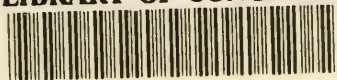


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SUBMISSION TO THE WILL OF GOD.

A FAST DAY SERMON,

DELIVERED IN THE

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

LOUISVILLE,

ON FRIDAY, MAY 14th, 1841,

BY W. L. BRECKINRIDGE,

PASTOR OF THE CONGREGATION.

LOUISVILLE:
MORTON & GRISWOLD,
.....
1841.

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TO THE LADIES

OF THE

LOUISVILLE PROVIDENT SOCIETY.

The following discourse was prepared very hastily, in a feeble state of health, under the pressure of onerous duties, and without the slightest expectation that it would ever assume any other form. But such wishes, as it would not be proper to resist, have been expressed for its publication. I beg permission to put it forth under the sanction of your name. It may save it from a scrutiny, which, I am conscious its execution cannot bear, although I think its sentiments may all be defended. It is proper too, that the pecuniary avails of such labors should be placed at your disposal, since the Fast, which God has chosen, implies "that thou deal thy bread to the hungry, when thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house."

W. L. B.

Assembled, as we are, at the request of the Chief Magistrate of the country, it is proper for us to recur to the terms in which he has invited us to the services of this interesting occasion. You will allow me, then, to read the President's "Recommendation to the People of the United States."

"When a christian people feel themselves to be overtaken by a great public calamity, it becomes them to humble themselves under the dispensation of Divine Providence, to recognize His righteous government over the children of men, to acknowledge his goodness in time past, as well as their own unworthiness, and to supplicate His merciful protection for the future.

"The death of William Henry Harrison, late President of the United States, so soon after his elevation to that high office, is a bereavement peculiarly calculated to be regarded as a heavy affliction, and to impress all minds with a sense of the uncertainty of human things, and of the dependence of nations, as well as of individuals, upon our Heavenly Parent.

"I have thought, therefore, that I should be acting in conformity with the general expectation and feelings of the community, in recommending, as I now do, to the people of the United States, of every religious denomination, that, according to their several modes and forms of worship, they observe a day of fasting and prayer, by such religious services as may be suitable on the occasion; and I recommend Friday, the fourteenth day of May next, for

“ that purpose: to the end that, on that day, we may
 “ all, with one accord, join in humble and reverential ap-
 “ proach to Him, in whose hands we are, invoking Him to
 “ inspire us with a proper spirit and temper of heart and
 “ mind, under these frowns of His Providence, and still to
 “ bestow his gracious benedictions upon our Government
 “ and our country.”

There is something not only impressive, but I think truly great, in the conception of national grief—a whole people mourning. The tears of a single individual are affecting. We cannot witness, without deep emotion, the sorrow of a family, all its members mingling their sighs and tears together. The heart could scarce bear to behold the grief of a whole city, and hear the lamentations of every citizen and every family rising in one groan to Heaven. But when these swell into the wailings of a nation, the sound is like the voice of God's thunder. The tenderness of the impression is, in a measure, lost in its grandeur. That giddy, weakening, heartsick anguish, with which we heard of the nation's loss, is, in some sense, forgotten. The hearts of the people are still sad, and long they will be so—but the very conception of this great nation giving utterance with one voice to that sadness, is a mighty sluice to let it off. It is a great outlet, while it is a sublime expression, of the nation's grief. And it shows a great spirit in our Chief Magistrate and his immediate advisers, and a just and noble confidence in the greatness of the national heart, that they have called the people to the exercises of this day. I speak not now of piety. But they take large views of men and of things, and they presume that the people do, or we had received no

such recommendation, as that which has convened us this morning. I trust that no one here will deem me to be treading on forbidden ground, or advancing an improper sentiment, when I say that this is an auspicious omen of a generous, wise and prosperous administration of our affairs—for they only are worthy or fit to guide the interests of a great people, who can themselves take large views, and who are not afraid to trust the people to respond to them.

Although so much has been said, within the last few weeks, both in the public prints, and in every private circle, of the character of our late honored Chief Magistrate, and of the events which may spring from his death, these themes are too full of interest to have become at all tedious to you. On this account merely you would not forbid me to speak of them to-day. But upon higher considerations, they are excluded from the place and the occasion. I am not the person, nor is this the time, to pronounce his eulogy, and, although under other circumstances, you would delight to hear it, its utterance is needless. His name, a name for two centuries sacred to liberty,* identified in both hemis-

* "And truly it is a name strongly linked with liberty, and with some of the grandest movements of mankind. To us, the two public documents, (after Magna Charta,) that most illustriously exhibit the sovereignty of right, are the warrant for the execution of Charles Stuart, the first king of England of his name, and the Declaration of Independence, against George Guelf, the third of his name. The former embodies the sentiments of a great, just and free people, vindicating their recovered liberty by the judicial condemnation of a bloody and perfidious tyrant—the latter sets forth, in a unanimous legislative rejection of another tyrant by a people resolved to be free, the clear and elevated principle on which the independence of states reposes. *There*

pheres with its noblest struggles, is engraved upon the hearts of his countrymen. His memory needs no other monument—'tis embalmed in the bosoms of men, and will live till the history and institutions of his country are forgotten.

Nor must I speak of political events and prospects, especially as connected with the interests and schemes of parties. We are all Americans. To-day, at least, we must all be brothers. If it became me to discuss such subjects on any occasion, it could not on this. If I understood them ever so well, to-day my tongue would refuse the office. We have higher objects before us. The concussion of parties, even the purest aims of patriots, and the best principles of statesmen, do not reach us here. We come to worship God, and, while we stand in awe of his power, and tremble before his judgments, to preach the gospel of his grace and love.

But first there are two sentiments which I cannot repress. If you do not approve them, you will, at least, pardon the freedom with which I utter them. I know not how it strikes other minds, but for myself, I cannot bear that the President's dust should be taken from the capitol. The seat of our national government has been consecrated oftentimes, and abundantly, thank God, by noble efforts of genius, wis-

is but one name common to these two glorious instruments. IT IS THE NAME OF HARRISON! Harrison, the regicide,—and Harrison, the signer of the Declaration of Independence,—and Harrison, the leader of the remarkable political revolution of our own day. It is the same name, the same family from father to son in direct descent, the same remarkable and unique association with the vast movements of the people, the vast ideas of generations!"—
Balt. Lit. & Rel. Mag.

dom and patriotism, but never before by the work of death, the very act of God, upon the person of the Chief Magistrate. These ashes are ours—they belong to all the people. The spirit has gone to its great account, I trust to a blessed recompense. It is God's. But what remains is ours. That, too, God will one day claim, and if the soul be now with Him, He will, in the end, clothe the body too with the brightness of light; for you know, my brethren, that of each one of the saints it is promised, that He shall "change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." But, in the mean time, let it rest where his countrymen have laid it with so many sighs and tears. It will breathe a fragrance around the spot that will doubly hallow it. It will help to purify and elevate the patriotism of all who go up thither as true friends of the country, and, I think, it would almost keep off the foot of the intruder, who would dare to go up as an enemy. Let us tell his immediate kindred, that we are all his children. Let the nation go with a kind, respectful, but earnest importunity, which cannot be denied, and tell his widow and his children, that their loss is ours too; that he was our friend and father, and that the great family begs the privilege of watching his grave, even in the people's burial place, where God has already placed his ashes. I am sure such a suit could not be denied, and I think it would mingle well with the services of this day, if all the people were to solemnize it farther by signing one great national petition to the family for the boon, and thus affording to that house

another opportunity of laying the whole country under obligations to it.

There is another subject, which I would like to urge, if I had the voice, upon all my countrymen to-day. This day—which God has sent us so beautiful from Heaven, as if He would chase away by its brightness the gloom which the public calamity has thrown over our minds—I would have signalized by another move of the nation. I would have another great paper signed by all the people to-day. But it should be in the tone of sovereigns speaking to their public servants. It should say that the nation will administer upon the President's estate, and deem itself highly favored in being permitted to assume all its obligations, and make up all its losses, and this, in a manner commensurate to the greatness and glory of the state. Not as if we were conferring a cold, grudging charity—not as if we were trying to pay a debt, which is beyond all price, and which can never be paid with money—but in the spirit of a just, generous, great people, seeking to render a tribute of respectful and affectionate homage, as honorable to the nation which offers it, as to the house which shall receive it, in the name of its illustrious head now gone. Nor should it be done in any stinted measure, limiting it to the poor meanness of one year's salary. Has this nation grown niggardly? Once, the representatives of the people, going directly from their bosom, could order the national ships across the ocean for the accommodation of the "Nation's Guest." Nay, as a tribute of personal respect, and an expression of public gratitude for his services in the early struggle for liberty by the

colonies, Congress assumed the obligations of our fathers, and voted him, in the name of the people, a princely domain of lands, and eight years' salary of a President in money. La Fayette was an early and steady friend of the country, and as such deserved its gratitude: and, if I remember rightly, but one voice in Congress, and hardly another among all the people was raised against this expression of public regard. But what did the people owe to that gallant friend of liberty, more than their debt to him who has now left us? and what has resulted from the precedent, but national glory? and who does not to-day regard it as a proud example? I am ashamed of the press, when I read its pitiful propositions on this subject. It is one of the most prominent characteristics of the American people that they are capable of forming great conceptions. They are quick to appreciate them, and ever ready to carry them out. It makes me rejoice in my country, and thank God that it is mine.

But I have already pursued these reflections farther, perhaps, than is proper, in view of the important services which are before us. Our Chief Magistrate has invited all the people to spend this day in religious exercises, and those of a peculiarly grave and solemn kind. We are here to pursue them. In view of such a recommendation to such services, I have thought of no Scripture which could more appropriately engage our attention, than that which you will find recorded in,

JOHN, 18 CHAP. 11 v. THE CUP WHICH MY FATHER HATH GIVEN ME, SHALL I NOT DRINK IT?

These are the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, in which, besides what we shall presently notice, he expresses his disapprobation of Peter's vehement impatience. Simon Peter, as he was one of the earliest, so he was one of the most attached friends and disciples of the Saviour. A man, as I suppose, of superior intellect—certainly, of a generous disposition—if unsteady, yet noble and ardent—too much influenced by sudden impulses, and often betrayed into serious indiscretions, as men of his general cast of character are apt to be—of which we frequently observe examples among ourselves. Indeed, so much do the people of this country partake of such a disposition, that a reproof of Peter's too hasty, though generous temerity, is peculiarly appropriate to many of ourselves. Would that we had his honest and sincere attachment to his Lord! For, although he once denied him, and once, in later times, dissembled, he was an honest man, and truly loved his master.

On the occasion before us, a band of officers and men from the Chief Priests and Pharisees, led by the traitor Judas—who had already sold his Lord, and was now come to betray him with a kiss—had followed Jesus to the garden, where he was accustomed to resort with his disciples. Thither, as to a retired spot, where he might be seized without a tumult of the people, they came to lay their bloody hands upon him. This was their hour, and the power of darkness; and Jesus was ready to be led away to the work

which he had come from Heaven to do. But, as if he would at once explain that work in its nature and design, he stood forth before his followers, representing in their small but honored band, the countless multitude of those, who in all coming time were to believe on his name through their word, and said, "I have told ye that I am he. If, therefore, ye seek me, let these go their way." "That the saying, says the Evangelist, might be fulfilled which he spake, of them which thou gavest me have I lost none." What a clear, beautiful, unchangeable illustration is this, my brethren, of the blessed doctrine of the gospel, that Jesus took the place of his people, and suffered in their stead, so that none can ever lay any thing to the charge of God's elect.

It was, perhaps, the tender concern for his disciples, thus expressed by Jesus, and as to its full meaning, imperfectly understood by them, that robbed Peter of all self-command. His generous bosom had already swelled with feelings which he could scarce suppress, when he saw the fierce, yet trembling band of ruffians—for it is said that when they saw Jesus, they went backward and fell to the ground—and when he looked upon Judas, as he tried to smile through the cloud, which his base sentiments, and the beginnings of his remorse had already spread over his features. But when Jesus laid bare his own bosom for the stroke, that his disciples might go safe, I think it was then that Peter could bear no more. His heart was full of emotions which could not be repressed. And I am almost ready to believe that half the men in this vast assembly, if they had been there, with no more than Peter's knowledge, and all Peter's love, would have felt as he did, and perhaps have acted just so too.

Unhappily, he had a sword—he was scarce conscious that he laid his hand upon it—he had hardly touched it, till the hasty weapon started from its scabbard. It was the very scene, if misunderstood as to its great designs, to rouse every indignant feeling of the bosom, and make even the swords spring forth!

But Peter was all wrong. He ought to have understood his master better. And Jesus, to set him right, having doubtless by his unseen power kept him from the deed of murder, healed by a touch the person whom he had wounded, and said, “Put up thy sword into the sheath. The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?”

You perceive that much is suggested by this Scripture which we cannot examine to-day, even if it all suited the occasion. This, however, stands out from the passage, OUR SAVIOUR’S MOST BEAUTIFUL AND SUBLIME EXAMPLE OF PATIENT SUBMISSION TO THE WHOLE WILL OF GOD.

The dispensations of Divine Providence, whether kind or severe, towards nations, no less than individuals, are spoken of in Scripture under the figure of a cup, which God pours out for men, and gives to them to drink. As (Ps. 23, 5,) “Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies, thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over.” (Ps. 75, 7—8,) “But God is the judge. He putteth down one, and setteth up another. For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture, and he poureth out of the same, but the dregs thereof; all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out and drink them.” (Isai. 57, 17,) “Awake, awake, stand up, oh Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of

his fury—thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out.” And so frequently through the Scriptures. Thus, in our text, our Lord speaks of the sorrows which were laid upon him, under the same figure, while he disclaims with horror the idea that, however bitter, the trial was not to be borne with patient and pious submission to the Divine will.

Whence, in attempting a little farther to elucidate this Scripture, and apply it to our present circumstances I remark,

I. THAT EVERY EVENT IS FROM GOD.

Not merely are our enjoyments and richest blessings derived from his gracious hand, but no calamity comes without his bidding. The occurrences of human life are the dispensations of Divine Providence. And this suggests one of the most obvious points of difference between him that believeth and an infidel. Even a speculative believer in christianity as divine, and in the Bible, therefore, as from God, holds it to be a fact that the Almighty orders all events. While the true, evangelical, believer devoutly recognizes God’s hand in every dispensation, and in view of all, looks up to Him, and says with the Saviour, “Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.” Thus referring every thing to the Divine sovereignty.

That events ought to be so referred, the Scriptures explicitly declare. As (Amos 3, 6,) “Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it?” So again, (Isai. 45, 17,) “I form the light, I create darkness, I make peace, and create evil. I the Lord do all these things.” You remember how Job spake under his multiplied and extraordinary calamities, some of them immediately induced by the hand of man, and

not all of them, therefore, to be referred directly to the act of God. His philosophy was as sound, as his piety was elevated—indeed piety deserves the name only when it is rational—“The Lord gave,” he said, “and the Lord hath taken away.” And a clear recognition of this principle it was which enabled him, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, to add, “Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

In like manner we have the testimony of our Lord, not only to the pledge of Divine protection to his people, so that the very hairs of their heads are numbered; but also to that careful supervision of all affairs, which does not suffer even a sparrow to fall to the ground without our Father’s knowledge.

And this testimony is confirmed, if that were possible, by the general opinions of men. Even in the minds of the obdurate, who have least sense of religion, and of those who afford no practical evidence of its influence over their feelings and behaviour, there is something that responds to the voice of God when he speaks through his Providence. So that, in some instances, all men are obliged to be still, and say that God has done it, for the conscience will admit no other solution. It is related—I do not vouch for the accuracy of the statement, but I have so heard it related as to credit the story, that when the Asiatic cholera was travelling on in its desolating march through the old world, an American physician met it in a city of Europe, where it prevailed with less than its accustomed violence, and upon his return to America, undertook, with great confidence and precision, to assert its causes, and to teach the method of its cure—declaring that it was impossible for the disease to prevail in

region where he lived—the causes not operating there, and that if it should appear, it would be in so mild a form and so easily manageable, that he would pledge a limb from his own person, for every instance of its mortality in his town. Presently it reached our shores, and gliding on in its silent, terrific, irresistible progress, it sought out the abode of our traveller. In that very town it swept away nearly one-tenth of the people, and in the general consternation, and his own manifest impotence, he was compelled to give it up. Confessing that he could do nothing with it, for it began—where other diseases closed—with death! while all men said, of a truth the hand of God is in it!

But it is not only on such appalling occasions, that God vindicates his matchless power, and universal control, as He wrings from the wicked their reluctant homage. There is, if I do not greatly err, something in the reason and conscience of every man that makes him see the hand of God in events, until powerful influences of sin have blinded his eyes, and seared his conscience as with a hot iron.

I am rejoiced to be able, as it is in point here, to remark, and as you all have doubtless observed with high gratification, that the cabinet officers of the government, in announcing to the country the death of the Chief Magistrate, recognized in the most distinct manner, that melancholy event, as an act of “an All-wise Providence.” So his successor in assuming the reigns of government, in like speech, calls it “the dispensation of an All-wise Providence,” and assures the people, that for a just and happy administration of their affairs, he confides in the “care of an everwatchful and overruling Providence;” while all the people speak of these

events, as the dispensations of God. There is the nation's testimony to the particular dispensations of Divine Providence!

Nations, then, no less than individuals, are subject to His dispensations. Nay, I may add, especially so, because men's national relations are dissolved in the grave. Men will go up to the judgment, each in his solitary accountability. In their great associated relations they are confined to this world, and in that capacity, receive their awards only on earth.

Nor does the universal and irresistible control of events by the Almighty make him, in any sense, a partner in the crimes of men. For says the Apostle Peter upon this very subject, (Acts 2, 23,) "Him"—referring to Jesus Christ, who had just been cruelly murdered,—“Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel, and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain,”—thus asserting distinctly and with the utmost positiveness this proposition, that God may appoint a certain end by an absolute and irresistible decree, and yet men may greatly offend Him, by the inferior agency which they employ for its accomplishment. Here is a clear assertion, therefore, of the Divine sovereignty, in the control and ordering of events which human hands work out—and an assertion, no less clear, of the unrestrained freedom, and the deep responsibility of human agency, in the very events which God had purposed.

. Then God is a great king over all his creatures, each one of whom according to its intelligence is accountable to Him. And for men, it is clear, that the rule of conduct and

of accountability is not the secret purpose or decree of God, but his law written upon the heart, and still more clearly in his word. And hence, though a man's conduct were tending in its influence to a result both desirable and necessary as ordained of God, it might be extremely wicked. When Cyrus, as we read in the prophets, was achieving by his valor, and his skill, the great events, which God's righteous Providence had ordered, it was as a servant, who knew not the master in Heaven—and none can tell what varied and extreme wickedness may have been all the time at work in his heart, nor how many improper acts may have obscured the glory of his remarkable career.

We can all perceive that the just judgments of God may come down on any wicked people, and be God's just judgments still, although contrived, as far as man contrived them, in perfidy and ambition, and executed amid the cruel and fierce display of the worst passions of our nature. And so, in the best gifts that God bestows on men, the same base passions may rankle in the bosoms, and even burst forth in the lives of those, whom he has made the almoners of his blessings. God is holy in all his ways, whatever man may be, even when he is helping, as an instrument in the Divine hand, to accelerate God's "bright designs, and work his sovereign will." If it had pleased God, that his servant, whose death we mourn, had fallen in his high place by an assassin's hand, rather than by disease, no man, in his senses, would have said, that it was any the less a dispensation of Divine Providence—nor that God was less holy, for the wickedness of the murderer whom he permitted to shed such honored blood—nor that the murderer was less wicked,

and less deserved the extremity of punishment. The sovereignty of God does not affect, much less destroy, the free agency of man, or his strict accountability.

II. In the second place, I observe that, THE DISPENSATIONS OF PROVIDENCE, NO MATTER HOW TRYING, ARE TO BE BORNE WITH PATIENT AND RESIGNED SUBMISSION TO THE SOVEREIGN WILL OF GOD.

This is the very meaning and aim of our religious exercises to-day. To what do our services tend, if, while we acknowledge God's powerful, wise and righteous government of the universe, we do not consent to his will? What avails it that we confess our sins, that we deprecate his well merited displeasure, that we implore his protection, his forgiveness, and his grace, if yet we be unwilling that He should do what seemeth him good? Why, my brethren, however we may appear to each other in these services, they are stamped with the ineffaceable mark of hypocrisy before God, if we do not bow with rational and devout submission to His holy will. I do not speak of a cold insensibility—I do not mean a stoical indifference—nor that frigid philosophy, with which some men try to brace up their minds to endure the destiny, to which fate consigns them, as they madly call it. Nor do I mean that heroic and invincible fortitude, so noble in its place, with which the brave do sometimes bear the ills of life. But I mean that sentiment—sent to us from Heaven—which Jesus breathed—which none have known who are not taught of God—that which enables its possessor, from the heart and in all things to say, the will of the Lord be done!

Such a spirit, it has been intimated, is peculiarly appropriate to us to-day—met as we are for the solemn expression of our sense of calamity and sin. As a nation and as individuals, we are fasting before God—humbling ourselves under his hand laid upon us in this public stroke. The very spirit that we should cherish is that of profound submission to the expressions of God's will in the solemn acts of His providence.

An argument for the earnest cultivation of such a spirit—for I speak to those who demand and can appreciate a reason—may be derived,

1. From what has been already insisted on, that *all events, even our heaviest calamities, are to be regarded as the dispensations of God*. They could not have occurred without his permission. And all that enables us to perceive of any event, that God has ordered it, compels us also to say, "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works"—"Just and true are thy ways, oh thou King of Saints." "I was dumb," says David, "I opened not my mouth because thou didst it." If the Lord be God, a God of wisdom, benevolence, justice, holiness and truth, then men ought so to stand in awe of Him, as to praise Him for what he does, no less than for what He is; and no voice of complaint against any of His acts, nor even the feeblest sighing of the spirit, in the way of murmuring against Him, ought ever to be heard.

2. *Men ought to be silent and submissive before God, under their severest afflictions induced by his hand, because they have been well deserved.*

Who of us can this day lay his hand on his heart, and, with an honest and clear conscience, say that he has not de-

served the chastisements with which he has been visited! No matter of what kind, no matter how frequent, or severe, they have been lighter than we deserved!

And what has THIS NATION merited at the hand of God? Are there no national sins, no national wrongs, oppression, injustice? "If thou seest, saith the wise man, (Eccles. 5, 8,) the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter, for He that is higher than the highest regardeth, and there be that are higher than they." God has declared that He will vindicate the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Does nothing in our history, although we are the professed friends of justice and liberty among all people, prove us as a nation to be guilty of oppression, before the Judge of all the earth? Can the people of this land appeal to God for the righteousness of their course towards those whom our Fathers found the possessors of the soil before them—or those whom the cupidity and inhuman cruelty of men have forced hither into bondage from other climes? I pray God to spare us! For I fear it is a great account, which we have yet to settle with Him, for our conduct to the red man and the black—neither of whom we have treated as our brethren, although God has declared, that He made "of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth." 'Twas one of our most distinguished countrymen, I believe—himself no Christian, nor even a friend to Christianity—whom men love to call the apostle of liberty—who said in allusion to these subjects, "I tremble for my country, when I reflect that God is just." Can the eye of infinite purity behold, without offence, the madness of party spirit, and the furious asperities of public feeling, in

our political contests? Such that it has been truly said, if half the things that partisans say of each other be true, they are all villains. Is our unparrelled worldliness no sin? Does the tide of intemperance, of legalized vice and murder, that rolls over our land, send up no sound to Heaven that God will hear? Have we no account to settle with him, for our perpetual violation of his holy Sabbath? And how much of our glory have we ascribed to God? We praise our fathers—we laud ourselves—we boast of our institutions of government and our progress in science, and the arts. But how little do we praise God! 'Twould be a long list, if all were spread out—but in view of only these, surely we have reason to fear that God will deem us worthy of his rebuke, and will say of us, as He said of those before us, "Shall I not visit for these things, shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" So our Chief Magistrate seems to think, if we may judge from the terms of his appeal to the people to humble themselves before God, and confess their sins to-day. Well, therefore, as I conceive, does it become us to be submissive before God, when He lays his hand upon us, seeing that we have deserved so much.

3. *Our submission ought to be deepened, and our humiliation rendered still more devout and patient, as our gratitude ought to abound, when we remember the mercies with which God has followed us as a people.* I think the bosom of this nation ought to swell to-day, and the lips of all the people ought to break forth into singing, because of the manifold goodness of God. Notwithstanding all, that in the judgment of any, may distress the country and cloud our prospects, what rich national blessings do we enjoy—wide spread dominion—the respect

of nations—peace with all—untrammelled liberty—the diffusion of knowledge—the true religion! And these are but items in the catalogue of blessings. Even with this late national bereavement how many mercies mingle! To mention but one of a political nature—how perfect and hence how glorious and full of promise, the tranquillity with which our public affairs have been conducted in this new trial of the system! The present Chief Magistrate has succeeded as quietly to office as if he had only left the chair of state, to resume it after an hour's absence! Not a jar—not a murmur! The only semblance of agitation is the noise of the sighs of people, as they breathe them over the grave of one President, and the shouts of their triumph as they salute another! He, I am bold to say, is no patriot, who does not rejoice in this token of the strength of the government, and the permanency of its institutions.

But I cannot forbear to congratulate you on another mercy here. I refer to the clear, abundant and doubtless sincere, and heartfelt testimony, which our rulers have borne to the true religion. First, there is that in the Inaugural Address of the late President. I am yet to learn that any of our former rulers has borne just such an one—penned too, it is said, by a most remarkable and touching coincidence in the very chamber where he was born—where his pious mother had often, in his childhood, retired with him for prayer—and laying her hand upon his young head commended him to God—and thus, it may be, fixed in his mind impressions of religion that he never wholly lost, and which, after so many years of absence returning to that hallowed spot, he there prepared to announce to all mankind. I am ready to believe

that God's holy angels, who used to attend his pious parent when she led him there for prayer—who had hovered around his path through life, and guarded him from danger on the field of battle—met him again in that sweet, sacred chamber, and catching the sentiment, as it arose in his heart, before yet his pen could trace its lines, flew away with the tidings to the skies! And yet, perhaps, little did even they think that day, that God would send them down so soon to bear to his presence the spirit of his servant! It was upon that solemn day, when he stood up, as it were, in the face of the world, to assume the government of this greatest of republics, and to take, therefore, the most august station among men, that he said,

“I deem the present occasion sufficiently important and solemn to justify me in expressing to my fellow-citizens a profound reverence for the Christian Religion, and a thorough conviction that sound morals, religious liberty, and a just sense of religious responsibility, are essentially connected with all true and lasting happiness: and to that good Being who has blessed us by the gifts of civil and religious freedom, who watched over and prospered the labors of our fathers, and has hitherto preserved to us institutions far exceeding in excellence those of any other people, let us unite in fervently commending every interest of our beloved country in all future time.”

It has been stated, on such authority as I do not hesitate to credit, a statement which under other circumstances it would be improper to disclose, but since he has gone from us, the fact, like his character is public property, and when authenticated becomes an important testimony—that on the

day of his inauguration both before and after that event, he sought the retirement of his chamber, and there implored the Divine blessing under his great cares, and besought that wisdom which cometh down from above.

One of his earliest acts thereafter, was to purchase with the public funds, and to be kept in the executive mansion, as the property of the people, a copy of the word of God—declaring it to be his sense of propriety in the case, that the Bible ought to be a part of the furniture of the President's house, put into his hands, as it were by the people themselves, to be his guide in administering their affairs!

I remember to have read some weeks ago, with equal gratification and surprise, accompanying the annunciation of his arrival at the seat of government, a distinct apology for its occurrence on the holy Sabbath, the editor stating that it was a necessity arising from some casualty and deeply painful to the President elect. The public statement was probably made without his knowledge, but no discreet gentleman would have made it, without a very distinct acquaintance with his views on that subject. It was such a testimony to the sacredness of the day of rest, and the value of the religion which enjoins it, as ought to be as gratifying to all Christians, as it is rare among our public men.

The late President was not a member of the Church, by public profession of his faith in Christ—and his testimony to religion is in some respects the more interesting and remarkable on that account. It is understood, however, that he was on the eve of making such a profession, when the opportunity was lost to him by death. It is farther stated upon unquestionable authority, derived indeed from his own lips,

that for several years past he had greatly desired to have a visible place among the people of God; and that he was deterred from becoming a member of the Church only by considerations drawn from his position before the country. In this, doubtless, he erred. It had been better for him to confess Christ before men, and leave them to impugn his motives as they might see fit, than from any such considerations to neglect a command so tender, solemn and universal, as that which requires the friends of the Son of God to commemorate his dying love. But every one can perceive how easy it was for a purely honest and delicate mind to be misled on this subject in his circumstances. And justice, not to say charity, but that simple justice, which all are willing to render to the dead at least, requires us to suppose that he was prompted, by reverence for religion and the fear of impairing its credit among men through their misconstruction of his motives, to deny himself so long the privilege of a public connection with the Church of our Divine Lord. "E'en the failing leaned to virtue's side." And the whole matter furnishes a strong expression of his sense of the purity and value of true religion.

Reference has already been made to the early declaration of his successor that he relied upon God alone for ability to administer the government aright. I have also read in your hearing his recommendation to the people to observe this National Fast. You have not only been struck with the fact, so unusual in our history, of the appointment of such a day—but you have admired the terms in which the request has been preferred. It breathes no sentiments that are not as just and devout, as they are patriotic. I know not whether

the President professes to be a Christian in the evangelical sense. But I see, and I thank God for it, that he is not ashamed to be known to revere the gospel. He has a strong sense of religion, and a conscience that has felt the powerful impressions of truth, or else he has formed a large estimate of the hold of religion on the hearts of the people. If he have not the holy fear of God before his own eyes, he believes that his fellow-citizens have before theirs. If he do not love the Saviour himself, he is sure that multitudes of the people do. And in either case, it is a testimony to religion worthy of public and grateful acknowledgment this day. Our honored Chief Magistrate has proclaimed us, to all men, a Christian people. There is more than that vague and heartless recognition of the Almighty, to which the nation has been accustomed in its rulers, but which has touched no heart. We have now an example set us of acknowledging the Lord to be our God, in a manner that is rational, scriptural and perfectly intelligible. We are bidden to come before God, as a Christian people should, and heartily to confess our sins, while we mourn over our national calamity. I declare that I can scarce mourn over any thing that brings forth, and apparently so cordially, such a tribute to the religion that Jesus gave the world. No one in this country desires to see any form of religion established by law. But all ought to rejoice in every thing that may impress a sense of religious obligation on the minds of the people: and reverence for the true religion, and distinct recognition of the Providence of God, thus solemnly expressed by our rulers, may help to impress the public mind on these great subjects, while they show that there are already no little religious

feeling and influence in the country. The appointment of this NATIONAL FAST is of itself an interesting tribute to our holy religion. I think that alone, and especially connected with its associated events, it furnishes a reason this day for patient submission to the will of God, because this is a great mercy which has accompanied our national visitation. If our calamity be heavy, we cannot deny that much kindness follows it. Our Lord said, "The cup which MY FATHER hath given me, shall I not drink it?" 'Tis mixed in our case too, and offered by our Father's hand, and that is reason enough why we should drink it.

These reflections apply with equal force to individuals in their private afflictions. If, then, there be one broken-hearted child of sorrow here to-day, let such an one be comforted by the divine example before us. Let such an one contemplate his trials, as ordered by God, who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, who will not lay on his children more than they can bear, nor give them a cup too bitter for them to drink, but will make even their afflictions to work out for them an exceeding weight of glory. Let such an one come to Jesus, who is both the example and the sacrifice for his people; and relying upon his atonement, and endeavoring to imitate his example, and catch his spirit, let him lift up his head, and dry up his tears, and say with the ancient servant of God, "Why art thou cast down, oh my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God."

(While these sheets were passing through the press, the following was observed in the newspapers, and seems to be sufficiently interesting on many accounts to justify its use in filling up the space which would otherwise be left unoccupied.)

DEATH OF PRESIDENT HARRISON—MEETING OF AMERICANS
IN LONDON.

At a numerous meeting of the citizens of the United States in London, at the residence of the American Minister, on Saturday, the 1st day of May, 1841, in consequence of the recent intelligence received of the death of the late President of the United States, the following proceedings took place :

On motion, the AMERICAN MINISTER was requested to preside, and the American Consul, Col. THOMAS ASPINWALL, to act as Secretary.

On taking the chair, Mr. STEVENSON stated very briefly the object of the meeting. He had assembled his countrymen, he said, for the purpose of performing a solemn and impressive duty, which he was quite sure could not fail to be gratifying to every American heart. It was to express their deep sympathy and regret for the loss which their country had sustained in the death of its Chief Magistrate, and to pay the only tribute of respect to his memory, which it was in their power to offer. That whilst their whole country were in-

dulging, with one accord, their feelings of grief and respect under this national bereavement, it was due to themselves, as American citizens in a foreign country, to add the homage of their respect, and mingle their sympathies with those of their common country. No where, probably, could this with more propriety be done than in the house of the representative of the American people. The occasion, Mr. Stevenson said, was one which forbade every thing like studied eulogy. It belonged less to discussion than to feeling, and he should, therefore, not attempt to express by words what he was very confident the hearts of all present would much better supply. When they reflected, however, upon the peculiar circumstances under which this death had taken place; that it was the first instance in the history of their country in which its Chief Magistrate had died during the period of service; that he had been cut off in the first moment of his elevation to power, and in a manner so sudden and unexpected, it was indeed calculated to increase the force of their sympathy, and to mark with a deep sense the uncertainty of human life and the instability of all human pursuits. It was a striking instance of Providential interference in the affairs of man, full of moral and religious instruction, and well calculated to reach the hearts of all.

The following resolutions were then submitted by him to the meeting:

1. *Resolved*, That the citizens of the United States now present have received with feelings of deep sensibility, the painful intelligence of the sudden death of WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON, President of the United States, which took place on the 4th of April, at the seat of the Federal Government.

2. *Resolved*, That, as a mark of respect for the memory of the deceased, we will wear badges of mourning for three months, and that it be recommended to our countrymen abroad to do the same.

3. *Resolved*, That copies of these resolutions and proceedings be transmitted to Mrs. Harrison, with our sincere condolence in the late afflicting bereavement by Divine Providence.



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JAN 1989
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