

NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY BEFORE GOD.

# A DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED ON THE DAY OF

**FASTING, HUMILIATION AND PRAYER,**

APPOINTED BY THE

President of the Confederate States of America,

JUNE 13, 1861,

*Benjamin Morgan*  
BY B. M. PALMER, D. D.,

Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, New-Orleans, La.

~~~~~  
PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF  
THE CONFEDERATE GUARDS, COMPANIES "A" AND "B."  
~~~~~

NEW-ORLEANS:

PRICE-CURRENT STEAM BOOK AND JOB PRINTING OFFICE, 51 CAMP STREET.

1861.

1034 mac  
750

NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY BEFORE GOD.

# A DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED ON THE DAY OF

## FASTING, HUMILIATION AND PRAYER,

APPOINTED BY THE

President of the Confederate States of America,

JUNE 13, 1861,

BY B. M. PALMER, D. D.,

Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, New-Orleans, La.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF  
THE CONFEDERATE GUARDS, COMPANIES "A" AND "B."

NEW-ORLEANS:

PRICE-CURRENT STEAM BOOK AND JOB PRINTING OFFICE, 51 CAMP STREET.

1861.

# PROCLAMATIONS.

---

## PROCLAMATION TO THE PEOPLE OF THE CONFEDERATE STATES.

When a people who recognize their dependence upon God feel themselves surrounded by peril and difficulty, it becomes them to humble themselves under the dispensation of Divine Providence, to recognize His righteous government, to acknowledge His goodness in times past, and supplicate His merciful protection for the future.

The manifest proofs of the Divine blessing hitherto extended to the efforts of the people of the Confederate States of America to maintain and perpetuate public liberty, individual rights and national independence, demand their devout and heartfelt gratitude. It becomes them to give public manifestation of this gratitude, and of their dependence upon the Judge of all the Earth, and to invoke the continuance of His favor. Knowing that none but a just and righteous cause can gain the Divine favor, we would implore the Lord of Hosts to guide and direct our policy in the paths of right, duty, justice and mercy, to unite our hearts and our efforts for the defence of our dearest rights; to strengthen our weakness; crown our arms with success; and enable us to secure a speedy, just, and honorable peace.

To these ends, and in conformity with the request of Congress, I invite the people of the Confederate States to the observance of a day of fasting and prayer, by such religious services as may be suitable for the occasion, and I recommend Thursday, the 13th day of June next, for that purpose; and that we may all on that day, with one accord, join in humble and reverential approach to Him in whose hands we are, invoking Him to inspire us with a proper spirit and temper of heart and mind to bear our evils, to bless us with His favor and protection, and to bestow His gracious benediction upon our government and country.

(Signed)

JEFFERSON DAVIS.

By the President:

R. TOOMBS, Secretary of State.

---

## PROCLAMATION BY THE GOVERNOR.

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT OF LOUISIANA, )  
JUNE 8TH, 1861. )

The President has invited the people of the Confederate States to the observance of a day of fasting and prayer, and has designated Thursday, the 13th day of June inst., for that purpose.

It is meet, right and our bounden duty thus to humble ourselves before Almighty God, and invoke His protection. I therefore recommend the good people of Louisiana to faithfully observe the 13th day of June as a day of fasting and prayer, thus recognizing and acknowledging the righteous government of the God of Nations, and imploring His guidance and aid in our holy cause.

THOS. O. MOORE, Governor.

THEOLOGICAL

DISCOURSE

DELIVERED AT THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY

The following Discourse has been written out, since its delivery, from phonographic notes taken by Dr. N. B. Benedict, to whom the author takes pleasure in expressing his obligations.

The following Discourse has been written out, since its delivery, from phonographic notes taken by Dr. N. B. Benedict, to whom the author takes pleasure in expressing his obligations.

DISCOURSE

DELIVERED AT THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY

The following Discourse has been written out, since its delivery, from phonographic notes taken by Dr. N. B. Benedict, to whom the author takes pleasure in expressing his obligations.

## DISCOURSE.

---

2d. CHRONICLES, 6th Chapter, 34th, 35th verses : "If thy people go out to war against their enemies by the way that thou shalt send them, and they pray unto thee toward this city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name ; then hear thou from the heavens their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause."

This day is one of surpassing solemnity. In the gravest period of our history, amidst the perils which attend the dismemberment of a great nation and the reconstruction of a new government, we are confronted with another more instant and appalling. Our late Confederates, denying us the right of self-government, have appealed to the sword and threaten to extinguish this right in our blood. Eleven tribes sought to go forth in peace from the house of political bondage : but the heart of our modern Pharaoh is hardened, that he will not let Israel go. In their distress, with the untried sea before and the chariots of Egypt behind, ten millions of people stretch forth their hands before Jehovah's throne, imploring him to "stir up his strength before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh, and come and save them." It was a memorable day when the Hebrew tribes, having crossed the Jordan, stood, the one-half of them upon Mount Ebal and the other half upon Mount Gerizim, and pronounced the solemn Amen to the curses and blessings of the divine law as proclaimed by the Levites. Not less grand and awful is this scene to-day, when an infant nation strikes its

covenant with the God of Heaven. This vast assembly is not simply a convention of individuals engaged in acts of personal worship. It is not even the Church holding communion through priestly rites. But, as an integral part of this young nation and in obedience to the call of our civil head, we are met to recognize the God of nations. Confessing the sins of our fathers with our own, and imploring the divine guidance through all our fortunes, the people of these Confederate States proclaim this day, "the Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey." It is this sacramental feature of our worship which lends to it such dreadful solemnity. At the moment when we are crystalizing into a nation, at the very opening of our separate career, we bend the knee together before God—appealing to his justice in the adjudication of our cause, and submitting our destiny to his supreme arbitration. The bonds of this covenant, which we seal this day to the Lord, are entered upon the register in which the Recording Angel writes up the deeds of time, before the Eternal throne.

The question then arises at the threshold of our proceedings, what principles underlie and support this act of public and national homage? Our external actions are a mockery, except as they are concrete expressions of some secret and vital truth. As the body is but the organ of the soul, and each gesture but a symbol of the power which reigns within—so in all intelligent action some dominant idea resides, the soul by which it is quickened and informed. The worship now offered in this sanctuary will be found to turn upon the great truth, that the nation is in a clear sense a sort of *person* before God—girded with responsibilities which draw it within his comprehensive government. We must renounce the shallow nominalism which would make such a word as "nation" a dead abstraction, signifying only the aggregation of individuals. It is an incorporated society, and possesses a unity of life resembling the individuality of a single being. It can deliberate and concur in common conclusions which are carried out in a joint action, analogous to the powers of thought and will in a single mind. It stands in definite moral relations, out of which spring such du-

ties and obligations that we can properly speak of the law of nations in which they are expounded, and by which the intercourse with every similar society is regulated. In these respects a nation becomes a *person* capable of executing a trust, and conscious both of rights and obligations. Each has its own precisely defined character, fulfils its appointed mission, is developed through a providential training, and is held to a strict providential reckoning. The importance of this principle is sufficiently apparent. It not only gives significance to these religious solemnities; but it suggests the duty of this new-born nation to consider the part assigned it in the great drama of History, and its dependence upon the blessing of Him who "ruleth in the kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever he will." I shall, therefore, be justified in pausing for a moment upon its illustration.

If we ascend the stream of history to its source, we find in Noah's prophetic utterances to his three sons, the fortunes of mankind presented in perfect outline. The benediction upon Shem marked his descendants out for a destiny predominantly religious; and through all time, in ancient days and in modern, both in a true direction and in a false, and as seen in the two representative nations of the Shemitic stock, history attests the fulfilment of this mission. Through the entire interval between Abraham and Christ, the Hebrews were appointed to testify for the unity of God against the idolatry of mankind; and all Hebrew history turns upon the execution of this trust as its pivot. Since the Christian era, the Arabians, belonging to the same group, moving in a false direction, but yielding a blind obedience to what may be termed their Shemitish instinct, gave birth to the Mahometan imposture, a religion without a mystery and without a sacrifice, which, transforming a religious enthusiasm into martial fanaticism, has tinged the whole current of their history. Still further to mark the destiny of this group, the only members of it, which have left no permanent trace upon the history of mankind, were those upon the banks of the Euphrates, who were seduced by a fertile agriculture and a flourishing commerce from their religious trust, and lapsed into the idolatry and worldliness of the other races.

In like manner, enlargement was promised to Japhet; and through all the past, the hardy and aggressive families of this stock have spread over the larger portion of the earth's surface, fulfilling their mission as the organ of human civilization. In ancient and in modern times—through the Greeks and Romans once, through the English, French and Germans now—the world has been indebted to Japhet for its intellectual culture, for the discoveries of science, for the inventions of art, for the solution of all the great problems of State policy and public law. It would not be difficult to show how this general work of civilizing the world has been providentially subdivided between the families of this great stock—that as of old Greece was supremely devoted to intellectual culture, and Rome to political philosophy, so in later times the same partition of duties has practically been made between the great nations of Europe. Still further to show the controlling power of God over nations, wild and nomadic tribes have been held in reserve, bursting, at appointed times, the bounds of their enclosure and recruiting the wasted energies of a decaying civilization.

Upon Ham was pronounced the doom of perpetual servitude—proclaimed with double emphasis, as it is twice repeated that he shall be the servant of Japhet and the servant of Shem. Accordingly, history records not a single example of any member of this group lifting itself, by any process of self-development, above the savage condition. From first to last, their mental and moral characteristics, together with the guidance of Providence, have marked them for servitude; while their comparative advance in civilization and their participation in the blessings of salvation, have ever been suspended upon this decreed connexion with Japhet and with Shem.

These facts are beyond impeachment; and nothing can be more instructive than to see the outspreading landscape of all history embraced thus within the camera of Noah's brief prophecy. In the largest classification of the human race, we see the hand of God upon nations—not only "appointing the bounds of their habitations," but impressing upon each the type of character that fits it for its mission. If from this wide

generalization we turn attention to particular States, we have the same evidence of their separateness and individuality. Thus, from the earliest moment that Egypt was cradled amidst the bulrushes of her own sacred Nile, she exhibits a character throughout and intensely Egyptian; a character as clearly distinct from the Hebrew and the Persian, as these in their turn differ from the Roman and the Greek. And the spaces which all these respectively fill upon the chart of universal history are as exclusively their own, as the places which they occupy upon the surface of the globe. It is noteworthy in this connection that as nations have their assigned missions, so they are preserved in being till their work is done; after which they sink into decrepitude, or are expunged from the roll of the living. Thus Greece was perpetuated until she had carried the arts of sculpture and painting, of poetry, eloquence and song, to a perfection which has never been surpassed; and when she could do no more in philosophy and science, she was trodden in the dust beneath the iron-heeled legions of Rome. When Rome, too, had built up an empire as wide as the world, and could do no more by her systems of jurisprudence and schemes of state-craft, she slid into a military despotism--and the world having no need of experiments in that direction, her mighty fabric gave way under the pressure of barbarian hordes, the present congress of European nations springing ultimately from the political chaos which was thereby induced. So it has been through all the past; so it will continue to be through all the future; and the grand conclusion is but the lesson which is impressed upon us to-day. This lesson is, that nations are in a weighty sense *persons* before God, with individual characters mysteriously impressed upon the parent stock, and fully developed through a providential training; that they work out their historic missions which are unequivocally assigned by a higher power; that girt about with grave responsibilities, they are held to account for their fidelity to their trusts: and that their solemn duty is to recognize in every stage of their career that Being by whose guidance and blessing they are conducted to their destinies. In the ac-

knowledgment of this truth we to-day bow the knee before the God of Heaven, whom we have chosen to serve as the God of this nation forever.

Parallel with this truth of the nation's personal responsibility, is another which determines the form of our worship by humiliation and fasting as well as by prayer. I refer to the continuity of a nation's life through a long succession of individuals that die. While the elements which compose the nation are continually passing away, the nation remains entire without disintegration. As the body of a living man is continually wasting and as continually repaired, through the ceaseless flux of its particles ; so in the state "one generation goeth and another generation cometh", but the nation preserves its identity through the whole succession. In consequence of this it is that, in God's government over them, the sins of a nation are often punished in generations long posterior to that which is immediately guilty. The measure of criminality being at last filled up by these, the accumulated chastisement descends. This principle our Lord declares to the Jews of his day : that they "filled up the measure of their fathers;" that "upon them would come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, the son of Barachias, whom they slew between the temple and the altar; verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation." It is in virtue of this principle that we undertake to confess the sins of our fathers as well as our own ; which, upon any other ground, would be a mockery and a sham. As nations in their corporate form cannot be subject to the retributions of the final judgment, the divine government must be enforced alone by temporal sanctions ; and the probation which nations enjoy passes along the current of national life through succeeding generations, bringing at last the avenging punishment upon one generation out of many which are equally implicated. If this should seem severe, it should be remembered that it is unavoidable under a state of discipline and probation ; and it has the practical comfort, that repenting posterity may often, by humility and faith, turn aside the descending

judgment, and secure still the favor and protection of Heaven, forfeited by their fathers.

Under this exposition of principles which underlie our worship, let us, my brethren, like Daniel of old, "confess our sins and the sins of our people, and present our supplication before the Lord our God, in this his holy mountain." There is obviously a distinction between the sins committed really by individuals, but which from their universality we may in a sense bewail as national, and those sins which are referable to the nation itself in its organized and corporate form. For example, intemperance is painfully prevalent among all classes of our people; yet it is not properly chargeable upon the nation as an organic whole, except so far as the government by its unwise or insufficient legislation may be responsible for the same. So again, "because of swearing the land mourneth," that profane use of God's holy name which dishonors the lips of multitudes; and which one of England's classic writers describes as "the superfluity of naughtiness," "a sort of peppercorn rent" which men gratuitously pay to the Devil. Yet in a strict sense it is the sin of individuals who presumptuously say "our lips are our own, who is Lord over us!" In like manner, Sabbath-breaking is affirmed in Scripture to be one of those offences which peculiarly draw down upon a people the righteous resentment of God. Yet the nation is not held answerable for it, except as rulers in their official acts, or the law by its postal and other arrangements, may wantonly tread it in the dust. However proper it might be to comment upon these forms of transgression and to bewail them upon this day of public fasting, as the common sins of our people, I prefer for special reasons to restrict your attention to that class of sins which are properly national, as being committed by the people in their public association and in their corporate existence.

1. *We bewail then, in the first place, the fatal error of our Fathers in not making a clear national recognition of God at the outset of the nation's career.* The record of the divine dealings with America was, from the beginning, singularly a religious

record. It was certainly remarkable that this Western Continent should have been locked up between two oceans from the knowledge of mankind, through fifteen centuries of the Christian era : and quite as remarkable that its discovery should be ordered at a time when an asylum was required for the victims of religious persecution in the old world. It is certainly true that religious zeal operated as a constraining motive with those who first took possession of these shores. In all the proclamations and grants of Spain and Portugal, the planting of the cross upon these heathen and savage coasts was urged as the leading motive for conquest and colonization—and the Continent was formally taken possession of by the first discoverers as distinctly in the name of Almighty God, as by the authority of their Christian Majesties, Ferdinand and Isabella. It is familiar even to our children that the hardships of the first settlement in these United States, were cheerfully endured through the faith and patience of those who simply sought “amidst the depths of the desert gloom” “freedom to worship God.” Yet will it be credited, when this most religious people, after the lapse of a century and a half, undertook to establish an independent government, there was a total ignoring of the divine claims and of all allegiance to the divine supremacy? It is true that in the eloquent paper which recited their grievances before the world, and proclaimed the Colonies independent of the British throne, the signers of the Declaration appealed to the Divine Omniscience “for the rectitude of their intentions,” and pledged their faith to each other “with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence.” It is therefore the more remarkable that, eleven years after, in that great instrument by which the several States were linked together in a common nationality, and which was at once the public charter and the paramount law of the land, not a word is found from which one could possibly infer that such a being as God ever existed. The omission was a fearful one ; and it is not surprising that He who proclaims his jealousy of his own glory, should let fall the blow which has shattered *that* nation. Probable reasons may be suggested for its explanation. It certainly was

not due to the irreligiousness of the masses, for they were predominantly christian. But the public leaders of the time were largely tinctured with the free-thinking and infidel spirit which swept like a pestilence over Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and which brought forth at last its bitter fruit in the horrors of the French Revolution. It may have been due likewise to the jealousy entertained of any union between Church and State, at a time when the novel, grand and successful experiment was first tried of an entire separation between the two. But to whatever causes we refer it, the certain fact is that the American nation stood up before the world a helpless orphan, and entered upon its career without a God. Through almost a century of unparalleled prosperity, this error has been but partially retrieved ; as the religious spirit of the people has silently compelled the appointment by executive authority, of days of public thanksgiving and prayer—yet to this day, in the great national act of incorporation there is no bond which connects the old American nation with the Providence and Government of Jehovah.

Thanks be unto God, my brethren, for the grace given our own Confederacy, in receding from this perilous atheism ! When my eye first rested upon the Constitution adopted by the Confederate Congress, and I read in the first lines of our organic and fundamental law a clear, solemn, official recognition of Almighty God, my heart swelled with unutterable emotions of gratitude and joy. It was the return of the prodigal to the bosom of his father, of the poor exile who has long pined in some distant and bleak Siberia after the associations of his childhood's home. At length, the nation has a God : Alleluia ! “ the Lord reigneth let the earth rejoice.” And now in the beautiful proclamation of our President our whole people through eleven States are called to ratify the covenant, and to set up the memorial stone hereof. It is indeed no ordinary State Paper, filled with cold and starched commonplaces, which by their icy formality so often freeze up the very piety they seem to invoke. But a religious unction pervades every clause and line ; and the child of God can recognize the dialect which his ear loves to hear. It summons us to “ recognize our dependence upon God,” to

“humble ourselves under the dispensations of divine providence,” to “acknowledge his goodness” and “supplicate his merciful protection.” Under the conviction that “none but a righteous cause can gain the divine favor,” it “implores the Lord of Hosts to guide and direct our policy in the paths of right, duty, justice and mercy; to unite our hearts and our efforts for the defence of our dearest rights; to strengthen our weakness, crown our arms with success, and enable us to secure a speedy, just and honorable peace,” “to inspire us with a proper spirit and temper of heart and mind to bear our evils, to bless us with his favor and protection, and to bestow his gracious benediction upon our government and country.” This is truly a Christian patriot’s prayer. It breathes no malignant revenge; but it calls the nation to nestle beneath the wings of Almighty power and love. Upon this central truth—that “God is and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him”—all of us can stand. Hebrew or Christian, Protestant or Catholic—all can subscribe this ultimate truth: and here we all meet to-day to say that He is our trust in whom nations as well as men “live and move and have their being.” This day is therefore one of infinite solemnity; it is our nation’s first Sabbath, when it meets to confess its God. If it shall hold fast to this testimony, it will have an immortal career: and had I a voice loud as seven thunders, I would proclaim from the Potomac to the Rio Grande, that a nation drives against the rocks which denies its responsibility before the God of Heaven. I speak this not as if it were my trade: but as a man, and in full view of all that constitutes true manhood, under the pressure and dictation of the highest philosophy, I affirm that to know and fear God is the perfection of wisdom. He is most a man, who brings up all parts of his nature with an equal culture; and to cleave sacrilegiously between these parts and to throw away those religious longings which can be satisfied only in God, is to forego our highest prerogative and to approximate the level of senseless apes chattering upon the trees of the forest. May God keep this nation under the power of those religious convictions, which to-day moves the hearts of our people as they were never moved before!

2. *We have sinned against God in the idolatry of our History, and in the boastful spirit it has naturally begotten.* It is a melancholy proof of human frailty, that our noblest virtues so easily degenerate into the meanest vices. A generous heart cannot but rejoice in an honorable ancestry; and love of country is a filial virtue, which must feel complacency in a public history illustrated by magnanimity and truth. A just self-reliance too is only the off-shoot of true manliness; characteristic of all, whether nations or men, by whom any thing historic is ever achieved. Were these high virtues always sanctified by a religious sense of dependence upon God, they would never be corrupted into the weaknesses either of vanity or arrogance. But woe to the nation that with pride of heart lifts itself against God! The terrible infliction upon Nebuchadnezzar of old, is a lesson for all time. The poor monarch, driven among the beasts of the field and drivelling in his insanity, proclaims through his affecting experience that all "those who walk in pride God is able to abase." Never was such a debt of gratitude for providential blessings contracted by any people, as that due to God from the American nation. He gave them a broad land and full of springs—He emptied out its former inhabitants who melted away as the Canaanites before Israel—and His gracious providence was a wall of fire around their armies through a long and painful war. Yet we have seen how speedily they forgot the God of their salvation, and made an idol of themselves. Looking out from their palaces and towers, they have cried, "is not this great Babylon that we have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of our power and for the honor of our majesty?" They have lifted up their golden image upon the plain of Dura, and "at the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut and psaltery, they have fallen down and worshipped it." With insufferable arrogance they have taunted other nations with their adherence to institutions and usages, which are the growth of time, and cannot perish in an hour. Assuming that Constitutional freedom can only be enjoyed under Republican forms, as propagandists of their own political faith, they have sometimes rudely challenged every other creed

as heretical and monstrous. It is too often forgotten that forms of government are not the arbitrary products of legislation, but are an outgrowth from the nation's life—as it were, secreted from within and crystalizing around it as an external shell. Hence the burning resentment created by a crusade against usages which are endeared by habit and consecrated by time. Certainly from this charge of officious intermeddling, a portion of the American people have not been free, springing, even where it is most innocent, from the egotism and self-conceit which says, “we are the people, and wisdom will die with us.” But it was reserved to our own day to carry this haughtiness to its climax, in denying the right even of political existence to those who will not pronounce the Shibboleth of Federalism. The empty menaces, too, which have been poured into our ears, and into the ears of all Europe, would be disgusting from their arrogance if they were not contemptible from their impotence. But in the public laughter which they have drawn down from all the world, we cannot fail to see the righteous retribution of God upon this national idolatry of self. Let us—so far as in the past we may have been implicated in this transgression—deeply repent of it. Let us, in the opening of our national career, lay deep the foundations of public virtue in a sense of dependence upon God. Let us, to the end of our history, aim to preserve that modesty of carriage which distinguishes the nobleman from the parvenu, and which always remembers that a nation is great only through the divine favor.

3. Another form of national sin has been *a too great devotion to Party, coupled with the flagrant abuse of the Elective Franchise*. We may indulge no Utopian dreams of exemption from the collisions of party; nor would complete political repose, if long continued, be an advantage. Under a free government where men are permitted to think, they must be expected to differ. Discussion, too, gives light; for truth, like fire, comes out from the contact of flint and steel. Parties which spring from honest and different views of public policy, are seldom sectional. Embracing the whole country, they are perfectly consistent with genuine patriotism; and may even form bonds of union be-

tween those who might else be separated by local interests. The simple existence of parties, therefore, is not an evil; or if it be, like the antagonism between the forces of nature, it is conducive to a higher good. This presupposes, however, that the arena of conflict is the hall of legislation, and the weapons of warfare are those of honorable debate. But when it comes to this, that party usurps the place of country—when caucus becomes king, and by boot and thumbscrew all individuality of opinion is crushed out of men—when public platforms become the oracles of inspiration, higher than the constitution and the law—when tricksters and under-whippers, who drill the rank and file of party, take the place of statesmen who expound and defend great and lofty principles—when, above all, supple cunning carries out, by base and crooked measures, the decrees of secret cabals: then may be seen the handwriting upon the wall, and the glory has departed. Alas! my brethren, am I not reciting the sad and bitter tale of the past? What but this fell spirit of party has riven to its base a government which, a little while ago, we thought as enduring as the everlasting hills? The great statesmen passed away whose hearts could embrace a continent, and we came to men who, whatever their genius, fall under the cutting rebuke of Goldsmith—to men

“Who, born for the universe, narrowed their mind,  
And to party gave up what was meant for mankind.”

We have lived to see fulfilled in the reign of sectionalism the remarkable prophecy of Mr. Jefferson, uttered forty years ago with such startling emphasis: “I had ceased,” writes he, “to pay any attention to public affairs, content to be a passenger in our bark to the shore from which I am not distant. But this momentous question (the Missouri controversy) *like a fire bell in the night*, awakened and filled me with terror. *I considered it at once as the knell of the Union.* It is hushed for a moment; but this is a reprieve only, not a final sentence. *A geographical line coinciding with a marked principle, moral and political, once conceived and held up to the angry passions of men, will never be obliterated.*” A turbulent and wicked faction, working

through a generation and laying its obscene touch upon everything holy in Church and State, at length sprung like the old man of the sea astride of the nation's neck. The work of ruin was accomplished; and now the deep, awful chasm of eternal separation yawns between North and South. May God in his mercy forgive the authors of this mischief, for it never can be repaired!

But what shall be said of the *abuse of the ballot*, the very symbol and instrument of the people's power? What of the timidity, or indifference, or disgust of some who abstain from their privilege, and suffer every true interest of the country to pass by default into the hands of base and designing men? What, of the profaneness of others, like Esau, who for a mess of pottage sell their American birthright? What, of the political brokerage which trades in this dreadful immorality, and sets up the offices of government virtually at public outcry to the highest bidders? What, of the trained ruffianism which hustles with violence from the polls all honest men who can be browbeaten? "Oh! the offence is rank, and smells to Heaven!" Can my poor voice contribute aught this day towards arousing the public conscience to the enormity of measures, by which all national morality is secretly sapped, and the foundations of public liberty are surely undermined? Let us be deeply humbled before God for sins like these; and let us fervently pray they may belong only to the record of the past. For the love of God and Country, let us strive to bring back the purer days of the republic: when honest merit waited, like Cincinnatus at his plow, to be called forth for service, and before noisy candidates cried their wares at the hustings like fishwomen in the market—when a ribald press did not thrust its obtrusive gaze into the sanctities of private life, and the road to office did not lead through the pillory of public abuse and scandal—and when the votes of the people only expressed their virtuous and unbiased will. If not—then in the loss of our national virtue we shall become as incapable of serving God and history, as the poor nation which we have just seen stranded upon these abuses and wrecked forever. May these things be only of the

past! May the brand of Cain be on the forehead of him who first attempts, in our new Government, to corrupt the ballot! May he go forth a fugitive from men, until his dishonor shall hide itself in a nameless grave!

4. *As a nation, we have sinned in a grievous want of reverence for the authority and majesty of law.* You remember that fine passage in Hooker which embalms, in words of amber, the whole philosophy of obedience: "of law there can be no less acknowledged than that her seat is in the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world; all things in heaven and earth do her homage; the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempted from her power; both angels and men and creatures of what condition soever, with uniform consent, admiring her as the mother of their peace and joy." Like the attraction of gravitation in physics, law binds together all the spheres of human duty and holds them fast to the throne of God. In all the concentric circles of society, obedience is man's first obligation. Not one is so much a master, but he owes fealty to a power higher than his own. The spirit of insubordination is therefore the highest treason, for it breaks the tie which binds the universe of moral beings together: as though in nature apostate orbs should fly from their centres, and wildly clash in the regions of space.

But if disregard of law be in this general view a crime of such magnitude, it assumes a new malignity when committed by a people living under such a government as ours. Its distinctive folly and wickedness are seen in the fact that it involves the abdication of our supremacy. In a republic, the sovereign is the people; and the laws they obey are the expressions of their own will. To trample upon these is, therefore, to trail their own sovereignty in the mire, to abdicate their own power, to extinguish the national life by shameful *felo de se*. When a monarch like Charles V lays aside the insignia of his royal state and retires to a convent, we can understand the weariness of care and disgust of the world, which induced the step. But no censure mingles with our compassion, because

the state survived. His abdication simply transferred the symbol and substance of power to the hands of another, and there was no break in the continuity of the nation's life. But where the people are the ruler no less than the ruled, abdication is a felony; for it can only take place through self-murder. Insubordination to authority is with us therefore the commencement of political destruction—at once the most flagrant and the most senseless of crimes. There is the greater necessity for grinding this truth into the minds of our people, inasmuch as through the simplicity of our republican institutions the ensigns of power are not flaunted before the eye. Under a monarchy, the king and his court become the symbol of authority, the living representative of the law in its majesty. It is an unquestionable advantage of that form of government, that law should be presented in this embodied and concrete form before the masses; who are insensibly taught reverence by the very pomp and ceremony, which many decry without considering this incidental benefit which accrues. But with us, the administration of law is necessarily stripped of this outward splendor: the people should, therefore, be taught the dignity of obedience, as springing from the self-respect which is due to their own sovereignty. Need I pause to show the disasters which, in a popular government, must flow from irreverence of the law? Alas! the present history of our own distracted land furnishes a commentary for the text. It is a sad tale—a tale, sad as that which renewed the grief of Æneas before the Tyrian queen.\* It is this arrogant competition of individual opinion finding its climax in the pretensions of “a higher law,” which has involved half the nation in the guilt of perjury, and broken the bond of the holiest covenant ever sworn between man and man. It is this same recklessness of obligation, which has lifted up the sword to butcher those who will not bend nor yield to a merciless proscription. It is the same spirit mounting to phrenzy, which has seized upon wise and venerable

---

\*“ Infandum, Regina, jubes renovare dolorem,  
Trojanæ ut opes et lamentabile regnum  
Eruerint Danaï. \* \* \* Quis talia fando  
Temperet a lachrymis ?”

ministers of the church; who have turned away from the gospel of God, in order to hound on this war of exterminating and bitter revenge. And it is the same demon of misrule which, in three short months, has swept away every guard of private as well as public liberty; and erected, under the shadow of the tomb of Washington, a despotism as irresponsible and cruel as any which has ever crushed the hearts and hopes of mankind.

In this particular manifestation of lawlessness, the South has rather been "sinned against than sinning." But then we have the *lex talionis*; the spirit, whose unrelenting cry is "an eye for an eye—a tooth for a tooth." This right of retaliation finds recognition with us; not softened, as with the ancient Hebrews, by cities of refuge, whither the man-slayer may betake himself. By a too general consent individuals assume the prerogative of the magistrate, in redressing their own wrongs. It may be true, that certain outrages cannot be restrained by the inadequate defences of public law; and when the safety of society may require instant retribution at the hands of the sufferer, who is substantively transformed into the magistrate. But these cases are exceptional and extreme; and if not provided for by special enactment, they are at least sustained by a virtuous sentiment based upon the instinct of self-preservation, characterizing the State as well as the person. Yet, in a civilized and Christian land, when the broad shield of law is supposed to cover all the interests and rights of men, it is flagrant wickedness to live as though society was resolved into its primordial elements: amid all the paths of business or pleasure, to have the treacherous hand trembling upon the concealed weapon, which is ready, in the sudden brawl, to leap forth upon its unsuspecting victim. This spirit must be exorcised from the land, else it will work the destruction of government. Let us choose wise legislators, who shall frame a code sufficient for the public protection. Let us clothe our Judges with the purest ermine, that they may make the temple of justice awful and holy as the sanctuary of God. Let us create a robust and healthy public sentiment, which shall everywhere support the law by an influence as diffused and silent as the pressure of the atmosphere. Let us

train our youth to habits of obedience, teaching boys to remain boys, else they will be beaten with rods. Thus may reverence for law pervade all classes; and the daily conduct of our citizens come up as the swelling chorus of that song, which Hooker beautifully describes as "the harmony of the world." We have sinned in this against our race and against God: let our repentance to-day be the deep bass, which shall give the keynote of that song.

5. *As a people, we have been distinguished by a grovelling devotion to merely material interests.* A nation loses its tone when it becomes intensely utilitarian. When noble deeds are weighed in the scales of merchandise; and expediency stands behind its counter to measure off virtue by the ell, and weigh honor by the pound avoirdupois. The American devotion to material interests is by no means inexplicable. A great and practical race like our own, thrown upon a new Continent, and turning its Saxon energy upon the development of hidden treasures, elsewhere unparalleled, finds its covetousness reacted upon by its own prosperity. The age too is an age of physical science, which, exploring the secrets of nature, and subordinating her powers to the uses of man, renders it utilitarian by system. Besides all this, the stimulus of our Republican institutions develops the activity of our people into almost superhuman energy, and sharpens their wit to the highest shrewdness. With the total obliteration of caste, we start together from the same level of democratic equality. Yet, with the avenues to power and distinction open to all aspirants, is it strange that a general competition should exist amongst our people in the accumulation of wealth, which is at once the most obvious and the most easily attained instrument of power? Thus, the greed of gain has rusted into the hearts of our people—the most sordid of all passions, and the most fruitful source of individual and national corruption. The prevalence of this spirit has exposed us to the bitter sarcasm that, as a nation, we have set up the Golden Calf in the midst of the camp as the God of our idolatry. Every interest of the land has suffered from the corroding influence of this sordid utilitarianism. It has infected our schools

of learning, cutting down the standard of intellectual discipline until sound scholarship is fast becoming a thing obsolete as the mythology of Greece. It has contaminated our Courts of Justice, until jury trial has, in a measure, become a shield for crime, and immunity from punishment is regulated by a graduated tariff. It has seated itself in halls of legislation, and discounts at the tables of the money-changers the rights and claims which a just legislation should protect. The spirit of speculation sweeps over the land with its expansion of credit and its inflated prosperity, until, as periodically as the equinox, we look for financial disaster, which dashes to the ground colossal fortunes as easily as the hurricane lays prostrate the giants of the forest.

It is all wrong, my hearers: offensive to God, and ruinous to ourselves. And I do not wonder that, to save us from total demoralization, God has let loose upon us this political storm, in order to bring up from the depth of the nation's heart its dormant virtue. We are learning by the sacrifices of the times, in the same school with our heroic forefathers, that liberty is better than gold, and honor more precious than fortune. The accumulated treasures of past industry and thrift are now cheerfully laid upon the altar of your country's safety. Fathers are consecrating their sons to that Country's service, with an oath more solemn than that which bound Hannibal to eternal enmity with Rome: and tender mothers buckle the shield around them, as did the Spartan mothers of old, saying with equal heroism, "come back with it a conqueror, or be borne back upon it a martyr." I thank God for the storm. It has come in time to redeem us from ruin. Though the heavens be overcast, and lurid lightnings gleam from the bosom of each dark cloud, the moral atmosphere will be purged—and from our heroism shall spring sons and daughters capable of immortal destinies. Let me sound it out as with the trumpet of the Resurrection day: the men in all ages who have made history, have been men of faith—men who could hide a great principle deep in their heart, work it out as a potential and substantive fact, and abide the verdict of posterity. All the Poets, all

the Statesmen, all the Warriors of the past, were men of faith. Believing in the grand and the true, they could put their heel upon the present; and lifting up the curtain which hides the far off future from other men, they drew up that future by a magnetic attraction to themselves, and lived abreast of it. Any man can do the things that can be done; but they who do the things that can't be done—they are the immortals. It is a heroic day in which to live! Let the pulse of a high and generous patriotism beat in our breasts: that the history we work out may be the school-book from which our children's children shall learn to be true, and brave, and pure, as it becomes the children of the great to be.

I had designed, in connexion with our national responsibilities, to speak of *the obligations we owe to our slave population*. But the subject is excluded by its own largeness from discussion now. It will bear postponement. When this unnatural war shall be concluded, and we shall be free from the impertinent interference with our domestic affairs by which we have been so long annoyed, there will be opportunity to say all that the moralist and christian should utter, and what it will be fitting the legislator and the master should hear. We can afford to bide the time.

In conclusion, permit me to say that the present is by far the most important and glorious struggle through which the nation has ever passed. The parallel which has been drawn between it and the contest of the Revolution, has not been seen in its full significance by many even of those who have suggested it; certainly not by those who have derided it in terms of measureless contempt. The principles involved in this conflict are broader and deeper than those which underlay that of the Revolution, rendering it of far greater significance to us and to our posterity and to mankind at large. Our fathers fought for no abstract rights as men, but for chartered rights as Englishmen. They claimed that the fundamental principle of English liberty was invaded, when the Colonies were taxed without representation. They were abundantly able to pay the duty which was stamped upon the Royal paper, and the tax levied

upon the tea which they threw into the harbor of Boston: but they were not able to submit to any infraction of their Constitutional rights. For this they resisted unto blood: and had the British Ministry been wise, the day had been long postponed before the Crown had lost its brightest jewel, and England found a rival in those very Colonies which once owed her fealty and love. But *our* Revolution rests upon the broader principle laid as the corner stone of the American Constitution: "that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed; and that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of the ends for which it was formed, it is the right of the People to alter, or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness." The true issue of to-day is not precisely what it was in November last, nor in January last, nor yet in March, when was exhibited the spectacle of the inauguration at Washington. The issue which now unites our whole population as the heart of one man, is *whether ten millions of people have not the inherent right to institute such a government, "as to them shall seem most likely to secure their safety and happiness."* This right is denied to us; and its denial lays the foundation of a despotism under which we cannot consent to live, for it was distinctly repudiated in the Declaration of 1776. We should be unworthy of our Fathers, if we flinched from maintaining to the last extremity the one, great, cardinal principle of American constitutional freedom. I could perhaps manage to live, if Providence had so ordained, under the despotism of the Czar, for it is not wholly irresponsible: the order of the Nobles would be interposed between me and the absolute will of the Autocrat. I could perhaps submit even to the Turk; for he is held in check by fear of his own Janizaries. But I will not—so help me God!—I never will submit to the despotism of the mob. It is not the occupant of the White House who is the tyrant of to-day; but the starving millions behind the throne. Hence the wild outburst of revenge and hate, which now astonishes the world. It is the wail of concentrated agony and despair of the unpaid labor

which asks for bread, and capital gives it a stone; and which hopes through our extermination and the deportation or massacre of our slaves, to find room for itself upon the broad Savannas of the South. May a merciful God help them of the North! They have sowed the wind, they must reap the whirlwind. They cannot retrieve the past, they must drive on and meet the future: perhaps to experience the fate of Acteon, and be eaten up by their own hounds.

The last hope of self-government upon this Continent lies in these eleven Confederated States. We have retained the one, primary truth upon which the whole fabric of public liberty was reared by our fathers, and from which the North has openly apostatized. We have too in the institution of Slavery a great central fact, living and embodied, lifting itself up from the bed of history as the mountain cliff from the bed of the deep, blue sea; and in defending it against the assaults of a "rose-water philanthropy," we may place ourselves against all the past and feel the support of God's immovable Providence. Dare we then—dare any of us, man, woman or child—falter upon the path of such a destiny? Dare we quench in eternal night the hope which for a hundred years has been shedding its light upon the world, that man may be self-governed and free? I do not doubt the bravery of our people—I do not distrust their willingness to make all possible sacrifices to maintain their right. But I do fear the absence of sufficient trust in the power and grace of Almighty God. Whatever may be the strength of our self-reliance, let it be built up through a sacred confidence in God as our shield and buckler. Whatever hopes we may cherish from the diplomatic influences which are destined to bear upon this quarrel, let us remember the jealousy of Him who forbade Israel to "go down into Egypt for horses." Let us trust in God, and with an humble self-reliance take care of ourselves; prepared to recognize that gracious Providence which will work our deliverance.

The division of the American people into two distinct nations has not taken me by surprise. It was clearly enough foreshadowed by the parliamentary conflicts through which we

have passed ; and it has its root deep down in the different nationalities, of which our eclectic population is composed. The analogies of history should have led us to anticipate it. Through all time, nations have been formed first by agglutination, and then by separation. In their original weakness, the most heterogeneous elements are combined and held together by the pressure of necessity : but in their maturity, those concealed differences spring up, which have their root often in the type of character impressed upon the parent stock ; and which no lapse of time can obliterate, and no political chemistry can make permanently to coalesce. We have vainly read the history of our fathers, if we failed to see that from the beginning two nations were in the American womb ; and through the whole period of gestation the supplanter has had his hand upon his brother's heel. The separation of North and South was as surely decreed of God, and has as certainly been accomplished by the outworking of great moral causes, as was the separation of the Colonies from their English mother ; as the genesis of the modern nations of Europe, out of the destruction of ancient Rome. In effecting this separation, the most glorious opportunity has been missed of demonstrating the power of our Republican principles, the progress of American civilization, and the effective control of the Gospel over human passions. In past ages, the sword has been the universal arbiter, and every issue has been submitted to the ordeal of battle. How fondly many of us hoped and pleaded for the rejection of this brutal argument ; and for such an adjustment of our difficulties, as both the civilization and the religions of the age demanded ! But our overtures of peace were first fraudulently entertained, and then insultingly rejected. I accept that rejection. I will go to my God, and will tell him how we have desired peace. I will tell him how we have sought to realize the scripture idea of "beating the sword into the plowshare:" and then I will remit those who have rejected our treaties of amity and commerce, to his retributive judgment. But in this act, let us bow in low humility before His throne ; confessing our sins with prayer and fasting, and trusting in His promise to reward them that diligently seek him. Oh ! my

country! "there in none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee, and shall say, destroy them. Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop dew. Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O People saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee, and thou shalt tread upon their high places."