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JUDAH'S MERCIES AND TRANSGRESSIONS,

ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE

DUTIES AND DANGERS OF THE AMERICAN NATION.

EXHIBITED IN

TWO DISCOURSES,

DELIVERED IN THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ALLEGHENY,

On the 8th and 15th of June, A. D. 1856.

BY

REV. E. P. SWIFT, D. D.,

PASTOR.

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1856.



ALLEGHENY, June 20th, 1856.

Rev. E. P. Swift, D. D.

DEAR SIR—The undersigned, on behalf of themselves and many other members of your church and congregation, who had the pleasure of hearing the sermons delivered by you on the last two Sabbath mornings, and who, deeming them eminently suited for the existing state of affairs in this Great Republic, and believing their publication and dissemination would be for the public good, respectfully request you, at your earliest convenience, to furnish us with manuscript copies of them for that purpose.

Your compliance with our request will place us under obligations to you.

Very respectfully,

THOMAS MACCONNELL,
WM. G. JOHNSTON,
RICHARD C. GRAY,
JAS. PARK, JR.
W. MACKEOWN,
JOHN IRWIN,
MOSES BORLAND,

H. B. TEN-EYCK,
JAS. M. BURCHFIELD,
H. E. DAVIS,
DAVID BORLAND,
J. L. CARNAGHAN,
ROBERT B. NORRIS,
H. L. BOLLMAN.

ALLEGHENY, June 24th, 1856.

GENTLEMEN:

The discourses to which you refer with so much undeserved and affectionate interest, were delivered, in substance, in the regular course of pastoral duty, and without any thought of your desiring any further use of them. The subject was indeed suggested by the then portentous aspect of public affairs, and a desire humbly to counsel the Christian patriotism of my congregation in such an emergency. I cannot but impute your wish for their publication rather to the warmth of personal friendship, and the strength of your aspirations for the public welfare, than any adaptation in them to subserve the purposes you mention. Still, however, sensible that my remaining opportunities to contribute my feeble mite to the good of our country are now few, I cannot withhold the discourses which you solicit.

With my respectful acknowledgments to yourselves and those whom you represent,

I remain, truly yours,

E. P. SWIFT.

*Messrs. Thomas MacConnell, Esq., Wm. G. Johnston, Rich'd C. Gray, James Park, Jr.,
W. MacKeown, John Irwin, &c.*

DISCOURSE I.

“The Lord’s voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.”—MICAH VI. 9.

THIS prophet was a native of a small town in the southern part of the territory of Judah, and was cotemporary with Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, and Joel. His sentences are brief, and in passing, in some cases, from topic to topic, his allusions are somewhat obscure, but no ancient prophet gives more comprehensive statements of Messiah’s human birth-place, eternal generation and miraculous conception, and spiritual and universal dominion over the kingdoms of men: and it may be added, that though short and rapid in his references and descriptions, no one could give more graphic and impressive views of the sins and sorrows of his countrymen, and of the depressions and coming peace and glory of the Church of God.

This chapter, written during the latter years of Hezekiah’s reign, and shortly after the final destruction of the kingdom of Israel, may be said to divide itself into four parts; having reference to the state of Judah during the reign of Manasseh and most of his successors. It opens with a tender and sublime announcement that God has a controversy with his chosen people, and a call upon the prophet to bespeak the judicial audience “of the mountains and hills, and strong foundations of the earth,” that before them the eternal God of Israel may bring his complaints and remonstrances; and his ungrateful people may before this tribunal bring their pleas, witnesses, and accusations against God, and make their defense. They had avouched him as theirs, and engaged to serve him: and so absurd and iniquitous was the conduct of his church in turning aside into idolatry and apostacy, that even his inanimate works—the mountains in their silent grandeur, and the flinty rocks in their mute hardness—might be ready to give a just attention to their Maker’s wrongs, and judicially denounce the stubborn misconduct of his church. This citation of his church to come up and enter her complaints against him, before his other and inanimate works, produces some anxious relenting, and in the sixth, seventh, and eighth verses, the church, in the person of an awakened

inquirer, asks "wherewithal shall I come before the Lord?" and the answer to this question seems to complete the reference to Judah, considered as God's covenant church and people.

The text then resumes the same train of thought, considering Judah not as a church, *but a nation or body-politic*, and under the general proposition that when the voice of the Lord crieth unto any city or nation, it will be the natural course of every man of wisdom in it to recognize and apply it; there is an obvious reference of the general rule to this particular case. Jerusalem, as the metropolis of the kingdom and the representative of the whole nation, was the particular city in the prophet's eye, and often in the Bible *Damascus, Babylon, Nineveh, and Samaria*, as the seat and centre of their respective kingdoms, are spoken of when the whole nation is intended. The voice of the Lord, in the admonitions and threatenings of his holy providence, or in the accents of his word, is said to be heard: and experienced or anticipated calamities to be appreciated, when they lead to those national humiliations, reformatations and supplications which they should produce.

Nations are now composed of individuals who have corrupted their ways before the Lord, and having an existence only in this world, suffer privations and punishments correspondent to the moral condition of the people who compose them. No nation is utterly destitute of all knowledge of right and wrong, and thus exempt from national guilt; but as there are various degrees of information, and as, in reference to this as well as other blessings, God selects some nations for a peculiar pre-eminence, so the obligations and sins of such nations bear a proportion to this difference in their circumstances. Thus it was with Judah or Jerusalem, that honored name, and as the embodiment of all God's chosen people who remained in the land of promise, it was now especially cited to hear the admonitions and complaints of Israel's Redeemer. By his previous impassioned appeal to the church, he would now remind them that if the heart and conscience of the nation—its hopes, and fears, and precious interests, could not move it, and its moral feelings be brought over to do right toward its national benefactor, the strong foundations of the earth, the "mountains round about Jerusalem," Horeb, and Pisgah, and Carmel, and Lebanon, replete with memorable associations—yes! even Judah's mountains in their silent indignation, and her hills with their rocky hardness, "would immediately cry out" in the righteous vindication of an injured Creator.

But while the text refers to Judah, the whole case is applicable to any Christian nation, at any period, in so far as in its peculiar mercies and its transgressions it resembles this ancient commonwealth: and the present threatening aspect of affairs in our own confederation, both as to its internal disquiet and its foreign relations, seem to make it a duty, with a reference to those analogies between Judah's blessings and sins, and

threatened adversities, and those of our own beloved country, if possible to make the one instructive to the other.

The text calls our attention

- I. TO THE SPEAKER AND COMPLAINANT ;
- II. THE AGGRESSOR AND RESPONDENT ;
- III. THE SUBJECT MATTER OF COMPLAINT AND DELINQUENCY ; and
- IV. THE DICTATES OF WISDOM AND DUTY THUS SUGGESTED.

I. The voice of the Lord "crieth" unto the city. Does not this emphatic expression "crieth" denote the earnestness of God and at the same time the stupidity and dullness of mankind, whose great moral apathy must, to insure any response, require this extraordinary appliance. The great design of God, under his present gracious economy, is to promote the moral order, reformation and salvation of mankind, considered as individuals and nations, and this he does by calling them to trial; calling their attention to their defects and sins; and the miseries which they suffer, and the causes of them. He would not leave them to rest in their transgressions or to sink down into moral slumber and slide unguardedly into hopeless vice, disorder and crime. When, therefore, consideration, amendment and prayer cease to be thought of, God lifts up his voice and calls their attention to eternal things. The speaker is indeed the everlasting Creator and Governor of all things, the proprietor of the heavens and the earth and all they contain; but "he is the Lord God, merciful and gracious, slow unto anger and abundant in goodness," and the special benefactor of Christian nations. He built this earth as the temporary home of his mundane children, and when they all began to be his enemies, and apostate sinners, he began to be a Saviour, and through the gift of his only-begotten Son he brought them a written revelation—the fruits of a full and all-sufficient atonement, and the offer of an eternal heaven opened wide to repenting sinners, so that he could triumphantly ask, "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?" Can you gaze upon the star-studded firmament of heaven and hear the nocturnal music of its balanced spheres, or fix your eye on the blooming landscape—the tranquil vale, the picturesque mountain home of the cheerful shepherd; the fruitful fields, grazing flocks and meandering streams; the gladsome villages and cities of a prosperous and happy people? Can you look at man, so fearfully and wonderfully made, with all his bodily senses the inlets of joy: and all his facilities of intelligence, of comfort, and pleasure; and doubt whether the parental heart of the Father of spirits, though forgotten and insulted by his depraved and alienated children, is not still compassionate and kind? Can you open this written revelation and see what moral and spiritual counsels and instructions he has given to a benighted world: containing rules of duty, personal, domestic, social,

ecclesiastical and national, so wisely adjusted, so comprehensively stated, so fitted to be the basis of all legislation and moral order, and, above all, can you read the history of his providence, visit his holy courts, and the tender and hallowed scenes of Gethsemane, and doubt whether he ought to be feared and loved? Yet this infinite being, so ready to bless and save us, so willing, when communities and nations rightly acknowledge and reverence his laws, to hold himself engaged to protect them, guide their councils, perpetuate and foster their useful institutions, direct their affairs, smile upon their agricultural and commercial interests, and become the strength and glory of their country, is the complainant! He is the holy one of Israel who is constrained, by his benevolence, rectitude and justice to lift up his monitory voice and tell of the base ingratitude of offending persons and guilty nations. What dishonor to his name, insult to his feelings, and violation of his laws is comprehended in this indictment, as it respected Jerusalem and other communities, it remains for us to consider.

II. The cited invader of the rights of the God of Jacob is the *government and nation of Judah*, and, by implication, all Christian commonwealths whose circumstances resemble hers. She, in the *first place*, is presented on the theatre of ancient history in the extraordinary attitude of a nation whose territorial possessions, public blessings, and relative ascendancy over all existing communities, is immediately referable to the *particular munificence of God*. Her domain had for centuries been definitely reserved for her, as the discovery of this Western World, at so late and so appropriate a period, seemed intended to meet the aspirations of our oppressed fathers in the Old World, and the subsequent exigencies of the American people. God had brought her Hebrew founders, and by previous discipline, as indeed he did our ancestors, out of a state of civil and religious oppression in a foreign land, to inherit a territory of unexampled fertility and excellence. For this end he had, with remarkable demonstrations of power and goodness, driven out and consumed the Pagan tribes which originally possessed it, and given them a goodly heritage, impressing on all its territory the indelible inscription of his pre-eminent goodness. Is this the nation of whose impiety and ingratitude, above all others, Heaven is now called to complain?

2. Yes, it is Judah, whose providential history, like ours, has been replete with the marvelous instances of his *powerful interposition*. Redeemed from vassalage, the grasp of a despotic monarch, devoid of citizenship and the right of soil, he had planted them down in the "glory of all lands"—divided unto them by lot their respective inheritances, and for ages had there protected and prospered them in the rich productions of their own fields and vineyards—the multiplication of their numbers, their cities, and their

resources—the increase of their herds and flocks, while there in peaceful repose they had dwelt under their own vine and fig-tree, without any to molest them. In the days of invasion and conflict, God had raised up their Joshuas and Gideons, and Jephthahs, and Baraks, and Davids, to enkindle the national enthusiasm and lead their armies to victory and deliverance. Does not the citation of the text seem re-addressed to our own republic; with its extended states and vast resources, so striking is the parallel? The wars of Canaan—the victories of Gideon, Asa, and Barak, realize their counterpart in the conflicts of the scattered and feeble colonists with the Indian tribes anterior to the Revolution, and our Washingtons, Waynes, and Putnams, were led to ultimate victory through the singular tokens of the divine interference. Can the aged veteran soldier still surviving in the distance of seventy years, or can our younger population recall the scenes of Lexington, Monmouth, and Yorktown—the dark and desponding nights of the Revolution, and the brightening morning of our national independence, and not respond to the sentiment that it was Judah's God who led our fathers in a way which they knew not.

3. We behold in Judah, as she stands as an ungrateful defendant before the Lord, a kingdom to whom, amidst the comparative moral thralldom and darkness of other nations, he has given *benign civil and social institutions*—an advanced civilization—a good measure of political freedom, and the privilege of worshipping the God of their fathers according to the dictates of their own consciences, and the statutes of his law. Possessed of a fertile soil, abundant harvests repaid the labors of her husbandmen, while her commercial wealth (the whole land being near to Tyre, at one time the first commercial city in the world) was perhaps equal to any of the surrounding nations. Though engaged, at times, in foreign and intestinal wars and commotions, the arts and sciences, especially those of letters, music, poetry, architecture, and sculpture, occupied her attention. The school of Samuel, founded for the education of the young Hebrews, destined for civil as well religious stations, and the mission under Jehoshaphat, of laymen, with the priests and Levites, to go out to the remotest towns in the kingdom, and, with the book of the law, to teach the people, shows the attention given to the intellectual and moral culture of a quiet, religious and happy people; so that in his reign it is said, that “the fear of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms of the land that were around about Judah, and they made no war upon it.” And we are told that in and after the age of David, hymns and songs were composed commemorative of the great events of her history and replete with sentiments of piety and patriotism, adapted to re-enkindle the national enthusiasm.

Need anything be said to show you the analogy here, or remind you of the goodness of the Lord to us in these particulars. How precious is the

boon of the unrestricted rights of conscience, more perfectly enjoyed by us than by the inhabitants of any country on earth. We read its worth in the struggles and sacrifices, and most severe and painful sufferings, which many noble-minded men have freely encountered to obtain it. Can you think of our commerce whitening every sea, our agricultural and manufacturing wealth and resources, our schools and seminaries, and not feel your bosoms glow with thankfulness! And if Jerusalem was known and venerated in far distant lands, for its sacred associations—the manifestation of the presence and power of God to it, insomuch that Jesus Christ, in his last approach to it before he suffered, wept as he thought of its wonderful mercies and deliverances, its holy martyrs and its aggravated sins—is there no parallel here in the providential hand of God in our country's colonial and revolutionary history, and in the signal dispensations of his Spirit upon almost all parts of this extended republic, the tidings of which have surprised and gladdened the hearts of good men in remote climes? O, favored Judah, what an example of national virtue and propriety! of moral and political excellence, did it behoove thee to offer—honorable to him who thus exalted thee, and blessed to thyself! And is the duty less obligatory or less needful to the world now as to our own country?

4. Judah thus called to her account by the God of nations, stands before him loaded with the tokens of his long continued friendship—in her *high national responsibility*—the focus of civil and religious truth and influence, for the good of all nations; yet already stained deeply with *unkindness* and *ingratitude* to her divine Benefactor. Do you not know, he seems to say to her, what I did for your forefathers, whom I ransomed from the tyranny and idolatry of Egypt? Have you forgotten how I nurtured them in the wilderness forty years, and drove out the nations before them? And have you not copied the idolatries and vices of these heathen nations, and done even worse than they? Survey these goodly mountains and well watered and fertile valleys, and rich and varied fields and pastures clothed with flocks and adorned with flowers of richest hue and fragrance, and have you not crowned every hill with your idolatrous groves and high-places? Behold yonder holy temple!—its tasteful proportions and beautiful magnificence, its towers and walls, and its appropriate altars, its hallowed utensils and abiding glory—and yet in this my house, my earthly resting-place, have you not “set up altars to all the hosts of heaven;” and in this valley, which skirts its walls, is there not idolatry's basest shrine of obscene and bloody worship, where you “make your children to pass through the fire unto Moloch?”

III. We are thus led to contemplate the transgressions which, by his holy prophets, the Lord charges upon Judah, and for which her nationality

is threatened. The particular forms of national ingratitude and rebellion, we gather from this chapter of Micah, corroborated by the words of his prophetic contemporaries.

And the *first* and most obvious which a righteous God would likely bring against Judah and Jerusalem, in the last century of their continuance, would be those *gross immoralities* and *flagrant vices* which were steadily going on to sap the foundation of their national independence, and constitute them a ruined people. The prophet, in the context, speaks of fraud, dishonesty, lying, oppression, theft, licentiousness, murder, and bribery, and that extinction of domestic harmony, and of the parental and filial affections which, with other crimes, resulted from inebriation and the excessive use of intoxicating drinks. These and like immoralities were somewhat checked in the wise and virtuous reign of Hezekiah, but were terribly reproduced and established by Manasseh, his son and successor, who set himself to corrupt the minds of the young, by the worst principles; making himself an example of impiety towards God, and of bribery, licentiousness, and iniquity, before the people; and whose conduct thus became the cause of their national downfall.

The vices which we have mentioned, together with profanity, sabbath-desecration, and debauchery, are, like infidelity, atheism, and irreligion in general, the sins of the members of society considered as individuals, and become national when the common sentiment and practice of the mass of society sanction their endurance; and when there are no effectual laws to restrain them: and when their inherent criminality before God, and their destructive influence upon the public welfare, are not appreciated. It often happens that communities become so absorbed in the pursuits of business and gain and enterprise, that the agents of its commercial, manufacturing, and agricultural interests become in fact irreligious, and official agents of government become negligent of morality and virtue, through the all-engrossing prosecution of men's worldly interests. The marts and work-shops, the fields and counting-rooms and warehouses and thoroughfares of the State are so entirely disassociated from religion and the fear of God, that the very associations and industrial pursuits of men, and the firm hold which the love of the world takes of their minds, become the ultimate sources of vice and immorality. Under the sway of covetousness, ambition, and political aspiration, they forget, as it were, to be vicious and skeptical, in the ardor and impetuosity with which the great objects of public improvement or the prospects of gain and affluence impel their sleepless energies. These become, therefore, the times when God and duty are forgotten, and when luxury, immorality, and the decay of sound principles make great advances, and anticipate the ultimate perdition of national prosperity and stability. The reference of this particular to the present state of morals in our country, I will not

attempt fully to express. Amidst the vast accumulation of its population, from almost every part of the world, and of every shade of character, and the augmentation of the sources and occasions of immorality, you will doubtless feel that we are approaching a great crisis in our national history, when all the appliances of knowledge and restraint should be earnestly sought.

But here we must, for the present, pause in our investigations, and close with a brief reference—

IV. To the dictates of *duty* and of *wisdom* which the utterance of the monitory voice of the Lord suggests. Are not these too plain to require elucidation?

1. It is for the *men of wisdom*, the patriots who love their country and its institutions, the Christians who revere the goodness of the Lord, to recognize and acknowledge the munificence and forbearance of the Almighty to the American people; the justness of his complaints of her ingratitude and sin, and the equity of his righteous threatenings towards guilty nations.

2. It is for them, while heaven still waits and holds out the strongest encouragements to reformation, and a return to him through the merits of his Son, in these times of national apprehension, to awake to thoughtfulness, humiliation, and prayer. You see how invaluable are the civil rights and social blessings which this great republic now enjoys, and yet, if the true standard of public morals and private example and sound patriotism is not upheld, constitutions and laws will be lighter than a feather to restrain those whose integrity and national morality is gone. O, that the citizens of these States, of every grade and condition, might rightly estimate this richest political boon that the wisdom and munificence of Heaven ever gave to earth, and cherish an undying determination so to deport themselves as through all momentary, selfish, and sectional agitations, or public perils, at all hazards and sacrifices, to perpetuate it till the light and power of national example shall spread it through the earth.

DISCOURSE II.

“For who shall have pity upon thee, O Jerusalem? or who shall bemoan thee?
or who shall go aside to ask how thou doest?”—**JEREMIAH XV. 5.**

Twenty-six hundred years ago, Jerusalem, then an opulent and splendid city, was the capital of the kingdom of Judah. The part of Palestine which fell to this kingdom was a territory probably of not more than eighty miles long and from forty to sixty broad; though it may have then, as in the days of David, extended a little beyond this to the east and south. It had contained, probably, for most of the time of its duration, a population of near two millions of people; and in the reign of Abijah had of its own army “of valiant men of war” a force of four hundred thousand men brought into the field; and in an engagement with the kingdom of Israel, whose capital, Samaria, was only forty miles distant, there were slain by it in one day, of the latter Israelitish army, five hundred thousand chosen men. Though now, since comparative desolation and the curse has rested upon it for many centuries, it appears to be a rocky, sterile land, it was then extremely fertile, having probably many cities of from twelve to a hundred thousand population, and the whole land in a high state of cultivation. The monarchy was established by divine permission, God not having properly abdicated the Theocracy; and therefore the monarch was only the vicegerent of the Most High, to preserve his laws and execute his will. In the ordinary concerns of government, he was supposed to reign as other sovereigns; and though thus there was a sort of constitution, with its laws and limits, he was an absolute ruler; and on the introduction of idolatry, and by his despotic administration, the king soon violated the constitution, as God had foretold, when the nation insisted upon choosing a king. Thus, as in all similar cases, their apostasy from God and righteousness, and growth in iniquity and irreligion, became first the cause of their apostasy under their own rulers, and then of their national destruction.

It has been our wish, as you know, to unfold the conduct and fate of Judah, as illustrative of the sins and dangers of other nations. The text refers to that people, and teaches that if nations signally exalted of heaven

do, like her, by their sins forfeit the protection of the Almighty, and perpetrate their inevitable downfall, there will be no community on earth to pity or bemoan them.

Here are two questions—

I. WHAT THOSE THINGS ARE WHICH HAVE A TENDENCY TO PRODUCE THIS RESULT? and

II. WHY THERE WILL BE NO COMMISERATION?

The *first* of these inquiries replaces us on the line of our investigations as to Judah's transgressions; and we resume the enumeration, and observe—

2. *Literal idolatry* was one of the principal crimes which led to the destruction of the kingdom of Judah. I need not cite the preceptive and historical records of the Old Testament to show you in what distinct and solemn language, and by what almost numberless instances, Jehovah sought to guard his people against this sin, which, for so long a period, overspread the world: or what an invincible tendency to it they exhibited.

The reasons for this divine procedure were many. Its aspect toward God himself is that of rejection of him and rebellion against the laws of his government, and the impious and demoralizing transference to other objects and senseless images, the honor which belongs to him. The word of God reprobates idolatry as an abomination which he abhors, as setting up an idol in his place. That this custom greatly prevailed in the reign of Manasseh, and under the sway of most, at least, of his successors, is plain from such statements as this: "For according to the number of thy cities were thy gods, O Judah; and according to the number of the streets of Jerusalem have ye set up altars to that shameful thing, even altars to burn incense unto Baal."

This determined, habitual disposition to make gods of their own, and to bow down and worship and serve graven images, arose, as it ever arises, from the hatred of their carnal minds to the true God and his holy service. This led God to threaten them, and finally to withdraw his grace and blessing from them, and leave an incensed foreign conqueror to overturn their government, destroy their nation, ruin their fair heritage, and carry them away captive into distant lands.

The principle assumed in the Bible is, that there can be no virtue or moral goodness in so gross a superstition; but that cruelty and impurity are its essential characteristics, having its foundation in man's aversion to God and the purity of his law.

We are all naturally idolaters, that is, in our dispositions and conduct we love and worship the creature more than the Creator. We make our own selfish desires and inclinations the interests of this life, and our

fellow mortals the objects of our supreme attachment, and "the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life" become the supreme directors of our conduct. How does the inebriate, the debauchee, and the miser join himself to his idols, and trample upon the authority and laws of God! The man of ambition sets up the applause of mortals, the fleeting breath of popular favor, above the approbation of Jehovah; and the infidel reformer would exalt his inflated theories far above the Bible or the spirit of Jesus Christ. The visible idolatry of Judah was to them as the spirit of infidelity and irreligion is to us, the refusal of men to reverence the Deity, and frame their lives on Christian principles, and yield obedience to that moral order which is the glory of the universe.

Men cannot be expected to do justly, respect the rights of others, and yield all due submission and obedience to proper restraints and wholesome laws, unless they believe in and adore the moral Governor of the world, who directs all its events; and further, unless the impression of his character and law upon their minds restrains that native selfishness which leads them to consult their own private inclinations, at the expense of moral order and the good of others. No nation can possess and enjoy a free government, or one dependent upon its own opinion and not on the force of controlling power, unless it has that intelligence and virtue which lead the people to look upon government itself as ordained of God, and the rulers consider themselves as his servants and ministers, and all just, wholesome, and necessary restraints as enforced by the sacredness of the divine will. The true genius and tendency of idolatry, therefore, you will all see; and also see how nations like ours may possess its spirit without its form. We may idolize our constitutions, our military strength and resources; we may refer our political salvation to particular men, and measures and platforms, and practically ignore the superintending agency of God. The same element of godless, idolatrous anarchy which swept away the remaining freedom and self-government of Judah, in modern times has caused the French and other republics and free states of Europe and America to wither and fall in quick succession, like the trees of the forest before the raging fury of a conflagration. O, my brethren, how much we need as individuals and a nation, at such a time as this to renounce all our idolatries and mortal dependencies, and return, in the true spirit of our revolutionary fathers, to the God of forces—the rock of our salvation, when the political heavens darken and strike us with dismay and confusion, and the sword of the destroyer seems ready to pierce the vitals of our national prosperity.

3. There was a *third* delinquency in the decline of *social, personal, and political integrity*. Truth, justice, benevolence, and the sense of moral honor, as the true basis of the civil compact, began to fail. *Personal integrity* consists in pure, unadulterated *honesty*; in saying and doing

that, and that only, which the person believes to be right and true, no matter how strong may be the motive to swerve from it; and political integrity is the strict application of this principle to one's duties and actions in the relation of the citizen. Such a man, for example, would not vote or exercise the electoral franchise if he did not believe that it was his right, according to the meaning and intent of the law; nor would he countenance such an act in another, however much it might tend to promote the cause of the party which he desired to support; he would not aid or abet any defrauding the State, smuggling goods, or taking advantage of the public or his fellow citizens. It consists in the support of the true ends of the civil compact, and a consequent respect and reverence for its good, as an ordinance of God; and an implicit obedience to all laws which one believes to be truly and legitimately enacted, however repugnant they may seem to be to his own interests.

There was in Judah, as we have reason to fear in our own republican country, a great relaxation of the primary duty of instilling into the mind and forming in the conduct of the young and rising generation, a becoming respect for divinely constituted authority, and a training of the conscience and the heart in the fear of God and the obligation of the subjection of the passions to the control of reason and duty. If children are not constantly taught, both by precept and example, to abhor deception and falsehood, injustice, unbridled passion, and to curb that selfishness which controls the bulk of mankind, and that inflated pride of character which bases itself not upon purity and virtue and moral truthfulness so much as a selfish dignity, there can be no sure basis for civil government.

If man is not accustomed from infancy to feel that he owes it to himself, to his fellow-men, and above all to God, to restrain himself from crime, immoral desires and vindictive passions, he comes upon the stage of action predisposed to throw down rather than uphold the standard of duty and social obligation. If the teachings of the well-regulated family are wholly wanting, and the young grow up to manhood, having in their own bosoms no powerful checks to injustice, untruthfulness and lawlessness, founded upon a cherished sense of God's presence and the moral turpitude of dishonesty and crime, it is in vain to look to human laws alone to control their vicious propensities or curb the fury of their passions. So it was and ever will be in such a case.

4. A *fourth* delinquency, a fourth threatening indication which God by his prophet notices, is the development of *sectional rancor*, *violence*, *excited passions*, *conflicting aims and interests*, and *bitter alienations*, in the midst of which the restraints of order and authority were overborne and anarchy threatened. It is usually the case that no animosities are so bitter and dangerous as those which attend the feuds and factions of a divided nation; and in which men, impelled often by pride and lawless

ambition, are earnestly struggling for ascendancy; and every evil and unpatriotic passion is invoked.

The conflict of the opposing will and determination of the masses, like an unrestrained torrent, rises and sweeps away all the embankments of order and justice, and the flow of swelling passion suddenly breaks over all restraints of both human and divine authority. Here is the danger to moral order which exists in all free states of society, where authority has not the presence of a military force or an armed police to overawe the passions of infuriated men.

It is a noticeable fact in the history of the Israelites that their greatest dangers, if not the most ruinous calamities which befell them, arose from those internal strifes, and commotions, and outbursts of lawlessness, which appeared to be most intense and ruinous in the darkest periods of their history. The fact that when the Jews were shut up and closely besieged in Jerusalem, in the war of the Romans, under Titus, which issued in their utter desolation and ruin, these animosities were rife within its walls, and deadly assaults and assassinations were filling the city with blood, while famine and death were raging in its streets.

It is a remarkable fact in the history of our country, which I have long been led to notice, that of the number of murders and homicides which are annually committed, the proportion which have arisen from revenge, personal quarrels, and the outbreaks of passion, have astonishingly increased; and since the custom, now becoming so common, and which thirty years ago would have been esteemed disreputable and immoral, of wearing deadly weapons, there is every reason to think the evil will increase. How offensive to the Almighty such a custom among men, who should, from day to day, go out as friends and neighbors to love and bless each other. The idea that pride and ungovernable passion should lead an honored law-maker, under any conceivable provocation of words, in the very sanctuary of law and national legislation, violently and furiously to assault a fellow-legislator and almost take his life, must be esteemed by all good men as a disgrace to the civilized world. What if the acknowledged and cherished right of free-discussion in all our social convocations and legislative halls may have a tendency at times to exasperation, is it for considerate and patriotic men to invade prerogatives so sacred to free men? If the tone of violence is to take possession of the nation on such personal or popular emergencies, have we not begun to dig the grave of this exalted republic? How deeply should it be engraven on every mind, in our judicial tribunals and legislatures as well as in every family, that if the citizen does not hold himself in inviolable subjection to what the good of society requires, and if his neighbor's person and rights are not sacred in his eyes, as to all personal invasion, the public security must become impossible.

5. A relaxed, diseased, and *unsound moral-sentiment*, and the *spirit of insubordination* to the dictates of law and civil rectitude, and the rules of public order was another prominent delinquency to which the prophet referred. There was a wide and alarming decline of the inherent power of law in the nation. Although in the last years of *Moses*, and those of the earlier Judges, and during the reigns of *Hezekiah* and *Josiah*, a sound and virtuous public sentiment measurably prevailed in Judah, and important reformatations were effected by these last two sovereigns, there was a constant tendency in the whole period of the Jewish Nationality, not only to idolatry, sedition and anarchy, but also to infidelity and irreligion. After each reformation there was a speedy relapse into the abominations of the heathen, a departure from the principles of justice, truth and virtue, and a turning of their backs upon Jehovah and the moral laws of *Moses*. Manasseh's persecutions had greatly fostered the principles of cruelty, injustice, and iniquity, and by the immoral tone of the masses of the people, the laws of God as to moral duties and religious worship were first, by common consent, nullified and set aside and could not be enforced, and then the requirements of the king and his officers were disregarded, and vice, disorder, and insubordination prevailed. Manasseh had himself set up and enforced a most bold and wicked idolatry, and compelled his subjects to practice it, and when after his captivity and conversion he essayed to restore the true worship and enforce it, he found himself powerless to effect it. There is a sense in which public opinion governs the world; and if in any case, the majority of the people practically sanction unlawful actions and aggressions, and set aside the prescribed penalties, the supremacy of order is so far gone, and statutes which are not, and cannot be executed, avail nothing but to illustrate the weakness and inefficacy of government. In a free government, therefore, under God, the presiding genius, the controlling principle is the direct influence of the sentiment and determination of the mass of the people to enact and sustain just laws and rules of conduct, and frown down and punish all contempt and infractions of governmental authority, and scrupulously guard the purity of the electoral franchise.

But if this conscientious feeling of reverence for law and moral order is destroyed, the basis of the social structure is undermined. Ours, more truly than Judah's, is a government of opinion and principle, instead of force; and, therefore, almost all just fears must arise from the depravity and unscrupulousness of our own people. The prevalence of infidelity and intemperance and vice are vast political evils; for how is life and liberty and property to be secured if crime cannot be restrained, and if the oath loses its validity upon the conscience?

It is one of the plainest axioms in human experience, and the science of politics, that in a free and elective government, the public security

must mainly rest upon the virtue and patriotism of the masses of the people, and that tone of integrity, of order, and self-government, and conscientious respect and reverence for law and the public welfare which is found among them. If the body politic is sound, and enlightened, and upright, a free and elective government is the strongest of all; but without this, it is the weakest of any.

When the felt obligation of the citizen to submit to the authority of the laws, through the force of a corrupt public opinion, is disclaimed, and the implied conditions of the social compact are thus broken, then the heat of pride and passion is ready to set aside the claims of truth and justice, and man holds himself accountable only to himself, denying the validity of constituted authority when it conflicts with his own selfish passions. But while one thus refuses obedience to the dictates and restraints of the civil laws, his example and his principles go to destroy the protection which these are intended to give to himself and others, and the whole tendency is to destroy the efficacy of civil government, and reduce society to the necessities of anarchy or despotism.

Finally, The Most High complained of Judah that there was, in all her people, a deep insensibility, a profound moral lethargy, pressing like a preternatural apathy, a fatal incubus, upon the public mind, at the very period when her eventful emergencies would require the union of truth, justice, and patriotism with wakeful piety, firmness, and moderation. The spirit of deep slumber of the heart and conscience, as to her God, her duties, and her responsibilities, overspread the nation, and formed a melancholy contrast with those trying events which were hastening on to decide her destiny. Amidst the long, earnest, and solemn calls of God to repentance, the offers of good and the announcements of evil, the sunshine of beneficence and the distant thunders of approaching judgment, there, alas, is Jerusalem devoid of internal harmony and concord, rent by civil feuds and animosities, wicked and destitute of the wisdom and moral strength and patriotism demanded by her relative condition, and wrapped in a profound spiritual insensibility, criminal and gloomy at any time, but awful in the hour of impending danger.

The exigencies in her national career, which inevitably awaited the empire, and to which I refer, were the successive invasions of the monarchs of Egypt and especially of Assyria, in one of which Manasseh was taken prisoner and the city and commonwealth progressively enfeebled and depopulated, until at last the moral weakness of a degenerate people made it easy to subvert the government, kill, and carry into captivity the residue of the nation, and lay waste and desolate the territory. God had done every thing for them, and even in their apostacies and corruptions of religion, their dissensions and crimes, had waited and expostulated; but when judgment and desolation and carnage were at their doors, the eye

of a dying piety and patriotism saw no indications of reformation, was gladdened by no marks of returning contrition, gratitude and devotion to God. Who could wonder, then, that the sun of her national existence set in disgrace, suffering and blood, and that, in the emphatical words of the text, there was none to bemoan her.

We owe the sincerest gratitude to God, for the belief that our own happy country has yet no small amount of piety and moral principle, while yet to the calm and prejudiced observer, we must be deemed a profane, sabbath-breaking, intemperate and money-making people, vastly wanting in that purity and godliness which a free and highly-favored nation should rejoice to exhibit. Slavery is an evil and a stain upon our national escutcheon, which all good and patriotic men profess to deplore, as alike opposed to the principles of eternal justice and the genius of our government, and the spirit of the Christian faith. While our mercies and obligations, the admiration and envy of other nations, call for profound gratitude and deep, national humiliation; our pride and luxury, our social revelries and crowded theatres, and scenes of dissipation and licentiousness, with many other things, show, alas, but too plainly, the spiritual insensibility and moral death which pervades the public mind.

Our republic is now called, it would seem, to meet the issues of a great and difficult question of national policy, demanding such a measure of harmony, concession, and patriotism, in all orders of society, as can result only from an awakened sense of solemn, national responsibility, and the superintending care of a just and holy providence. The lines between the pro and anti-slavery extension parties; in the states and territories, are not only distinctly drawn, but each embodies so much excited determination to press the question to its final issue, that, to human view, it cannot be long postponed, nor in any feasible way be amicably adjusted. Whatever the spirit of moderation and mutual forbearance might have done in calmer times, in waiting for some future disposition and adjustment, or for God to open some way of escape, unforeseen by mortals, it seems now impossible to avert a crisis which the extremes on both sides appear able and disposed invincibly to press to a final disposal of, by the American people. All other questions and topics, at the polls and in legislative assemblies, will be merged in this, and no expedient to harmonize the whole nation, or avert a threatening collision of opinion, is longer practicable.

With man this is impossible, but "*with God all things are possible,*" and on this account how much is our national forgetfulness of him to be deplored. Already we hear on the western breeze the murmurs of strife and conflict; and among the two nearly equally divided masses, there is a tone of determination not to acquiesce in the ascendancy of the other, and a single rush of hostile elements might bring upon us the incalculable

miseries of civil war. Will an offended God withdraw his hand and no longer pilot this nation through the commotions and howlings of the apparently impending storm? Justly might he do so, and then how soon should we seal our own national ruin, and write in confusion and with blood the last chapter of our once auspicious history. But the God of nations is merciful to penitent and returning communities.

II. The text leads us to consider that, when a *nation like Judah, thus exalted of heaven, by its persevering iniquities incurs the condemnation of God, accomplishes its political destruction, it can expect no sympathy from heaven or earth*, the commiseration of no civilized nation whatever. The reasons for this are many. Unpitied would be Judah in her fall, because she would *perversely sacrifice that nationality* and that regular regal succession in the family and line of David, her former king, which she seemed commissioned of heaven to transmit down to the time when David's greater son should arise to take the spiritual sceptre and reign forever. Thus, as a chosen kingdom, traveling on to meet in her own Monarch the potentate and Messiah, who could pity her when she ignobly lost and sold these great promises and splendid prospects through her own iniquity and debasement. Yet so it was; and when the divine and illustrious prince appeared in the flesh, there was no kingdom of Judah, and the sceptre had all but departed from her. And which of the nations of the globe, either of present or future times, shall pity this our confederated republic, if e'er it reaches the close of its first century, it falls and crumbles through the weight of its own sins and dissensions. Having embraced and announced the idea that its intended destiny in the plan of heaven is, to be its choicest instrument for good, and the grandest political luminary and guiding star to all the nations of the globe, how shameful, by its reckless fall, to add one more example and illustration of the reputed impossibility of political freedom?

2. Judah would find none to bemoan her fate, because *her folly* and her *wickedness* would appear pre-eminently *great* and heinous in the eyes of all the nations. With such antecedents in her past history, such bright and glorious promises before her, how could her daring idolatry and deep pollution, and fatal excesses and dissensions, leave any people to bemoan her rejection. The judgments of heaven would appear so just and her ruin so inevitable.

3. Jerusalem in all her glory and sacredness laid low, and Judah swept of all her homes, and hamlets and cities laid desolate, would stand amidst her desolation and ruins, uncommiserated, because she had so *ungratefully rebelled against* and wearied the *patience* of her best, mightiest, and most gracious Friend and Benefactor.

Let us, in her persevering sin, and final ruin and destruction, read the

inevitable doom of individuals as well as nations, who pervert distinguished mercies and persevere in aggravated transgressions.

Is not this then a period when the Christian philanthropist should humble himself before the Lord, for his own and his country's sins; exert himself to allay the asperities of sectional feelings, and promote the objects of reformation, and the interests of pure and undefiled religion? Should not the united piety of the country address its intercession to the dishonored ruler of the universe, asking him to pour out a double portion of his spirit upon the entire nation, lead us to a true repentance and reformation, and thus make it consistent to avert from us his merited chastisements? What a motive to this is presented in the thrilling alternative presented in the text?

Passing events have constrained us, my brethren, as a matter of duty, to call your thoughts to this subject, somewhat at large, and we would now commend it to your deliberate and prayerful reflection. There is involved in the providential destiny of this republic, an incalculable amount of good or evil, for all the nations of the earth. There is danger of a collision between Britain and the United States, the two nations upon whose stability and spirit of evangelization the prospects of protestant christendom, throughout the world, seem chiefly dependent, at this eventful period in Christian prophecy. May not God have a controversy with his people in both countries, for their remissness in making "known on earth the saviour of the Redeemer's name," as well as other things. In all these signs of the times, let us hear the voice of him who sitteth on the throne, and who often reveals himself for deliverance and consolation in the trying hour. Let us hope and pray that through every danger, he may lead our country safely on, cherishing its own immunities, and itself nobly fulfilling for Christ and the world, the work of freedom and salvation.

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