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WITH
AMERICA.

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A SERMON,

DELIVERED ON THE LATE

FAST DAY,

RECOMMENDED BY THE AMERICAN CHURCHES AND
BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE U. STATES.

BY ARTHUR JOSEPH STANSBURY,
MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.

GOSHEN, N Y.

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Montgomery, County of Orange and }
State of New York, Sept. 11, 1813. }

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

The Session of your Church, anxious for the promotion of truth in the present alarming state of our Country, and willing to make every proper exertion for that end, request for publication, a copy of the Sermon preached by you at Graham's Church, on the late Fast Day recommended by our General Synod and by the President of the United States.

Rev. Arthur J. Stansbury.

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A SERMON, &c.

A M O S IV. 10—13.

“ I HAVE sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

“ I have overthrown some of you as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a fire-brand plucked out of the burning; yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

“ Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel; and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.

“ For lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, and maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, the LORD, the God of hosts is his name.”

THE man is a fool, or worse, who would shut out God from the government of his own world. A fool, to suppose that he who called the universe into being by his word, and who upholds it with his hand, should not control its motions and govern what he has made. Worse than a fool, if the opinion has passed from the head to the heart; if he “hath said in his heart, No God.” Bad as the state of the world is, it would be ten thousand times worse could we believe the world left to itself, abandoned by its maker, and delivered

up to whatever fearful results its folly or its sin might produce. A Christian has other views and other consolations. He adopts a nobler, more consistent, more enlarged, more enlightened philosophy; and while his infidel neighbour attributes every thing to chance, and is thrown, for all the present and for all the future, upon mere contingency, or what is worse, upon the unrestrained will of sinful men, the Christian

“ Sees a God employ’d

“ In all the good and ill that checker life.”

But if we admit the interference of a governor, and believe that governor to be righteous, we cannot avoid the idea of a moral government, and must suppose some connexion between natural and moral evil, between suffering and sin. Their connexion in every particular instance, indeed, we need not expect to trace; but the general notion we must admit. The dealing of God with men is a system of discipline, calculated in its own nature to instruct and reform them; and if, under its infliction, they remain uninstructed and unreformed, their guilt becomes aggravated in proportion as this discipline has been strongly marked and long continued. These principles are plain; they run throughout the Bible; they are applied to Gentile and to Jew; but for obvious reasons they apply with most force to

those who have most light. Whoever are favored with the word of God have the best help to the understanding of his providence; and if they shut their eyes to the one and their ears against the other they need not wonder if God make their doom equal to their perverseness. Nations are viewed by him as persons, and all the principles which regulate his treatment of individual men regulate his government of men as collected in masses and bound together by political or other ties.

Amos appeared among the nations of the west of Asia as a messenger of general woe. Upon Syria, upon Palestine, on Tyre, on Edom, on Ammon, on Moab, he denounces in succession the sentence of his God: and then, turning to the chosen tribes, he rises in the severity of his rebukes, and in a strain of lofty and penetrating eloquence that speaks its own original, he upbraids them with their national ingratitude, recounts the mercies of God, sets their crimes before their face, and warns them of accumulated and desolating judgments. He spoke to men who would not hear. The kingdom of Israel had stood for more than two centuries since its separation from Judah under the first Jeroboam, and was now at the height of its temporal grandeur. But alas, with most nations, the meridian of wealth and

power is the midnight of profligate security. Amos thundered in their ears the threatenings of Jehovah, but they set his message at naught; and though the cup of the divine wrath was passing around them from people to people, they said in the pride and infatuation of their heart 'it shall not comenigh us.' They were mistaken. It came, and they drank the dregs of it, and wrung them out. The warnings of the prophet had hardly ceased to vibrate on their ears, before the nation fell into a state of anarchy. During an apparent interregnum of eleven years they seem to have been abandoned to general confusion, and when at length the government was restored unto Zachariah, the national miseries still continued. Conspiracy succeeded to conspiracy. One usurper after another seized the regal power. Through five successive reigns the judgments of God continued to pursue them, until all former and lesser evils were swallowed up in the overthrow and final destruction of the kingdom of the Assyrian conqueror. Then, it may be, the words of their rejected prophet came to remembrance, and compelled by their ruinous accomplishment that regard which had been demanded in vain by their wofulness and their authority. "I will slay the last of them with the sword. He that fleeth of them shall not flee away; and he that escapeth of them shall not be

delivered. Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down: and though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and tho' they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them: and though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword and it shall slay them; and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good. And the Lord God of hosts is he that toucheth the land, and it shall melt, and all that dwell therein shall mourn; and it shall rise up wholly like a flood; and shall be drowned as by the flood of Egypt." But wherefore such a vehemence of wrath? Because they were a nation pre-eminently favoured: because God had long pled with them by his messengers; because his providence toward them had been so peculiarly marked as to constrain their notice: because they had despised both mercies and judgments, and under the clearest light, and all the opportunities and means of repentance had remained incorrigible.

Is there in all this no lesson for America? I do not say that the cases of the two nations are exactly parallel; God forbid that my country should be so near the time of her rejection and judgment:

but are they not at least similar? so similar, that the words of the text, in their spirit, and almost in their very form, will apply to our own land?

That we are a nation which has been highly favoured by God, no man but an atheist will deny. Who enriched this land with all the means of life, watered it with fertilizing streams, indulged it with a genial soil and temperate climate, fitted it for internal and for external commerce, stored it with the materials for manufactures, and all the munitions of defence? Who conducted our fathers hither over the trackless deep, preserved them from surrounding dangers, and blessed their industry? When threatened with oppression, who gave them one heart and one soul, united their council, and combined their strength in resisting wrong? When dangers thickened around them, who placed a patriot and a hero at the head of their little armies, and giving to his magnanimity its noblest reward, made him the political saviour of his native land? Who gathered us into a nation, endowed us with civil and religious liberty, relieved our finances from embarrassment, strengthened us by foreign treaties, blessed the labour of the husbandman, spread our sails in every sea, changed our wilderness into fruitful fields, and covered our plains and rivers with villages and towns? Who fostered our infant seminaries of learning, sent among us

the messengers of his gospel, multiplied our churches and watered them by his spirit? While Europe was convulsed to its centre and drenched in blood, while Asia was in barbarism and Africa in chains, who made favoured America the envy of the world? While Continental Europe was worshipping the Virgin and the Pope, while Turkey was kneeling to Mahomet, Persia worshipping the Sun, Tartary the Lama, India sacrificing to Jugernaut, China bowing before her Jos, and all Africa worshipping the devil and the stars, on our distinguished shores the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ shone resplendent for a century, and still shines. The highest blessing for the soul crowned all the blessings for the body, and to every varied comfort of this life was added God's unfailing provision for the life to come.

Under so many and so great favours, what has been our return? We have forgotten our deliverer, offended our father, provoked our God. Large sections of our country have long been notorious for the contempt of his truth, others for the corruption of it, and all for open breaches of his law. So little did we think of his bible, that we did not hesitate to put the helm of our public affairs into the hands of a man who disbelieved it, and who published his disbelief of it to all the

world. Deistical societies have been openly formed, and the most scurrilous of all the libels on the scriptures has been printed and sold, and printed again; its blasphemies have been fashionable among the young and its dreary Atheism the refuge of grey hairs. The infidel philosophy of Europe has spread among our literary men and infects our literary works. The great code of our civil order, our most solemn national act, contains no allusion to our deliverance or our deliverer, nor any trace by which it can be known whether America worships one god, or twenty gods, or no god at all. And (worse than all!) this is avowed, is advocated, is boasted of by men professing Christianity. But it will be said there are irreligious men in all societies, the bulk of all communities consist of men who do not profess to be religious, and those who rule especially, are every where notorious for impiety. A miserable apology! But let us then turn to the religious world. And here are we guiltless? Is it not a fact that the deity of the Son of God is not only doubted but openly denied in this land? Has not the heresy of that Arius whose bowels God shed upon the ground found its sanctuary among the descendants of the puritans? Nay, has not Socinianism itself, which not only denies his divinity, but denies his pre-existence altogether, denies his mi-

raculous conception, and makes him a man like other men, the son of Joseph and Mary. Has not this blasphemy raised its head in our land, and have not its preachers been aided in erecting the temple of error by members of churches sound in the profession of the faith? Is not a sect which denies or explains away his imputed righteousness spread over our land from Maine to Georgia, and are they not boasting of converts by thousands? Has the bloody mother of abominations no footing on our shores? Has she not five churches in one city and sixteen thousand members in another? and is she not pursuing her old and successful policy in establishing seminaries for our youth? Has not a new-fangled combination of errors become the fashionable religion of a large district of our country, and is it not spreading like a pestilence from minister to minister, from church to church, from presbytery to presbytery? A system which without ceremony affirms God to be "the efficient agent, the great first cause of all sin;" which denies the imputation of our sins to Christ, asserts that no man can be a Christian who is not willing to be damned, and allows us to ask no blessing but one for Christ's sake.

But let us look at the orthodox. How is discipline administered, and how is it received? Are not whole sections of the church openly neglect-

ful of the correction of offences? and where the fact is otherwise are not church members restive under the discipline which our divine Head and Lawgiver has appointed? Are not fugitives from one church welcomed and countenanced in another?—How does America support the Ministry? Does she not give them the option either to leave their studies and their flocks to labour for their daily bread, or by accumulating a load of debt to distract and burden their spirit for the rest of their day? I know there are honorable exceptions; it is my happiness to enjoy one of them; but I now speak generally. Is it a fact that the American churches make comfortable provision for their pastors, that they furnish it in season, and without grudging? What prospect have these pastors for old age? What can they do for their children?—Seminaries have been attempted for the education of our pious youth; do the churches in general do any thing respecting these seminaries but praise them? What is the state of family religion? Of those who stand up before God, and in the face of his church, in the hearing of their families and with a living offering in their arms vow to observe family-worship, what proportion keep their vow; or in how many instances does not the conduct of the parent demonstrate to their children that in their father's estima-

tion promises (those at least made to God) may be broken at pleasure, and that baptismal vows, can be nothing to them, since they are evidently nothing to him? Oh Israel, how canst thou say I am clean, I have done no iniquity!

From such things in the church let us turn to the nation. We are, at least we once were, a commercial nation. As such, how have we kept this commandment, "Thou shalt not covet?" or this, "Thou shalt not steal?" or this, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain?" Where is the Custom-House from the St. Croix to the St. Mary's, in which the name of God is not a foot ball and a jest? Who finds any difficulty in getting property covered, false oaths, false papers, false signatures and all?—Mazemon erected at the sea his throne of gold, and such throngs of worshippers pressed to sacrifice at his shrine, that they seemed ready to contend who should the most devotedly make a burnt-offering of their conscience and ruin their souls in his service. There is not a form under which dishonesty could appear that it has not assumed in our community: insomuch that it may be truly said the eighth command has no where been more ingenuously broken. To which other of the commandments shall we look? Is it to the sixth? America is a land of duels. The soldier views his

sword with a blush till he has flesh'd it in the bosom of a friend; his epaulette has no brilliancy till it is brightened with a widow's tear. The judge takes a pride in breaking the law it was his place to guard, the barrister in breaking the law it was his profession to study, and both receive the plaudits of their country for trampling on the united authority of God and man. Murder? The land is full of murderers. I speak not of the assassin who lays wait by night. I speak of him who murders at noon day; who drags his miserable victim publicly to the slaughter-house, and while it cries for mercy continues to repeat his blow till by stern and ruthless perseverance he destroys the last feeble remains of life. Such a murderer is the drunkard, and the victim, alas! is his own soul. Sixty stills in one single county furnish the means of death one would think in abundance, but there is a cry for more, and it drowns the voice of abused wives and naked children that rise with it to heaven. Do we turn to the fourth commandment? At this very session of congress a law has been passed authorising the breach of it, and prescribing the penalty on such as refuse to break it. I refer to the law regulating the post offices, permitting the travelling of the mail, and compelling all post masters to deliver letters and newspapers on the Sabbath day, on pain of the loss of office.

Nay, our national representatives have not only commanded us the breach of the Lord's day, but they have set us themselves the example. Again and again have they sat as a congress on that day—and this in the face of the remonstrances and the withdrawal of a few, whose eloquence was by such an arrangement silenced without the trouble of argument, and their votes conveniently dispensed with. And do we ask how the people have thriven in such a school? go for an answer to our steam-boats and our livery-stables on Sabbath morning, to our news-offices on Sabbath noon, to our public gardens on Sabbath evening.

* We are a free people. But is there no slavery in our land? Yes, there is slavery: grinding, merciless, wicked slavery; and, strange to tell, where the cry for liberty is loudest it is mingled with the clank of fetters and the sounding lash of the overseer. Cargoes of human flesh and bones still leave the wretched coasts of the old world, and find a ready market here. But the miserable victims come, however, to a Christian land, they come, of course, to be pitied and enlightened. Would it were so! But we know better. We know that the Christian teacher, nay, even the harmless schoolmaster, though received as an an-

* The two following paragraphs were through inadvertence omitted in the delivery of the discourse

gel by the slaves, is frowned upon, is repulsed, is persecuted by the master.

We are a free people. But has our liberty never been abused. Has not the happy freedom of our government, instead of binding us together as brethren, generated a spirit of party which knows no bounds and will brook no restraint? Does not this spirit interpose its dividing force between the nearest relations of life and sever the most sacred ties which unite men to each other? Is not this setting brother against brother, Christian (oh shame!) against Christian, parting friend from friend, and breeding destructive jealousies between ministers and people? Nay, is it not operating among us on a gigantic scale, and producing results which make true patriots of all parties tremble for their country? In this land of equal rights, have not men unconvicted by any law, been driven like cattle through the public streets, loaded with insults, covered with wounds, shut up in the common prison, and thence brought forth for the slaughter? Has not an American city been polluted with blood thus unrighteously shed, while the law was silenced and overawed, and trembling justice fawned upon crime? Has not this spirit of party almost driven truth from our land? Has it not made our public print a public nuisance? The time has come when even official statements

are to be received with caution. The long accustomed channels through which truth has flowed to the community begin to shift, are no longer safe, and our credence must slowly make its way with the sounding-line in its hand. On certain subjects we all seem to have agreed to forget with one accord that it is written "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." And now, brethren, shall I proceed? Need I call up our race-grounds, our theatres, our lottery-offices, our brothels? or has not enough been said to bring the blush upon our cheek and to humble us this day before God? To this catalogue of public crimes let every man bring the secret list of his own sins, of sins within his personal knowledge, of sins which pass daily before his eyes, and then let him ask his soul whether a fast is out of season.

Thus have we requited God. His dealing with us, in the mean while, has been that of a father with a refractory and disobedient child. This nation is a child before God. With him a thousand years are but as yesterday when it is passed, or as a watch in the night; and our nation is not yet forty years old: But ah, how old are we already in corruption! God has treated us with much tenderness, yet with a discipline gradually proceeding from one degree of severity to another. He has "sent us the pestilence after the manner of

Egypt." It has entered our populous cities, cut down the young and the aged, the base and the honourable together: the most skilful of our physicians have themselves become its prey, and all the resources of their knowledge have been applied in vain to check its progress. The country long thought itself safe, but God has written vanity upon this confidence, and commanded his destroyers to go throughout the land. We have seen our most valued neighbours drop one after another into the grave, and our breaches are not yet healed. From the country it passed to the camp. The commissioned angel walked among our armies, traversed our frontiers, and wherever he passed he left the dead behind. The pestilence was soon succeeded first by the decline and at length by the ruin of our commercial prosperity. And here the Lord touched us to the quick. We had long been profiting by the calamities of Europe; the wealth of the various quarters of the world floated into our harbours with every wind; our merchants were like princes. But God turned first one ravager and then another upon us. They mocked at our feebleness, they trampled upon our rights, they sported with our property. And after thus retrenching our gains by foreign violence, he at length completed their destruction by our own hands. The busy hum of men has

ceased from our harbours, the roar of commerce with her hundred wheels is now but faintly heard, and our mariners are gone to seek their bread in other lands.

Then God kindled alarming fires in our cities, and in one the text was almost literally fulfilled: "I have overthrown some of you as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a fire-brand plucked out of the burning." Have we forgotten the catastrophe at Richmond? How suddenly were the haunts of sinful pleasure turned into a furnace of judgment, and the temple of folly with all her thoughtless votaries made a smouldering ruin! After the fires came storms upon our sea-board; and scarcely had these finished their commission by strewing our coast with the wrecks of ships and the dead bodies of their crews, when they were followed by earthquakes along all our southern and western border. The concussions of the earth were violent, protracted beyond example, and of such frequent recurrence that numbers abandoned their homes, and the most inconsiderate and hardened began to pause and to tremble. Neighbouring cities were engulfed in destruction, ours were mercifully spared.

All this, one would think, was a course of the divine procedure sufficiently marked to awaken and to warn us. But we would not be instructed: Be-

ing often reprov'd we hardened our necks ; until, after long deferring, and often respiting us, God has at length stretched out his hand in wrath & we are plunged in the horrors of war. The justice or necessity of the war I am not now going to discuss. The war is here, and our business to-day is to view it as the judgment of God ; which every war, while it lasts, certainly is, whatever be its origin or end. A load of national debt, and of consequent taxes ; the destruction of morals occasioned by military service ; the tearing of our youth from all who loved and were united to them ; the sickliness of a camp ; the danger of battle ; the miseries of captivity ; these, certainly are not public or private blessings. They are indeed the necessary concomitants of the most successful war, and may in some measure be compensated by splendid victories, important acquisitions, and permanent national aggrandizement. But where are the equivalents, where the national aggrandizement here ? The war has been little else than a series of disasters. The flower of our youth have fallen : two armies are gone into captivity : a territory is lost : our coast is ravaged : we have spent fifty millions of dollars : and what is gain'd ? We are a divided people, and our divisions grow daily more alarming. What is in reserve for us time alone can reveal. The purposes of God

hang in dread uncertainty. Chastened us he certainly has, and that in various ways, "yet we have not returned unto him." Under like circumstances what says he to his own chosen Israel? "Therefore thus will I do unto thee O Israel, and because I will do this unto thee, therefore prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." His purpose towards them is here covered with that dreadful obscurity which they well knew contained the heaviest judgments. For the Jews, to this day, dread no threatenings like such as are thus significantly and purposely indefinite. Such a threatening the Lord Jesus uttered to the church of Sardis before its utter destruction. "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know the hour that I will come upon thee." And what is Sardis this day? A desolation. The turban of the Janizary is seen on her plains like the white crest of the eagle in the desert, and wherever he is seen he is passing to his prey.—And where are now the tribes to whom Amos was sent? Lost among the millions of Asia. They went forth into captivity, they, their kings, their priests and their princes together. The delicate woman uncovered the thigh and passed over the rivers; their mighty men were without strength, their elders without honour. They were led far from their border, they returned no more to the land of their

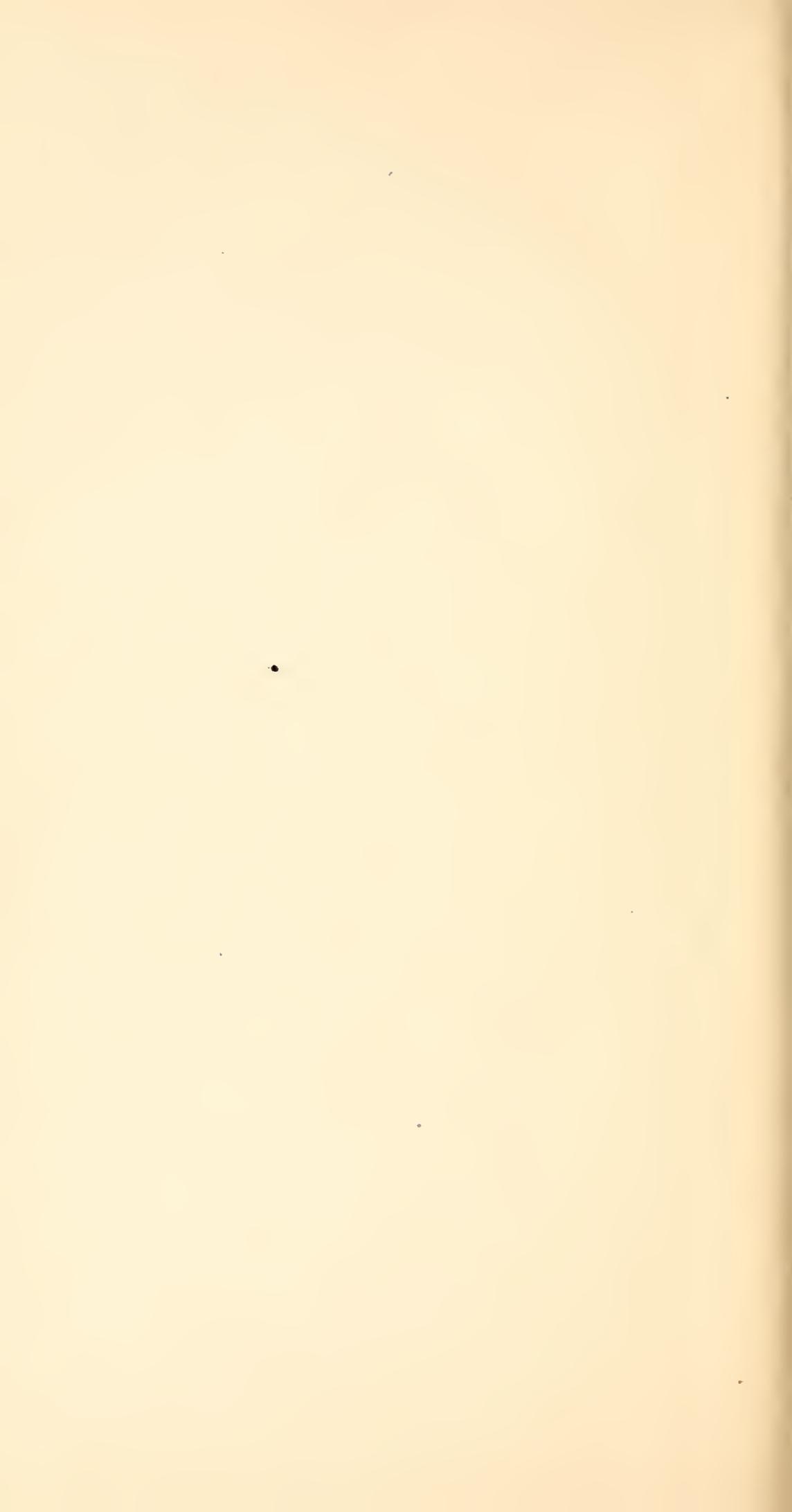
fathers' sepulchres, but remained to mourn among the heathen and to die by the waters of Chelar.

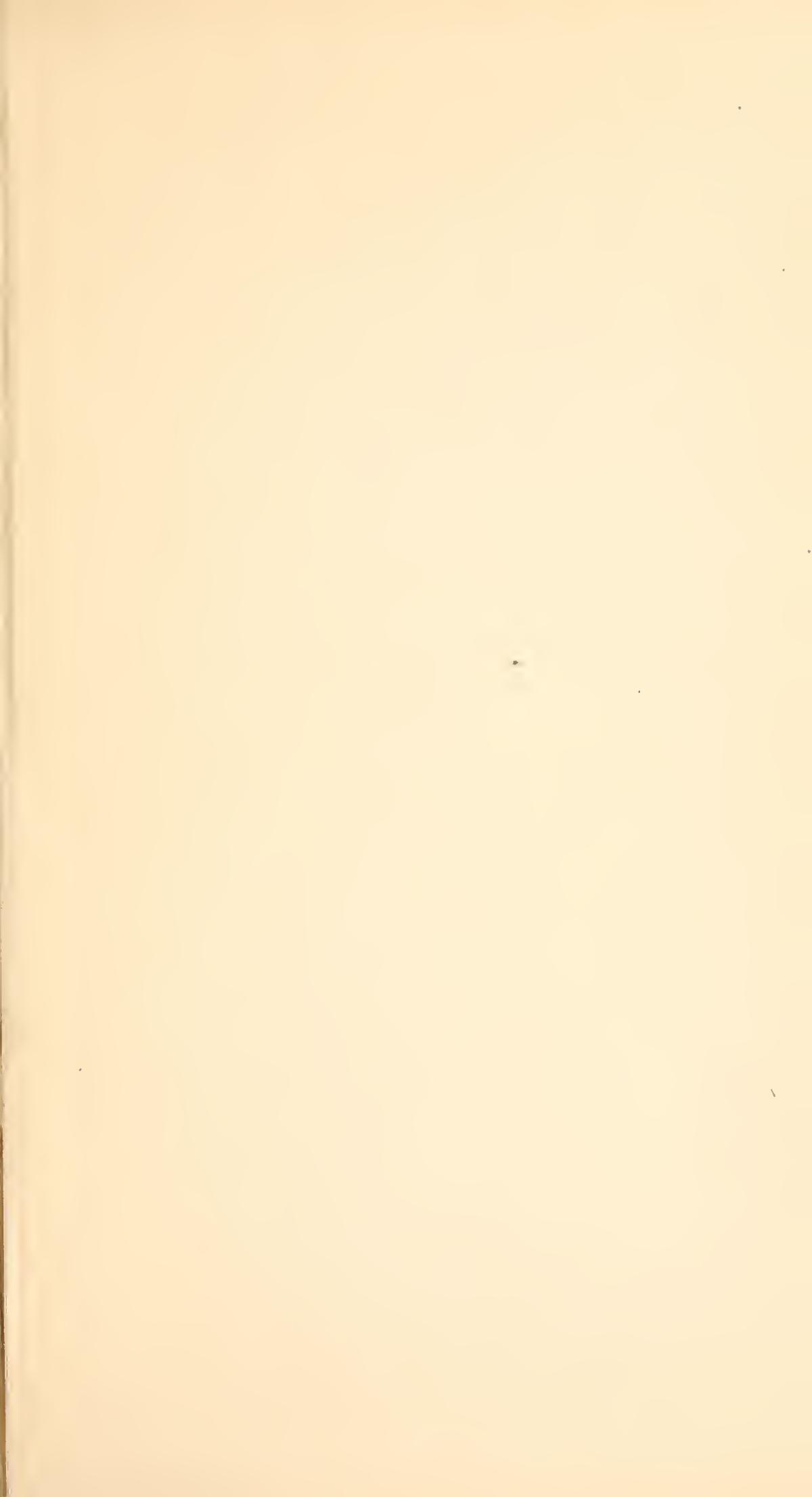
And oh America, is not this thy God also? Is his arm shortened that it cannot reach thee? Is he not still "he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, and maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth? the Lord, the God of hosts is his name." Are we so fortified in safety that we may deride his voice and set at naught all his reproof? Has he not arisen out of his place to plead with the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity? Has he not overturned kingdom after kingdom, and is not Europe afloat with blood? Where, I ask, is our pledge of security? Have no free governments ever perished in a revolution? Have no republics been first divided and then subdued? Have none of them fallen victims to foreign attachments, to the arts of intrigue, and the violence of ambition? Is the destroyer of Europe, the modern Attila, a friend to republican government? Was not France itself a republic when he crossed the Mediterranean, and what is she now? Did their mountains save the Swiss, or their insignificance the Genoese? Ah, talk not of our bravery, of our unconquerable spirit, of our untameable hatred of despotism. I know my countrymen are

brave, and that they love their liberty. But have no brave, no free, no freedom-loving nations been broken by the mace of despotic power? Be not deceived. We lie at mercy. There is a God, and we are sinners. Our hope is not in our armies, it is not in our generals, it is not in our counsellors, it is not in our constitution: it is in this, that the Lord is long-suffering, and slow to wrath, and repenteth him of the evil. His face let us seek. Let us weep in the dust before him. Let us break off our sins by righteousness. Let us return unto him with the whole heart and with the whole soul, if, peradventure, through the precious merits of his own Christ, he will turn away his wrath from us, and his heavy judgments from our children.

THE END.







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