

NATIONAL SINS: A CALL TO REPENTANCE.

A SERMON:

PREACHED ON

THE NATIONAL FAST,

August 3, 1849,

IN CUMBERLAND CHURCH, CHARLESTON, S.C.

BY THE
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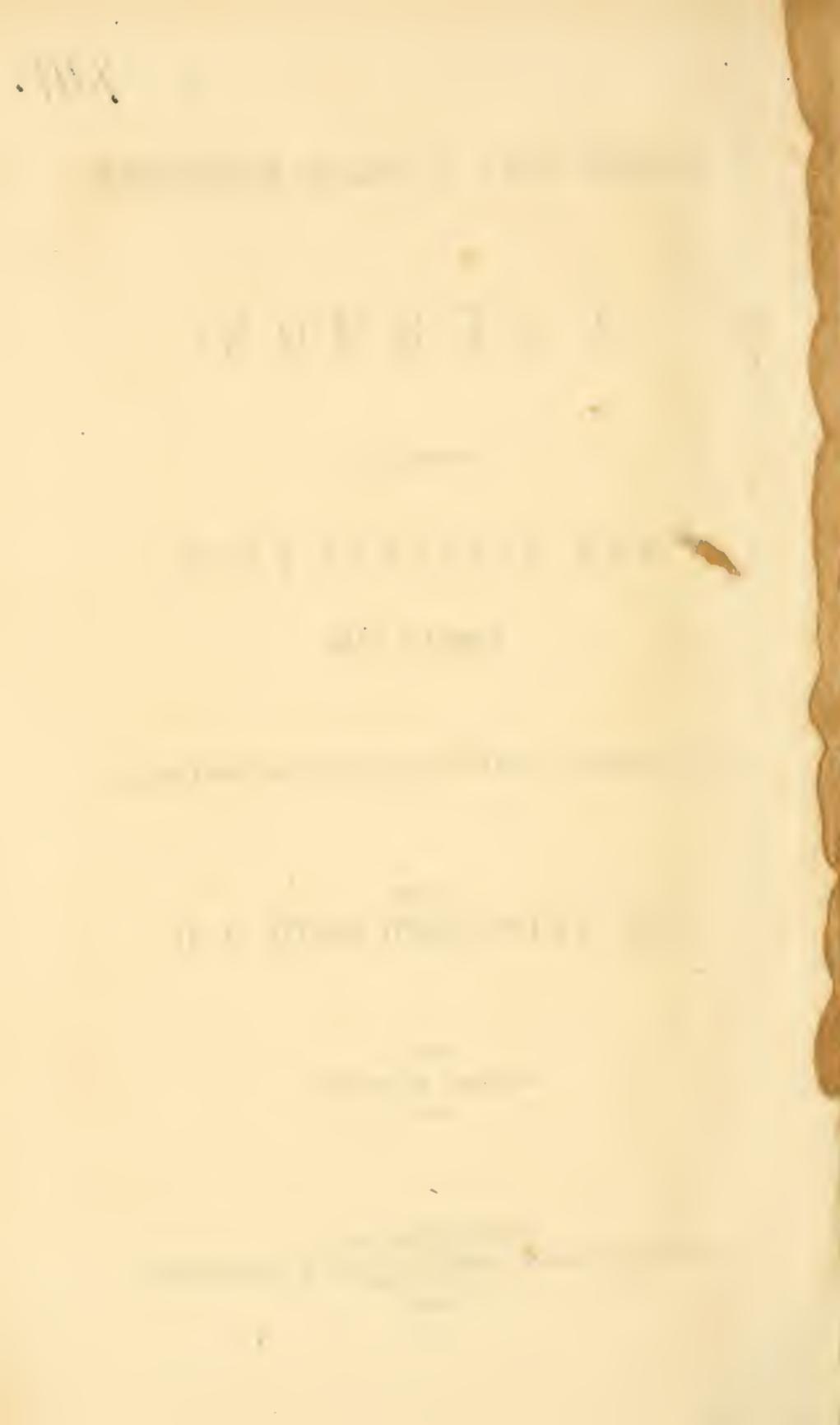
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The desire expressed by many that the following sermon should be published, together with a wish to bear his testimony against the prevailing vices of the times, has induced the author to lay it before the public in its present form.

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SERMON.

- “Therefore also now, saith the Lord, Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning:*
“And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God : for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.”—JOEL, ii. 12, 13.

In obedience to the call of the President of the United States, the American people are this day engaged in a general act of humiliation and prayer. It is appropriate to a Christian nation at all times to acknowledge the divine supremacy. But it is pre-eminently appropriate that they should humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, when his judgments are abroad in the land. And such is the occasion of this day's convocation.

Several months ago, the desolating scourge which has almost depopulated many cities of the Old World, was announced as having again made its appearance on our shores. The startling intelligence was well calculated to strike a panic in every heart; for the memory of its former visitation was yet fresh in the minds of many. With fearful anxiety was its progress watched as it braved the current of the mighty Mississippi, paying its visit of death to the cities and towns upon its banks, and awakening the wild cry of despair upon the bosom of the father of waters. Still onward it swept to the very borders of civilization, and • the great cities of the West groaned beneath the curse.

Even mountain barriers proved no obstruction to its course, and now Eastern cities wail under its stroke. So wide-spread a desolation becomes a national judgment; and the chief magistrate of our country, in accordance with a custom wise in itself, honoured by the practice of all ages, and most salutary in its moral influence, has convoked our people to-day, that we may make humble confession of our sins, and implore that mercy which our necessities require, but which our merits do not deserve.

There are some general principles which deserve our attention, and which are necessary to be borne in mind, that we may be induced to such an act of humiliation and prayer as may be acceptable to God. The first of these is, that such visitations are not accidental or fortuitous, but that they are the interpositions of Providence, the stretching out of the hand of God.

National calamities are sometimes the result of mal-administration, or at any rate they are so intimately connected with secondary causes, that they are not recognized by the multitude as the judgments of heaven; though it pleases God often to employ them as such, and the pious do so regard them. Thus it often happens that countries are involved in war through the ambition and policy of kings, and their subjects become the victims of its fury; yet, the thoughtless thousands reflect not that a superintending providence has permitted this for the chastisement of a people's sins. A great monetary pressure involves commercial embarrassment and general bankruptcy; and the whole blame is laid upon the policy of the government, while men forget that God has been preaching a truth which they will only hear and learn when experience becomes the painful task-master; that riches make to themselves wings and fly away.

But when the breath of the pestilence becomes the

instrument of God—when the angel of death unsheathes his glittering sword and it drinks the blood of thousands—when no local causes can be found for the wide-spread evil—when in the city and in the hamlet, in the east and in the west, all over the land, the same disease prevails, and the people fall before it—when the healing art is baffled, and philosophy stands confounded—then, the irresistible conviction takes hold upon the minds of men, that it is *a visitation of God*—then, the simplest may read as though it were inscribed upon the firmament above them, “Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?” The pestilence is no fortuitous occurrence. It is not subject to the control of man. It seems to be admitted that this dreaded scourge is lodged in the atmosphere we breathe. And in what more signal manner could a judgment from heaven be manifested? Who hath power over the air but God? Who but the Almighty maketh “a way for the lightning of thunder?” And who but He hath power to control the elements and to withhold the rain or the lightning?

Another consideration in immediate connection with the former is this, that the judgments of God thus sent upon nations are corrective and punitive.

In the administration of God, the punishment of individuals may be deferred. He is long-suffering and slow to anger. The adjudication of the last day will sufficiently vindicate the divine justice and truth, and the punishment of the sinner then will be awful indeed. But nations have only a temporary existence, and where a people are forgetful of God—where public virtue is corrupted—where great national sins provoke the divine displeasure, and God hath a controversy with the people of a land, the vindication of his law requires that that people should

suffer, and the vengeance of offended Heaven is poured out upon the sinful community. So, when the wickedness of man waxed great in the earth, and the whole world was corrupt, God brought in a flood upon the world of the ungodly, saving only Noah and his family from the universal deluge. So, when the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah went up before him, and their abominations provoked his wrath, he "turned them into ashes, and condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly." So, Egypt, and Moab, and Edom, and Assyria, and the great cities of Tyre and Sidon, all in their turn were made the subjects of retributive justice. And so Palestina has been dissolved, and until this day the descendants of Abraham realize the displeasure of God in the destruction of their national polity, and are exiles and strangers upon the earth.

And the history of later times is replete with similar illustrations, where the iniquities of cities and kingdoms have been followed by the judgments of God. Among these unhappy France stands prominent, where the reign of Atheism was but the prelude to the reign of terror.

Thus does the Almighty chastise the nations which refuse to acknowledge his supremacy, and vindicate before the world the authority of his throne.

Another consideration which should be well remembered, is, that when under a sense of the divine displeasure a people rightly humble themselves and implore the mercy of God, he accepts their humiliation and repentance, and removes his judgments from them. This feature of the divine government well accords with the nature of God, and with the frailty of man. An illustrious instance of it occurred in the history of the once renowned Nineveh. When the wickedness of its inhabitants had provoked

Jehovah's anger, Jonah was sent to proclaim against them the coming judgment of heaven, and the whole burden of the Prophet's message was, "In forty days Nineveh shall be destroyed." Though in this dread denunciation there was no promise of pardon even on condition of repentance, yet it was implied in the principles of the moral government of God, and the king and the people, alarmed at the warning voice, clothed themselves in sackcloth and ashes and fasted and humbled themselves before Almighty God. And the voice of their prayer was heard on high, and the threatened judgment was, for a time at least, averted.

Often too in the history of the Jewish nation were the threatenings of judgment followed by humiliation and repentance mingled with fastings and prayers, and often were the contrite pitied, and the guilty spared. For "He will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger forever."

This has sometimes been the case with individuals. Thus was it with the proud Nebuchadnezzar, great Babylon's haughty king. When the admonitions of God were despised, and his threatenings disregarded, and the advice of his prophet unheeded—"when his heart was lifted up and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: and he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will." Then proclaimed the monarch, "Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of Heaven, all whose works are truth, and hisways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase."

How full of encouragement is this feature of the divine government! Terrible indeed would be the cloud of judgment if no radiant hues of mercy shone upon its blackness. Deep and dolorous would be the cry of despair, if hope were exiled from the heart of man. But the chastenings of the Lord are not intended for our destruction if we will receive them as they are designed. For God has declared, “I will not contend forever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.” “Therefore also now, saith the Lord, Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.”

Another important consideration is, that when, instead of repentance there is hardness, and the judgments of God are either mocked or resisted, he has still heavier stores of vengeance; and will bring out the magazines of his wrath. So when unhappy Pharaoh resisted the divine command, and hardened his heart against the judgments of God, plague followed plague, and curse succeeded curse, until his own servants expostulated with him on his perverseness saying, “Knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?” And when in the pride and rebellion of his heart he still refused to submit, the wail for the first-born dead went up from every Egyptian habitation. Then followed the closing scene of discomfiture and overthrow, when “Jehovah triumphed gloriously, and the horse and the rider were thrown into the sea.”

And who can ever forget the fate of unhappy Israel, God’s chosen nation? In her melancholy history stands conspicuously recorded, the forbearance and the justice.

the goodness and the severity of God. Often did he expostulate, and long did he wait, till his mercy was magnified above all his name. But when repentance was only followed by backsliding, and the cup of their iniquity was full—when he “looked for judgment, but behold oppression, for righteousness but behold a cry”—then did he take away her hedge, and break down her wall, and lay her waste, and her honour was trodden down in the dust. The abomination of desolation floated over her most holy place, and Zion was ploughed as a field.

And now, my brethren, in view of the principles which have been asserted, and I trust satisfactorily illustrated, let us come to the contemplation of our own past history and present circumstances, and see the necessity we are laid under, to humble ourselves in the dust, to repent, to fast, and to pray, if peradventure God may turn away his anger from us, and in wrath remember mercy.

If there is one feature more worthy than all others to be well remembered in connection with the origin of our nation, it is the sincere and unaffected piety, the deep and ardent religious devotion of our ancestors. They were men of faith. To the eye of reason, to the calculations of a worldly policy, there was little hope for success in the War of the Revolution. No veteran army was ours; nor was our coast lined with fortifications, or guarded by an experienced navy. With an untrained militia, often almost destitute of arms and ammunition, with no resources which constitute the sinews of war, contending against disciplined forces amply supplied, our people came to the struggle for their liberty with scarcely an earthly hope. But their very Declaration of Independence proclaimed to the world the ground of their confidence and hope, they relied upon the justice of their cause, upon the protection of heaven, upon the God of battles. The result justified the wisdom of their

trust, and proved how happy is that people who make the Lord their confidence and shield.

The same humble dependence upon God which characterized them in the field, marked their deliberations in council. It was an interesting incident in the early history of our national deliberations, when, perplexed and embarrassed by conflicting opinions and interests, a wise and venerable man arose, and calling the attention of the assembly to their need of divine aid in such a crisis, proposed by prayer and supplication to ask guidance of heaven in the dark hour. And the needed help was graciously afforded; harmony prevailed in their counsels, and wisdom shone in the result.

In establishing the constitution of this great Republic, it was declared that "no religious test should ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust." Far was it from the framers of that noble instrument, however, by this provision, to exclude religion. But with a just discernment they perceived the baneful effect of all alliances between Church and State; and with such an appreciation as they perhaps of all men living were best qualified to form, of the value of religious liberty, they were resolved to secure its blessings to themselves and their posterity. They cast not off their allegiance to God when driven by a stern necessity they abjured the authority of a king. They renounced not the reasonable obligations of religion, when they spurned the despotism of the hierarchy. They knew full well its inestimable advantage to those who, regardless in great measure of its external trappings, cherished with holy vigilance its quickening spirit. Unlike the misguided republicans of a later day, they discerned the difference between the religion and the form, and while they freed the human mind from superstition, they yielded to Christianity the willing homage of a living faith.

Knowing full well the value of divine revelation they made it the great corner-stone of the Republic, and recognizing charity as worth more than zeal, they left the wide field of religious operation open to all. Heaven-directed men ! who knew how to discriminate between the arrogant assumptions of kingly power, and the just authority of constitutional law ; between the rampant bigotry of an ecclesiastical zealot and the virtue of an humble Christian. It was a sentiment worthy "the Father of his Country," "that no truth was more thoroughly established, than that there exists an indissoluble union between virtue and happiness ;—between duty and advantage ; between the genuine maxims of an honest and magnanimous people, and the solid rewards of public prosperity and felicity ; and that the propitious smiles of heaven could never be expected on a nation that disregarded the eternal rules of order and right, which heaven itself had ordained."

Happy had it been for us if sentiments so exalted had been kept constantly before our eyes, and engraven on the tablets of our hearts. But how far have we departed from the examples of those noble men !

It is appropriate to this occasion that we should duly and solemnly consider and review those sins of our people which have provoked the displeasure of Heaven and brought down upon us the judgments of God. And this we should do, not as partisans or politicians, desirous to throw blame upon those from whom we may differ, but as brethren of one great confederated nation, involved in common in the guilt of national sins, and bearing in common the national affliction.

And as judgment is threatened to begin at the house of God, it may be well to look first into the churches of our land, and see if they have not been derelict to duty and guilty of departure from the single and high end of their constitution.

Placed upon the same level, and secured in the enjoyment of all their rights, they have been called to the discharge of those noble functions they were ordained to perform. To be witnesses of the truth of our holy religion, to proclaim the message of mercy and salvation to men, to win sinners from the pursuit of vice to the paths of virtue, to lift up a warning voice against all immorality, to point out the way by which alone national prosperity and perpetuity could be attained, to minister heavenly consolations to those who suffer, and to animate with celestial hopes the hearts which were otherwise despairing ; these were the legitimate ends of the church's institution, and worthy of her greatest exertions.

But as among the twelve a controversy arose which of them should be greatest, so it is to be feared a spirit of human ambition has sadly corrupted the churches of our day ; and the work which might well have employed the hearts and hands of angels, has been measurably lost sight of in the struggle for human pre-eminence. Instead of the brotherly regard and Christian charity which should have characterized co-workers in a common cause, a narrow jealousy unworthy of the Christian name has too often arrayed them in opposition and strife, the one denouncing the ministrations of another, and each anxious only for its own Shibboleth.

Under the influence of wealth and popular favour, much of the simplicity of early Christianity in this country has given place to a desire for gorgeous externals and imposing forms. But the most splendid habiliments of the dead can never revivify the corpse.

Nor this only. Forgetful of the example of Him whom they call Lord and Master, and whose infinite wisdom was shown when he said, " Render unto Caesar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are

God's ;" there have not been wanting those who have descended into the arena of political strife, and by the introduction of questions of civil polity into ecclesiastical judicatories, have fomented bitterness and wrath ; and some have even been found to desert the nobler offices of the pulpit to become political agitators.* Well might angels weep, if weep they can, over derelictions such as these, wondering that men whom God had called to sweep through loftiest regions of Gospel verities and preach salvation and eternal life to man, could rather choose to mingle in the din and tumult of earthly things.

Well then does it become the Churches on this day to put on sackcloth and humble themselves in the dust, to make acknowledgment of their sins and implore the divine mercy.

In the State as well as in the Church there have been sins to call down upon us the anger of God.

The inordinate desire for wealth, the ambition to be ranked first among the great powers of the earth, the proud and boastful language which we have too often held, are all in strange and striking contrast with the principles and conduct of our republican ancestors. How has the spirit of patriotism been substituted by the spirit of party ? How few are there of the prominent men of our country who can rise above the narrow views of political association, and embrace the comprehensive interests of the whole nation ? How few who are ready to sacrifice the promptings of a towering ambition upon the altar of their country's good ? What scenes have been witnessed upon the floors of our national legislature, which would have shocked the virtue and done violence to the sensibilities of the men who signed the Declaration of Independence, or who formed the federal Constitution ? Nor has even the

*In some places ministers have become Anti-slavery lecturers.

Sabbath been free from desecration! Its early dawn which should have beheld the rulers and legislators of a great and happy people sending up their orisons to God with grateful hearts, has witnessed the last violent conflict over some darling scheme of policy, and the passions which should have subsided before its holy calm still tempest-wrought and high.

But let us not vent our indignation against the ministers of religion and the officers of State as though they alone had sinned. If we turn our eyes upon the great body of our people, how much shall we discover calling for humiliation and repentance! It will not do always to deal in general denunciations against sin. It is necessary sometimes to be specific and minute. Let us then look closely and with a scrutinizing eye upon some of the more flagrant iniquities of which as a people we have been guilty. Although the page of history is full of examples of the truth, that national degeneracy and corruption are the sad but inevitable consequences of wealth ; and although this truth is of frequent application to individual character, we have been strangely infatuated with a desire for opulence and increased riches. A consequence of this general covetousness has been an unwillingness on the part of thousands to pursue the steady and honourable path of industry contented with the blessings of competence, but they must needs rush into wild and extravagant speculations with the hope of amassing in a year what might well be the reward of a life of toil. Flushed with the success of a first trial, or mortified by a first defeat, another experiment has been hazarded, and still another, until the habit of speculation has been fully formed ; and revulsion after revulsion in the commercial world has scattered the fragments of many a wrecked fortune. This spirit has likewise seduced from agricultural pursuits many of our people,

congregating them in large cities where they have been "engulfed in luxury and effeminacy." It has led many to the abandonment of home and all its sweets, to the sundering of the dearest ties of friendship and kindred, to the relinquishment of all the advantages of a settled and well-ordered community, to expose themselves and their families to the inconveniences and sufferings of a life in the wilderness. Its latest development has been the crowding of emigrant vessels with suitors of fortune, who have left houses full of bread, that they may starve in sight of California gold.

To gratify this insatiate appetite for gain our people are already beginning to manifest a desire for conquest and extended territory. And although every acquisition becomes the subject of fierce contention, convulsing the nation and threatening its very dissolution, yet so impetuous is this passion and so blind, that before we have realized the results of the late Mexican conquest, we hear clamours about the Canadas and Cuba. Shall we forget that whom God would destroy, he first turns mad? The present area of our national domain is amply sufficient for every want we can properly have, and enough for our posterity for ages.*

In immediate connection with this accursed avarice, stands the lawless agrarianism of the age; a principle as hostile to religion as it is antagonistic to the constitution of society. Not satisfied with the largest blessings of constitutional liberty, it threatens the overthrow of all law, and the annihilation of all distinctions among men. Under the pretended right of the majority to govern, it would wrest from the minority all that has been secured to them by federative compact.

* See Appendix A.

Nothing is made plainer both by nature and revelation, than the design of God that there should be inequalities in the condition of man. "The poor shall never cease out of the land," was declared by the inspired Law-giver; and the fulfilment of the purpose was witnessed by our Lord, when he said, "the poor ye have always with you." Had every man been made independent of his fellow, how soon would the sordid selfishness of our degenerate nature have raised every man's hand against his brother. But the same infinite wisdom which made the law of mutual dependence the basis of all inanimate creation, has applied the same principle to all the relations of human society. Wise and merciful is this arrangement of our Heavenly Father. For, by it the sympathies of our nature are called into action, all that is lovely and generous and grateful in man finds room for exercise, and we are permitted to imitate our Maker in the luxury of blessing others.

We have asserted that this communism, socialism, or call it by what name you may, is hostile to the genius of religion. It is eminently so in its origin, which is a jealousy of all who seem more favored than ourselves. It is obviously so in its practical working, which is irrespective of the rights of property, and in violation of the fundamental principles of honesty and justice. Religion imposes moral obligations and gives moral precepts to the rich and to the poor, to the master and the servant. It teaches contentment with the lot in life which Heaven assigns to each, and enforces its teachings by the promise of a great reward. But if such inequalities in society did not exist, if such relations were unlawful and destined to be overturned, what need of rules for the regulation of human conduct in these relations? "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself" is a great feature in

Christian character, a great principle in Christian life.

Obedience to magistrates and respect to law are among the important duties which religion teaches. And he who for purposes of self-aggrandizement would destroy all forms of human government, and plunge society into the horrors of anarchy and barbarism, is a traitor to his country, to his race, and to his God.

There was a time when age commanded respect, when the young venerated the experience and the virtues of the old, when the hoary head was a crown of glory. But, alas ! among the sad signs of human degeneracy, the young have become forgetful of the honour due to age, and the counsels of wisdom and piety are too oft unheeded and scorned.

We have no sympathy with that croaking spirit which is always mourning over days and institutions long gone by, and which deprecates any improvement or change. But we are equally opposed to that disposition which would run hurriedly into every change which a speculative spirit may suggest, allowing no system time enough for trial and denoueing every thing old as antiquated and unsuited to the times. The very restlessness which thus urges to perpetual change is evidence of dissatisfaction with its own experiments, and proves a want of due deliberation, thought and care.

As a people how deeply have we been involved in the sin of Sabbath-breaking ! Who can contemplate the sweet calm and stillness of a Sabbath, spent in the worship of God, undisturbed by the interruption of worldly cares and avocations, with the affections of all hearts gratefully fixed on the Giver of all good, and reflect upon the happy influence of that day of rest, the earnest and antepast of an everlasting rest in heaven in communion with God and with the good,—who can survey the whole people of a land

thus employed, emulating the strains of angel and archangel, and not exclaim,

“ I love thee,—when thy Sabbath dawns
O'er woods and mountains, dales and lawns,
And streams that sparkle while they run,
As if their fountain were the sun :
When hand in hand, thy tribes repair,
Each to their chosen house of prayer.
And all in peace and freedom call
On Him, who is the Lord of all.”

But how different the scene the Sabbath now presents ! What city can we visit, where there are not temptations presented to its violation ? And even the country, where nature seemed to sympathize with man in keeping holy-day has had her forest sanctuary invaded by the noise and hum of active and busy life, and the devotion of the villager is disturbed by arrivals and departures. And how many of our fellow-men know no Sabbath. No day of rest is theirs, when with their wives and children they can go up to the house of prayer and acknowledge their obligations to their Creator ; or, sit quietly in their houses and talk to their little ones of Jehovah's mercies and train their minds to virtue ; no tranquil hours are theirs when they can hush the storms of passion which have been awakened in their breasts, and dwell upon the lessons of heavenly love. If the humanizing influences of religion and the Sabbath are thus withdrawn, can we wonder that men become reckless, and the restraints of virtue and morality are fearfully weakened ? Or, should we inquire into the causes of the increase of crime within the last quarter of a century, may not the disregard of the Sabbath be well assigned as one of the most prominent and fruitful ?*

There remains to be considered another sin, of which as a people we have been guilty, which calls for humiliation and repentance. If there be a right dear to freemen—if

* See Appendix B.

there be an instrument which rightly used is the greatest foe to tyrants—if there be one engine greater than others to work weal or woe for our country, it is that which has been designated “the palladium of liberty,” an unshackled press. Employed in the cause of virtue and of freedom, who can calculate its value? Enlisted on the side of vice, who can compute the magnitude of its power for ill? Making tributary to its service the mighty discoveries of modern science, it multiplies its influence a thousand-fold. Its daily sheets, its weekly issues, its monthly magazines, its quarterly reviews, its cheap publications are spread over the land, and read in cities and towns, in villages and country-places, exerting an untold power over the opinions and character of our people. And this prodigious power has been grievously abused. The liberty of the press has degenerated into licentiousness, and the patriot and philanthropist cannot but mourn over the prospects of their country, when they contemplate its blighting influence. One of the most signal instances of this licentiousness, is the abuse of magistrates and public officers. If the stranger in some foreign clime should form his opinion of those who are called to the chief magistracy of our Union, from the periodical press, he might well suppose us sunk in the lowest degradation. No epithets are too vile to be employed, no insinuations too base, no crimes too great to be imputed by a party press to the candidates for the highest office in the gift of the people. The very motives of public functionaries are assailed, and the acts of the most conscientious held up to derision and scorn.

We wish not to trammel the liberty of the press. It is the security of the people that the acts of their agents undergo a proper scrutiny, and that they be well informed on all subjects of public interest. But this is consistent with high and honourable speech. Self-respect should

prompt us to use respectful language even in the denunciation of the grossest crimes. The cause of truth loses rather than gains, when its advocates descend from the lofty position on which she places them to employ as instruments vituperation and abuse.

But what shall be said of that licentiousness of the press, which exhibits itself in many of the cheap publications of the day, where virtue is dishonoured, and the lowest, basest, and most profligate passions of human nature are invited to a wild debauch? When the press first corrupts the heart, and then panders to the worst desires it has awakened—when every agency is employed by which its horrible emissions may be circulated, spreading desolation and ruin in its course, who stands not appalled at the moral pestilence and shrinks not from its dread contagion?

To every wild scheme of fanaticism—to the assassination of private character—to the circulation of obscene police reports—and to unnumbered other abuses, a portion of the press has lent itself, until its proper designation has become "*the chronicle of crime.*" The father of a family has need to exercise a ceaseless vigilance over his household reading, lest the deadly poison infect his children, and they fall to rise no more. Well for him if he is not so swallowed up in avaricious thoughts, and so intent upon the acquisition of fortune, as to leave no time to consider their higher interests.

We may well rejoice that there are so many honourable exceptions to the general licentiousness of the press; that all are not corrupt; and it is a source of high gratification to us that the State in which we live, and this community particularly, has ever exhibited a determined opposition to such dangerous abuse. Let us guard against the introduction from the large cities of our Union of these vehicles of moral death, more to be dreaded than "the

pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the destruction that wasteth at noon-day."

It has been our effort to present you with candour, friends and brethren, some of the most flagrant and crying sins which pertain to us as a people. True, the catalogue might have been greatly enlarged. You might have been reminded of your negligence as heads of families in training your children and servants in the fear of God. A dark picture might have been drawn of the evils of intemperance, which has stalked like a demon through the land, laying low the fond hopes of many a parent's heart, invading even halls of legislation and the sanctuary of God. And you might have been pointed to another evil of no ordinary magnitude, had we pictured to your view the dismal scenes of the gaming table. But enough has been said, let us hope, to awaken us to a sense of our national sins, and to point out the connection between them and the affliction under which our people now groan. Can we wonder that the hand of God is made bare for our chastisement when we see how greatly we have sinned? "Be not deceived: God is not mocked." As surely as he lives, he will vindicate the honour of his insulted throne.

But the other day, our papers brought us the intelligence of a dreadful desecration of the Sabbath, and of a judgment which speedily followed. In Cincinnati, it is said, more than five thousand persons united in a profanation of the Sabbath, by holding a musical festival in the neighborhood of the city, where "drinking, dancing, and other acts of revelry were the order of the day." "The result of the festival was fearful in the loss of life. It is supposed that one hundred of those who joined in the Sabbath desecration on that occasion, died in ten days from the effects of wine drinking. It is stated by one of the daily papers,

that nine thousand bottles of sour wine were drunk on that day!"*

Is it not time for the good and virtuous, for the patriot, the philanthropist and the Christian, to join in humiliation and prayer? Come then, my brethren, and let us humble ourselves before the Lord. Let us weep that such enormities are committed in this land of liberty.

When the pestilence once raged in Israel, David their king, entreated God for his people, and at the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite he offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings unto the Lord; and the Lord was entreated for his land, and said unto the angel that destroyed the people, "It is enough: stay now thy hand."

When Ezra led the returning captives from Babylon, and met with difficulties in his way, then he "proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that they might afflict themselves there before their God, to seek of Him a right way for them, and for their little ones, and for all their substance. And when they fasted and besought Him, He was entreated of them."

The same ear that heard the supplications of his people in the ancient time, is still attentive to our prayers. The same hand that helped them in the day of their distress, is ready to be stretched out for our deliverance. Blessed be God that he hath put it into the heart of the ruler of this land to convoke our people to-day, and that so many who fear God are every where assembled to make prayer and supplication to the King of Heaven.

We, of this community, have cause to mingle devout thanksgiving with our humiliation and confessions, for God hath dealt kindly by us. As yet, the pestilence has not visited our homes, and while we sympathize with those

* See Appendix C.

who suffer, we may well be grateful for the mercies we enjoy. Let us not provoke the Almighty to wrath, or mock him with a pretended service, but let us keep this fast unto the Lord, according to the direction of his word. Let us "break off our sins by righteousness, and our iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, if it may be a lengthening of our tranquility." "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily ; and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward."

And now, most Merciful God and Heavenly Father, whose tender mercies are over all thy works, and who hast promised acceptance and grace unto the contrite, dispose our hearts unto a true repentance, and grant unto us as a people, that we may ever hereafter keep thy commandments, and walk in thy ways to the honor and glory of thy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord ; unto whom, in the unity of the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, forever. Amen.

APPENDIX.

A.

The following extract from "Ramsay's History of the United States," is so much in point, and contains such excellent advice, that I cannot forbear inviting the attention of the reader to it. He is addressing his fellow-citizens, and says :

Cherish and support a reverence for government, and cultivate union between the East and the South, the Atlantic and the Mississippi. Let the greatest good of the greatest number be the pole star of your public and private deliberations. Shun wars : they beget debt, add to the common vices of mankind, and produce others, which are almost peculiar to themselves. Agriculture, manufactures, and commerce are your proper business. Seek not to enlarge your territory by conquest. It is already sufficiently extensive. You have ample scope for the employment of your most active minds, in promoting your own domestic happiness. Maintain your own rights ; and let all others remain in quiet possession of theirs. Avoid discord, faction, luxury, and the other vices which have been the bane of commonwealths. Cherish and reward the philosophers, the statesmen, and the patriots, who devote their talents and time, at the expense of their private interests, to the toils of enlightening and directing their fellow citizens ; and thereby rescue citizens and rulers of republics, from the common and too-often-merited charge of ingratitude. Practise industry, frugality, temperance, moderation, and the whole lovely train of republican virtues. Venerate the plough, the hoe, and all the implements of agriculture. Honour the men who with their own hands maintain their families, and raise up children inured to toil, and capable of defending their country. Reckon the necessity of labour not among the curses, but the blessings of life. Your towns will probably ere long be engulphed in luxury and effeminaey. If your liberties and future prospects depended on them, your career

of liberty would probably be short ; but a great majority of your country must, and will be yeomanry, who have no other dependence than on Almighty God, for his usual blessing on their daily labour. From the great excess of the number of such independent farmers in these states, over and above all other classes of inhabitants, the long continuance of your liberties may be reasonably presumed.

Let the hapless African sleep undisturbed on his native shore ; and give over wishing for the extermination of the ancient proprietors of this land. Universal justice is universal interest. The most enlarged happiness of one people, by no means requires the degradation or destruction of another. There is territory enough for them and for you. Instead of invading their rights, promote their happiness, and give them no reason to curse the folly of their fathers, who suffered yours to sit down on a soil, which the common parent of both had previously assigned to them. Diffuse the means of education, and particularly of religious instruction, through your remotest settlements. Support and strengthen the hands of public teachers, and of worthy clergymen. Let your voluntary contributions confute the dishonourable position, that religion cannot be supported but by compulsory establishments. Remember that there can be no political happiness without liberty ; that there can be no liberty without morality ; and that there can be no morality without religion.

B.

The following article which appeared in the Southern Christian Advocate a few weeks since, may be new to the reader. In general, churches are among the first buildings to be erected after the location and settlement of a town.

On the Southern coast of West Florida lie the ruins of the once pleasant little city of St. Joseph. Spread out to the westward before it is the broad and commodious bay by the same name, being an arm of the great gulf. It is an excellent harbor where the largest ships may lie at anchor with safety. Time was when its beautiful surface was thickly dotted with merchant vessels waiting to be laden with cotton to be carried to other climes. The surrounding territory is one vast plain of white sand, scarcely varied by the smallest hill, and but thinly wooded

with low pine trees and scattering stunted shrubs—being such an immense barren that no human being lives within twenty miles around the place. Bears and other wild animals inhabit the marshes and places of concealment, living principally on shell fish, and whatever else may float to the shore.

In the midst of this wild, uninhabited wilderness, sprung up like a mushroom almost in a day about the year 1831, the city above named. It was the principal mart of a large up-country territory. The produce was conveyed by an outlet of the Chattahoochee, called a bayou, into the lake Wimmaco, from thence by a railroad which led across the plain to the city, and was continued in the bay nearly a half mile to about fifteen feet of water terminating in the form of a T., where the cotton was received immediately from the cars on board ship lying by the wharf. The people came from all parts of the world, consequently there was a variety of languages spoken, and various were their costumes and habits of life. Cars were hourly passing loaded with all classes who resorted hither. Some for speculation—some for health, and others to indulge in pleasure and idleness. Never was there a place more prolific of the dreams of happiness and the anticipations of wealth never to be realized. It is said that the Mansion house of the new city was completed, with some fifty rooms, in less than one week and filled with boarders. A large territory was surveyed out into city lots, and sold for the most extravagant prices. Fine houses were erected on credit, that cost thousands. Vines and choice fruits brought from tropical climes, were highly cultivated. Pleasant gardens were tastefully arranged, in which were cultivated all kinds of flowers and shrubbery. Every luxury that a pampered appetite could wish was realized, and if we may judge from the immense quantity of champagne bottles scattered in all directions, Bacchus was the principal household god. In less than five years it numbered nearly four thousand inhabitants, and was considered a potent rival and cause of jealousy to its neighbouring sister town Apalachicola. Many a fine house was seen stealthily to crawl away from the latter, and find its way to the new rising city. Gentle reader, the dreams of wealth were of short duration. Mene, Tekel, Upharsin, were written on her walls. She was weighed in the balances and found wanting. As anomalous as it may seem in a christian

land, in the height of its prosperity, no house of worship was ever erected there, and dedicated to the living God. A reverse of fortune was soon to follow, commercial affairs assumed a different aspect. The price of cotton fell in the market, and it was evident that business was fast declining. To hasten its total ruin, in 1841, the yellow fever broke out, and the citizens fled in every direction,—many leaving all they had,—leaving their sick friends to die almost alone, and be buried, as it happened, by strangers. Some of the fugitives never returned to regain their property; nor was it known what was their fate. A mighty change has come over this once flourishing seaport town. The bay spread out in front of it is as beautiful as ever, but the city is an entire wreck. Once elegantly finished houses are fast falling to decay. Some seventy souls are now living among the ruins, secluded from mankind. A Sunday school has recently been formed, and is kept up by a faithful few. They have had no preaching for several years. A meeting was held there a few Sundays since, and some remarked that it was the first time they had ever attended church and heard a sermon.

Such is the fate of the unfortunate city of St. Joseph, and we venture to say the like has never been known in the United States.

C.

PROFANATION OF THE SABBATH.—The Germans of Cincinnati have been outraging the moral feelings of the community by holding what they call a musical festival, in the neighborhood of that city. Some 5000 persons were present, chiefly German Lutherans and Papists; and drinking, dancing, and other acts of revelry, were the order of the day. And what is worse, the secular papers of the city, with scarcely an exception, eulogized the celebration. The *Central Watchman*, however, speaks of it as follows: “The result of the German Festival on Bald Hill, Sabbath before last, has been more fearful in the loss of life than we had anticipated. It is supposed that 100 of those who joined in the Sabbath desecration on that occasion, died in ten days from the effects of wine drinking. It is stated by one of the daily papers, that *nine thousand* bottles of sour wine were drunk on that day! It is matter of alarm,

that intemperance is still fearfully on the increase in our city. Places for the retail of intoxicating drinks are multiplying on every hand. We counted the other day *ten on one side* of a single square! One thousand in this city—one to every twenty or twenty-five families! And this is about the proportion in most of our large cities." In announcing the festival, a paper published by *five German ministers* had the effrontery to say: "From Heaven we expect no *disturbance*; for he means it well, even if he pours down rain upon his flowers; they flourish only the better. But what will our Puritans, Methodists, and hypocritical bigots of all colors say, when they see, early on Sunday, the procession of happy and free men walking up Bald Hill? Well, they will wish them a few stormy thunder claps, but they cannot grunt down the chorus, from the breasts of German freemen." Whatever Methodists and Puritans may say, the *Lutheran Observer* expresses itself in no ambiguous terms, concerning such baptized infidels. "We disclaim ecclesiastically, theologically, and practically, all and every relationship and communion with them, and wish not to be named or thought of in connection with such ministers. May the Lord preserve our land, our Sabbath, and our free institutions from the withering influences of German neology. Such displays of its practical effects, really seem calculated to bring down upon our land the signal judgment of heaven."—*Southern Christian Advocate.*

