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INFLUENCE OF OUR NATIONAL STRUGGLE ON
CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

A



SERMON

DELIVERED IN JACKSONVILLE, JUNE 14, 1863.

BEFORE THE

SOCIETY OF INQUIRY

OF ILLINOIS COLLEGE.

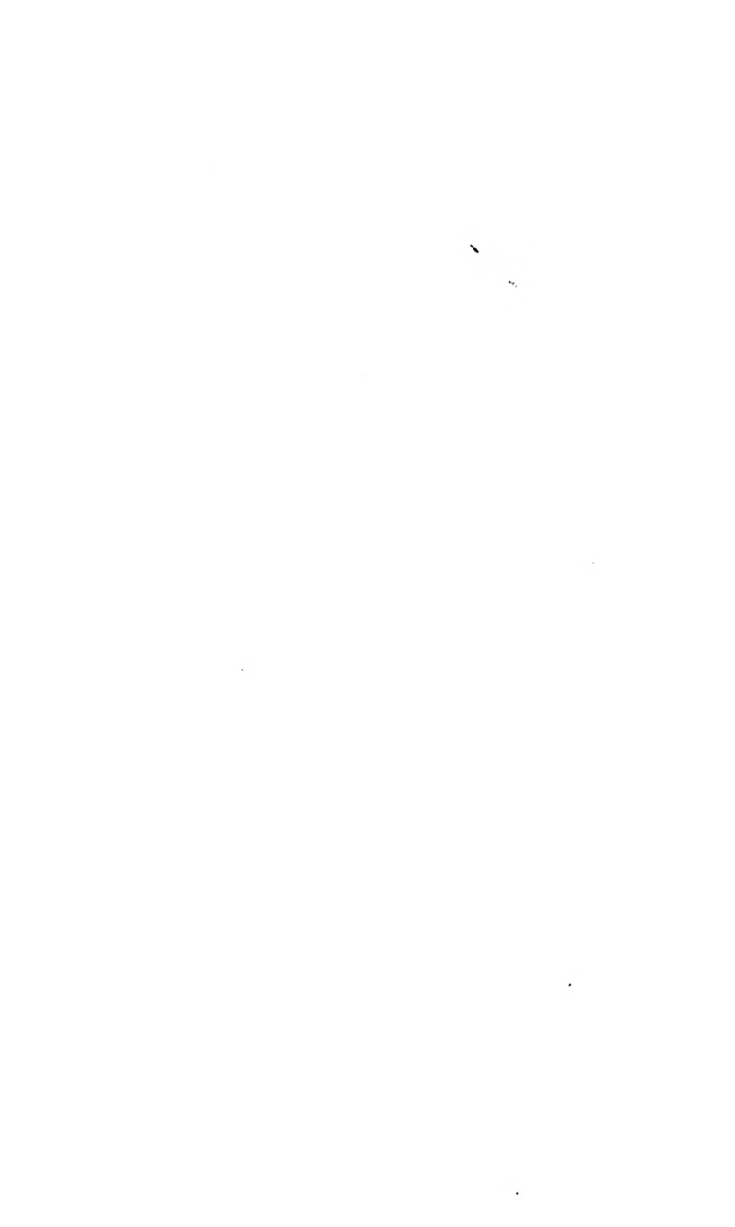
By W. S. RUSSELL.

PASTOR OF THE FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH, JACKSONVILLE.

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JOURNAL BOOK AND JOB OFFICE PRINT.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

JACKSONVILLE, June 18th, 1863

Rev. W. S. RUSSELL—

Dear Sir : In behalf of many friends and the Society of Inquiry, I would request a copy of the sermon you preached before our Society on Sunday evening last, for publication.

Very respectfully yours,

WM. HENRY ATKINSON, *Rec. Sec'y.*

Mr. WM. H. ATKINSON—

Dear Sir : My discourse is at the disposal of your Society. You are welcome to make such use of it as you may think best.

Very truly yours,

W. S. RUSSELL.

SERMON.

INFLUENCE OF OUR NATIONAL STRUGGLE ON CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

"So will I stretch out my hand upon them and make the land desolate—and they shall know that I am the Lord"—Ez. 6: 14.

As a nation we are now passing through one of those momentous crises which the historian is in the habit of seizing upon as a prominent landmark on the wayside of human progress, indicating the termination of periods and the beginning of new epochs.— We are evidently in a transition stage of our nation's life; and are rapidly passing from a phase of civilization, which we may already call old, to one that shall be new in many important particulars. The goodly fabric of our government has been swayed by the storm till its foundation stones have appeared, and it becomes apparent that the structure must be bound anew, with bolts of iron, to its original foundation, with which, in late years, it had been but too loosely joined. Changes the most extraordinary, whose accomplishment had come to be regarded as impossible, have transpired with marvelous celerity. Changes in sentiment, heretofore but tardily brought about, (if brought about at all), by years of patient instruction, are now taking place as by the flash of intuition. Men who have stood opposed to one another on great questions now see eye to eye. What once was odious has become respectable, and is rapidly advancing to the pinnacle of honor. The impracticable enthusiast of yesterday is the hero of to-day.— New modes of thought, new policies, new administrations of affairs, are taking place with a rapidity that bewilders the mind for a moment, so quick are the changes in our con-

victions, under the pressure of the thickly accumulating evidences of the hour. All this is because we are living in an age of *results*, and not of the quietly working antecedent processes. Just as one standing at the mouth of the Mississippi sees a volume of water discharged, at its several issues, which he did not see along the course of the quiet stream. While the muner is beating the rock, and putting in the charge, and laying the train, his work is unobserved, but when the blast explodes the whole country feels the shock and sees the rocks flying. We are living in God's blasting time. We see the *effects* of former principles and policies, and therefore have the best means of estimating their character. He who does not reverse or modify his former views to-day is unworthy to live in such an epoch; he is a mole burrowing under the rubbish of exploded ideas; he is a bat, hidden from the light, loving only the darkness. In such a period of transition, when our political economy, our statesmanship, our literature, our moral science, are all being modified, and in some respects essentially changed, will not the church, will not christian character, feel these agencies and yield to them? Shall not that gospel, whose exhaustless resources have proved sufficient for the demands of every age, in all the varied revolutions of human society, again vindicate its infinite capacity by its ready adjustment to the new wants of the generation now growing up under the storm-cloud that hangs over our land? What, then, will be the character of the gospel of the future? This is the question which I desire to consider to-night. The young men of the society which I have the pleasure of

addressing, are to be the believers in, and most of them the preachers of, this gospel; I desire, therefore, to lead their minds to some of the lessons of these momentous times, especially as they indicate the elements to be taken into the christian character now forming, in order to fit it for the service of the Lord and of humanity, in that future upon the threshold of which we now stand. By the gospel of the future I do not mean a gospel in which the essential doctrines of the Bible shall be changed. No, not one of them. But Christianity, with the plastic power of the ever-living spirit which pervades it, adjusts itself to the vicissitudes of humanity; shows one of its many characteristics to each passing age, and reveals a new phase of its power as it is called forth by the necessities of the new epoch. A particular class of its truths needs to be emphasised at one time; quite a different class at another time.—Consulting, then, the powerful influences around us, as the guide of our judgment, we will endeavor to ascertain what results the future promises us in the all-important sphere of religion.

Before entering upon this inquiry, however, it is well to admit that the product of this era of change will not be one of unmingled good. New and startling forms of evil will also appear. Hideous shapes of sin have always followed in the fiery track of war. Respect for human life will be lowered, and murder will be a more frequent crime; the rights of private property will not be as sacred as they have been; quarrels, violence, blasphemy and drunkenness will abound. For Satan always works with new energy when God exercises his power, in a special manner; and alarming demonstrations of wickedness may ever suggest to the God-fearing man this compensating thought, that Satan is alarmed for the security of his kingdom, because he perceives the coming of the Lord of Hosts in special visitation. The seeming triumphs of the prince of darkness are, therefore, really evidences of his weakness; unwilling prophecies, like Balaam's, of the supremacy of the Lord God Almighty. And, in such times, when sin is more of a reigning and demoniac than usual, the boundary line between the church and the world appears more distinctly; the church is purer and selfless, less from treachery with her camp; the wolf casts off his sheep's clothing, and is known as a wolf, and therefore is not so successful in getting within the fold.

The sentence which I have read as a text is an utterance of the Old Testament constantly recurring after the narration of some war, famine, pestilence or other form of affliction

sent upon the people. It is placed at the close of such narrations for the purpose of pointing out at once the *design* and *result* of the affliction—"And they shall know that I am the Lord." The Sovereign Ruler of the world thus explains his acts to us, so that we may understand, as often as such afflictive events transpire, his purpose in sending them, and in faith anticipate their blessed effect. He expressly states that he used Assyria as the rod of his anger with which to punish his people for their sins, and that they might know that he was the Lord. And when we say that God is now using the South as his rod of chastisement to beat our sins out of us—for like the fool we must needs be braved in the mortar before our foolishness would depart from us—and that he employs the North as his instrument of punishment for the South*—for our sins being mutual we are each the scourge of the other—when we thus speak, I repeat, we base our judgment upon the sure word of God and use the modes of speech common to it; we interpret his design in this case from many analogous cases in the Bible, and are fully warranted in saying that the result will be the same in this instance as so often before, the people "shall know that I am the Lord."

1. *We are in transition from atheism to faith.* By atheism I do not mean that bold denial of the divine existence which prevailed in the last century in all parts of the civilized world. Falsehood has not of late led his hosts to the battle against Truth in so open and defiant a manner. Had he have done so the danger would have been less. But in a guise flattering to man's intelligence, in sympathy with the inventive, exploring spirit of the age, and having so much of truth as to secure introduction into the very bosom of the church, did the infidelity of the era just past present itself. NATURALISM has been the system of thought sapping the foundation of our holy religion. We have been living in a period of unusual activity in the discovery of the laws of nature and their practical use. The subtlest elements have been harnessed to do work for man. It has been an age of machinery. Science has made rapid strides and lifted the veil from many of nature's mysteries. The effect of all this has been the deflection of law, and to engage the mind in natural, secondary causes. Hence a vast, tangled mass of machinery, laws, proximate causes, arose between man and God, obscuring the face of the Divine Being. It was the common fashion, when an event was to be accounted for, to say that such and such instrumental causes brought it about, and he was deemed a singular, un-

fashionable man who should say bluntly, after the manner of the old Bible, "God did it." To explain every thing was pleasant and flattering to human wisdom; to reverently recognize the divine presence in the transactions of the world was humiliating. And as is usual where there is undue assumption of wisdom, there was great superficiality. The past has not been a profound age. It did not push its investigations so thoroughly and radically as to reach the primal cause of all phenomena and the source of all principles. It stopped short of this and was satisfied with finding a reason for things, not stopping to inquire whether or not it was the ultimate, fundamental reason. It has been an age that did not realize the authority of principles; it shrunk from those who insisted on following principles to their legitimate results; it detested all radicals and radicalism—which in its true sense, simply means, fidelity to principle. Its type is the swarm of busy insects rippling the surface of the summer stream, not the native fish that goes down to the cool depths below. This spirit of infidelity showed its extremest effects in the hands of those teachers who insisted on a system of physical and moral or spiritual laws so unalterable as to preclude the possibility of a miracle, which is the result of supernatural interference, and so all-sufficient and inherent in man as to prevent the necessity of the regeneration of his heart by power beyond his own, and the interposition of a Savior from the skies. They sought to put God in irons and those irons, by a strange inconsistency, they made to be the laws and principles which originated in his own divine will and intelligence. The leader of this school was Theodore Parker. Next we have Rad-panteists, identifying God and nature; so that there remains no power above nature. Then there is a large class who accept the crudities of phrenology as their philosophy of man. Organization explains human action. Transgressions of God's law are rather the misfortunes of organization than the violation of the will of a holy God. The foundation of duty is weakened, and duty becomes mere prudence or skill in judging how to act. There is, also, the intelligent denunciation of Unitarians, the whole drift of whose teaching is against the supernatural system of faith inculcated in the New Testament. According to them self-culture is what man needs, not regeneration by the power of the Spirit of God. Development will remedy all his defects, not salvation through the sacrifice of an Infinite Redeemer, in whom dwelt all the fullness of the godhead bodily. And I have been familiar with this godless

style of thinking in this form: "Man has five senses," we claim, the dippant philosopher, "nothing to reach he can't except it pass through one of these five doors. How, then, can the Spirit of God, which is not an object of any of the senses, exercise a direct influence upon his heart to regenerate him? Impossible!" Certainly it is, I hope, idle, I respond, if you have more faith in a material philosophy than in God's Word. But the spirit of unbelief is not confined to unevangelical denominations, but has infiltrated itself into the minds of many religious people and their teachers, belonging to evangelical churches. With them there has been a false faith—a faith trying to prop itself upon sight—which prevents a hearty recognition of the ever-present God. In support of this serious charge I will here cite the testimony of a distinguished preacher and author of our country. Writing in 1838, he says: "We see that the more direct arguments and appeals of religion are losing their power over the public mind and conscience. This is true especially of the young, who pass into life under the combined action of so many causes, conspiring to induce a distrust of whatever is supernatural in religion. Persons farther on in life are out of the reach of these new influences, and, unless the education is specially called to the fact, have little suspicion of what is going on in the mind of the rising classes of the world; more and more saturated every day with the influence of unbelief." * * * "Take our atmosphere; it begins to envelop the common mind of the world." * * * Indeed there is nothing more common than to hear arguments advanced and illustrations offered, by the most evangelical preachers, that have no force or meaning, save what they get from the current naturalism of the day. We have even heard a distinguished and carefully orthodox preacher deliver a discourse, the very doctrine of which was inevitable, unqualified naturalism. Logically taken and carried out to its proper result, Christianity could have had no ground of standing left,—so in the did the preacher himself understand the true scope of his doctrine, or the mischievous that was beginning to infect his conceptions of the christian faith?" As an illustration of this last remark of the author, I remember reading an article lately from a popular eastern preacher, in which religious fasting was admitted to be nothing more than a natural expression of grief; that is, that a man fasted naturally when in sorrow because he had no appetite; and, therefore, the stomach-sickened rejection of food dictated the previous time of fasting! Every christian knows

But there is no religion in this view, except so far as the ground of the naturalist and admit that religion is simply the following out of the natural laws of our minds and bodies, which course, the Bible teaches, and is not a superstition, instead of in glory; for the natural [and natural] man is enemy against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. In this prevailing tendency of modern thought to a religion of nature is found the secret of that gross and polite service of God which is so popular. A religion whose gospel leaves out the doctrines—which is like a man with the bones extracted from his body, soft, pliable, and readily accommodated to any position, and resisting nothing, overcoming nothing, this gospel of our degenerate days is rather a sort of propitiation—a Charnfield in clerical dress—than the word of life for the dead. It has too much regard for the refined sensibilities of polite society to preach of hell as well as of heaven, or God as a consuming fire as well as one who is plenteous in mercy; to insist on man's deep depravity and sell him to his knees to plead for heaven's forgiveness. It soothes and flatters and sends its hearers away on the best of terms with themselves,—not, as they should go, trembling under conviction of sin, and seeing no way of escape but the sin-atonement of Christ. It discards the toiling pilgrim of Bunyan's dream, as type of the true Christian, and adopts instead the conception of one modern satirist, in which the slough of Despond is filled up, all unpleasant places, the Doan's castle and the dungeon, of Giant Despair, fitted up pleasantly for the traveler's accommodation and refreshment. A railroad professes to transfer the passengers from the City of Destruction to the Celestial gates.

All the various phases of this skeptical spirit which I have enumerated, have their common source in a weakened faith in the presence of God in the hearts and affairs of men. The tendency has been to exalt the lower and visible agencies, and to depreciate the higher and spiritual. There has been a disposition to regard praying men, who believe in an invisible power, as deficient in practical wisdom. In this there was a departure from the modes of thought peculiar to the scriptures. In them the thinking of the agent of inspiration is the infallible example of how our thinking should proceed. They have used an illustration clearer than that of any physical phenomenon, that can be along the chain, secondary causes up to the good the primal Cause. For instance, David's child sickened and died. Its sickness

was the manifest cause of its death, but does the inspired writer give this merely proximate cause as the final reason of its death? No, but while he says that it was sick, he startles us with the sentence, "God struck the child." When a wicked king suddenly dies of a loathsome disease, the Spirit of Truth leads the historian to account for it thus: "The angel of the Lord smote him because he gave not God the glory." When wars arose and Israel was captive, the record is, "The Lord sold them into the hand of their enemies, because they did evil in his sight." And when Israel prevails in battle the cause of victory is thus stated, "The Lord discomfited Sisera..... with the edge of the sword, by his Barak," and "God subdued on that day Jabin, the king of Canaan, before the children of Israel." Again, when a human soul is filled with the new joy of sins forgiven, the Scripture manner of accounting for it is, he "is born of the Spirit," "God hath given him a new heart." Thus, as these men of the Bible saw the world, it was presided over by the living God, who directed and controlled its affairs, individual and national. To them the world's history was a vast scroll on which was written, in characters easily read, the will of God; written in events, deaths, calamities, prosperities, national changes, individual changes of character and action. They saw the world alive with God, not as a heap of dead machinery. They walked as seeing the invisible One; they lived and thought with an abiding sense upon their minds of the reality of the supernatural. Will the people of the present age return to this sublime faith of the fathers? In to day's wilderness of strange events will the voice of one be heard crying, Prepare ye the way of the Lord? I believe that it will be so; and that the severe chastisements which the whole people feel will in a large measure release us from the cold naturalism of the past and bring us nearer the warm heart of God.

I think it will be evident to many that the people are being converted to the belief that God governs the world in the interest of righteousness. In those corrupt days of peace the loving, tender spirit of the gospel was often perverted into a sickly, sentimental toleration of crime, and the conviction of God's ex-harshed justice was weakened or altogether doubted. The sovereignty of God, exercised in unwavering faithfulness to justice and truth was not felt as it should have been. Now men begin to realize that there is a ruler higher than Presidents, Congresses, and popular majorities. "There is a Providence!" men exclaim out of the furnace

heat of the Lord's hot displeasure. They wonder at the depths of unbelief in their hearts, of which before they seemed not to be aware. We are now coming to believe that there are unseen forces which really decide the destinies of nations. Great armies and heavy ordnance do not insure victory. There are invisible agencies, which no general can command, which are stronger than rifled cannon and massive divisions. It is now apparent that we cannot calculate victory out of superior natural and artificial resources of war. A swollen stream, an antinefy fog, a storm at sea, an unaccountable impression on the mind of an army, as in a panic, have baffled and defeated the strongest armies and wisest generals. The Lord orders these simple but decisive agencies. No council of war can foresee and estimate them in its plans. The will of the Lord must be acknowledged to be supreme, for he alone is the arbiter of the issue of battles. He has been bringing us to this acknowledgement by forcible lessons. Go back two years this month. I hear the steady tramp of fifty thousand feet, as they march over the Long Bridge of the Potomac; I see the gleam in the moonlight of fifty thousand bayonets, and hear the low rumble of battery after battery. How the heart of the patriot swells with pride as he beholds that grand army! How sure the promise of victory which it gives. But alas! in a few days the heart sickens at the sight of its ranks torn, and mangled, and broken, and flying in wild disorder. Then we felt that the Lord God Omnipotent reigned, and that the battle was not to the strong. Thus has it been repeatedly. Our most splendid armies have been defeated or poured out their blood to win barren victories. One leader after another, to whom we have looked for success, has failed us and taught us that our help was not in man. Thus the nation has been brought to its knees. Millions of hearts daily plead with God for the interposition of his power. Sincere prayer is a direct appeal to God; it rises above instrumentalities, confessing their insufficiency, and is a resort to that God who alone successfully 'insureth the host to battle.' This is curing our naturalism.

Again from innumerable homes, scattered from Maine to California, myriads of secret chords are stretching to beloved ones in the army, and with what exquisite sensitiveness do their heart-strings vibrate, pouring a plaintive strain into the ear of God, as they are swept by every breeze wafted from battle fields. Mothers, wives and sisters beseege the throne of God in behalf of their noble and brave ones whose places at home are

sadly vacant. Lips unused to pray now riven in fervent supplication; lips accustomed to prayer plead with a new earnestness, feeling in unwonted power the comfort and efficacy of the prayer of faith. But not only have the anxieties and apprehensions of affliction driven thousands to the mercy seat, but the most heart-rending losses have already fallen upon many, and the sad, new names 'widow,' 'orphan' have been received amidst the baptism of tears. Scarcely a paper is read but what contains a list of dead in battle and hospital. In these fatal lists how many tear-dimmed eyes read the names of home's best beloved, and the brief word 'killed' or 'died' strikes the heart like a bullet from the foe. But these darkened homes often behold a new light shining out of the darkness, for the Lord Jesus reveals himself in them and a fountain is opened the sweetness of whose waters was unknown before. In these losses the spirit of the Saviour's sacrifice is repeated. No man liveth or dieth unto himself; and when men surrender their lives for their country, they are redeemed from that selfishness which is the basest mark of our depravity. And those who mourn their loss find comfort in that spirit of self-sacrifice which dictates that they should suffer for the good of the race. Thus the Christ-like temper spreads. Those bonds of selfishness and self-seeking, which bound the spirits of many to earth and its low aims and motives, are loosed, and their souls have arisen into a higher sphere of feelings and noble impulses. Patriotism, which leads to the surrender of fathers, husbands, brothers, property, and life itself to the cause of human progress, is lifting thousands of souls into sympathy with the genius of Christianity. And that blessed system, whose central object is the cross with its sinless, bleeding sacrifice, will be better understood, by those hearts which have been pierced through by the noble sorrow of suffering in behalf of humanity.

Still another influence may be mentioned as calculated to reinvigorate the religious sentiment of the country. We are being brought more frequently into the presence of the dying. Thousands who, in one hour, are exercising all the activities of healthy life, the next are strewn at the gates of death. And disease, in the crowded hospital with a slower power, brings to the grave tens of thousands. The sympathies of Chaplains, nurses and friends are enlisted in these departing soldiers, and they feel, as do all at the death-bed, the earnest desire of saying something that will place before the dying peaceful visions of the future, and that will remedy the

fearful distress of an impenitent man, when trembling on the borders of the spiritual world. In such scenes it is that the saving resources of the gospel are developed. No theory of mere reformation, of self-culture, or gradual development, will answer the wants of men about to be ushered into the presence of the just and holy God. An immediate salvation is demanded by them. A perfect righteousness, capable of instantaneous appropriation, they must have or perish. A justification, which no man could work out for himself, is that only which can bring peace to the guilty soul and gird it for the triumph over death. The most solemn realities crowd around the death bed: eternity is near, heaven or hell, joy or woe, victory or defeat. The Lord who is our righteousness alone can determine which destiny shall open before the departing spirit. A simple incident will illustrate this point. A Christian laboring in the army writes from a prominent military station in the east, "The nurses in the hospitals are most of them Unitarians and Parkerites. One kind-hearted good woman said to me, 'Oh, Mr.—I'm glad you have come down to day, for several seem very anxious about their souls, and you know I don't know what to say to them. I was brought up a Quaker, and my husband is a Unitarian, so we went to Theodore Parker's Church, and I don't know how to talk to them.'" They needed the old gospel, and a disciple of the gospel with its modern improvements, found herself dumb in the presence of a soul realizing its spiritual necessities. So all human schemes are being swept aside by the stern hand of affliction and death. Super-human power to rescue is felt to be needed when a frail mortal is struggling in the jaws of the monster Death. Thus the religion of Christ is being restored to its proper supremacy, and its graces, most beneficent provisions are being brought home to needy souls.

In all these instances of the benefits of our country's afflictions we are but repeating in our experience what was so frequent in the history of Israel. When they had been afflicted eight, or ten, or twenty years by wars and oppressions through neighboring hostile nations, the accustomed record of the sacred historian is, "*then they cried out to the Lord.*" These strokes of Jehovah's rod are bringing us to his feet. And as we come out of this furnace, I do expect confidently to see our christian character shine with a new and unwonted radiance, because purified from a vain and deceitful philosophy, from self-righteousness, conceit, and human reliance. And the gospel of the future that such christians

will manifest in their lives and have preached in their pulpits, will be pervaded by the unction of the divine presence; will speak, with the power of genuine faith, of God's providence and of the reality of his government of this world. That gospel will choose its terms less from human science and more from the inspired Word. It will speak less of 'reformation,' 'culture,' and 'development,' and more concerning regeneration, holiness from the inworking Spirit, and salvation through the grace of God and the merits of Christ. It will be inspired by the holy vigor of those men of faith whose achievements surpass the triumphs of any of earth's heroes. It will utter the name of God not as an abstraction, but as the name of the living father, who is ever present with his children, and the throbbing of whose heart of love may be felt by those who press close to the divine bosom. That gospel will win its way more by the 'foolishness of preaching' than by the influence of worldly wisdom. It will draw its resources of strength not from wealth, or numbers or earthly blandishments of any kind, but from God, and its going forth will be "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." It will not be hoodwinked by instrumentalities, so as not to see the Lord's agency lying behind all secondary causes, without which they are a body of eyes and ears, and feet and hands, deprived of the soul. This gospel will blaze with the light and glow with the warmth of the God who dwelleth between the cherubim, and, as a form of more than earthly loveliness, will lift her face to heaven, where the throne is, and reflect upon the world the glory of him who sitteth in the majesty of the Highest. Thus will the word of God be fulfilled, "*They shall know that I am the Lord.*"

I now invite your attention to a second leading point in the discussion of this subject. We have reason to believe that

2. *We are in transition from an age of Casuistry to one of Conscience.* The epoch in our history which we are now leaving was one in which the minds of men were greatly perplexed by a question involving in itself morals, religion, politics and commerce—a most unfortunate and hazardous complication of interests; for where a question is so broad and so complex as to comprehend these diverse elements, the worldly interests are almost sure to overshadow and becloud those elements that are moral, and involve their decision in great perplexity. And in this case the result had been the tying of such an involved Gordian knot upon the chariot of our national progress, that only the sword of the Lord of Hosts could cut it. The slavery

the soul, to integrity of character. It is doubtless owing to the degenerating influence of those shameful years of our history—most distressing though apparently the most prosperous—that we now behold such alarming corruption in the sentiment of loyalty among our people. To our treasonable sentiments—to bring oneself to the very verge of the greatest criminality. For treason involves sin, crimes, perjury, theft, &c. &c. &c.—It strikes a blow at that which results from all crime, the government which executes the law of the land. It therefore opens the door for the incoming of every form of transgression: it tramples upon our safeguards against the highwayman, the assassin, the nee-flieth, the burglar. He that speaks disloyalty of his government or its administrators, is taking the first step to every crime that ever blackened the records of society.—By persisting in the utterance of treasonable language the citizen casts himself out of the pale of upright society, and becomes a suspicious character, who may any day be found among other criminals. For the thought is father to the deed; he that meditates murder may soon be found in the actual commission of the act. The secret thought of treason issues in the open act of murder, yea, in ten thousand murders. For every man shot by a rebel is *murdered*; every rebel shot by a loyal soldier is *executed* to vindicate the majesty of law, under the authority of him "who is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." I think there are many who do not realize the exceeding guiltiness and danger of the ground upon which they stand when they talk so carelessly of the government and of their obligation as citizens. Government is not a social compact, to be annulled at the pleasure of the parties—that sentiment belongs to the atheism of the past. Government is an ordinance of God. Therefore the obligations which it lays upon us are of the most binding and sacred character. Could such obligations be violated in word and deed as readily as they now are, without the deepest corruption in the heart of the citizen? And could such corruption be there but by a long, depraved schooling, such as the people have been subjected to in past years, during the supremacy of the slave-power? Ah, it will require more than the genius of a Juvenal to truly portray the vices of the degenerate age of our Republic. Yea, an inspired Jeremiah only could tear away the veil from the repulsive features of that corrupt era.

But the tornado, whose roar we hear to-day, is sweeping away the fogs. We sowed to the wind and we are reaping the whirl

wind; but it is not wholly a destroying, punitive power, but also a beneficent agency, purifying the atmosphere. The moral horizon has cleared up so rapidly in two years that there is promise soon of an unclouded sky. The Almighty's hand has swept across the continent, and theories, sophisms, and policies have been brushed away like spider's webs from the morning meadow.—War is a great reformer; for proof of that read the Old Testament. When preachers have done their utmost in pleading; yea, in days of old, when the prophets of God warned and besought the people in vain, war was successful in bringing them back to the Lord. After the scourge of war, "then they cried unto the Lord." In the first settlement of Plymouth the Pilgrims erected a church of round logs, but made the roof flat and ran the logs above it on the four sides to serve as a parapet, on top of which was mounted their only cannon. So the building was at once a church in which those men of faith worshiped God, and a fort to defend them against the Indians—a type of the church militant to which the descendants of those Pilgrim fathers have been very faithful. And, indeed, the church that is not militant is a church succumbent. Captain Standish, looking out of his window to the brazen howitzer mounted on the church, according to one of our poets, thus eulogizes it:

—A preacher who speaks to the purpose,
Steady, straight-forward and strong, with irresistible
logic,
Orthodox, A-thing conviction right into the hearts of
the heathen.

Such is the preacher of to-day. That his effectiveness was not overrated by the gallant Puritan Captain is abundantly evident to us all. He has awakened the indifferent, strengthened the wavering, fastened conviction upon the most skeptical, and turned men from the advocacy of wrong to the enthusiastic support of right. He has let in such a flood of light upon darkened minds that, like Saul of Tarsus, the way which they once persecuted they now preach. By this war the eyes of the people are being rapidly opened to the heinous character of the sin of which they have been so tolerant. Few really honest, disinterested seekers after truth remain unconvinced or are on the road to conviction. The hideous features of the demon slavery are more distinctly revealed every day, so that all, except the wilfully blind, may see his repulsiveness. The faithfulness of that symbol in the Apocalypse strikingly appears now: The seer beholds a white horse, and one sitting on him with a bow, a crown upon his head, and he rides forth conquering and to conquer. A symbol of Christ

in his steadily progressing conquest of the world. But he is attended by one sitting upon a red horse, holding a great sword, and having power to take peace from the earth: the personification of War. Wrong so entrenches itself in this world sometimes, and the subjects of sin so league themselves together, as that an effectual barrier seems to be opposed to the advance of the benignant principles of the Savior. Then his attendant War lifts his sword, cuts in sunder the bands of wickedness, and hews a way through the ranks of falsehood for the march of the all-conquering Redeemer. So it has been in this land; and we already discover God's intentions of mercy towards us in the midst of the manifestations of his wrath.—The present chastisement is grievous, but it is even now yielding the precious fruit of righteousness. It is evident that that wisdom which is from above, which is *first pure, then peaceable*, is guiding our affairs. And what christian heart can desire peace, or believe peace to be possible, before there is purity?

Do we, therefore, hazard anything in predicting that the gospel of the future will be a free gospel? The shackles, it will be found, have not only been broken from the hands and feet of the poor slave, but also from the gospel; for it is ever true that Christ is fettered in the person of his humblest follower. And who does not know that the Christ who has gone about this land, in former years, was a chained and crippled Christ, having the Edward hand of worldly policy laid upon his mouth whenever he would announce his mission. "The Father hath sent me to preach deliverance to the captives, and to set at liberty them that are bound?" A chained Bible is the oppressed standard; an open Bible, let us trust, will be the emblem of the emancipated Republic. In it great sins will not be able soon again to sit on parents of light, so as to deceive the subjects. The church will not speak saith and cry, dogmatically of the blessings of liberty and of the wrath of God against the oppressor, as announced in the Scripture. It will not countenance odious distinctions of race, such as are worthy only of heathen heathen; but with a holy but unyielding will reach out its arms in Christ, whether bond or free. It will not wink at the inhuman, blasphemous assumption, that wife, husband, children, honor, property, liberty and life, are all very well for him who has a white skin, but of no consequence to him to whom his Creator gave a black one. The church of the future will have learned not to call evil good. Its tongue will not fear to rebuke sin, because it is a great sin, en-

trenched behind bags of gold and political interests. With a direct insight into right will the people of that day judge. They who have been schooled by the thrust of the bayonet, the glance of the swift descending sword, and the bullet speeding straight to the mark, will be impatient of the slow processes of the casuist, and having learned directness of thought in so severe a school, will not suffer the simple principles of common right and justice to be obscured and perverted by the reasonings of a bribed conscience. Young men of to-day, with the sad lessons of these bloody years exerting their influence upon you, you will have faith that it is better to do right than to make money—better to act always from principle than to grow rich by sacrificing it. It did seem for years past that the way of interest and self-aggrandizement was a secure and pleasant road; and that the strong might wring wealth out of the weak with impunity. But that is now seen to have been ruinously pernicious doctrine. It is proved by Jehovah's own argument spoken in the thunder-tones of the battle, that justice, right and freedom are as immutable as the character of God, and cannot be violated without overbalancing with the most destructive penalties the transient sorrow. Take a representative fact, out of the many daily occurring. A regiment of colored soldiers march in solid ranks, with proud step, to martial music, through the broad avenues of the nation's capital. In their course they sweep past the Old Capitol prison, which is full of rebels suffering for their treason. The rebel—man, the soldiers drown the groan in triumphant huzzahs. Look at it; the master in prison, the slave marching by with the stately step of a free soldier, a musket in his hand, hastening on to the battle of Liberty! When I behold that, I exclaim, with the voice in the Apocalypse issuing from the martyr's altar in heaven, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments!"

I thus have endeavored to sum up the lessons of the important era in which we live, in their bearing upon Christian character, under two leading heads: first, the casting out of foreign elements from our religious convictions and teachings, leading to a simpler, more Scriptural faith; and, second, the restoration of a conscience to the exercise of its proper authority in deciding the church's course of action toward public questions.—Whatever implies to truth and righteousness are given in this day of the nation's judgment, I believe may be comprehended in one of these fundamental points. To call the least of the people back to the God

of their fathers, to enforce the truth, "they shall know that I am the Lord," in religion and morals, promises to be the blessed result of our trials. This result will appear in the character of God's people; especially is this true of the young christian who is now laying the foundation of his future character.—The elements that should enter into the character of the sincere follower of Jesus, are these: *First*, An invigorated faith in the spiritual forces of the universe, that are under the Lord's supreme control; forces that are superior to nature, because in the hands of the God of nature, and, indeed, completing that system of which nature is but a part; forces that are simply the uniform exercises of God's will and intelligence, and that are the true causes of all events. Joined with this article of faith the belief that we enlist these spiritual agencies on our side by a righteous life and earnest prayer: "for the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him."—We should regard the man of prayer, not as weak in practical matters, but as the strongest, most invincible of men, because calling to his assistance those unseen powers which determine the fate of all conflicts, the rise and fall of all monarchies and republics.—Just as Luther, before entering Worms, alone, prostrate upon the floor of his room, crying unto God, was drawing reinforcements from a source which made him, single handed though he stood, stronger than the united forces of the Pope and of King Charles, the most powerful monarch of that age.—Therefore, we must regard all efforts that seek to exile God from our world, as one present in our affairs, by the reasonings of science and discoveries of nature's processes, not as wise and profound, which they profess to be, but as foolish and superficial.

Second, There should be a firmer faith in God as the Sovereign superior to every other; who governs the world according to his own holy will, notwithstanding the rebellion of earthly rulers; a Sovereign to whom our

first allegiance is due; and let there be the profound conviction that any conflict between the laws of his administration and those of an earthly nation, will inevitably, sooner or later, bring disaster and shame upon that nation; and hence it is the duty of every christian to strenuously labor, by influencing public affairs, to prevent such conflict. The christian must never forget that he is also a citizen.

Third, Let there be received into our character a stern, unyielding opposition to sin; an opposition based upon principle, and that will not, therefore, change according as the sin may be popular or unpopular, among the rich or the poor, fashionable or unfashionable. David's injunction must be followed, "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil." A symmetrical and reliable religious character must include both of these elements. The abhorrence of evil, which is illustrated in the imprecatory Psalms and in Christ's rebuke of the Pharisees, gives spirit and courage to Christians, that they may storm the strongholds of iniquity, and at the same time fills them with a heartier, more exalted love of the pure and just God.

Fourth, Let there be a jealous regard for the integrity of conscience. Let her decisions be influenced by neither fear nor favor.

And, lastly, let a wider philanthropy expand the soul, regardless of station, embracing in its arms all mankind.

Thus a character, viewed as a whole, should and will, I believe, come forth from this furnace, having the sturdy firmness, the burning zeal, the uncompromising fidelity, and the fear of God, which belonged to our Puritan fathers. Thus, in the grand result, it will appear, that not only our Republic has developed its military resources and trained its citizens to be soldiers, but that Christ has gathered and disciplined an army, possessed of those martial christian qualities, which will fit it for that final conflict, whose triumph is to inaugurate the reign of Christ as Lord of Lords and King of Kings.



