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THE NATIONAL VINE.

Its Growth and Beauty, Its Risk of Ruin.

A SERMON

Preached on Thanksgiving Day, November 30, 1882, before the Presbyterian Congregations of Indianapolis, Indiana, in the Third Presbyterian Church,

—BY—

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[NOTE: This discourse was delivered extemporaneously, and written out for publication; it does not claim to be an exact, but only a substantially accurate reproduction of the discourse as spoken. A T. P.]

PUBLISHED EVERY THURSDAY BY W. J. RICHARDS, THE NEWS, INDIANAPOLIS.

History repeats itself. Old battles have to be refought on other fields. The whole course of events before Christ seems some times but the type or shadow of another similar series after His advent. There are often the most startling synchronisms and correspondences, even in the times and periods.

For example, about 1800 B. C., Abraham begins to represent the elect people of God, separated for a special mission. About 1800 after Christ the great modern missionary period of the Church begins. 1500 B. C. occurs the exodus from Egypt, 1500 after Christ Luther leads on a new exodus from Rome; 1000 B. C. the worldly glory of Solomon reached it's summit, followed a half century later by division of the kingdom; 1000 A. D. the Theocratic monarchy of Rome is at its height, and the new German Empire, followed half a century later by the division into Eastern and Western Churches; 1492 B. C. the spies are sent to explore the Palestine of the Orient; 1492 A. D. Columbus discovers this occidental Palestine; 300 B. C. the Shekinah of Prophecy pales its glory in the apostate Jewish Church; 300 A. D. the Christian

Church lapses into its long night of ritualism, rationalism, Romanism.

One correspondence is specially pertinent to the object which we have now in view, viz., the leadings and dealings of God with reference to the Hebrew Nation and its home in Canaan, and His correspondent leadings and dealings with reference to the American people and this favored land.

Palestine was God's gift to Israel; given to them for a peculiar possession, in trust, and for a religious end. They were there to set up His sanctuary and maintain pure worship; unto them were committed the Oracles of God, and they were to be the representatives and disseminators of the true Faith. Just so far as they accepted and fulfilled this mission and commission, the Lord was with them. He led them into the land, gave it to them, confirmed them in its possession, gave them the "rest" of a true prosperity, subdued their foes, and richly fulfilled all His covenant promises.

Our National history presents a remarkable parallel. Look at the wonderful way in which God opened this land to a peculiar type of Christian civilization, and established us in its possession. Mark the time,

After the dark ages had passed and the reformation both in philosophy and religion had begun; the printing press with steam and the mariner's compass and kindred inventions, had opened the way for intercourse between the Nations and for the dissemination of the Bible; persecution for religious opinion was driving out pilgrims from the old world and disposing them to establish here both a sanctuary for the truth and an asylum for the oppressed of all lands. Just at this convergence of events He rent in twain the veil that for five and a half millenniums had covered this continent and opened this land to His Church.

Mark the way. Who dares doubt God's providence in the history of this Nation! That flight of paroquets from the southwest to the northeast diverted the course of Columbus from the mainland to San Salvador, in the Bahama group. What a flight of birds was that! It turned the whole course of history! But for such interpositions this land might have been cursed as Mexico and South America have been by the decaying civilizations of the Papal countries of Southern Europe. Other Nations have been Christianized, converted from heathendom; this Nation was born Christian. Madame de Stael said to George Ticknor: "You are the advanced guard of the human race, the future of the world."

All great Nations have represented some grand idea, as Egypt, priesthood; Assyria, empire; Greece, art; Rome, law. We seem to be destined to represent freedom, combined with faith; a grand political trust, together with a grand religious mission. We are to guard the Ark and build the asylum of the ages. Such is the destiny, graven by the iron pen of God's Providence upon our National shield. I am to speak this morning of some helps and hindrances to our destiny, to our discharge of this solemn trust.

Here surely is a magnificent opportunity. God has not asked us to make "bricks without straw." The field invites labor, and the yield richly rewards labor. No such national heritage ever was committed to any Nation. Palestine "flowed with milk and honey"; this land flows with silver and gold. It is the granary and treasury of the

world. It has immense savannahs and prairies for grain, sugar, cotton and rice, vineyards and orchards; vast forests of timber; huge reservoirs of coal; mines of all metals from the commonest to the most precious. It has a river system whose combined length is over 16,000 miles; a mountain system spanning the continent from North to South like back-bone and breast-bone.

Our inheritance is so vast that a distinguished English visitor could only express it by bounding our country "on the north by the aurora borealis, on the south by the equator, on the east by the rising sun and on the west by the day of judgment." The extent of our land is indefinite; and its possibilities and potentialities infinite. If Connecticut be taken as the unit of measurement it could be contained in our whole country from 600 to 800 times. Within such a territory we could take the whole population of the globe, and give two acres to each inhabitant. The silver and gold lying in our mountain ridges would suffice to regulate a world's commerce and conduct a world's evangelization.

Moreover we occupy the historic zone of power, the belt within which human history has wrought its grandest achievements within which England, France, Spain, Italy and Lower Europe, Prussia, Germany, Palestine, Persia, Assyria, Greece, Rome, Upper Egypt, Upper India, China and Japan have achieved the wonders of ancient and modern civilization. Greatness is thrust upon us by decree of Providence. Our marvelous growth and the westward course of empire can scarce be appreciated. The wave of population dashes on, more than thirty miles each year; and the center of population moves westward five miles a year. Here we are in the midst of a triangular empire, bounded by the Ohio, Mississippi and Great Lakes, which has been the growth of half a century; which to day represents the highest average culture and wealth of the continent; which is becoming more populous than the New England and Atlantic States, and which is no longer the "Northwest," but the center of the Nation. Within the average lifetime of one generation a settlement becomes a metropolis, a

railroad center, a radiating point of civilization; and a young man may see all this under his own eyes before he passes his prime, and be a part of this development of a new and great State.

This is, indeed, a grand National heritage; but the Anakim are here, and do not mean to be easily dislodged. Grave questions that concern the Indian, Mormon, Chinaman and Freedmen; tremendous evils, such as Romanism, rationalism, materialism, Socialism; consuming vices, such as intemperance and sensuality, challenge the highest wisdom of pulpit and press, statesman and philanthropist to cope with them.

It has become so customary to speak in glowing terms of eulogy of our country and its present prosperity and future destiny that we are, perhaps, running the risk of forgetting our perils. All National destiny turns on a hinge of conditions. It is possible to forfeit the most brilliant future. The Hebrew Nationality and Commonwealth felt confident of a Divine election to a peculiar privilege; yet behold that grand monarchy and hierarchy fall into ruins; and it is a curious and significant fact that the same causes which contributed to this result are the same that to-day threaten this Republic with disintegration.

The Hebrew Nation was ruined by the wild boar, that represents the ruder, grosser, coarser forms of vice, and the beast of the field that may represent the stealthy, fashionable, respectable vices.

Those causes were these namely: Worldly Luxury, Judicial Corruption, Political Division, Loss of Homogeneity, Growth of Caste, Social Vices and Religious Degeneracy. Turning from Hebrew history, let us see how these very evils imperil our future.

1. Worldly Luxury—When God tells us what was the "Sin of Sodom," we are surprised that it was not beastly sensuality or arrogant blasphemy; but "pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness." (Ezekiel xvi., 49.) While we are fighting the more repulsive vices, the fashionable, respectable vices are eating into the very vitals of our social life. The very rapidity of our National growth implies peril, for moral and spiritual life grows more slowly, and we become strong as the brute is strong, without

reason and intelligence and conscience to rule brute force. We make money easily and quickly. It is either hoarded and makes the miser and the monopolist, or else it is lavished on self-indulgence and makes the spendthrift and the prodigal.

Jefferson called the "great cities the ulcers upon the body politic," and in the cities this luxurious extravagance reaches its climax. Young men without family spend enough to support a frugal household, and the expensiveness of supporting a wife keeps many a man single to whom a home would be a shelter and safeguard. The extravagance at weddings makes those poor who attend them, and the extravagance at funerals makes those poor who survive, and we can scarce afford to die, because it is too costly. I knew a burial where the body of a child was borne upon a floral catafalque which cost \$750. Webster said, after a Western tour, that he could express in four words his impression of what he had seen: "Abundance, luxury, decline, desolation!" And that warning came from the foremost of American statesmen. Froude says the "vivifying principle of history sometimes becomes in turn the dissolving one." The prosperity we boast may turn to be our ruin.

2. Lack of Homogeneity—Israel incorporated into the body politic foreign elements that could not and would not assimilate, from Egypt, Canaan and Moab, Philistia and Phoenicia. What are we doing? Seven hundred and fifty thousand immigrants last year came into our land, representing every land and language, and every creed, political and religious. They come here to live simply, buy farms and become permanent citizens, but they come to keep and to breed foreign notions. We hasten to put into their hands, without qualification of intelligence or morality, the elective franchise, and they often outwit and outvote us. Romanism may claim indulgence as a system of religious faith, but we ought to remember that every devout Papist owns allegiance to a civil power outside this Republic, which in an American citizen is constructive treason, and might in emergencies prove destructive treason. Among these various elements there is no cohesion,

no basis for political unity, and there are the seeds of revolution. With many of these foreigners comes a leprous inaction that taints our whole social life.

3. The Spirit of Caste is engendered of the bitter strife between labor and capital. The head is not in sympathy with the hands. There is a growing separation between the higher and lower classes which leads to strikes, incites to acts of violence and riot and fosters Nihilism, Communism and Socialism. How long will it take us to learn that "the condition of the common people is the condition of the Commonwealth?" Robert Peel gave, as a birthday present, to his daughter a splendid riding habit, and went out with her on the same day for a ride by her side in the Park; his heart swelled with parental devotion. Just after, she died of typhus fever of the worst type, and it proved that she had caught the infection from the garment, which the poor seamstress who embroidered it, in a wretched attic, had used to cover her husband in the shivering fits of a malignant and fatal fever. The safety of the highest is bound up in the same bundle with the lowest, and society avenges herself of all neglect of the physical, intellectual, moral or spiritual condition of her poor and lowly ones. The pyramid of society narrows toward its top, but its broad bottom is the base on which the whole rests. Woe be to the builder who looks not after that base, which consists of the great mass of the common people.

4. Political Division is a peril not yet past. Wise men and statesmen say that another "irrepressible conflict" threatens between the North and South. Leaders of public sentiment in the Territory of the Confederacy boldly affirm that the South is vanquished, but not conquered nor subdued, and that "State Rights" is only waiting its time to strike another blow. Any future conflict on this issue is to be doubly dreaded. The late War was a submission of a question to the arbitrament of the sword, on which there might be honest difference. If treason at all, it was a mild form of treason,

since no authoritative oracle had ever declared which party was right in their construction of the basis of our Union. Our passions often betray us into excitement and extravagance. But coolly looking at it, the contrary views held at the North and South were the results of a divergent education, and honest men could conscientiously fight on both sides. But now the sword has forever decided that to attempt to break up this Nation is treason; henceforth, the oracle of war declares the doctrine of State rights to be anathema, and another war on that issue would be simply one of extermination. It must be averted by mutual concession and conciliation, by the cultivation of the blessed bond of sympathy, and where is that bond to be found as in a common gospel? The thorough evangelization of the South—united labor among Christians of both sections to elevate the poor whites and the freedmen, what a divine method of reconstruction would that be!

5. Judicial corruption is another threatening peril. Washington, in his last address, emphasizes the purity of our Courts of law as the corner-stone of our political welfare. It is a startling fact that the conviction of criminals is getting to be more and more difficult; especially if they are "big" criminals does the web of the law seem, as Anacharsis, the Scythian, said, too frail and fragile to hold them. When a wretched villain shot Garfield, the whole Nation was in fear lest even he should escape the gallows on the ground of "insanity," and the whole Nation heaved a sigh of relief when he swung from the scaffold. "Temporary insanity" is coming to be a common plea of criminals, and even when acquitted on this ground it is impossible to secure them even within the walls of an Insane Asylum. Atrocious crimes are committed with impunity; life, liberty and property are unsafe, especially in our great cities. How can it be otherwise while we have an elective judiciary? There is a perpetual temptation to bribery and dishonesty where a Judge holds his office at popular will. It ought not to be an object with a Judge to court the favor of voters. He ought to be put on the bench by a supreme appointing power and kept there for life or during good behavior, as in

England; and then we should have Judges such as they have in the British Assizes.

6 Social Vices risk our National existence. Intemperance ruins enough victims yearly to span the continent from sea to sea with a double row of drunkards' graves. Sensuality gnaws like a vulture at the heart of society, corrupting and consuming our youth.

A godly physician told me that if he should tell me how many young men and women in the best circles of society during twenty years he had been called to treat for the most repulsive forms of disease, begotten of an unchaste life, I would not believe his statement!

Anthony Comstock seizes twenty-four tons of obscene printed matter in one vault, prepared to poison the mind and morals of our youth. Our young ladies' seminaries dare not issue catalogues, because they supply the sodomites of society with the names and addresses of our daughters.

Some plain words ought to be spoken about the infertility of the better class of American families. Look at Europe. During the last fifty years England grew in population 119 per cent., Prussia 72 per cent., Austria 27 per cent., France only 12 per cent. If we reckon the excess of births over deaths, in France it is three times less than in Austria; five times less than in Russia; six times less than in Prussia; eight times less than in Britain. The balance of power in Europe has changed since the Reformation, from this cause alone. And France and Austria are dropping out from the map of Europe simply because other Nations are multiplying so much faster. When it is said that Parisian life, with its club house, hotel, systematic bachelorship, or systematic licentiousness; with its absence of home and children, is coming to be the mode of American life, our danger in this respect will be apparent. The pulpit and the press ought to disdain those arbitrary restraints which forbid plain speech on such subjects. We are dying of simple infertility. The better class of families average one and three quarter children apiece, while the families of low class foreigners average three and a

half each. By simple numbers they are crowding us to the wall!

7. Religious Degeneracy—Every shade of religious opinion is represented on these shores. But what is worse, no religion at all has its millions of votaries. Thousands have not even an altar "to the unknown God." Atheism drifts toward barbarism. Skepticism is destructive of morals. Denial of a future state of rewards and punishments gives free rein to the worst of passions. Ingersoll is a worse foe than Kearney or Karl Marx. Dr. A. A. Hodge declares that "a triangular contest" is going on. At the apex of the triangle equality and liberty meet in the sovereignty of God and the supremacy of law. But down at the base, whither society is tending, absolutism at the one angle and license at the other complete the figure, and present the opposite extremes to which men swing in rebellion against God and law. And these are a few of the forms of evil which bring us into risk of social and National decay and ruin. The boar out of the wood and the wild beast of the field—how well they represent the rude violence of mere brute force on one hand and the more refined and subtle skepticism and respectable vice on the other!

Fellow Christians and fellow citizens, both the Church and the State are in danger of a Godless civilization, such as that of the Cainites, who started great commercial enterprises, built cities, erected a landed aristocracy, developed agriculture, the mechanic arts, and even the fine arts, but encouraged polygamy, adopted a law of retaliation for injuries, and parodied Enoch's prophecy with skeptical verses like Lamech's!

There is but one hope for our land. It is the Gospel. Here is the potent force that can assimilate the heterogenous elements, unite all classes in bonds of fraternal sympathy, reconcile contending sections, displace extravagance by self-denying benevolence, purify our Courts of law, correct social vices and prevent both family decay and religious decline. Let us love our land and be proud of our heritage, but let us not forget our solemn trust, to guard the ark of a pure religious faith and the asylum of a true political freedom. Let us build up the

hedges around the ballot box, impartial but not universal suffrage, requiring at least proper qualifications of intelligence and virtue in those who wield the great weapon of the freeman, the elective franchise, and control our laws and liberties. Let us keep out the boar, with his gross sensuality and brute violence; and the beast, though his subtler, stealthier step be with the beauty of a leopard's skin. Let us set up the Christian

Church and school on every hill and valley until every wild waste shall blossom as the Lord's garden. Then shall the vine which God planted on these Western shores grow graceful and strong and yield precious harvests unto God. We shall vindicate the promise of our history and accomplish the prophecy of our destiny. Happy, thrice happy shall we be, if our God is our defender and friend!