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Nebuchadnezzar  
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NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S FAULT AND FALL:

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A SERMON,

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PREACHED AT

GRACE CHURCH, CHARLESTON, S. C.,

ON THE

17TH OF FEBRUARY, 1861.

BY THE

REV. C. C. PINCKNEY.

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## CORRESPONDENCE.

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48 BROAD STREET, March 27, 1861.

*My Dear Sir* :—The Vestry and Congregation of Grace Church, Charleston, believing that in this time of our political necessity, the publication of your Sermon, delivered in that Church on the 17th of February last, would add to the general good by giving proper direction to the thoughts of those engaged in establishing a Government for our Confederacy, as well as in aiding the public mind to receive the efforts of their labors, have requested me to ask a copy for publication.

Yours, respectfully,

WILLIAM WHALEY, *Chairman.*

Rev. C. C. PINCKNEY.

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MARCH 27, 1861.

*My Dear Sir* :—I have received your note conveying the request of the Vestry (of which you had previously informed me) to publish the Sermon which I preached in Grace Church, some weeks since.

My own impression is that the public are tired of Sermons on our national affairs, and, therefore, I did not act upon the intimation given me. But, if the Vestry and Congregation desire its publication, I comply at once with their wishes, and I am gratified at the general endorsement of the views of the Sermon, as manifested in this request.

May the God of Nations bless this and every effort to promote truth and righteousness on the earth.

Very truly, yours,

C. C. PINCKNEY, Jr.

W. WHALEY, *Chairman Vestry Grace Church.*



## A SERMON.

The King spake and said : Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the glory of my majesty ? *Daniel, chap. iv., 30.*

THE most potent monarch of the old world, before the rise of the Persian dynasty, was Nebuchadnezzar. Inheriting the vast empire embraced in the Babylonian dominion, he enlarged and strengthened his kingdom by foreign conquests. The fragments of the Assyrian empire were gradually absorbed by the Chaldean. Syria, Palestine, Idumea, Moab, were subjugated, and many of their inhabitants transported to Babylon to swell the census of the Capital ; Judea and Jerusalem were obliterated ; old Tyre was destroyed after a stubborn siege of thirteen years ; its vast ruins testifying to its ancient grandeur, and furnishing Alexander the Great, materials to assault successfully the new city, which perpetuated the name and fame of the old. The only rival for the world's dominion was Egypt. And Nebuchadnezzar, after defeating Pharaoh Necho in Syria, marched into Egypt, ravaged its fertile plains, and returned to Babylon, laden with the spoils of nations, the acknowledged master of the civilized world.

In the intervals of leisure after his wars he devoted himself to the advancement of his capitol. Babylon was an ancient city, perhaps the ancient Babel. It was the royal residence of Belus, and of Semiramis, the latter of whom bestowed so much labor upon it that she is sometimes termed its founder. But when Nebuchadnezzar long after became the monarch of the world, he re-built the city, constructed those walls which are counted among the wonders of human skill ; created the hanging gardens, which excited the wonders of our child-

hood, and erected the royal palace, which still rises like a conical mound from the desolate plain of Chaldea. Those famous walls, which Herodotus and Alexander's officers measured and described, were 350 feet high and 87 wide, with a spacious chariot road around the summit. A hundred gates of brass opened upon streets 150 feet wide, running through the city from East to West and from North to South. The city was an exact square, each side fifteen miles long, and, therefore, sixty in circumference, intersected by the Euphrates, and connected by noble bridges. The equally famous gardens were built in successive terraces up to the city walls. They rested upon massive arches, and were covered with soil to a sufficient depth to enable forest trees to find root. Some terraces were shaded with foilage, some smiled with flowers, some waved with grain, some were covered with rocky grottos and bubbling fountains.

The beauty and magnificence of this unrivalled city, as described by Greek historians, are attested by Scripture phrases. "Babylon the Great"—"the praise of the whole earth"—"the beauty of the Chaldees excellency"—"the golden city"—"the glory of kingdoms"—these are prophetic declarations of her greatness. And, in allusion to her walls, Jeremiah, while predicting their overthrow, implies their superiority to the destructive power of ordinary agencies. "The very wall of Babylon shall fall"—though men thought it as indestructible as the Pyramids of Egypt are now considered. "The *broad walls* of Babylon shall be utterly broken,"—though seven times thicker than our strongest fortifications. And in allusion to their height, he says: "Though Babylon mount up to heaven, and though she should fortify the height of her strength, from me shall spoilers come unto her, saith the Lord."

These wonders were the creation of Nebuchadnezzar's architectural skill. That he was truly the builder of Babylon is confirmed by Col. Layard's recent researches in Ninevah and Babylonia. In one of the mounds which he explored, he came upon "a solid piece of masonry," built of the large Babylonian brick, "with traces of piers and buttresses project-

ing from the heap of ruins." "Upon nearly every brick are clearly and deeply stamped the name and titles of Nebuchadnezzar, and the inscribed face is always placed downwards." Such was the amount of bricks contained in those mounds, that successive cities have been built along the Euphrates from these materials, as far as Bagdad. "There is scarcely a house in Hillah which is not almost entirely built with them; and as the traveler passes through the streets, he sees in the walls of every hovel, a record of the glory and power of Nebuchadnezzar." Page 412.

As this mighty monarch walked upon the terraced roof of his palace in the centre of this gorgeous city, he saw enough to swell his heart with pride. As he looked around the vast area, enclosed within the walls, and counted the temples and palaces, and observatories he had built, he would regard himself as a model monarch, the envy of his equals, the benefactor of mankind. When he looked down upon the rectangular streets, alive with population and busy with traffic, these creations of his power and wealth would fill his soul with satisfaction. As he surveyed the different races of subjugated peoples who inhabited his city, and marked the captives with turbaned heads and "harps in their hands," who frequented the "willows" upon the "river banks," he smiled contemptuously at their strange conceit, that their God was irresistible. Had not the power of Israel's God quailed before Nebuchadnezzar? Which of the gods of the nations had withstood his arms? What mortal monarch could resist his will? What leagured array could ever scale those walls? As these thoughts engrossed his mind, he gave utterance to them in the language of the text: "And the King spake and said, 'Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?'"

There was truth in the boast; but God hates arrogance, and punished the boaster. While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from Heaven, "O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken. The kingdom is departed from thee: and they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling



shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will."

"The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar."

A sudden insanity fell upon him. He fancied himself a beast. He herded with the oxen. He imitated their habits; he slept in the fields until a hairy covering protected his naked body, and his nails hardened into claws. For seven long years the brutalized monarch became a loathsome spectacle to his subjects, and a warning to all men of the real degradation of pride. At the end of that period "my understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored Him that liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom from generation to generation." With the restoration of his reason, his kingdom was restored unto him, and he lived and died a wiser and a better man.

My brethren, can you see any repetition in modern history of the pride and the fall of Nebuchadnezzar? You may reply that in Napoleon's fate we read the same lesson. True. But I come nearer home. It does not require the prophetic wisdom of Daniel to interpret the dreams which have floated through the minds of the American people for a generation back. As we reposed upon our national bulwarks, and looked down upon our unexampled prosperity; marked our empire, washed by the two great oceans of earth, studded with noble cities and fertile plains, and majestic rivers; independent of the world, and secure from war, from invasion and from famine; when we counted our brave and enterprising population, swelling from three millions to thirty in our brief existence: when we saw the ocean whitened with our commerce, the American flag flying in every sea, and honored alike in all, we surveyed our achievements in the very spirit of Nebuchadnezzar, and self complacently asked, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built by the might of my power, and for the glory of my majesty?" Is not this Confederacy of States des-

tined to endure, to eclipse the splendors of Europe and the grandeur of imperial Rome? Have we not partaken of Nebuchadnezzar's sin? Has not our national pride and vanity overflowed the bounds of reason and religion? Have we not grown as *self-confident* as the Babylonian monarch? Our "walls" we fancied too strong to be thrown down. Our house we thought "built upon a rock." The wisdom and stability of our federative system we were never tired of proclaiming. We lauded our republican institutions as the model of social organization, the panacea for all political ills, and the hope of mankind; and to all discontented peoples we held up our Union as a beacon light, saying unto them, "Look ye unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

From this overweening confidence in our destiny, we have *grown arrogant* in our bearing. The language of contempt has been our language towards the most ancient monarchies. We have characterized them as "the crumbling despotisms of the old world," and congratulated ourselves on the foresight which had provided such a house for our home, as would throw all our neighbors into the shade, and shelter our children in all time to come. "In my prosperity I said I shall never be moved."

But God hates pride and arrogance, whether in a crowned monarch or a republican people; and our pride falls as suddenly as Nebuchadnezzar's. There has been no voice from heaven proclaiming our fate, but the word of God and the finger of God are equally manifest. Suddenly, unaccountably, our national grandeur melts away like wax before the fire, our political union dissolves like the shifting scenes of a diorama, our country crumbles into fragments, in time of profound peace, without any hostile touch, without external pressure, without internal violence—I see nothing like it in history. Our vanity bursts like a bubble, our ship of State goes to pieces in a calm day, on a smooth sea, without any acknowledged cause. A mysterious power affects it; every nail is loosened, every plank starts, and the crew must save themselves upon rafts until another vessel be constructed.

What is the cause? We say, the Abolitionists. They say, the Secessionists. But nothing was further from their intentions than a disruption of the Union—nor did any Southern State seriously contemplate such an event six months since.

It is manifestly God's decree against our national pride.

We have been *victims of prosperity*. This is the fountain whence our overflowing vanity is supplied. Thus mankind have ever abused God's gifts. "Pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness," were the provoking causes of Sodom's destruction. The carnal security of Moab was declared by the Prophets to provoke his fall. "Moab is at ease from his youth, he is settled on his lees," and prosperity begot pride, and pride was his ruin.

Nebuchadnezzar was the victim of prosperity. He was fortune's favorite. In the field, in the cabinet, in arts, in wealth, he had no rival. But great prosperity yielded its usual fruit. "His heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride," and the usual result followed. God "deposed him from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him." This is the lesson of history for six thousand years. Nations and individuals alike illustrate its truth, for "Pride goeth beyond destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." The United States of America is the last recorded example of a people spoiled by prosperity, and overthrown by pride.

Here are the true causes of our national dissolution, and these the rocks of which we must beware in our future history.

My brethren, I have set these things before you, not to triumph in the failure of our Confederation—for a feeling of sorrow will ever touch a generous mind as it surveys the ruins of a noble edifice—nor to seek occasion for boasting at our neighbor's expense, (for we have done our full share in inflating the national vanity); but to draw lessons of wisdom for the future.

We are now endeavoring to reconstruct a government for a portion of this Confederacy. I pray God that we may be preserved from past errors. A government in our land is only the reflection of the public sentiment, and an embodi-

ment of the national character. Hence every *man's opinion* and every man's *character* enters into the national structure, and helps to mould its form, and to influence its destiny. Every citizen contributes his mite towards the character of the rising edifice.

Beware then of an *unsound foundation*. Neither pride nor policy can uphold a nation's happiness. *Too much confidence in ourselves*, in our own courage, and wisdom, and destiny, while it gives a temporary strength, really weakens the body politic. In times of trouble it will prove worthless as a brittle sword, for it will always find, or provoke, a pride equal to its own, and it will always array God's power in opposition. National pride, personal pride, pride of power, of wealth, of birth, God hates. Let us not spoil the new Confederacy by an infusion of national pride. It will prove rotten mortar between the joints of the edifice, and stone after stone will drop out, until the whole fabric comes to the ground.

Let us not rest our hopes *upon identity of institutions* in the Southern States. Slavery is itself no bond of Union. It has become so with us, *simply as the result of outward pressure*. The Chaldean monarchy, the Roman empire, the Greek republics, the South American States, were all slaveholding countries. But they have all fallen to pieces notwithstanding. Of itself, it is a mere rope of sand, with no more power, politically, than any other recognized relationship.

Let us not repose on our *agricultural staples*. Cotton is the king whom commerce now worships. But its reign may pass away like other human sceptres. It is not now more firmly established in its supremacy than Nebuchadnezzar was in his. Suddenly as the ancient monarch was hurled from his seat the dominant staple may be from its commercial throne. Sixty or seventy years since, indigo was the produce of Southern fields, and Cotton scarcely known. Seventy years hence some other culture may supplant this, as it has supplanted the former production, and more remunerative labor may fill its place. These are the two *human props* upon which the Southern mind is now tempted to lean, instead of upon the eternal God. They are the arches upon

which pride is resting our political house. But they will sink beneath the superincumbent weight, like the arches in the walls of Babylon.

Beware also of a *greediness after territorial acquisition*. This has become a ruling passion in the American mind. It is the sin of strong nations. Acquisitiveness makes the individual grasp property; it makes the nation grasp territory. It gratifies at once ambition and covetousness. But the lust of aggrandisement debauches a people. If God's Providence enlarges a man's property, or a nation's territory, He will sanction the use, so that it shall not prove a snare. But an acquisition eagerly coveted, and unlawfully grasped, lowers the character, and begets a dishonest spirit. All empires perish from too much expansion.

What, then, is our hope for the future? "The Lord who ruleth in the earth, and *giveth the kingdom to whomsoever He will.*" Let us rest our hopes on Him, *practically and theoretically*. There should be a more formal acknowledgment of God than the Constitution of the United States contains.\* Our Christian character, our faith in the Gospel and the Christian Sabbath, should be openly affirmed. But more than a formal, there should be a general, hearty recognition of God's word and power and blessing. Our laws should rest upon the eternal principles of right and wrong which the Scriptures reveal—our national, social life, be regulated by the rules of truth and justice, which God has therein given us.

The supreme power of Jehovah should be the recognized basis of our national existence. "Hath not the potter power

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NOTE.—The Constitution of the Confederate States has been published since the delivery of the sermon; and the writer is gratified at the confirmation of his views by that document. There is an open avowal of the God of nations, and of our dependence upon His "favor and guidance." The Christian Sabbath is also indirectly recognised, as in the old Constitution. This may seem a small gain, but we thankfully accept it. It is the *recognition of a true principle*, inserted into the foundation of our Confederacy. We have in our national history proved the danger of incorporating a political and religious fallacy (as I regard it) in the Declaration of Independence. The doctrine of universal equality has been the radical evil of the United States Government. May the introduction of a new religious principle in our Constitution, be as potent for good, as the above error has been for evil.

over the clay, to mould it as he lists," is the comparison by which the Lord asserts his sovereign power over the nations. The heathen reject the claim and set up a rival God. "*Dextra mea Deus*—" my right hand is God, saith the atheist; and many a monarch since Nebuchadnezzar hath foolishly repeated the boast. Let us believe "that the Lord he is God," "his arm our defence," his power "our shield and buckler!" Let us seek and obtain his "blessing," for it maketh rich in enduring benefits. His blessing upon our *rulers*, upon our *people* and our *land*, shall give security and happiness in future years. *Secure his blessing "by righteousness."* Let every man contribute his aid. "Acknowledge the Lord in all thy ways." Let "his name be hallowed," and oaths be sacred in our land. Let our rulers and people honor his Sabbath, our railroads and steamboats cease their traffic on the Lord's day. Let our Churches be filled with devout worshippers, and the enticements to sin be closed by law upon that day. Let men deal truly and justly with their fellows, remembering that God will reward every good and every evil deed.

Let us, as a Christian nation, glorify the Lord Jesus. Let our heartfelt trust be ever in the Lord. It was *the sin of his heart* which overthrew Nebuchadnezzar. It is the pride of our heart which provokes the Lord.

"Let not the *wise* man glory in his wisdom, neither let the *mighty* man glory in his might, let not the *rich* man glory in his riches, but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, who exercises loving kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." Thus we shall know that "there is a God that ruleth in the earth;" "that He exalteth the people according to his will;" that "his dominion is an *everlasting dominion*," and "his kingdom from generation to generation." Thus should "we praise Thee, O God, and God, even our God, shall give *us his blessing*." With that all pervading blessing to crown our work; with our acknowledged advantages, agricultural, commercial, social and religious, with a united people, walking in the fear of God, and the faith of the Gospel, we may expect

to retain the favor of heaven. "His blessing maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow with it." May it be to us for walls and bulwarks, *so our house shall stand!* It will shelter the Ark of God, secure the welfare of our children, and reflect "the honor of his majesty;" and "the Lord of hosts shall be for a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty to the residue of his people!"







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