

OUR COUNTRY
AND
THE CHURCH.

BY
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P R E F A C E .

THE following pages are the substance of two discourses preached in the 5th Avenue and 19th street church, on the Sabbath preceding the late national fast-day. The interest awakened, and the desire expressed by many to see them in print, have led to the preparation of them for the press. They contain sentiments which are believed to be not only scriptural, but of great practical importance in the existing state of the country and of the Church of Christ. Two circumstances in connection with our national troubles, we have been compelled to regard with pain and with serious apprehension :

1. So far as we have had the opportunity to observe the expression of sentiment by ministers of the Gospel and ecclesiastical bodies, far greater prominence seems to have been given to expressions of loyalty to, and sympathy with, the Government, and to the condemnation of the Southern rebellion, than to the sinfulness of the nation, and to the fact that the fearful judgments

of God are upon us, because of our iniquities. The necessity of carrying on the war vigorously seems to have been urged with more feeling and eloquence, than the necessity of repentance and reformation. Now, whatever propriety there may be in giving expression to patriotic feeling, and to disapprobation of the conduct of those who have risen up against the Government, and are aiming to destroy our noble Union, we cannot but believe that it is greatly more important to the country, and more in harmony with the teaching of God's word, that the chief prominence should be given to the sin which is the chief cause of our troubles. Either civil war, threatening the ruin of the nation, is not a Divine judgment for our sins, or one of the main duties of ministers of the Gospel and ecclesiastical bodies, is to call both people and rulers, both Church and State, to repentance. We have just read a sermon preached by Rev. Dr. Witherspoon, a century ago, the title of which is "Prayer for National Prosperity and for the Revival of Religion inseparably connected," preached on a public fast appointed in Scotland on account of the war then raging, and the disasters which had befallen the armies of Great Britain. His description of the state of things then, and of the course pursued, is almost literally applicable to our own affairs. I cannot forbear to quote a few sentences from this discourse :

"We have also been long engaged in war with a powerful and politic enemy ; and has not the Provi-

dence of God sensibly frowned on us, and visibly frustrated almost every one of our attempts? This hath been the case to a degree hardly known in any former instance. We have 'turned our backs faint-hearted before our enemies' in almost every encounter; and the greater and more formidable our preparations for any enterprise, the more pitiful the issue, and the more shameful our defeat and disappointment. Has there not been an obstructed trade, a loss of territory, a loss of honor, and expense of treasure? * * * How numerous and expensive, but how useless and inactive, have been our fleets and armies." Again: "From what hath been said, you may see what wrong measures we have hitherto taken for removing these evils, so far as we have been sensible of them. Our gracious sovereign hath, indeed, been pleased to point out our duty, by calling us annually to fasting and humiliation, but with the far greater number it hath been no more than an unmeaning and lifeless form; and they have continued in the same forgetfulness of God. You have heard, also, that nothing is more contrary to the genuine spirit of intercessory prayer in public calamity, than putting trust in an arm of flesh; and yet, is there any thing with which this nation is at present more chargeable? Nothing is more apparent from the very face of our common channels of intelligence. In case of disappointment, on the one hand, are we not ungovernable and head-strong in our resentment against men? and equally foolish and sanguine, on the other,

in our hopes of those who are substituted in their place? We give pompous details of armaments, and prophecy, nay, even in a manner describe their victories, long before the season of action; and incautiously celebrate the characters of leaders, while they are only putting on the harness, and going into the field. What proud and arrogant sentiments do we often express on the subject of our national courage, and ancient British fire, as it is called." How literally descriptive of what we have constantly read in our own papers!

2. The second thing we have observed with pain and apprehension, is that, whilst so much concern is expressed in the pulpit and in the religious press for our Constitution, our Government, and our nation, we see but little expression of grief on account of the state of religion, and the divided and distracted condition of the Church of Christ in this land. We have read strong commendations of ministers who have zealously espoused the cause of the country, and strong condemnations even of those who, whilst avowing their zeal for the country, have doubted whether ministers and churches, as such, should identify themselves with the war. But how few expressions of grief on account of divisions and heart-burnings in the churches, and the very low state of religion! In the sermon just quoted, Dr. Witherspoon labored to prove, that we have no warrant to pray for deliverance from national calamities, and for national prosperity, without a revival of religion; that we have no reason to expect that the

former will be separately bestowed ; and if it should, it would not be a blessing, but a curse. " Are we not," he asks, " in a very low and fallen state as a church, or a nation, still retaining some profession and form of religion ? This will be found to correspond with the other (*i. e.*, national calamities) as the cause with the effect." Would that we could deeply impress upon every mind the following solemn truth, uttered in the same discourse: " If, then, public calamity bears a commission for this purpose, (*i. e.*, the reformation of the people,) from him whose work is perfect, what reason is there to expect that it will be removed before it hath attained its end ? Will He not repeat the stroke, and increase its severity, till it procure submission ?" If these sentiments are true, (and what Christian will call them in question ?) then is it not the special business of Christ's ministers, for the sake both of the country and the church, to preach to the people and their rulers, and also to the churches, the duty and absolute necessity of immediate repentance and reformation ? We have before us the resolutions recently adopted by a Congregational Convention, in which the war is declared, on our part, to be " a just and righteous war ;" the obligation is professed to prosecute it with vigor, " and as speedily as possible bring it to a triumphant conclusion." And the Convention express the strong conviction, that " the system of American slavery " is the cause of the war, and urge the Government to make emancipation an object in prosecuting

it. But in these resolutions is not an intimation, that we in the North have any sins to confess, or any reason to dread the Divine judgments.

We have also before us the proceedings of one of our oldest synods, in which we find one resolution in reference to the country, viz. : that adopted by our General Assembly, *so far as patriotism is concerned* ; but no recognition of the hand of God in our troubles, no confession of sin, no call upon the churches to turn to God. The resolution, it is stated, "proved the sterling loyalty and patriotism of the body." Did their loyalty and patriotism need to be proved? We think not. But surely the times demanded, if any thing were said, something we do not find.

These cases are referred to, as happening to be before us, as showing the manner in which the troubles of the country and Church are treated by ecclesiastical bodies. They are not referred to in a censorious spirit, but with grief. We are deeply convinced that our troubles are likely to increase, till God's ministers and people shall be brought to utter the language of faithful warning and of true penitence, and to call mightily upon Him for help. We must realize, that loyalty and patriotism, however valuable in their place, cannot deliver the nation from the judgments which its sins have brought on it.

N. L. R.

OUR COUNTRY:

ITS EXALTATION.



Righteousness exalteth a nation.—Prov. xiv. 34.

1. TROUBLE, individual, domestic, and national, though in itself an evil, often proves an inestimable blessing, by calling attention to great truths, forgotten or disregarded in prosperity, and impressing them anew and more deeply on the minds of men. David said—"It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes." Isaiah said—"With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early; for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." * It is not probable that great afflictions ever leave individuals, families, or nations in the same moral condition

in which they find them. Under the pressure they become better or worse ; turn in the direction of righteousness, or rush more recklessly forward in transgression.

2. There are few great truths more obvious, yet more frequently forgotten, especially in periods of national prosperity, than that declared in the text. To individuals and families prosperity has too generally proved more dangerous than adversity ; and in times of prosperity, nations, even more than individuals or families, forget their dependence on God, and become boastful and rebellious. In his farewell address to the Jewish nation Moses very solemnly warned them against this danger. "When thou hast eaten and art full, then shalt thou bless the Lord thy God for the good land which he hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day : lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein ; and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied ; then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God." *

* Deut. viii. 10.

Yet how very soon the wonderful deliverances they had experienced, and the solemn warnings they had received, were forgotten, until Divine judgments humbled them, and made them feel their dependence on God. Happy will it be for this nation if the great troubles that have come upon it shall impress on the minds of the people the important truth that "righteousness exalteth a nation." My design is to illustrate and apply this truth.

Righteousness is conformity to God's law; springing from faith in the Gospel. Paul calls it "obedience to the faith." It is absolutely impossible to maintain a high standard of morals without the doctrines of Christianity. They constitute the reasons of the duties enjoined, and offer the motives to the performance of them. This is, doubtless, the reason why false teachers so generally seek to corrupt the faith of the Church of Christ; for the devil knows, that morals will soon sink when the doctrines have been rejected.

Righteousness, it is here declared, *exalts* a nation. It secures and promotes all those interests which make a nation prosperous, great, and honorable. Sin produces precisely opposite effects. It undermines all its interests, weakens and degrades it.

There are two principal ways in which righteousness exalts a nation :

I. In its own nature, and by its own legitimate operation it promotes, in the highest degree, all the interests of a nation. Every righteous man seeks to understand all his relations, and to discharge all the duties arising from those relations. "His delight is in the law of the Lord." He delights to learn and to discharge all his duties, whether directly to God or to men. The same principles which make him a blessing to his family and his neighborhood, make him a true patriot and philanthropist. Now that nation will always be most prosperous, the greatest proportion of whose citizens aim conscientiously to discharge all their duties. When all build, the walls go up rapidly.

Besides, every righteous man exerts a happy moral influence on others. Such men "shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life"—illustrating in their daily walk the excellency of the Christian faith, and impressing it on the minds of men more forcibly than the most conclusive arguments. And even multitudes who never cordially embrace the Gospel, are induced by the influence of such men to practise, with more or less strictness, its morals. Such,

indeed, is the power of the Gospel, when preached with fidelity ; and such the influence of Christian example, that a high standard of morals may be sustained in a community, only a small minority of whom profess to be Christians. And so there may be the righteousness that will exalt a nation, when the great majority of the people are unconverted. The Church of God is "the salt of the earth."

There are many ways in which righteousness, by its own operation, exalts a nation. It is worth while to mention some of them.

1. It promotes useful industry. I say, *useful* industry ; for there are many men of energy and untiring industry, who make their living by means which not only add nothing to the general wealth, but tend to impoverish the country, and afflict their fellow-men. But a righteous man regards the rights of others, as well as his own. As a member of society, he feels it both a duty and a privilege to contribute his full share to the general prosperity. His religion requires him to be "diligent in business," as well as "fervent in spirit ;" and the pursuits in which he engages, whilst they build up his own fortune, add to the wealth of the country.

2. Righteousness promotes general intelli-

gence. Every righteous man is a *disciple*—a learner. He is a constant student of the noblest of all sciences. And the works and the Word of God stand so intimately related to each other, that he who loves the latter, can scarcely be indifferent to the former. And he who would have all acquainted with the Word of God, would, for a like reason, have all acquainted with his works. As a matter of fact, righteous men have ever been the advocates of popular education, and the founders and supporters of the best literary institutions. A righteous nation, therefore, can never be an ignorant nation.

3. Righteousness promotes wise legislation. In a popular government, legislation can never rise higher than public sentiment. A law unsupported or opposed by public sentiment, becomes a dead letter. So far, then, as there is righteousness in a nation, there is a public sentiment demanding and sustaining wise and righteous legislation. It makes itself felt in the choice of civil officers. It will not allow party feeling to become so strong, that party nominations become more important than capacity and integrity. It sustains good laws, and sees them enforced. It is part of the religion of every righteous man to be “subject to the powers that be.”

Such men abhor mob violence as the very worst form of tyranny. A nation with wise and equal laws, sustained by public sentiment, cannot fail to enjoy peace and prosperity.

4. Righteousness promotes works of benevolence. It loves both God and man. It honors God and does good to man. The righteous man, like his Saviour, goes about doing good. He is not satisfied with doing only what his fellow-men have the right to demand of him. It is his delight to diminish the amount of suffering, and to add to the amount of happiness. Cornelius "gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway." The labors of such men greatly mitigate evils which cannot be entirely removed, and melt away those which legislation cannot immediately, if ever, reach. So long as there is sin in the world, there will be evils in every nation. Righteousness will diminish some, and melt away others, as the rising sun melts the snow.

II. Righteousness exalts a nation by securing favoring providences. It is a glorious truth, that God does exercise a providence over this fallen world. "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice"—"The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble." The providence of God is not merely

a *care* of men, but a *control* over them with reference to the accomplishment of great ends.

God in his providence deals with men in view of four forms of accountability, viz. : individual, domestic, ecclesiastical, and national. Each individual, apart from his relations to others, is accountable for his own acts. Each family, as a community by itself, has duties to perform and sins to account for. Churches, as such, have their responsibility to God ; and nations, as such, have theirs. Families, churches, and nations, more than individuals, feel the consequences of their conduct in this world ; since they will not exist hereafter. God is "King of kings," and "King of nations." Beyond a question, then, the wickedness of a nation will call down Divine judgments upon it ; and the righteousness of a nation will secure the Divine favor. Thus righteousness does exalt a nation.

Besides, it is to be remembered, that nations sustain to the Church of Christ such relations, that they almost necessarily promote or hinder its great work. And since Jesus Christ is "head over all things to the Church," he will surely punish or destroy nations that become obstacles to the progress of his kingdom. Therefore God says to his Church—"For the nation and king-

dom that will not serve thee shall perish : yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted." * The prophets foretold the rise and fall of the mightiest kingdoms of antiquity, only as connected with the interests of the Church of God. And who does not see that the recent revolutions in Europe, and those impending in Asia, are the fulfilment of prophecy, and are preparing the way for the diffusion of the Gospel and the coming of the kingdom of Christ? When the seventh angel of the Apocalypse sounded his trumpet—the symbol of political revolutions—"there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever."

Nor ought it to be forgotten, that favoring providences are secured to nations in answer to the prayers of righteous men. If there had been ten righteous men in Sodom and Gomorrah to unite their prayers with those of Abraham, those cities would have been spared. Jeremiah directed the captives at Babylon to pray for that city; "for in the peace thereof ye shall have peace." And Paul exhorted, that "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of

* Isai. lx. 12.

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." It is as true with respect to nations as to individuals, that "the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

And here we find a chief ground of hope for this nation. The Congress and the President of these United States have called upon all the praying people, and even the whole nation, to humble themselves before God, and to implore his mercy and his aid. National humiliation may be followed by deliverance from national calamities.

Since, then, righteousness only can exalt a nation, the great problem on which depends the permanent prosperity of any nation, is how to secure and maintain a high standard of religion and morals. A nation may rise rapidly without righteousness ; but its speedy decline and ultimate ruin are sure. The Jewish nation never increased in wealth and power so rapidly as during the reign of Solomon ; and yet scarcely had his body been laid in the grave, when the moral corruption which had rapidly increased, developed itself in a ruinous revolution. Rome, after conquering all surrounding nations, sunk under the

weight of her own corruptions. She had not virtue enough to bear her growing prosperity. Spain, in the beginning of the sixteenth century, was one of the greatest kingdoms on earth ; and yet its corruptions soon rendered it one of the most wretched and contemptible. The history of France is no less instructive.

If it be true, that only righteousness can exalt any nation, it is eminently true of nations having a republican form of government. In the absence of a strong central government and of standing armies, moral principle must restrain passion, balance sectional interests and prejudices, and sustain law. If the people, who are the rulers, become corrupt, it is, of course, impossible that the government shall not be so. If the people, who are virtually the law-makers, become lawless, what but anarchy can result ? What shall become of a people, asks De Tocqueville, who are their own rulers, if they fear not the Deity ?

It is a terrible mistake to suppose, that intelligence alone fits a people for self-government. It is necessary, but it is wholly insufficient. There is no adage which more commends itself to the common sense of every one than "Honesty is the best policy ;" yet men of business

never trust others on the ground of their intelligence. They are careful to inquire respecting the moral character of those who seek their confidence. Depravity blinds men to their own interests, as much as it induces them to disregard the interests of others. The moral principle of a people is to popular government what the attraction of cohesion is to solid bodies. If you could destroy that property in the firmest body, it would instantly become particles of dust. And so, whenever moral principle amongst any people having a free government becomes too feeble to resist passion and sectional interest, divisions and revolutions commence ; and then there must be anarchy or despotism.

All this is more emphatically true of nations having a vast extent of territory, with marked differences of climate, productions, and pursuits. For, the more extended the territory, the greater the number and importance of sectional, as opposed to general interests ; and, therefore, the greater the difficulty of restraining selfishness and passion, to which political demagogues always make their appeal, and upon success in exciting which their hope of elevation to office depends. For, that administration of government which is for the general good, must often

bear hardly upon particular sections or interests. With the increase of territory, therefore, there must be corresponding strength in the moral forces ; or civil commotions and revolutions are inevitable.

It is, then, evident that when a nation, after years of peace and prosperity, becomes threatened with disruption and ruin through internal discord, moral corruption must have made fearful progress. In all such cases, one of two things is true, viz. : either a very large portion of the people are disposed to trample upon important rights of the rest ; or a very large portion are indisposed to submit to the equitable administration of government. It is an historical fact, that no nation was ever ruined or seriously in peril from internal strife, whilst maintaining a tolerably high standard of morals. Civil constitutions and civil laws may prove defective in their provisions, or ambiguous in their language ; and wise and good men may hold widely different opinions on very important questions which arise from time to time ; but such men will compare views, and agree or compromise, when bad men, controlled or blinded by passion, will fall out and fight.

Let us apply these principles to the present

state of our country, that we may ascertain how we stand, and what can be done to bring us out of our troubles.

There are three principal ways in which God has been wont to manifest his displeasure against nations, viz. : by famine, by pestilence, and by war. When He was displeased with David and the Jewish nation, He offered him choice between seven years of famine, three months of war and flight before his enemies, or three days of pestilence. Of these three forms of Divine judgment, war is by far the most terrible ; and civil war is the most terrible form of war. David, therefore, said, " Let us fall now into the hand of the Lord ; for his mercies are great, and let us not fall into the hands of man." No one who knows any thing of civil war, needs to have proof that it is the most fearful and disastrous kind of war. It is a house divided against itself ; a nation pulling down its own prosperity ; and in the dreadful work, the passions rage more furiously than in war against a foreign foe.

We are thus brought to consider the alarming fact, that our beloved country, so wonderfully favored of God hitherto, is now suffering under Divine judgments in their most dreadful form. Our situation is still more alarming in view of

the terrible disasters which have befallen our army, and of the huge dimensions which this quarrel has assumed. The appointment of a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer, at the request of the supreme Legislature of the nation, in view of the war and the disasters, is a solemn and emphatic acknowledgment, that the hand of God is in our troubles, and that we are under his frown for our sins. Such a confession, as already remarked, affords ground of hope.

It would be easy, whilst contemplating our troubles, to dilate upon the excellency of our Government, and the importance to the cause of universal liberty of our success in this conflict; and, humanly speaking, it would be difficult to overestimate its importance. I had occasion, some years ago, to deliver a lecture on the mission of these United States. I believed then, and still believe, that to no nation, if we except the Jewish, did God ever intrust a more sublime and glorious mission; and most sad is it to be compelled to fear, that our country may prove faithless to her high mission.

It would be easy, too, to affirm that the rebellion of several States of this confederacy against the General Government, is without any justifying cause; and that the war on our part is for

the very existence of the nation—a war forced upon us, and therefore a righteous war. And in all this there is truth ; but the appointment of a day of fasting is a confession that this is not the whole truth, that on our side of the line great sin has been committed. And as we are now to come before God, with whom is no respect of persons, and who judges righteously, it becomes us not to forget, much less to deny, that, in producing the irritation and loss of confidence which have resulted in this war, many in the North have a fearful responsibility.

We are called upon, by the appointment of a day of fasting, to consider our own sins, not to declaim against the sins of those in war against us ; and it is our duty, as it is surely our interest, to view the whole subject in the light of God's word. It is, indeed, seldom that ministers, if they are wise men, can shout with the excited multitude. There are very grave views to be taken of such troubles, which, in the heat of excitement, are overlooked, but which their responsibilities require them to consider. Moreover, noisy men are not the most reliable, either as advisers or actors, in times of trouble and difficulty. If such men had had less influence, the war might not have come ; and if it had, our army

might not have fled in confusion from the field of battle. We are called to consider two truths :

1. Our present troubles are unquestionably the result of prevailing corruption. We certainly have not the righteousness which exalts a nation ; but we have the sin, which is a reproach to any people. I know it is said, and probably with truth, that Southern politicians have long been plotting this rebellion ; but an enlightened nation never allows scheming politicians to bring it to the verge of ruin, whilst it maintains a tolerable standard of morals.

We have had no new questions to deal with. Slavery has existed in the country from its earliest history, and there is no reason why it should have become more difficult to manage now than heretofore. We have had no questions at all to deal with, which a moderate degree of wisdom might not have settled. And then the motives for perpetuating our civil Union are overwhelmingly strong, even aside from any moral obligation. Corruption must have made fearful progress before ties so sacred could have been broken, and motives so overwhelming disregarded. But as the strength of moral principle declines, selfishness and passion gain the ascendancy ; and then men can neither see their own

true interests nor feel the claims of others. Then crimination and recrimination take the place of calm argument ; and all that is said or published, instead of diffusing light and producing conviction, only inflames the passions and hastens the crisis. And often does it happen, when moral principle has become greatly weakened, and passion much excited, that great revolutions are precipitated by comparatively trifling causes. A single spark may ignite a magazine. The secession of the ten tribes of Israel from the remaining two, affords a striking illustration of this truth. They complained of excessive taxation during the reign of Solomon, and demanded of his son that their burdens should be lightened. And yet at no previous period had the people amassed wealth so rapidly ; nor had the nation ever before taken so high a stand in the family of nations. But in the midst of this extraordinary prosperity, there had been a sad decline in religion and morals. The people had become irritated, and Jeroboam, an ambitious and unprincipled man, had his agents amongst them to magnify their wrongs and inflame their passions. An irritating answer to their demands, at the critical moment, was sufficient to outweigh all the weighty motives of duty and of interest,

which bound them to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, to the temple, and the holy city of their solemnities. Jeroboam was too well aware of the decay of religion and morals, or he would not have ventured, as a matter of policy, to set up an idolatrous worship among them. Such an outrage, at a period when the nation was less corrupt, would have cost him his crown, if not his life.

But the moral corruption was not exclusively, probably not chiefly, in the seceding tribes. The revolution was a Divine judgment on the king and the nation for their sins,—1 Kings xi. 33. Never was there a more striking illustration of the truth that “sin is a reproach,” a cause of division, weakness, and degradation, “to any nation.” A man with the seeds of consumption in his system may live many years, if his general health can be preserved; but if that becomes impaired, a slight cold seizing on the weak point in his system, may prove fatal. And a trifling ailment may become a serious matter, if treated by unskilful physicians, or by quacks. Our body politic had its weak point—the institution of slavery. So long as the standard of morals was tolerably high, it bore up under the evil, and was gradually throwing it off; but under the weight of prevailing corruption, and

because of the irritation produced by unskilful and false reformers, it has reached a terrible crisis.

The decay of morals in a nation is gradual, and to the mass of even intelligent men it is often not perceptible. They do not stand in a position to observe it. Their attention is not called to it. Therefore they are taken almost completely by surprise, when it shows itself in civil convulsions. This is still more emphatically true in an age of moral and religious excitement like the present ; for in such an age there may be much appearance of religion, whilst sound doctrine is losing ground, and much talk of moral reforms, when corruption is undermining the foundations of society. I had occasion to visit the venerable Charter Oak, a few days before it fell. Though showing signs of age, it looked as though it might weather the storms of years to come. A comparatively slight wind proved too much for its strength ; for decay had been gradually going on at the roots for years. So it is with nations. So it has been with us. Comparatively few among us believed it possible, twelve months ago, that the nation could have so soon fallen into its present state ; and few even now, it is to be feared, realize the extent to which corruption has spread.

It is probable that every nation ruined by internal discord passes through three stages. The first is the *patriotic*, when, engaged in laying the foundations of its government, and struggling up through many difficulties, it selects men of wisdom and tried integrity to fill important offices. The second stage is the *ambitious*, when the nation has taken its place among the family of nations, and is enjoying peace and prosperity. Then, as no dangers seem to threaten, the people are less concerned to choose the best men for high offices; and as office confers honor, ambitious men become successful candidates. Still public sentiment demands of those who seek honors at the hands of the people, that they give some proofs of possessing patriotism and integrity. The third stage is the *venal*, when the nation has become wealthy and corrupt, and men seek office, not for the honor it confers, much less that they may be useful to their country, but for the money they can make by it. Then votes come to be bought and sold, as commonly as wheat and corn; and the men who *buy* their election expect to get their money back with large interest, whilst enjoying the emoluments of office. Then comes bribery with all its demoralizing influences; the people cease to re-

spect their legislators, and to place confidence in their judges ; and soon they are prepared for any thing. This dreadful state of things may occur, when there are in the nation enough of righteous men to resist the tide of corruption, if only their influence were properly directed. Happy for the nation, if they perceive the danger before it is too late, and rise in their strength and effect its deliverance. In which of these three stages this nation now is, others can judge as well as I.

But that corruption has made fearful progress amongst us, there can be no doubt. For years past, mob violence has become growingly frequent ; showing the weakening of the moral sentiment that upholds law. Defaulters have multiplied, showing the prevalence of covetousness, and that such conduct was becoming less disgraceful, or more successful in escaping punishment. And who has not observed, that men of sterling integrity and of capacity in every part of the nation, have been pushed aside and thrown into obscurity, whilst incompetent and immoral men have been chosen to fill even the most important offices ? Who does not know, that bribery has become so common, that it has almost ceased to be disreputable ? There is no

impropriety in stating the fact, that the late venerable Judge McClean said to me, some three years ago, that in his opinion this Government could not last twenty years longer, unless there should be a considerable moral reform. Corruption, he said, pervades all parties, and controls the Government. The opinion of such a man is entitled to great weight; and he stated, that in this opinion he was not singular—that the wisest statesmen in the country agreed with him.

It is not very difficult to account for the decay of morals in our country; and since the discovery of the causes that have operated so disastrously may suggest the proper remedies, it is worth while to point them out.

1. As we have been accustomed to boast that the present is an age of progress, the idea has extensively prevailed, that human nature, and especially as represented in the Anglo-Saxon race, is a progressive thing—that under favorable circumstances it will rise to a higher standard of morals, as well as of intelligence. The old doctrine of total depravity has become, to a considerable extent, obsolete or unpopular. It is nothing strange, that the invalid who imagines himself almost well, should cease to follow the prescriptions of the skilful physician, and should

become seriously ill. Whenever men have begun to glory in the upward tendencies of human nature, its deep depravity has become more and more manifest. For then the Divinely appointed remedy for the ruins of the Fall has been neglected or corrupted.

2. The last thirty or forty years have been a period of extraordinary prosperity, marked by increasingly frequent commercial crises. The prospect of accumulating wealth rapidly, has tempted multitudes into extravagant speculations; and the danger of losing it still more quickly, has tempted them to immoral methods of holding it. It is not uncommon to meet with men who have made and lost two or three fortunes, who have not yet lived threescore years. This unhealthy state of things has been most unfavorable to sound morals.

3. A third and most effective cause of the corruption of morals in our country, is to be found in the unhappy change that has occurred in the character of the pulpit and the religious press. I do not stop now to notice the progress which has been made by different forms of fundamental error; though the tendency of all such errors is to let down the standard of morals. But I now refer to the change among evangelical

denominations. Sermons have become, to a considerable extent, finely written moral or philosophic essays, adapted to please and entertain cultivated audiences, but powerless to awaken the conscience or affect the heart. Religion can never be maintained in a healthy state, but by the constant, clear, pungent setting forth of the doctrines, as well as the duties of Christianity, backed by the very language of inspiration. It is the preaching of "*the word*"—the preaching of "*the cross*," which is the power of God to salvation. Apollos, as a preacher, was "mighty in the Scriptures;" and thus only can ministers of Christ be mighty with reference to their great work.

But the mischief has been done, not so much by powerless preaching, as by a kind of preaching and writing, which has imparted to religion a perverted and injurious power. Within the last forty years, a new philosophic theology has extensively prevailed, which began by magnifying *the abilities*, and then *the rights* of man. It first had a great run in revivals of religion, which turned out to be to a great extent spurious, under the preaching of fluent, fiery evangelists. Sinful men were taught to believe, that they could regenerate themselves, and must do it; and multi-

tudes were induced to believe they had done it. The effects were most injurious to the peace of churches, to religion, and to morals.

The next manifestation of the new doctrines (which after all were not new) was in the direction of moral reforms. The subject of *temperance* was seized upon and pushed to great extremes, even in some cases to the making of total abstinence a term of church membership. And then the attempt was made, in some cases successfully, to push legislation on the subject entirely beyond the public sentiment of the country. The subject became prominent in elections ; and ministers of the Gospel and churches were unhappily and injuriously involved in the angry excitements. No wonder that one of the most prominent ministers in our country, himself an advocate of temperance, has felt constrained to say, that the cause of temperance has met " a Waterloo defeat."

But the great theme on which the new principles of reform expended their energies, was *slavery*. From a very early period of our history, the doctrine both in the churches and in the country was, that slavery was a great evil—an evil to both parties involved in it—and that it ought to be removed, as fast as it could be

with safety to all concerned. Under the influence of this doctrine, gradual emancipation was growingly popular; and State after State adopted a course of legislation terminating gradually the existence of slavery within their limits. Under the influence of this sentiment the American Colonization Society arose, and was earnestly supported by all religious denominations, by many Legislatures, and by the leading statesmen in the country.

Then Abolitionism arose. Its fundamental doctrine was, that slaveholding is in itself sinful; and that slaveholders are great sinners. Its advocates insisted upon purging the Church from the sin, by the excommunication of all involved in it. These extreme positions, manifestly unsustained by the Scriptures, were set forth in language the most offensive and irritating. Colonization was bitterly denounced, and immediate emancipation, regardless of consequences, insisted on. I doubt whether the history of the Church and the world exhibits another instance in which, during a period of thirty years, a great and difficult subject, incessantly agitated, called forth so little calm, Christian, or even manly argument—so much offensive, irritating declamation. I think I speak within bounds, when I

say, that for every page of calm argument on this subject, there have been a hundred pages of offensive denunciation.

Can any one wonder, who knows any thing of human nature, that bitter denunciation on one side called forth denunciation as bitter on the other ; that extreme doctrines on the one side soon produced doctrines as extreme on the other ; and the unlawful and immoral means of freeing slaves, led to unlawful and immoral means of protecting the institution ? What were the effects upon the morals and the peace of the country ? Let us calmly consider these.

1. The prominence given to these exciting themes diverted attention from the great doctrines of the Gospel, and from other great duties. The shibboleth by which the orthodoxy of ministers was tested, was not their views of human depravity, the atonement, the work of the Spirit, and the like, but their views of temperance and slavery, especially the latter. It became popular for ministers to declaim, from Sabbath to Sabbath, against evils and sins a thousand miles distant, whilst sin in its various forms was gaining in the communities where they were called to labor. Religion could not flourish under such preaching, nor sound morals.

2d. Ecclesiastical agitations soon began. Angry discussions occupied the time, injured the piety, and crippled the influence of ecclesiastical bodies. Friendly relations between corresponding bodies were disturbed. Finally, the sad work of division commenced. One denomination of Christians after another became divided *sectionally*. They did not simply form different organizations, but *hostile* organizations. There was no ministerial or Christian fellowship between the Churches on the different sides of the line. They were aliens to each other; and the religious press, by its bitter effusions, constantly increased the loss of confidence and the irritation.

And now, when almost all the moral forces, which had so powerfully bound the different sections of the country together, were not only broken, but rendered antagonistic; what was there left to balance sectional feeling and interest, and to restrain the passions which it is the interest of corrupt men and demagogues to excite? In a country, where the main reliance for the support of the Constitution and the laws, and for the preservation of peace, must be upon the moral forces, what could we expect when those forces became antagonistic, but division and war?

In the mean time politicians on either side

were not slow to see that they could make capital out of this quarrel. Sectional jealousy, as a matter of course, already existed. Religious antipathy was now added to that. Jeroboam very naturally believed, that he could never prevent a reunion between the ten tribes and the two, unless all religious fellowship between them were destroyed (1 Kings xii. 26-33). And aspiring politicians—those who wished the Union destroyed, and those whose merit could not elevate them to office without a hobby—saw in the ecclesiastical divisions the opportunity they desired. And now the religion and morals of the country were further injured by a sort of union of religion and politics. Politicians and political editors never known to manifest hatred of sin before, declaimed against the sin of slavery, or against the fanaticism of Abolitionism ; and ministers of the Gospel declaimed against the further extension of the sin of slavery, or against political interference with what was held to be a Scriptural institution. As might have been expected, politicians did far more to corrupt the Church, than the Church did to purify politics ; and the Church became a football to be knocked about by politicians, as their interests or passions dictated.

I rejoice to bear testimony, that large num-

bers of faithful ministers on both sides of the line refused to prostitute their sacred office, and continued to preach only "Christ and him crucified." But the constantly increasing number who yielded to the pressure of a public sentiment growingly corrupt and intolerant, were quite sufficient to do incalculable injury to religion and morals, and to the country.

4. Whilst the attention of ministers and churches was so unhappily diverted from their great work, and the religion and morals of the country were corrupted and perverted, infidelity made its appearance in some of its most dangerous forms. One class of minds became bewildered by the absurdities of German Pantheism; whilst a vastly larger number became converts to the marvels of Spiritualism. This last form of infidelity, taking its type from the peculiar excitement of the age, claimed to hold constant intercourse with the spirit-world. Though a wretched system of materialism, it made appeals to some of the strongest feelings of human nature. It sent forth its lecturers in all directions. It descended amongst the masses, and made converts amongst women, as well as men. Halls in large cities were hired, and those lecturers gained access to the masses, whom the churches do not reach.

Papers, and periodicals, and books in large numbers, and of all sizes, were printed and circulated. Circles were formed in all cities and villages. No form of infidelity has ever made progress half so rapid in our country. And although it may seem to have, in many places, but an ephemeral existence, it leaves its victims miserable infidels, and its demoralizing influence extending. In a country so enlightened as this, and so generally pervaded by Christianity, infidelity never could have made such progress, if the Gospel had not extensively lost its influence. But with every step of the progress of this form of infidelity, all pure morality was annihilated, and the very foundations of society unsettled.

5. After all, there was and is pure religion enough in the country to have saved it, if it had not been merged in party politics. For some years past, the political parties have been nearly equal in strength ; and this fact, taken in connection with the character of the questions mainly agitated, has given constantly increasing intensity to the excitement attending elections. The fact that slavery became more and more the prominent question on which the parties were divided, induced moral and religious men to take sides more warmly. The consequence has been,

that such men, if they have not actually participated in the corrupt proceedings resorted to in our elections, have connived at them; and in their zeal for the triumph of their respective parties, they have readily voted for the party nominees, regardless of their competency and of their moral characters. Year after year, men of true statesmanship and of tried integrity have been thrown into obscurity, whilst incompetent and unprincipled men have been chosen to fill the most important offices. Violent men have disgraced the halls of our national Legislatures; and bribery has controlled the legislation of the States and the country.

And as the Christians of the country have given their influence to put honor upon incompetent and bad men; so have they thus given to those men an influence still further to corrupt the morals of the country, they otherwise never could have possessed. When wickedness is exalted to the high places of the land, it sheds down upon the whole land a withering influence. And when the young men of the nation see that statesmanship is no qualification for office, and virtue rather a hindrance to advancement than a help, what must inevitably be the effect upon their moral character? And then how can any

people long respect laws made by lawless men, and by bribery? And when in a free country, respect for law has been destroyed, what can save it from ruin? Surely the good men of this nation have forgotten the inspired declaration—“When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.” How widely different might now have been the state of our country, if the Christian and moral men in it had regarded *moral integrity* in candidates for office, as far more important than party politics, and had positively and perseveringly refused to give their influence to any candidate, unless he were known to be a moral man and a patriot. Then, indeed, the Church, whilst as such standing aloof from politics, would have insured wise and righteous legislation, and prevented the dreadful corruption of the morals of the country by the influence of men in office.

6. One of the most potent influences in corrupting the morals of the country remains to be mentioned, viz., the character of a large portion of the secular press. We live in an age when public sentiment is, as never before, moulded and controlled by the press; and probably in no other country are the people so generally accus-

tomed to read newspapers, and to form their opinions from them. Now, is it not true that to a very great extent the leading secular papers of the country have been and are under the control of bad men? And, apart from their peculiar political sentiments, is it not true that they have constantly put forth false and injurious moral sentiments? These papers have been patronized not only by unconverted men, but by Christians, who have had the opportunity of knowing their character from week to week, without uttering a protest. For years this silent, but all-pervading and mighty influence has been doing its work upon the minds of the people of this nation.

Such are some of the chief influences by which the morals of the nation have been corrupted, or by which the better moral influences have been neutralized. Surely these are sufficient to account for the unhappy condition of our country.

II. But we are suffering under Divine judgments. War, as we have seen, is one of the judgments of God upon wicked nations, and civil war the most dreadful form of war. In years past, He has visited this nation by other judgments. Twice within thirty years the pestilence has visited us, sweeping hundreds of thousands into the grave; and once a national fast was appoint-

ed and the people called on to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. Once and again the rain has been withheld, and by one means or another commercial crises have taught us the uncertainty of wealth. But all the warnings have been disregarded ; and now God has spoken in His displeasure, uttering language adapted to fill us with dismay. He never punishes a people so severely, as when He gives them up to their own folly and passion to destroy themselves.

Now, if this war is a judgment upon the nation for its sins, it is absurd to suppose that we can throw it off merely by fighting. God is calling us to repentance and reformation, and nothing else will gain us lasting peace. Read and consider Jeremiah xvii. ; 7-10.

It is a terrible mistake to suppose that, because a war may be justifiable or necessary on our part, God will give us success. When He sends the pestilence, the skill of physicians fails. When He sends war, or when the most righteous war is undertaken with sins unrepented, or in a wrong spirit, the skill of generals and the courage of soldiers avail not. The attack on the city of Ai, under direction of Joshua, was right ; but because there was sin in the camp, the army fled

before their enemies; and Joshua was far less concerned to inquire what blunder his officers had committed, than how God came to be offended. When Nebuchadnezzar led his hosts against the Jewish nation, can we doubt that they were justified in defending themselves? It might be, and doubtless was said, not only that the war was forced upon them, but that it was a war of liberty against despotism, of true religion against paganism—a war in defence of the temple and the ark—in defence of God's chosen people, and that every attribute of God would secure His aid on the side of Israel. But God was displeased with the nation and the church for their corruption and wickedness, and He had sent Nebuchadnezzar against them. False prophets assured them that God would be with them, and faithful old Jeremiah was persecuted and immured in a dungeon for telling them that, on account of their sins, He would not. The 15th chapter of 2 Chron. is just now instructive to us. Referring to a time of great corruption, the prophet says, "And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the countries. And nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city; for God

did vex them with all adversity." God ceased to afflict them, when they turned penitently and sought Him, not before. We cannot expect chastisements to be removed before they have had their proper effect.

What, then, is the hope of this great nation ?
I answer :

1. Not in its importance to the cause of liberty in the world. It is to be feared that many Christians, as well as others, have persuaded themselves, that God will not abandon a nation which has done so much in favor of human freedom, and whose influence is so important to this noble cause. Let us not forget, that God has infinite resources. The language of John the Baptist to the Jews, who labored under a similar error, is appropriate to us : "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father ; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." If this nation disqualify itself by its corruption for its high mission, God can raise up other instruments to do the work. Let us not forget, that "all nations before him are as nothing : and they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity."

2. Our hope is not in the intelligence of the

people, in the skill of our commanders and the bravery of armies, nor in our abundant resources. These are means and instrumentalities by which ordinarily God accomplishes his purposes. But abounding wickedness always begets prevailing folly, which renders the greatest resources worthless. Cyrus could never have taken Babylon, but for the corruption and dissipation within its walls. Moreover, no resources can avail, if God be against us. He has said—"Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. Blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." Let us remember, that "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong."

3. The hope is, that the people of this nation, especially the Christian people, in their troubles will turn to the Lord, and seek wisdom and help from him. But there must be true fasting, true penitence, and permanent reformation. For if the cause of our troubles—national corruption—continue, how can we hope for peace and prosperity?

Let ministers of Christ and Christian people come back to the cross, from which they have wandered. Let them abandon the idea, that

ours is an age of progress, and that the obvious meaning of the Bible and the apostolic mode of reforming men do not apply to us. Let us come back to our Protestant creed, that the Scriptures are a complete rule of faith and life, and that they only, by the blessing of God, can effect reformation, or build up that righteousness which exalts a nation. Let ministers be interpreters of God's word, "in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if, peradventure, God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth."

Let the people take warning by the troubles into which false principles of moral reform have brought both the Church and the nation. For if unwise preachers and bad politicians continue to control public sentiment, our troubles are only begun. Already do we find the very classes of men who have done so much to produce the alienation and want of confidence which have involved us in war, clamoring to have it declared to be a war for the abolition of slavery, and condemning the Government for not taking this ground. Claiming, many of them, to be Christians, they would reform men, not by the Word of God, but by the horrors of war. Having done so much to divide the nation sectionally, and in-

volve it in the terrible disasters of war, they would produce still further divisions, and thus render us powerless, even for self-defence.

Let Christian men and patriots so far withdraw from political parties, as to refuse to give their influence to put men in office, who are incompetent or destitute of integrity. It is a favorable time now for the Church to free herself from political complications, and make her moral influence felt; for now political parties have nearly disappeared. A great point will have been gained, if reformation be effected in this matter—if the religion of the country shall cease to be merged in party politics, and shall again put forth its legitimate influence.

Let Christian influence be brought to bear upon the secular press. Let those Christian men to whom God has given influence, make that influence felt in purifying this powerful engine from its present uses for evil. Let the conductors of the press be solemnly rebuked against those demoralizing influences, which they have done so much to disseminate in the country. Let those who have a voice in the past, when they were members of the press, and people of the mails, be rebuked for the unimproved for

interfering with such matters, and hints were thrown out about the union of Church and State. And now a great and ruinous battle has been fought on the Sabbath, disgracing the nation before all the nations. Possibly now the people may pause and consider. Let us have a Sabbath, that we may have righteousness, and that the nation may be exalted.

Let there be reformation, as well as fasting and prayer, and then we may hope for brighter days.

THE CHURCH:

ITS PERILS AND DUTIES.

“Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.”
—REV. xvi. 15.

THE general meaning of the prophecies of the book of Revelations, I doubt not, has been correctly understood. I have some doubt whether the symbols—the seals, trumpets, and vials—have been rightly interpreted by most commentators and writers on prophecy. These three classes of symbols have been supposed to reveal events of the same general character; the seals bringing down events in the history of the Church and the world to a certain period; then the trumpets bringing them to another later period; and the vials completing the history. This mode of interpretation seems to me unsatisfactory. For:

1. It is most improbable, that three classes of symbols so different should signify events of the same character.

2. Seven is the number constantly employed in the Scriptures to express that which is complete or perfect. We may safely conclude, therefore, that the seven seals complete the series of events they are intended to reveal ; the seven trumpets complete another series ; and the seven vials, a third series. If so, the events indicated by these three classes of symbols, do in the main synchronize.

Perhaps a careful examination might lead to the conclusion, that the seals reveal the history of the Church, and of the progress of the Gospel in the world ; the trumpets bring to view national revolutions connected with the interests of the Church, and overruled for its good, and for the spread of the Gospel ; and the vials exhibit those remarkable Divine judgments with which, from time to time, God has visited the Church and the world. Certainly these three classes of events do make up the history of the Church and the world, and are the means divinely used for introducing the Millennial day. It is not my purpose now to give in further detail the reasons

for this view ; nor could I express it with unbecoming confidence.

But either interpretation makes the solemn admonition expressed in the passage just quoted, applicable to the present time ; for it comes under the sixth vial. The pouring out of this vial was to be followed by the rapid diffusion of error, and by very great agitations among the nations. John saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouths of the dragon, of the beast, and the false prophet ; and these are explained to be the spirits of devils, working miracles or doing marvellous things, diffusing amongst the nations their mischievous errors, and thus producing bloody wars and revolutions. These convulsions are to be overruled to the fulfilment of the Divine purposes ; and therefore they are represented as “the battle of that great day of God Almighty.”

Unless interpreters have been sadly at fault, the prophecies do indicate, that we are very near to another great epoch in the history of the world—the most momentous, if we except the advent of Christ, in its history. The twelve hundred and sixty years must be nearly completed. Certain it is, that the human mind, the world over, has never been so excited as within the last few

years ; and important and startling events have never crowded so rapidly upon each other. It is observable, too, that in the providence of God, by the increasing facilities of travel and intercommunication, all nations have been brought closer together ; and their interests have become so united, that whatever seriously affects one, affects all ; and all excitements become universal. And it is true, that the great questions which have agitated and do still agitate the world, connect themselves more than ever before with religion and morals ; and in the midst of the agitations and by means of them, Popery and Moham-
medanism, the two monster systems of error, which were to continue to the end of the twelve hundred and sixty years, have been made to totter to their fall.

These agitations must continue for years to come ; and they will necessarily bring peculiar perils to the Church of Christ, and demand corresponding watchfulness. “ Behold, I come as a thief.” This is not, as I believe, to be a literal and personal coming of Christ ; but a coming with overwhelming judgments and by the wonderful power of his grace, to prepare the way for the thousand years of the reign of righteousness.

I propose briefly to consider the perils and

the duties of Christians, and of the Church of Christ in this day.

The first danger I will mention is, of becoming unscripturally entangled with political agitations. It is clear, that such agitations are to prevail under the sixth vial; and it is also certain, that they are to prevail in connection with, if not because of, religious errors extensively prevalent. We know that such agitations have become increasingly frequent and extensive in our day. To go no further back, the great rebellion in China is closely connected with religion. The late terrible outbreak in India was excited by religious fanaticism and hatred of Christianity. The war between Russia, on the one side, and England and France, on the other, had a similar origin; and so had the late deplorable massacres in Turkey. The astonishing revolution in Italy has been closely connected with the great question of the rights of conscience. In our own country, the great question which has eclipsed all others, and which has involved us in a dreadful civil war, is as much a moral as a civil question; and its moral aspects have given intensity to the feeling on both sides.

It is impossible that Christian men can be indifferent spectators of these great conflicts.

They ought not to be so. They ought to feel, and must feel a deeper interest in them, than worldly men can ; for they are intimately connected with the progress of the cause of Christ in the world. But there is great danger lest, failing to discriminate between the rights and duties of the citizen, the rights and duties of church members, the rights and duties of ministers of the Gospel, and the rights and duties of ecclesiastical bodies, they may involve the Church, *as such*, in unscriptural and injurious complications with political agitations.

This subject is one of so great importance and difficulty, and there is so much difference of opinion regarding it, that it demands very careful consideration.

The Church and the State are both of God ; the former directly, the latter indirectly. God himself organized the Church, and he authorized men to organize the State, or to establish civil government. He gave to the Church its form of government ; he left men free to give to civil governments whatever forms might be best adapted to them. But whatever the forms of civil government, "the powers that be are ordained of God ;" and within those limits which He has prescribed, they are supreme.

But in every age, much difficulty has existed in defining the relations of these two organizations to each other, and in confining each within its legitimate sphere. As the Church and the State have been organized for widely different purposes; so they are, in their nature, widely different organizations. Yet since they are obliged, to a considerable extent, to deal with the same subjects, there has been no little difficulty in drawing the line beyond which neither ought to go. To a considerable extent criminal legislation and ecclesiastical discipline take cognizance of the same actions; and then marriage, the Sabbath, &c., have both civil and religious aspects. It is not surprising, then, that the State should often encroach on the Church, or the Church on the State; that the State should sometimes call on the Church for a kind of aid, in times of difficulty, which it cannot rightly render; or that the Church should be disposed to avail itself of the arm of State to suppress errors and vices which do not readily yield to argument and exhortation.

But for the sake of both organizations, for the sake of the people for whose benefit they are intended, and for the honor of God, the author of them both, it is of the utmost importance,

especially in such a day as this, that each of them be kept on its own side of the line, confined within its own proper sphere. Thus only can they be mutual supports to each other, and answer the great purposes for which they exist.

There are three principal ways in which these two organizations have injured each other, and perilled the interests of the people, viz. :

1st. By the State becoming the patron of the Church, and assuming to legislate for it. It does seem strange, that it has been so difficult for men to see, that civil rulers were neither authorized nor qualified to dictate creeds, modes of worship, and terms of ecclesiastical fellowship.

2d. By the Church assuming to control the legislation of the State. For centuries, the Pope gave or withheld crowns, and deposed princes, as to him seemed best. Once and again, he commanded civil rulers to exterminate heretics, under pain of forfeiture of their crowns. The Church is no better qualified to direct the legislation of the State, than the State is to dictate creeds for the Church.

3d. By the Church taking part in political agitations and conflicts. During a long period, there was quite a contest between kings and princes, in their quarrels with each other, which

should gain the Pope and the Church to his side. And whoever gained in such contests, the Church and religion always lost. In our own elections, within the last few years, politicians have watched the course of Christian ministers with intense interest; and political editors have commented on their pulpit discourses, whenever they seemed to have even a remote bearing upon the issues between the parties, with as much freedom as on the speeches of stump orators. And in truth, there were too many instances in which the two so closely resembled each other, that there seemed no good reason for discrimination. Whatever politicians or political parties may gain by calling in the aid of ministers and churches, it is certain that religion is thus dishonored, and shorn of its saving power.

In attempting to state the relations of the Church and the State to each other, let us keep in view two great truths, viz. :

1. The work of the Church is incomparably more important than that of the State. It is, therefore, absurd and wrong that, in order to help the State, the Church should cripple her energies in the great work to which her Redeemer has called her. It is far more important that the people be brought under the influence

of the Gospel—that the authority of God should be supreme over their hearts and consciences, than that any measures of State should succeed. The conversion and salvation of men rise in importance infinitely above human law and government. In God's plan the State is for the Church, not the Church for the State. Jesus Christ is "head over all things to the Church." Whatever, then, may become of civil governments, the ministry and the Church of Christ must go forward in their great work, turning neither to the right nor to the left. Surely I need not appeal to particular passages of Scripture to prove a truth so clear.

2. The Church never serves the State so effectively as when she does her appropriate work most faithfully. If it be true that "righteousness exalteth a nation," then when the Church and her ministers are most zealous and successful in building up righteousness, they accomplish most toward the nation's prosperity and glory. This is their part of the work. The civil and secular interests of the nation have been committed to citizens and civil rulers; and the less the Church, as such, interferes with matters not belonging to her, the better both for religion and for the country. The very character of her work

demands that she shall occupy a position which will enable her to exert her entire religious and moral influence on all classes and parties. Just so soon as her ministers and her ecclesiastical courts are found taking sides with one political party, they destroy their influence over those belonging to other parties, and over that large class of men of all parties, who regard such a course as the prostitution of a sacred office. Such being the nature of the work intrusted to the Church, ministers of the Gospel may well become alarmed when they see the country threatened with ruin in consequence of the prevalence of corruption and the rancor of party feeling; for such a state of things demonstrates too clearly that they have sadly failed in their part of the work of sustaining the Government, and, of course, in the far more important work of converting men to God. In a country possessing one of the best governments on the globe, and so pervaded by religious influences as this country is, it is impossible that corruption should so prevail, and that the Government should be in great peril, until the churches have largely lost their influence, or are exerting a perverted influence. Instead, therefore, of hastening to identify themselves with the quarrel, on one side or

the other, let ministers inquire most earnestly and prayerfully what great error they have committed. Let them lift up their voices like a trumpet, and show the people their sins. Let them preach the Gospel in its purity with greater zeal and power than ever before. It is the wickedness of the nation that is ruining it. Let the ministers of Christ build up righteousness. Read and consider the 58th chapter of Isaiah.

Keeping in view these two great truths, let us come more directly to the consideration of the relations of Church and State, and of their respective obligations to each other.

1. The obligation of the State to the Church is that of *protection simply*. It cannot dictate or recommend a creed, ceremonies, or a form of government. The Church never prospers as when protected and let alone. It were better for her to be persecuted, than established and patronized by the State. This will not be disputed in this country.

2. The duty of the Church to the State is embraced in the following three particulars, viz. :

1st. It is the duty of the Church, through her ministers, to teach those great principles of God's Word by which civil rulers are bound to govern their official conduct. God is King of

kings ; and His law is supreme over rulers. Read Deut. xvii. 14-20.

2d. The Church owes it to the State to teach the people "to be subject to the powers that be," within the limits God Himself has fixed ; and to explain to them, out of God's Word, the duties of citizens. (Rom. xiii. 7. 1 Pet. ii. 17.)

3d. The Church owes it to the State to pray for it, for all civil rulers, that they may fear God, understand and discharge their duty ; and for the country, that the blessing of God may rest upon it. These three particulars embrace all the duties which the Church owes directly to the State. And, having discharged these duties, she cannot be charged with unfaithfulness or disloyalty.

But in such a day as this, it is of the utmost importance to determine precisely how far the Church, as such, and ministers of the Gospel, as such, may justly be required to go ; or how far they may rightly and scripturally go in touching the questions which agitate nations and States. We have heard much recently of the loyalty or disloyalty of ministers and churches. Not only the sermons, but the prayers of ministers, have been watched and criticized with reference to their loyalty ; and some have chosen, and others

have been obliged, to retire from pastoral charges purely on the ground of their political opinions. And large numbers of ministers and ecclesiastical bodies have very fully identified themselves, on one side or the other, with the present war. In the South, we see ministers acting as military commanders ; and in the North are not a few who would be perhaps more consistent with their own teaching, if they were employed in the same way. There are, on the other hand, not a few ministers who are deeply grieved at this state of things, and regard it as alike unscriptural and injurious to Church and State. Let us then get at the principles that underlie and should control this whole subject : How far ought ministers and churches, as such, to become involved in these political agitations ?

Let me not be misunderstood. I am not inquiring respecting the rights and duties of Christians or of ministers in their relations as *citizens*. As a citizen, I have certain rights, and am obliged to perform certain duties. As a church member, I have certain other rights, and am obliged to perform certain other duties. As a minister of the Gospel, I have still other rights, and am obliged to the performance of still other duties. And when a member of an ecclesiastical

body, I have rights and duties peculiar to the character of the body. It is of the utmost importance not to confound these different sets of rights and duties. Our inquiry now has respect exclusively to the rights and duties of ministers and churches, as such, with reference to political questions and agitations.

There are, then, two classes of subjects which ministers and churches, as such, cannot decide, viz. :

1. The first are questions purely secular, civil, or political. Our commission as ministers obliges us to preach the Gospel, and it limits us to this. We may not preach less ; we may not preach more. A Christian congregation would be shocked, if their pastor should preach a sermon on the importance of the Pacific Railroad. He might plead that he was a patriot, and that the road was essential to the best interests of the country ; or that such a road might aid in the work of evangelizing an important section of the country. Such a plea could not be listened to. On this point, perhaps, all are agreed. But I proceed a step further, and contend—

2. That ministers and churches, as such, cannot settle those *moral* questions which depend upon secular, civil, and political questions. In

the progress of human affairs, and in the different relations of life, many questions of right and wrong, of duty and obligation, arise, which depend wholly upon secular, civil, or political questions ; so that the settlement of these determines the moral questions. Now, since the Scriptures do not instruct us concerning such secular questions, the best men—those who most thoroughly understand the Scriptures, and who do not differ from each other on any important doctrine or moral principle—do differ widely respecting the secular questions, and, consequently, respecting the moral questions which depend upon them. For example, three Christian physicians are called to treat a patient who is dangerously ill. They are perfectly agreed as to the moral obligation, if possible, to restore him to health ; but they differ materially respecting the best mode of treatment. The treatment which one of them sincerely believes to be the best, another of them believes to be injurious, if not fatal. Consequently, the former would feel morally bound to adopt a course which the latter would regard it as morally wrong for him to adopt. Who would think of referring the moral question to any minister of the Gospel, or to any number of ministers ? The moral question depends upon the sec-

ular or scientific; and since they are neither authorized nor qualified to determine the latter, they cannot decide the former. Again, two members of the church claim the same property, each asserting his moral right to it. One of them appeals to his pastor or to the session of the church to decide to which of the claimants it belongs. Each founds his claim upon a will or a preceding title. The question is strictly moral, but the determination of it depends upon the validity of a will, or upon important principles of civil law. Neither pastor nor session, as such, can undertake to determine the dispute. They are not authorized to settle the legal question; and, therefore, they cannot settle the moral. They cannot take sides in the dispute, since the question is one respecting which the most conscientious men may differ.

Such a question our Lord was called upon to determine, and his answer is instructive. "Master," said a certain man, "speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" Why was this answer given? The question was a moral one, and our Lord knew perfectly what was right in the case.

· But the settlement of secular and civil ques-

tions did not belong to his sacred office ; and the moral question depended upon the secular or civil. He, therefore, refused to prostitute his sacred office, but embraced the opportunity to teach a great moral truth, and to warn those who heard him against the sin of covetousness. " Now this shows us," says the excellent Matthew Henry, " what is the nature and constitution of Christ's kingdom ; it is a spiritual kingdom, and not of this world. It does not interfere with civil power, nor take the authority of princes out of their hands. * * It does not intermeddle with civil rights. * * * It does not allow ministers to *entangle* themselves in the affairs of this life, to *leave the Word of God to serve tables.*" " This little episode," says Olshausen, " is instructive as showing the way in which Jesus conducted himself in affairs pertaining to the *external relations* of political and civil life. He wholly refrained from such interference, and confined his labors entirely to the sphere of moral and spiritual truth. * * * An important hint for all who are called to the work of the ministry."

Within the last few years, questions have arisen between our Government and that of Great Britain respecting the right of search,

boundary lines, and the like. Moral questions stood connected with these disputes ; and if they had resulted in war, there would have been a great moral question respecting the righteousness of the war on the one side and on the other. But who would have thought of calling on ministers and churches either to decide such questions, or to take sides in the war ? They could decide the moral questions, only by first deciding the civil, which latter they are not authorized to meddle with. It belongs to the civil authorities to settle such questions ; and it is the duty of citizens to acquiesce in such decisions, if they do not interfere with rights of conscience. But it would be neither the duty nor the right of ministers and churches to discuss the questions involved, and to identify themselves with the war on either side.

The same principle applies to the questions which have so unhappily divided our country, and involved it in civil war. One of the questions is, whether the several States of this Confederacy have the right, when their interests seem to them to demand it, to withdraw from the Union. A second question is, whether slavery exists in our country by common law or by municipal law—whether, in other words, the Consti-

tution gives to slaveholders the right to take their slaves into the territories. A third question is, whether, when a State insists on withdrawing from the Confederacy, the allegiance of citizens is due primarily to the State or to the United States. To these constitutional questions is added a question of fact in relation to the public sentiment in the free States with reference to slavery in the South. Now, the question of the righteousness of the war, on the one side or the other, depends mainly on the settlement of these constitutional questions, together with the question of fact. If the right to secede exists, then however justly we may condemn the exercise of it as morally wrong in the circumstances, we must also admit, that it is wrong to deny the existence of the right, and still more to wage war upon any State for the exercise of it. If the right does not exist, then it is wrong for any State to claim it, and still more to involve the country in war in the defence of it. If the Constitution gives to slaveholders the right to take their slaves into the territories, then it is wrong to deny them the right, and to organize a political party upon the principle of withholding it. If the Constitution gives no such right, then it is wrong for the Southern States to claim it, still worse to attempt to break

up the Government, because it is denied. And so, if allegiance is due first and chiefly to the State, then the citizens of seceded States must be justified in yielding obedience to them, rather than to the General Government; and *vice versa*. The question of fact is one in regard to which every individual must be left to form his opinions from the evidence before him.

But the moral questions, it is perfectly apparent, depend upon the constitutional or civil questions; and what we maintain is—that since ministers of the Gospel and churches have no right to attempt to settle the latter, they cannot settle the former. There have, indeed, been cases of civil conflicts, and there may be cases again, in which ministers and churches may and should take sides; because they directly involve moral principles. Suppose, for example, a party should deny the obligation to obey civil authorities, and attempt to overthrow all government. Or suppose a party should attempt, for their own ends, to revolutionize a government already established, and which confessedly is constitutionally administered. Or suppose a party to attempt to deprive a portion of the people of the rights of conscience. Or there may be wars of conquest or of plunder. In all such cases, the

violation of the law of God is clear; and the ministers of Christ must condemn the wickedness. But the state of the case is widely different, when intelligent men and men of moral principle differ respecting the proper interpretation of Constitutions. The difference may originate in the ambiguity of the language used by the framers of the documents; or in the course of events new questions may have arisen, which did not occur to them, and for which they did not adequately provide. But however the difference of opinion may have arisen, it would be absurd to say, that men are either heretics or sinners for understanding the documents in one way, and not in another. A minister of the Gospel, as a citizen, may be satisfied as to the meaning of the Constitution on all the points just named; but since he does not get his view from the Scriptures, which only he as a minister is authorized to expound, he cannot press them as morally obligatory on others. He has no right to enter his pulpit, and preach them to his people. So long as those questions were in dispute between the parties, all admitted, that ministers and churches had no right to take sides in the dispute. Now that the dispute has resulted in war, can they rightly take sides? How does

the fact, that the two sections of the country have appealed to the sword to settle which interpretation of the Constitution shall prevail, or whether the parties, unable to agree, shall permanently separate, authorize ministers to become expounders of that document, and to pronounce upon the moral questions depending upon the civil?

But are not ministers to be loyal to the government under which they live, and to teach their people to be so? Most assuredly they are to be law-abiding men, and to teach their people to be "subject to the powers that be," within the limits prescribed by God Himself. But it does not follow, that they are to discuss the merits of all the important proceedings of government, and to decide for or against any war which may arise from differences of political opinion or political interests. What would have been thought of the ministers and churches of the country, if they had undertaken to discuss the merits of the late war with Mexico, and to pass resolutions to sustain or oppose the Government in that war? Doubtless they were expected to be loyal; but they were not expected to identify themselves with the Government in the prosecution of it. Why not? The war was morally right or wrong. Why, then, did not the churches take

up the question ? Because the moral question depended upon the civil, which latter question they were not authorized to settle. And so now, ministers of the Gospel are expected to be loyal ; but why should they undertake to decide upon the merits of the quarrel, and to identify themselves, as ministers, with the war ? How can they do it, without going entirely beyond the limits of their high and sacred commission ?

The correctness, as well as the great importance of these views, will appear from several additional considerations :

1. It is wholly unnecessary for ministers and churches, as such, to take sides in such quarrels. In this country, men are not accustomed to go to ministers of the Gospel to learn what political opinions they shall adopt, any more than they go to lawyers to learn what religious doctrines they should believe. The truth is, ministers as a class are poor statesmen ; and lawyers are poor theologians. Each class may command respect and be useful in the discharge of the proper functions of their office ; both expose themselves to just criticism, when they attempt to give instruction in departments with which they are not familiar. The moment the pastor of any intelligent congregation begins to give forth his views of the true

meaning of the Constitution on disputed points, most of the men who hear him regard themselves as at least his equal in that department; and many of them know that they could instruct him. All know, that if they need instruction in such questions, they can easily find access to men far better qualified than their pastor to enlighten them.

It is true, that when excitement is high, many are not only willing, but glad to hear any one utter the sentiments they approve; not a few are willing, for the time, to see ministers merge their high office in the character of the patriot; and not a few are disposed to demand, not that ministers shall instruct their ignorance, but that they shall utter the sentiments they desire to hear. But after all, few, if any, are influenced in the formation of their own opinions by such deliverances; whilst very many, who have gone to the House of God to listen to higher and more momentous themes, are disappointed and grieved. It is wholly needless, to say the least, for ministers to undertake to enlighten the people in civil questions; and if they have expounded to them the Word of God in relation to the duties of citizens, the moral questions will always be clear, when the civil are understood.

2. It is a calamity to the State to have minis-

ters and churches identified with political quarrels and with the conflicts arising from them. The country may thus be precipitated into war, when otherwise peaceful counsels might prevail. The passions of men are easily aroused, when their temporal interests seem to be in jeopardy. The difficulties in the way of a peaceful settlement are multiplied, when religious feeling is added to the natural. For years past, wise men have seen the gathering storm which has now burst upon our country with terrific fury. Year after year, sectional feeling has become more and more intense. Oh, if ministers of the Gospel, North and South, men who ought to understand human nature, had labored as faithfully and zealously to calm the troubled waters and to preserve kindly feeling between the sections, as many of them did to widen the breach, how different might now have been the condition of our country! If whilst some were denouncing the Dred Scott decision by the Supreme Court, as if the interpretation of the Constitution were included in their commission, and others were defending the right of slaveholders to carry their slaves into the territories, they had all been preaching the Gospel with all their power, we might now have been enjoying peace. Who can tell whether the

State of Louisiana, for example, would have seceded, if a distinguished minister in New Orleans had not, at the critical moment, preached a sermon assuming the right of secession, and urging the people, as a religious duty, to secede, in order to "conserve and perpetuate slavery"? There were ministers on both sides, who did what they could to prevent the war. Had ministers and churches generally done the same, war would, in all probability, not have been initiated, and our noble Union would not have been torn asunder. We owe our troubles, in large part, to the interference of ministers and churches with questions which they are not authorized to touch.

Another unhappy consequence of the taking of sides in such contests by ministers and churches is, that war becomes far more fierce, and it is far more difficult to make peace. The moment the Church, as such, takes sides, religious feelings give intensity to the natural passions; and religious principle adds to the determination to yield nothing. When men begin to fight *religiously*, then you have war indeed; and when they whose office is that of peace-makers, have become heated partisans, who shall restrain the passions and mitigate the horrors of war; and who shall influence excited men to accept an

honorable peace? Do not the angels weep to see ministers of Jesus Christ, of the same faith, who in times past have taken sweet counsel together, standing on either side of the embattled hosts, not to restrain from cruelty, nor to remind them that they are brethren, but to urge them on in God's name to the work of carnage?

Another most distressing consequence of the course we deprecate is, the far greater difficulty of keeping the country in peace when the war ends. We cling to the hope that our country is yet to be one. We are professedly fighting for the Union; but when the war shall terminate, where are the moral forces that are to bind together the now hostile sections? We send bandages to our wounded soldiers; for the blood cannot be staunched, and the wounds will not heal, unless the parts are pressed and held together. But where are the bandages for our wounded country, to press and hold together the parts so torn asunder? We must keep in view the truth, that in a free country like ours, the moral forces must be mainly relied on to maintain peace and union. And will not those forces be very far more needed hereafter to soothe the lacerated feelings, and to open the way for the flow of the life-blood of kindly and Christian feeling through the

nation? Oh, if the different churches were but united in Christian confidence, extending their influence over the hostile sections; if they had taken no sides, *as churches*; if they had not become absolutely hostile to each other; then, when the war shall terminate, peace might be preserved. Alas! the country will make peace, but the churches will not. With them the quarrel has become a matter of religious principle and of religious antipathy. What hope is there, then, that when the war shall end, permanent peace can be preserved?

Besides, the very fact, that ministers and churches have taken sides in the war, presents one of the mightiest obstacles in the way of the reconstruction of the civil Union. Did not Jeroboam exhibit the shrewdness of a statesman, when he decided that he could prevent the reunion of the ten tribes with the two only by dividing the church, and substituting religious antipathy for religious affection? He said—"If this people go up to do sacrifice in the House of the Lord at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam, king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam, king of Judah." If it be true, as alleged, that there are Southern

politicians who have been laboring for years to effect a dissolution of the Union, they must have seen with joy the sectional divisions of the different Christian denominations ; and if the leaders of the Southern Confederacy are as wise as Jeroboam, they must have been delighted to learn that the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church have taken sides in the war. For whilst the action of that body added little or nothing to the popular sentiment in favor of prosecuting the war, it severed the last strong moral tie that bound the hostile sections together, and created just that religious antipathy which was so effective in preventing a reunion of the Jewish tribes. But for that action, tens of thousands of hearts would have longed for reunion, and their influence would have been effective in bringing it about. But henceforward there will be no Christian fellowship between the two sections ; the different denominations on either side of the line will be repelled, instead of being attracted.

It is said, division would have come, if no such action had been taken. There is no certainty of this ; but if, as a matter of expediency, there had been different ecclesiastical organizations, they would not have been *hostile* organizations. They might have stood related to each

other, as the Presbyterian Church in this country stands to that of Scotland, and to other evangelical bodies in Europe. And who can tell how effective is the Christian sympathy between the churches of the two nations in preserving peace between them? Who can tell how soon war would begin between England and the United States, if the same antagonism should come to exist between the churches of the two nations, which now exists between the churches in the North and the South?

But if (which God forbid) we shall be compelled to see this nation divided permanently, and two governments existing side by side, the difficulties in the way of permanent peace between them will be very great. We shall then need all the moral forces to prevent constant collisions; and yet we shall have none of them. We shall have precisely the reverse. How shall two sections of the same nation, or two contiguous nations maintain peace in spite of sectional jealousy, the hatred arising from bloody conflicts, and powerful moral antagonisms?

I do not hesitate to declare the painful conviction, that the condition and attitude of the churches are by far the most discouraging features in the condition of our unhappy country.

What shall become of a country which, from the very nature of its government, is obliged to rely mainly upon the moral forces for its support, when all those forces are powerfully antagonistic? I cannot help deploring what I must regard as the prevalent and terrible mistake so generally committed by ministers and churches, North and South. Either under the mistaken notion of what is due to patriotism, or yielding to a senseless clamor, they have done the country an injury from which it cannot soon recover.

It is true, ministers and ecclesiastical bodies should not be silent in such a day as this. But what should they do? Preach the Gospel. Lift up the banner of truth. Warn the people that God's judgments are upon them; and if they would escape, they must repent. Guard the churches and people of God against the dangers to their spirituality, peculiar to such a time. Would that the General Assembly had risen above the clamor around them, and viewing our troubles in the light of God's word, had addressed to all the ministers and churches under their care, an affectionate, earnest pastoral letter, warning ministers against turning aside from their sacred office to engage in the carnal conflicts of the country, calling on ministers and

people to come back to the Cross, from which they have too far wandered, that they and our country might escape the awful judgments of God. Better, unspeakably better, for the country, I cannot help believing, would have been such action.

3. Another sad and terrible consequence flowing from the fact that ministers and churches have taken sides in this war, is the serious injury done to religion and to the great work committed to the Church. Whenever ministers and churches undertake to settle civil questions, or the moral questions growing out of them, good men of the same religious faith are sure to take different sides. Then what follows?

1st. In the first place, ministers of the Gospel of equal talents, learning, and piety, seem to give forth opposite utterances, not on some minor points in faith or duty, but on the fundamental principles of morals. See how the matter now stands. On one side, ministers teach that the war on the part of the Government is eminently a righteous war, assure the people that God will be with them, and that it is their religious duty to fight till complete victory is gained. On the other side, ministers of no less talent and learning, and whose piety has not

heretofore been called in question, denounce the war against the South as one of the most atrocious wars in the history of nations, and exhort the people, as a religious duty, to resist the invading foe, even if extermination is the consequence. This is an amazing state of things. What will infidels and worldly men say? We have contended that the Bible is a perfect rule of faith and morals, and easily understood on all fundamental points, both of doctrines and morals. How is it, then, that ministers of acknowledged talents, and learning, and piety, who have devoted their lives to the study of the Bible, are now found giving forth these opposite utterances on fundamental points of morals, and on either side adding to the fury of the war? What must men think of our rule of faith and practice? On careful inspection it seems clear that those ministers have placed themselves and the Scriptures in a false attitude before the world. They do not really differ on any moral question involved in the whole subject. Catechize them and see.

Ask both classes of them—"Do you hold that civil government is of God? Do you believe that an oath of allegiance is morally binding? Do you hold that rebellion against an existing

government is a sin, until it fails to answer the ends for which it was founded?" On all these questions you will receive precisely the same answers from both classes. Where, then, is the difference between them? It is in their understanding of the meaning of civil constitutions, connected with their opinions of the sentiments and purposes of the people on either side. The Southern minister will say, "The North have trampled under foot the Constitution, and have avowed their determination to deprive us of rights which we regard as essential to our prosperity, if not to our existence. *Therefore*, it is right for us to secede and resist." The Northern minister thinks the South have put a wrong construction upon the Constitution, and have made demands which ought not to be complied with. *Therefore*, it is right, even necessary, to put down the rebellion. That is, these two classes of ministers differ, not on the principles of morality taught in the Bible, but on civil questions; and because they differ on civil questions, they differ on the moral questions which depend upon them. Let it be so understood; and thus let the Bible be vindicated. But what right have ministers of the Gospel to turn interpreters of civil constitutions, and thus rend in two the

Church of Christ, and throw reproach upon religion ?

2d. The Church is divided into hostile parties, and thus she is crippled in the great work of evangelizing the world. The history of the Presbyterian Church in this country is, in some respects, a sad one. Between twenty and thirty years ago, she passed through a severe conflict in defending the doctrines of her Confession of Faith, and in securing such an organization that her energies might be wisely and efficiently put forth in the diffusion of Gospel truth. Scarcely is she fairly organized, and her different boards prepared to do a great work, when by means of our political troubles she is rent in twain—divided into two hostile organizations. She successfully resisted all the efforts of fanatics to divide her ; but she at last split upon the rock of political and national conflicts.

Is it, then, true that the unity of the Church of Christ is absolutely dependent upon the unity of the State ? Is the relation of the Church to the State such that she must be torn to pieces whenever politicians differ respecting the proper interpretation of civil constitutions, and seek to settle their differences by an appeal to the sword ? Who expects to see the State convulsed

because churches differ and divide? If the Church is under obligation, or is at liberty, to take sides in every war, then indeed is she the humble servant of the State, or rather of the unwise and wicked men who may succeed in involving the country in war. But it is not so. The Church and her ministers are appointed to teach all nations the truths contained in the Word of God. There is no reason why its unity, even as to organization, might not extend over different nations; nor is there any good reason why that unity should be disturbed by merely civil questions, or by moral questions depending upon them. The Scripture method is to teach the whole truth, and leave it to individuals and the civil authorities, to settle all such questions. Thus the Church, but slightly disturbed by civil commotions, would go forward with all her great work; and when peace should be restored, all the sooner because she and her ministers continued peacemakers, she would bless the nations by her moral and religious influence, maintaining peace amongst them.

It is, alas! too late now to prevent the dismemberment of our noble Church; but it is not too late to guard against other great evils that may soon come upon us. We are in the be-

ginning of our troubles. When they will terminate none can tell. But we may look for still further agitations in years to come; and unless the Church and her ministers free themselves from complication with such troubles, division and subdivision will still go on, until the Church shall appear a withered, scattered, feeble, contemptible thing in the eyes of men.

In what I have said concerning the troubles of our country and the proper position of the Church with reference to them, I have taken neither the Southern nor the Northern view. Indeed, however much ministers and churches on the different sides of the line may have differed on other points, they have too generally agreed to take sides in the conflict. With the object aimed at by our General Assembly—the preservation of our civil Union—I most deeply sympathize. I have no language adequate to express my unwillingness to see our noble country divided between two or more sovereignties. The evils which must follow, will be incalculably great. But the adoption of resolutions which must not only divide the Church, but render the two bodies into which it is divided hostile to each other, is not the way to prevent the permanent disruption of our Government. It is

rather the most effective method of bringing about the result.

2. The second great danger to which Christians and the Church are exposed in this day, is loss of spirituality. This will appear from several considerations :

1st. The attention of Christians is diverted from the cultivation of personal piety by the exciting events constantly occurring. All feel anxious for the fate of the country. Every eye is strained to see, if possible, a little way into the future. The papers and periodicals of the country, secular and religious, are constantly filled with war news and with speculations regarding the war. These are the constant topics of conversation in the domestic and social circles, on the street, and in the counting-room. The mind is constantly occupied and excited by these themes. Even on the Lord's day, and in the House of God, the same subject is in the mouths of many ministers. Almost unavoidably, the attention of Christians is diverted from their own spiritual state, and from the spiritual interests of those around them. Doctrinal and devotional reading is neglected, and the ordinary means of grace are slighted, or are neutralized by the secular thoughts and feelings which crowd the mind.

2d. If piety is likely to suffer from having the mind constantly filled with exciting subjects of a secular nature, it is still more in danger from the feelings excited by civil war. We not only become familiar with the acts of violence and the human slaughters, which constitute war; but we rejoice in victories in which hundreds or thousands of our fellow-men have been suddenly hurried into eternity, and multitudes of families filled with desolation and mourning. Familiarity with such subjects is hardening; but far more injurious to personal piety are likely to be the feelings of animosity which it is too natural to cherish. The deplorable effects are most strikingly manifested in the border States, where the people are divided amongst themselves; where families take opposite sides, and the officers and members of the churches become enemies, prepared to slay each other. Alas! long years must pass away, before the churches in Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri, can recover from the terrible effects of the war. But there is great danger that in every part of the Church the standard of piety will sink rapidly. Is it not so already? We scarcely hear of a revival in any part of the country. The Holy Spirit seems to have taken his departure from the churches.

3d. The extraordinary anxiety of men of all classes about their worldly affairs, is most unfavorable to spirituality. In the regions where the war rages, multitudes have lost every thing. In every part of the country, business has been interrupted; many who supposed themselves wealthy, find poverty staring them in the face; men of business are at a loss to know how to conduct their business; and multitudes who have families dependent upon them, are thrown out of employment. Christians become incapable of devout meditation; the mind wanders, when they would read the Word of God, and when they would hear the Gospel preached. "The cares of the world," always unfavorable to the growth of piety, become far more so in such times as the present.

And this unsettled state of things must exist for a long period. For there is abundant reason to believe, that there are to be great agitations amongst the nations for years to come. These agitations will greatly disturb the ordinary and healthful course of business. Fortunes will be made rapidly, and lost even more rapidly. Men will thus be tempted into bold and reckless speculations; and to avoid losing their all, they will be tempted to resort to immoral methods of

saving themselves. Many professors of religion will make shipwreck of the faith, and the Church will suffer in consequence. Already has the cause of religion and morals suffered increasingly within the last thirty years, from these causes; and within the next thirty, it must in all likelihood suffer still more.

It was with special reference to just such a state of things, that our Saviour gave the following warning: "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come upon all them that dwell upon the face of the whole earth." We are living at a time, when the exhortation of our Lord is most appropriate: "And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." Christians need the comforting exhortation of Peter—"Casting all your care on Him; for He careth for you."

3. Another very serious danger to Christians and others in this day, is that of being misled by plausible religious errors. We are warned, that "in the last days, perilous times shall come." When epidemics prevail, and the people are looking for physicians and medicines; then quacks abound, and nostrums are advertised at

every corner of the street. So it is in religious matters. At every great epoch in the history of the Church, heresies have multiplied—always taking their type from the character of the events which are anticipated. When the Messiah was expected, false Christs constantly made their appearance, deceiving multitudes. Now, all are looking for moral reformations. The period of twelve hundred and sixty years is to end with the overthrow of Popery and Mahometanism. After this there are likely to be great agitations, resulting in the rapid spread of the Gospel. But as the general expectation is of moral reform, false reformers, zealous, plausible, fanatical, are likely to multiply. Already the Church in this country has suffered greatly from this cause; and the troubles of the country are traceable to the same cause. The “unclean spirits like frogs” have gone forth. The “spirits of devils working miracles” are abroad in the world. Pantheism, Spiritualism, Abolitionism, Woman’s Rights, Mormonism, are amongst the unhappy products of this day of excitement. Others will follow rapidly.

Never was there a time, when the clear, discriminating, faithful preaching of the doctrines of the Gospel was more needed. Never was

there a time, when it was more important that parents faithfully instruct their children in the catechism, making them thoroughly acquainted with the doctrines of Christianity. Peter's warning is appropriate to our day: "Ye, therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

4. There is danger lest, in the midst of exciting events, we forget the great interests of the cause of Christ in the world. Whether we can see it or not, it is nevertheless true, that Divine Providence is now permitting or producing great revolutions and changes with immediate reference to the progress of the Gospel and the triumph of the Church. When God is moving, let not His people slumber in carnal security. When He is upheaving the very foundations of society to prepare the way for the Gospel, let not His people, in their concern for their temporal interests, neglect to work zealously for the cause. We are called to make sacrifices for our country in its troubles; let us be still more willing to make sacrifices for the cause of Christ. Let us not for-

get, that the Church of Christ is the hope of the country and the world.

It is the precious privilege of the Christian, in times when "men's hearts are failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth," to rejoice that "the Lord reigneth;" that "all things do work together for good to them that love God;" and that the Church, "the bride, the Lamb's wife," shall come forth from these troubles, arrayed in her white robes, having "made herself ready."

THE END.