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The Evils of Disunion:

A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED ON THANKSGIVING DAY,

DECEMBER 12, 1850;

BY

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AND

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

"Meddle not with them that are given to change: for their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the ruin of them both?"—PROV. 21: 21, 22.



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PREFATORY NOTE.



When a man attempts to discharge a public duty, it cannot but be gratifying to him to receive the approbation of the public. The favorable opinion which various persons have been kind enough to express of the following discourse, and repeated requests to see it in a permanent form, have induced the author to consent to its publication ; although, in justice to himself, it is proper to say that it was prepared without the remotest thought of such a result.

He the more readily consents to this, because he is persuaded that the discourse is in accordance with the sentiments of the great body of the Old School Presbyterian Church, with which he is connected. This body, though friendly to rational progress, is properly Conservative. It is a law-abiding body, not given to change. It is not known on the field of politics, nor can it be transferred from one partisan leader to another to secure some local or temporary object. With the Fugitive Slave Law it has not undertaken to interfere. The public prints have indeed reported that the large and respectable Synod of Pittsburgh lately passed resolutions denouncing that measure, but this was a mistake. Resolutions of such a tenor were offered, but they were not adopted. They were laid on the table. Such would probably be the fate of similar overtures in every Judicatory of this branch of the Church of Christ. The writer is happy to have the opportunity of making public the above correction.

PROCLAMATION

BY DANIEL HAINES, GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF
NEW JERSEY.



Whereas, during another year, the Citizens of this State have been signally blessed in the enjoyment of health ; in the abundant products of the earth ; in the peace and prosperity that prevail ; and especially in the deliverance of the National Union from the dangers which have threatened it :

And Whereas, it becomes us as a Christian people to acknowledge our dependence upon Almighty God, from whose bountiful hand all our blessings flow ;

I do therefore set apart and appoint *Thursday, the twelfth day of December* next, as a day of public Thanksgiving and Praise, and respectfully recommend to my fellow-citizens the observance of it in the usual manner.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto subscribed my hand and affixed my privy seal at the City of Trenton, the first day of November, in the year of [L. S.] our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Fifty.

DANIEL HAINES.

Discourse.



"And I will make them one nation in the land." EZEK. 37. 22.

Our excellent Chief Magistrate has specified four causes of thanksgiving in his late pithy and pious proclamation, 1. "The enjoyment of health"; we have been mercifully preserved from epidemics and pestilences during the year. 2. "the abundant products of the earth"; God has given us fruitful seasons, and the early and latter rain, filling our hearts with food and gladness. 3. "The Peace and Prosperity that prevail"; Our State, small among the thousands of Judah, conducts its government without imposing a cent of tax, a thing that would hardly gain belief in some of the tax-ridden countries of the Old World. 4. "Especially the deliverance of the National Union from the dangers which have threatened it." We recal with shuddering the portentous whispers which loaded every breeze last winter, and directed all eyes with the deepest interest to the Chief Council of the nation, and their arduous efforts to arrange an amicable compromise. The compromise has not indeed given universal satisfaction, but it has at least secured us a breathing-time, and opportunity for more mature consideration.

This last item of the proclamation, the Union of these States, it is proposed to consider more at length, as a subject of engrossing interest and appropriate discussion in our present circumstances. Nor do we apprehend a rebuke from our auditors. "The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the Messenger of the Lord of Hosts." While partizan politics are justly proscribed as contaminating to the purity of the ministerial vestments, the fealty which we owe to

the government under which we live, is to be no less sedulously inculcated as a great branch of moral duty. “*Put them in mind,*” writes the apostle Paul to a clergyman, “*put them in mind* to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates.” Titus. 3. 1. And he enjoins another clergyman, in conducting the public liturgical service of the church, “I exhort therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority: that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.” 1 Tim. 2. 1–3. And the apostle expatiates again at some length upon the subject of our civil duties, at the close of an epistle which had been devoted to the discussion of the highest points of doctrine. “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God.” He means to say, the magistracy equally with the ministry is of divine origin and appointment, though the particular individuals who shall execute the trust, are not directly specified by the Lord. Even a bad government is preferable to none. “Whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the Power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same. For he is the minister of God to *thee for good*,” not to rule for himself, but for the benefit of Society. “But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake”; not merely through fear of penal statutes, but from conscientious motives. “For, for this cause pay ye tribute also; for they are God’s ministers,” (this is the third time the apostle calls magistrates God’s ministers,) attending continually upon this very thing,” or ministry. “Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due,—custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.” Rom. 13. 1–7. So far from stirring up sedition, and placing a dagger in the

hands of the slave, the advice of the apostle is peremptory and decided. "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed." You see how carefully the apostle assigns moral, not political, motives for the course he recommends. He did not wish to see the Gospel of Christ made a cloak for sedition. "And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren ; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. "*These things teach and exhort.*" The preacher is not out of the line of his duty in teaching and exhorting on this subject. But notice the scorching rebuke to those who pursue an inflammatory course. "If any man *teach otherwise*, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words," logomachies, mere abstract and not practical points, "whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings, (*gallings*, in the original,) of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness : from such withdraw thyself." 1 Tim. 6. 1-5. See the prolific and bitter fruit, like the apples of Sodom and the grapes of Gomorrah. See it, see it, all over the land ! and all because the apostle's advice is disregarded.

Such is our warrant. It is ample. The preacher needs no apology for doing his duty. "There is a time for all things." "Every thing is beautiful in its season." And if ever there was a time for "*putting men in mind* to be subject to principalities and powers, and to obey magistrates," the present is that time. We speak not as politicians, but as Christian moralists, whose position elevates us high above the dust of the forum and the strife of the ballot box, and bids us reach forth and grasp eternal principles, that lie at the foundation of all government and social order. This is our place ; this is our vantage-ground ; and from it we call upon the people to be subject to their magistrates, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. And if the holy apostle could inculcate such a course of conduct under the imperial sway of a Nero,

much more should American citizens respect the rulers they themselves have elevated to office. This is the Law of Christ. If there be a "higher law," we know not where to look for it.

We deprecate Disunion, because it is unconstitutional, because it is uncalled for, and because it is unwise.

I. It is *unconstitutional*.

It is well for republics occasionally to revert to first principles, and re-examine their original foundation, that they may be saved from fatal deviations.

Union is not a novelty. So long ago as 1643, the Eastern Colonies banded together for mutual defence against the Indian tribes, under the name of "the United Colonies of New England." In 1722, a convention of the governors and commissioners of several of the provinces met at Albany to consult upon the more effectual protection of the frontier. In 1754, the British government invited a similar convention, in view of the French war. *At that very time*, a hundred years ago, the first germ of our present constitution sprang into being. The commissioners proposed a grand *Confederation* of all the North American provinces, with a triennial council to be appointed by the provincial assemblies, and a *President*, to be appointed by the Crown. But the jealousies both of the British and Colonial governments effectually frustrated the adoption of the plan. In 1765, the first actual Continental Congress sat in New York, and prepared a Bill of Rights, in which they protested against the power of taxation; which was confirmed by a like congress of delegates the following year in Philadelphia. These proceedings had at that time all the force of laws. But it was in 1775, that the body met which we are in the habit of regarding as the Congress by eminence, and which was a national convention in the truest sense of the term. In 1776, this venerable body issued the ever memorable Declaration of Independence, and prepared articles of Confederation. So long as the outward pressure lasted, the States were held fraternally together, but as that was gradually removed, the confederation proved a rope of sand. It was only a league or compact of States; and as each State reposed on its unshorn Sovereignty, the general government found itself without power to levy imposts for the discharge of the

national debt, to regulate trade, or to coerce obedience. The entire army was reduced to 80 rank and file. The Union was fast losing respect at home and abroad, and the prospects were deplorable. The exigency at length so vividly forced itself on the attention of the people, that in 1787, a new Convention of delegates from the several States met in Philadelphia, and after a session of several months with closed doors, General Washington being the presiding officer, they prepared the present federal Constitution. It was submitted to the people of each State, and by them ratified, and went into operation March 4, 1789 ; Rhode Island and North Carolina giving in their adherence the year following. From that time the United States started on that career of uninterrupted progress, which has given them almost the entire northern continent ; has brought them face to face on the Pacific with Asia ; has made them the second, if not the first, commercial power in the world ; and has rendered our flag the admiration or the envy of all nations.

This historical review is absolutely necessary at the present time, in order to set the question before us in its true light. Our Constitution is not a compact, it is a government ; it was not, like the old confederation, the work of the States, it was the work of the People ; and it contains no provision for its dissolution, nor for the secession of any of its members. As the States were not, as such, parties to the compact, so they have no power to nullify it. No single State by its legislature has the right to talk of such a thing. Our government, State and National, is twofold, yet not clashing. The same people have constructed both. It is as if the same man had established one agency to carry on one particular kind of business, and another agency to carry on another kind of business. The same head, and the same responsibility, superintend both.

This is a point which will bear no denial. It is an incontestable fact. The People of each State met in convention to adopt and ratify, without the intervention of the legislatures ; and the Preamble rehearses, in unmistakeable language, the popular origin of the Constitution. Listen to it.

"WE, THE PEOPLE of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and

secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

This instrument was framed with great care and deliberation by the first men of the country, and every word has its definite, exact and weighty meaning. The words "WE, THE PEOPLE," are the emphatic words, to which we call your attention in the present discussion. Too much importance cannot be given to the phrase. It marks a complete and total contrast with the old confederation. In the 2d article of that instrument it was explicitly stated, that "each State retained its sovereignty, freedom, and independence; and every power, jurisdiction and right, which was not, by that confederation, expressly delegated to the United States in Congress assembled." Such a government as ours is now, the State Legislatures were incompetent to establish; but whether or not, the fact is settled by the Preamble already recited; which, saying not a word of the State Sovereignties, ascribes its paternity wholly to the People. In the People resides the Supreme Sovereignty.

The only objection that can be raised to this exposition, is, that though no State *legislature* has a right to nullify, the *people* of the State may assemble in convention again, and resolve peaceably or otherwise to secede. But here comes in another principle. In ordinary business, or in leagues and compacts between corporations, no one single party has a right to retire from the agreement. If a man makes a contract or a bargain, he is bound by its terms, however dissatisfied he may afterwards become. This is doubly the case, when common rights, common engagements, and common interests are involved. If either party might withdraw at pleasure, the common rights and interests would be fearfully jeopardized. The liberty is not allowed in ordinary courts of justice. It cannot be recognized among States, except under one contingency, that is, *the right of revolution*. Is there a grievance that justifies this step?

II. This leads naturally to another ground of objection against Disunion. It is *uncalled for*.

Whenever grievances arrive at such a pitch as to be absolutely intolerable, the constitution has provided a peaceful method of

adjustment and redress. The 5th article provides for amendments, in case they should be found necessary. Either on the suggestion of two thirds of both houses of Congress, or on application of the legislatures of two thirds of the States, a convention may be summoned for the purpose, and if ratified by the legislatures or conventions of three fourths of the States, the amendments proposed shall become valid. The time that must necessarily elapse, will be favorable to a calm and dispassionate judgment, and thus put obstacles in the way of that hasty or fluctuating legislation which must prove a fatal impediment to prosperity. Stability is essential to the well-being of national institutions. People will not consent to venture much unless they know what they have to expect. At the same time, with suitable checks and balances, the power of proposing amendments leaves nothing to be desired. Should the rights of the States, or of any State, be infringed, Congress is *bound* to call a convention when constitutionally requested. If the requisite number of two thirds cannot be made to see the propriety or advantage of a convention, it may admit of a reasonable doubt whether a convention is needed.

The Constitution was originally the fruit of Compromise and mutual concession. That spirit must still prevail, if we would continue as we are. That spirit has wisely dictated the late compromise. That it has been unsatisfactory to the violent extremes on both sides, is presumptive evidence of its wisdom and moderation. At any rate it is now the law of the land, and as such must be respected. All constitutional remedies must first be exhausted, before resistance is talked of.

It is certain that without certain constitutional guaranties the South would never have entered into the Union. By letting their peculiar institutions alone, therefore, we lose nothing ; we are just where we would have been, without a union. Those are purely local laws, local institutions. And this should be remembered by both extremes. Those who live north of Mason and Dixon's line should abstain from fanatical and incendiary intermeddling with the local laws of the Southern States ; and those living south of that line should no less reflect that they cannot carry their local laws wherever they go themselves. They may, indeed, complain

that they are shut out from the rights of American citizens, in not being permitted to take their property with them: but they should remember that property is an indeterminate thing. What is property in one State, is not in another. If a State enact local prohibitions that affect strangers alone, while her own citizens are exempted, there might be ground for complaint; but if those prohibitions include her own citizens also, there is, and can be, none. If a State refuses to recognize a certain species of property among her own citizens, there is no injustice in treating strangers in the same manner. To make an exception in favor of the latter, would be most extraordinary partiality indeed.

We think, therefore, the Constitution is good enough, and covers the ground sufficiently without any alterations. We advance a step further.

III. We deprecate Disunion as *unwise*. "Every wise woman buildeth her house, but a foolish woman plucketh it down with her hands." Prov. 14, 1.

To what, under God, are we indebted for our rapid progress, our unparalleled prosperity, our commanding position, our potential voice among the nations? To what but the blessed Union! To it we owe every thing. What madmen, then, are they who are clamorous for a separation! What do they want? Is it only a threat, to coerce into submission to their views? Or are they dreadfully in earnest? And if so, to what do they wish to reduce us? Would they revive that rope of sand, the impotent old Confederation? Or would they have a variety of petty Sovereignties, each with its own marine, its own standing army, its own flag, its own custom-house, its own tariff, its own coinage, and its own passports? Do they want us split up into so many insignificant German Duehies, or independent Indian tribes? What is to become of the smaller States, in such a division, and how will they fare? What disposition shall be made of those glorious old memories in which we have all proudly claimed a share?

On the instrument which published our nationality, the handwriting of Franklin is mingled with that of Jefferson; and the twin signatures of Hancock and Carroll attest their equal undauntedness and self-sacrifice. Northern bayonets flashed at the Bran-

dywine ; and Southern feet bled on the frozen Delaware. Saratoga saw a Southern contingent at the capture of Burgoyne ; nor was the North absent from the closing scenes of Yorktown. And there is Mount Vernon. How shall that hallowed spot be divided ? Or who will assume its exclusive guardianship ? Or which party will be willing to visit their father's grave by stealth only, by sufferance and connivance, as strangers and foreigners ? Or, more horrible still ! whose cannon shall wake those slumbering echoes with their sacrilegious roar, and whose kindred blood shall drench the burial ground of Washington ? When I think of these things, I cannot bring myself to believe that any of the Old Thirteen—when it comes to that,—will have the heart to do it.

And how is the dissolution of the Union to be brought about ? Does any one suppose it can be done as peacefully and quietly as a summer morning ? Is any one so crazy as to imagine this within the range of probabilities ? Will it not be with “the confused noise of warriors, and garments rolled in blood ?” Will not the torch of civil, not to say of servile, war, be kindled, and brother rush to bury his sword in his brother's breast ? Will not towns be bombarded, sacked, pillaged, burnt, amidst the shrieks of virgins and the unavailing remonstrances of the hoary head. And should any one of the States assume a belligerent attitude, would she be so insane as to cope with all the rest single-handed, and call in no foreign help, and commission no privateers with letters of marque on the high seas ? And shall we see foreign navies riding in our northern harbors ? Shall Jersey again be made the Flanders of America, and Brunswick once more see the old sycamore in Burnet street converted into the flag-staff of an enemy's head-quarters, while this and other churches, as was done in years gone by, are dismantled, desecrated, and destroyed ?

It is easy for demagogues to get up the cry of war, but it is the people that must pay for it. It is the people that must bear the burden and heat of the day. It is the people that must be saddled with heavy taxes ; it is the people that must spill their own or their children's blood ; it is the people that must suffer from the stagnation of business, the interruption of commerce, the scarcity of money and commodities, and the usual demoralization of war. The

people should think long and warily before they sound the tocsin, and plunge into such a complication of evils.

The children of Israel long rued the day when Ahijah the Shilonite rent his mystic garment in twelve pieces ; and most welcome, as cold waters to a thirsty soul, was the promise of Jehovah by the prophet Ezekiel, that he would again bring Ephraim and Joseph together, and make them “one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel, and one king should be king to them all : they should be no more two nations, neither be divided into two kingdoms, any more at all.” It was not without reason our Lord uttered those words, “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation ; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.”

The agitation which so fiercely distracts the country is owing to the peculiar institutions of the South. We are no apologists for Slavery ; rather the reverse. We believe, with a great Statesman of the Southwest, and in his own nervous words, “Slavery is a curse to the master ; and a wrong, a grievous wrong, to the Slave.” But we must look at the subject all round. One sided views are almost sure to mislead. Slavery is an evil, but Disunion would entail a thousand evils. The one is a partial and a local evil ; the other would be a universal and a national disaster. With the Union go down peace, order, liberty, independence, prosperity, respectability, religion, morality, foreign missions, the example of a successful republic, the sick hope of a down-trodden world. The despots of Europe would exchange congratulatory notes, and hell hold high carnival. The Union brings us a thousand blessings ; let us not for a single doubtful benefit hazard them all. The Lord has made us one nation in the land. Let us not rend ourselves in twain. Let us not quench our Stars in a night of shame, and reddens our Stripes with our own blood.

And now, to resume the more customary tone of the pulpit, we would have you reflect on the melancholy instability of all things human, the wisest constitutions, the best constructed governments, the most promising works of man. “For promotion cometh neither from the East, nor from the West, nor from the South ; But God is the judge ; he putteth down one, and setteth up another.” Ps.

75 ; 6, 7. Let us, while we pray for guidance, for peace, for union, make the Most High the portion of our souls, and secure a title to the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. "This word, once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore, receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." There is a Union more desirable and enduring than any that can be formed on earth. It is a Union with Christ. It is truly indissoluble. Death, which breaks all other ties, will but strengthen this. God grant, whatever our political condition is, that we may be "no longer strangers and foreigners in the city of God, but fellow-citizens with the Saints, and of the household of God!" "Of Zion it shall be said," as the proudest of distinctions, "this and that man was born in her; and the Highest himself shall establish her." Ps. 87; 5.