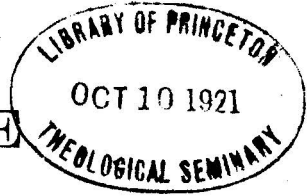


SCP
8105

PRAYER FOR THE COUNTRY.

A DISCOURSE



PREACHED ON

THANKSGIVING DAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1860,

IN THE

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, PRINCETON, N. J.

✓ BY

JAMES M. MACDONALD, D. D.

[PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.]

NEW YORK:

JOHN F. TROW, PRINTER, 50 GREENE STREET.

1860.

PRAYER FOR THE COUNTRY.

A DISCOURSE

PREACHED ON THANKSGIVING DAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1860.

We are assembled, my brethren, in conformity with the recommendation of His Excellency, the Governor of the State, who has appointed this day "to be hallowed as a day of Thanksgiving to Almighty God," and devoted "to such religious duties as the occasion suggests." It is an observance well becoming a Christian people. It is proof of the great prosperity which signalizes this land, that seldom does a year draw to a close, when it is not the dictate of the people, in obedience to which our chief magistrates make the appointment, that a day be observed to give public, and united thanks, for the blessings which have crowned it. More and more generally, in all the States of the Confederacy, has this demand been made, until within a few years, the observance has been nearly universal.

And seldom has there been a year when, taking the country at large, the many bounties of Providence more strongly appealed to a people to express, and give evidence, of their gratitude. Never were the first fruits of the year, in all this section of country, more abundant; and although the later harvest, at one time, by reason of drought, seemed to be endangered, the showers which came at last, in answer to our prayers, in a measure at least restored it; so that our fields, our vines, and our trees, at the time of gathering, yielded an ample supply for both man and beast. In the words of the 65th Psalm, looking up to him, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift, we

can say: "Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly; thou settlest the furrows thereof; thou makest it soft with showers; thou blessest the springing thereof. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness; and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn: they shout for joy, they also sing."

In some portions of the great South-west, and in Kansas, the crops have failed; but in the country at large not only has the harvest been bountiful, but God has blessed men, in their various industrial callings; he has blessed our Commerce; he has not permitted the pestilence to lay us waste, nor to visit with its usual severity those cities and districts most exposed to its ravages; he has preserved us from intestine commotions, and from the horrors of war. For the many blessings of the year, we may well be invited, as we are by the chief magistrate, to hallow this day. Even they to whom it serves to call up sad memories of the times when they enjoyed the company of some who are now no longer here to come up with them to the glad work of praise, nor to unite in the domestic festivities of the day, are yet sharers with us in the bounties of a common Providence. "Oh come (then) let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise unto the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. Oh come, let us worship, and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand."—Psalm 95. 1, 2, 6, 7. "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations."—Psalm 100. 4, 5.

But, my brethren, it would be affectation to attempt to conceal the anxiety that oppresses our spirits, in view of the present state of public affairs. We meet in the providence of God at a moment when the most buoyant, as well as sagacious minds, are weighed down with the apprehension of important, and, it may be, disastrous changes in the nation, as being possibly at hand. We cannot, if we would, ignore the political state of the country; nor is it necessary that we should, in order to carry out the purpose for which this day has been appointed. To be sensible of our dependence on God, and to deepen that sense of dependence, is essential to true gratitude. May this day, which so many sister States unite in observing, in the great mercy of Heaven, be employed as a means, an effectual means, of making the people all over this land, more sensible than they have ever been, of their obligations to the great Ruler of nations, for their political blessings, and their dependence for the continuance of the same. We are met to give thanks; but thanksgiving is but a part of prayer. We are here to offer up our petitions

unto God, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies. And O, never had the people of a great nation, greater need of prayer, or greater things for which to ask, at the throne of the heavenly mercy. I feel assured I shall not be charged with having misused or perverted this opportunity, if I avail myself of it, to urge upon you who are here present, to look earnestly to God in this time of our country's need. The text you will find in

PSALM 122. 6-9.—Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. 7. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. 8. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. 9. Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good.

Jerusalem, which David had made the capital of his kingdom, was considered, in his time, as the centre not only of the worship, but of the government of the nation, and as the bond of union of the twelve tribes. In it they all had a common interest. There were set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David. It was, moreover, the city of their solemnities, whither the ark had already been removed, and which was destined to be the seat of the temple, to which all the tribes on great festal occasions, repaired. As it has been often said of some modern capitals, they are the nation; so it might be said of Jerusalem in the same sense, only with still greater propriety, that it was the Israelitish nation. Its peace and prosperity was the peace and prosperity of the whole land; danger and disturbance to it were peril and commotion to the nation. Therefore prayer for the peace and welfare of Jerusalem, was prayer for the entire nation.

The text occurs in one of that series of Psalms termed "Songs of Degrees," or "Steps," so denominated, according to the most plausible supposition, because they were selected and arranged thus in the Psalter, to be used by the pilgrims, from various parts of the land, on the occasion of their going up to Jerusalem to worship, at the celebration of the great sacrifices. They are called "Songs of Degrees," or "Steps," i. e. Psalms of Progress, with reference to the march towards Jerusalem, and the progressive parts of the worship in which the pilgrims there engaged. In the psalm before us, which is the third in the series, the caravan is supposed to have arrived at the top of one of those mountains, which are round about Jerusalem, from which "the city of the great king, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth," is in full view. The wearied travellers break forth in the song, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand (and this shall reward us for all our toil and fatigue) within thy gates, O Jerusalem." They looked down, in David's day, on an already large and compact city. Buildings united Mount Zion, where for centuries had been the stronghold of the Jebusites, with the part of the city which had been inhabited by Israelites since the days of Joshua. In Solomon's days they

beheld the city still further enlarged and beautified—the two eminences, Zion and Moriah, connected by a grand causeway—but most of all, that crowning work, which excelled all the palaces and other edifices and works, the temple in all its glory.

Taking Jerusalem as we have done, not only as the centre, but as the symbol of the nation, its compactness, its fortifications and beautiful temple, were types of the union, the strength, and religious character of the entire people. They were bound together as the descendants of the same progenitor; by a common inheritance in the same divine covenant and promises; by allegiance to the same monarch. Together the tribes went up to receive, at the same altars from the same priesthood, the rites of religion, and to have justice administered among them from the same tribunals. How delightful the spectacle of a God-fearing and *united* people—UNITED, although they may be personally strangers, and notwithstanding their diverse interests, some fishermen of Galilee, and others merchants of Jericho or Jerusalem, some dwelling on the borders of Syria, and others on the confines of Egypt—and happy, because they are a UNITED people. Well might they have sung at their great gatherings in the time of David or of Solomon, as they did in one of these songs of degrees, “Behold how good, and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together.” (Ps. 133d to the end.)

Was it because David had some foresight or presentiment of the division that was to take place,—of the disruption that actually took place so speedily in the reign of the son of his successor, by which the people whom he had led to so many victories and to such renown, were separated into two rival and hostile nations,—that he put this earnest plea for prayer for the peace of Jerusalem, into the songs of the worshippers, as they came up from the borders of Reuben, of Judah, of Benjamin, of Issachar, and the other tribes. Certainly, if he had foreseen what so soon took place, he could not have done better than to pray, and teach his people to pray, that that unity of which he draws so beautiful a picture, might remain unbroken; and to think and feel that their own personal prosperity depended on their love for the peace and prosperity of their country. He sought to make every worshipper feel that this peace was essential, not only to his own individual welfare, but to that of his household, his kindred according to the flesh, dwelling under the same roof with him. “For my brethren and companions’ sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee.” But most of all, it was because of the household of faith, or the house of the Lord, the great interests of true worship and true religion, that he would have them seek the quiet and the good of the civil state. It was because Jerusalem contained the ark of the covenant; it was because the Jewish nation had the custody of the religion God had revealed, the only true religion in the world, that the inspired psalmist says, with so much earnestness, “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem,” “Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good.”

But, perhaps, it may be said, the Jewish nation was a favoured nation, a

chosen generation, to whom pertained ‘the adoption, and the glory and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose were the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ was to come, who is over all, God blessed forever;’ but that now there are no more theocracies; God no longer recognizes any nation as his chosen people; nor does any nation recognize him as at the head of their government. This may be true, but is it not also a clear principle of the holy Scriptures, that civil government as such, under all its forms, and in all parts of the world, designed as it is to secure men against the evils of anarchy, is a divine institution. Does not the inspired Paul (although he lived under the despotic power of Rome) expressly teach, that every soul must be subject to the higher powers, and that the powers that be are ordained of God, and that whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God? Does he not exhort 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? Prayer for the Roman emperors and governors, and other rulers of his day, was prayer for the empire and the nationalities which they represented. And does not the Apostle Peter also exhort, “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well?” Yes, my brethren, the God to whom we address our supplications, is the Lord of all lords and the King of all kings.

We may then pray for the nations of our day, and for their rulers. Although our own nation be not chosen out as Israel of old was, it has been signally favoured of Heaven; and by the blessings which have been bestowed upon us, in answer to prayer, we are encouraged to approach boldly the throne of grace, and with our giving of thanks, put up our “supplications, prayers, intercessions,” for our beloved country, in this her time of peril,—of greater peril than she has known before, during her existence of three quarters of a century. Might I not, without any appearance of irreverent freedom with holy writ, apply the language of the text to her in its entirety, and say, “Pray for the peace of America; they shall prosper that love thee. (That is, our private individual prosperity is involved in the peace of our country.) Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions’ sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. (That is, the quiet and safety of every man’s own fireside is involved.) Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good. (That is, the interests of religion in this land, and wherever a united people might be instrumental in extending it, are at stake.)

I heartily approve, my brethren, as I have no doubt you all do, of the great principle of self-government, which distinguishes our political system. I believe it to be in entire accordance with the teachings of the Bible, and the best suited to promote the general intelligence and prosperity, and to protect

the rights of all classes of the people. In the principle of universal suffrage, let due efforts be made to advance religion and education, I see no danger, but rather a safeguard in it. I feel more willing to trust the plain common sense, or instinct, if you please to call it so, of the common people, than those whose brains are beclouded and bedizened with speculative reforms and utopian schemes of utilitarianism. I have lived to see what in my judgment was the mistaken suffrage of men, who were thought to be wise, on important occasions, counterbalanced by that of men who were thought to be unwise. Lord Macaulay, in his celebrated letter to one of our public men,* in which he argues that our Republican institutions have been indebted for their permanency hitherto to the extent of our domain, and cannot possibly survive when a crowded population, like that of the old world, fills it up, because the poor, or the masses, will war upon the rich, and civilization must perish, or, on the other hand, liberty perish before military conquest and rule;—this great man, I say, in thus arguing, proves how little a foreigner, trained under a monarchical system, can appreciate our political system, or the state of society it fosters. He forgets that America is not Europe; that here we have no privileged, and, therefore, no antagonistic classes in society; that we have no laws of primogeniture to secure the entail of estates in families; that we have none born to be kings or born to be nobles; he forgets that the sons of our humblest citizens often become our merchant princes, or the possessors of ducal estates, and rise to the very highest offices in the land. How can there be a war of classes where there are really no classes; *i. e.* classes which are always represented by the same families; where wealth and office are constantly changing hands; where the poor man's son may be the patron of the rich man's son; and the young man who goes out to the frontier with his axe in his hand, may rise to the first office in the gift of the people.

I make these remarks because so excellent a government as ours is worthy of prayer, and because I would esteem it a double calamity if the trials, through which our country is now passing, should tend to weaken our confidence in republican institutions. Let not the thought be entertained for a moment, should a disruption take place in our confederacy, that monarchy, even a monarchy limited, but in which some men are born to civil rights and privileges, to which others, who are their equals, or even superiors, in all that constitutes a true manhood are not born, can ever rise upon its ruins. Monarchies have been, in all their essential features, the same since the days of the prophet Samuel, when under his solemn protest,† by the command of God, one was established over his ancient people. No; this land is committed to a republican government. And let us hope that the apprehended disruption may yet be averted, if it be the will of God. Let this be our

* The Hon. Mr. Randall, of New York, author of the *Life of Jefferson*.

† 1 Samuel, viii., 10-18.

fervent, united prayer. It is our country which appeals to us; not a part, a section, but the whole of it, through all its dimensions of latitude and longitude. Never had citizens a nobler history of which to be proud, or a nobler country to love and cherish.

An English writer, of a former day, of some note, maintained that there is nothing in Christianity which favours the principles or the spirit of patriotism; that, on the contrary, it requires its disciples to know no country, but to love all men as brethren. Patriotism, however, is not necessarily at war with philanthropy. David was patriot enough when he said, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee;" or, when holding the claims of patriotism subject to the limitations of justice and charity, he adds, "Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good." Well has it been said, that "the Christian has a motive for patriotism far stronger and holier than those of all other men; for the kingdom of Jesus Christ is committed to human hands, and is partially dependent on the course of human events." Paul was patriot enough when he exhorted Christians to honour, and pray for the civil magistrate, and to let their "conversation (*i. e.*, their deportment as citizens) be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ."—Phil. i. 27.

How precious was the price—the lives and fortunes of heroic ancestors—paid for the inheritance which we enjoy! How admirable the constitution and laws which have been framed for the government of these States! Not merely the gigantic physical features of our land, or its vast agricultural, mineral, commercial, and manufacturing resources, but our civil and religious liberty, the progress here made in the arts and sciences, the improvements which genius and philanthropy have devised for the advancement of mankind, the wisdom of our statesmen, and the valour of our soldiers, point to a destiny, under God, if we remain an undivided people, which no other nation, ancient or modern, has attained. And Oh! shall the spirit of fanaticism, or of party, of aggression or of self-aggrandizement, or of insubordination to laws constitutionally framed, or rulers constitutionally elected, disappoint all our hopes, and "make a smooth path on the top of all our glories?" Let a great people, in the fear of God, and with dependence on him for help, rise up and answer, No. Let them at least, with strong cryings, cast themselves at the feet of sovereign mercy, and ask that this may not be. It has been difficult for me, I confess, to see how disunion, or the secession of States, which is another name for the same thing, can be effected without collision and danger of bloodshed. Should there be such collision, I have not the nerve to look down into the abyss of horrors which will open before the inhabitants of this land.

But, lest in my earnestness on this subject, I should perchance outrun the feeling or honest convictions of a single praying soul, as to the greatness and solemnity of the present emergency, let me press my plea for prayer for the country, although it may be done at the expense of detaining you somewhat

longer than is my wont, by presenting several distinct reasons in support of it. And it seems to me that the people of God are called to earnest prayer for the country,

1. That the spirit of true patriotism may be revived. Either this spirit has declined, or much of the history of the men and times of '76 is apocryphal. The spirit which led the fathers of the republic to pledge their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honour, to achieve our independence, was the spirit of the great mass of the people. The statesmen had but caught the fire which burned in every mountain hamlet, and at the scattered firesides in the recesses of the newly populated wilderness. A common foe, and common labours and sufferings, and the common blessings of which their achieved liberty made them the possessors, made them one, and taught them to place so high a value on their union, that for years the man was not to be found who was bold enough to breathe a word against that union, or the constitution which was at length its fruit. In my youth and earlier manhood, such continued to be the temper of the people. I need not tell you that there has been a sad change. I never expected to see this day. When Mr. Webster made that eloquent burst in the Senate that he had not accustomed himself to calculate the value of the Union, I never expected to see the day when its value would be a matter of common and every-day computation. It proves that love of country—of a whole, undivided country—of that Union formed by those who achieved the independence of these States, does not exert that widespread, overpowering influence it once did.

The decay of this love I attribute, in no small degree, to a spirit of greed or money-making, which has so besotted the land. The pecuniary or commercial gauge has to be applied to every thing. We can scarcely keep it away from the altars of our God. There are men, it is to be feared, who, if they could satisfy themselves that a few more dollars might be made, sitting among the ruins and *debris* of a dissolved Union, would not hesitate to apply the mine, and the battering ram, to the walls of the glorious fabric. The spirit that would sell the Saviour of the world for silver, will not scruple at selling a country. But as the silver did the traitor disciple no good, and only served to buy a Potter's field, in which he, as a suicide and a stranger in Jerusalem, was probably the first one to be buried, so we may predict that the gold which the traitors to their country receive, will do them no good. Let us pray against the influence of this fell spirit; that men may not sacrifice to their sordid avarice the sheltering edifice, the protecting ægis, without which the wealth of a Croesus would be worse, as it would be certain, in a season of anarchy, to entail more misery, than the poverty of a Lazarus. Let us, I say, pray, that a virtuous love of country, which shall prompt to disinterested sacrifices, if need be, for the common good, may be revived. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee."

2. I would urge this plea for prayer by the low state of the morals of

politics. Politics, which means nothing less than the "science of government; that part of ethics which consists in the regulation and government of a nation," has come to be a term which suggests any other than pleasant reflections or elevating associations. It has come to mean, in common parlance, the bitter and unfair contests of parties for power. We discover here the trail of the same serpent as before, the same spirit of greed, lust of office, and the emoluments of office. The free use of money in our elections of late years, can be explained only by the prizes which are supposed to be at stake; and next to the dangers that are now pressing upon us, it is one of the darkest, most threatening signs for the future. What is to become of the confidence of thinking men in a government of the people, by the people, if money by thousands, and hundreds of thousands, is to be called for on the recurrence of every quadrennial election? I have heard it said that there are voters in this town, who annually sell their votes to the highest bidder. I hope this is not true; but if it is, I hope some law may be formed or framed by which such men may be disfranchised. I mean both parties; the men who buy as well as the men who sell; for, by prostituting, they have shown themselves to be unworthy of the sacred right of franchise. And we would it be, I am persuaded to believe, if any convention shall be called to modify the Constitution of the United States, if it should be so modified, as to lessen the amount of patronage at the disposal of the Executive.

The time would fail me to speak, in any manner as the subject demands, of the low state of the morals of politics in the higher signification of this term as the science of government. Suffice it to say, that theories have been broached, and seriously propounded, and propagated with too much success, which tend to subvert all order and government. Their authors "set up the individual will against the decrees of Providence, as written in nature and life;" deny the accredited and well-authenticated traditions of history; wage a fierce warfare against the settled foundations and principles upon which the wholesome structures of society are founded, and habitually violate, in spirit or action, the supreme law of the land. Such radicalism, unless rebuked and checked, if not now, will sooner or later undermine the constitution, and disrupt these States. They who think they owe it to their self-respect to mingle as little as possible in the conflicts of political parties, surely owe it to their country to expose the fallacy of these theories, and to beseech Him who holds the hearts of men in his hands to save it from the corruptions and immoralities to which these conflicts tend.

But these two reasons, by which I have now endeavored to enforce my plea for prayer in behalf of the country, were in full force six months, if not six or twice six years ago, and might be enumerated among the causes which have brought the country into its present critical condition. I allude to well-known—alas! too well-known—facts. While there are fanatics in one part of the country, who for years have been proclaiming at the corners of the streets, that the constitution is "an agreement with

death," and a "covenant with hell," who have used every means in their power to defeat the execution of laws formed to carry out its provisions, to create agitations, and foment divisions,—in another part, there are men who have no love for the Union, and the people of whole States, under their lead, seem to be unanimous in taking the initiatory steps for a separation from the Union. Thousands wait upon the telegraph and the mails, as upon the lips of destiny. We know not what a day may bring forth. Many of our most sagacious men look upon a dissolution of our Confederacy as a foregone conclusion. The money-market, like a truth-telling pulse, indicates some great disturbance in the body-politic. Commerce and manufactures, abundant as the harvest has been, rich as the country is, are seriously affected. Surely there is enough to make us despond, but not enough as yet to make us despair. I see little ground of hope from man; but is there not a God in heaven who can make the wrath of man to praise him, and restrain the remainder, and who has often made man's extremity his opportunity? Therefore, I make all that I have to say to you, my brethren, to-day, to centre and culminate in this, *Pray that the nation may be extricated from its perils.* I urge my plea for prayer,

3. That the President of these United States and his constitutional advisers, and the Congress about to assemble, may be possessed of all that prudence, sound judgment, and firmness, which the present emergency, or any that shall arise, may demand; and that all sections of the land may be brought to take an impartial view of the questions which agitate and divide it, and consent to a just decision of them. No man was ever called to occupy a more difficult or responsible station than the chief magistrate at this hour. And if, under ordinary circumstances, it is our duty first of all, according to the words of the apostle, to pray for all who like him are invested with civil authority, most certainly it is our duty to remember him and his counsellors at this juncture, that they may be imbued with that wisdom which is profitable to direct, and know how to mingle mildness with their faithfulness and firmness, in maintaining the "SUPREME LAW OF THE LAND." Let us also pray for Congress, which has so often of late years been an arena of embittered debate, and for the display of sectional animosities, that all parties may come together prepared to lay criminations and recriminations aside, and sit down in fraternal consultation to heal the divisions of the land.

And further, let us pray that all parties and all sections may be brought to take that view of the subjects on which the country is divided, which is according to truth and righteousness, and consent to a just decision of every question. Men who differ must be brought to understand one another better. Their study must be, not how they may state an opponent's opinions, so as to make them appear to the greatest disadvantage, but to understand what is true and what is right, and be willing to accept the truth and practise the right. Men of the South need to understand the real views and feelings of the great mass of their Northern brethren better; and men of the North

equally need to understand better the true views and feelings of their Southern brethren. Could we, for once, change stand-points, I am persuaded that nothing more would be needed to restore harmony and good feeling. As I look at the questions on which the South and a great body of the people at the North are divided, it seems to me that if passion could be allayed, and truth and justice prevail (and it is for this we should pray), and the small number, comparatively, both at the North and the South who are at heart unfriendly to the constitution and union of these States, not be taken into account, they might soon be settled, and a better state of feeling be the result than has prevailed for many years. For, look at these questions. There are but two. Let the South give up its demand for intervention on the part of Congress for their slave property when they remove into a new territory, and expect slavery to become a State institution, only where the laws of nature establish it. It is in vain to hope that the North, and in this they agree with some of the most enlightened men of the South, can ever be brought to regard the constitution of the United States as of itself designed to establish slavery in territories where it never had existence. It is opposed to the righteous doctrine of the equality of the states, that the peculiar social institutions of some of the States should be legislated into new territory, and not the peculiar institutions of all the States. And then, on the other hand, let those at the North who hold that it is the duty of Congress, by positive enactment, to legislate slavery out of the common territories, recede from their doctrine. For if Congress has a right to legislate it out, it has a right to legislate it in, and *vice versa*. This doctrine of the right of Congress to legislate in respect to slavery in the territories, is a two-edged sword, neither friendly to the North nor to the South. It is therefore for the interest of both sections to abandon it! And is it too much to hope that, in answer to prayer, the opposing parties may be brought to see this, and act accordingly?

The other question relates to the rendition of fugitives. And is it too much to hope that the States which have passed laws to defeat the carrying out of that provision of the constitution which requires the rendition of fugitives, will recede from the ground they have taken, repeal the laws which have so unfriendly an aspect to their brethren, and which, in effect, violate the supreme law of the land. Let these States adopt the course of our own beloved State of New Jersey, which, so far as I know, has the approval of all her citizens, and there would be no longer any ground for the charge of nullification or injustice against them. Peace, so far as this question is concerned, would be restored. Opposition to the execution of a just and efficient law of Congress on this subject, is opposition to the constitution; and I cannot believe that any considerable number of right-thinking, right-feeling men, in any part of the country, will be found willing to place themselves in such an opposition. If it be said that the Personal Liberty bills, which have been passed, grew out of the unduly harsh features, dangerous to the rights of freemen, of the present law of Congress, and it be found that there is ground

for this complaint, is it too much to hope that such a spirit of justice and humanity, in answer to the petitions of a people, earnest for the preservation and peace of their country, may be bestowed on the body that passed the law, so to modify and amend it, that all apology for retaining the reactionary bills complained of on the statute books where they are found, shall be taken away? I do say, my brethren, that the difficulties in the way of peace to the nation, do not appear to me to be insuperable, if but the spirit of justice, mutual forbearance, and concession, can be exercised. I do think there is great encouragement to pray for this. The hearts of men are in the hands of the Lord, and he can turn them as the rivers of water are turned.

But, my brethren, if all our hopes for the integrity of the Union fail, and we must become a dis severed nation, O, then, let us pray that the severance may be effected without violence. As to the abstract right of a State to secede, so long as the constitution which all have adopted, remains inviolate, there seems to be but one answer. The constitution makes, and could make, provision for no such thing; and it seems, from the nature of the case, wholly impracticable, and destructive to the government. The attempt to secede, on the part of certain States, will test our system as it was never before tested. It will place the Executive in a most difficult and trying position. And therefore, I say, the President is entitled to the most fervent prayers of a Christian people, that he may not only be enabled to be faithful to his oath to maintain the constitution and laws, but endued with all necessary wisdom and forbearance. Never did a ruler have a stronger claim on the prayers of the faithful; for never had a ruler more precious interests and issues in his keeping. The President may put down rebellion, and enforce the laws, but when it comes to coercing a people to remain in a Union, who are unanimous in repudiating it, it is an altogether different matter. Ours is a voluntary system, and to undertake to coerce a State into such a system, is in the very nature of things, absurd; because it is impossible. When these States have to be kept together by force, our system is a failure; and is not worth one drop of the meanest blood that might be shed in its defence. To attempt to coerce a State against its own free choice to remain in this Confederacy, will be, as has been well said, "the inauguration of a reign of terror and of blood, such as the darkest days of the Revolution never witnessed—the end and result of which no human faculty is able to divine." But what shall be done, and what may happen, in case of secession, questions which fill us with so much apprehension, are questions which should, I say again, lead us fervently to pray may be so answered by a merciful Providence, that the people of this country shall be saved from beholding their practical solution. But,

4. It is for the sake of the interests of religion in the land, and of civil and religious liberty in the world, that I urge the duty of prayer for the stability of the government of this nation, and its peace and welfare. "Because of the house of the Lord our God," said David, "I will seek thy good;" and he put this language into the mouths of the worshippers of Israel, as

they approached Jerusalem, and looked down upon it, from one of its overhanging summits. It was the place where the ark of the covenant was deposited, the centre of worship to the nation. Its prosperity was intimately connected with the prosperity of religion. This was the chief motive which actuated him, as the monarch, in seeking to beautify, strengthen, and promote the peace of that city; and he would have the same motive influence them. And because the interests of religion are involved, should be the chief motive with Christians, in seeking the peace and prosperity of their country. A period of commotion, strife, and terror, cannot be favorable to religion. We cannot, at such a time, lead peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty. All the interests of virtue and religion must suffer. What would become of our missionary operations at home and abroad, and all the various benevolent schemes of the Church? The kingdom of Emanuel is a kingdom of peace; and peace and union are essential to its operations being carried forward with any degree of vigour and success. Then, again, taking the worst possible aspect of the case, the rupture of our government seems to me necessarily to involve the rupture of the Church, the separation and alienation of brethren one in faith, who have learned to love one another, and to co-operate harmoniously in the great work of the evangelization of the world. I see not how the Church can hold together, and retain a common property in, and control, over existing institutions, under the heart-burnings and animosities, even should the fearful calamity of civil war be escaped, that must be inevitably engendered among the people, if the North and the South (if we have not also in that case to add, the East and the West) become foreign countries to each other. And then what is to become of the influence of our great example, in the cause of civil and religious liberty, in the world? If our experiment of a government of the people by the people, under such favorable circumstances, fail, will not despots smile and take courage, and the down-trodden nations hug their chains in despair? Our example has already told with powerful effect. Shall we undo what we have so well done? O my brethren, O my countrymen, need I, in view of these great and important interests, the peace and unity of the Church, and the prosperity of religion in the land, and the spread of civil and religious liberty in the world, urge any further the duty of prayer for the integrity of our government, and the peace of the nation. But I will add

Finally, and it is a great, if not the great, reason; prayer seems now to be almost our only resource. Our wisest statesmen seem to be completely nonplussed, and stand as if paralyzed. No commanding voice is heard, as on former occasions of peril, above the din of the gathering storm, inspiring us with confidence, that the helm is in a safe hand, and that our bark will be able to outride the storm. We now see that our much-lauded system of free government, and our admirable constitution, cannot save us. Our present trials may be sent upon us as a rebuke for the sin of idolizing our free institutions; in which we have gloried, and trusted, unmindful of our depend-

ence on the God of heaven. In reference to the wonderful enlargement and prosperity of our country, we have felt too much in the spirit of an ancient monarch, who said, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" upon whom judgment fell while the word was in his mouth. We have trusted in our wise men, and in our brave men, and no nation has wiser or braver; we have trusted in our constitutions and institutions, with which those of no other nation can be compared; and God is now showing us the vanity of our trust. O let us return unto him; let us confess and forsake our sins; let us take words and return, and say unto him, "Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously; so will we render the calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, ye are our gods; for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy." And you shall hear him graciously saying, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from them. I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine; the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon."—Hos. 14.

If vain is the help of man, O let us not feel and act, as if vain were the help of God; for through him we shall do valiantly, for he it is that shall cast down our enemies; he it is that can heal, also, our dissensions, and avert disunion and disaster; which may He do, and **ALL THE GLORY WILL WE GIVE TO HIS GREAT NAME FOREVER. AMEN AND AMEN.**