

THE
SCOURGE OF GOD,

A

SERMON

PREACHED IN THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

JULY 6, 1832,

ON THE

OCCASION OF A CITY FAST,

OBSERVED

In reference to the approach of the Asiatic Cholera.

Williamson
BY JOHN W. NEVIN, 1803-1886

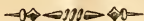
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RECOMMENDATION OF A FAST.



Pittsburgh, June 27th, 1832.

A number of clergy, elders and other members of the different christian denominations in the city of Pittsburgh, convened on this day, at the Lecture Room of the First Presbyterian Church, for the purpose of adopting and recommending such measures in relation to the appearance of the Asiatic Cholera on this continent, as this alarming dispensation of Divine Providence might require.

The meeting was organized by appointing the Rev. JOHN T. PRESSLY, Chairman, and JOHN M. SNOWDEN, Secretary.

The meeting was opened with prayer by the chairman, after which the following resolutions were submitted for consideration, and were on full deliberation unanimously adopted:

Resolved, That the danger with which this country is at present threatened from the appearance of the Asiatic Cholera, is, in the opinion of this meeting, a just cause of alarm to every part of the land, and ought to engage every city and community to have recourse, by penitent acknowledgments of sin and humble applications for mercy, through Christ, to God who rules the world, that he may be graciously pleased to avert his judgements or mitigate their force, that they may through his grace be prepared for, and sanctified by whatever may be his holy will respecting them; and

that our fellow men who have been visited by this awful calamity, may see the hand from whence it comes and be profited by this severe dispensation of Divine Providence.

Resolved, That it be recommended to the inhabitants of this city and the adjoining towns and country, to set apart Friday the 6th day of July next, as a day of fasting, humiliation and prayer for this purpose; that they may with one consent suspend their ordinary avocations, close their offices and shops, meet together in their customary places for worship, and thus exhibit in public and in private, the spectacle of a whole community humbling itself under the mighty hand of God, and beseeching him to interpose his help in this time of need.

Resolved, That the Governor of Pennsylvania be respectfully requested to issue a proclamation recommending a fast to be observed throughout the State with reference to the same object.

Resolved, That the chairman and secretary be directed to forward to the Governor a copy of the proceedings of this meeting, accompanied with such respectful remarks as they may think the importance of the subject requires.

Resolved, That the proceedings of this meeting be published in all the papers of this city, and that the clergy generally be requested to notice them from their respective pulpits on next Lord's day.

Adjourned, after prayer by Dr. Bruce.

JOHN T. PRESSLY, Chairman.

JOHN M. SNOWDEN, Secretary.



In pursuance of the recommendation contained in the foregoing Resolutions, the Churches in this City were opened for public worship, the shops and places of business closed, and FRIDAY THE SIXTH DAY OF JULY was, by common consent, set apart and observed in Pittsburgh as a general fast. The very interesting discourse contained in the following pages, was delivered in the first Presbyterian Church, on the occasion referred to, by PROFESSOR NEVIN, of the *Western Theological Seminary*; and several gentlemen who attended, believing that its publication would have a salutary influence on the public mind, and lead

many to the adoption of means which have been sanctioned by eminent physicians for the prevention of the malady, addressed the following Letter to the author requesting a copy.

REV. JOHN W. NEVIN,

Dear Sir—

The undersigned having listened with feelings of intense interest to the very excellent Sermon delivered by you this morning in the First Presbyterian Church, take the liberty of soliciting from you a copy of the same for publication.

We are persuaded that the precautionary measures, which you have this day so eloquently recommended, cannot fail, if generally known and adopted, to mitigate the horrors of the pestilence with which it has pleased the Almighty to visit our beloved country; and although we sincerely trust that our own neighbourhood may be exempted from the deadly scourge, yet, it is the part of wisdom and of true courage to prepare for a calamity which the ingenuity of man has hitherto been unable to avert.

In making this request, therefore, we beg you to be assured that we are influenced by no considerations, other than those which we deem to be immediately and vitally connected with the public welfare.

Very respectfully, &c.

W. W. IRWIN,
WILSON M'CANDLESS,
GEO. R. WHITE,
R. C. STOCKTON,
W. B. M'CLURE.

Pittsburgh, 6th July, 1832.

To which the Rev. Mr. Nevin replied as follows:

Pittsburgh, 7th July, 1832.

GENTLEMEN—

I cheerfully comply with the request contained in your communication of yesterday. My sermon is at your disposal, to publish it if you think proper. There is reason to believe, that at a time like the present the public attention may be gained in some measure to the truths it was designed to present; and if they have

any importance, I shall be glad of an opportunity to preach them from the press as well as from the pulpit. On one subject, especially, which is taken up in the latter part of the discourse, I would that I could speak with a voice to be heard at this time through all the streets and habitations of our city. I do regard the trade in ardent spirits which is going on among us every day as a crying evil in the place. Had I power, I would turn upon it the indignation of the whole community, and make it a thing to be looked upon with heavy rebuke from every eye. The times of men's ignorance in regard to this matter, when the offences that were connected with it might be winked at by the public mind, are happily gone by; and there has succeeded to that darkness a day of so much light as should turn them now into their proper shame.

I am, gentlemen, with much respect, yours,

JOHN W. NEVIN.

Messrs. *W. W. Irwin, Wilson M'Candless, Geo. R. White,
R. C. Stockton, and W. B. M'Clure.*

SERMON.

TEXT—THE VOICE OF GOD IN THE ASIATIC CHOLERA.

WE meet in the sanctuary to-day under circumstances of peculiar interest. An extraordinary evil threatens to come upon the whole land. The angel of death is seen standing upon our borders with a commission to destroy, and his hand is stretched out as it were over our very heads. We are come together to prostrate our spirits before the High and Holy One, and to intreat his favor and help in view of the uplifted scourge.

In attempting on the occasion to direct your meditations, I propose, in the first place, to survey the general character of the evil itself whose approach we deprecate. In the second place, to consider the connexion in which it stands with the finger of God. In the third place, to trace out, at least generally, the relations which it has to our sins. I shall then be prepared to conclude with a few reflections in the way of inference from the whole subject.

I. THE GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE EVIL ITSELF CLAIMS OUR ATTENTION.—It is no other than the deadly cholera of Asia, which for years has been traversing the eastern portions of the globe, and carrying dismay through almost all nations, kindreds, and tribes of the human family. Information of its ravages in different regions and cities of Asia has been conveyed to us summers and winters ago, when we were too secure, in our distance from the scene of suffering, to give any special attention to the subject. For more than a year past, however, we have been led to trace the march of the disease with deeper interest, in consequence of its showing itself in the civilized countries of Europe, and pushing its way with appalling rapidity towards the shores of the Atlantic. Since the time of its terrific triumph at Astrachan, the account of its progress has not fallen as an idle tale upon our ears. We have watched it with some concern as it made its way from city to city through Russia and the German States; and our concern deepened into a real anxiety when the

tidings came that it was entered into Great Britain and France. Still we heard of it only with the hearing of the ear, and the wide Atlantic separated us from the field of its action. There was room to indulge the hope that the ocean might prove a barrier to the course of its conquests. There was room to speculate on the probabilities of its assuming a milder and less destructive character, if it should leap that barrier, and come to try its strength upon the hardy constitutions and healthful habits that stood ready to meet it upon our highly-favored soil. But the hour of this suspense is past. The cholera has proclaimed its presence upon the shores of our own continent. The scourge of Asia, and Africa, and Europe, is in very fact let loose upon the western world. We have ceased to watch its movements in England, and all eyes are turned in fearful expectation to the northern parts of our own land.

According to all report, it is one of the most terrible diseases that ever scourged the human race. It attacks its victims suddenly, and with great violence—subjects them to the most excruciating pain—makes them spectacles of amazement and terror to all who stand around—and in a vast multitude of cases hurries them out of life in the course of a few hours. In the expressive language of an English physician, it seems to commence where all other diseases terminate—in the agony of death. A fearful mystery still hangs over all its character. After all opportunities for observation, it still remains doubtful whether it is propagated by contagion or not. Its natural history has never yet been elucidated. The laws of its action are hidden even from the wise. In this respect, it is pre-eminently “the pestilence that walketh in darkness;” though, under another aspect, it may be as characteristically styled “the destruction that wasteth at noon-day.”

It has shewn itself thus far an irresistible and unconquerable plague. I do not mean that all precautions against it have been entirely useless, and all medical treatment unavailing; but no precautions have been sufficient to prevent its approach; and the art of medicine has failed to achieve as yet any thing like a decided victory in grappling with its giant strength. Through civilized as well as through uncivilized nations, its march has still been onward, in despite of all obstructions thrown in its way. Physical and moral barriers have proved alike inadequate to restrain its progress. No climate has presented a retreat from its terrors; no season has afforded a respite from its cruel devastation. It has set quarantine law at defiance, and forced its way through every rampart of sanitary regulations raised by the affrighted nations for their defence. After having traversed almost every part of the eastern world, and triumphed over nations of almost every

complexion and speech, it is seen rearing its horrid front in these ends of the earth with the same dark determination of death it has ever shewn; proclaiming itself a still unvanquished foe, and menacing sorrow to every portion of the land.

Such, in its general character, is the evil whose approach has called us this day to humiliation, fasting, and prayer before God. It is quite apparent that it is no imaginary danger which has awakened our concern. The tragedy of Montreal and Quebec has not been such an exhibition as other cities on the same side of the Atlantic might look upon without anxiety or dismay; and though it should be ascertained, which yet has not been done, that the particular plague in this case was local in its character, and not likely therefore to spread with all its virulence into other sections of the country, still would there be ample reason for the solicitude which brings us this day into the house of God. Whatever theory we construct in order to account for the disease in this instance, the fact continues unchanged, that the cholera, before which other nations have been made to tremble, is on our borders; and from all that we have learned of its history in the eastern world, we have every reason to apprehend that its ravages will not be confined to Canada. And even if the danger, which has been threatening us for some time more immediately from this quarter, should pass away without harm, it would be great presumption to imagine ourselves secure from every visitation of the kind. We have now seen that the waters of the Atlantic are no protection against the disease, and that it can thrive as well upon an American as upon an European soil. On these points speculation has given place to experience. Whatever then may be the laws of its propagation, whatever the conditions of its becoming developed in particular places, it is reasonable to expect that it will in this country, as in others which it has visited, pass over the entire land, or at least light upon the various sections of it, in more or less sweeping judgment. Had it been a new and unheard of pestilence that had appeared in the north, we might have cherished the hope that its devastations would have been only local, and temporary in their range. But the epidemical character of the disease which has actually appeared has been too well ascertained to leave room for any expectation of this kind. It certainly bids as fair as epidemic ever did to go through the whole country.

It is important that we should, in this respect, keep steadily in view the reality of the danger to which we stand exposed. There are two extremes to be guarded against in this case. There is an unseasonable and undue alarm, which outruns the occasion, and unfits the mind for the duties which attend it. This is one

extreme into which men are naturally carried, when the first intelligence of approaching evil falls upon their ears. But it often happens that they are in a little while as naturally hurried back into a feeling of security and presumption, because of some change in the aspect of that evil, while yet they have no good reason to conclude that they are safe. In this case, a re-action takes place in the mind, by which it is borne, at times, as far beyond the line of sober feeling in this new direction as it had been before in its opposite. I am not sure but something of this sort has already occurred in the present instance of danger. I am not sure that the first panic which spread through society when the cholera was announced this side the great deep, has not already given place in many minds to a presumptuous security, as unreasonable, to say the least, as the alarm with which it was preceded. The accounts from Montreal and Quebec have lost their terror—the first suggestions of fear have not been realized—considerations have been presented in relief or mitigation of the appalling evil; and now we are in some danger of making light of our own apprehensions, and congratulating our hearts that the bitterness of death is past. But let us beware of a spirit like this. The enemy may slumber, but we have no right to reckon upon its death. This partial calm may be but the pause of preparation for fresh assaults; and before we are aware, a destruction like that of Montreal may break forth in some new spot, and proclaim the pestilence to be still walking in darkness through the land. It has, in fact, been characteristic of the disease all along to proceed in this dark and mysterious way. We have no right, therefore, to lay aside our fears, as if no evil, or only a slight evil, were at hand. It becomes us to still hold the attitude of solemn expectation; for it is only in such an attitude that we are likely to bestir ourselves aright in the work of preparation, or to be secure from the exciting terror of a new surprise.

II. I PROPOSED, IN THE SECOND PLACE, TO CONSIDER THE CONNECTION IN WHICH THIS EVIL STANDS WITH THE FINGER OF GOD.

There are some persons who hold that the divine providence is concerned only with large interests and great events, while smaller affairs are left very much to the determination of mere chance, as being beneath the notice of the Infinite Mind. Even such persons are bound to recognise the hand of God in the movements of the wide-spread calamity we have just now been contemplating. It is too vast an event in the history of our world, to be resolved into the operation of any causes that may be supposed to lie without the range of that plan of intelligence on which the govern-

ment of God proceeds. We must deny the fact of any such government at all, or admit that in such a case as this we have an illustration of it before our eyes.

But the distinction to which I have just referred is as repugnant to true philosophy as it is to the express declarations of the Bible. If there be a God at all who upholds and governs the universe which he has made, his providence must reach to all interests and all events alike. Not a sparrow may fall to the ground without the notice of his eye. Not a blade of grass may spring into life without the operation of his power. His hand is seen in all changes that take place. Blessings and afflictions, whether they affect individuals or nations, are administered alike, according to his will, and under his immediate direction. It matters not by what secondary causes, or by what subordinate agencies, they may be wrought out, or in what circuitous way they take their ultimate effect, still we can give no satisfactory account of them, without resolving them into the intelligent purpose of Him, in whom alone all laws exist, and all causes have their power. This is true of all the dispensations of Providence, whether we are able to trace them to their secondary causes or not.

At the same time it must be acknowledged, that when such dispensations are extraordinary in their appearance, and mysterious in their character, they are adapted to convey to our minds a more lively impression of the presence and agency of God than when they are not of this description. In such cases it is, perhaps, still more a duty than at other times to recognise the hand that is at work in the administration of this world's affairs. At least, when the very constitution of our minds, in despite of their natural atheism, rises in testimony of the presence of God, as it does in such instances, it must be a fearful argument of our corruption if we still refuse to admit and feel the fact.

Now I need not say that the Asiatic cholera may challenge special attention to itself in this light. There is something so strange and inexplicable, as well as dreadful in its history, that the most careless observer can hardly fail to regard it as being sent upon its errand from God. At His bidding, it is seen taking its deadly course, as an angel of wrath, among the nations. Whole lands shrink affrighted from its approach, and cities, in quick succession, are filled with consternation by its presence. An impenetrable mystery hangs over its track. Science employs herself in vain to explain its origin, or to interpret its way. Art is confounded in endeavouring to stay its progress, or to overcome its strength. As an angel of wrath, it moves on in thick darkness, and steals with noiseless tread from place to place in the execution of its dread commission. Its march is known only by the

fall of its victims. No premonitory terrors speak its coming in any particular case. No admonition; save the piercing cry of the places where its desolation is going on, gives intelligence of its near approach. In the midst of life and health, when air, earth, and sky seem to hold forth no other promise than of joy, it precipitates itself upon cities, and districts of country, and proclaims its presence only by turning them into scenes of amazement and death. Its descent, in many cases, is of such a kind as to call to remembrance some of the judgments recorded in the Old Testament, when the angel of the Lord is said to have gone forth from his presence, and in a single night filled a whole country with dismay by the work of death. Who can look upon a plague like this, and consider the strange and terrible ministration it is performing in the world, without being constrained to say with the magicians of old, "This is the finger of God!"

Let us take heed, then, that we do not lose sight of the hand of God in the evil with which we are now threatened. Emphatically, the cholera has been a scourge, employed by the Almighty himself, for the chastisement of the nations; and every stroke with which it has lighted upon their population has been by his immediate direction. Whatever the cause may be, he has had a controversy with the inhabitants of the earth, and has been moving personally among them with his terrible judgments. And now that the plague is ready to enter *our* borders, we may not shut our eyes to this alarming consideration. The rod that is lifted up over our heads is held in the hand of a righteous God. The alarm that has sounded through the land has been uttered, as it were, from the voice of the Almighty. Undoubtedly it has meaning; and it claims attention as much as if it had been spoken in living words from the midst of high heaven.

But what is the meaning of this appalling visitation? And why is it that God is raising his hand in anger to smite the inhabitants of the earth? And what is the ground of that controversy which he has with our own land, that he should thus stretch out his arm in terror over its borders, and bid it prepare to meet him in frightful judgment? These inquiries bring us to the third head of this discourse.

III. WE ARE TO TRACE, AT LEAST GENERALLY, THE RELATION WHICH THIS OVERFLOWING JUDGMENT HAS TO OUR SINS. —It is a special visitation, and as such evinces the special displeasure of God with the nations on whom it is sent.

All the afflictions which men are called to endure in this world are the consequence of their sins. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all

men, for that all have sinned." Every form of suffering that presents itself to view, however common and universal it may be, has, in this respect, an intimate connexion with sin as its cause. We behold in it a proof of the existence of sin, and an expression of the divine displeasure toward sin. But as there are extraordinary offences among men, so undoubtedly there are extraordinary calamities sent upon them occasionally in the providence of God for judgment. This every person must admit at once who gives credit to the testimony of the sacred scriptures. The history of the Old Testament is full of instances in which this connexion is represented to have had place between special chastisements in the providence of God, and special sins on the part of men. And if any truth is taught in the Bible, it is that the government of God, under which men are placed, is a moral government, in which, even this side the grave, respect is continually had to character and conduct, and general premonitions afforded of that retributive justice which is to be more fully developed hereafter. All history abounds with illustrations of the same truth; and the more attentively the constitution and course of nature are studied, the more strikingly will they be found to lend it confirmation.

When we speak of the *special* judgments of God, we do not suppose that they have any thing miraculous in their nature, or that they take place in any sense independently of the agency of secondary causes. Though the laws of its action are not yet adequately explained, yet I have no doubt but the cholera is as much governed by general and fixed principles established in nature, as is the lightning in its mazy track, or the planet circling in dread magnificence around the sun. There is no miracle in its appearance in any place; and every single case of its occurrence is attended with an adequate natural reason. To some, I know, a concession of this kind seems like abandoning the argument of its being a special judgment altogether. They have no notion of God interposing in the way of special retribution for special sins, except by an actual deviation from the established constitution of nature; and when any particular visitation can be resolved into the operation of known and established laws of nature, they are ready to conclude that it can have no direct and immediate relation to any particular moral offences, save just so far as these fall among those natural causes from which it has proceeded as an effect. But this imagination has as little reason in sound philosophy as in revelation. It is perfectly conceivable that God, in arranging the entire plan of his natural government of the world in the beginning, might so dispose of all different chains of causes and effects, as to make events brought about in one way bear a

close moral relation to other events brought about in a different way, even when they might be destitute of all natural connexion. To draw an illustration from the case now before us, it is perfectly conceivable, that God may, in the beginning, have so arranged the system of nature, that the cholera of Asia should, as the natural effect of previously operating causes, come into action, and go forth among the nations, just at such a time as to fall in with their special guilt, and thus stand related to it in the way of special judgment. There is something in such an idea, it is true, that bewilders our limited and feeble minds; but we must remember, that to the Infinite Mind all time is constantly present, and an arrangement of this kind ordained for a thousand years would stand forth to His view as clear and simple as the same arrangement made for a single hour.

There is nothing unreasonable, then, in the supposition that God, at times, sends special judgments upon men for their sins; and, as we have already seen, the fact itself is made sure by the most sufficient evidence, the testimony of the sacred scriptures, corroborated by all history and observation. These visitations are brought about by the action of second causes, and in accordance with established laws; but still they are as truly special as if they were sent immediately from his hand in a miraculous way, and without the intervention of any means whatever. So far as their special character is in question, it is the same thing, whether God has ordained the time and manner of their appearance by a previous arrangement, or continually interposes to bring them upon men by a new and extraordinary agency whenever they are needed.

In regard to individuals, it is not always easy to decide when their afflictions are indicative of the special displeasure of God, although no doubt, even in such cases, they often do express a displeasure of this kind; and men may generally interpret the meaning of them for themselves, each in his own particular case. But where whole communities or nations are involved, it is much easier to read the meaning of the judgments which overtake them from time to time in the providence of God. All history, sacred and profane, sheds light upon this point, and justifies the conclusion, that the dispensations of the divine government towards men, in their national and corporate capacities, are in this world strictly retributive. Great national sins are followed, sooner or later, with great national calamities; and great national calamities are always an argument of great national sins.

And who can doubt, in tracing the history of the Asiatic cholera, whether it be of the nature of a special judgment or not? We have already seen that it is a scourge lifted up by the hand of

God himself for the heavy chastisement of the nations. And now, can it be a question whether the chastisement have any relation to their sins? Shall we imagine that God can thus enter into controversy with the world without a reason, or that a visitation of this kind should be allowed to fall upon it only as it were by accident, and irrespective altogether of its condition or character at the time? And if we are constrained to admit the existence of some reason for the strange and striking manifestation of anger at this particular time, where shall we look for that reason, if not in the guilt of the nations themselves towards whom it is displayed? There has been something indeed in the peculiar character of this pestilence which could hardly fail to impress the most careless observer, when regarding it from a distance, with the feeling that it was a special minister of the wrath of heaven toward the sins of men in all places where it came. Contemplating the scourge afar off, we have seemed almost to see the outstretched arm and frowning countenance of Jehovah himself, as he smote the nations in his indignation—rebuking their angry contentions, and their irreligious policy, and their heaven-daring crimes. We have been able to perceive in each successive stripe the righteousness as well as the terribleness of the dispensation—whether inflicted upon the armies and cities of the Russian tyrant, or upon the states of Germany, apostate from their ancient faith—whether made to light with mitigated force on guilty, yet in part repentant, praying England, or with heavier judgment on the gay, corrupt, and atheistic capital of France. It has been indeed an awful spectacle, thus to look over the broad Atlantic upon the nations sinning, and God chastising them with His terrible scourge; while yet, for the most part, they have not perceived the hand that was smiting them, and have not regarded the correction, but are going on still, with growing presumption, to fill up the measure of their iniquities, that wrath may come on them to the uttermost.

And now that the scourge of Asia and Europe is raised in terror over our own land, can we hesitate to believe that it has a special relation to our sins, and that God is actually drawing nigh to punish us on their account? May we flatter ourselves that a visitation which came upon Europe, to all appearance, for their sins, has no reference whatever to sin when threatening to fall upon the United States? Are we, as a nation, so free from guilt, that we have no reason to interpret such a calamity in our own case as an expression of the special indignation of heaven? Assuredly, if there be truth in the representations of the Bible on this subject, we are bound to believe that we are visited in this case for our sins. It is because we have become a guilty people that God is

frowning upon us in this dispensation of His providence, and lifting up the rod for our correction. We do not take a right view of the evil unless we look at it in this light. It is only when we look at it in this way that we can be said to "regard the work of the Lord," or to "consider the operation of his hands."

I shall not undertake to specify the particular sins which may be supposed to have called for this interposition of wrath on the part of heaven. I shall content myself with merely referring your attention to the general spirit of the country at this present time. Is it not a fact, that in the midst of all that is cheering and encouraging in our moral and religious prospects, there is much to alarm us in the growing strength and prevalence of a spirit that is at war with all religion? It is characteristic of the age in which we live, that this spirit, wherever it exists, is found putting itself forth in continually bolder and stronger action. This fact grows out of the very constitution of the times themselves, and will become still more and more manifest, till victory, full and final, shall be eventually declared in favor of truth. By reason of it, a special malignity is found attaching itself to the wickedness of the wicked in all lands. The opposition which is made to truth, and righteousness, and liberty, in the various countries of Europe, is assuming every year a more hellish aspect, and calls louder every day for vengeance; and it needs no great discernment to perceive a like progressive movement in the kingdom of darkness this side the Atlantic. The prince of that kingdom is mustering his forces in darker array, and training them to enterprises of greater daring, in view of the grand crisis which is rapidly drawing on. Infidelity is plying all its arts to poison the social system. Licentious opinions are urged upon the public mind in all directions. Every effort of christian benevolence is resisted with all sorts of slander and reproach. Prejudices against religion are promoted in every way, and alarms are continually sounded on the subject of its dangerous influence. The whole system of government, it is to be feared, is coming to be more and more pervaded by the same anti-religious temper. The authority of God seems to be more and more openly disregarded in the administration of our public affairs. The maxim that the rulers of a nation have nothing to do with religion in their public character is increasing its dreadful authority. A disposition to trample upon the consciences of religious people, and to avoid at the same time every thing that looks like a governmental recognition of any religious truth, is gathering strength. A proud independence, that owns no allegiance even to the King of Heaven, and discards all trust in other than its own resources, is coming to characterize our government in the most offensive

form. A like feeling reigns too much throughout the land. The nation is proud—trusting in its physical resources—glorying in its internal improvements—exulting in its own prosperity—and forgetting that there is a God in heaven, who rules the destinies of kingdoms, and raises them and pulls them down at his pleasure. Surely a land like this is deserving of judgment; and when we turn our eyes to the danger that threatens us from the north, we have reason to tremble, lest the anger of God turn not away till it has laid upon us its heaviest chastisement.

IV. I NOW PROCEED TO MAKE SOME PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS IN THE WAY OF INFERENCE FROM THIS SUBJECT.

The grand inference to be made is, that we should repent, and turn away from our sins, and call upon God to save us from the evils we have reason to fear.

It is right, nay, it is a duty, to make use of all natural means for protection from the power of the plague. Religion does not discourage the use of such means, but urges men to resort to them in all cases where they are at hand. The cholera, though we have reason to look upon it as a special visitation from God, is nevertheless, as we have seen, subject to the established laws of nature in its action; and if these laws can be ascertained, so as to enable us to avoid the evil in any measure, we are as much bound by religion itself to attend to them for this purpose as we are to attend to any other conditions on which our comfort and happiness are known to depend. When the conditions of our escaping evil in any case are known, it is our duty to obey them; and this obedience is itself a part of the moral discipline which trials and dangers are intended to secure. All, therefore, that can be done in the way of preparation for the pestilence, either by individuals or public authorities, ought to be done. It is our duty, in this place, to take an interest in all measures that are designed to make our streets clean, and our air pure, and to urge forward every sanitary enterprise as far as we have it in our power; and we have reason to feel regret when such preparations are not made as vigorously as they ought to be. But still, I affirm, it is of greater consequence than all this, that we repent, and turn away from our sins, and call upon God for deliverance. And it is only when they are accompanied with this temper of mind that we may hope for much good from all the sanitary precautions we can use.

Beyond all controversy, God is calling us to repentance by the danger he is now holding up to our view. The call has been given, indeed, for more than a year past, while the cities of Europe were enduring the scourge in our sight. But now it has

become exceeding loud, by reason of the immediate proximity of the plague to our borders. And yet it seems as if judgment was still restrained, for the very purpose of giving us space for repentance. The destroying angel is seen standing upon our very borders, and waiting but the signal to go forward in his course of desolation, and yet he is not permitted to proceed. Oh, it is a solemn pause! Is it not as if a voice spake to us from heaven, bidding us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, before it descend upon us with its heavy stroke?

We have set apart this day for such humiliation. Let us see to it that we be honest in this transaction with God. Let us own from the bottom of our hearts the righteousness of the Most High in all the evil which he is threatening to bring upon us. Let us acknowledge the grievous provocation which we have reason to believe has stirred up his indignation against us as a people. Let us lament over our national transgressions, and the sins that defile the entire land. Let us bewail the evils that have place in the church of God. Let us mourn for the iniquities and abominations that are done in our own city. Let us bring into review our own lives, and pour out our souls in penitential acknowledgment of our own personal guilt. Thus shall we honor God in the way that he is requiring us to do it; and thus may we hope to be heard of him when we cry unto him for help. He that spared repentant Ninevah of old, will also spare us; or at least so moderate the plague, that it will pass lightly over our heads, and do us, comparatively, little harm. May God give us true repentance, and the true spirit of prayer, this day!

But we must also *turn away* from our sins. This enters indeed into the very nature of repentance, insomuch that there can be no repentance without it. We are bound to do all we can to prevent the sins of others, and especially to prevent public sins, in which we otherwise become implicated ourselves, as members of the community by which they are committed. It may often happen in these cases, however, that all our opposition will prove unavailing; and then we can only abhor in our hearts what we have had no power to hinder, while we pray to God that our fellow-citizens may come to a better mind. But where *personal* sins are in question, we can have no excuse for not forsaking them immediately; and all professions of repentance will be hypocritical so long as this is not done. A day like this, then, which is designed to bring sin to remembrance, should engage us to take up the resolution of forsaking every evil way in which we may be brought to discover that we have hitherto been walking. When the judgments of God are in the earth, men should learn righteousness.

There is one particular class of sins which men in view of this terrible visitation are particularly called upon to forsake. I mean all those sins which are connected with the use of ardent spirits in the land. If any fact is fully settled in relation to the cholera, it is that the intemperate every where are its first victims. They are more exposed than all others to its attacks, and when attacked they have the smallest chance of recovery. This has been so strikingly evident as to attract attention in all countries. And when I speak of the intemperate, I do not mean merely the beastly intemperate. Even what are called moderate drinkers of ardent spirits have been found more fit subjects than others for the cholera, just in proportion to the measure of their intemperance, whether great or small.* Almost every person must be struck with the relation which the tremendous scourge bears, by reason of this fact, to the great effort which has begun to be made of late years for the promotion of temperance. It seems as if God, in the visitation of the cholera, had actually interposed his extraordinary providence, to co-operate with the temperance reform, and convince the world of its necessity. We have, too, the greatest reason to be thankful for what has already been achieved in that work, before the arrival of this plague upon our borders. Had the calamity been distinctly foreseen, the very best preparation which the land could have been brought to make for meeting it, would have been just that preparation which the Temperance Society, without any view to that end, has to so great an extent already effected. And it may safely be affirmed now, that what has been done by that society for the promotion of temperance, has done more for the protection of the country at this time against the deadly power of the cholera, than all the sanitary regulations that have been made since the announcement of its near approach.

If this, then, be the relation of the cholera to intemperance, how loudly are the drinkers of ardent spirits called upon to forsake their sin. If the cholera be regarded as the scourge of no sin

* Extract of a letter from Dr. Henry Bronson, of Albany, dated Montreal:—

“Cholera has stood up here, as it has done every where, the advocate of temperance. It has pleaded most eloquently, and with tremendous effect. The disease has searched out the haunt of the drunkard, and has seldom left it without bearing away its victim. Even moderate drinkers have been but a little better off. Ardent spirits in any shape, and in all quantities, have been highly detrimental. Some temperate men resorted to it during the prevalence of the malady, as a preventive, or to remove the feeling of uneasiness about the stomach, or for the purpose of drowning their apprehensions; but they did it at their peril. It is believed never to have done good, but nearly always injury.”

besides, yet surely it is emphatically the scourge of this. Who will dare to drink, in view of the visible wrath that God is pouring out upon drunkards in this dread visitation? I know it is thought by some that persons of this character would not be so safe in quitting their bad habit in the time of immediate danger as in adhering to it. And it is undoubtedly true, that it is a poor preparation which can be made in this way at so late a period, when the system is still left to labor under the depravation of its former custom. But still I am persuaded it is better, even in the extremity of danger, to throw away the poison; and every day of respite that is enjoyed from the immediate presence of the plague, adds to the chance of real safety in the adoption at once of the rule of temperance. On this subject, however, I will quote the authority of a medical man, Dr. A. W. Ives, of New York. "I regret to perceive," he says, "that one of my professional brethren, for whom I have much respect, advises, as a preventive of cholera, the moderate use of brandy and water, and of good sound wine. This advice, I am constrained to say, I believe to be unsafe and inexpedient—that its tendency is, to induce many who have abandoned the use of strong drink, to resume it, and to encourage those who now drink moderately, to drink more. The writer may reply, that this would be an abuse of his language and meaning. Granted: the facts will nevertheless be realized, and the results, there is great reason to apprehend, will be a powerful predisposing cause to disease, and to the intemperance of many who are now temperate. It is the testimony of all those who have witnessed the prevalence of cholera, that every species of excess, and every deviation from a regular and uniform mode of living, is liable to excite the system to disease. But we have the most abundant testimony, also, that abstinence among those who have been intemperate, does not predispose to this sickness, but is, on the contrary, a great security against it. I need only mention the official statements, relative to the epidemic cholera in Russia, on the authority of Prince Lieven, Ambassador to England. He stated to Sir Matthew Tierney, that 'the cholera, during its rage at Petersburg and Moscow, did not increase the mortality beyond the average of former deaths.' By the official returns, the number of deaths, taken as a whole during the prevalence of the epidemic at Moscow, was absolutely less than in ordinary times. *This is attributed to the people refraining from drinking, and other habits of dissipation.*"

But there are others implicated in the guilt which intemperance brings upon the land, besides the actual victims of the vice itself. If intemperance be inevitably connected with all use of ardent spirits in common life, as all experience testifies; and if

no single advantage is gained to society by their use, by which they can be said to afford the smallest compensation for the world of sorrow and death they create, which I challenge all the enemies of temperance to show; then I affirm, and I desire to do it dispassionately, as in the presence of God, that to assist the use of them in any way is to become accessory to the crime of drunkenness itself, and participant in all the sins that flow from it, as their deadly fountain. If so, the cholera has a special voice for all manufacturers and venders of ardent spirits. They are called upon to repent, and to turn away from that particular sin of which they have been thus far guilty, in making merchandise, as it were, of the shame, and poverty, and ruin of their fellow men. I confess I do not know how any of this class of persons can stand the burning evidence which the cholera has been for some time throwing upon the iniquity of their trade. The light was powerful before; but it has now acquired a vividness that, one would think, should gleam through all the chambers of the darkest soul, and fill it with conviction not to be resisted. With every such person, if there be such persons present, I would expostulate to-day in the most affectionate but solemn manner. "Is it true, O my brother, that this disease, which has carried consternation over the whole globe, and is now calling the land in which we live to humiliation and prayer, is nourished and supported by the use of ardent spirits more than by all other causes together? Is it true, that the intemperate are its chosen victims wherever it goes, and that the very prey on which it fattens and luxuriates from day to day is made ready for it by the power of strong drink? And can you still consent to aid in the distribution of so foul a poison? Though regardless of all other appeals sounded from that vast hospital of sorrows which intemperance has created, how can you bear the great and piercing cry that is continually going up to heaven from the track of this desolating scourge? Oh, methinks, at that sound you should bring every gallon of liquor from your cellar, and pour it out in the streets, as an atonement to an injured and suffering world! Atonement, did I say? Ah, there can be no adequate atonement to society for an injury that eats so incurably into the social system. But you would, at least in this way, evince the sincerity of your repentance, and secure a claim upon the forgiveness of your fellow men. As it is now, I marvel how you can look them with tranquillity in the face. The very danger which now terrifies the land, is a danger which *you* have contributed to create—for it lies more in the intemperate habits of society than in all other causes put together. And while you continue your present traffic, you are continually aiding to maintain that danger in all its force. Yes, you are literally providing

aliment for the plague; and while the community around you is making all sorts of exertion to ward off its attacks, you are doing as much as in you lies, and I had almost said all that can be done, to invite its presence, and to make it terrible when it comes. Is there no injury done to society in all this? Is there no trampling here upon the rights of your fellow men? Is it not enough that you are lending your aid to keep up the burden of their taxes by promoting pauperism and crime among them, and that you are instrumental in scattering among them the ordinary sorrows produced by intemperance? Do you claim the right also of bringing the pestilence upon them, and ministering to its dark course as it steals in terror through their dwellings! And can you then think it strange that some of them, at least, feel themselves aggrieved by your conduct, and look upon you as doing them wrong? Oh, my brother, they have reason. You are sinning against your country, as well as against your God."

But there is a duty incumbent upon *every* man in regard to the use of ardent spirits—the duty of joining himself to the Temperance society, and giving all his influence to promote the object which it has in view. Are there any in this house who have hitherto refused to co-operate in this great enterprise of the day? I entreat you take the matter once more into serious consideration this day, and see if you have not done wrong in thus standing aloof from such a cause. And if you find reason to conclude that you have done wrong, resolve at once to change your position. It is in vain to pretend friendship to the interest at which the Temperance Society is aiming, unless you actually throw yourself into its ranks. To occupy any other ground, is to stand in the way of its onward march. And can you at this time, when suffering humanity is so eloquently invoking your aid, consent to withhold the influence you possess from a cause so benevolent and noble? What a blessing it had been to the country at this hour if the temperance reformation had been completed before the cholera reached our shores! What a security it had been to this city—far above all the protection that is now sought in the sanitary measures that are going forward—if only one year ago ardent spirits had ceased to be used among its citizens, and all its grog-shops were now closed, and all its drunkards sober men! And why has not all this been accomplished? Because so many in the land have acted the same part which you have acted in regard to the temperance enterprise. Had you enlisted in it with all your heart, you would have had the comfort of reflecting this day, that, so far as your instrumentality would reach, it was all employed to effect a result that would have been so desirable. As it is, that reflection cannot be yours. And now are you wil-

ling to gaze still upon the desolation which the use of ardent spirits is working around you, and not raise a finger to stay its progress? Can you listen to the story that records the triumph of that pestilence which is now on its way to our very doors, and not be stirred up to do all that in you lies to put away from our city, and the land, the baleful malaria that is continually breathing upon us from the grog shops and liquor cellars with which we are surrounded? Are you concerned to have the streets and alleys cleansed, neighbouring ponds of stagnant water filled up, and the purifying agency of lime applied to every lurking-place of corruption; and will you yet take no interest whatever in the vastly more important purification which the friends of temperance are aiming to effect? There is no pool in our vicinity that sends up over us so foul and pestiferous an exhalation as that which is rising every day from the haunts of the intemperate; and there is no taint in the air like that which is continually communicated to it from the store-houses of the drunkard's poison. Oh, it were right that at such a time as this, an injured community should rise up with the feeling of one man, and pour such a frown of indignation upon all who are implicated in this mischief, as would compel them to skulk from the eye of day, and hide their shame in midnight darkness, instead of proclaiming it, as is now done, in the face of heaven, and through all the streets!

But there is another grand lesson to be received from the approach of the cholera. It is adapted to remind men most impressively of the vanity of that life which they here enjoy, and of the inadequacy of all human resources to secure their peace; and in doing so, it calls upon them to enter into covenant with the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus be at peace with their Maker. There is no refuge to which a soul can retreat, and be entirely free from danger, save the shadow of the wings of the Almighty. There is no hiding-place in the day of calamity and terror like the strong pavilion of the divine favor. *There* all his people retire, and dwell in security amid the deepest overflowings of judgment. Trust in God is the only thing that can effectually preserve that tranquillity of heart which is allowed on all hands to be one of the greatest securities against the power of the pestilence. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee." Thus is it that religion has even the promise of this life, as well as of the other. But its grand excellency is, that it not only fortifies men against the fear of death, but actually takes away all occasion for such fear, by turning even death itself into a tolerable event. It gives the soul an assurance that all things shall work together for its good; and that in the midst of all physical convulsions with which it can be surrounded, its safety is made

sure. Oh, how sublimely beautiful is that language of the psalmist, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar, and be troubled; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof!" And how expressively is the warrant for this confidence set forth in the ninety-first Psalm, "Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day. Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon-day. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold, and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the Lord which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet."

