

THE SANCTUARY OF GOD,

CONSULTED IN THE

PRESENT CRISIS.

A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE

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SERMON.

"I went into the Sanctuary of God."—PSALM lxxiii, 17.

THE Sanctuary of God, among its other great and admirable uses, is an oracle whither we may go to inquire the mind and will of God in trying circumstances. It was thus that the Psalmist resorted to it on the occasion mentioned in this passage. The problems of life were too hard for him. He could not match the word of God with his work. He could not reconcile the promise with the Providence of God. His feet were almost gone, his steps had well nigh slipped, "until," he says, "I went into the Sanctuary of God." Then his doubts were solved his tottering faith re-established, his peace of mind restored; and he breaks forth into the strains of joy and adoration, which form this beautiful Psalm: "Truly, God is good to Israel!"

The Sanctuary of God! What is there here to reassure and tranquillize troubled souls amidst the calamities and agitations of the world, and under dark aspects of divine Providence? In earlier times, there were the Urim and the Thummim, "the voices of the prophets read every Sabbath day," the prayers, the sweet and solemn music of the house of God; and music has a wondrous power to stir the slumbering faculties of the soul and put the mind on new paths of thought. In the Sanctuary of God, as it

now stands, there is the complete Word of God, the Ministry of the Gospel, the rich hymnology and harmonies of christian worship; there is more than all this: God is here; for of Zion he says, "this is my rest forever; here will I dwell:" Christ, the Creator and Upholder of all things, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge, is here; for "wherever two or three of you are gathered together in my name," he says, "there am I in the midst of you:" The eternal Spirit is here. He breathes through the word, he speaks in the ministry, he warms, illuminates, and lifts to Heaven on the wings of sacred harmony, the soul of the worshipper. O, what an oracle! what living oracles rather, instinct with life, as well as beaming with light, giving responses not only, but grace, peace and strength to the soul of the inquirer—have we in "the Sanctuary of God!" Our world would be given up to anarchy, darkness and despair, were it not for the Sanctuary of God.

Into that holy place we come this morning, in the cloudy and dark day of our country's calamity and peril. What an aspect do our political skies wear to-day! What a spectacle does this bright sun look upon, as he throws his light from sea to sea, over the broad expanse of our Republic? Hostile camps, embattled hosts, a nation in arms; not for common defence, but on the one hand to assail, and on the other to defend the government under which we live, a government devised by the very men who achieved our freedom, adopted by representatives from all parts of our country, solemnly ratified by the voice

of the American people, standing plumb and true this day, on the very base-line by which our fathers laid its strong foundations, and administered by public officers called to power but a few months ago by an election in which the whole country participated. Has our government oppressed any man? Has it despoiled any man of his rights of conscience, of speech, or of property? Has it invaded any part of our Republic? Has it usurped powers not granted to it by the Constitution? None of these things are even charged. Yet nothing less has ever been held to justify the last and terrible resort of revolution. But Americans are this morning in arms to overthrow that government. They have seized on its fortresses, vessels, and munitions of war. They have turned its own arms against its loyal citizens. They avow the intention to seize on the Capitol, to tear down and degrade the national banner: and already, to accomplish these purposes, they have stained the sacred soil of our country with the blood of their brethren.

In these circumstances of gloom and peril, we "come into the Sanctuary of God" this morning. We lift up our hands towards his holy oracle. We wait to hear what God the Lord, will speak. What are the responses we receive? What are the lessons and duties of the hour addressed to us in this holy place?

1. The first is, doubtless, this—"Be still, and know that I am God." We must see and acknowledge the hand of God in this sudden and terrible emergency.

Some of us are ready to trace the origination of these difficulties to one section of our country, others

to another; some to one class of political maxims, others to another. But they are here. They are here by the sovereign and irreversible appointment of God. Their causes existed far back in history. They were at work a century before you or I were born. Their operation has been seen, permitted, overruled, by Him who appointeth unto all men their times and the bounds of their habitations. The soils, the skies, the productions of the different portions of our country; the races and classes from which the population of each was derived; the commercial or agricultural pursuits which have modified their several characters; the leading men who have powerfully moulded their opinions and to a great extent controlled and determined their history; all have been allotted of God, just as much as the frame-work of their mountains, the flow of their rivers, the line of their coasts, and the depth, capacity and approaches of their harbors. History is the work of God. Men are his instruments. Of one of the great conquerors of antiquity, Cyrus, God says, "I girded thee, though thou hast not known me." And when in popular governments, shrewd and eloquent men labor to compass political ends by popular agitations, they are simply God's agents for working out his vast and inscrutable plans. Men may call this fatalism. But it is not fatalism. It is faith—faith in a wise, holy, just and omnipotent God, who doeth according to his will . . . among the inhabitants of the earth; who knoweth the thoughts of men afar off, and controls all human activity and ordains all events on earth as everywhere throughout his vast dominion. Without

him, a sparrow cannot fall to the ground; certainly then a nation cannot be disintegrated. "Shall there be evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it?" Is there evil in our great and lately prosperous and peaceful country, and the Lord hath not done it? He hath done it, my brethren. There is no better preparation for duty, no more solid foundation for tranquillity in the solemn and awful crisis which we are entering, than is found in those few words, "it is the Lord!"

2. Humiliation before a just and holy God.

This is always appropriate in seasons of adversity. It springs directly from that recognition of God, of which we have just spoken. Visitations of calamity are a special manifestation of the majesty of God. "The Lord *cometh out of his place* to punish the inhabitants of the earth." When human sovereigns leave their palaces and appear among their subjects, they are received with reverence. How much more should creatures abase themselves when the King of kings, the blessed and only Potentate "cometh forth from his place," in the awful interpositions of his Providence? "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God."

Calamity is not always intended as a direct and special rebuke of sin. We cannot so interpret the Providence of God without coming in collision with his Word, and the inspired history of his dealings with men. Job was subjected to dire and crushing adversity, though "there was none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man." "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth." Calamities are an asser-

tion of God's sovereignty in the affairs of men, they are a trial of faith, humility, submission, patience. But they always bring with them at least, an admonition to earnest and searching self-examination. "Surely it is meet to be said unto God, shew me wherefore thou contendest with me." And never was this inquiry more appropriate than in such a great, such a sudden calamity as that which has befallen our country.

And in conducting such an examination, let us remember that while the eye of God surveys a whole nation, it penetrates the heart of every individual, and he often takes account of private and even secret sins, by public and general calamities. One guilty man brought the frown of God and consequent weakness and disaster on the whole host of Israel. "The accursed thing" hid in the tent of Achan "troubled" Israel and made her weak even before a small and contemptible enemy. Nor could she shake off the terrible cause of defeat, till the host had been sifted, tribe by tribe, family by family, household by household, man by man, and "the accursed thing" was discovered, and the sin disavowed and chastised by the punishment of the offender. My brethren, let us each institute such a scrutiny into our own hearts and ways. Let every man ask himself how far he has been instrumental towards this national trouble. Let us *mourn apart* in this day of our country's peril and adversity. "Let us search and try our ways and turn again unto the Lord."

And let us not fail to direct this examination distinctly to those duties which as Christians we have

owed to the people, the public of our country. To all who acknowledge his authority, Christ has said, "seek ye first the kingdom of God ; preach the Gospel to every creature ; go out into the highways and hedges and compel men to come in that my house may be filled." How have we performed this duty ? Let every one among us who has named the name of Christ, ask himself or herself, faithfully, this question : Have I earnestly labored to teach the ignorant, to reform the vicious, to gather neglected children, and bring them within the purifying and saving influences of Christian instruction and the Christian Church ? One of the great blessings of our political and social state has been, perfect liberty to put forth every Christian energy in the holy work of enlightening and saving our fellow-men. How have we occupied this precious, this peculiar talent ? Have we felt as if we were debtors to all men to impart to them the light and life of the Gospel ? On us the duty rests not only as Christians, bought with the blood of Christ, and dedicated to the blessed work of enlightening and saving men, but it rests on us as American citizens, as we love our country and prize her liberty and Union ; for these, as we well know, can stand on no other foundation, and be held together by no other cement, and defended by no other bulwarks than the intelligence and cultivated conscience of our people. No coercion can finally and perpetually hold the elements of our American society and polity together, but the coercion of Christian motive. The true Union-savers among us, are pious men and women who go among the ignorant and degraded,

and labor, with Christian patience and love, to enlighten and elevate them. The only permanent and effective conservative party (and we rejoice to think that it is a very large one,) is the band of Sunday School teachers, tract distributors, and ministers under every name and form, of Christian beneficence. Every sinner that we convert from the error of his ways, every wayward youth that we bring under holy and elevating influences, is a new element of strength and perpetuity infused into our institutions.

If any of us is conscious, my brethren, of dereliction in this matter, let us humble ourselves before God for it in this solemn hour.

But there are general and national sins, sins which infect whole communities, and when national troubles and disasters weigh upon us, these ought to be distinct subjects of humiliation and sorrow. In reference to this class too, might not the prophet of God address us as he did Israel of old, "are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?" I am not disposed to exaggerate the faults of my countrymen. I do not believe there ever was a great and powerful nation less disposed to war, more humane in victory, more merciful to the vanquished and the feeble. Still, there are two faults which may be called *national*, and which grow directly from our unexampled prosperity, and our high political freedom. One is a spirit of national pride and self-gratulation, which seems to say, "my power and the might of my hand hath gotten me all this wealth;" another, the bitterness, severity and denunciatory spirit in which the strife of parties is carried on

among us. American citizens are often heard coupling abusive and contemptuous epithets with the party designations of those who are opposed to them; as if liberty to differ were not the unquestionable privilege of freemen: as if liberty itself could live without free and earnest discussion of opposite opinions. These two sins are especially traceable in our present calamities. God has made "our own iniquities to correct us." Let us confess them. Let us turn from them, and earnestly cultivate a more humble, thankful, and fraternal spirit.

There are other forms of impiety which prevail among us in common with other nominally Christian communities. The Lord's Day has not been honored, the Lord's house has not been resorted to, his holy and venerable name has not been revered, as it should have been. Let us see his uplifted rod to-day, and penitently humble ourselves under it, and deprecate its threatened stroke.

3. The Sanctuary of God calls us to prayer. "Call upon me in the day of trouble. I will deliver thee and thou shalt glorify me." That sublime and cheering promise belongs to national as well as individual and domestic afflictions. In fact, it was to Israel, as a "people," that it was first addressed. (Ps. 50, 7, 15.) And now God is addressing such language to us, my brethren, the people of these United States. And let us not doubt his readiness to hear, and his power to deliver us? Has he not often delivered us before? Yes, we may go back to the history of the mother races from which we sprung; we shall see the annals of Holland, England, Scotland, marked by in-

terpositions of God's delivering hand as visible and as mighty as those which rescued ancient Israel; interpositions granted too, in manifest answer to prayer. Look at that "invincible Armada," as it was boastfully called, in which the vast empire of Philip II. exhausted its resources, to crush the liberty and life of England,—dispersed and almost annihilated by a succession of disasters so clearly providential as to draw from the English admiral the acknowledgment that it was the finger of God, and from Queen Elizabeth the memorable and well-known saying, "God breathed on them and they were scattered."

A yet more striking example, because it combined civil strife with foreign war, is the dark but glorious era of 1672 in the annals of Holland. Louis XIV had assembled a magnificent army, under generals whose very name was a host,—Turenne, Conde, Louvois, Luxemburg—with the deliberate purpose (concealed, however, till the storm was ready to burst upon her) of annihilating the religion and nationality of Holland, and of making his empire extend to her sea-coasts. He had bribed the unworthy King of England, Charles II, to co-operate with the English fleet and army, and, to render the hostility more deadly—to retain the mask of an alliance with Holland to the last moment. The day of doom for the Republic seemed to have come. Her condition, judging after the manner of men, was simply desperate. Her army was disorganized from long peace; her Stadtholder and commander-in-chief was only twenty-two years old. To eliminate, as it were the last element of hope, three of her States *seceded*;

traitors, not a few, were detected in her camp and councils; and several of her strong border cities sent their keys to the invader with a facility which wore very much the look of treason. Brave men began to talk of embarking in their ships, and planting a new republic in India. Some one asked the young Stadtholder "How will you escape beholding the ruin of your country?" "I have thought of a way," he replied; "*I will die in the last ditch.*"

But the brave little Republic made valiant fight even against these desperate odds. And she began at the right point. She went into "the secret place of the Most High," and committed her freedom and her faith to the custody of God Almighty. "Holland," says one of her eminent writers, "waged that war with daily prayer-meetings." Ah! my brethren, what were Turenne and Conde, and Louis and Charles, and fleets and armies, against daily prayer-meetings? God is very merciful at the cry of a people who humble themselves before him and implore his help in the hour of national peril. He heard the prayers of Holland. The cities and States which continued loyal, after the seceders and traitors had been well sifted out, offered "gold and blood" without stint for the defence of their country. An ebb of unprecedented continuance prevented the invading fleets of England and France from landing, and a tremendous storm followed, driving them far off to sea. Thus the Dutch had time to prepare their fleet; and the brave De Ruyter and Van Tromp, who "never counted their enemies," crippled and shattered them in successive engagements.

It was on one of these occasions that De Ruyter, who was a saint as well as a hero, said, "The weaker we are, the surer am I of victory; for my confidence is not in man but in Almighty God." Finally, God turned the counsels of Louis into foolishness, in a manner so palpable and extraordinary that the infidel historian Voltaire pronounces him *infatuated*. In little more than a year, Holland had passed safely and gloriously through that terrible struggle which threatened nothing less than her utter destruction. Verily, "the Lord *knoweth how* to deliver." He is our King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. He is a God that doeth wonders, things that we look not for, exceeding abundantly above what we ask or think. The past, wonderful as it is, as a record of God's mighty works, is no measure for the future. We shall see greater things than these. God challenges his people to call him forth to new, unprecedented and astonishing displays of his power by their humble and importunate pleadings. "Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing: now it shall spring forth.*" "Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me.†"

Let us avail ourselves, in the humble boldness of faith, of the awful liberty of *commanding God*.

4. One of the solemn lessons of this hour is the mutable and perishing nature of all earthly things.

A year ago, our Republic seemed the most solid

* Is. 43.

† Is. 45.

political fabric on earth. Many once powerful nations of the old world seemed in the rapid process of decay and not far from dissolution. The vast empire of China almost equally divided between government and rebellion; Turkey passing through those alternate stages of languor and delirium which betoken the near approach of death; the Papal power at the last gasp; the empire of Austria, which so long adjusted the poise of European powers, shaken by revolts and bankrupt in credit; all the nations of Europe groaning under immense armaments, and filled with agitating presentiments of war. Our own free government and happy country seemed, in the midst of this troubled scene of wars and revolutions, to combine all the elements of political security and social enjoyment—peace in all our borders, abundant harvests, prosperous commerce, solid national credit, a light debt and ample resources, with general health and exemption from any calamitous visitation. War was raging in one part of the world, pestilence in another, famine in a third, while fanaticism was spreading like a resistless fire over a fourth. But our own favored land seemed a sacred enclosure, whence all these terrible forms of human suffering were excluded. Our government especially, strong in the content of the people, made in fact, and controlled by the people themselves, seemed to promise impregnable strength and perpetual endurance. Revolution might disintegrate the heterogeneous and heavily oppressed nationalities under the sceptre of Austria, speaking some ten languages and holding every form of Protestant, Papist and

Mohamedan faith or superstition. Revolution might even explode (as it has done before,) the strong and solid despotism of France. A spark might at any moment fire those terrific mines of popular discontent, which, thirteen years ago, covered Europe with the wrecks of revolution. But who could have imagined that the American people, or any part of it, would destroy the work of their own hands, the guarantee of their own liberty and order, reared by the patriotic wisdom and cemented by the blood of their illustrious fathers? The American government! it was the work of the American people. It was the free expression and embodiment of the popular sentiment and will. If there was anything unsatisfactory in its working, the same popular sovereignty which made it could modify it. There were constitutional and peaceful methods of doing so. Never, therefore, could it be for a moment supposed that the American people, great, powerful, prosperous, intelligent, free, *sovereign* in all their own affairs and over all the elements of their own political and social condition, could with suicidal hands tear away the pillars on which rested the glorious fabric of their Republic, while all the other nations were gazing at it in wonder and envy, as the model of political wisdom and well-being. But what, my brethren, has happened? That mighty and glorious fabric of our national freedom and union trembles and totters to its deep foundation. It is as if a seam should suddenly run through this edifice, and its massive walls fall asunder! Surely, one solemn lesson of the hour is this, that "*the fashion of this world passeth away.*"

5. But there is another yet more solemn lesson ;— it is the self-destroying folly and wickedness of man. For all this derangement of peace, this interruption of industry, this violent and sudden arrest of Christian activity in its large schemes for the promotion of human happiness ; nay more, for the blood that has been shed, and we fear, will be shed before this terrible controversy is decided—there is awful guilt somewhere. And he who “maketh inquisition for blood” will in due time fix the dread responsibility where it belongs.

6. One sacred duty of the hour is a loyal, earnest, and generous support of our government. The Sanctuary of God enjoins this upon us, as imperatively as any other. “Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. The powers that be are ordained of God.” The magistrate, even when he “bears the sword,” is to us the minister of God.

But patriotism is a duty to which it is scarcely necessary to exhort the American people. We love our country, and we have reason to love it. Our government has our hearty support and it deserves it at our hands. In such a crisis as this, in fact, the sentiment of patriotism is only another name for the instinct of self-preservation. If our government is overborne in this struggle, we shall have no country. The laws, liberties, and historic renown which make that name dear, sacred, and precious to us will be no more. Anarchy, speedily solidified into despotism must be the inevitable result of triumphant disloyalty.

For, you see, these misguided men of the South no longer pretend to aim at peaceable separation, and

unaggressive independence. Conquest and subjugation is now their avowed purpose. They will plant their treasonable flag on the national Capitol, they will plant it on Faneuil Hall, they will call the roll of their slaves at the foot of Bunker Hill Monument! Suppose they should. What would be our fate in that event? We may easily and surely learn it from that of our loyal citizens who have fallen into their hands. Freedom of thought and speech would be as effectually under the ban in New Jersey and Massachusetts, as they are now in South Carolina or Texas. The Spanish Inquisition was not more merciless in exacting conformity to "the faith" (as they called it), than the South in exacting conformity to their "social code." The tyranny against which our fathers fought, was nothing to this. The little finger of the South is heavier than the loins of Great Britain. There is not on earth such a despotism—so watchful, keen-scented and inexorable—as that to which a Northern man is subjected at the South. Are we ready to have it transferred to this free community,—to have it spread over all our country? If not, our government must be upheld at all costs and hazards in putting down this Southern conspiracy.

7. But the Sanctuary of God has also more cheering and hopeful lessons for us. Despair is a feeling unknown within these sacred precincts. Here we learn those sublime accents of faith, "God is our refuge and strength. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." We are in arms for our country;—for law, and order and government, —all high and sacred interests, dear to God, emana-

ting from himself, and constituting the very elements of his kingdom on earth. We desire to oppress no man, to impair no man's liberty, to infringe no man's rights of conscience or of property. We simply ask that the Constitution transmitted to us by our fathers be held inviolate, that the Capitol, the sacred domicile of our country's majesty, be protected from rude aggression; that the laws under which we have lived happily for near a century, be upheld, or, if modification and repeal have become necessary, that they be made in accordance with the usages of popular government. These are not unreasonable demands. They are in accordance with humanity and religion. They are just. If they are subjected to the stern arbitrament of war, that issue is forced upon us. It is not of our seeking. It must be met and sustained, or everything that is dear to men, to freemen, to Christians, is to be wrested from us, and trampled in the dust. That same terrible arbitrament was forced upon our forefathers. They were sorely averse to draw the sword. They reasoned, remonstrated, endured, till they found that aggression had no goal but slavery—and then, they took the sword and did not sheathe it, till they were free. The sword was God's appointed instrument for achieving all this glorious freedom, and inaugurating this new and beautiful civilization of our American state and society, which like a luxuriant vine, has sent its suckers into foreign lands, and "filled the face of the world with fruit."

It is a solemn thought to contemplate, but it is not to be denied, that God, in his holy and mysterious sovereignty, has appointed this terrible ordeal for his

human offspring; that war is sometimes an inevitable necessity. There are certain knots which men have long tried to untie but could not, and they could only be solved by being cut with the sword. There are certain controversies which are to be decided not by arguments but battles. The shock of armies has an effect in the moral world, like the shock of elements in the world of matter. The lightning which rives the oak, and sometimes destroys the dwellings and lives of men, and is announced by thunders which shake the earth as if the day of doom were approaching, is, in fact, the beneficent purifier of the atmosphere, without which it would hang around us in dank and pestilent vapors. That very explosion which terrifies us, turns the latent electricity of the atmosphere, from a deadly into a beneficent form, and makes it the fructifier of vegetation, the quickener of life. War too has its terrible uses in the mysterious but beneficent economy of God. This will not diminish the guilt of those who by intolerable oppressions, or for the gratification of selfish ambition, bring it on. "It must needs be that the offence cometh; but woe to that man by whom it cometh!" We only speak of a fact,—an actual phase in history, which may calm and fortify our minds in such calamities.

Certain it is that all free and manly races have had bloody annals. No nation has been great and powerful in history, or borne a conspicuous part in civilizing the world by its thoughts, arts, discoveries or commerce, which has not bled till it seemed sometimes ready to bleed to death, by frequent and severe wars. Look at the Grecian peninsula. Its western strip enjoyed

almost uninterrupted peace. Its eastern had rare and short respite from war. And yet from that blood-saturated soil grew all that history has thought worth preserving of ancient life; eloquence, art, philosophy, the germs of Roman and modern jurisprudence, the very language in which the New Testament is written—were all the productions of Eastern Greece. That western side which slept in the lap of peace has left no history, bequeathed no legacy to after ages.

The races which have led the wonderful progress of mankind since the Reformation, have had a like hard experience. Truth, freedom, national life have only been won and kept by those who have carried the sword in one hand, and the implements of peace and industry in the other.

The day is coming—may the mercy of God hasten it!—when He who sitteth upon the throne shall say, “Behold, I make all things new!” Then this terrible discipline will be no longer necessary; and “the nations shall learn war no more.”

Be of good cheer. This is the parting voice in which the Sanctuary and the Lord of the Sanctuary speak to us to-day. Our country will yet see good days, days of peace, and established freedom and revived prosperity;—yes, of restored Union, too. Never have I felt a stronger faith in my country’s future than I do at this hour. Her mission, beyond that of any other great and powerful nation in history, has been pacific. She has spread, by an expansion generally peaceful, across this continent, and planted her own free and Christian institutions, on the shores of the Pacific. She has re-acted beneficently on the old

world. She has sent her sons, bearing the Gospel which is the source of her own life, to many distant lands and islands of the sea. They will lift up holy hands for her in this hour of her sore trial. Her mission is not yet accomplished. God has made her great, and she has been elated with her greatness, as if it were her own work, and not his gift. Now, he is shewing her that all that greatness and strength is perishable as a flake of morning vapor, if he withdraw from her. This is the great lesson of our adversity. The sooner we learn it, the shorter will be our national agony. "Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight."

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