

7.
AMERICA'S MISSION.

A SERMON

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AMERICA'S MISSION.

“AND WHO KNOWETH WHETHER THOU ART COME TO THE KINGDOM FOR *such*
A TIME AS THIS?”—Esther iv. 14.

WE have not selected these words with an intention of dwelling at length upon their original reference. You have assembled on the morning of your National Thanksgiving, expecting to have your meditations led in directions befitting the occasion—and we call your attention to this particular text, because we judge it to contain a great principle, entirely appropriate to our present circumstances.—The occasion of its primitive utterance is familiar to you all. It is the message sent by Mordecai unto Esther, when the machinations of Haman were hemming the Jews in unto destruction, in which he urges her to the performance of her duty to her people, from the consideration that, apparently, God had brought her to the queenship of that great ori-

ental kingdom, with the very design that she should work out their deliverance—as if he had said—“Divine Providence has not distinguished thee, raising thee from poverty to a throne for thine own sake merely, but rather for the express purpose of counterworking a great scheme of wickedness formed against the whole people of Israel;” and this argument is prefaced in the context by a prophetic intimation, that if, for any reason, she shrank from the accomplishment of this purpose, her own destruction, as one not achieving the end of her political elevation, would inevitably follow. And herein is manifestly and strikingly set forth the great truth: *that God, in His Providence, raises up special instrumentalities for special purposes; which instrumentalities will themselves be destroyed, if they subserve not those purposes.*

Now, we need not pause to prove to you that such is a principle of the Divine administration. Such is, indeed, a principle of every wise administration, however finite and imperfect—and reason and revelation conspire to affirm it a great and pervading principle in the government of God. We take it, therefore, on the authority of Revelation it receives in the text, and go on, at once, to a practical application of this

principle to ourselves as a nation, in our peculiar circumstances this morning.

It is the morning of our National Thanksgiving—a morning when the heart of every American patriot and Christian, swells high in rapture over the glories of his birth-right, and the voice of a nation lifts to God grateful anthems, as a befitting sacrifice of thanksgiving, in return for our distinguishing religious and political blessings; and yet, a morning when, in view of our national short-comings, every Christian and patriotic heart in the temples of Jehovah confesses a foreboding, as to what shall be the future of such a people, in the Providential out-working of a Divine purpose, alike all righteous and omnipotent. And this is the peculiarity of our circumstances, which renders the great principle of the text most appropriate, and we go on at once to consider and apply it.

This principle, in this application, involves two simple thoughts.

First, That God seems to have raised us up as a nation as a great instrument of Civil and Religious benefit to the world.

And, *Secondly, That our own national prosperity and indeed, national existence, for the future, depend, under God, on our diligent outworking this grand purpose of Providence.*

Let us consider these two thoughts in their order.

We say, then—*First, That God seems to have raised up this American Nation as a great instrument of civil and spiritual salvation to a world.*

This truth, will, we think, be made manifest from several distinct considerations.

Foremost of all, as in the case of Esther, in her relation to the Jews, we would have you observe—*The indications of a most marked and wonderful Providence in our national rise and progress.*

This fair world was not rounded into beauty and hung amid the stars, to remain forever a stronghold of the apostate. In the first hour of its disloyalty to Jehovah, it was, *a priori*, to be expected that God would either sweep it out of being, or redeem and restore it; and with an eye carefully observant of its past history, we perceive how God's system of providence has all been tending to one great end—*The*

restoration of the race to its original condition, through the institution and extension and triumphs of the Church.

Nations have flourished and fallen—and the eye of Christian philosophy, looking back upon the convulsive workings of human passion, that have rocked the cradle and dug the grave of progressive empires, traces distinctly the operation of a grand Providential economy, working, indeed, in that great majestic patience, and those circles of immense sweep, wherein Omnipotence ever achieves its purposes; yet working steadfastly and surely ever, turning and overturning old systems, for the establishment, on their ruins, of an everlasting Kingdom, whose Monarch shall be God. And, if it be ours at all to judge of Divine designs, from Providential indications, then this American nation constitutes, so to speak, a great spring, or lever, or wheel, in that vast and complicate machinery whereby Omnipotence is outworking this magnificent result.

To the eye of sceptical philosophy the phenomena of our rise and progress as a people, may well appear marvelous. It is a marvel that, until the fifteenth century, in the enthrallment of his moral nature, man

should have remained but half a man—his noblest prerogative unrecognized. It is a marvel that until the fifteenth century, the world should have remained but half a world, its noblest continent undiscovered, yea, undreamed of. And greater still seems the resultant marvel—that in the march and movement of God's providence, the self-same fifteenth century should have developed man in his majesty as a whole man—and the world in its magnificence as a whole world. I say, the eye of *scepticism* sees, in all this, the greatly marvelous; and so every preceding and attending circumstance of our national being—our early preservation—our glorious revolution—our subsequent progress, seem all, as well, things mysterious and wonderful; and yet the eye of philosophic *Faith* sees in them all—in the simultaneous invention of the mariner's compass and the printing press, the one lifting the curtain from the whole world, the other shivering the fetter from the whole man—in the simultaneous birth of the Genoese navigator and the German reformer, braving, in behalf of that world and that race, the one the tempests of the material, the other the tempests of the moral world—in the simultaneous rise of English literature and English intolerance, the

one producing the English Bible, the Magna Charta of the American Church, the other driving forth that Church with this precious birth-right blessing, to set up the pillar of its Bethel on Plymouth rock—in all those stormy conflicts that rooted colonial religion like the oak tree, deep amid the foundations of the everlasting hills—in the altogether matchless, nay, almost miraculous success of our early struggles for nationality, as an unarmed child in the wilderness against the mightiest war power in the elder world—in the wonderful wisdom of a constitution—conceived amid struggles for hearth-stone and altar, and written, as it were, in the life blood of heroic hearts, whose great central truth of *human equality*, has set it above all other political systems as gloriously as the living man of to-day is above the dead fossils of the old geologic races—in all the march and magnificence of a subsequent progress, which, ere the forests have decayed that showered their foliage as the pilgrim's welcome, has laid deep the foundation, and reared strongly a national superstructure, whose height, even now, among the nations of the world, is as Mont Blanc amid mountains—in all this, I say, the eye of *philosophic faith* perceives the evolution of far-reaching

and Omniscient design, more distinctly marking this nation as one of God's great instrument for the world's civil and religious redemption, than did the strange call of the Hebrew Patriarch, and the marvelous preservation of the Hebrew law-giver and the magnificent Exodus of the Hebrew people; show the descendants of Abraham to have been the objects of God's special care—and divine instrument for the diffusion over the Gentile world of the light and liberty that abide in the oracles of God.

Now this leads me to remark as the *second reason* for the thought under review—

That the political and religious aspects of the other nations of the world, and the signs of the times in regard of them, lead directly to the conclusion, that the work of the world's evangelization, and man's social and spiritual redemption, if accomplished at all, must be OUR national work.

I can not enlarge upon this thought, but I ask any man to tell me where, save within our own borders, can be found the necessary resources for the great work of the world's national or spiritual redemption?

Look at the people and realms of the trans-atlantic world. Over poor Africa broods the moral silence and gloom of the sepulchre—scarcely the whisper of a child's Hozanna—scarcely any thing but the death-sob of oppression in all the dwellings of the children of Ham. Upon the vast Shemite world there has come down a power of great darkness, the Churches planted by the Apostles have not even a name to live, and the tree of liberty, that under the long line of Prophet and King shadowed in strength the cities of the Hebrews, Alas! it has died root and branch in the very Canaan of the Patriachs. A limited portion of Europe and our own Republic are, at this moment, the only portions of the world where real liberty, and true christianity, have even a nominal being. To them, therefore, is providentially committed the entire work of man's civil and religious redemption; but if truth can be read in the signs of the times, the period is not far distant when European christendom, if it do not become itself missionary ground, will require all its religious resources in the match of its own altars; and when European liberty, if it be not utterly swept away in the advancing tide of despotism, will seek, even at our hands aid in the strife; and build with the

granite of this pilgrim land, fortress and tower in the great day of her trial.

The trans-atlantic world is yet to undergo mighty revolutions ere the principles of the Bible can flourish there in their power and purity. Its social systems are in manifest antagonism, alike to the spirit of diffused popular knowledge, and to the Gospel of Christ. Three mighty social changes, at least, must precede a European Millenium.

The monopoly of soil must be abolished.

Irresponsible and arbitrary power must give place to the franchises of the multitude.

And unrestrained liberty of conscience must be restored fully to the race.

And to suppose that such changes can be produced by processes of gradual melioration, is to suppose that a granite mountain can be levelled, grain by grain, without the heave of an earthquake. You cannot make Europe the home of religious liberty by emendations and additions to her old social edifice—for all your multiplied sweepings and garnishings she will remain the same prison-house of bondmen. No! no! it must be rocked into the dust, and another structure raised upon its ruins, ere Christianity and

liberty can enter in and dwell there. Europe must herself become free, before she can be counted as the champion for freedom and humanity. Europe must herself become evangelized, popularly and thoroughly, ere she can be reckoned as an instrumentality for the world's evangelization. The gospel must enter her social system as an original element—European society must take its shape, and model its usages, and baptize its whole being in the genius of Christianity, ere God will make use of her prominently as the regenerator of humanity in the conversion of the world.

And, in view of all this, I repeat it—The eye of faith, looking abroad for agencies for this great work, rests, as its last hope, on beloved America; and the man must be a blind man, who fails to perceive how God hath raised us up to stand in the strength of these everlasting hills—the world's great asylum, and the gospel's great stand-point—in that period of approaching convulsion, foretold by prophesy, as a period that shall turn the sun into sackcloth, and the moon into blood, and shake the whole earth in the violence of her outraged and agonizing population.

Now, this leads me to remark, *Thirdly*, That the truth under review will appear still more apparent, if you carefully observe—

How the genius of American Institutions, and the peculiarities of American character, eminently qualify and equip us for this great work of man's social and civil regeneration.

The whole history of the rise and progress of our national character, cannot have failed to impress this thought strongly upon every philosophic mind. Not only in the original settlement of this country was there a sifting of all Christendom for the noblest specimens of manhood to go forth as colonists, but in all our subsequent progress has there been gathered into it every variety of national character, so that there is scarcely a solitary people in the whole earth which finds not its representative incorporated in our social system. The iron Saxon, the volatile Frenchman, the grave Spaniard, the reflective German, the effervescing Italian, the warm-hearted Irishman; aye, and the member of the wildest clan and the extremest caste of earth's remotest continents, all speak of America as the refuge of their brethren; And as the celebrated Corinthian brass was only a rare amalgam

of all other metals, so the American character holds in combination, all the available peculiarities of every people under heaven. While the original Anglo-Saxon is the controlling element of the mass, yet, so essentially have the highest qualities of other races modified the composite; and so warmly has the whole been fused and fired by the glorious freedom of American life; that our national character is, to-day, a new and nobler style in the development of manhood. And in this anomalous fact, you cannot fail to perceive how God has furnished us with the desiderata for one great mission to the nations, as well in the hold we thus have on the sympathies and affections of all people, as in those elements of ardor, and energy, and hope, which must render the Anglo-American the noblest representative of man.

Add to this, then, the mighty resources of influence and strength which our nation embosoms—the mighty and magnificent thing America is now on the earth—and the more mighty and magnificent thing she is to be presently, when, if true to herself and to her great mission, she shall stretch from ocean to ocean, athwart this broad continent; a nation of freemen, self-governed—governed by simple law, with-

out a police or a soldiery—a nation of five hundred millions of people, covering the sea with their fleets, and the land with their great cities—first in arts and learning, and every great product of genius—and thus, even POLITICALLY, a power on the earth, before which the menial war-power of kings were as the Philistines before Samson. Aye, and more than all, RELIGIOUSLY, God's great almoner of the gospel to the race—the light of the benighted—the refuge of the oppressed—the home of the exile—the hope of the lost. Oh! I say, in view of what my country now is, and what she seems destined to be, in the march of God's providence, who can fail to recognize God's great purpose in raising her up as the one mighty instrument for the civil and religious regeneration of the world.

And this leads me to yet another point in the argument, which is just beginning to receive philosophic attention, and on which, though it were not safe very greatly to rely, yet we would fasten your thought for a passing moment—we mean

God's great Prophecies in Revelation having reference to America.

This argument begins with the assumption which has, at least, a plausible seeming—that it is unreasonable and unphilosophic to suppose that in a vast system of prophesy, detailing the grand features of the world's history to the end of time, and specifically and repeatedly predicting the rise of every nation whose existence was, vitally, to affect the church of God—that in such a system of prophesy, no mention should be made of a nation confessedly destined, more than all others, to affect the world—no allusion found to an epoch, an era, a nationality, more replete than all others with influences of good to man, and glory to Jehovah.

Setting out with this assumption, it confidently expects to find this American nationality fully foreshadowed in the ancient symbols of prophesy, yea, and it confidently declares it has found it in many a line of misinterpreted revelation.

It finds it *in Ezekiel's prediction of the restoration of Israel*. The unequivocal promise of future nationality to Israel in the Christian era, it interprets as fulfilled with wonderful particularity in the manifold parallelisms of American nationality.

It finds it in *the Fifth Kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar's*

vision, thus interpreted by Daniel—“*And in those days shall the God of Heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all other kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.*”

It finds it in *Daniel's vision of the great ancient of days*. That sublime prophesy of Empires coincident throughout with this dream of Nebuchadnezzar.

It finds it in *Daniel's third great prophesy—in Michael the great Prince, who should stand gloriously at last for the children of God's people*.

It finds it, moreover, predicted in the whole range of *Apocalyptic symbols*—*In the man-child of the woman crowned with twelve stars and fleeing with great wings into the wilderness—In the man with many crowns, who with eyes as as a flame of fire, and vesture dipped in blood, smote the nations with a sharp sword, and ruled them with a rod of Iron—In the sealing of the hundred and forty and four thousand*.

It finds it indeed in many of those mysterious symbols of the Revelation, which have heretofore been regarded as of different interpretation.

And this prophetic explanation, involving, perhaps, much that is fanciful, yet is made to rest on a philosophic interpretation of symbols, and a plausible compu-

tation of the sacred and symbolic time of the Hebrew chronology, such as give it the seeming of much that is worthy a Christian's earnest study. And applying these specific predictions to America, it draws clearly and strongly the prophetic inference, that the grand design of this new and wonderful nationality is two-fold, *to destroy all systems of Monarchical Government, and to restore and expand over all the earth the glory of a pure and primitive Christianity.* That the time hastens, when against this last popular embodiment of Divine power, the kingdoms of the world shall ally themselves in anger, and be dashed in pieces as a potter's vessel. And that then, rising up in its strength, this glorious nationality shall work out as God's instrument, the last great purpose of the present system of things: *A universally diffused Freedom and Christianity to all peoples, and kindreds and nations under Heaven.*

But, even ignoring this last point as altogether fanciful, we think we are not assuming too much, we think we do not greatly magnify the strength of our argument, when we declare that just as Esther was raised up for the salvation of the Jews, so, manifestly has God raised us up for the world's regeneration, and that in the very words of the text "*For such a time as this have we come to the kingdom.*"

Aye, and this is the thought, more than another, which fills the heart with great rapture amid the hallowed gratulations of our national thanksgiving. We love to linger even over the *political* promise of our loved land. To behold the first spring of the eaglet to the air, that in circles of amazing swiftness and power, will out-soar every bird of the sky on its strong wings to the sun. To go forward for years and behold America, the last born, but loveliest and queenliest sister in the family of nations. This, even this, is a prophet's vision at which the American eye kindles and the American heart swells in Thanksgiving.—But when from a thousand considerations, some of which we have suggested, the conviction fastens on us, that, we have been raised by God's Providence for the accomplishment of purposes more magnificent and mighty than any vision of Statesmanship. That in very deed the mountain of an ascending nationality has been flung up as a stand-point, whence the apocalyptic angel, with God's everlasting gospel of peace to man, and glory to God in the highest, is to take flight over the world—Oh, then I say, our mortal joy as patriots becomes immortal joy as Christians—and our thanksgiving for civil and social blessings, partakes of the hallowed exultation of the old Israelite, when

he stood upon the crowned heights of Zion, and beheld proselytes from remotest nations of the world—Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Phrygia, and Egypt, coming up with the tribes to the great ritual jubilee of the Jewish year.

But it is time now to pass to the other part of the text's great principle, and consider,

Secondly:—That our own national prosperity, and, indeed, national existence, in all future time, depend under God, on our diligent outworking this grand purpose of Providence.

And on this point there is small need of an argument. It is a *sequitur* at once, from the principle involved in the historical context.

That a Divine Instrumentality will be displaced and destroyed if it subserve not its designed purposes.

This was the whole argument of Mordecai with Esther:—*That inasmuch as God had brought her to the kingdom for such a time and purpose, she, herself, would surely perish, if she failed in its accomplishment.* The principle is one common in its application to all intelligent operations, whether Divine or human, viz: *That any instrumentality will be displaced and destroyed, if, upon trial, it fail to answer its designed purpose—*

and from this principle, patent in all the records of God's past administration, there comes, mingling with our rejoicing thanksgivings this day, a foreboding of disaster.

We are not looking at the data of political and patriotic argument, though, even in these might be found material for unpromising prediction. Ungracious as it ever will be, to doubt the self-perpetuating power of American Institutions, there are yet, unquestionably, premonitions of political disaster in the things that are around us. There is a manifest decay of sympathy between remote members of our great national confederacy. There is a degeneration in the healthy and hearty old party spirit, from a magnanimous struggle for great principles into a selfish sticking for local and sectional interests. There is a loathsome prostitution of statesmanship unto the artifices and dishonesties of the rankest demagogueism, so that the heights of our political ambition are attained as often by the sinuous winding of the reptile, as by the majestic strength of the eagle's soaring pinion. There is an increasing *furore* in the proverbial restlessness of American character—and a growing intolerance in the bigotry of American liberalism—and an enlarging distrust in the very optimism of the American system—and, more than all, there is an overleaping of those

great moral and religious land-marks, which our forefathers regarded as the only barriers whereby the wild waves of political excitement could be hemmed in from an oversweeping deluge. Intemperance reels through our streets; and blasphemy and profaneness burden the atmosphere; and the public conscience has become callous, through the frequency of unpunished crime, and licentiousness stalks unblushing through the land, and the Sabbath is trodden down by the multitude; and an unholy lust of conquest is working, like hidden fever, in the pulses of the body politic; so that right in the path of our glorious progress, the seas are white around the rocks whereon the old republics rushed to shipwreck two thousand years ago. And in these things the eye, even of irreligious statesmanship, perceives many a sign of disaster to our peculiar institutions. But of such things, as we have just said, we are not thinking to speak—we only insist on the great principle of the text—*That God has raised us up for one great purpose, and if recreant to that purpose, however gigantic our march, we are yet rushing to destruction.* That prepared, manifestly, by God, as the great instrument for the world's civil and religious regeneration, such an end we must recognize and accomplish; or, if God remain

immutable in the principles of His administration, the smoke of our burning will surely ascend, and the fragments of our shipwreck go by upon the waters.

And here we are brought to a grand principle of national self-preservation, which, though for the most part lost sight of, deserves our serious pondering—and that is, *That our safety depends in looking less inwardly upon ourselves, and more outwardly upon others.* We do not, indeed, pretend that to a nation, as to individuals, self-preservation is not the first law of life; we only do assert that this outward and world-reaching activity, is the great means even of self-preservation. We ought, of course, earnestly and vigilantly to take heed to ourselves. Esther was to seek to preserve her own life as carefully as that of her people. National life, like all other life, begins at the centre, and must be watched at the centre, as it works outward to the circumference. We must see that our civil and religious institutions are perpetuated and perfected. The Gospel of Christ must be given in fuller measure to our vast population. There is a practical and positive heathenism coming down on parts of the nation, which, as an influence undermining our national christianity, must be earnestly evangelized. There is an alliance of infidelity, and Anti-christ ad-

vancing with bold front, against pure and undefiled religion, which must be met by the championship of faith, and conquered for Jesus.

Meanwhile, our *civil* institutions, as well, must be conserved and strengthened. We must see that no root of bitterness spring up and trouble us. We must set our whole strength to crush under foot every reptile that dares to whisper of *disseverance and disunion*. The political demagogue, who, for any purpose of personal aggrandizement, dares conjure the phantom, we should brand with the mark of Cain, and drive forth from all political sympathy, a vagabond forever; and the professing christian, who, for the sake of southern bondmen, dares to preach and pray for disunion, should be pitied, indeed, as a poor lunatic, without enough of common sense to bear the heavenly graft of true piety; but, meanwhile rebuked from our presence as one lunatic, with a whole legion of devils.

In regard alike of our civil and religious immunities, we should, of course, first, take care of ourselves, remembering that it is a great law of our God—“*That he that provideth not first for his own, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel;*” but, meanwhile, remembering as well that other law of our God, that the very preservation of life depends on the vigorous

working of that life outward from the centre to the circumference—that “*There is, that scattereth and yet increaseth, and that which withholdeth more than is meet, which tendeth to poverty;*” and that alike in individual and national life, there is an extravagant self-care, which tends to destruction; and a generous forgetfulness of self, which results in preservation.

We may not and would not be blind to the dangers to which our land is exposed, nor to the political and anti-christian influences which seem at work for our destruction; nevertheless we have no right to be everlastingly declaiming, about their dangerous influence, as things to absorb attention. After all, we have no doubt but that these evils are all exaggerated—they are, in the main, only the symptoms of unimportant disease in a strong man, which will be only increased by over much attention, and disappear of themselves if he go bravely abroad to his ministry. One and all, we say these dangers are exaggerated.

Men cry aloud against—*The upgrowth in our midst of the Papal hierarchy*; but this danger we take to be, in the main, a phantom, conjured by religious demagogues, as a man of straw to be overthrown in Quixotic chivalry, in the face of an ignorant multitude. Now and then some impracticable and effemi-

nate youth may profess conversion to Rome, seduced by Jesuitic arts, and thinking of the romance of a foreign college, or the mysteries of a confessional; but that this Anglo-American people are to go back in any considerable masses to the drivelling mummeries of the Tiber's haggard superstition, is about as likely, as that our commercial marine will retrograde into the old Roman oar-gallies, and our Paixhan howitzer give place to the old Latin battering ram. The man, who in a land and an age like this, is honestly declaiming against the temporal influence of the poor Pope; and earnestly warning his countrymen against the political arts of the poor Catholics; ought to have lived at least in the last century, and followed the Spanish Cavalier in his crusade against wind-mills.

Nor have we any more to fear—*From the influx of foreign elements into our body politic, in the character and habits of the mingled races of the old world.* Though foreign emigration were increased a hundred fold, it would no more alarm a thoughtful man, for the safety of our free institutions, than do the thousand rivers, that pour their varied elements into the sea, alarm a philosopher for the purity of the mighty and assimilating ocean. This nation is already, in all its grand elements of character, permanently Anglo-

American; and a wise man would just as sincerely fear to dine on a salmon, lest he, himself, should become a great fish; or to break his fast on a bird, lest he should sprout with feathers and wings; as have a fear lest this American nationality be essentially or injuriously modified by any foreign elements that may flow into it.

Nor, on the whole, have we any more serious apprehensions of disaster from that everlastingly vexed question of *Southern Slavery*. The cry of danger to our Federal Union, from this cause, is, at most, the false alarm of over-slept watchmen, who, in the somnambulism of a half-dream, mistake the sigh of winds through the banner, for the stealthy tread of armed men, or the far peal of trumpets. We do not say that this great confederacy can never, for any cause, be rent into fragments, and instead of one glorious commonwealth, there arise on its ruins, with all their anarchial and revolutionary accessories, two smaller confederacies, like the miserable military republics of South America. Causes may, indeed, arise in the providence of an avenging God, which shall rock our proud nationality into dust, and bury in the grave of our free institutions, at once the liberties of all people, and the hopes of a world. This all may happen, as we shall, presently, insist upon, from the ope-

ration of the principle of the text—that God will surely displace and destroy every instrument that works not out the purpose of its establishment.

We might say, indeed, that this Union can *never be dissolved*; because it is the result of a great organic law, which makes it, as the different members of a common body, by the great principle of a common life, one and indissoluble forever—not a conglomerate of States, but a great and composite Nation. Nevertheless, as violence may destroy a common life by a disseverance of its members; so this Union, while it cannot be peacefully *dissolved*, like an ice-hill in the sun, may yet be rent into fragments, as a mountain is rent by an earthquake. We do not say that this shall never happen, but this we do say, with the clearest, the calmest, and most assured confidence, that this question of Southern Slavery is not the earthquake that has power to sever us.

There has been, indeed, since Solomon's time, a regular descent of men, "from whom, though brayed in a mortar, among wheat, with a pestle, yet foolishness will not depart,"—Impracticable and malignant fools, who, like Herostratus, would gain for themselves immortal infamy, by the destruction of glorious structures like the Ephesian Temple of Diana. And such

are the men, who, for the sake of the black men scattered thinly over the continent, would destroy this confederacy;—and for the abstract and imaginary right of a poor fragment of a race—to whom its exercise, if practicable, were destructive and disastrous—would madly destroy the last hope of a world's salvation, and bring down, upon all races the burden of ancestral bondage, adamant and forever. Nevertheless, with such men, the great Anglo-American mind has no sympathy whatever. This question of slavery is, confessedly, a perplexing and disturbing thing in our body politic, and about it men do differ honestly and widely; but then there is one greater and grander question, about which the overwhelming and ever-increasing majority of this people never have differed, never will differ,—and that is *a steadfast and inflexible purpose, to preserve against all enemies, and with their heart's best blood, this glorious Union indissoluble and forever!*

Slavery is confessedly an evil, which no man more deeply feels and more ingenuously acknowledges, than the intelligent slaveholder, to whom the evil was a birth-right—and how to get rid of the thing without disadvantage to the two races is a problem perplexing all Christian philosophy. If true to ourselves, the

God who hath relieved us from sorer evils will work out this problem, and in the end make manifest to the world, His hidden purpose of wisdom, and love in that mysterious dispensation whereby these children of Africa have been permitted to bondage. Meanwhile about expedients for removing this evil, so that the black man and the white man shall be mutually advantaged, there may be—and till God reveal his own hidden wisdom there must be—honest and hearty differences; and yet none but a fanatic or a fiend ever thought seriously, for one moment, of solving the problem by dissolving the Union; for, in the first place, such a dissolution, so far from freeing the slave would leave him more hopelessly, a bondman in a great Southern military confederacy. And secondly, even if it resulted in the abolition of slavery, it would be treating an evil on the old heroic plan of setting fire to a house to get rid of a broken sash, or cutting off a man's head to cure his arm of paralysis.

Oh, No! No! indeed No! Our national bark may be driven, by God's storms into shipwreck, but it will not be on this poor pebble of negro slavery, we break up piecemeal. We have already escaped a thousand mightier dangers. When the old thirteen colonies arose against British oppression they were three mil-

lions of people, scattered along a wild seaboard, and even then, they bore bravely the pressure of dissevered counsels—of party jealousies—of State quarrels—of sectional encroachments, on a strengthless central government—of destroyed cities—of stagnant commerce—of burned and blighted harvests—of paralyzed industry—of a crushing burden of debt, and of a disaffected and dissolute soldiery. All this great burden they bore triumphantly through the long conflict with the mightiest war-power of the world. And if thus and then, a nation only in form and name, with little of the vitality of her subsequent national life—America only grew stronger under this pressure in all those elements that now constitute her glory; tell me, if now, standing erect and mature in the full grandeur of her strength, she cannot, against the empty breath of a thousand fools, bear onward unbroken, nay unbent, this poor fardel of slavery. Oh! away with the doubt, let it come from what quarter it may, let it assume what form it will, of philanthropy or religion, it should be trampled sternly under foot as a hissing reptile; and the man who even in a whisper dares to speak of disunion as a possible and practical thing, should be spurned from the face of all honest men into infamy and exile, *as a traitor to his Country and an infidel to his God.*

We say then in a word, of all these evils, and of all such evils springing either from elements within us, or enemies without us, that we have no apprehension they can work us serious national disaster. Our apprehension, this day, arises only from the immutable operation of God's great law—*That every inefficient and mal-adjusted instrument will be cast to destruction.* We have been raised up by God, as the world's great regenerator, and we must accomplish thoroughly that work or be broken up as an effete engine.

This regeneration is to be at least in part SOCIAL AND POLITICAL. We have, in our national capacity, a great work to do with the false social systems of old and haggard despotisms; not that ours is a call, (as the great Hungarian understood it,) to armed intervention. Kossuth's mission to this land was based on a great and true principle, and hence at his advent the heart of the nation rose up in glorious welcome.—But his fiery genius mistook the practical application of that principle, and hence the resistless ebb of his popularity. To suppose that America is to furnish war forces, and send fleets and armies to fight the battles of European freedom, is as wild a chimera as ever danced in the brain of a madman. The simple matter of fact is, that the age of fleets and armies, as

means of human progress, and asserters of human rights, is passed away forever. The strongholds of despotism the world over, are not now camps and fortresses, but the living hearts of the populace.— With a universal desire for free government in the popular heart of Europe, every bond of oppression would fall off as the smoking flax from a Samson. And the coming war of redemption to Europe is not to be a war of arms, but a war of opinion; a war in which men will not conquer kings, but conquer the only support of kings, their own ancestral and ignorant prejudice. Our national intervention in behalf of the race, is to be in the intellectual field of man's prejudices and passions; and though we might do it safely and perhaps with success, yet to interfere as an armed power in European politics, were as philosophic, as to send an army to the Alps to manage the avalanches, or a fleet of gunboats to Naples to manœuvre Vesuvius.

No! no! our mission in behalf of the nations is not an armed intervention. Indeed our mission, in its higher aspects, is in no degree military, and there is no falser and fouler slander than the everlasting utterance of a pensioned foreign press, that America is to be, or desires to be a great military nation, emulous of conquests and feats of arms. We have unquestionably the fiery and

high heart of a brave people, and all the bone and sinew of a resistless military people; nevertheless, pre-eminently above every other nation on the face of the earth, are we a peace-loving, and a peace-abiding people.

Surrounded as we are by weak and helpless nations, and strong as we are in every arm and appliance of conquest. Yea, provoked, as we have been, by blustering foreign insolence—this country exhibits this hour a glorious spectacle of moderation and magnanimity, and self control, such as the world never saw. Verily, were America instinct with that fiery and unscrupulous martial ambition, which these slanderers ascribe to her, then, spite of all the paraded alliances of every empire under heaven, would the banners of her conquest be floating this day, over every province and island that from Hudson's Bay to Cape Horn belongs to this continent. Had we a single tithe of the martial spirit of the old military republics, then five hundred thousand of the bravest soldiery on earth would march under our eagles; and a navy, such as the world never saw, be whitening with its resistless canvass, every ocean under the firmament of heaven.

But we have not such a spirit. In the progress of the race, the age has gone by for the supremacy of such a spirit. America has a nobler work to do than

to play the poor brutal game of war with crowned idiots. If, as seems not impossible, these European Empires in their essential antagonism, and irreconcilable hate to our free institutions, should band themselves together, and come forth in their strength—the bear and the lion, and all the beasts of the earth, and the fowls of heaven, against the flight of our eagle, then indeed, for a little will it be our high calling of God, to stand up by these great hills and glorious streams, and sounding cataracts, and show what God's man-child can do, when he rushes into the last great battle for freedom and the world !

Nevertheless, such strife will not be of our seeking. It will come, if it come at all, in the fulfilment of the apocalyptic prophecy, whose vision was—“*Of the Beast and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered to make war on him on the white horse, whose eyes were as a flame of fire, and on whose head were many crowns.*” And the grand issue of conflict is foretold in the vision, as well—“*The blow of a rod of iron !*”—and “*the flash of a sharp sword !*”—and “*the gathering of all the fowls of Heaven to eat the flesh of kings, and of captains, and of mighty men, at the last great supper of Almighty God !*” If God appoint us to such a war-

path, then let the world be sure—will we walk it with a bounding heart, and a flashing eye, and a great and terrible glory such as the world never saw!

But of such conflicts, I repeat, I am not speaking when I proclaim America's Political mission to the nations of the earth; nevertheless, I am speaking of influences she is to put forth as positive and powerful. We are not to sit still with folded hands and frozen hearts, in full view of Political oppression and wrong unto Christ-redeemed humanity. No! perish the thought! perish the craven policy that dare to advocate or avow it. In all ways of practical and earnest wisdom, God calls us to interfere in behalf of the race. We have been equipped from the first for a mission of intervention. Our colonial establishment was an intervention; our Declaration of National Independence was an intervention; the march of our magnificent progress was an intervention; our enlarged commerce—our liberty-breathing literature—the opening wide of our gates to all exiles from despotism—the power and play of our political machinery—the majesty wherewith man, as man, walks this broad continent—and the radiant flash to the ends of the earth, of the stars that blazon our banners—these, all these are influences of re-

sistless intervention wherewith God hath gifted us.

And the alarming thing about it all is, that we are not exerting these influences as broadly and strongly as the times demand of us. The period has come for one full working; our attitude in respect of the law of the text, is not that of an instrument in process of formation and adjustment, *but of an engine already coupled to a system of mechanism, and set a going for trial.* We are not on march to a kingdom for some period of future emergency. No! "*we are actually come to the kingdom for such a time as this.*" The day has come when, even politically, American influence ought to be mighty in the earth as a blessing to all nations. Already do the Isles of the sea wait for us; the great Continents wait for us; Africa lies drowning in deep waters; Asia moans like a famishing giantess; Europe is hot and seething as a great caldron—her oppressed people are weary with the yoke, and expecting deliverance. These mad monarchs are wasting, in suicidal battles, the resources they should husband for the oncoming struggle for their own imperilled empires; and oppressed MAN watches and waits for the hour, when, with an equal stake on the great game, he may spring to the battle. Italy heaves already

with the presage of an earthquake. Hungary rests like a weary giant, recruiting strength for a fiercer struggle. France has breathed one deep breath of freedom, and henceforth, every despot's fetters on her limbs, are as the burnt flax on Samson. Britain, with her great Anglo-Saxon heart, will cast presently, every burden of bondage off, as a lioness the rain-drops. The great northern despotisms feel pulses like the beating of living hearts under their blood-cemented dynasties—"and for such times as this have we come to the kingdom." From our free institutions should be streaming abroad those mighty and manifold influences which shall destroy despotism, and establish and vindicate universal manhood.—For this was America born, and baptized with God's baptism; that in the embodiment of a vast moral power, and the movement of a tremendous moral machinery, she should solve the great problem of a world's freedom, and work out the glorious accomplishment of an emancipated race.

But, then for more than this, far more, are we come to the kingdom. These influences, *social* and *political*, though pertaining to our mission, are secondary and subordinate to our *evangelical influences*. When the world has been vitally christianized, then,

and then only will its manhood be thoroughly emancipated. And especially for this evangelical work have we been raised up and strengthened. We stand to-day in the world in the place of old Israel—the chosen and peculiar people of the new dispensation—to be the almoners of God's grace, and the promulgators of God's oracles to the ends of the earth. And already has the fullness of time come for the accomplishment of our mission.

We have no limits to enlarge on the thought, nor does the thought need it. It is patent in the signs of the times, so that he that runneth reads it. On all sides it is deeply felt, that ours is an age most momentous in magnificent issues. Events that once required centuries for their accomplishment, are the result now of moments; change succeeds change with the startling rapidity of unnatural and extravagant drama. There is a restlessness abroad in the present system of things which seems the very throe and sore labor wherein the creature travaileth for deliverance from unwilling bondage. The nations of the world are waking from the long sleep of ages—the great heart of the race sorrows and throbs for redemption. False religions no longer satisfy its immortal longings. Paganism all in the East, holds its iron sceptre with a nerveless hand, senile and superannuate. The

Mahomedan faith like the Mahomedan Empire is already wasted and worn in its death struggle. Popery is already tottering to the grave in the wrinkle and decrepitude of dissolute living. The Ganges, the Euphrates, the Tiber, the Jordan—those ancestral rivers—are glassing in their flow the purpling dawn of a great day of redemption.

Then, too, the resources of the church of Christ and the implements all furnished to her hand for the diffusion of the true faith, are almost miraculously mighty—steam, the printing press, the magnetic telegraph, have equipped man for the rapid diffusion of truth, with the very pinion and power of an Archangel. And the canvas of christian commerce is whitening all waters, and riches vast as the treasures of kings, are in Christian coffers consecrate to Jesus. Surely the time has fully come for the aggression of a militant Christianity upon the tottering kingdoms of Antichrist. The American church is called of God to be leading the van in the glory of her beautiful garments, flashing light from heaven into the dark places of a world in ruins. This very hour should there be an American missionary in every hamlet, and an American Bible in every home of a perishing humanity. The islands wait for us; the continents wait

for us ; the world waits for us. The hour has already come, when as a political influence, and a religious power, America should be fighting the great battles of God Almighty—not for future times, but for such a time as this have we come to the kingdom.

And here we say is our ground of gloomy foreboding. Are we accomplishing our mission ? Are we acting well one appointed part in this majestic drama of Providence ? Are we taking this whole round world into the sympathies of one great national heart, and pouring the light and loveliness of our political and evangelical beatitudes into the habitations of them that sit in the shadow of death ? Oh ! you can answer these questions for yourselves, any child can answer them. We are doing voluntarily and efficiently almost nothing for God and our generation. There stands the great enemy to be conquered for Jesus. Against which, with the wisdom of the children of this world, we ought to be hurling the forces of mighty armies, and our poor craven hearts and carnal passions, keep us back from the conflict and the victory. Avarice clutches its great keys in its skeleton fingers and cries—“*Oh, all this will require treasure,*”—and Selfishness lays hand on its shrivelled and bloodless heart, and says—“*Oh ! Charity begins at home.*”—And

Fear whispers with pale lips—“*Oh! I saw there the sons of Anak, tall men and mighty—and Sectarianism, with its hundred hydra heads and serpent voices, hisses, “Oh! let us enlarge our own borders and make popular our shibboleth;” and Pride—a devil in an angel’s robe,—cries, “Come let us build splendid churches, with soft seats in the middle, and costly melo-dramatic ritualism at either end thereof.”* Till verily, verily, the carnal carries it so mightily over the spiritual, that the militant church looks like a peace establishment in its holiday parade, rather than a veritable war-power, armed and eager for battle.

Alas! alas! Called to conquer a world for Christ—we have not yet in the field even the semblance of an army. We are not as yet even successfully skirmishing around the out-posts, when we ought to be thundering at the great inner Citadel, and pealing the shout of victory in the mighty tide of the last great battle. We are not fulfilling our destiny. We are not upspringing to our high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

And here lies our danger: *In the patent law of God’s empire against an effete engine.* We fear nothing but this. We laugh to scorn every thought of danger to our free institutions from internal fanaticism or external aggression. We will stand up here, in the

glorious brotherhood of our fathers and our God, and trample, as a serpent under our feet, this foul spirit of disunion. We can gather by these sounding seas, and repel the mightiest war-power of an allied world, as majestically as Gibraltar rolls back the ocean surges. We can bear, unbent, all our national burdens, and walk, in the face of all people, our own ascending path to the loftiest summit of national glory. *But then, Omnipotence is too strong for us,—* God can palsy the right arm of this giant! and dash our crown of glory into dust, as a potter's vessel!

To a Christian, the question of our national perpetuity is not a mathematical problem as to commercial wealth and military resources—it is simply and purely a philosophic inquiry as to the success of an instrument in achieving the grand purpose whereunto God has called us. That Omnipotence will accomplish, in one way or another, that purpose, it were infidel to doubt. Deliverance was sure to the Jews, even if Esther forgot them; but then upon Esther herself, such forgetfulness would bring down destruction. And so of ourselves. The oppressed peoples of the earth are destined to civil liberty, and the kingdoms of this world shall surely become the kingdoms of Christ Jesus. Just as sure as God lives, this eclipsed orb in

the firmament, shall become a new world of righteousness, and emancipated and redeemed man shall walk its radiant fields in the strength, and beauty, and gladness of immortality. We may forget our duty, and stand back from its burning wheels, yet scarcely the less will God's chariot of redeeming love rush abroad to all people. But if, recreant to our high calling, we go not forth in the march as God's fellow-workers, then do we cast ourselves into the play of that stupendous law, that dashes in pieces our effete engine. And the very way in which America may accomplish the redemption of a world, may be, alas! alas! by being rent into fragments by great national convulsion, and the scattering of her sons and daughters as fugitive missionaries of civil and ecclesiastical liberty to the end of the earth.

These, then, imperfectly set forth, are the two propositions we have had under review.

FIRST, That God has raised up this nation, as an instrument of the world's political and evangelical redemption.

And, SECONDLY, That by the principles of a great Divine law, our national safety depends on an earnest outworking this great purpose of Providence.

And, the result of the whole argument in our

hearts, to-day, should be mingled emotions of the loftiest joy and the deepest sadness—loftiest joy in review of God's distinguishing love, manifested to us as a people; but deepest sadness at the indications in regard of us, that we are not achieving the great purpose for which that love has so distinguished us.

We ought to be joyous to-day. It is fitting and goodful to gather in these temples of God, in National Thanksgiving, And his soul must be infidel, and his heart adamant, who can ponder our past history or our present position, without a very overburden unto God of all grateful emotions. We stand, to-day, on this high mount of privilege, flung up amid the waste of ages. We look abroad upon the other nations of the world, some of them moaning in fetters, some of them lying down under heavy burdens, some of them heaving with wild convulsions, some of them in the wane and wrinkle of hoary decrepitude; and we look to ourselves—and lo! by these grand old hills and by these rushing streams, there stands, like the apocalyptic angel, upon the land and upon the sea, a gigantic form, in the fresh vigor and fair glory of trustful and exultant youth, all girt as a giant to run a race, all armed as with thunderbolts, to fight God's great battles—and the goodness, the

grandeur, the magnificence of our American birth-right overwhelms us. We cannot—we will not—shame on us if we could—repress one rapturous pulse of the grateful heart, or check one exultant voice swelling up in hallelujahs. Verily from these great cities, and these grand old forests, and these sounding cataracts, and these majestic mountains, should there go up to Jehovah, this day, such a hymn of exulting thanksgiving, as since the birth-song of the morning stars in the firmament, this world has not heard.

Nevertheless, enough of foreboding should move along the heart to remind us, that our acceptable thanksgiving for such national blessings, is not an indolent and sentimental emotion, but a living consecration of all our powers to God's service in that world-redeeming mission whereto He has called us.—And, verily, amid all our rejoicings, there are just grounds for such forebodings. Although, in the play of the intelligible and immutable law we have been considering; our future destinies are committed to our own care and keeping—yet, to-day, the prophesy from the signs of the times is of doubtful interpretation.—It is beyond our poor power to decide, whether this national instrument is to be kept agoing as approved in its play and adjustment—or displaced and destroyed

as effete and abortive. It is a question our dazzled and tearful eyes have not a vision to answer, whether the chill shadows which fall from these mountains are passing away from a rising—or lengthening, or deepening from a descending sun. It is a point in musical expression upon which our listening ears are dull of hearing. Whether our thanksgiving-hallelujah to-day, hath the quality of birth-day gratulations over a giant's cradle, or funeral honors over an untimely grave. It is a burden of mystic and unfulfilled prophesy, which we are not inspired to interpret—whether this apocalyptic man-child, brought forth in the face of the devouring monster, and nurtured by God's hand in the wilderness—whether, I say—all instinct and earnest with grateful love to Jehovah, and armed in heavenly strength to redeem man from thralldom, and conquer the world for Christ Jesus, he shall walk safely to the end his majestic path of deliverance, and be caught up in fulfilment of the sublime vision—to the very bosom and throne of the Lord God Almighty: Or whether—alas! alas!—forgetful of his Divine calling, and recreant to his redeeming mission, and loitering in the race, and standing back from the battle, he be torn from his high place as an effete engine—and dashed into fragments—burned into ashes by the flash of God's thunderbolts.