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Beecher, Lyman.

The Memory of our Fathers.

A Sermon delivered at Plymouth
on the 22 of December, 1828.

Boston, 1828.





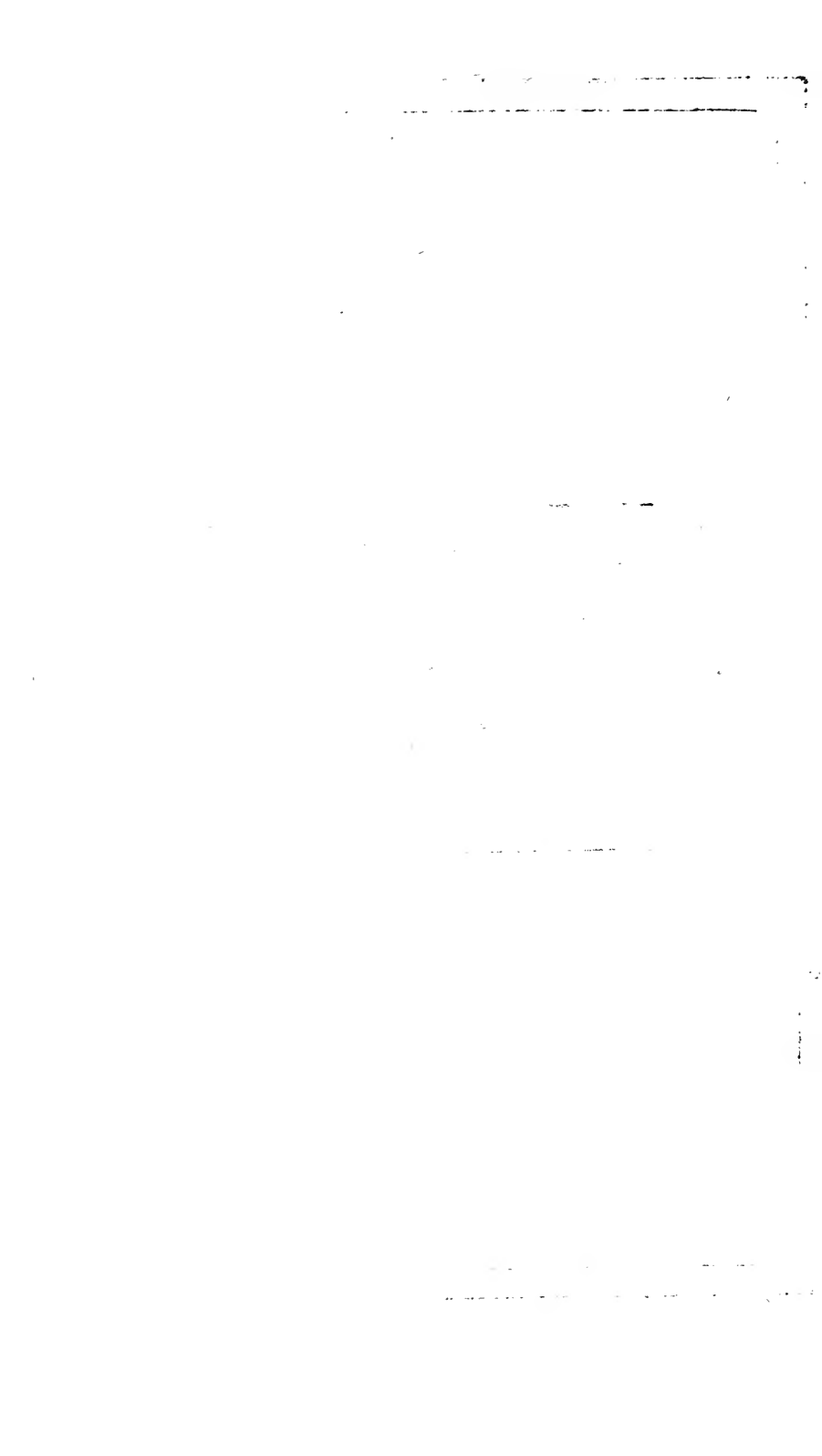
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DR. BEECHER'S
Plymouth Sermon.

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1827.



The Memory of our Fathers.

A

SERMON

DELIVERED AT PLYMOUTH,

ON THE

TWENTY-SECOND OF DECEMBER,

1827.

BY LYMAN BEECHER, D. D.

Boston :

T. R. MARVIN, PRINTER, 32, CONGRESS STREET.

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DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS.....TO WIT :

District Clerk's Office.

BE it remembered, that on the twenty fourth day of January, A. D. 1828, in the fifty second Year of the Independence of the United States of America, THEOPHILUS R. MARVIN, of the said District, has deposited in this Office the Title of a Book, the Right whereof he claims as Proprietor, in the Words following, *to wit* :

The Memory of our Fathers. A Sermon delivered at Plymouth, on the twenty-second of December, 1827. By Lyman Beecher, D. D.

In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, entitled " An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned:" and also to an Act entitled " An Act supplementary to an Act, entitled, An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts and books to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned; and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving and etching historical and other prints."

JNO. W. DAVIS, { *Clerk of the District
of Massachusetts.*

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PLYMOUTH, DEC. 25, 1827.

Rev. and dear Sir,—At a meeting of the Third Church in this place, on the last evening,—It was

“ Unanimously Resolved,

“ That our Pastor be requested to thank the Rev. Dr. BEECHER, in the name of this Church, for the Discourse delivered at their request, on the anniversary of the 22d December, in commemoration of the Landing of the Fathers; and to request a copy of the Discourse for the press.”

In communicating the above extract from the minutes of the Church, permit me to add,—we feel assured that the Discourse is well calculated to be of extensive utility to the cause of true patriotism and christianity; and therefore hope that you will not hesitate to gratify our request.

With great respect and consideration,

Yours, in the Gospel of Christ,

FREDERICK FREEMAN,

Pastor of 3d Ch. Plymouth.

Rev. Dr. BEECHER.

THIS Discourse was first delivered before the Legislature of Connecticut, and printed at their request. It was re-written and delivered at the Anniversary of the Landing of the Pilgrims, as the only tribute which at that time the writer could pay to the Memory of our Fathers. This departure from the ordinary course, was known and approved by the Committee who made the application, and was the more readily acquiesced in by the writer, as the Discourse contains a discussion of just those topics which he regarded as most appropriate, and which he preferred to have associated with that most interesting anniversary.

SERMON.



Revelation, xxi. 5.

AND HE THAT SAT UPON THE THRONE SAID, BEHOLD, I MAKE ALL
THINGS NEW.

THE history of the world is the history of human nature in ruins. No state of society, which corresponds with the capacity of enjoyment possessed by man, or with his conceptions and desires, has been permanent and universal. Small portions only of the human family have, at the same time, enjoyed a state of society in any considerable degree desirable; while much the greatest part of mankind have, in all ages, endured the evils of barbarism and despotism.

It is equally manifest, that this unhappy condition of our race has not been the result of physical necessity, but of moral causes. The earth is as capable of sustaining a happy, as a miserable population; and it is the perversion of her resources and of the human faculties, which has made the misery of man so great. The human intellect has given proof of vigor and ingenuity sufficient to bless the world;

and powerful efforts have been made in every age, by afflicted humanity, to surmount this downward bias, and rise to permanent enjoyment. Egypt, in her monumental ruins, affords evidence of a high state of the arts. In Greece, a vigorous intellect and favoring clime thrust up from the dead level around her, a state of society comparatively cultivated and happy ; but the sun of her prosperity blazed upon surrounding darkness, to set in a night of ages. Rome fought her way to dominion and civilization, and furnished specimens of mental vigor and finished culture ; but the superstructure of her greatness was reared by the plunder of a devastated world. Commerce, which gave to cities a temporary eminence, elevated but a little the moral condition of the multitude ; and science, which was restored to modern Europe at the Reformation, and commerce and the arts, which have followed in her train, have not, to this day, disenthralled the nations.

From these experiments so long and so hopelessly made, it appears, that, in the conflict between the heart and the intellect of man, victory has always declared on the side of the heart ; which has led many to conclude, that the condition of man, in respect to any universal abiding melioration, is hopeless. The text throws light upon this dark destiny of our race. It is a voice from heaven announcing the approach of help from above. “ He that sitteth upon the throne saith, behold I make all things new.”

The renovation here announced, is a moral renovation which shall change the character and condition of men. It will not be partial in its influence, like the sun shining through clouds on favored spots; but co-extensive with the ruin. Nor shall its results be national glory which gilds only the palace, and cheers only the dwellings of the noble. It shall bring down the mountains, and exalt the valleys; it shall send liberty and equality to all the dwellings of men. Nor shall it stop at the fire-side, or exhaust its blessings in temporal mercies; it shall enter the hidden man of the heart, and there destroy the power which has blasted human hopes, and baffled human efforts. Nor will the change be transient; it is the last dispensation of heaven for the relief of this miserable world, and shall bring glory to God in the highest, and upon earth peace, and good will to men.

Many have doubted whether such a renovation of the world will ever be accomplished; but, He that sat upon the throne, said, 'it is done;'—i. e. it is as certain as if it had come to pass.

I shall submit to your consideration, at this time, some of the reasons which justify the hope, that this nation has been raised up by Providence to exert an efficient instrumentality in this work of moral renovation.

I observe then, that, for the accomplishment of this renovation, great changes are required in the civil and religious condition of nations.

1. The monopoly of the soil must be abolished. Hitherto the majority of mankind who have tilled the earth, have been slaves or tenants. The soil has been owned by kings, and military chieftains, and nobles, and by them rented to landlords, and, by these, to still smaller dealers, and by these again, it has been divided and subdivided, until the majority, who paid the rent, have sustained in the sweat of their brow, not only their own families, but three or four orders of society above them; while they themselves have been crushed beneath the weight, and have lived on the borders of starvation; the sickness of a week, and often of a single day, rendering them paupers.

This same monopoly of the soil has sent another large class of the community into manufacturing establishments, to wear out their days in ignorance and hopeless poverty; and another to the camp and navy, where honor and wealth await the few, and ignorance, and an early grave, the many.

The consequence of excluding such numbers from the possession and healthful cultivation of the soil, has been ignorance, improvidence, reckless indifference, turbulence, and crime. Tortured by their oppressions, and unrestrained by moral principle, they have been prepared for desperate deeds. Such a state of society cannot be made happy: the evil is radical, and can only be remedied by giving a new direction to the physical, moral, and intellectual energies of men. We might as well band with iron the

trees of the forest, and expect their expansion ; or throw upon them in stinted measure, the light and the rain of heaven, and expect their luxuriant growth, as to cramp the human mind by unequal institutions, and expect the developement of its resources, in a happy state of society. Room for action must be afforded, and light must be poured upon the understanding, and motive pressed upon the heart. Man must be unshackled and stimulated. But to accomplish this, *the earth must be owned by those who till it.* This will give action to industry, vigor to the body, and tone to the mind ; and, by the attendant blessing of heaven, religion to the heart. From agriculture stimulated by personal rights, will result commerce, science, arts, liberty, and independence.

The attraction of gravity is the great principle of motion in the material world ; and the possession of the earth in fee simple by the cultivator, is the great principle of action in the moral world. Nearly all the political evils which have afflicted mankind, have resulted from the unrighteous monopoly of the earth ; and the predicted renovation can never be accomplished, until, to some extent, this monopoly has passed away, and the earth is extensively tilled by the independent owners of the soil.

2. To effect the moral renovation of the world, a change is required in the prevailing forms of government.

The monopoly of power must be superseded by the suffrages of freemen. While the great body of

the people are excluded from all voice and influence in legislation, it is impossible to constitute a state of society such as the faculties of man allow, and the word of God predicts. While the few govern without responsibility, they will seek their own elevation and depress the multitude. To elevate society, and bring out the human energies in a well ordered state of things, the mass of mankind must be enlightened and qualified for self government, and must yield obedience to delegated power.

3. Before the moral renovation of the world can be achieved, the rights of conscience must, also, be restored to man.

Few of the millions that have peopled the earth have been qualified by knowledge, or permitted by the governments under which they lived, to read the Bible and judge for themselves. The nominal religions of this world have been supported by governments, who, of course, have prescribed the creed, and modelled the worship, and controlled the priesthood. From such a state of things, what better results could be expected, than that ambitious men should be exalted to the sacred office, while religion itself was despised and persecuted? Governments and ecclesiastics, then, must cease to dictate what men shall believe, and in what manner they shall worship God. The Church must be emancipated from worldly dominion, and enjoy that liberty wherewith Jesus Christ has made her free.

Is it to be expected that kingly governments shall

cease, and the republican form become universal? I shall not stop now to discuss this question. I would only suggest the inquiry, whether monarchical governments can be sustained without a nobility and an established religion; and whether these privileged orders can exist without that monopoly of the soil, and of political influence, and of the rights of conscience, which are destructive to a religious and happy state of society. That governments will change their name, or all their ancient forms, I will not say. But that they will, under some form, become so far popular in their spirit, as that the political power shall be in the hands of the people, cannot be doubted.

It has been contended, that christianity cannot exist in this world without the aid of religious establishments. But, with more truth it might be said, that, from the beginning to this day, it has existed in spite of them. It took possession of the Roman Empire in the face of a formidable establishment of false religion, and has survived the deadly embrace of establishments nominally christian, and now, bursting from their alliance, finds in them the most bitter opposition to evangelical doctrine and vital godliness.

To accomplish these changes in the civil and religious condition of the world, revolutions and convulsions are doubtless indispensable. The usurpation of the soil will not be relinquished spontaneously, nor the chains knocked off from the body

and the mind of man, by the hands which for ages have been employed to rivet them. He that sitteth upon the throne must overturn and overturn, before his rights and the rights of man will be restored. Revolutions of course are predicted, such as shall veil the sun, and turn the moon into blood, and shake the earth with the violence of nation dashing against nation;—until every despotic government shall be thrown down, and chaos resume its pristine reign; until the spirit of God shall move again upon the face of the deep, and bring out a new creation. The day of vengeance is no doubt begun, and will no doubt continue, until He that sitteth upon the throne shall have made all things new.

But to the perfection of this work a great example is required, of which the world may take knowledge; and which shall inspire hope, and rouse and concentrate the energies of man. But where should such an experiment be made? Africa required for herself the commiseration of the world, and in Europe and Asia, it would have required ages to dig up the foundations of despotism, and remove the rubbish, to prepare the way for such a state of society as we have described: this too must have been done in opposition to proscription and organized resistance. There was also such a mass of uninformed mind, accustomed to crouch under burdens, and so much was required to prepare it for civil liberty, that little hope remained that the old world, undirected, and unstimulated by example, would

ever disenthral itself. Some nation, itself free, was needed, to blow the trumpet and hold up the light. But in England, though she enjoyed to some extent the blessings of civil liberty, there was so great a monopoly of the soil and of power, and so much overturning feared and needed, that it was only in stinted measures, and with circumspect policy, that she could deal out her sympathy and hold up her light. A more vigorous ally to liberty was needed, which should with a fearless heart and powerful hand, push on the work. But where could such a nation be found? It must be created, for it had no existence upon the earth. Look now at the history of our Fathers and behold what God hath wrought. They were such a race of men as never before laid the foundations of an empire; athletic, intelligent and pious. But how should this portion of a nation's population be uprooted and driven into exile? They were not permitted to remain at home. In that age of darkness, and land of bondage, they had formed some just conceptions of civil and religious liberty; and would fain have modified the civil government and the church of God according to the Gospel. But the reformation from popery, superintended by government, and regulated by policy, stopped short of what the pious expected and desired. The Puritans could not in all things conform, and were not permitted to dissent; and thus they were driven into exile, and compelled to lay the foundations of a new empire. And now, behold their

institutions ; such as the world needs, and, attended as they have been by the power of God, able to enlighten and renovate the world. They recognize the equal rights of man—they give the soil to the cultivator, and self government and the rights of conscience to the people. They enlighten the intellect, and form the conscience, and bring the entire influence of the divine government to bear upon the heart. It was the great object of our Fathers to govern men by the fear of the Lord ; to exhibit the precepts, apply the motives, and realize the dispositions, which the word of God inculcates and his Spirit inspires ; to imbue families, and schools, and towns, and states, with the wisdom from above. They had no projects of human device—no theories of untried efficacy. They hung all their hopes of civil and religious prosperity upon the word of God, and the efficacy of his Spirit. Nor was theirs the presumptuous hope of grace without works. It was by training men for self government, that they expected to make free men ; and by becoming fellow workers with God, that they expected his aid in forming christians ; while, by intellectual culture, and moral influence, and divine power, they prepared men to enjoy and perpetuate civil liberty.

The law, with sleepless vigilance, watched over the family, the church, and the state ; and a vigorous and united public opinion rendered its execution certain and efficacious. Every family was required to possess a Bible, every district a school, and

every town a pastor. The law protected the sabbath, and sustained the public worship of God, and punished immorality ; and with mild but effectual energy, ruled over all. The great excellence of these institutions is, that they are practical and powerful ; the people are not free in name and form merely, but in deed and in truth. Were all these forms blotted out this day, the people would be free, and other forms of civil freedom would arise. The governments are free governments from the foundation to the top stone, and of such practical efficacy as to make free men. The family, embodying instruction and government, was itself an embryo empire. In the school district, the people were called upon to exercise their own discretion and rights, and in the ecclesiastical society, to rear their place of worship, elect their pastor and provide for his support ; and all under the protection and guidance of law. The towns, in their popular assemblies, discussed their local interests and administered their own concerns. In these, originated the legislature, and from the legislature emanated the courts of justice. In the States, as they are now organized in our nation, all which is local and peculiar, is superintended with a minuteness and efficacy, which no consolidated government could possibly accomplish. The people have only to ascertain from experience what their convenience or interest demands, and their wish becomes a law ; and still, in the national government, there is all

the comprehension of plan, and power of resource, and unity of action, which are required for the highest degree of national energy and prosperity.

It has been doubted, whether a republic so extensive as ours, can be held together and efficiently governed. But where there is this intellectual and moral influence, and the habitual exercise of civil and religious liberty from the family upward ; we see not why a republic may not be extended indefinitely, and still be the strongest, and most effective government in the world.

The history of our nation is indicative of some great design to be accomplished by it. It is a history of perils and deliverances, and of strength ordained out of weakness. The wars with the savage tribes, and with the French, and at last with the English, protracted expense, and toil, and blood, through a period of one hundred and fifty years. No nation, out of such weakness, ever became so strong ; or was guided through such perils to such safety. “If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say ; if it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us : then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us : then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul : then the proud waters had gone over our soul.” These deliverances, the enemy beheld with wonder, and our Fathers with thanksgiving and praise. But, in the whole history of the world,

God has not been accustomed to grant signal interpositions, without ends of corresponding magnitude to be answered by them. Indeed, if it had been the design of heaven to establish a powerful nation, in the full enjoyment of civil and religious liberty, where all the energies of man might find scope and excitement, on purpose to show the world by experiment, of what man is capable; and to shed light on the darkness which should awake the slumbering eye, and rouse the torpid mind, and nerve the palsied arm of millions; where could such an experiment have been made but in this country, and by whom so auspiciously as by our Fathers, and by what means so well adapted to that end, as by their institutions? The course which is now adopted by christians of all denominations, to support and extend, at home and abroad, religious and moral influence; would seem to indicate the purpose of God to render this nation, extensively, the almoners of his mercy to this world.

For two hundred years, the religious institutions of our land were secured by law. But as our numbers increased, and liberty of conscience resulted in many denominations of christians, it became impossible to secure by law the universal application of religious and moral influence. And yet, without this mighty energy the whole system must fail; for physical power, without religious and moral influence, will not avail to sustain the institutions of civil liberty. We might as well rely on the harvests

which our Fathers reared for bread, as to rely on the external forms of liberty which they established, without the application of that vital energy, by which the body politic was animated and moved. But, at the very time when the civil law had become impotent for the support of religion and the prevention of immoralities, God began to pour out his Spirit upon the churches; and voluntary associations of christians were raised up to apply and extend that influence, which the law could no longer apply. And now we are blessed with societies to aid in the support of the Gospel at home, to extend it to the new settlements, and through the earth. We have Bible societies, and Tract societies, and associations of individuals, who make it their business to see that every family has a Bible, and every church a pastor, and every child a catechism. And to these have succeeded Education societies, that our nation may not outgrow the means of religious instruction. And while these means of moral culture are supplied, this great nation from her eminence, begins to look abroad with compassion upon a world sitting in darkness; and to put forth her mighty arm to disenthral the nations, and elevate the family of man. Let it be remembered also, that the means now relied on, are precisely those which our Fathers applied, and which have secured our prosperity. And when we contemplate the unexampled resources of this country in men, soil, climate, seacoast, rivers, lakes, canals, agriculture, commerce, arts and

wealth, and all in connexion with the influence of republican and religious institutions ; is it too much to be hoped that God will accept our powerful instrumentality, and make it effectual for the renovation of the world ?

The revivals of religion which prevail in our land among christians of all denominations, furnish cheering evidence of the presence of evangelical doctrine, and of the power of that Spirit by which the truth is to be made efficacious in the salvation of mankind. These revivals are distinguished by their continuance through a period of thirty years ; by their extent, pervading the nation ; by their increasing frequency in the same places ; by their rapidity and power, often changing, in a few weeks, the character of towns and cities, and even of large districts of country. An earnest of that glorious time when a nation shall be born in a day, they purify our literary institutions, and multiply pastors and missionaries to cheer our own land, and enlighten distant nations. They are without a parallel in the history of the world and are constituting an era of moral power entirely new. Already the churches look chiefly to them for their members and pastors, and for that power upon public opinion, which retards declension, and gives energy to law and voluntary support to religious institutions.

These revivals then, falling in with all these antecedent indications, seem to declare the purpose of

God to employ this nation in the glorious work of renovating the earth.

If we look at our missionaries abroad, and witness the smiles of heaven upon their efforts, our confidence, that it is the purpose of God to render our nation a blessing to the world, will be increased. In talents, and piety, and learning, and doctrine, and civil policy, they are the legitimate descendants of the Puritans. Every where they command high respect, and have been distinguished by their judicious and successful efforts. In Ceylon, and Hawaii, and among the natives of this country, they are fast supplanting idolatry by christian institutions. Revivals of religion cheer and bless them ; and churches, and all the elements of christian civilization are multiplying around them.

Let this nation go on, then, and multiply its millions and its resources, and bring the whole under the influence of our civil and religious institutions, and with the energies of its concentrated benevolence send out evangelical instruction ; and who can calculate what our blessed instrumentality shall have accomplished, when He who sitteth upon the throne shall have made all things new.

If Swartz, and Buchanan, and Vanderkemp, and Carey, and Martyn, and Brainerd, could, each alone, accomplish so much ; what may not be expected from the energies of such a nation as this ? Fifty such men as Paul the Apostle, unaided by the resources of systematic benevolence, might evangelize

the world. What then may not be accomplished by a nation of freemen, destined in little more than half a century to number its fifty millions ?

If we consider also our friendly relations with the South American States, and the close imitation they are disposed to make of our civil and literary institutions, who can doubt that the spark which our Forefathers struck will yet enlighten this entire continent ? But when the light of such a hemisphere shall go up to heaven, it will throw its beams beyond the waves—it will shine into the darkness there, and be comprehended ; it will awaken desire, and hope, and effort, and produce revolutions and overturnings, until the world is free.

From our revolutionary struggle, proceeded the revolution in France, and all which has followed in Naples, Portugal, Spain, and Greece ; and though the bolt of every chain has been again driven, they can no more hold the heaving mass, than the chains of Xerxes could hold the Hellespont vexed with storms. Floods have been poured upon the rising flame, but they can no more extinguish it than they can extinguish the fires of *Ætna*. Still it burns, and still the mountain heaves and murmurs ; and soon it will explode with voices, and thunderings, and great earthquakes. Then will the trumpet of jubilee sound, and earth's debased millions will leap from the dust, and shake off their chains, and cry, “ Hosanna to the Son of David.”

Before we conclude this discourse, let us attend to some of the duties to which we are called by our high providential destiny.

And most evidently we are called upon

1. To cherish with high veneration and grateful recollections the memory of our Fathers. Both the ties of nature, and the dictates of policy demand this. And surely no nation ever had less occasion to be ashamed of its ancestry, or more occasion for gratulation in that respect; for while most nations trace their origin to barbarians, the foundations of our nation were laid by civilized men—by christians. Many of them were men of distinguished families, of powerful talents, of great learning, of pre-eminent wisdom, of decision of character, and of most inflexible integrity. And yet, not unfrequently, they have been treated as if they had no virtues; while their sins and follies have been sedulously immortalized in satirical anecdote. The influence of such treatment of the Fathers is too manifest. It creates and lets loose upon their invaluable institutions the Vandal spirit of innovation and overthrow; for after the memory of our Fathers shall have been rendered contemptible, who will appreciate and sustain their institutions? ‘THE MEMORY OF OUR FATHERS,’ should be the watchword of liberty throughout the land;—for, imperfect as they were, the world before, had not seen their like, nor will it soon, we fear, behold their like again. Such models of moral excellence, such apostles of civil and religious liberty,

such shades of the illustrious dead, looking down upon their descendants with approbation or reproof, according as they follow or depart from the good way, constitute a censorship inferior only to the eye of God;—and to ridicule them is national suicide.

The doctrines of our Fathers have been represented as gloomy, superstitious, severe, irrational, and of a licentious tendency. But when other systems shall have produced a piety as devoted, a morality as pure, a patriotism as disinterested, and a state of society as happy, as have prevailed where their doctrines have been most prevalent; it may be in season to seek an answer to this objection. The same doctrines have been charged with inspiring a spirit of dogmatism and religious domination. But in all the struggles of man with despotic power for civil liberty, the doctrines of our Fathers have been found, usually, if not always, on the side of liberty, as their opposite have been usually found in the ranks of arbitrary power.

The persecutions instituted by our Fathers, have been the occasion of ceaseless obloquy upon their fair fame. And truly it was a fault of no ordinary magnitude that, sometimes, they did persecute. But let him, whose ancestors were not ten times more guilty, cast the first stone, and the ashes of our Fathers will no more be disturbed. Theirs was the fault of the age, and it will be easy to show, that no class of men had at that time approximated so nearly

to just apprehensions of religious liberty; and that it is to them that the world is now indebted for the more just and definite views which prevail. More exclamation and invective has been called forth by the few instances of persecution by the Fathers of New England, than by all the fires which lighted the realm of Old England for centuries, and drove into exile, thousands of her most valuable subjects.

The superstition and bigotry of our Fathers are themes, on which some of their descendants, themselves far enough from superstition, if not from bigotry, have delighted to dwell. But when we look abroad, and behold the condition of the world compared with the condition of New England, we may justly exclaim, ‘Would to God that the ancestors of all the nations had been not only almost, but altogether such bigots as our Fathers were!’

Their strictness in the family, and in church and state, has been complained of as too rigid. But they were laying the foundations of a nation, and applying a moral power, whose impulse should extend through ages; and who that beholds the rapid and appalling moral relaxation of the present day, can believe that they put the system in motion with too much rigor? In proportion as their discipline had been less strict, our present condition had been more alarming, and our future prospects more desperate.

Our Fathers have been ridiculed as an uncouth and uncourtly generation. And it must be ad-

mitted, that they were not as expert in the graces of dress, and the etiquette of the drawing room, as some of their descendants. But neither could these have felled the trees, nor guided the plough, nor spread the sail which they did ; nor braved the dangers of Indian warfare, nor displayed the wisdom in counsel which our Fathers displayed. And, had none stepped upon the Plymouth rock but such effeminate critics as these, the poor natives never would have mourned their wilderness lost, but would have brushed them from the land, as they would brush the puny insect from their face ; the Pequods would have slept in safety that night which was their last, and no intrepid MASON had hung upon their rear, and driven into exile the panic-struck fugitives.

2. We are called upon to cherish and extend our religious institutions.

Religion was the power on which our Fathers relied—the power which has made us what we are, and which must guarantee the perpetuity of our blessings. Every other influence has been tried and has failed, while this has been tried with ample promise of success. The application of religious and moral influence is, therefore, the great duty to which, as a nation, we are called. On this influence depends our rise or fall—our glorious immortality or our hasty dissolution. Every thing but this, may be safely left to the operation of existing causes. Ambition will secure the interests of education and sci-

ence ; the love of gold will push agriculture and commerce and arts ; and the pride of liberty will arm the nation, and render it invincible. All these things, the nations who have preceded us have been able to do. But there was a sickness of the heart which they could neither endure nor heal ;—and with this same disease this nation is sick, and intellectual culture, and civil liberty, and national wealth will not heal it. There is but one remedy ; and that is, the preaching of the Gospel, with the Holy Ghost sent down from on high. But to render the Gospel effectual, the religious education of the family, and the moral culture of our schools and colleges must be secured ; and the Sabbath must be rescued from profanation. The Sabbath is the great organ of the divine administration—the only means provided by God to give ubiquity and power to his moral government. The intellectual culture of a nation requires schools and literary institutions ; and that the subjects of instruction shall be brought under their influence. Let the fascinations of pleasure, or the demands of labor withdraw the children and youth from the power of intellectual culture, and ignorance will ensue ; in like manner, let the stream of pleasure and of worldly cares bear away the population of the land from the house of God, and from the duties of devotion on the Sabbath ; and ignorance of God and of his laws will with equal certainty ensue ; irreligion will prevail, and immorality and dissoluteness, to an extent utterly inconsistent

with the permanence of republican institutions. Europe can never enjoy civil liberty until she shall do more homage to the Sabbath of God ; and we shall enjoy it but a short space after we have ceased to render to God his right in that sacred day : for, all the millions who violate the Sabbath, will draw themselves from the moral power of the divine government, deprive their families of a religious education, and abandon them to the power of their evil hearts and their own bad example. In the mean time, the secular interests of men are so indissolubly connected, that the stream of business, put in motion by the wicked on the Sabbath day, not only pains the eye of the virtuous, but, as it deepens, and roars, and rolls onward its turbid waters, it draws into itself by the associations of business, a large, and still larger portion of the community ; until it spreads unresisted over the land, obliterates the government of God, and substitutes covetousness and pleasure and dissoluteness, instead of godliness and the morality of the Gospel.

The present, undoubtedly, is the generation which is to decide the fate of this great empire, by deciding whether the Sabbath of God shall be preserved or blotted out ; for the temptations of the seaboard and of canals are immense, and are increasing most fearfully ; and, unless public sentiment and law shall make a stand soon, we may as well attempt to stop the rolling of the ocean, or the current of our mighty rivers.

The universal extension of our religious institutions, is the only means of reconciling our unparalleled prosperity with national purity and immortality. Without the preserving power of religious and moral influence, our rapid increase in wealth will be the occasion of our swift destruction. The rank vegetation of unsanctified enterprise, thrown into one vast reservoir of putrefaction, will send up over the land desolation and death. No nation will be so short lived as ours, unless we can balance the temptations of our prosperity by moral power. Our sun has moved onward from his morning to his meridian, with a rapidity and glory which has amazed the world. But, unless we can extend the power of religious institutions through the land, dark clouds will soon obscure his glory, and his descent to a night of ages will be more rapid than his rising.

When we were colonies, or unallied states, the law could make provision for the creation and application of moral power. The law could compel men to desist from secular employments and vain amusements on the Sabbath. The law could compel men to support the Gospel, and attend the public worship of God—and civil officers could see to it, that every town should in due time settle a minister, and that every family should possess a Bible and a catechism. But these means of moral influence the law can no longer apply; and there is no substitute but the voluntary energies of the nation itself, exerted by

associations for charitable contributions and efforts, patronized by all denominations of christians, and by all classes of the community who love their country. We may boast of our civil and religious liberty, but they are the fruit of other men's labors into which we have entered ; and the effect of institutions, whose impulse has been felt long after the hands that reared them have mouldered in the grave. This impulse, too, is fast failing, and becoming yearly, more and more disproportioned to the mass that is to be moved by it. Our religious institutions must be invigorated, or we are undone. They must move onward with our flowing emigration to the Mississippi—must pass the Rocky Mountains, and pour their waters of life into the ocean beyond ; and from the north to the south, they must bear salvation on their waves. In this way the nation can save itself : but unless it can be roused to this mighty work, it will, like the man among the tombs, become exceeding fierce, and turn upon itself its infuriated energies, and pour out its own life blood by self-inflicted wounds.*

* In many of the discourses and orations which commemorate the deeds of our Fathers, their character, as the apostles of civil liberty, is especially eulogised ; while their doctrines, their piety, their church order, and the other peculiarities of their religious institutions, are passed off with cold commendations, or perhaps palliated and excused as the defects of the age. But no historical fact is more completely established, than that religion was the chief end for which our Fathers sought this wilderness, and that their peculiar doctrines and views of experimental religion and church order were dearer to them than life ; and that it is these, which, for more than one hundred and fifty years, applied the religious and moral influence under which New England was formed, and which has made her what she is. Let

3. We are called upon to give a quickened, and extended impulse to our charitable institutions.

These are the providential substitutes for those legal provisions of our Fathers, which are now inapplicable by change of circumstances. In these the nation must enrol itself spontaneously, and the spirit of the Puritans be revived, for the preservation of their institutions. And now is the time. With our growing prosperity, the fascinations of pleasure increase, and the means and temptations to voluptuousness. Now, unless the salt of the earth contained in christian institutions can be diffused through the land, the mass will putrify. The tide of business and pleasure, bursting from our cities, rolling on our seacoast, and flowing in our canals, will soon sweep away the Sabbath, unless a vigorous public sentiment, by the preaching of the Gospel,

the children of the Pilgrims never forget this ; and let the eulogists of their patriotism cease to spread before our eyes such a glitter of style and eloquence, as shall place their civil exploits in the fore-ground, and throw their doctrines, and church order, and eminent piety into the back-ground. The religious and moral causes which have blessed New England, and are now rolling the tide of salvation to the West, can never be concealed ; and can never be, successfully, misrepresented. As well may the Newtonian philosophy be concealed, as the system of our Fathers—it is out, and known, and read of all men. We are the more called upon to regard this subject with deep interest, from the fact, that the attempt is now openly made to destroy the religious and moral energy of the churches which our Fathers planted, by perverting their doctrines, changing the qualifications for membership, and taking from them their immemorial and sacred rights in the election of their own pastors, in the enjoyment of which, they have exerted so powerful and salutary an influence, and in the destruction of which, their moral power must fail. We have no apprehension that the children of the Pilgrims, when the subject shall be fairly understood, will, by adding injustice to ingratitude, sanction such innovations.

and the power of the Spirit, can be arrayed for its preservation. Let the Sabbath schools, then, and Bible classes of our land be multiplied; and let societies for domestic missions rise in every State and district, and collect and pour out the energies of the nation for its moral preservation; while Bibles, and pastors, and teachers are multiplied, till the knowledge of the Lord covers the land, and his saving health is extended to all the people.

4. All christian denominations are called upon to co-operate for the preservation of religion.

It is idle to expect, and folly to desire, the amalgamation of all denominations into one. The papal effort at universal comprehension has shown, what a vast, unstimulated, stagnant uniformity will accomplish; and God, no doubt, has permitted some varying winds of opinion to move upon the face of the deep, to maintain motion, purity and life. We may say, however, that jealousies and ambitious collisions between religious denominations should give place to christian courtesy, and the magnanimity of an hearty co-operation for the glory of God, and the salvation of the world. It is in vain to expect, and it would be sinful to desire the extinction of any one denomination of real christians. There is room for all—and work for all; and there is ample reason why each should hail the other as an auxiliary in the work of the Lord. Religious principle must be applied throughout the nation, and no *one* denomination *can* do it. The work demands the cease-

less action of each in its own peculiar way, and the magnanimous co-operation of all, for the preservation of the great principles of our common christianity. Nor will such concert of action be in vain. It will form, extensively, a public opinion which shall accord with the morality of the Gospel—whose sanctions, expressed in the votes of virtuous freemen, shall elevate to influence and power, men of pure morality, and consign the irreligious, immoral, and dissolute, to merited contempt:—a law which the wicked cannot repeal, and whose penalty they cannot evade. All denominations, united, and directing their suffrages to that end, can check the violation of the Sabbath; can arrest the contagion of intemperance; can punish duellists in high places, who with shameless notoriety, set at defiance the laws of God and their country, bringing upon us the contempt of the world, and the just judgments of heaven.

5. In this great work of national preservation and universal good will, our civil rulers are, particularly, called upon to co-operate; not, as once, in convoking synods, and approving and recommending creeds; and not in coercing by law, attendance upon public worship, or the support of religious institutions. The day is gone by, in which such interposition is required, or can avail. The God of our Fathers, having given to us a practical illustration of the efficacy of religious institutions, sustained by law during our minority;—now, in our manhood, puts the price into our hands to be

preserved or abandoned spontaneously on our own responsibility. Nor are the church and the state to be so identified, as that the qualifications for civil office must be the same as for membership in that kingdom which is not of this world. Our civil rulers owe to God and their country now, the same illustrious piety, the same estimation of the doctrines of God's Word, the same attendance upon the ordinances of the Gospel and co-operation for their support, and the same strict and pure morality, which rendered the civil Fathers of our land so illustrious in their character, and so benign in the power of their example upon their own and upon other generations. The example of men in official stations, is among the most powerful moral causes which afflict or bless a community. If it be good, it descends with cheering power, like the gentle rain upon the earth; but if it be evil, from its "bad eminence," it comes down upon the community like the mountain torrent, sweeping away landmarks. The righteous mourn under their sway, and the wicked creep from their hiding places, and walk on every side, setting their mouth against the heavens, and their foot upon all that is sacred and holy. The time has come, when the experiment is to be made, whether the world is to be emancipated and rendered happy, or whether the whole creation shall groan and travail together in pain until the final consummation: and the example of the rulers of our nation will throw decisive weights into the scales, for or against the

world's last hope. If they pour contempt upon the Bible, its doctrines and institutions—if they take in vain the name of God, or profane wantonly his holy day—if they concentrate in the capitol, and spread abroad through the land, the infection of their bad example ; the whole nation will feel it, and die under it, unless the indignant virtue of an insulted community shall throw off the body of death, and, by a well directed suffrage, call to its aid men of talents and of pure morality.

6. To perpetuate our national prosperity and hold up our light to the world, our citizens must banish party spirit, and regulate the suffrage of the nation with reference to the preservation of its moral purity.

The temporary collisions of local interest and of ambition can never be excluded from such a nation as this, and are not to be feared. It is those deep-rooted and permanent divisions, extending through the land, rousing the feelings and arraying the energies of one part of the nation in keen collision with the other, and perpetuating prejudice and strife from generation to generation, which threaten the existence of our republican institutions. Through one such fiery trial we have passed undestroyed, though by no means uninjured ; and no patriot of the present generation would willingly, I trust, behold our country placed in such jeopardy again. Despotic governments may pass in safety through popular commotions such as would shake down the pillars

of a republic. The mobs of England, which, in the presence of the military power, are but the gambols of a kid within the scope of the lion's paw, would be, in this country, as the letting out of waters. There is no possibility of freedom in this bad world, without so much intelligence and moral principle among the people, as shall create an efficient public sentiment in favor of law and good order. But party spirit prostrates every thing within the sphere of its commotion, which is venerable and sacred. It directs the attention of the people from their own common interests, to the means of gaining objects to which prejudice and passion may direct them; and the attention of the government from the public good, to the means of its own perpetuity and ascendancy. It renders a wise and comprehensive policy impossible; for party spirit has no magnanimity, no conscience, no consistency, to withhold it from resisting as readily what is wise as what is unwise; and its victories are too transient to admit of much prospective wisdom. It is eminently hostile to the laws which watch over the morals of the nation;—for who will execute them, when partizans on both sides fear that they may feel the consequences of fidelity at the next election. Too often, from the nearly balanced state of parties, the most worthless portion of the community actually hold the sway in the elections, even in a state of society comparatively virtuous,—occasioning impunity in the violation of law, and clothing with political consequence,

and too often surrounding with adulation, men whom our Fathers would have expelled from good society. It tends to destroy in society, all distinctions of moral character, talent, and learning, as qualifications for office ; while it reconciles the people, upon the plea of necessity, to such preposterous sacrifices of conscience and common sense, as they would never consent to, unstimulated by its madness. Indeed, in all but the name, it rears beneath the forms of freedom, a real and most terrific despotism. For every party has a soul,—some master spirit, who, without a crown and a sceptre, governs with absolute sway. He is surrounded by a nobility, each of whom is commissioned to govern the public opinion within his sphere, and bring his retainers to the polls, to subserve implicitly the interests of the king and of the aristocracy. It needs only to kindle the watch-fire, and every clansman is at his post ; and argument might as well avail against bullets in the day of battle, as in these determined contests of parties. There is no remedy for this state of things, but that intelligence which qualifies the people to understand their rights, interests, and duties ; and that calmness of feeling to which the public mind, undisturbed by partizan efforts, will not fail to come ; and that deep conviction of the importance of moral purity, which shall turn the expectations of the people from party men and party measures, to the application of moral power, by the institutions of religion, and the interposition of the Holy Spirit.

Multitudes of christians and patriots have long since abandoned party politics, and, not knowing what to do, have almost abandoned the exercise of suffrage. This is wrong. An enlightened and virtuous suffrage may, by system and concentration, become one of the most powerful means of promoting national purity and morality ;—as the suffrage from which the influence of conscience is withdrawn, cannot fail to be disastrous. While then, as freemen, we remove one temptation to hypocrisy, by dispensing with a profession of religion as a qualification for office, and exclude all occasions of jealousy, by bestowing our votes without reference to christian denomination ; let all christians and all patriots exercise their rights as electors, with an inflexible regard to moral character ; and let the duellist and the sabbath-breaker, and the drunkard, and the licentious, find the doors of honor barred, and the heights of ambition defended against them by hosts of determined freemen, and the moral effect will be great. The discrimination by suffrage will exert upon the youth of our country a most salutary restraint, and upon dissolute and ambitious men a powerful reforming influence. Let every freeman, then, who would perpetuate the liberty and happiness of his country, and transmit to his descendants of distant generations the precious legacy which our Fathers have sent down to us, inquire concerning the candidate for whom he is solicited to vote,—is he an enemy to the Bible, or

to the doctrines and institutions of the Gospel ;—is he a duellist, or an intemperate man, or a sabbath-breaker, or dissolute, or dishonest ?—and if, in any of these respects, he be disqualified, let him withhold his vote, and give it to a better man—and it will go far to retrieve the declensions which have taken place, and to render righteousness and peace the stability of our times.

And now, what shall we say to these things? Are they the dreams of a fervid imagination, or are they the words of truth and soberness? Will our blessings be perpetuated, or shall ours be added to the ruined republics that have been? Are we assembled to day to bestow funeral honors upon our departed glory, or with united counsels and hearts to strengthen the things that remain? Weak indeed must be the faith that wavers now, and sinks amid waves less terrific, and prospects more cheering, than any which our Fathers ever saw. Were it dark even as midnight, and did the waves run high, and dash loud and angry around us, still our faith would not be dismayed: still with our Fathers we would believe, “*Qui transtulit sustinet;*” and still would we rejoice in the annunciation of Him that sitteth upon the throne, “Behold I create all things new.” Our anchor will not fail—our bark will not founder; for the means of preservation *will* be used, and the God of our Fathers *will* make them effectual. The memory of our Fathers is becoming

more precious. Their institutions are commanding a higher estimation. Deeper convictions are felt of the importance of religion ; and more extended and vigorous exertions are made to balance the temptations of prosperity by moral power. Christians are ceasing from their jealousies, and concentrating their energies. The nation is moved, and beginning to enrol itself in various forms of charitable association, for the extension of religion at home and abroad. Philosophers and patriots, statesmen and men of wealth, are beginning to feel that it is righteousness only which exalteth a nation ; and to give to the work of moral renovation their arguments, the power of their example, and the impulse of their charity. And the people, weary of political collision, are disposed at length to build again those institutions which in times of contention, they had either neglected or trodden down. Such an array of moral influence as is now comprehended in the great plan of charitable operations, was never before brought to bear upon the nation. It moves onward, attended by fervent supplications, and followed by glorious and unceasing effusions of the Holy Spirit. The god of this world feels the shock of the onset, and has commenced his retreat ; and Jesus Christ is pressing onward from conquering to conquer ; nor will he turn from his purpose, or cease from his work, until he hath made all things new.

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