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PIETY SECURES
THE
NATION'S PROSPERITY.

A THANKSGIVING DISCOURSE.

PIETY SECURES THE NATION'S PROSPERITY.

A

Thanksgiving Discourse,

By Rev. G. S. [✓]PLUMLEY.
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PREACHED IN THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, METUCHEN, NEW JERSEY,

On Thursday, December 7, 1863.

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[CORRESPONDENCE.]

METUCHEN, N. JERSEY, *December 18th*, 1865.

THE REV. G. S. PLUMLEY, Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church.

REV. AND DEAR SIR :

The desire has been expressed by members of your congregation that your Thanksgiving Sermon appear in print. It is believed that the ideas which it so ably presents should be placed in a form more durable than manuscript, and that its circulation beyond the bounds of your parish will be productive of good. Will you furnish us with a copy for publication ?

By complying with this request you will oblige us and those whom we represent.

Respectfully Yours,

EZRA M. HUNT,

WILLIAM M. ROSS,

J. W. WEED,

A. W. KELLOGG,

JOHN J. CLARKSON.

METUCHEN, N. J., *December 20th*, 1865.

TO MESSRS. HUNT, ROSS, AND OTHERS.

GENTLEMEN :

In accordance with your request, I send herewith the sermon preached to our congregation on the late Thanksgiving day.

Very Truly Yours,

GARDINER SPRING PLUMLEY.

THANKSGIVING DISCOURSE.

CHRISTIAN HEARERS :

We are assembled this day under circumstances such as Time has not witnessed. After months of apprehension and prayer, during which we have suffered sore trials, and seen garments rolled in blood, God has blessed his people with peace. And our rulers, as is becoming, in fitting words invite us to the house of the Lord to render to him the honor and the praise.

These are their proclamations in obedience to which we are met together.

WHEREAS, it has pleased Almighty God, during the year which is now coming to an end, to relieve our beloved country from the scourge of civil war, and to permit us to secure the blessings of peace, unity and harmony, with a great enlargement of civil liberty; and

WHEREAS, Our Heavenly Father has also during the year graciously averted from us the calamities of foreign war, pestilence and famine, while our granaries are full of the fruits of an abundant season; and

WHEREAS, Righteousness exalteth a nation, while sin is a reproach to any people:

Now, therefore I, ANDREW JOHNSON, President of the United States, do hereby recommend to the people thereof, that they do set apart and observe the first Thursday of December, as a day of national thanksgiving to the Creator of the Universe for these deliverances and blessings.

And I do further recommend that on that occasion the whole people make confession of our national sins against His infinite goodness, and with one heart and one mind implore the Divine guidance in the ways of national virtue and holiness.

In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the city of Washington, this twenty-eighth day of October, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-five, and of the Independence of the United States the ninetieth.

ANDREW JOHNSON.

By the President :

WM. H. SEWARD, Secretary of State.

It has pleased God, during the year now drawing to a close, to remove from our country the scourge of civil war, to permit the reëstablishment of the National Government over a restored Union, to preserve our people from famine and pestilence, and to bestow upon us abundant harvests.

For these and other blessings, our devout thanks are due to HIM who is the giver of all good.

Therefore I, JOEL PARKER, Governor of the State of New Jersey, do hereby designate and appoint, Thursday, the seventh day of December next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Prayer, and recommend the people of this State to assemble on that day in their usual places of public worship, to give thanks to Almighty God for the manifold blessings bestowed on us during the past year, and in the midst of thanksgiving humbly to pray that he will speedily repair the ravages of war, bind up the broken-hearted, and give consolation to those who sorrow for the slain; that he will move the hearts of our people to remember with gratitude the heroic services of the soldiers of the Union, cherish the memory of those who have fallen, and with liberal hand provide for the widow and the orphan, and especially that he will preserve our beloved country from civil strife and from foreign war, advance our nation in the path of true greatness, and cause us as a people continually to rely for guidance on the Most High.

Given under my hand and privy seal, at Trenton, the thirteenth day of November, A.D., eighteen hundred and sixty five.

JOEL PARKER.

Attest:

S. M. DICKINSON, Private Secretary.

As appropriate to this most interesting and memorable occasion we invite you to meditate upon the words of Holy Scripture recorded in

JEREMIAH xvii. 12:—"A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary."

When the children of Israel had entered into the promised land and encamped in the plains of Jericho, a remarkable vision was vouchsafed to assure them of divine assistance and complete success. "It came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay;"—that is, I come not as private soldier to engage in either army in a subordinate capacity,—“but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship.” At once he recognizes his Commander in chief. Beholding in that humble form of one like unto the son of man the King of kings, victorious general of Israel as he is, he looses his shoes from his feet and renders to his sovereign the submissive homage that he owes. The glorious high throne where that king sits in serene and powerful majesty is the place of sanctuary for his people. Its erection, its continuance, its occupancy are pledges that complete triumph shall ensue

to Israel, and decided overthrow crush without remedy all of Israel's opposing foes.

Such was the well-grounded confidence of Joshua, and such the equally assured hope of Jeremiah, the author of our text. Living in a period when weighty responsibilities rested upon his nation, while many were filled with disquietude, and some, their heart departing from the Lord, trusted in man and made flesh their arm; with comforting words of truth he urges his countrymen to commit all their great interests to Jehovah, in the calm assurance that piety will secure the prosperity of their commonwealth.

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in JEHOVAH, and whose hope JEHOVAH is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." "A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary."

Not less complete than was this perfect trust of God's people in ancient days, should ours be; and while we adopt its exultant utterance as the burden of our Thanksgiving song over blessings and deliverances such as were never surpassed, let us not forget the lesson it suggests and enforces.

TRUE PIETY WILL SECURE OUR NATION'S PROSPERITY, AND DELIVER IT FROM ALL THE FOES THAT MAY THREATEN ITS PERMANENCE OR ITS PEACE.

And that we may become deeply impressed with the necessity for true piety in the present crisis of our national existence, let us contemplate,—

I. Some of the foes that threaten the prosperity of our country.

By the phrase, "our country," we understand not merely the national territory as bounded by geographical lines, but the form of government itself under which we live, and the constitution of society among us.

At the present time the world witnesses but few governments purely despotic. The fear of revolution, jealousy of other powerful States, even in the remote East the influence of the great European powers and the Republic of the United States of America, serve to

check the else uncontrolled authority of otherwise unlimited monarchs. In Russia and France the Emperor's power is to-day thus circumscribed by the force of public opinion and the dependence of national prosperity upon the inexorable laws of trade, finance, and commercial intercourse. Great Britain, though usually styled a limited monarchy, is in fact an aristocratical republic. The forms of a monarchy are indeed retained, but the real governing power, instead of being in the hands of the sovereign, is in those of the well-born, educated, and wealthy classes.

The form of government of our country, the United States of America, is a democratical republic, that is, a government by the people through their representatives. The following ideas are inseparable from it.

Christianity.—We do not mean by this statement that the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is distinctly mentioned in our Constitution;—the fact is otherwise: nor that our rulers are ineligible to office unless Christians;—on the contrary, the lack of piety in high places of authority is a cause for profound sadness. But this is the truth,—Christianity was the controlling principle of vast numbers of the early settlers in this land. Persecution on account of their Christian faith drove to these shores the Puritans of England, the Huguenots of France and the Presbyterians of Scotland and Ireland. An early enactment in relation to Pennsylvania is a specimen of the enunciation of those fundamental principles respecting religion which have finally been embodied in our national Constitution:—"That all persons living in this province, who confess and acknowledge one Almighty and Eternal God to be the Creator, Upholder and Ruler of the world, and that hold themselves obliged in conscience to live peaceably and justly in civil society, shall in no ways be molested or prejudiced for their religious persuasion or practice, in matters of faith or worship; nor shall they be compelled, at any time, to frequent or maintain any religious worship, place or ministry, whatever." So long as our Constitution remains unchanged no one can be persecuted for adhering to the Christian religion or obeying its dictates.

The laws of the land prohibiting murder, theft, sabbath breaking, profaneness, and other vices are based upon God's word. The death penalty for murder takes its sanction from the same authority. In our treaties with other nations, in our treatment of prisoners of war, and in our dealings with savages in our territories, however defective or open to censure the national conduct may be, it is universally con-

ceded among us that it ought to be founded upon Christian principles. Upon our current coin is seen the christian motto, "In God we trust." Christianity is then inseparable from the assemblage of ideas included in a view of our country.

Another idea inseparable from our country is *Democracy*. All who are competent are to enjoy the right of governing through their chosen representatives. There are, doubtless, imperfections in carrying out this principle into practice. Some of the incompetent, those ignorant perhaps even of the words and letters of written language, are voters; while some of those competent are excluded from the right of suffrage: but the principle notwithstanding is still acknowledged as a fundamental one in our conception of the American republic, that the people are the sole source of authority, and that their will, as expressed by their free ballots, is to mould the national policy.

Fraternity.—This is a term which, though not unfrequently upon the lips and banners of European patriots, has its proper significance only in a republic like ours. The largest liberty of immigration to this land by natives of all other portions of the world who desire to adopt our country as their home, with a welcome to the rights, immunities, and privileges of native born citizens,—this is our national recognition of all men as our brethren. The President of the United States must be "a natural-born citizen," but, with the exception of the occupancy of that office, all other advantages enjoyed by natives of the United States our Constitution offers to those of other lands who desire that they and their children may live under it.

This principle results from tradition, since our citizenship was originally composed of emigrants from foreign countries. It is, moreover, maintained among us by the argument that if in the very commencement of its history the national destiny was shaped by those of foreign birth, it can not be disastrous to us as a people to continue welcoming such to a share in our commonwealth, especially since the ratio between the number of immigrants and natural-born citizens is daily smaller, the latter by this fact continually exerting in all our affairs a more preponderating influence. To fill and to subdue our vast territory we must have enterprising swarms of population, while the world's progress demands that we invite to our varied soil and climate the dwellers of every land.

Unlimited extension of territorial boundaries in the formation of United States.

If thirty-seven States, differing in productions and modes of life, with some contrasts of interests and sentiment among their inhabitants, can cohere under one constitution as a well cemented whole; there seems to be no limit, save that which the ocean forms, to confine our nation's expanse. The Constitution of the United States of America is so framed as to give all necessary right of control to the individual States in matters not affecting the general welfare, which, in turn, is committed to a central government, in our day proved to be strong enough to compel these States to an indissoluble union, and a mutual avoidance of the infringement by one or a few of them upon the interests and proper claims of the others.

When, therefore, in the exercise of Christian patriotism at this nineteenth century of our Lord's era, citizens of the United States of America speak of their country, they intend by the phrase a land in the choicer hemisphere of the world, not easily bounded as to territorial limits, distinguished in its subdivisions as many States, yet but one republic, offering citizenship and opportunities for advancement in true progress to all mankind, permitting every one competent to have a share in the government, and basing its laws, its institutions, and its civilization upon the imperishable foundations of God's holy word.

This is our country—

“Great God! we thank thee for this home,
This bounteous birthright of the free,
Where wanderers from afar may come,
And breathe the air of Liberty.

“Still may her flowers untrampled spring,
Her harvests wave, her cities rise;
And yet, till Time shall fold her wing,
Remain earth's loveliest paradise.”

Some of the enemies that threaten the peace and stability of our country are these:—

1. The principle of republican democracy itself as carried into practice among us has an inherent weakness,—a foe to national permanence.

The theory at the basis of this principle is, that all who are competent shall have, through their representatives, a share in the management of the nation. But in practical working many of the competent, if by this term we mean the well read, judicious, benevolent,

and pious are excluded. For example, women have no vote even though competent from acquaintance with facts and events to employ it with intelligence, while a man unable to read or write, with the ballot which he can not decipher, helps to govern the nation. How far it is practicable to include all the competent and exclude all the incompetent from the exercise of suffrage, is still with us an untried experiment. The fact is that many thousands who are ignorant of the very first elements of human knowledge have this privilege; and we may well inquire can this be so without the greatest peril to the prosperity, even the continuance of our country.

The inherent weakness of a republican democracy presents another phase when we observe the limited power of the executive department of our government, held in check moreover by the extreme jealousy of it liable to be entertained by the people at large.

It is generally admitted as proved by the experience of nations, that, were it not for the encroachments of the sovereign in the exercise of his authority to aggrandize himself and his posterity, the strongest government, is the best. Could we have an angel or a perfect man for emperor, who would not prefer an absolutism to any other form of rule that can be supposed?

As we have no angels or perfect men for rulers, we desire a republic rather than a monarchy, but with its advantages this is its necessary defect. The central government which, to ensure permanence, should be very powerful, is very weak; and if the chief executive officer and his advisers endeavor, in defence of the State and for the public welfare, to exert its full powers, there is danger lest the natural and ever wakeful jealousy of the people may interpose obstacles to its exercise.

Thus, in the commencement of that great struggle for life through which the nation has just passed, it was a question in the minds of some whether the executive possessed under the constitution the power to evoke a sufficient force for quelling a rebellion. And at every step in the progress of the mighty conflict, the necessary measures for maintaining the authority of the government where it became reinstated, and for consummating the overthrow of the insurrection, were debated, as to their propriety not merely, but as to their constitutionality as well, by numbers of our citizens.

2. Another enemy of our country arises from the very independence itself of which we are wont to boast.

The isolation of each of the atoms that compose the mass tends to

a disintegration of the whole. We rejoice in the separation and disconnection of the particles of the quicksilver, but, having made it necessary for every drop to maintain its own individuality and to roll on for itself, we then expect the whole mass to cohere and to become a solid and homogeneous ball.

In an old monarchy like Great Britain everything leans upon everything else. If one card, of the child's cardhouse, tumble, all totter and fall; but replace the cards by squares of metal and cement their joined edges and we have the emblem of such a state. Each individual has a certain independence, since there are in him some elements of stability upon which others lean, but all his hope of being sustained is in their permanence. His station in life differs from that of others and his interests seem separated from theirs; he has little hope of changing his position or bettering his condition; as his forefathers lived so must he live, but these very differences and diversities seem to promote the common security. As the putting together of the legs of the surveyor's compass makes it topple over, so would it be were the diverse and opposite interests of such citizens to be made one and united; and in such a community they may reverse the old adage, and say: "Divided we stand, united we fall."

It is far different with us. We lack such a binding influence as the continual and manifest interdependence of everything in Great Britain affords. There all stability and prosperity seem to consist in the separation of individual interests; with us, in the union of all the portions, I had almost said of all the individuals which compose the republic. The very fabric of the government itself depends on union.

If a confederation of States, or a single State, or even a city or town in our land could leave our union and successfully maintain its independence, its separation from the remaining portions would be a death blow to the nation. If one State may go off, so may ten; if one State may rise in arms against the central government, each one may rise against its neighbor; if the compact is not a binding one by which they are joined together, neither is the compact a binding one by which the chief magistrate must vacate his seat when the period for which he was elected expires: a *coup d'état* like that of Napoleon III. becomes virtuous, and oaths lose all their power.

And yet, in connection with this union so necessary, so vital, there co-exists among us a principle most antagonistic to it, that of the freest individual independence. The rights of separate States are defined, jealously guarded, and in some instances, as is not surprising, even

magnified. Each city, town, village, and hamlet has its own interests, sometimes in apparent conflict with the welfare of the common country; while all our education in the school, and not unfrequently, in the family, fosters individual independence.

Each child, not to say each man, is daily surrounded by influences and subject to impressions that tend to promote an intense individualism in all. The American citizen seems ever marching to the exhilarating music of the poet's sentiment:—

“Thy spirit, independence, let me share,
Lord of the lion heart and eagle eye;
Thy steps I follow with my bosom bare,
Nor heed the storm that howls along the sky.”

It may be well, within limits, to be thus intensely unfettered; the danger is, lest we become also intensely selfish. The tendency of this individualism, unless it be modified and tempered, is to set up every man for himself against others, every state for itself, and each section for itself to the overthrow of all that is sacred and dear to us in our Republic.

This intense separation of interests was our country's foe in 1788 and 1789, when it hindered and sought to prevent the framing and adoption of the Federal Constitution. It was a foe in 1813, when it perilled the nation's safety by rendering the New England States lukewarm in the common defence. It was a foe, when, in 1832, it prompted a convention in South Carolina to declare laws of the United States to be “null and void.” It has become in our day a terrible foe, arraying against the general government a confederated assemblage of States, and plunging us into a terrible civil war.

Such have been some of the awful results of an isolated independence and a separation of interests. How great an enemy this principle can be to our nation, we may learn by reflecting that its very life is in its union, while disunion is for the United States of America, national death.

3. Our limits permit a mere reference to another enemy of our country:—Romanism.

Rome is to-day more a temporal than a spiritual power. Her cardinals, bishops, and priests, form a vast secret society having ramifications in every portion of the world, and rapidly acquiring by every method possessions in real estate and valuable securities worth uncounted millions.

The principles of Romanism are tyrannical. Each lay member of the church of Rome is part of a machine moved by the priests, these in turn by the bishops, and so upward until the will of the supreme pontiff is reached as the last moving power. Wonderfully truthful, as illustrating this spiritual tyranny of Rome, was a motto lately displayed in a popish cathedral, on the occasion of the funeral of a deceased American officer: "I am a soldier and I obey my general; I am a Roman Catholic and I obey my bishop." Yes, "I obey,"—not my Redeemer, Christ Jesus,—but "my bishop." If there be any lesson which modern history has so taught that it may be considered as a proved law, it is this, that Romanism is the direct and the direst foe to free institutions. This tyrannical power, with uncounted wealth, binding in iron chains the souls of its deluded subjects, and blinding by ignorance and superstition astonishing numbers of those whose suffrages are to create our law-makers, and under God to decide the destinies of our republic, can not fail to be to it a gigantic enemy.

This Roman power in the midst of us is not loyal to our government, nor can it be. Its oaths of allegiance must, by the very terms of prior oaths to the Roman See, contain a mental reservation that nothing shall be done or thought of to the hindrance or injury of the Pope's temporal and spiritual reign. Every priest is, and understands himself to be, a subject of the Pope, who alone is his rightfully constituted sovereign. In the language of the old monastic vows, he is pledged to "be in the hands of his superior, as the staff in the hand of an old man." If he seem to yield submission to another government, it is because he deems it a prop of support to the papacy.

The controlling influence of this hierarchy upon the minds of public men in our country may be estimated from facts well known and uncontested.

Why is it that certain laws, those, for example, requiring the registration by the clergy of marriages solemnized by them, can be ignored and their provisions disregarded by the Roman priesthood? Why, that valuable property is given away by city councils or state legislatures, upon which Romish churches are reared, when appeals for similar grants to Protestant congregations are proverbially in vain? Why, that the Bible is to-day excluded from many public schools? And why is it that, during the late civil war, while numbers of Protestant clergymen were driven from their homes, their houses of worship closed or diverted to secular uses, and their flocks scattered,—no Romish church has been touched, and no Romish priest, whether he fa-

vored or opposed the suppression of the rebellion, molested? Other clergymen were obliged by the force of public opinion, or the interposition of the authorities, to declare their sentiments and to avow whether their convictions placed them on the side of the United States Government or of its adversaries; but no such ordeal confronted the Romish priest. On the border line between the union and the rebellion, to-day he celebrates the mass undisturbed under the flag of the United States. To-morrow hostile armies join in mortal combat; he is undisturbed: the day following, the rebel flag waves in temporary defiance; he remains untouched: the next, the traitors driven out, the Union regains its legitimate power; yet he continues unmolested. In Charleston he sings his *Te Deum* over the fall of Sumter, in Boston for the overthrow of Vicksburg.

We all know what Papal Rome was in her days of mastery, when emperors, kings, and princes paid their allegiance to the supreme pontiff and resigned their thrones at his command. We have not forgotten her persecutions when she made war upon the saints of God and was drunken with their blood, and we are ever asking:—is she to be feared as much to-day as she was to be dreaded in former centuries: would she, if she had the same supremacy, use the chain, the sword, and the faggot as she once used them: are her principles and her aims what they were when Luther, and Knox, and Calvin beheld in her THE MOTHER OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH?

To these questions the Pope's encyclical letter, so widely circulated during the past year, fully replies. In this document the Pope calls this century "our sad age," because of "wicked men who spreading their disturbing opinions like the waves of a raging sea, and promising liberty when they are slaves to corruption, endeavor by their pernicious writings to overturn the foundations of the Christian Catholic religion and of civil society."

Such is the language of the Pope of Rome, when in A. D., 1865, he speaks of the Bible Christians of the Protestant world, the doctrines of whom he characterizes as the "monstrous opinions which particularly predominate in the present day."

We will quote but one other sentence from this document, remarkable for its unblushing avowal of sentiments and its declaration of the propriety of employing measures supposed to have died, and to have been buried in the dark ages of the past. The Pope thus describes the advocates of civil and religious liberty as they exist in our own country;—"There are a great number of men in the present day who

do not hesitate to affirm 'that the best condition of society is that in which the power of the laity is not compelled to inflict the penalties of the law upon violators of the Catholic religion'—they do not hesitate further to propagate this erroneous opinion, termed *delirium* by Gregory XVI., viz. 'Liberty of conscience and of worship is the right of every man—a right which ought to be proclaimed and established by law in every well constituted state;'"

Think of that, Protestant Americans of the nineteenth century, who cherish as a holy legacy and tradition from Christian forefathers. "Freedom to worship God;"—and, as you hear the Bishops of Rome call their principles as to this freedom "*delirium*," will you hesitate to believe that Rome is now, as from its beginning, your deadly foe and the deadly foe of your country?

In this monstrous form of antichrist do we not behold a vast secret society composed on principles hostile to human development and religious progress, and as we witness its increasing wealth and daily augmenting power and resources, as we see how little true loyalty to a government founded upon the principles of our nation it can possess, as we remember how it is everywhere present, and that its devotees among us number four millions, do we exaggerate when we affirm that the power for evil, even of those whose failure in their opposition to the Union now awakens our gratitude to God, can not for a moment be compared with that wielded by this hostile hierarchy!

4. We mention finally in this enumeration of our country's foes;—Infidelity.

Want of faith in God, disbelief of his revealed word, a following after those who teach for truth doctrines opposed to that divinely inspired rule of faith and practice, and a sad neglect of the duties it enjoins,—these are some of the indications of an infidelity growing in the midst of us. Among the thousands who have sought our shores there have been very many who, in their own lands, have been filled with this subtle poison. They have themselves learned to look with a cold eye upon all the manifestations of God's glory in his works, and God is not in all their thoughts. The journals they would read, the public discourses to which they will listen, the conversation they delight in, must not contain anything of God which can not be interpreted as referring to, and ending in, second causes. And their baneful influence infects and degenerates numbers of our own countrymen, finding victims most readily among the young and the thoughtless.

The accurate statements of opposition to God's word, which in for-

mer days defined English Deism and French Atheism, are not found upon the lips of those who have imbibed the poison, for it is current among us as a practical infidelity manifesting its presence especially in two forms.

Absorption in business is one. The labor of the hands and of the head, by which the outward wants of man are supplied, controls all the thoughts, and not unfrequently engrosses all the affections of the soul. To this every waking hour must be devoted, while the immortal interests of our spiritual nature are ignored and disregarded.

Another form of practical infidelity is seen in the rush after mere excitement in pleasure. Amusement alternates with many as the only other occupation of the mind when exacting business relaxes its hold upon the over-strained powers. The mind fluctuates between toil and pleasure, while no attention is paid to the claims of God and religion upon a share of affection and regard.

Hence the general neglect of reading the Scriptures; hence the growing prevalence of the habit of spending the Sabbath as a day of recreation, God's house being passed by; hence the demand for a style of preaching which shall not inculcate the old, time-honored truths of divine revelation, but which shall rather discuss the affairs of the nation, or the relations of art to outward worship, or scientific problems, or rest in the acknowledged duties of the second table of the law, or become a mere essay upon the lesser moralities of well-bred society.

As in these and manifold other forms, we recognize the power of infidelity in our land, does it not become all Christians to raise deprecating hands to him who is thus despised and rejected, and to beseech him to remember the honor due unto his holy name whose glorious throne is from the beginning the place of our sanctuary!

Such are some of our country's foes;—the inherent weakness of a republican democracy,—the very independence itself of our citizens,—Romanism that lives only by destroying civil and religious liberty, and Infidelity, the more insidious because it springs up without the announcement of distinct principles or dogmas, a shadowy phantom as undefined, yet as dangerous as the death-dealing miasma or the pestilence that walketh in darkness.

If we borrow the wonted figure which illustrates the destiny, that none may foretell, of our dear native land;—the ship is noble and staunch, well built, and launched upon her untried voyage with the prayers of the good following her: but in her timbers themselves is the hidden worm, among her very crew are the unwise and the un-

faithful, and pirates are cruising upon her course. Shall the end bring her to success or disaster?

The question would furnish no theme for a day of national thanksgiving, but for the reply that comes to us from countless passages of God's word and finds its echo of triumph in our text: "A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary!"

Yes, this thought inspires our confidence, our hope, and our most grateful praises, as, like the ancient prophet, we reflect that—

II. God has defended and can defend our country from all its foes, while obedience to him will secure the nation's peace, permanence and prosperity.

"Righteousness exalteth a nation." "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." "Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in JEHOVAH our God is the salvation of Israel." "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

Such are the clear utterances of Holy Scripture, teaching us that a Christian nation should ever be a monarchy over which God must be recognized as the supreme reigning sovereign: "JEHOVAH is King for ever and ever!"

1. We may well consider hopefully the influence of true piety to make even a republic strong.

By true piety we mean "the religion of principle, in distinction from the religion of impulse; a spiritual religion, in distinction from a religion of forms; a religion of which the Spirit of God, and not the wisdom, or the will of man, is the author; a self-denying, and not a self-indulgent religion; a religion that has a heavenward, and not an earthly tendency; a practical religion in opposition to the abstractions of theory; and a religion that is so full of Christ, that he is at the basis of all its duties and hopes, its centre, its living head, and its glory."

The healing virtue that such piety can alone infuse is what we need to counteract prevailing worldliness, that, in spite of our churches, Bibles and ministers, infects the nation in its possession of exhaustless stores of material wealth. Natural productions of a varied climate and soil, mines of gold, silver, quicksilver, iron, copper, and lead, wells of oil, rich beds of coal and other valuable deposits; rewarding industry, aiding in the accumulation of wealth, and affording such re-

sources as never before and nowhere else in the world have been under the control of one people,—these are blessings from the hand of God, but at the same time blessings that imply accompanying temptations amid the enjoyment of the gifts to forget the Giver, and to set the heart supremely upon this world.

Suppose a deep infusion of Christianity to permeate the nation at large, how would it not change for the better all our prospects as a people! Suppose, instead of increasing an absorbed interest in matters merely of this world, all the bounties which God has lavished upon us were received with hearts fully recognizing our high obligations to Him, and used, as they might be, to extend His glory in the earth; suppose a deep and continual interest in true religion to characterize our country, who would not rejoice in the hope that if there were in its frame-work some inherent weaknesses resulting from the imperfection of all human things, yet the foundations of our prosperity and permanence would never be shaken!

True piety will increase the general intelligence of the people. A truly pious man is universally an intelligent man. Religion is identified with thought. The religion of the true God speaks its truths to his children through a book, and through the preacher, which effect an entrance for it into the mind by the presentation of thought; while the communication of believers with their God is likewise in uttered words that are to convey to him in prayer the results of their thought. Hence you never hear of the conversion of an illiterate man but you hear immediately that he is learning to read. He learns to read, and every passage of Scripture with which he becomes familiar, and every religious discourse that illustrates or enforces the word of God, and every new religious treatise which finds its way into his hands adds to the sum of his information and increases his intelligence. One day in seven is used by all such individuals to promote their acquaintance with important truths so as to increase their own intelligence, that of their households, and even the mental advancement of the whole community around them. The spectacle of an ignorant voter unable to read, who is a pious man, is seldom seen. The demagogue may not be troubled because of the number of the utterly ignorant thus engaged remotely in making the laws and governing the State, but the Christian statesman, well knowing how fatal is ignorance to the nation's welfare, rejoices to behold true piety banishing it as the sun dispels the darkness of night.

Piety increases confidence between the rulers and the ruled. If we

could see in places of trust and authority such men as fear God and work righteousness, it needs no demonstration to prove that the mass of the people would feel that in their hands all the interests of the nation would be safe. While, on the other hand, it is not the truly pious that make up the mob, irresolute, swayed hither and thither, and led into factious opposition to the powers that be. Who will for one moment doubt that if the majority of our rulers and of our people were obedient to the letter and to the spirit of God's word, we might confidently trust that the republic would go on its prosperous course directed by the wisdom and guarded by the watchfulness of the glorious covenant-keeping Jehovah. His lofty throne is from the beginning the place of our sanctuary!

It is the ignorant mob that makes us tremble. The men of loose, immoral life are the natural tools of the demagogue; they who seek office to gratify their avarice and ambition, and they who when raised thither trample upon the rights or squander the resources of the nation, are those whose consciences are not enlightened by God's word. But true piety transforms immoral, into moral men, brings its instructions to render the ignorant intelligent, awakens the voice of conscience in the heart of the ruler to re-echo and enforce the authority of the voice of God.

Thus righteousness exalteth a nation.

2. True piety will bind and cement our nation.

When we meditate upon the separating influences that tend to sever the citizens of such a republic as our own, can we fail to be impressed with the need of some powerful and connecting tie to counteract them, and bind us with indissoluble bonds? And where shall we hopefully seek such a tie, where find these bonds so surely as in true piety that tends to disunite none, but to cause all to grow together into one body in Christ Jesus.

A distinguished poet of ancient Rome begins one of his immortal odes with these words: "I hate the uninitiated common crowd." This sentiment is a specimen of the innate principle in depraved human nature which tends to isolate and disunite more and more widely man from man. The rich, the educated, the refined, while unchanged by the Holy Spirit, despise and learn to hate the poor, the ignorant, the less polished; while the poor is separated even from his neighbor. What a contrast to such division of interest and selfishness of conduct is presented when we heed the injunctions of God's word: "Love the brethren,"—"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,"—"As we

have, therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men,"—"Honor all men,"—"Having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous."

Such are the teachings of true piety. The truly Christian man will not wrap himself in comfort and luxurious ease while his neighbor pines in want and sorrow, unfriended and neglected. He will love to seek and to save that which is lost; he will, as did his divine Master, go about doing good; and no fellow being will be too humble, no dwelling too lowly, no afflicted heart, by reason of social position, too far distant from him, to receive and be blessed by the gentle, kindly influences of his sympathy and friendliness.

Again and again have we heard in our day "Fraternity" echoed as the watchword of nationality, and with a tone and enthusiasm that seemed to import the sincerity and fervor of real brotherhood. But there is no true fraternity in aught beside Christianity. There is no such uniting influence in the wide world as the cross of that Saviour who died that men widely dissevered, differing in complexion, differing in customs, in language, in the education of their faculties, and united in little but the common heritage of sin and the need of redemption, might be one in Christ Jesus. So that, if their languages even should have no other common words, they might all be able to clasp hands and find a universal medium of communication as they say together:—EDEN, JEHOVAH, JESUS, PARADISE, HALLELUJAH, AMEN.

And if in a republic like our own the idea of individual independence ever seem to become a separator of men, well may we summon the aid of religion to counteract such an evil, assured that Piety will become for us the effectual, as it is the only true binder.

This union in the blessings of a common salvation, this interest in the blood of a common Redeemer, this obedience to the one law of the only living and true God, this Christian love joining heart to heart in heavenly affection, would serve to hold our citizens forever united, even though the stars of our flag should be multiplied by ten, and its folds sweep over the entire western continent. A oneness of religious sentiment and interest would thus bind fast the dwellers of the widest extended territory. The burnished golden chain of Christian love shall clasp us to each other in bright and indissoluble bonds.

3. We may point to true piety as the only antidote to the destructive influences of Romanism and Infidelity.

This statement needs no argument, for what is Romanism but an

opposition in one form to true piety, and what Infidelity but an opposition in another form to true piety.

What is Romanism? There was a time when the gospel was preached in its purity, and received with sincerity by those who dwelt at Rome. But the gold became dim and the fine gold changed, and, as centuries revolved, instead of following Christ in meekness and humbleness, the bishops of Rome added to their temporal power, gained authority over nations and kingdoms, and abandoned the simplicity of the gospel for splendid schemes of worldly ambition. It may have been that even in her most corrupt days there were those among her members who had not bowed the knee to the Baal of her pollutions, but rested upon the atonement of Jesus Christ as the only ground of their salvation. Such there may be even now, although borne down and overpowered by the gross heresies that have eaten out all the life of an apostate organization, having no element of a church save the name only.

What is Romanism? It is opposition to God's commands, all broken by her doctrines. It is opposition to God's word forbidden or set at naught. It is opposition to salvation by the atonement of Christ alone. It is a system of penances and indulgences. It is Sabbath breaking and licentiousness. It is gorgeous rites, tinselled robes and the vanities of a pompous ritual. It is the tyranny of the priesthood and the slavery of the people. It is always and everywhere the foe of progress, of enlightened civilization, of Christian Liberty.

And true piety, universally embraced would slay this monster. True piety upholds God's commands, true piety bases itself upon, and ever lives, by God's holy word. True piety looks for eternal life only from the sacrifice, mediation, and intercession of God's dear Son. True piety has no faith in penance, alms, or confession to priests to cleanse from sin. True piety sustains the sacredness of the Sabbath, and enforces the moral law. True piety teaches that all real believers in Jesus are God's kings and priests; and, elevating the masses of the nation, carries on the torch of knowledge and Christian civilization to illumine every dark corner of the earth.

Piety, then, is the great weapon to use against Romanism. If any one ask, how can I best oppose this national foe, the answer comes: by becoming more Christ-like yourself; by recommending true piety by your own life; by increasing through your efforts the number of the truly pious.

Yes, true piety will dissipate the darkness of ignorance; it will dif-

fuse the Bible far and wide through the land ; it will gather into Sabbath schools the children of those now ignorant, degraded, and vicious ; and, by the aid of the Spirit poured out from on high, it will cause multitudes of the superstitious to abandon their vain idols and yield allegiance to Jesus Christ.

To the destruction of Infidelity, also the same remedy is applicable. Infidelity, want of faith in God's word, in God's Son, in God's plan of salvation, in God's day, in God's house, in such a life as God commands, and in such rewards and punishments as he has decreed ; what shall save us as a nation from this direful foe, but true piety ; and this will save us as we fly to God's high throne, so glorious, so ancient, so surely our sanctuary and our asylum !

And our confidence and trust in God is increased and all our hope of deliverance from every foe to our nation established as we review,

4. What God has done in behalf of our nation.

In years long past, God laid the foundations of our country in the piety and the afflictions of those forefathers who sought in these western wilds to establish civil and religious liberty and a Christian nation. His hand was in our revolutionary struggle. He gave us a Washington, a man of prayer and of piety ; he marked out our course in those early days of experiment while, with scarce any precedent to guide them, the fathers of our legislation and diplomacy felt their way toward the policy which has made us strong and great. And oh, how God has blessed us during the year now closing ! His hand stayed the effusion of blood, his voice spake peace once more to our distracted land, he gave success to our armies battling to restore or compel complete obedience to the laws.

God has so ordered it that slavery, for the overthrow of which good men in all portions of the land have prayed, should meet its death the past year. God graciously decreed that just previous to this thanksgiving-day it should be forever removed from us by an amendment of the Constitution, proposed and consummated in a reasonable and legal method. God has overruled even the sad affliction that overwhelmed the nation with heartfelt grief and clothed it in mourning, while all wept the death of their honest, capable, and indefatigable Chief Magistrate ; so that it has resulted in the quelling of angry feelings at home, and awakening sentiments of sympathy and interest abroad. God has given us abundant harvests and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. God is now permitting us to indulge the cheerful expectation of soon beholding our land freed from

many of its evils, with its citizens more truly united than ever before, and with the favor of his own gracious spirit visiting it with his copious and blessed effusions, to gladden and beautify it with heavenly mercies.

Yes, it is with these astonishing blessings, crowning with his favor this year of the right hand of the Most High, that we enter his house with songs of rejoicings to-day. His glorious high throne from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary. It is our asylum from all our foes. However numerous or powerful they may be, whether they approach us from without or within, if our nation may but become a truly and deeply pious people whose God is the Lord; this dear native land of ours shall overcome them all, amidst frowning and threatening dangers still be unharmed; shall stem the billows and outride the storm,

“Like those trim skiffs, unknown of yore,
On winding lakes and rivers wide,
That ask no aid of sail or oar,
That fear no spite of wind or tide.”

How appropriately, then, are we directed, and how does it become us to approach to the sanctuary of God's throne with our thanksgivings.

He loves to hear our praises. He will accept the offering of our grateful hearts.

“Give unto JEHOVAH, O ye mighty, give unto JEHOVAH glory and strength. Give unto JEHOVAH the glory due unto his name; worship JEHOVAH in the beauty of holiness.

JEHOVAH sitteth upon the flood; yea JEHOVAH sitteth king forever.

JEHOVAH will give strength unto his people; JEHOVAH will bless his people with peace.”

The President of the United States, in appointing a day of special thanksgiving for God's wonderful mercies to the nation, also urges us to confess “our national sins, and with one heart and one mind implore the divine guidance in the ways of national virtue and holiness.” To the place of our sanctuary then should heartfelt and humble prayers be borne.

The temple of Jehovah, the ancient sanctuary of his chosen people, had the privilege of an asylum: all who fled thither were safe. So, in

the exercise of true piety are we, as a people, to seek our safety. And, as in former days, those who had incurred their king's displeasure hastened to the sacred temple, and, taking hold of the horns of the altar, secured protection and pardon, so let us flee unto the glorious high throne on which Jehovah sits; and, clinging in faith and prayer to that throne, no evil thing shall cause us to tremble. We will confess our national sins; our pride, our vanity, our Sabbath-breaking, our worldliness, our consent to cruel human bondage, our yielding to Romanism, and our leanings toward Infidelity. O Lord hear, O Lord forgive. Pardon O Glorious King, pardon. Hear the cry of thy people, and take away all their guilt!

Moreover, amid these themes of general and national interest, let us not forget—

Our personal obligations to become the Lord's, and to promote pure religion by our influence and example.

Only as we infuse true piety into our nation, we have seen, can we make it sure that her foundations shall not be shaken. Oh how important is it that this true piety fill every one of our hearts; that you, my hearer, who love your country, and cherish her good name, and desire her perpetuity and glory, begin the great work of deciding her stability and grandeur by a personal consecration of *your* heart and life to the great Jehovah, King of our Christian land!

The earth redeemed from sin is to be his and the fullness thereof. This nation may have the distinguished honor of setting up his glorious high throne of universal dominion, first of all the nations, in the sense of an entire obedience to that God who has been from the beginning our help, of a hearty coöperation in extending his sway to all peoples and kindreds and tongues. What a happy career, how sublime a destiny! And, if this, as all the other great works of our age of social power, is to be accomplished by the personal influence of man upon man, what a responsibility rests upon each and every one of us to be truly pious, as we erect this day in our hearts Jehovah's throne.

This submission will enable us, with a patriot's hope and a Christian's confidence to adopt the almost prophetic words of the Chief Magistrate of this happy land, spoken years since, but still in the glad future by our nation's piety to be fulfilled:

“Let us look forward to the time when we can take the flag, that glorious flag of our country, and nail it below the cross; and while it

hangs floating beneath the cross exclaim, Christ first: our country next."

NOW UNTO THE KING ETERNAL, IMMORTAL, INVISIBLE, THE ONLY WISE GOD OUR SAVIOUR, BE GLORY AND MAJESTY, DOMINION AND POWER, BOTH NOW AND FOREVER. AMEN.