

Our Own Sins.

A SERMON

12.

PREACHED IN THE

ARCH STREET CHURCH,

ON THE

Day of Humiliation and Prayer,

APPOINTED BY THE

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

Friday, January 4th, 1861.

BY

CHARLES WADSWORTH.

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REV. CHAS. WADSWORTH, D. D.

DEAR SIR:—The undersigned members of your congregation, deeming your late fast-day sermon eminently calculated to do good in this particular period of our National history, earnestly request a copy for publication.

Most truly yours,

GEO. W. MCCLELLAND,
HOWEL EVANS,
CHARLES KOONS,
ALBERT I. MOULTEN,
HENRY SLOAN,
THOMAS G. HOOD,
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1704 Arch Street.

GENTLEMEN :

Hastily prepared, and most imperfect as was the discourse, and small as is my estimate of the influence of such publications, yet I do not feel at liberty to refuse your request. I yield to it in this instance the more readily, because thereby I may leave my humble record by the wayside, that in this hour of our great peril, my feeble voice was lifted in behalf of the peace and brotherhood of our whole beloved land.

Very truly your friend and obedient servant,

CHARLES WADSWORTH.

To Messrs. McClelland, Stryker, Evans, and others.

S E R M O N .

“WHO CAN TELL IF GOD WILL TURN AND REPENT, AND TURN AWAY HIS
FIERCE ANGER THAT WE PERISH NOT.”

Jonah iii. 9.

THE duty of observing national fasts in times of great national peril, is plainly taught in God's word. And the divine blessing which attended them in cases not directly ordered of God, gave to the human authority appointing them, an implied divine sanction. The recorded fasts of the Israelites, when defeated by the men of Ai: of Ahab, when denounced by the prophet Elijah: of Jehoshaphat, when assaulted by the confederate forces of Ammon and Moab: of Nineveh, when visited by Jonah: of the Jews in Shushan: and of the returning captives at the river Ahava: all illustrate this truth. In every one of these instances the manifest blessing of God attended the exercise of fasting. Jehovah mercifully interposed in behalf of the penitent, “to give beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.”

On fitting occasions, and in a fitting spirit, therefore, the appointment, by rulers and governors, of days of national humiliation comes with the full force of a divine sanction. And this public recognition by our highest national authority of a Power infinitely above it, unto which it is alike subservient and accountable, can not but be acceptable unto God. And, even amid the oppressive sadness of this hour, the pious heart is cheered to witness this public national

acknowledgment that against God we have sinned, and from his judgments are righteously suffering. And from this national avowal of the necessity, in our present exigency, of divine interposals, are we encouraged to believe that God hath not yet cast us utterly away, but will graciously interpose to deliver an imperilled and repentant people.

But in order that this national act may secure divine forgiveness for the past, and favor for the future, it must be unfeignedly and thoroughly what it purports to be—*a day of fasting and humiliation and prayer before God for our great national iniquities*. And if, instead of this, it shall be made the occasion of disseminating political opinions, or appealing unto selfish and malignant instincts, or of uncharitable criticisms and criminations, or of considering other men's sins rather than our own,—carrying our lighted candles in search for evil leaven, away from our own houses into the dark corners of the dwellings of our neighbors; then will the occasion only aggravate the evil, and by our self-righteous hypocrisy shall we incense yet more deeply the infinite Jehovah.

Nor are we here merely to confess indiscriminately, and in a general way, our common national sins. Our business is to consider such particular iniquities as God seems now threatening signally to punish, (*i. e.*,) such as under a Divine Providence seem instrumentally to have brought us into great national peril. We are, of course, not unmindful that all sins are grounds of divine displeasure. But we are mindful, as well, that particular sins receive at God's hand a special retribution. And so intimate and apparent, for the most part, is the connection between the sin and its punishment, that seldom, in any given case, are we at a loss to perceive for what iniquity we are suffering. An intemperate man, for example, may be, as well, an

impure, or a dishonest man. But while suffering the terrible delirium that comes with strong drink, we are sure that it is especially for his drunkenness God is punishing him. And as of individuals, so of nations, in particular ways and times God punishes particular sins. And, therefore, on occasions like this, we are specially concerned to understand and repent of those iniquities whose evil influences we are at the time experiencing.

It is indeed right and befitting here and now to acknowledge and bemoan all our manifold offences. Truly, in unnumbered ways, are we before God a most guilty people. There is not a precept of His most holy law that we have not most flagrantly dishonored.

"We have had other Gods before Him!" And our varied forms of national idolatry have cried out as loudly against us unto heaven, as if we had built glorious shrines unto false gods, and burnt thereat sweet incense as a ritual of false worship!

"We have taken the name of the Lord our God in vain!" Profane swearing has come to be regarded as American rhetoric, and every breeze of heaven that comes from the divine hand odorous of blessings, bears back into the ear of God its foul burden of blasphemy!

"We do not remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy!" That season of sacred rest lies trodden down in our streets, and creation groaneth and travaileth in sore bondage as we compel even its brute elements to profane God's holy day!

"We do not honor father and mother!" That filial reverence and love, which, as the primitive form of obedience to authority, lies at the foundation of all society and government, has become old fashioned and obsolete amid the land's youthful and irreverent impatience.

"We do commit adultery!" Till the cheek of purity burns in places of public concourse, and the heart of faith

looks heavenward for the very judgment of fire that came down upon Sodom.

“*We do bear false witness!*” Slander, falsehood, perjury, in high places and low, are thickly woven as dark threads in the woof of our social life, until our grand national boast of “free speech,” and “a free press,” has become an abomination and a curse, as an unrestrained and infamous license to misrepresent and injure our fellow-men.

“*We do kill!*” Till the blood of murdered men cries out against us from every city street and every by-way in the wilderness!

“*We do steal!*” Till popular dishonesty under its various forms of defalcations, assignments, extensions, compromises, hath so unsettled all faith in men, that every ripple on the waters of commerce begets a panic and a crisis, wherein all confidence is unhinged, and all credit shipwrecked.

“*We do covet!*” So that to become rich is the grand end and aim of American life, and the stronger pulses of American heart and conscience, can be felt only in the great tides of commerce.

All these things, in their most manifest and monstrous forms, are we doing, until our national attitude before God, is that of a giant heated with wine, standing with bold face against the heavens, and feet trampling the broken tables of God’s law in the dust with mockery and despal.

And for all these things, unfeigned humiliation and penitence do this day become us. God is angry with us. And it is time for us to pause in the madness of our impiety, and seek by tears of godly sorrow, and acts of earnest obedience, to avert from our national life the fierce judgments of God. Of all these popular sins there should be this day sincere penitential confessions in our approaches unto God. For doubtless they have all conspired to kindle His indignation

as He casts on us, even now, the frown of his awful face, and terrifies us with fears of his consuming displeasure.

But while considering thus generally our popular sins, it is manifestly our special duty to-day to consider those particular sins which God is now threatening signally to punish, (*i. e.*) those actions which in the economy of Divine Providence have, instrumentally, brought us as a nation unto our present exigency of peril.

And surely on this point there is no room for misapprehension. The least thoughtful mind in our midst perceives at a glance, the cause and character of the present crisis. And our service in God's house will be a failure, nay worse, an offence and provocation, if we shrink from considering this matter honestly, that as conscientious and christian men, we may repent of the sins for which God has brought it upon us.

Now confessedly our national trouble this day, has arisen in one way or another, out of this simple thing—SLAVERY! But for this, we should be at this moment the most prosperous and happy of all nations under heaven. And the strange fact, that at the close of a year almost unexampled in its material prosperity, we find ourselves in a crisis of pecuniary distress and political convulsion, unparalleled in our history, we all perceive to have resulted from our acts and attitudes in reference to SLAVERY. For these God is manifestly distressing us, and our present duty is, if possible, to discern wherein slavery has been to us an occasion of sin.

Now, on this point there is a class of moralists among us who dispose of the whole question quite summarily, and, to themselves, satisfactorily, by regarding SLAVERY ITSELF *as the sin with which God is angry, and for which he is distressing us.* They tell us, that in permitting this involuntary servitude we are showing ourselves a nation of oppressors, and therefore, God is rising up to dash us in pieces as a

potter's vessel! And if this explanation be the true one, then our present duty is plain. And as we would escape the threatened national destruction, we must, in all events, and at any cost, get rid of this national iniquity. For we have not assembled this day as statesmen, seeking to perpetuate forms of national life by political expedients, but as Christian men, striving by tearful and practical repentance, to turn away from our imperilled land the threatened judgment of God. Therefore, if slave-holding be a grand national iniquity, whose protection under our Constitution exposes us to divine anger, then it is our duty—a duty on which our future destiny depends, and which God will bless us in performing, to rise up and declare that we will abide by no constitution which recognizes and protects it.

But then, honestly and calmly considered, is this explanation true? *Is slavery itself the evil for which God is punishing us?*

And without prolonged argument, we answer this question unhesitatingly in the negative. And for two reasons—First, because we have been, from the very first, a slave-holding people, and yet, as such, God has in our whole experience, most wonderfully blessed us; and secondly, because God has never destroyed nations, and never will, for acts which He has not plainly forbidden, and which he has not denounced as especially sinful. And with regard to slave-holding, it suffices for our present purpose to say—as has been said, unanswerably, a thousand times before—that God has never authoratively forbidden it. The divine treatment of positive and flagrant sin, is never to suffer it unrebuked, never indeed to legislate about it, but peremptorily and at once to denounce and prohibit it. God does not say, “Thou shalt not lie, or steal, or covet, or kill, or commit adultery—*except in certain cases and under specified conditions.*” But by a broad, sweeping, uncompromising negative, forbids all

such acts at once and forever. But in regard of this holding men in involuntary servitude, God has expressly permitted it, and legislated for it, saying to ancient Israel, by the mouth of his servant Moses, "*Of the heathen that are round about you, shall ye buy bond-men and bond-maids. And they shall be your possession. And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession, they shall be your bond-men forever.*"*

Saying moreover to the Christian church of all time, by the mouth of his servant Paul, "*Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed.*"†

Now, these passages, and their numerous parallels, taken in connexion with the fact that both Testaments were written in the midst of slave-holding, and yet neither in the Old or the New is it forbidden as sinful, settle this point satisfactorily to every man who in simple trust takes the Bible as his rule of faith, and practice—that it can not be the simple existence of slavery in our nation which has excited God's anger. And the evil thing must be found in our own acts and attitudes in regard of it.

Wherein then, have we sinned in this matter? And in answering this question, we are to consider *our own* sins, and not those of other men and communities. Were we observing fast to-day, in a Southern sanctuary, and were the speaker addressing a congregation of slave-holders, he would regard it as his duty, and as God gave him grace would fearlessly perform it—to discourse upon the iniquities then and there abounding. He would not waste precious moments in enlightening their consciences upon any aspects of Northern fanaticism. But if he knew in those communities of abuses of power and prerogative; of slave-holding characterized by cruelty, or oppression, or impurity, or any flagrant un-

* Leviticus, xxv., 44-46.

† 1 Timothy, vi., 1.

righteousness—of State laws which forbid the instruction of slaves, or protect not the marriage contract, or authorize the forcible separation of families, or, denying them their relative rights as men, dare to treat immortal beings simply as cattle—of acts and attitudes in regard of this institution, inconsistent with godliness, and justly exciting the indignation of the Christian and civilized world. Or, if there were manifest in such a community in their relation to other States, a want of brotherly kindness and forbearance, or of patriotic regard for our national Constitution,—if ambitious place-men were seeking to kindle strife, and Christian ministers were daring to advocate rebellion, and Christian men to pray for treason in God's holy sanctuary,—then the speaker, as he looked for divine favor, would lift up his voice in earnest rebuke of the sin, and tearful entreaties into repentance.

But I am not in such a presence, nor addressing such men. With their sins in this act of humiliation we have nothing to do. Our personal concern as penitents before God, is with our own personal iniquities. Wherein, then, have WE sinned in regard to this thing that troubles us—Slavery?

And I answer, First. And as the foundation of all other misdoings, *we have cherished in regard of it a disposition which the apostle ranks in its iniquity, with the sin of the thief, and the malefactor, and the murderer,—i. e. We have made ourselves* “BUSY-BODIES IN OTHER MEN'S MATTERS.”* Whatever may be our individual opinions of the institution, we have no more concern with Southern slavery than with Russian serfdom. To it we hold no relation and in regard of it sustain no responsibilities. And, so long as manifold and monstrous social evils exist in our midst for which God holds us responsible, in wasting our sympathies in this foreign direction we have subjected ourselves to the severe

* 1 Peter, vi. 15.

rebuke of our Lord—as “hypocrites seeking to remove the mote in our brother’s eye, with a beam in our own,”—yea, to the more tremendous rebuke of his divine example, who, spending his whole earthly life in the midst of more despotic forms of slavery, uttered against it no recorded word either of rebuke or denunciation.

Meanwhile, Secondly. Not satisfied with this interminable meddling with what in no way concerns us, *We have pursued our work in the very worst and most wicked spirit.* Ignoring all the meekness and gentleness wherewith even philosophic philanthropy, to say nothing of true piety, seeks to reform and bless mankind, we have launched against our Christian brethren of the South, arrows poisoned with the venom of most malignant passions. The vocabulary of abuse has been exhausted in the taunt and vituperation, and invective, wherewith we have assaulted Christian men, and Christian Churches, as dear as ourselves to the heart of Christ.

Nor this the worst of it—for thirdly, We have in this matter in its most inexcusable and intolerable form “*borne false witness against our neighbor.*” Because this, like all other social institutions, is liable to abuse, and has been practically abused, and there have been cruel, and unjust masters, as there have been unjust and cruel parents and magistrates, we have carefully searched out these casual enormities, and declaring them essential to the system, have denounced all slaveholders as living in shameless sin, and justly meriting excommunication from the Church and the execration of the world. And on this point we are thoroughly persuaded that in all the unscrupulous and persistent evil speaking the world has ever known there has been nothing to compare with the malignant misrepresentation our Southern brethren have received at the hands of nominal Christians at the north. And while we may not

all of us have been engaged in this work, yet we have all been sharers in the iniquity, by suffering it unrebuked in our midst, yea, by encouraging and protecting it. We have done this indeed under the plausible plea of "maintaining inviolable freedom of speech and of the press," as the grand prerogative of freemen—as if forsooth, personal liberty involved a license to utter, irrespective of truth, and regardless of consequences, at all times and in all places, whatever of vile thought may be inspired by malignant passion—a license utterly incompatible with all higher personal rights, and all general social welfare, and therefore no more to be protected and tolerated than a license to fling fire-brands into our neighbors' houses, or plunge daggers into their hearts—a license moreover which the word of God most emphatically denounces, declaring that "the tongue," unrestrained in its licentious utterances—*i. e.*, absolute and unconditional freedom of speech—is "a world of iniquity defiling the whole body, setting fire to the course of nature, and itself set on fire of hell."

Now, these are some of the wrongs we have committed in the matter under review. And manifestly out of these wrongs so far as we are concerned have grown our present difficulties. This spirit of self-righteousness and uncharitableness, and false witness, and evil-speaking, has been steadily growing strong in our midst. Entering year after year more and more, as a controlling power into our politics, and a disturbing force into our religion, it has destroyed the old parties in the State, and broken in two the great Christian denominations of the Church, till culminating in a fierce national controversy, it has brought us this day as incensed and belligerent sections upon the very verge of national destruction.

For these things, then, we are this day to humble ourselves before God, following the apostolic direction—"cease

to do evil, learn to do well." Not thinking to excuse our own wrong-doing by that of other men, but, leaving them to bear the burdens and meet the issues of their own iniquities, to set ourselves right in the matter, in the sight of men and before God, assured that then only can we look hopefully for that divine deliverance which is promised unto the sincere and obedient penitent.

In a deep, sincere, national repentance lies our only hope. The sins of the land lie heavy upon us—sins of omission and of commission—sins in high places and low places—of the rich and the poor—of the ruled and the rulers—sins in the heart, on the tongue, of the life—sins against God's judgments and God's mercies—rebellion against God's law and ingratitude against God's grace—sins indeed in every place, and of every kind, and in every degree, and against every obligation. Ah me! what a tremendous account of evil hath a holy God written up against this so highly blessed people! And who marvels that we are in jeopardy when sin—such fearful and unprovoked sin against God—lies like a palsy on the intellect of our wise men and the strength of our mighty men.

And alas, though thus manifestly and even consciously guilty, we can discover little as yet of that sincere national repentance which secured unto an imperilled people God's deliverances of old. In the midst of all this distress and danger—when so far as human wisdom can foresee the deplorable alternative is—either the bloody subjugation of a rebellious section, or the never-ceasing conflict of rival confederacies—in a crisis which might draw tears from angel eyes—the last grand experiment of free institutions seemingly failing, and the shadow on the world's dial, pausing to go backward through long centuries of social progress—thus fearfully conditioned, yet what do we see? Alas, on the one hand, armed and open rebellion—States,

that owe all they have and are to God's blessing on this Union, seemingly dead to every patriotic and philanthropic sentiment,—blind even to every smaller and meaner consideration of self-interest and self-preservation,—deaf to all dictates of political science and experimental wisdom; striving to wreck this grand ship of State, and to construct out of its fragments some pitiful and crazy raft, which, without chart, or quadrant, or compass, they may navigate by conjecture and the stars. This, on the one hand—and, on the other, men equally insane and abandoned; communities exultant in unseemly and frightful mirth; denouncing all concessions and compromises, and clamorous for blood; when concessions are only unto justice, and compromises are only with the wronged, and the only blood that can be shed is the blood of our brethren! Verily, there is little in all this that looks like sincere national repentance! And maintaining such sinful attitudes, we cannot look confidently for the Divine interposal. Our present duty is:

First, *To feel, profoundly, the necessity for such a Divine interposal; to cherish a deep sense of our dependence, as a nation, upon the Divine favor.* From a want of this practical sentiment, our whole peril has sprung. So idolatrous has become our trust in our National Union, that we have not only regarded it as self-perpetuating, but as absolutely indispensable to the Divine purposes of liberty and salvation toward the rest of the world. The Divine favor has scarcely been reckoned among our elements of prosperity. Political science and statesmanship have been counted of greater price than godliness, and the ballot-box, rather than the mercy-seat, resorted to as our great national Palladium. And with this idolatry God has waxed wroth, and is rising up to teach us how our whole dependence is upon Him; to show us that all the natural resources and social influences

within us, whereon we have so relied, are, without the Divine blessing, only so many powerful elements of our own self-destruction, and that all these bonds of national confederacy, which we have been wont to regard indissoluble; this communism of social and commercial interests; this brotherhood of kith, and kin, and race; this grand geographical unity; this proud partnership in the common memories of a glorious past, and the common hopes of a dazzling and limitless future;—these, and whatsoever else has seemed to us a band of triple steel round our imperial confederacy, are only as a poor spider's web, when an incensed God turns away from us the light of His countenance.

Our first duty is to return to the strong, simple, Christian faith of our fathers: relying as well for national as for personal blessings entirely upon the sovereign power and mercy of God.

This will lead us, *Secondly, To exercise that unfeigned penitence which can alone secure the Divine favor.* As national judgments are inflicted for national sins, so national reformation is the only means whereby we can avert them. But national sins are the aggregate of individual acts, and a nation repents, only when there is general individual repentance. We are here before God, this day, to confess humbly, and forsake resolutely, our personal iniquities; wheresoever we have come short, or in whatsoever we have offended; in our love of our brethren, or our consecration to Jehovah, we are now to cease to do evil, and learn to do well. Repentance toward God is no indolent and tearful sentiment, but a strong, resolute purpose of practical reformation; a conscientious determination to do whatever is according to God's Word, and for the best interests of man, in all circumstances, and at every cost. Such repentance alone secures the Divine favor. God helps those only who

strive to help themselves. The mariner, who first runs his bark amid breakers, and then, recreant to all true seamanship, lets go helm and rope, that he may weep and pray on the quarter-deck, not only disgraces his manhood, but as foully dishonors God as the veriest infidel!

If our unrighteous words and acts have excited the fierce storm of passion that now threatens to overwhelm us, those sins must be confessed and forsaken. Alas! for that false pride of opinion which impels to perseverance in wrong, for the sake of consistency! In conquering our own prejudices, and according to all men their constitutional rights, we do not succumb to a human antagonism, but only bow to the authority of a righteous God; and only when thus ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well, can we expect, or even dare we ask for, the preserving mercy of God.

Having come into these frames of sincere repentance, then, *Thirdly, We must seek the Divine interposition by instant and earnest prayer.* Having no where else to go, and feeling that our only hope is in God, we should besiege the mercy-seat with intercessions for all sections and every interest of our distressed nation:—praying that God will give us, for our own personal sins, the grace of sincere penitence; that he will dispose the people of all States and sections to consider their own several attitudes in the light of His righteous law, sincerely repenting of all past wrongdoing, and henceforth yielding to all men that justice and brotherly kindness which our Constitution and laws recognize and require; that He will remove from our hearts all false pride of opinion, and rebuke the infidelity which regards the instincts of a sinful nature as a higher law than God's Word, and the obstinacy which follows such instincts over the ruins of old Federal promises and constitutional rights; that He will, for Christ's sake, freely forgive all these national sins which have justly called down

upon us these Divine judgments; that he will bestow heavenly wisdom upon our Rulers, Legislatures, and Conventions, that they may adjust all questions now disturbing the public peace, upon the everlasting basis of righteousness and mercy; that He will give unto our magistrates alike the conscience and the courage resolutely to enforce all righteous laws for the protection of all good citizens, and the punishment of all that are disobedient; that He will mercifully restrain us from revolution and bloodshed, and so carry us through all our perils as to check forever this spirit of anarchy, bring permanent peace to a distracted people, and strengthen and perpetuate, to the end of time, the bonds and brotherhood of our National Union. Feeling, in all these regards, our entire dependence upon God's gracious help, we should plead with Him, from every principle warranted in His Word; from our personal and national necessities and perils; from the welfare of the Church of Christ, and the highest good of the human race, seemingly involved in our deliverance; from His own infinite power and sufficiency; from the merits and intercession of our blessed Redeemer, and the glory of His own most holy name:—from all these considerations is it our privilege to plead, that He will graciously interpose in our behalf, over-ruling for good all the conflicting passions and opinions of men, so that henceforth, with a stronger faith, and an entire consecration, we may achieve one grand, providential mission upon earth, as a united and peculiar people, whose God is the Lord.

And having thus honestly performed our duty, we can cast all our imperilled interests upon God's gracious providence, certain that, whatever may be the issue, it will be yet for the best. We have no right, nor, indeed, have we any reason, to despair of our country.

One grand tendency of this national fast is to revive our courage and strengthen our faith. Just to the degree that

we cast the whole issue prayerfully upon God, will our confidence be restored. It is only because we have forgotten God, ignoring Omnipotence as the supremely controlling force in our national life, and mindful only of the stormy passions of the hour, and the impotence of human policy to stay or control them; only because of this practical infidelity, that we have all been frightened out of our proprieties and our common sense, into a feverish panic, and a childish and cowardly despair; uttering doleful lamentations over the ruin of our country, and chanting requiems over the sepulchre of our free institutions.

Surely, such extravagant fears are unfounded! Surely, the ultimate destinies of a land like this,—a land created by a miracle of Divine wisdom, and conserved by unceasing miracles of Divine power and love—are not in the hands of the unprincipled demagogues of the passing hour, who, like birds of evil omen and foul wing, delight in strife and fatten upon carnage! Oh! no,—no; for high above all the dust and din of human passion, sitteth the glorious Jehovah—our fathers' God—ordering all things in infinite love unto His blood-bought Church. And in His serene and Omnipotent Sovereignty all these malignant passions of evil men are but as chaff driven away by the breath of His power: the slush on the golden wheels of His Providence, which, from the first, even until now, have moved over this continent in the demonstration of a purpose to bless, through us, all nations, and redeem by us a world.

It is time, then, that we rose unto higher frames of manly courage and Christian trust. It seems to me sinful to believe that God has so soon forsaken this land of His love. Like the old Israelites, we have a great work to do for God, and He will strengthen us to do it. He may distress us for our sins, as he did Israel, before Ai. Indeed, we feel, to-day, that we are in the valley of Achor. The march of the

tribes before whom the walls of Jericho fell, is ignobly stopped, by a few miserable men, that come forth from Ai. We are turned back in our course! The brave men are disheartened! The old banner droops! We have come down from Earth's high places to the valley of Achor. But what then?—"Man's extremity is God's opportunity," and "the valley of Achor is a door of hope!" God will bring us out of these trials gloriously, if we trust Him and honor Him. "The Achans," the troublers of Israel,—the men who meanly or passionately have stirred up strife, and stayed our great progress,—they shall meet at God's hand their reward of infamy. But our nation can no more perish at the beginning of her great providential work, than Israel could have perished on the borders of Canaan!

God is chastening us for our good. He is teaching this people great lessons which our fathers knew, and we have ignored; lessons as to the value of our inheritance, and our dependence upon God to preserve and perpetuate it; lessons of practical obedience to the Divine law: to love God supremely, and our brethren as ourselves; lessons which, being once thoroughly learned, we shall come up from this valley of trouble, and advance, with renewed strength, to the great work God's providence assigns us.

How, precisely, this deliverance is to be wrought, we can not tell. In praying for national, as for individual mercies, we cast the petition, not only upon Divine *power to do*, but upon Divine *wisdom to devise*. Even in asking God to perpetuate our free institutions, we are not to dictate in what form they shall be made permanent. We must not even assume that their present form is the best, or that our Constitution needs not a thorough re-modeling; nay, we may not assume, even, that our present national union is essential to our great mission. We have been wont so to suppose, and so it seems, indeed, to our finite reason.

And, for ourselves, we look as confidently that this unity shall be ultimately preserved: not one name blotted from its glorious sisterhood—as we expect yonder sun to rise and set for another generation.

But, be this as it may, if we cast the interests of our land upon Divine grace, whether we remain in our present confederacy formally one, or assume other forms—as of co-equal confederacies—sustaining among themselves mutual kindly relations: two to each other, and one to all the world beside; at least, in some such form as God shall see best, we may safely trust that He will accomplish through us His grand work on the earth, and bring us triumphantly to a grand national future.

Such a trust in God is, to-day, both our duty and privilege. We have come before Jehovah, that we may be lifted out of these frames of God-dishonoring despair, into the courage and cheerfulness of Christian faith. These sanctuaries of God are places of faith-strengthening. So have they proved in all the histories of God's people. When David was brought into the straits of popular convulsion, and seemingly so inextricably beset that his wise men counseled flight, this was his resort; and I know of nothing in human language finer than this dramatic record: "*In the Lord do I put my trust; and how say ye then? Flee as a bird to your mountain? If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do? The Lord is in His holy temple!*" This the answer to all mental fears! "*The Lord is in His holy temple!*" Why should he flee as a bird to the mountain, when he could find God in His temple? Jehovah—Jehovah was the Rock of his strength!

Oh! gracious refuge unto exalting faith! Be it ours in these exigencies. Without, amid the assemblies of ungodly and malignant men, there may be cries of passion, and

clamorings for blood; but *here*—here, in the sanctuary—Omnipotent, Omniscient, All-merciful, is *God*—God!

In Him do we trust! And think not to drive us from faith's strong gladness, because of stormy human passion; because foul fanaticism, on the one hand, and foul treason on the other, are uniting their strength to destroy our goodly heritage, till its waters shall be tears, and its precious things ashes, and its only glory the monuments of its dead! For I tell you of a glorious and almighty One, whose we are, and whom we serve, and on whom, from all His merciful interposals in our marvelous past, we have learned confidently to rely, and who never will forsake us, if we cling to him in faith; a great and mighty God, before whose breath all human passion dies away, and along whose path stormy seas sink into stillness!

"The Lord—the Lord is in His holy temple!" His the power, the grace, the triumph, the glory! On this mercy-seat sitteth One whose voice "*stilleth the noise of the seas, the roaring of the waves, the tumult of the people.*" Here we have access to a Presence, and can cast our troubled land upon a wisdom and a power before which human counsels, and combinations, and evil purposes, and angry passions, are all as mists on the mountain-side, when the mighty winds are aroused, and the great sun shines!

Let us, then, approach our God in humble, loving faith; trustful for the future, because of the memory of all our old, marvelous, and Omnipotent deliverances; bathing our beloved land in tears of grateful penitence, and casting it, in sublime confidence, at His Almighty feet! And, as we leave its interests safe in His strong keeping, let us go forth again to our earthly walk and work, cheerful as of old time, our faces shining, and our voices joyous, with faith and hope. And henceforth, unto all birds of evil omen, all

cowardly counsel that would affright us with a thought of the removal of foundations, let our answer be, ever confidently and gladly: "*The Lord, the Lord is in His holy temple, and His kingdom ruleth over all!*"

THE END.