

GOD'S VOICE MISUNDERSTOOD

A

S E R M O N

DELIVERED UPON THE DAY OF

PUBLIC THANKSGIVING,

25TH NOV. 1847.

BY CARLOS SMITH,

PASTOR-ELECT OF THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

TALLMADGE, OHIO.

CLEVELAND:

YOUNGLOVE'S STEAM PRESS

1848.

# S E R M O N

ISAIAH 22: 12—14.

*“And in that day did the Lord God of Hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth; and behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die. And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of Hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord God of Hosts.*”

VOTED, “That this Church request a copy of the Discourse delivered to this people on Thanksgiving Day, by the Rev. Carlos Smith, for publication.”

Extract from minutes of 1st Cong. Ch., Dec. 9, 1847.

S. H. WHITTLESEY, Clerk.

“In that day;” the day of the invasion of Sennacherib, king of Assyria. He had laid waste a large part of Judea, ravaging it with fire and sword; and now, with a most formidable army, was drawing near to invest Jerusalem, the capital. He was a proud, tyrannical blood-thirsty prince; of a ruthless spirit; most extravagant in ambition. In the true spirit of a robber, for no object but plunder, was he now in Judea; his whole enterprise *in itself*, as offensive and abominable in the sight of a just God, the common Father, as was the partition of Poland by the triumvirate of iniquity; or as is the present invasion of Mexico. Yet God, in some sense, challenges as his own act and dispensation, that lawless and wicked enterprise. The proud Assyrian was “the rod of his anger;” and “the staff in their hand,” the weapons wherewith his soldiers destroyed the Jews, “was his indignation;” his indignation caused him to allow matters so to shape themselves, as that the Assyrians should take up the weapons. God says, “I will send him against a hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge to take the spoil, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.”

There was therefore a sense in which the enterprise was of God. In the absoluteness of his control over the affairs of this world, he allowed circumstances so to arrange themselves, that the unprincipled, greedy ambition of that tyrant should, at that time, break forth in that direction. His object was, the correction and reformation of his own wandering, wicked people. "In that day," by means of that dreadful invasion, "did the Lord God of hosts call the people to weeping, and to mourning, and to girding with sackcloth." Their duty was, to regard the invasion as God's chastisement for their national defection; to hear God in it, calling them to repentance. Now, in the fearful hour of the invasion, when messenger after messenger was every day rushing into Jerusalem, from various parts of the land, with horrible accounts of burning, and slaughter, and various forms of devastation, and the public mind was thrilled with excitement, and terrified with the certainty that the raging enemy was constantly drawing nearer to Jerusalem, there were two extremes into either of which the people were liable to run. Either might they, stupified with fear, fail to make any preparations for defence, and pretend to look for deliverance immediately from God, which would have been presumption; or they might forget God altogether, & set about preparations as though their own prowess alone was to decide the issue; and this would have been a practical denial of God. The result showed that the tendency of the public mind was, not to antinomianism, but to atheism. They set about fortifying Jerusalem, and preparing armor, and laying in stores, against the siege. Then, when their preparations were completed, and they regarded their safety as secured, instead of asking why God, their national Protector, had suffered this brutal enemy to set upon them; what the instruction was, which they should derive from the dispensation; instead of perceiving and feeling, that "in that day," by that dispensation,

"did the Lord God of hosts call them to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth," for their grievous national sins, they refused all serious thought; all care about either the national danger, or the moral aspects of their case. They relaxed themselves in mirth and sensual enjoyment; "slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine," as though it was a time of prosperity, and their horizon was all sunshine, instead of being blackened with a cloud of wrath. Between their demeanor, and the state of the public interests, there was thus the most glaring and the most blame-worthy incongruity; God calling them to repentance by holding up before their faces a most fearful destruction, and they feasting as though all was well; apparently resolved in their stupidity and impiety, to misunderstand God; and when he called them to fasting and prayer, take it that he called them to feasting and songs. It was the most daring impiety. God regarded it as such; "and it was revealed in the ears of the prophet by the Lord of Hosts, that their iniquity should not be purged from them until they died." It was a degree of guilt past forgiveness.

I cannot drive from my mind the conviction, that there is now, on the part of the American people, the same perverse, guilty, and dangerous misunderstanding of the voice of God. I cannot avoid feeling, that in this day, doth the Lord God of Hosts call us to weeping and to mourning; to humiliation and to prayer, and to the reparation of wrongs; and we do not hear aright, but fancy we are called upon for thanksgiving and rejoicing in view of prosperity. So does it seem to me. I can get no other view of our position. Never was I so perplexed and troubled in the planning of a Thanksgiving discourse. It would be an easy, pleasant task to consider the lovely, heaven-begotten theory of our republican government, and contrast it with the oppressive and injurious governments of the old world, and call upon you

for thanksgiving. It were easy to consider the social condition of American citizens, so free, and fair, and equal; every useful and honorable career open to every man; and contrast it with the social condition in Europe, where honorable station is the accident of birth, and not the fruit of intellectual and moral excellence, and in view of the difference, call upon you to praise God for your own mercies. We might too, contrast the plenty that smiles over our land, with the destitution of Ireland, and many another European community, where many thousands are soon again to be starving; where fathers and mothers hear first of all in the morning, the vain cry of their famishing children for bread, and lay them down at night with the same heart-breaking cry sounding in their ears, until you should look upon your happy children and cry out, "what shall we render unto the Lord for his benefits towards us?" But I cannot reach the conclusion that it would be right for me upon this occasion so to address you; and for this reason; I cannot suppose God does now so address you. For me to be calling upon you now, in view of our signal and peculiar mercies, to be rejoicing and praising, and feasting, it seems to me would be as though Isaiah, upon the occasion referred to in the text, instead of reiterating God's call upon the people for weeping and mourning in view of their sins, had been calling them to feasting and thanksgiving in view of their admirable preparations for defence. Rejoicing and praise in view of the divine benefits are not timely, provided it be true, that for the most grievous and presumptuous abuse of the benefits, God is calling upon us for the exercises of humiliation and supplication. Gratitude indeed, is never unbecoming. Every human breast should glow with it. Every heart should labor with a sense of obligation to God for his mercies; should burn with desire to express its grateful, affectionate emotions in suitable returns; should go forth over every interest, to see whether it be rich enough for the return; and sen-

sible of its inadequacy, should sigh with David's heart, "what shall I render unto the Lord, for his benefits toward me?" And yet, do you not see, that same individual would not be well occupied with the outward expressions of gratitude, at the very time that great delinquency, we will suppose, was calling upon him to occupy himself with expressions of a very different character? Why, if a man be greatly delinquent toward his benefactor, if he have a due sense of his obligation, instead of thanksgiving made with beaming countenance and glowing heart, he will be feeling and talking about that delinquency. He will be occupied with confession and sorrow. If a son had grossly abused the favors of a very beneficent father, turning them willfully to the great injury of his father, would not the father expect that sincere gratitude, should his son ever come to the experience of it, would lead him first of all to confession, and to hearty efforts to make some atonement for his injuries? And if the son should come before him very happy and very self-complacent, and eloquently set forth his obligations and express his thanks, would not the father sigh and say, "Ah, if my son really felt his obligations, he could not keep that great delinquency out of mind. The sorrow thereof, would run over at his eyes, and pour itself forth from his lips. His speech would be of confession and entreaty, rather than of thanksgiving." I think every one must perceive, so should the father feel. So should the gratitude of the son show itself. The gratitude that would not lead the delinquent object of your beneficence, first of all, with a cheek reddening with shame, to make confession, you would pronounce spurious. You would hold it offensive. Eloquent thanksgiving you would deem as much out of place, as God held the feasting and mirth of the Jews, at a time when he was calling them to weeping, and to mourning, and to humiliation. You could not avoid so judging him. You would be disgusted with him, should he stand up and be thanking you, when you

felt he ought to be upon his knees confessing to you. Like this, does the public attitude now before God seem to me; God calling the people to weeping and to mourning, and to girding with sackcloth; and behold, joy and gladness; slaying of oxen, and killing of sheep; eating flesh, and drinking wine. If it be so, I should not be willing now, to occupy your attention with a parade of your privileges, and be calling upon you for expressions of joy in view of them; because it is just as dangerous now for a nation to refuse to heed, or perversely to misunderstand the voice of God, as the Jews found it of old. If history is true, it brought them to ruin. If the bible is true, persisted in it will bring any nation to ruin. There is no world to come to nations; no judgment after death to nations. Their retribution is here; and as sure too, as the truth of God can make it. All history so attests.

That our national obligations to God are very great, I will not argue. No one who believes in a superintending Providence, a God who "minds the affairs of men," but is ready enough to acknowledge it. The national pride, in view of our civil and political position, has long been boiling over in Fourth of July orations, and in constant newspaper declamation. But the most active imagination is not active enough, in contemplating the advantages of American citizenship, to transcend the reality. Always accustomed to independence, and freedom, and a fair field for enterprise, and full opportunity for intellectual and moral development and enjoyment, and an abundant supply for all our physical necessities, we are utterly incapable of estimating our condition. In order to do this, we should need a few years experience in lands where such advantages are not the general rule, but the privileged exception; where the mass toil and suffer all their lives, to swell the enjoyment of the few, who are great by birth. Our fellow-countrymen who travel in foreign

lands, always tell us, we cannot appreciate our advantages; we know not how great a blessing it is to be a citizen here, rather than in any European nation, even the most favored of them. My friends, all this privilege is of God. He only has made us to differ. All the account we can give of it is, "Even so Father; for so hath it seemed good in thy sight." A man need have little more than the piety of natural religion, to persuade him a superintending Providence has directly given us our advantages. "Why," said the admirable Franklin, in the Convention that formed the Constitution of the United States, "why have we not applied ourselves, amid our perplexities and divisions, to 'the Father of lights?' In the beginning of the contest with Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayers in this room for the divine protection. Our prayers were heard. They were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle, must have observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence interposing in our favor. I have lived," said he, "a long time; and the longer I live, the more am I persuaded of the truth, that God governs in the affairs of men; and if a sparrow fall not to the ground without him, surely an empire does not rise without him." None of us will pronounce Franklin superstitious. Probably none of us will hesitate to agree with him, our national position is the gift of God. So that God is greatly our Benefactor. We are greatly God's debtors. Do you not so hold? Do you not so feel to-day? So that with Israel of old you are ready to exclaim, "If it had not been the Lord that was on our side when men rose up against us, then had they swallowed us up quick; the proud waters had gone over us." "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side," now may Americans say, "our nation had never occupied its present position." God by special favors heaped upon us, has laid us under special obligation; so that of all the nations upon which the sun shines, this should be the one, most intelli

gently and tenderly, and constantly careful, in all its policy foreign and domestic, to observe the will of God. There is not a nation, there never has been a nation, more sacredly bound than this, in every matter to ask, "what will please God?" Gratitude for favors received has demanded it. And I do not much hesitate to say, my knowledge of history does not enable me to name the nation that has more wretchedly met her obligations; that has made worse returns; with which God the common Father has had more reason to be grieved and offended. We have seemed to spurn the very thought of obligation to God. The humanity, out of love for which God set us on high, that in our light the nations might see how to come up from their own oppressions, we have systematically and perseveringly outraged. When we were laying out the treatment we would pursue towards the enfeebled, helpless Indians, right and wrong were mere abstractions; their question was not admitted into our counsels. Probably there was not in the land an expectation, that the government, in deciding what to do with them, would ask, "what is right? what will please God?" but the universal conviction that its care would be, to do what present expediency should demand, let the divine will be what it might. Would it not be a wonderful simplicity that should seriously ask, whether, in the ejection of the Cherokees, the will of God or the will of Georgia was regarded? Probably there was not a man in the land, whose moral sense, if consulted, did not denounce that as an unprincipled and profligate measure; that did not feel as those heart-stricken, helpless fugitives were driven from the graves of their fathers and made outcasts, it was a remarkable exhibition of power trampling upon right; a direct disregard of God whose care for them was as tender as it could be for us. Probably there was not a thoughtful person in the land, whose moral sense did not feel that the war upon the little bands of natives in Florida was waged, not because either the national honor or the na-

tional safety demanded it; the very idea is ludicrous; nor because the safety of individual families there, could in no other way be secured; not because of any conviction that the murders committed by the natives were unprovoked, and nothing but United States troops could prevent the continuance of them; not at all; but because slavery demanded as its victims, the children and grandchildren of fugitives who had escaped from her law; because she came with her bloody demand even into the habitations of chiefs; so that the unhappy Seminoles had but to choose between resistance and the giving up of their children into slavery; and they chose resistance; and the government of the United States, founded upon resistance to a three-penny tax, made war upon them for doing so; and year after year, at the behest of slavery, pushed forward her troops amid the disease and death of the swamps of Florida, at the expense of many hundreds of lives, until the Seminoles were driven from the land that God had given them, and its cypress swamps and everglades could no longer afford shelter to men and women fleeing from the intolerable miseries of slavery. Do we not know that in the simplicity of naked truth, this and nothing else is the history of that war? that God regarded the war as waged simply for the defence and support of slavery? And yet, who looked for the war to cease, simply because it must be offensive to God, whose common and equal benevolence embraced these Seminoles just as warmly as any and all others? No man expected to hear from Washington, "God must disapprove of this war; therefore let it cease." It was involuntary to feel, as things were, "The controlling interest in this land demands the war; therefore it will go on, God's will to the contrary notwithstanding." Probably not a single intelligent person in the land honestly supposed that God was regarded, I know not but I may say, once spoken of by our rulers, in the waging of that war. Did you ever hear of a prayer publicly offered for success in that war? Never such a

prayer probably, unless by a slave-holding minister. No man supposed those poor Seminoles were hunted and worried and torn by bloodhounds, and killed by American soldiery, to the glory of God; that the developements of the war were humble exhibitions of piety; that our soldiers were threading the morasses of Florida, from a sense of duty to God, as the conscious ministers of his will and Providence. Little indeed did any man's reason suppose God's will had to do with the matter; and as little had our government to do with God's will in the matter. The government took the responsibility in the enterprise, and left God out of the question.

Will any of you esteem it but an effusion of political party-prejudice, if I express the conviction, that just as little was God's mind consulted in all the policy whereby we took upon ourselves deliberately and by solemn act, all the responsibility of the slavery of a foreign nation? For many years had we been insisting that we cordially abhorred the spirit and system of slavery; that we deplored it as a great evil; that we should rejoice so any practicable mode of deliverance from it were pointed out; that England entailed it upon us, and we would gladly be rid of it; and in the face of these protestations, we opened wide the door of the Union, and invited to walk in a nation of slaveholders, and deliberately placed their system of oppression under the protection of American law; not content with upholding legalized oppression in our own land, we would improve the opportunity to do it in another too. The government deliberately placed this nation where it should be held to answer for the guilt of maintaining and upholding slave-law in Texas! Was there in this that tender regard for the will of the Common Father, which his benefactions towards us demanded? No man can avoid feeling, it was all in utter contempt of his will. Is my language too strong? I would not have it so. I would deprecate extravagance in alluding to the national sins. So far as we look at them

and speak of them, I earnestly desire it should be according to truth and reality. But I do not expect it will be so; and this will be the failure; I have not ability to speak of the national delinquencies toward God and humanity, according to the reality of the case. Who of us all has a heart sensitive enough, and an imagination vigorous enough, to apprehend and set forth the guilt of our present national position? Enormous was the wickedness of Britain in the murders and ravaging of her Chinese opium war. It is as far exceeded by the wickedness of our war against Mexico, as the guilt of upholding and extending slavery, exceeds that of upholding opium eating. Shameful was it that last year the power and skill of enlightened England were engaged in relentless war with the semi-barbarians of India, for the simple purpose of conquest. Infinitely more shameful to-day, is our war of conquest; for she will leave the social condition of the conquered better than she found it; while American policy intends to establish slavery in regions where by law, it is now prohibited. To-day, should the moral influence of this nation be employed in dissuading France from the war of ambition and lust, which for so many years she has been waging upon the African shores of the Mediterranean. Let our minister at Paris venture upon a remonstrance in favor of the miserable Arabs, would not the hearts of men in power there have him in derision and think of the butchery and devastation in Mexico? the enormous amount of human well-being that has been there offered up upon the altar of slavery and personal ambition? God set this nation up to be the light of the world; and the power of this government has been so often pledged and bound to the most grievous violence against humanity, that we should be ashamed to speak in behalf of humanity, to any of the nations of the earth! Is not this nation greatly delinquent? Have you ever set yourself seriously to dwell upon the awful intelligence that for so many months has been coming up to us from the fields and

cities and villages of Mexico? thousands of human beings, sons, and brothers, and husbands, and fathers, torn and mangled and crushed with cannon shot, slashed with swords, thrust through with bayonets, heads and limbs scattered over the field in every direction? Then have you dwelt upon the storming of cities? houses shattered with cannon shot; the indescribable destruction of shells, bursting amid household groups, and tearing to pieces women and children; one shell exploding near the altar of a church in Vera Cruz, and destroying a whole company of terror-stricken women that had fled thither for safety; the destruction of life and property so dreadful, that even the wretched conquerors when they came to look upon the completeness of their work, were filled with amazement? Have you soberly set yourself to get some idea of the agony and suffering connected immediately or remotely with these scenes of unutterable horror, and then asked yourself, "in what age of the world do we live? What was the necessity for this war? What is the occasion of this destruction of the weak by the strong?" If you have done this, I need say nothing to you about the national guilt. You have a vivid sense of it. You will be ready enough to agree with me, "In this day, does the Lord God of Hosts call this nation to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth."

It is not my intention to attempt an account of the national sins. With sorrow be it said many discourses would be needed for this. I but hint at a few of the most prominent, the best known, by way of illustration. And in view of them do you not think, that if there be in our hearts such gratitude to God for his benefits, as would make thanksgiving in any case acceptable, in our case it will first of all show itself in acts of contrition? in the confession of delinquency? in entreaties for pardon? in efforts for reparation? It seems to me we present this day to God and the world, a spectacle horribly absurd! So many

States of the Union engaged with much outward solemnity in acts of thanksgiving, and our armies ravaging and destroying in Mexico! Can you avoid feeling that a right view of things would have led our rulers first of all to recall our troops from our crushed, helpless sister republic, and then to have appointed a day for public humiliation and confession and supplication? I venerate the religious feeling, I rejoice in the recognition of God, manifested in the official appointment of a day publicly to render thanks for mercies; but more appropriate had been the appointment of a day in which to confess, with humiliation, a most grievous abuse of the mercies. This would have been bringing forth fruits worthy of gratitude. As it is, it is to be feared the language of the text is applicable to us; "In that day did the Lord God of Hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth; and behold, joy and gladness; slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine."

It should not take much argumentation to bring an observer of the events of his day, to realize, that God does call the American people to weeping and to mourning. His word thus constantly calls all sinners. But to us the most marked providences reiterate the call. We sometimes speak of God's revelations of his mind in his book of Providence. In this day it is as though that book were spread open upon the face of the heavens. "He may run that readeth it." It continually and most emphatically utters God's voice, calling the people to weeping and to mourning for their sin. Fifteen years ago did the Asiatic Cholera utter it. That fearful messenger is coming again. Unprecedented floods have conveyed it. The most intolerable droughts have brought it. Then, unexampled derangement and perplexity in the business world were its vehicles. One season it comes fearfully to us upon raging fires, breaking out all over the land, licking up almost entire cities in a few hours; fires, the fre-



quency and dreadfulness of which have been absolutely unexampled in history; which are not accounted for by any talk of incendiaries or drought; which were of God just as truly as was the burning of the Cities of the Plain; repeating the solemn voice, "In this day doth the Lord God of Hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to supplication." The voice has come too, upon the wings of the tornado. Sometimes the earthquake has rumbled it forth. That engine of death upon the decks of the Princeton uttered it, where lay the mangled forms of some who had been deeply instrumental in throwing upon this nation the fearful responsibility of a foreign nation's slavery. A few years ago, the death of a Chief Magistrate brought it. Infidel Conventions, all unwitting, have been God's heralds to call to weeping and to mourning. The voice is uttered by that spirit of violence and insubordination which God has permitted to break forth; threatening to wipe out the very notion of protection by law, and leave every man to look for protection to his own right arm; which in one State arms the multitude with deadly weapons against an entire religious sect, because the multitude choose to pronounce them fanatical and troublesome; in another State, rouses almost entire counties to resist with arms the collection of rent, upon the plea that the landlord's tenure is anti-republican and oppressive, and even elects men to important offices upon the very ground that they are favorable to this spirit; nay, finds vent for itself in the annual message of the Governor of the State; \* a spirit which in cities, lets itself out in private murders upon the plea of avenging wrongs which the

\* See his annual message for 1847. Gov. Young expressly endeavors to make anti-rentism respectable, by pretending a distinction between those anti-renters who have exhibited their views in open violence, and those who have not as yet so exhibited them; while all the world knows that the former were aided and abetted by the latter in all their outrages; and while too, he himself has pardoned the former, and turned them loose again upon society; and also by pretending for the anti-renters, an anxious apprehension, that their landlord's title may not be good, and some superior title *may* eject them.

law will not avenge; a spirit which exhibits itself boldly over the land, and proclaims, "let the mob determine what is wrong, and let the mob put it down." Do you not tremble sometimes, when you reflect upon the prevalence of this spirit? the readiness of the people to put the law aside, and place the judgment of grievances, and the redress of grievances, in the hands of irresponsible individuals? when you reflect upon the frequent refusal, on the part of our courts of law, to punish the wicked violators of law; judges sworn to administer and uphold the law, refusing to visit its penalties upon those who openly and flagrantly trample it under foot? judge and jury refusing to maintain the majesty of the law against the men, who, as at Richmond, upon the plea that they have suffered great injury, break into a private chamber, and in cold blood murder a naked, defenceless, absolutely helpless man? the law lying cloven down and despised in the dust? Is there no voice of God to the people in such things? Who can know himself safe? Truly "in this day doth the Lord God of Hosts call to weeping and to mourning." How can the Church fail to hear the voice in the humiliating truth, that to so great an extent, the Christian profession has lost its influence? Are you not sensible this is so? Once, the Christian profession was held a guaranty for integrity and benevolence. It was taken for granted that the member of a Christian Church was pure and upright, unless facts showed to the contrary. Whether it is so now, you can judge. The frequent fall of ministers in the Christian Church by scandalous crimes, conveys God's call to repentance. The alarming extent to which the Sabbath is despised, and preaching powerless, and revivals ceased, conveys the voice. The spirit of religious formalism, boldly teaching that religion consists in outward service, and leavening so extensively churches nominally evangelical, conveys the voice. And need I say, the long suffer-

ing and forbearance of God call us to repentance? How can we resist the gentle appliances of mercy, soliciting us to repentance? Oh, do you not think that "in this day doth the Lord God of Hosts call to weeping, and to mourning," and to supplication, and to reparation? Yes! you so believe. You feel that this part of the text belongs to us. Do you not fear lest the rest belong to us? "And behold, joy and gladness; slaying oxen and killing sheep; eating flesh and drinking wine;" the people complacently congratulating themselves upon their prosperity; priding themselves upon their privileges; their hearts filled with joy and mirth; palpitating with proud emotions in view of what they imagine awaits their country. "We are now a great people. We are but upon the threshold of our developement. Great and glorious is the Anglo Saxon destiny; and we shall fulfil it." God threatening us in his word, and in all the experience of nations, and in Providence, and in the voice of reason, that unless the nation repent, and make her policy to harmonize with the interests of the common humanity, he will not allow us to stand; we are in the way of the heavenly ameliorations of the age, and he will put us out of the way; and we swelling with thoughts of a glorious destiny? The Anglo Saxon race, and spirit, and law, to occupy this vast continent! and all under American auspices! God telling us that without speedy repentance "our iniquity shall not be purged from us till we die;" and so called philosophers and patriots the land over, doting about our glorious destiny! the coming greatness of the American nation! Reason and Revelation, and universal humanity reprobating the war of conquest in which we are engaged; and our great men contemplating calmly the occupancy and annexation of Mexico, as part of the Anglo Saxon destiny which is to astonish the world, and open a new era! This whole cry about destiny, and the opening glory of the American nation, is absolute atheism. It leaves God out of the question. It predicates

national prosperity, not upon his favor, secured by righteousness, but upon enterprise and ambition, and the tendency of society to new developement. It despises a call to repentance. It disdains to halt in a career of lawless aggrandizement, and talks of destiny. In the meantime the people enjoy themselves well; follow their worldly pursuits with good relish, and say, "thank God, we are doing well." Thus does God's call to repentance seem to be received. The pulpit does not seem prepared to enforce the call. The secular press surely does not enforce it. The accounts of Mexican towns burnt and devastated, and Mexican soldiers slaughtered, and distress beyond all computation carried into thousands of Mexican dwellings, are heralded forth as "glorious news!" "wonderful achievements" "unparalleled success!" "our army covered with glory!"

God, in these fearful scenes of destruction, "calling the people to weeping, and to mourning;" and behold, on the part of editors and people, "joy and gladness;" firing of cannon, ringing of bells, and kindling of bonfires! So have we generally met God's calls to repentance; and it should not need a very vigorous imagination to cause the ear to hear what Isaiah heard, when it was revealed in his ears by the Lord of Hosts, "Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from them till they die, saith the Lord of Hosts." The eye must be blind that cannot see materials enough for our national destruction, should God in retribution appoint for as destruction. We know he never lacks the means of retribution. He is "the Lord of Hosts." Seldom is it the eye can so plainly see his means. Will he use them, we persisting in the contempt of national righteousness, and despising his call to weeping, and to mourning, and to works meet for repentance? In his word he says he will. In his providence he says he will. National experience says he will. Doubtless he will. The destinies of this nation are just as absolutely in his hand, as were those of the Jewish nation. His commands

are as explicitly laid upon us, as they were upon them. Our disobedience is just as offensive to him as was theirs. Doubtless the consequences will be as ruinous to us as they were to them, our disobedience being persisted in. These are elementary truths; perhaps we may say, the principles of national religion, which a man is inexcusable for not knowing to be such from all the light of history. What shall be done? "What shall we do, a little handful of private citizens?" In all candor consider the national sins. Purge out the leaven of any prejudice that would blind you to them. By the influence of God's word purify and soften your moral sensibilities, that you may estimate the guilt of the national sins. Speak of them freely, and encourage all others to speak of them. Demand of ministers that they speak of them; that thus they may help in the production of a healthy moral sentiment in the public mind, that shall demand reformation and reparation. Abhor and condemn above all things, and stigmatise as moral treason, and repudiate, and help drive out the abominable sentiment, that with regard to national acts, we are not only to be submissive, but silent; that to canvass, and if need be, condemn the proceedings of the government towards other nations, shows us no patriots; the sentiment, "our country, right or wrong." Help, in petitions, remonstrances, and otherwise, in making known to our rulers, the public mind about public matters. Demand that the press speak freely and impartially of public measures. Help to curb that violence of party spirit, which denounces every thing in a political opponent, and defends every thing in a political friend. Resist the notion that it is superstitious to call public calamities, divine judgments. Be ready always, with Franklin to recognise a God that governs in the affairs of nations. Never be afraid of the doctrine of strict national retribution. Convince yourselves thoroughly of its truth, as you may do from the plain teachings of history. Maintain earnestly, that if we refuse to hear God when he calls us "to

weeping and to mourning," and instead, are filled with joy and gladness, we are in danger of the fearful words, "This iniquity shall not be passed from you till you die, saith the Lord of Hosts." Can we not all do these things? Would not the doing of such things be the work and service of enlightened patriotism? Above all my fellow citizens, you can offer to God prayer for our beloved country. When at last the divine forbearance toward Israel could reach no further, and God saw that they must be destroyed, how affecting is that word of his! "I sought for a man that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land," that is, simply pray for the land; "*and I found none.*" Oh the long suffering of God, that looked even for the excuse of a patriot's prayer, that he might still spare the land! And David, after recounting the guilt of the people's idolatry at Horeb, says, "and God said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach," that is, prayed to him, "lest he should destroy them." Can a true patriot withhold prayer for his country?

Can any man who believes in a God, pretend to doubt, that if an irreligious spirit prevail in the land, and unrighteous policy, internal or foreign, be still persisted in, and the idea of retribution be laughed at, and when God calls to mourning and to weeping, behold joy and gladness; eating flesh, and drinking wine; a presumptuous feeling of security, and prosperity, when God reveals guilt and danger, can the believer in a God doubt that then the Lord of Hosts will alter the fearful words, "Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you, till you die, saith the Lord of Hosts?" Many a christian heart is oppressed and laboring with the apprehension, that this decree is already gone forth from God. The venerable Dr. Porter, of Andover, is reported to have said, just before his death, upon a return from the south, that he feared God had prepared a cup of blood for this nation to drink, from the guilt of slavery. Add to this our other enormous pub-

lic wrongs, and our apparent readiness to fling defiance in the face of God, and then decide whether there is reason to fear God has prepared for this land a cup of blood to drink. And when you consider the fearful preparations for mingling that cup, will you not agree with me, that the people misunderstand the voice of God? he does not call them to joy and gladness, but to weeping and to mourning? that a day of thanksgiving for our great mercies, does not as well become us, as would have done a day of fasting and humiliation for our great abuse of them? You will not hold it a revelation in me of party prejudice and virulence, that I thus speak of the public guilt upon this day of public thanksgiving, when you reflect that it is not chargeable to any particular political party, but has been with us from the beginning growing with our growth, and strengthening with our strength. Neither, so considering the signs of the times, will you esteem it but croaking thus to speak of the danger of national retribution. I believe; therefore I speak. And so believing, what invective could be too fierce against me, should I refuse to speak? Let us all speak. Let us all act. Let us all pray; peradventure the Lord shall still spare us. AMEN.