitly the same great truths; let that apology be named in the expression of a belief that while the afflictions which to-day robe our nation in sackcloth are intended, like the visitation upon the Chaldean king, to instruct us that "the heavens do rule"; they are connected with many circumstances which justify the hope that our "kingdom shall be sure to us," our prosperity return, when once our youthful but rebellious country shall have learned the needful lesson.

Were we in want of an instance almost palpable to sense, to shew how much iniquity can stultify its votaries, we should have it in the fact that the maxim here embodied is questioned alike as to its foundation and its bearings. And yet, though the dispensation under review possessed some strong and peculiar features, it will hardly be denied that the principle

It was intended to illustrate and confirm is the same that meets us at almost every step, throughout the annals both of Jewish and of Gentile times. No one can read a dozen pages of the history of God's peculiar people, without discerning that a spirit of subordination to his authority was the point upon which turned their prosperity and their fame: no one is at a loss to trace the disastrous revolutions which, times without number, they were destined to undergo, to repeated lapses into the spirit of idolatry, combined with almost every kind of outrage against the goodness and patience and majesty of God. The same great lesson is graven on the front of all those dispensations that so often crushed the power or blotted out the memory of surrounding nations, who disregarded the authority or did not retain the knowledge of their creator. And if we advert to those calamities which for seventeen successive centuries have deluged the plains of Europe and western Asia, it will be found that the spirit of prophecy has portrayed them as the just and necessary requital of the men who "blasphemed the name of God," and who, even while writhing under the anguish of his chastisements, "repented not to give him glory." In one word, in so far as the page of inspiration is concerned, the burden of the annalist, the burden of the prophet, all that is precious in God's promise to the nations, and all that is harrowing in the denunciation of the curse, pour their floods of evidence upon the same great truth—unite their attestations with the voice of providence, heard far and loud in every age, that God is to be recognized, that God is to be sought to, that God is to be glorified, as the builder, the destroyer, the arbiter of nations, the sovereign disposer of the lot of every man.

The foundation of this principle, we have said, is called in question. Men venture to express their doubts whether the creator does thus charge himself

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with the control of individuals and communities, especially with the minute and universal detail: and dignify this outrage against the honours of his providence with the names of liberality and science. The creator, it is said, is too elevated in his conceptions and too exalted in his station, to condescend to the direction of the trivial matters which embroil the passions and cherish the solitudes of our little world. Or if he stoop at all to rule the destinies of nations, if he occasionally interfere to make empires feel the retribution of his justice, yet it would seem most proper that, securing by his omnipotence the grand result intended, he should extend his cares no further than to that general issue; but, seated upon the throne of universal empire, cause his worlds unnumbered to wheel around their centres, while it is left to the wisdom or folly of their occupants to shape their own course at will.

We have only to remark on this pagan representation of a truly pagan deity, that it is predicated upon principles which in every thing fall short of the honours due to him before whom we profess to be humbling ourselves to-day; and to the luminous dictates of whose word we owe it that our homage is not rendered to "the gods of wood and stone." We pass by the folly and baseness of the imputation that the father of eternity is so puffed up with his destination as totally to lack the condescending goodness which forms the noblest trait in the noblest of his creatures. We touch not upon the stupidity of the gratuitous assumption that his cares should be confined to wielding mighty masses of unfeeling matter, while he disregarded, as too trifling to share the honours of his notice, the creatures that inhabit them; to whom alone such cares can be important, who alone can discern and celebrate his glories, and who, in fact, are in themselves the Alpha and Omega of all that is precious in the worlds on which they dwell. We

name not the blasphemies implied in the assertion that a universal providence over a universe of worlds would be a charge too stupendous for the deity himself.—What place have such objections in the character of him whose essence is ubiquity, and his ken omniscience? What mean leisure or inactivity in their application to the being whose existence is eternity, and his will omnipotence? what bearing has multiplicity, has perplexity, on him to whose apprehension “all things are naked and open?” who comprehends them all as one simple idea! Degrading beyond utterance is that liberalized opinion, stultified beyond measure the luminous conception, which would thus mutilate and paralyze the government of him “for the control of whose dominion nothing is too vast; for the vigilance of whose inspection nothing is too small.”

But upon what do men base the self-contradictory assumption that the deity may exercise a general superintendence, may shape the course and arrange the destinies of nations, while every minuter interest and every minor movement is left to the direction of passion or of chance! When saw the world, or the universe, an instance in which the most comprehensive concern did not consist of innumerable details; and results the most stupendous did not spring from an infinite variety of mutually dependant or concurring circumstances? Who has not learned the decisive influence which an individual may exercise over the fate of nations? Who has not seen that, however things are circumstanced, the destinies of the world are controlled by a very few? And who has not pondered the thousand—thousand circumstances which have always edged the genius, given direction to the pursuits, stability to the character, or success to the measures of that monopolizing few? If God then control the destinies of nations; if his sovereignty and wisdom arrange the train of causes that are to issue in the certain accomplishment of his design; we are led

back at once to the cradle and the nursery—we contemplate in succession the innumerable incidents which fitted his agents for the station they were to occupy; and we trace the chain of causes from incident to incident, from individual to individual, through a combination so exact, so delicate and so extensive, that the mind becomes bewildered in the interminable maze, and turns aside to adore the unsearchableness of the wisdom which thus measured and timed such innumerable events, the omission or surcharging a single one of which might have given a different turn to the genius of the actor, a different issue to the pursuits which had engrossed him, a different aspect to the world at large.

Let no one call these mere cob-web speculations. Finely spun as they may be, they are exact delineations of nature and of truth. No one who hears me needs go beyond himself for proof of this assertion. It was such a combination of circumstances, remote and various, that fixed your allotment in the days of your infancy. It was a combination of such circumstances that, shaping your juvenile taste and employments, gave a tone to your character and a direction to your genius for the residue of life. It was a combination of such circumstances, operating upon your fame, operating upon your wishes, operating in ten thousand ways upon your standing in society, that made you what you are and brought you where you are. You have only then to pursue this chain of acknowledged facts; you have but to leave it to the deity still further to combine the myriads of ingredients which make up the sum of life to myriads of men; and in the fermentation of their passions, in the combination of their efforts, in the amalgamation of their interests, you behold the mighty means that plant or root up the prosperity of nations. Who then that believes in God's superintendence over the world, can hesitate to believe that

he rules it for the purpose of conducting to those issues which in the dispensations of his providence are actually unfolded? And who that believes he rules it for that end, will deny to his wisdom the praise of those appointments which so wonderfully ministered to the fulfilment of his designs? Thus then, as a believer in God's general superintendence, you must admit the particularity and universality of that providence which, in the simple but truly philosophical language of the scriptures, attends the little sparrows when they fall to the ground, and numbers the hairs of our head;—a providence which, in the accomplishment of his vast and deep designs, renders tributary every passing incident, and presents to our view the innumerable multitudes of successive generations, as so many little rivelets dashing from the mountains, in many a direction and from under many a clime; each one gathering tribute as it winds its devious way, till uniting with another and another streamlet, the congregated waters of almost half a continent press onward to the ocean, a broad and rapid flood. But,

II. If it be a fact that the Creator of the universe has not withdrawn from it the operations of his hand, then it is by no means a matter of trivial importance that the nations should recognize the controler of their destinies; nor is it strange that such judgments as are referred to in the text should rouse delinquents from the slumbers of forgetfulness, or blot out their memorial as a warning to their fellows.

It is no mean argument of the selfishness and blindness which the page of inspiration attributes to our fallen and degraded nature, that we perpetually overlook the beneficent and paramount results to which God is conducting the various portions of his government; and feel and reason as if their subserviency to the comforts of this fleeting and uncertain life constituted their sole importance. Nor can it

appear strange that persons who form such a low conception of the Creator's councils, should regard the principle for which we have been contending, even admitting it to be correct, as a mere theme of curious speculation, totally unconnected with the order and happiness of the human race. But the same being who has taught us to recognize his providence as incessantly hovering over the path we tread, has interwoven this discovery, as a practical principle, with all the duties and comforts of mankind. He challenges for himself the glory of his government, the obedience, the homage and the affections of his creatures, as the paramount ends for which he made the universe. Jehovah will not then be degraded from his station, as the common centre to which every thing must tend: He will not be deprived of that awe and admiration which is the only return his creatures can make for the profusion of excellencies with which their faculties are feasted: He will not permit a being "so admirable in reason, so infinite in faculty," to degrade itself to the level of the brutes that perish, insusceptible of his fear, and unobservant of his hand: He will never suffer the intelligences that throng the universe at large to suppose that his plans must terminate on his creatures, and that the boundless excellencies of the father of eternity subserve no higher purpose than to minister to them. He himself has written it, that the worlds were made for him; that the glory which is due he will not give to another, nor his praise to graven images. Clearly then the principle which would shut out Jehovah from the councils of the nation, or from the recognitions of the closet, is, in its very mildest form, rebellion against God. It is setting up our partial and our transient interests, above the ends which are purposed by the Great Supreme; and it is a denial of that homage and of those grateful recollections which are the only tribute our impotence can pay.

But further: The benignity of God has so constituted his creatures that the measures which best secure his ends in their production, afford also the best assurance of felicity to themselves. God governs the universe. His providence is not idle. These are not, my brethren, speculative and inoperative truths. Let them be but recognized, let them be but *felt*, and he has erected a tribunal within the bosom of every creature which will impose a stronger check upon the rampancy of passion, which will prove a better safeguard to the welfare of our fellows, which will elicit more completely the best energies of our nature, than every consideration that could possibly be heaped together from the sense of fear, of honour, or of right. Here you have the solace of individual sorrow; here the represser of individual discontent; here the great rampart against national oppression; here the firmest pledge of national repose. Think you then that God will treat the question as indifferent, whether men and nations are steady to the principle which is the solace of the mourner, the pillar of the feeble, the spur of the munificent, the check of the abandoned, throughout all his world? Shall that world be permitted to forget a truth so essential to the order and efficiency of its governments, and yet escape the dire remembrancer best fitted to rouse its slumbering recollections?

Let it be added, that a knowledge so inseparable from the homage we owe to the Creator, and so essential to the cultivation of social happiness and order, assumes additional importance in the estimation of the wise, when it is recollected that we are creatures bound for eternity. All that is precious in the gospel of God's son, and all that is unutterable in the perdition of the curse, depend for their efficacy upon the assumption of the text that the God of Heaven rules. An ignorance, then, which bars the gate of life to myriads, an example which hardens them against the fear of God, an influence, by whom-

soever or in whatever manner exercised, that has a baleful aspect toward the church of the first born, are to be deprecated as evils of the most gigantic order; and all that is wise and all that is holy in the universe of God, will hail as a dispensation of immeasurable mercy the deed of desolation which brings the monsters down.

In addition to the reasons we have just assigned, many others might be mentioned, of superlative importance, as inducing the chastisements which the world experiences. But as they arise from considerations of a quite different order; as their aspect is turned toward the throne of the Eternal, and not toward the safety or illumination of the nations; they cannot be considered as having a claim upon our notice in an exercise which admits but of so partial a sketch even of those reasons which fall directly within the range of the text. Let us then be content with settling it in our hearts, that every dispensation of Almighty God, independently of its bearings upon his general plan, speaks a loud and an appropriate language to ourselves. It bids us learn that the God of Heaven rules: and it threatens, in the event of inattention or obstinacy, to write that lesson in the ashes of our prosperity; that all who behold may record it for their warning, and that future generations may peruse it for their safety.

It would, however, militate greatly, if not against the soundness, yet certainly against the utility of the conclusion we have adopted, if the means usually employed to convey the admonition were fraught with any tendencies to conceal the hand that wields them. It is no doubt true that, in consequence of the fact that the government of God is a government of second causes, multitudes do lose sight of his agency altogether; and even derive an argument against the reality of his providence from the fitness and efficiency of the means which he employs. But that such a course can

have no other tendency than to steal up men for destruction, while it does not furnish the slightest apology for their guilt, must be evident to every honest and reflecting mind upon the shortest inspection. In what way would men have God to govern a world, which he has evidently constituted upon a scheme of second causes? If its order is to be preserved,—if its prosperity is to be augmented,—if its felicities are to be secured, not by the legerdemain which the prophet of Mecca has so preposterously employed in designating the heaven of his deluded followers, but by a chain of indispensable and appropriate means:—what folly, what infatuation, to deny to the Great Supreme the honour of employing his own established order to chasten as well as bless the creatures of his hand! Though you ascribed to the omnipotence of the living God more than imagination can possibly conceive, and more than eternity could tell; yet the bare suggestion that his intervention can take place only by the direct interposition of his arm, without the aid, and contrary to the order of the causes he has established, *even that* were an outrage more absurd in its original and more dishonourable in its imputations than the rank denial of his omnipotence itself. It reduces him to the necessity of staying the procedure and of departing from the order of his universal government, in order to convey a merited rebuke to a transgressor of his law: It imposes a necessity of ceasing to govern in an established way, however wise and excellent, that his creatures may be assured that he governs at all. Nothing, on the contrary, so clearly illustrates and magnifies to man the abundance of his power and the resources of his wisdom, as the single simple fact that, without infringing upon the liberty of his creatures, without interposing by such acts of his omnipotence as overleap all law, without even accommodating in the slightest measure, a new train of causes to the production of a new result; every thing subjects itself to the control of his dominion; every issue is conformed to the purpose of his sovereignty; and reason and passion, righteousness

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and sin, all that is intelligent, and all that lacks intelligence within the universe he governs, fulfil the behests of his mercies and his judgments. We will not stop a moment to defend this representation, so undeniably scriptural and so philosophically just. Let him who is able to comprehend his maker, let such as can grasp the idea of omnipotence, let the person who can unfold the principles of self-existence, or subject to their scrutiny an omnipresent essence—let *them* fathom the councils of the Creating Father, or object to such councils as they cannot fathom. As for ourselves, we are content to sit down with the conclusion that as Jehovah is high above the creatures of his power, so his ways are as high above the ways which we pursue. We enter not the lists with that prodigious intellect which strides from mountain to mountain, and from continent to continent. We see around us the proofs which the whole creation furnishes of conceptions unfathomable, of resources the most profound, of combinations to which only the universe sets limits, and which eternity alone will be sufficient to unfold;—and seeing all this, and knowing all this, we no longer feel a difficulty in bowing to that word which challenges for Jehovah the glory of his providence, and claims the creatures of his universe, animate and inanimate, holy and unholy, as the legitimate executors of his all-disposing will.

But we must hasten from discussions which, however necessary at the present hour, may be thought to have occupied a space by far too large. My brethren, had the liberty of choice been mine, had the temper of the times and the tone of public sentiment precluded the humiliating necessity of the rehearsal, you should not have been detained—no, not a single moment, to ponder these “first principles of the oracles of God.” They ought to be familiar to every child; they should shape the recognitions and regulate the conduct of every human being, in the walks of public and of private life. Infinitely rather would we have directed your attention to the innumerable outrages against the government of

God which have degraded the character and sapped the prosperity of our unhappy country: infinitely rather would we have employed our time in suggesting considerations for general amendment, and grounds of general hope—as the exercises best according with the solemnities of a day on which our prostrate nation professes to be humbling itself on account of such enormities. Let the perception that such a course has been impracticable, carry home to your convictions the wretchedness of a country unfitted to perceive, indisposed to admit, and therefore, most clearly, incapacitated to profit by the dispensations of Jehovah, though he speak to it in the most awful language of his providence. Let us, however, make the best possible use of the very few moments still left us. Having arrived at the conclusion that “the Heavens rule,” and that dispensations of severity are intended to correct, perhaps to crush, the nations that overlook or despise the momentous truth, let us

III. Inquire what may be the bearing of these principles upon our own history and prospects as a nation. It has pleased the ruler of the universe, “in the dispensations of his righteous providence,” to involve us in the toils of a disastrous war. We tread not to-day in the footsteps of the myriads who, execrating the conduct of a worse than barbarous enemy, see nothing in our conflict but the legitimate efforts of a justly indignant people to assert their most precious rights. We imitate not the follies of the atheistic multitudes who, imputing all our grievances to the mismanagement of our rulers, equally overlook the true ground of our affliction, and are blind to the retributions of eternal justice. My brethren, it is a matter of but minor moment, how wise or how imbecile may have been the councils of the nation;—how necessary or how wanton the struggle it has resumed. Whether our prosperity be the victim of another nation’s profligacy; or whether the pride and prodigality of our rulers have nerved against their country the paracidal arm; one thing is most certain, the God of heaven

rules. War, in its best shape, is a necessary evil, a judgment at *his* hand who unchains at pleasure the passions of the nations, and lets the war-dogs slip. Whatever then be the means of urging the catastrophe, the causes which provoked *his* righteous indignation must have an earlier date. That date you are to seek for in the commencement of those tempers which gendered anarchy in the moral world. My brethren, in a country that wears the name of christian, will you ask me for proof that such tempers have long been cherished among ourselves? and that the anarchy we have named has long shed an influence most unhallowed and unbenign? Let the fact—the simple, solitary fact, that the providence of God is scarcely credited, and still more rarely recognized, speak volumes on this subject. Look abroad upon your country, through cities and through hamlets; let the sage and the simpleton respectively depone; add public documents to private conversations: and rare as was righteousness in the times before the deluge, peculiar as was piety in the luxuriant vale of Sodom, almost as rare and almost as peculiar may you stamp that signal character who avows without a blush the belief of heaven's high rule, and founds his conduct and his confidences upon the strange belief. Thanks to the grace and goodness of the Saviour, such characters are to be found—they are even on the increase—in our own quarter they are increasing. But how few in comparison with the overwhelming multitudes who neither worship God, nor regard his gospel, nor respect his institutions, nor acknowledge his providence, no person who hears me, whatever be his opinions, can demand the proof.

Let no one impute to an unbecoming spirit this broad and serious charge against our common country. My brethren, it is a maxim sound in its origin and safe in its application, that next to the honors of innocence itself, are those due to the amiable confusion of the penitent who ingenuously confesses, while he forsakes his fault. Far from you be the folly of supposing that a sentiment so correct in its

application to individuals, can become a whit less appropriate when nations are concerned:—far from you be the ignoble assumption that the partiality which cannot fail to degrade the understanding and debase the feelings, when suffered to varnish over the vices of our friends, assumes an attitude more defensible, or sheds an influence less disastrous, because it is the character of our country that is involved. Called upon, as we are, by the venerable authority of the Chief Magistrate of the nation, summoned as we have been by repeated intimations conveyed to us in the providence of Almighty God, to confess before him our manifold offences, and to humble ourselves beneath his mighty hand; it were impiety, not patriotism, to cover the iniquity of which we are called to make confession—it were madness, not bravery, to steel our hearts against the dictates of that awful challenge, “who hath hardened himself against Jehovah, and hath prospered?” Remote from our thoughts, then, on a day like this, be the ill-judged course of whetting our resentments by dwelling on the horrors which this scourge of God has been suffered to carry into the habitations of our brethren. No less remote be the self-flattering employment of contrasting with these lawless and disgraceful outrages, the dignified councils, and conduct more than chivalric, which have, in multitudes of instances, done honour to our country. We need no new inducements to cherish any of those sentiments which a review, in either case, cannot fail to produce, or, if already produced, to nurture. But we *do* need a remembrancer that the bitterness of our woe, however it may proceed from enormities without parallel at the hand of the inflictors, is nevertheless measured out to us by the righteousness of him whose justice cannot suffer an over-rigorous retribution. We *do* need a memento that, just as are our resentments, legitimate as are our efforts, the obligation is not cancelled to sift our conduct and to humble our hearts in the presence of that Being who

has been pleased in awful judgment to subject us to those injuries, or to make those efforts necessary.

Be it, then, that our deprivations, our defeats, our desolations, are the inseparable concomitants of the most righteous struggle; be it so, that these evils have been augmented and diversified by the baneful influence of opposing faction; or be it, that imbecility in the councils of the nation has prolonged the horrors which were gendered at the first, by madness and ambition;—still, whoever be the authors, whatever be the means, that outrage from abroad, that distraction at home, that insanity in council, that imbecility in conduct, the failure of the best measures, or the adoption of the worst—all these things, *or any of them*, as the obstinacy of prejudice or heat of party may be pleased to make selection, are to be regarded as proceeding from the appointment of him who dates his controversy from the commencement of crime: and woe be to that country which, even when thus visited, stills hardens itself against the loud and fearful admonitions of his providence—shame upon that man, or upon that combination of men, whose hollow pretensions to a love of country induce them to spurn at the wholesome inquisition.

Upon such an inquisition, however, it has been already said, we have not time to enter. All that has disfigured and all that has disorganized society among ourselves, has been for years before you. The light of revelation will enable you at any moment to ascertain the facts, to trace them to their sources, to take their various bearings. It is ours to-day, in prayer and supplication, to confess them before God, to deprecate their consequences, to purpose and to covenant an hearty reformation. Assembled for such purposes, it cannot be foreign to the spirit of suppliants to contemplate in their full extent, without abatement and without disguise, those master offences with which our land is chargeable, the practical forgetfulness, and the speculative denial that “the heavens *really* rule.” Even when our country assumes her proudest attitude, when she legitimately advances her loftiest pretensions to the

homage and imitation of the nations of the world, this gigantic evil presents its boldest front. Ponder, if you will, that sprightliness of character which enlivens and adorns, and even dignifies, the face of society among ourselves, to an extent perhaps unequaled in any other land: bring into view those high-toned sentiments which shed their influence over almost every circle of almost every order: mark the liberality in individual transactions; the justice and temperance which in the main are observed in relation to foreign nations; the diffusive charities of domestic life; the spirit of true heroism that despoils the field of carnage of well nigh half its horrors:—Contemplate all these, not indeed without exceptions, not without alloy even in those respects in which alone they are truly estimable. Has the survey been made? Has the proud result been estimated? Then judge for yourselves how perverse that folly, how mad that preference, how abandoned that ingratitude, which tramples on the rights, which overlooks the claims, which sullies all the honors of the First and Best of beings, the author of our talents, the bestower of our blessings; while we recognize so much of what man may claim from man! What we approve and applaud is but a partial approach toward that amiable and useful line of conduct which the Father of mercies has seen good to prescribe as the common law of individuals and nations. But when have even the virtues which we boast, as dignifying and distinguishing the national councils, been tempered and directed by that first and best of motives, the direct authority of the Lord of all the nations! How seldom can any of those excellencies we admire, as discriminating features in individual character, be referred to the same great source! Our Father has commanded: the thing may be done, but his authority is not recognized. Our Father has instructed: the dictate may be followed, but its source is not acknowledged. Who demands—who *needs* the proof of these positions? Let the fact that whatever regards the deity himself forms no part of our

study and no part of our praise, in a collective point of view, speak every thing that need be said. Let violated sabbaths and neglected sanctuaries, ignorance of his commands and inattention to his providences—let every thing that can unequivocally and distinctively evince exclusive and paramount respect to his authority,—let *such* tests be applied to discover what portion of the community at large have learned that “the heavens do rule,” and subject their consciences to its supreme authority.

If upon this examination it should be found, as beyond all doubt it will, that in general they neither act up to the spirit, nor even recognize the obligation of “the first and great commandment,” it will excite no surprise that he who has so often written his memorial in the blood of the “disobedient and unthankful,” should have unsheathed against us that sword which he challenges as the ordinary and undoubted avenger of his quarrels. But righteous as is his anger, severe as he often makes the infliction of the stroke, such dispensations are the most merciful and salutary appointments for nations that have forgotten God, when they are intended to awaken dormant recollections, and save their object from the perdition of the impenitent. Nor is it to be ranked among the least interesting reflections which we are called to-day to cherish, that very many circumstances attendant on the evils which we feel and mourn combine with innumerable other indications in the general aspect of the times, to justify the belief that such mercy as we have named is mingled with our chastisements; and that the disastrous clouds which now darken every prospect of public and private weal, are only to bring us back to the all-important lesson that “the heavens rule,” and then to be dissipated by the breath of the Almighty, or dissolved in showers of blessing. To these indications let us not be inattentive. For if it be our duty to recognize and bow to the judgments of his hand, it is no less a duty to commemorate the mercies that signalize the judgment.

However sensibly we feel the stroke, who will not confess, pondering the magnitude and the pertinacity of our provocations, that he chastises us less than our iniquities deserve? Compare your experience, and the experience of your country, with that which must be recorded by nations old in crime. The age in which we live is an age of retribution. That Messiah who has achieved the salvation of the world, and who is in fact the disposer of its destinies, is winding up, so to speak, his accounts with all the nations, that he may usher in the reign of righteousness and peace. The controversy, then, now pleading with ourselves, has been plead with all the nations of the christianized world, in a similar manner and upon similar grounds. But we have been only overshadowed by the skirts of that cloud which has settled over the plains of the European world:—we have as yet been only sprinkled with a slight and transient shower, while for more than half a generation the torrent has been precipitated on their devoted heads. We have seen no cities sacked, no provinces laid waste. A partial defeat, a trivial desolation, a short-lived embarrassment, form the extent of the evils we have been called to mourn. And how often has victory perched upon our standard! Even there, where our proud enemy built her proudest confidence, and where we dared not anticipate the smallest share of triumph, even there, amid the tossings and bellowings of the deep, the God of battles has distinguished us with reiterated victories, which have laid the proud pretensions of the British navy low. Who has not seen, who has not recorded the rigorous retribution of eternal justice, which has rendered the scene of her unmanly triumphs the scene of greatest shame! Who has not found cause to lift up his voice in thanksgiving and blessing to our merciful chastiser, when “it pleased the Almighty,” keeping his strong arm round the weak and inexperienced, to make the flag that had fluttered in triumph round the world stoop to kiss the ocean wave, while the star studded

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banners of our unassuming navy still "float the pale blue skies!"

To these commixtures of God's mercies with his judgments, which induce the expectation that our "kingdom shall be sure unto us" when once we "shall have known that the heavens do rule," we add other considerations, derived from other quarters, but tending to the same great end. Our country, we have said, is young. And all who know any thing of the rules of the divine procedure have learned this consoling truth, that in the boundlessness of his patience and in the liberality of his construction, the young, whether in a national or individual point of view, inherit a forbearance and are secure in the enjoyment of an indulgent care, which are rarely extended to parties old in crime. Chastened we may be, but the chastisement is light; calculated rather to bring us back to our allegiance, than to pour upon our heads the perdition of the curse.

Add to this, that our country, whatever be its enormities, is free from the imputation of two of the greatest outrages which have brought down desolation upon the Eastern world. The church of the Redeemer, however much neglected and however much despised, has never been put under the duress of persecution: those hardships and indignities which have been heaped upon the Jews, by all other nations among whom they are dispersed, form no part of the controversy God is pleading with ourselves. We felicitate our country upon these auspicious circumstances, the full importance of which may be realized by all who yield their credence to the word of God. Tenderer than the instincts of the fondest mother are the feelings which are cherished by God our saviour for "the church of the first born." And though Israel be cast out—tho' Israel be doomed to a severer course of judgments than ever has befallen another nation of the earth, yet the tender recollections of the father of mercies are still toward the children of "Abraham his

friend." Though he punish with severity, though his anger flame for ages, yet will he not suffer the nations of the Gentiles to triumph in their shame. It is therefore clear from the whole tenor of the prophetic scriptures, that in the purgation which is to precede the communication of his mercies to all corners of the earth, the offences we have named form a prodigious item in the accounts to be adjusted. In these, thanks to the overruling providence of our creator, we have not the least concern.

We scarcely name, in addition to these consoling reflections, the hopes that may be extracted from the aspect of the times. There are none of you who have not heard that the period allotted in the prophetic scriptures to darkness, to desolation and to blood, has well nigh reached the point of consummation: None of you who have not witnessed that while he in whose hands are the destinies of nations, has come forth from his place to remunerate their offences, he is likewise dispensing the word of reconciliation in almost every language under heaven. These things have given signal for the pœans of the churches; supplied the best occasion for unbounded gratulation; and laid the sure foundations of universal hope.

Let then the suggestion of the text be followed. Let the all-important truth of heaven's domination obtain the assent and command the best exertions of our privileged country. Let violations of deference and contempt of grace no longer shape the aspect of the public councils, nor give the tone to private conversation. And then may we expect that, the causes and the motives to chastisement being removed, he in whose hand are the hearts of all flesh will dispose the enemy to a course of righteousness and peace; and that he will make our infant States among the first to inherit and the foremost to promote that general diffusion of righteousness and peace which is to heal the wounds and elicit the best affections of our misguided race, when once they shall have based their order and their interests upon the first and most indispensable of all

practical principles, the remembrance that "the heavens do rule." That sooner or later our country must be brought to this, no one can entertain a doubt who credits the divine purpose of subjecting all nations to the acknowledgment of his Son, and of visiting their habitations with his saving health. An indisposition to be taught, or a determination to disregard, can have no other effect than to secure to ourselves the continuation of the calamities we now deplore; or the early repetition of them, under some other and more dreadful form, that shall crush the disobedient who refuse to bow, and compel the affrighted remnant to yield the glory that is due.

GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATURE,

It is but proper to remind you, that in putting a stop to the effusion of human blood, and in ushering in the triumphs of the long expected day which is dawning even now upon the nations of the world, much may depend upon yourselves. It is but fair to presume that within these walls we have assembled much of the wisdom, and much of the influence of the State you represent. None of you can be ignorant that the sovereignty of God has so constituted our nature, that the mass of mankind are influenced in their opinions and moulded in their characters by the few individuals whose talents or station may have contributed to raise them above the ordinary level. It will not be denied that the operation of this principle has had a baneful effect upon the morals and manners of your country. It cannot be questioned that a deference for God's authority, or a kindness for his gospel, have been disavowed, if not deprecated, by most persons of this description, as involving an imputation degrading to their understandings and unfriendly to their interests. No one can be at a loss to see that the natural consequences of this example have gradually diffused themselves among all classes of the community, till we meet in every direction with the same outrage against God, and see perched on every lip the same contempt

for his Messiah. GENTLEMEN, have you *yet* to learn that the Heavens surely rule? Are you yet to be convinced that the evils which we suffer are a real, though unusually slender sample of the means which God employs to convict and turn the nations? If you have *not* to learn these things; if your understandings are convinced, and your aversation overcome; then lock not up the precious acquisition in the recesses of your bosoms. You have it in your power to become fathers to your country, by lending your example and influence to a cause which yields the only sure foundation of domestic order, and plants the first and best defences against external violence. Be patriots then, for once, in the best and noblest sense. Let the torch of your zeal be kindled at an altar whose fires are diffusing their renovating warmth, and darting the irradiation of immortal hope, among the sickly and benighted nations. You cannot bestow the blessing on your countrymen: but you can teach them to respect the source from which it flows. You cannot command the shower from on high: but you can open many a channel along which the waters may flow as they descend; and your example may embolden many a hapless coward no longer to tremble at the imputation of fanaticism, but to come bathe in these waters of lustration and be cleansed. Thus may you contribute to stay the arm of the avenger—thus may you give permanency to the institutions of your country—thus may you assist her to put her bridals on; and support her as she stands, in purity and loveliness, first and best among the nations of the earth, awaiting the approaches of the Lord of all the nations.

But strong as are the inducements of a patriotic spirit, eagre and diffusive as may be the wishes of benevolence—Friends, be it remembered, you have still a stronger motive than the prospect of giving stability to social order: there are dictates to be obeyed more imperious than any which even the angel form of benevolence can plead. That gospel of the savior which stills the heart of anguish and smooths the

brow of care, that law of universal and everlasting love which withers the proud spirit of injury and insult, is the herald of the Eternal to immortal creatures, and bears the weighty proffer of immortal life. This is the burden of its message to yourselves. Indeed were it not for this—were it not that the God of universal providence is announced to our hopes as “the resurrection and the life,” there would be much in its pages to rouse our apprehensions, but nothing to elate our hearts: nothing that benevolence could wish to see promulged, as the signal for “joy and thanksgiving:” nothing that patriotism could be induced to adopt as the pledge of public virtue. It is *because* that Redeemer, whose domination we announce, “was dead, and is alive, and liveth forevermore, and hath the keys of death and of hell;” *because* he has become “the author of eternal salvation” to every soul of man that believes upon his name; *because* the faith of Jesus lays hold upon an inheritance “eternal in the heavens;” *because* that, in so doing, it pre-occupies the mind with more important objects, lights up benevolence by the brilliancy of hope, and binds down to order by the sentiments of gratitude;—it is in consequence of *these things* that the gospel of the Savior is fraught with any tendencies to minister secret comfort or promote the public weal. Judge then how blind and how fatal must be the choice which centres in that gospel, merely as an instrument of doing good to others, while all that is precious and all that is indispensable in its provisions for immortality is neglected by ourselves. Surely nothing can be a greater outrage against the Savior’s *grace*, no course can pour so ineffable a contempt upon his sufferings, no crime can bring upon ourselves such an aggravated condemnation, as to lend our countenance and aid to the promulgation of his gospel, with a view merely to secure some of its incidental advantages, while the very thing that insures its efficacy, and even originated its being, is passed by as a thing of nought. This is to despise the divine favor, know-

ing it to be tendered; to brave the thunders of awakened justice, knowing them to be real; and to declare, in the sight of heaven and earth, that the partial influence of the Savior's mission upon the short-lived interests of our social state is a circumstance more dear to us, more worthy our regards, than the pardons he has purchased by the sacrifice of his cross, and the triumphs he has sealed by his resurrection from the dead. Can there, do you think, be a sight more pitiable than to see a wretched mortal thus "sporting himself with his own deceivings?" Vain of the influence which pre-eminence of talents or of station may have bestowed: consecrating, with a mixture of pride and patriotism, the influence thus enjoyed to the service of his country, by giving currency to principles which yield her firm support: convinced that it is the truth and the power of the gospel that render it the pledge of universal good:—and yet, after acting from the soberest convictions, to the best of purposes, in so far as the present and eternal interests of others are concerned, reduced at last to the misery of lamenting that the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and he himself not saved!

Let no one suppose this a strong representation of a very peculiar case. Such must be the common and the inevitable consequence in the case of every one who studies the incidental advantages of the gospel to the neglect of its primary ends. Such, it is to be feared, is the melancholy case of many among ourselves, whose courage and constancy support them in a course which they believe to be important to the morals of their country; but whose pride would be offended and their benevolence extinguished, were it warmly and pointedly urged home upon their consciences that the savior whom they honour demands another sort of homage, and the word of his grace another sort of reception than that which they are disposed to give. Miserable mortals! thus to lavish upon the attainment of a few short-lived advantages a treasure which would have effected all that they had in view, while it might have secured to themselves, by an appropriate management, the light and glory of eternal life! Miserable mortals! thus to hug themselves up in a fancied importance, which took delight in being the instrument of good to others, while it sealed up their own hearts in fatal security, till the messenger of the highest despoiled them of their stewardship and left them poor indeed!

My friends, if we would teach men how to respect the gospel of the Savior, if we ourselves would cherish due respect, we must cultivate an acquaintance with its most important bearings; we must bring those bearings home. It is only when we have hearkened to that voice of invitation which reverberates through all the temples of his grace, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters!" it is only when we can appreciate the blessings of the decree that "whosoever cometh shall in no wise be cast out,"—it is then, and only then, that we have reached the proper temper in which to avail ourselves of the privileges we enjoy. For yourselves, therefore, study this record of life. In your own behalf lay hold of the charter it contains.—"Seek first," and seek successfully, "the kingdom of God." No sad misgivings, no awful forebodings of judgment and eternity, will then paralyze your arm when you would elevate the cross in the eyes of your countrymen as the pledge of "truth and peace." No drawback will be allowed upon your satisfaction or your honors, when you contemplate a country thus redeemed by your efforts and smiling as the garden of God. But secure in the possession of an "high and holy hope," you can anticipate with calmness, even with cheerfulness, your dismissal from your post: Your heart will not tremble when you see the visitations of the Savior's justice commencing on the earth: Your best wishes will go before him when he walks forth in his might to marshal the Gentiles for the day of final triumph: Your faith will anticipate, as the consummation of its desires, the grand solemnities of the resurrection and the judgment: And when, in relation to any or to all of these events, you listen to that concluding voice of warning in the scriptures, "He that testifieth these things saith, surely I come quickly," your voice and your heart shall mingle in the thunders of the universal response, "Even so! come Lord Jesus. AMEN."

