

2/ 81
THE COMMANDMENT WITH PROMISE.

A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE

First Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn,

On THANKSGIVING DAY, Nov. 24th, 1859.

BY

REV. HENRY J. VAN DYKE,

PASTOR.

1802-1891
1852-1953

2 copies

New York:

GEORGE W. WOOD, 2 DUTCH STREET.
1859.

REV. HENRY J. VAN DYKE :

REV. AND DEAR SIR:—We deem it eminently fit that your *Thanksgiving* discourse, so appropriate to the occasion and the subject, should be given to the public, believing that its general circulation will be of value to all who love the Church of Christ.

We therefore request the manuscript for publication.

Yours, with affection,

GEO. L. SAMPSON,	HENRY S. HILL,
JOHN LAIDLAW,	RALPH KING,
HENRY SHELDON,	WM. S. DUNHAM,
WM. KUMBEL,	ALEXANDER B. CLARK,
JAMES P. WALLACE,	WM. O. MASSIE,
S. T. CASWELL,	GEORGE G. SAMPSON,
JAMES C. WILSON,	ROBERT TWEED,
DARWIN G. EATON,	WM. R. GOULD, JR.,
WM. J. WOOD,	JOHN SCRYMSER,
WILLIAM E. MORRIS,	R. H. LOWRY,
HENRY BUTLER,	FRANCIS SPIES.

BROOKLYN, November, 1859.

BROOKLYN, December 7, 1859.

DEAR BRETHREN:—The sermon you desire to publish has nothing to recommend it beyond the Scriptural principles it embodies. But I shall not withhold it from you on that account. On the contrary, I embrace with gratitude the opportunity to record and circulate my testimony to the importance of these principles under the sanction of such names as yours. It is a source of unspeakable comfort to me that the people you represent, and to whom it is my high privilege to minister in holy things, “consent to wholesome words, even to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ;” and that you love best that preaching which is most full of the word of God. Composed of representatives from various sections of our common country, with many from the land of our ancestors, as you sit together in the solemn assembly where that word is expounded, you illustrate, by your orderly and loving communion, the unity that there is in Christ—the unity every true patriot desires to preserve in the land which the Lord our God has given us. I pray that the publication of my sermon, if it should not accomplish the good results you anticipate from its circulation, may at least bind closer the ties that unite us to the Bible and to each other.

Yours, affectionately in Christ,

HENRY J. VAN DYKE.

To MESSRS. SAMPSON, LAIDLAW, SHELDON and others.

THE COMMANDMENT

WITH PROMISE.

EXODUS xx., 12.

“Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.”

WHEN we assemble to render thanks for the bounties of God's providence, it is eminently proper that we should be instructed in those duties which are most intimately associated with the improvement and perpetuation of his gifts. I have, therefore, selected, as the theme of discourse on the present occasion, a divine commandment, whose annexed promise is a long continuance in the land which the Lord our God has given us.

There are a few simple principles applicable to the interpretation of all God's precepts, which seem to be of special importance in the exposition of our text.

It should ever be borne in mind that “the law is spiritual,” requiring not merely an external conformity to its precepts, but claiming a supreme jurisdiction over the thoughts and intents of the heart.

It should also be remembered that the commandments are “exceeding broad.” They are comprehensive, and not specific. They do not enter into minute details, but select one species to represent all the different species of the same sin or duty; so that, when one form of a sin is forbidden,

all the forms of it are forbidden, and when one form of a duty is enjoined, *all* the forms of it are enjoined. Thus the commandment which says "thou shalt not kill," is expounded by Christ and the Apostles to prohibit all unreasonable anger and hatred, which are the antecedents and incentives to murder.

And furthermore, it should be observed, that negative precepts are contained in affirmative, and affirmative precepts in negative. Where a sin is forbidden the opposite duty is enjoined, and where a duty is enjoined the opposite sin is forbidden.

Bearing these simple and obvious principles in mind, let us proceed—FIRST, to explain the commandment of our text, and then we shall be prepared, SECONDLY, to illustrate the promise by which it is enforced.

I. THE COMMANDMENT

Is spiritual and comprehensive, extending to our opinions and feelings, and regulating our conduct in all our human relations, whether they be founded in nature or in the conventionalities of society.

1st. It requires us to honor our Natural parents.

It was not without a far-reaching and gracious design that God chose to propagate our race by natural generation—laying the undeveloped infant upon the bosom and under the hand of those from whose loins it springs. And it is not without a deep significance that, in the utterance of his authority over us, he calls himself *our father*; thus intimating that we sustain to our children a relation somewhat similar to that which he bears to us.

In a very high and important sense, the parent is to the children the representative and vicegerent of God. It is from its father and mother that the immortal subject of the divine government acquires its first idea of authority, and exhibits its first sense of obligation. And when the little one begins to read for itself the law and testimony of the great father, and to comprehend something of its higher

relations to the supreme ruler and judge, no requirements are more frequently and explicitly pressed upon the conscience than those which illustrate and enforce the fifth commandment. The Bible is full of them. To honor thy father and thy mother is to entertain and suitably to express a reverence for their persons; to submit cheerfully to their rebukes, instructions, and corrections; to obey all their lawful commands; to take the mantle of filial charity and affection, and walking backward like Noah's sons, to throw it over what we may esteem their faults; and tenderly to cherish and sustain them amid the infirmities of declining years. These duties are inalienable and universal. They admit of no exception. Even to the ungodly and unreasonable father, (upon whom, however, the child should be the last one to sit in judgment,) there should be paid at least an outward respect and obedience, whenever it can be rendered without violating the law of God. Even upon a foolish and evil-tempered mother, the son or daughter in whose veins her blood is flowing should be the last to utter a reproach, or bring dishonor. Such dishonors and reproaches come back with a fearful weight of guilt upon the soul that utters them. God says, (Deut. xxi., 16,) "Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother." "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it," (Prov. xxx., 17.) "Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness." (Prov. xx., 20.)

2d. The precept of the text requires us to honor our Spiritual fathers.

As in the family, so in the church God has appointed some to exercise authority and impart instruction; and demands for them, as his representatives and agents, a filial reverence. The elders that rule well are to be "counted worthy of double honor." The minister is to be esteemed very highly for his office and for his work's sake. For his office, because he is the ambassador of Christ, the steward of the mysteries of God, the guardian of souls, the pastor

of the Saviour's flock. For his work's sake, because he comes like the dove with the olive branch in his mouth to proclaim the glad tidings of peace; he builds not for time but for eternity; he labors as one who must give account under a weighty and awful responsibility. For those who heartily strive to fill this high office, the word of God has many precious promises and encouragements. And not only so: it vindicates their authority, makes provision for their wants, and defends both their character and their influence by the most weighty sanctions. Under the old dispensation, Jehovah threw the shield of his authority over the person and character of his servants, saying, "touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." And when Christ commissioned and sent forth the New Testament ministry to the great work of evangelizing the world, he added these words of instruction and warning, "whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that place or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily, I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city." When we consider how various and important are the relations which the Christian ministry sustain to the welfare of men in this world and in the next, how delicate and intricate are the duties in which they come in contact with the human conscience, and negotiate between God and man; how inestimable are the interests over which they are appointed to watch, and for which they must give account; we cannot be surprised at the claim of forbearance and reverence which the word of God sets up in their behalf. It would seem that such claims would be readily acknowledged by every right-minded man; especially in behalf of those whose official authority has been enhanced by long years of labor and experience. The gray-headed ministers of Christ, whose spiritual children are scattered abroad over the land, may well be called our "fathers;" and the younger men, whether in the ministry or out of it, should delight to do them honor. We should bear with their human infirmities. In the time of their weakness, we should cherish with devout gratitude

the remembrance of the days when their bow abode in its strength; and when God takes them up to their reward, we should stand gazing into heaven like the servant of the translated prophet, exclaiming, "My father, my father, the horsemen of Israel and the chariot thereof." And the same is measurably true of all God's venerable servants, whether they sustain an official relation to the church or not. "The hoary head is a crown of glory if it be found in the way of righteousness," (Prov. xvi., 31.) Blessed is the household, the church, the community, where such crowns are permitted to linger, shedding upon the emulation and strife of the present the light of bygone generations and of a near eternity. Let not the vigorous and warm-blooded be impatient at their presence. The fathers do not live forever. In the rapid revolutions of life's seasons the hoar-frost will soon come down upon the most flourishing head. Self-interest, if no higher motive, should teach us to "rise up before the hoary-head and honor the face of the old man," for the time is not far distant when we shall need and demand such honor for ourselves. But a godly old age claims respect upon infinitely higher grounds, even its own intrinsic beauty. As good old Thomas Watson says:—" 'Tis a blessed sight to see the springs of grace in the autumn of old age; to see men stooping towards the grave, yet going up the hill of God; to see them lose their color, yet keep their savor. Such, whose silver hairs are crowned with righteousness, are worthy of double honor; not only as pieces of antiquity, but as patterns of virtue. If you see an old man fearing God, whose grace shines brightest when the sun of his life is setting, Oh! honor him as a father, by reverencing and imitating him."

3d. The precept of the text requires us to honor our Economical fathers.

We use the word *economical* in its true sense, to signify that which relates to the labor and domestic arrangement of society. The world always has been divided, and, so far as we can now see, always must be divided into two classes—those who perform the physical labor of society,

and those who direct and control that labor. Now, by whatever tenure persons are held to service, whether it be the wages of a day laborer, the indentures of an apprentice that bind him for half his lifetime, or the stronger and more lasting bond that keeps others in domestic servitude all their life; whatever be the tenure of service, the relation between those who work with their hands and those who work with their head in directing it, is described in classic and scriptural language under the titles of *master* and *servant*. I cannot see why these words should be banished from our language, since the ideas which they signify are inwrought with the very frame of society, since Christ himself bore and sanctified both in his own person, and the spirit of inspiration has stamped them indelibly upon the pages of the Bible.

The relation between master and servant involves, as you well know, the most difficult and delicate questions pertaining to the welfare of human society. In our own country these questions have not only been discussed in the abstract, but so interwoven with party interests and passions, that it is rare to find a man who can sit down calmly and without prejudice to consider them. It has not been my custom, and it certainly is not now my purpose, to bring these questions, in their political aspects, into the sacred desk. The time has come when, in my judgment, it behooves all good men, and especially ministers of the Gospel, not to be identified with the bitter contentions of any party; but to stand ready with oil to pour upon the waves, instead of angry breath to lash them into fury. And in the presence of this Christian assembly, it seems to me that the very best oil for this purpose is the calm and authoritative utterance of the word of God. The fifth commandment, as it is expounded, not only in the Levitical law, but in the example and recorded testimony of Christ and his Apostles, has a direct bearing upon the relation of master and servant. Following the apostolic example, if I were called upon to regulate that relation, I would have nothing to say about abstractions, no appeals to the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States, the enact-

ments of Congress, or the deliverances of ecclesiastical assemblies. *These are not my text-books.* On a Southern plantation, I would adhere, just as I strive to do amid the winds of doctrine in this great city, to the law and testimony of my inspired commission. I would read and expound the whole Bible; saying first to masters, "Give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a master in heaven." Your heavenly master will hold you to a strict account. If you claim for the relation you sustain to your servants the protection of the divine law, you must accept also the conditions and restrictions which that law imposes upon it. If your authority over them is patriarchal, so also are your obligations towards them. You are answerable not only for their bodily comfort, but for their spiritual welfare and salvation, even as a father is answerable for his children. It is a solemn responsibility which rests upon you; and if you do not, to the utmost of your power, seek to promote the purity, knowledge, and eternal life of those to whom you stand in this parental relation, fearful will be your guilt. We do not require you to cease being masters. The Bible does not. And we honestly believe that in most cases the best interests of those under your control would not be promoted by a freedom whose perils and whose privileges they are not prepared to sustain. But we do beseech you, in Christ's name, not only to be reconciled to him yourselves, but to give those for whom you are responsible a knowledge and a living illustration of the truth as it is in Jesus.

This, brethren, is the doctrine which in days past was preached by such men as Davies, and Rice, and Baxter, and Alexander, and is now taught by hundreds of godly ministers all over our Southern States—the doctrine which has yielded, and is yielding, precious fruits in the salvation of multitudes of both masters and servants, and raising up for Africa a great cloud of witnesses, who shall lift up their voice, not only amid the white-robed throng in heaven, but amid the thick darkness of barbarous and idolatrous ages upon their native shores—the doc-

trine which, but for the prejudices and passions that have been roused into fury by teaching of a different sort, would even now be winning its quiet and blessed way into the hearts of many by whom, according to the Apostle's prophecy, (I. Tim. vi., 1,) the name and doctrine of God are blasphemed.

Nor is the instruction which the Bible gives to servants less abundant and explicit. I do not find in either Testament any bitter curses and accusations against masters, any trumpet calls to rebellion, and arson, and murder, any justification of fraud or violence, as a means of escape from servitude; but I do find such plain and sober words as these—and while they stand here in their obvious and unpervertible meaning, I never can yield to the popular clamor that contradicts or ignores them, unless at the same time I am prepared to become an infidel to the Gospel—I do find such sober words as these:—"Servants be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh; with fear and trembling, in singleness of your hearts as unto Christ; not with eye service as men-pleasers; but as the servant of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, *whether he be bond or free.*" (Eph. vi., 5-8.)*

* The five following verses (Eph. vi., 5-9,) treat of the relative duties of masters and servants. Δουλος and Κυριος are here relative terms. Δουλος from Δεω, to bind, means a bondman or slave, as distinguished from hired servant, who was called μισθιος or μισθωτος. That such is its meaning here is plain, not only from the common usage of the word, but also from the antithesis between δουλος and ελευθερος, *bond* and *free*, in verse 8. Κυριος means *possessor, owner, master*. * * * It is evident, both from the meaning of the terms here used and from the known historical fact that slavery prevailed throughout the Roman empire during the apostolic age, that this and other passages of the New Testament refer to that institution. It is dealt with precisely as despotism in the State is dealt with. It is neither enjoined nor forbidden. It is simply assumed to be lawful, so that a Christian may consistently be an autocrat in the State, or a master of slaves. The Bible method of

Believe me, the Gospel plan is best. If instead of arraying class against class, and section against section—if instead of speculating about abstract rights and political destinies, the ministers of Christ had only adhered to their commission and taught the relative duties of master and servant as they are laid down in the New Testament—if the intellectual and pecuniary treasures that have been worse than wasted in agitation and strife had been consecrated to the spread of the Gospel just as Paul preached it to both bond and free; the word of God, applied by his spirit, would have wrought out the practical solution of the great problems of servitude, not in the fierce contention that now convulses the land, nor in the division and fraternal strife that lower so portentously in the future, but in the unity of Christ where there is neither bond nor free, where the master treats the servant as a son, and the servant honors the master as a father. The unbeliever who does not recognize the Gospel as the power of God, and the

dealing with this and similar institutions is to enforce on all concerned the great principles of moral obligation—assured that those principles, if allowed free scope, will put an end to all evils, both in the political and social relations of men. The Apostle, therefore, without either denouncing or commending slavery, simply inculcates on master and slave their appropriate duty. On the slave he enjoins the duty of obedience. * * * * Masters are to act towards their slaves with the same regard to the will of God, with the same recognition of the authority of Christ, with the same sincerity and good feeling which had been enjoined on the slaves themselves. It is thus that the Holy Ghost deals with slavery. Slaves are not commanded to refuse to be slaves, to break their bonds and repudiate the authority of their masters. They are required to obey with alacrity and with a sincere desire to do their duty to their masters as part of their duty to Christ. Masters are not commanded, as an immediate and imperative duty to emancipate their slaves, but to treat them according to the principles of justice and equity. It is not to be expected that men of the world will act in conformity with the Gospel in this any more than in other respects. But believers will; and the result of such obedience, if it could become general, would be that first the evils of slavery, and then slavery itself, would pass away as naturally and as healthfully as children cease to be minors.—*Dr. Hodge's Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians.*

fierce partizan who cannot endure the slow methods of infinite wisdom, sneer and rail bitterly at this simple plan, and denounce those who dare, in God's strength, to adhere to it.

The Apostle seems to have anticipated their bitter opposition, when he wrote to his son Timothy these memorable words, "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed; and they that have believing masters let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather do them service because they are faithful and beloved partakers of the benefit. *These things teach and exhort.* If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to the wholesome words of the Lord Jesus and to the doctrine which is according to godliness—from such withdraw thyself. (I. Tim., vi., 1-5.) How lifelike is the portrait which the Apostle proceeds to draw of those who do teach OTHERWISE. Any one can recognize it. And how emphatic the instruction he gives to the Christian minister. Let Timothy take heed to it. FROM SUCH WITHDRAW THYSELF.

4th. The precept of the text requires us to honor our Political fathers.

Government is a divine ordinance. We do not mean that this or that *form* of government is divine. But it is a divine ordinance that the magistrate, under whatever form or title, shall bear the sword for the terror of evil doers and the praise of them that do well. And it is a divine command that Christians, wherever their lot may be cast, and under whatever government they may live, shall sustain human law whenever it does not violate divine law, and *submit to it when it does.* Christianity does not seek to accomplish its benign and glorious ends by seditious and revolutions. It comes to sanctify the individual. Through the individual it will, no doubt, ultimately accomplish the social and political regeneration of the world. But these ends can be most speedily and effectually attained by inculcating a respect for magistrates and a spirit of obedience to law.

Amid the din of war the voice of him that bringeth good tidings is hushed. The camp and battlefield are a poor soil for the cultivation of Christian graces; and under whatever provocation men may appeal to the sword for redress, and however holy may be the objects for which they contend, the effect of the contest is, with rare exceptions, to demoralize those who engage it. It is with a deep significance that the Saviour of men is called the Prince of Peace; and it was with a wise reference to the propagation of his Gospel that ere he appeared on earth the temple of Janus was shut, and the whole civilized world subdued under the dominion of a strong-handed government. It was the policy as well as the duty of the Apostles of Christianity to array themselves on the side of law and order, to inculcate obedience to civil rulers as a Christian duty, and to cultivate among their disciples a spirit of reverence for magistrates. They felt that even a faulty government was better for their cause than the social upheavings of sedition and revolution; for so long as the preacher might travel from one end of the empire to the other, under the broad protection of the Roman eagle, the leaven of the Gospel would work its quiet way into the hearts and homes of men. The persecutions to which they were often subjected by the perversion of law and the craftiness of corrupt magistrates, was no offset for these inestimable advantages. Even when the strong hand of civil power was stretched out against them, they felt that they "must need be subject not only for wrath but for conscience sake;" not only because the power was for a time on the side of their enemies and it would be folly to resist, but from a higher principle, even a conscientious regard to the ordinance of God. Would that the modern apostles of Christianity would imitate this wise and holy example. It is a strange spectacle to see a minister of Christ railing in the spirit of a demagogue at a government under which he lives in the enjoyment of his personal and social rights, and by the pervading spirit of his teaching inculcating contempt for the very power under whose shadow he has liberty to

prophecy. You need not be reminded how often this strange spectacle is brought to our doors and exhibited for the amusement and corruption of our children. How different is the language poured forth constantly in the pulpit, and the lecture room, and the daily newspapers, from that which Paul addressed to Christians living under the dominion of the Roman Emperor, and in a State of society full of evils, of which we, in this favored land, can form no adequate conception.

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. Wherefore ye must needs be subject not only for wrath but also for conscience sake. Render, therefore, to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.” (Rom., xiii, 1-2-5.)

The abstract right of revolution is not questioned or denied. Where evils complained of are intolerable and incapable of a peaceful remedy; where the great mass of any people are united in a desire and effort to change their form of government, and there is a manifest prospect of success, without incurring calamities worse than the evils complained of, Christians undoubtedly may, and ought, to have recourse to revolution. But such a revolution is a very different thing from a popular outbreak against the law, from habitual disrespect to civil magistrates, from such doctrine and example as tends to undermine the authority of all law, and sow the seeds of domestic discord.

The law of God inculcates an obedient and submissive spirit in the State as well as in the household. An inspired Apostle gives us a true comment on the fifth commandment, when he says, (I. Pet., ii., 17,) “Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the King.” The fierce spirit of Independence that chafes under all restraint, and is not willing to pay respect to the person and office of those in authority, does not derive its inspiration

from this Holy Book. Its origin and inspiration is earthly, sensual, and devilish. And it is doubly wicked, when in a country like ours, where both the law and the ruler can be changed by the popular will legally expressed, it incites to popular violence, plots treason, or threatens revolution.

II. THE PROMISE.

“That thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” The keeping of the fifth commandment, a respect for lawful authority, in whatever relation of life, will perpetuate our enjoyment of temporal and national blessings.

1st. The promise is true of individuals.

When all its functions are in healthful and harmonious exercise, and its outward circumstances happily adjusted, life is a precious and glorious boon. When the Bible speaks of the world as a vain show, it does not mean the world as God made it, but as man has marred it by his conventionalities and crimes. The things that are made are full of goodness and beauty; and life, fleeting as it is, may be full of exalted enjoyment. To a sound mind, in a sound body, the light of creation is as the smile of God, and every element is crowded with the gifts whereby he would fill our hearts with food and gladness. And we say there is no one thing which will do so much towards securing and perpetuating our enjoyment of these blessings, as obedience to the fifth commandment.

Such obedience will tend to preserve our health. How many fair cheeks grow pale; how many untimely graves are dug, because vanity and conceit will not submit to restraint in the matter of dress and diet. How many a young man, void of understanding, goes “as an ox to the slaughter, and as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life,” because he will not hearken to the instruction of his father, nor obey the law of his mother. Over how many graves, where youth and beauty lie mouldering, we might write with truth—here lies a victim to the spirit

of disobedience. Moreover, obedience tends to form a well-balanced character, to preserve mental tranquility and soundness of judgment, and thus to secure success in any and every avocation of life. The young man who has learned respect for authority at his father and mother's knee, and carries the blessed lessons of a Christian household into all the relations and duties of life, need not be anxious or impatient about his future fortune or the consideration he shall enjoy in the world. His fortune is growing even as his character is developing. The employer whom he serves with singleness of heart will lean upon and honor him; the teacher, at whose feet he sits, will love him as a second self—he shall be a Xenophon to Socrates; the minister he reverences will cling to him as Paul to Timothy; the gray head will return his respectful salutation; and the intrinsic value of his talents will be vastly enhanced by a good name, which even the silly and flippant asserters of their own unripe manhood will envy whilst they revile. If the young men who thirst for business prosperity and social distinction would attain to any real and permanent success—if as age advances upon them they would enjoy the comforts of this life and honors of a well-earned reputation; let them imbibe the spirit of the fifth commandment; let them give no sanction to the evil tendency which would divide the young from the old, whether in the business or pleasures of life, much less to the wicked jealousy which would array one class against the other, as though their interests or destiny were separate. Let them become habitually the respecters and supporters of law—especially of God's law. Whatever associations of human origin may claim their regard, let them prize first and chiefly the two societies which God has instituted for all men and all time, viz., *the family and the church*; and they may be assured that he who wrote the commandment with promise will not suffer that promise to fail.

2d. The promise of the text applies to the people in their collective and national capacity.

It applies, with special force, to the American people,

and to the dangers which threaten our continued enjoyment of the land which the Lord our God hath given us. It there is any one thing which is characteristic of our age and country, it is a disregard for lawful authority. A reckless spirit of independence which does not discriminate between liberty and license, seems to be advancing, by rapid strides, to the control of our public opinion. Our danger does not lie so much in the enactment of this or that law, as in a reckless disregard for the foundation principles of all law; not so much in the triumph of this or that party, as in the spirit of desperation and defiance, which seems to be rapidly demoralizing all parties.

Look at this spirit as it is developed in our political discussions. The word of God says "thou shalt not speak evil of the rule of thy people." And every sober mind will perceive at once the wisdom of such a prohibition. The public respect for the law, and the consequent peace of the community, must always be greatly dependent upon the good name and influence of those who are charged with its execution. And while official station should not screen any man from the just censure which is due to crime, it ought to screen him from the tongue of slander, and the bitterness of party wrath. But how is it in our country? Why, it has come to this—that whoever consents to take office, from the President down to the humblest village magistrate, must consent to be traduced and reviled, to have his dearest relations and affections exposed and perverted before the public gaze, and trampled in the mire by every unhallowed foot. The evil consequences are that multitudes of good and able men, shrinking from the odium of public life, give place to others more eager, but less competent; and unless this downward tendency shall be checked, the time is not far distant when "iniquity shall abound because the vilest men are exalted." And not only so; but the dishonor daily poured out through the press and in private circles upon our rulers, whether the accusations be true or false, is holding up a standard to which the young and inexperienced, to say nothing of the more depraved

and hardened, will not be slow to conform. Let the boy at his father's side be taught to despise and hate the chief magistrate of the nation as a very bad man, and party spirit is not the only passion that will be inflamed in his heart. With the kindlings of his childish ambition, there will arise, at least, a kindly feeling towards the wickedness which he is taught to believe is no hinderance to the attainment of the highest political honors. And thus the very fountains of public morals are poisoned in the nursery; and this prevalent political slander is marching on in accumulating strength to verify itself, if not in this, in another generation.

Again; look at the influence of this prevalent disregard for authority upon the administration of justice.

Is there not too much reason for the assertion, that of late years the sympathies of great multitudes of our people have been with the criminal rather than with the law or those who enforce it? Indeed, it would seem that the greater the crime the more intense is the sympathy that it awakens; so that if a man would be heralded from pulpit and press as a hero, and even have the gallows where he suffers the just penalty of his deeds blasphemously compared to the cross of the blessed Saviour, it behooves him to commit some unheard of enormity. Let him not be satisfied with bloodshed under the impulse of sudden passion or in its vulgar forms; but having trained himself for years to scenes of strife, until he can look upon the death agonies of his own children without a quivering of the nerves—having stultified his conscience and perverted the precepts of the peaceful Gospel, until, like Saul in the days of his blind zeal, he can believe that he is doing God service when he is “breathing out threatening and slaughter;” let him plot and undertake, in good faith, to execute some gigantic scheme of murder, whose bare recital shall send fear and trembling into thousands of households. And not only will the infidel and the fanatic sing his praises, but multitudes of feeble-minded Christians, whose tender feelings overtop their judgment, or whose false theology would

substitute a miserable time-serving expediency for God's eternal law against murder, will palliate his guilt and plead for his deliverance from punishment.

Once more; look at the influence of this prevalent disregard for authority upon the family circle—upon the very fountains of public virtue and national stability. Why, in multitudes of families, if we did not know to the contrary, we might really suppose that the commandment was written “honor thy son and thy daughter.” It is not merely that children seek to break away from the law of their parent, and the stripling refuses to rise up in the gate and do honor to the hoary head; this were to be expected from our fallen nature. But those in authority, under mistaken notions of kindness, yield to filial usurpation; and even Christian teachers and rulers seek popularity by sanctioning the social heresy. You may go into families and find the daughter arrayed like the lilies without toil or spinning, sitting as a decorated idol upon the household altar, while the trembling hands of the mother who bore her performs the offices of a servant at her bidding, and the father, whose skill and care provides for the household, is thrust aside lest his plainness should offend the gallant visitors.

But I need not pursue these illustrations. Any thoughtful observer can find them for himself. They are everywhere around us. They are being woven into our history. They are moulding our destiny, and we need not and cannot conceal the well-grounded fear that they are preparing danger, if not ruin, for the land the Lord our God has given us.

I know not how it is with you, but I freely confess that the return of this national anniversary does not come to me with the unmingled joy it has been wont to awaken. True, God's goodness knows no abatement. His sun shines and his rain descends, and from the full horn of his providence he pours plenty into our garners. But alas! So it was with the Jews of old, and so it has been with many nations whose memorials are written in their ruins. Why should we blindly hope to be exempt from the consequences of

our own rebellious folly and contentions? Why should we hope to escape the control of that divine law which God's providence over nations stands ever ready to enforce? Why should we shut our eyes to the causes which in past ages, and in lands no less highly favored than our own, have led on, step by step, to the horrors of anarchy and civil war, and to the barbarism and tyranny which have always followed in their wake? It must be evident to every sober observer that the alienation which has been growing for years between the two great sections of our country is rapidly making two peoples of those whose consanguinity and common interests, to say nothing of higher and holier considerations, ought to bind them in perpetual unity. Let us not flatter ourselves that these mutual recriminations, these sneers and accusations on the one side, and these threatenings on the other, have no meaning and will lead to no results. They *do* mean something. They mean that the union of these States *is being dissolved in the hearts of the people*; and if this process goes on to its near consummation, let us not flatter ourselves that we can live together, or separate in peace, or preserve our most cherished treasures from the wreck of our fathers' heritage. If we unchain the tiger, which now, as in former times, lies dormant even in civilized human nature, let us not flatter ourselves that he will be less ferocious than in other days, or that having once battered upon human blood he can be subdued without the iron heel of a conqueror upon his neck.

But I will not indulge these gloomy anticipations. God grant that as time rolls on they may prove to be utterly groundless. Forgive me if I have given too severe and sombre a hue to your reflections, or checked by these homely instructions the gratitude that ought this day to swell and overflow our hearts for the blessings we enjoy. And yet suffer the word of exhortation. If you would do what you can to dissipate and disprove all prophecies of evil, mingle this day's thanksgiving with the lessons of our text. When you gather your beloved around the board which providence has so bountifully spread for you,

and in homes guarded and beautified by so many blessings, remind yourself and teach them to remember that these gifts are not unconditional or perpetual, and that the coming generation cannot retain or transmit them to *their* children, unless in the spirit of the divine law and Gospel they "honor their father and their mother."

And above all, teach your children, by precept and example, to love and defend all parts of our common country. Frown upon the wrath, and bitterness, and contempt by which evil-minded men are striving to separate the two great sections of our land by an impassible gulf—a gulf, into which, if they shall succeed in digging it, the treasures of commerce, and the sweet charities of the fireside, and the fairest schemes and hopes of our common Christianity shall go down and perish. Whoever may have been the first to raise this evil spirit, and under whatever provocations it may be indulged on either side, the spirit itself is dangerous and wicked, and it becomes the duty of all men, by all means, to exorcise and lay it. If I had to-day the ear of a Southern audience I would say, you do us and yourselves a grievous wrong if you give heed to the demagogues who would fain persuade you that all the Christian men in our Northern States are fanatics, or that the great body of our citizens would willingly see the constitutional rights or the domestic peace of any portion of our land trampled on or invaded. And so I say here, *you* do wrong, you sin against God and his church, if in any way you sanction or uphold the men among us who would alienate your affections or pervert your sense of justice from your Southern brethren; or, if you suffer the misrepresentation and ridicule that are daily loading the columns of our partizan press to influence your opinions or control the spirit of your household words. For myself, I thank God that I was born and nurtured on the Keystone of this glorious national arch, under circumstances far removed from sectional bias and prejudice; so that the roof-tree of a Virginia plantation seems no less sacred to me than the old willows under which I used to lie and dream of the green mountains of the North and the

broad savannahs of the South, as constituting one happy and prosperous country. And I thank God that I have been led into ecclesiastical relations, and to the adoption of scriptural views by which the national enthusiasm of childhood has been enlarged and intensified. The great Christian denomination with whose life my life is bound up, preaches the Gospel, as Paul did, to both bond and free, and stretches out the right hand of her fellowship to the inhabitants of our whole country, from Boston to New Orleans, and from the Atlantic to the Pacific shore. Bound to us by the faith and order of the Gospel, there are tens of thousands of Christian men and women in our Southern churches whose piety I have no more reason to doubt than I have to question your right to the fellowship of the saints; and there are scores of Christian ministers, many of whom I know and love for their learning and devotion to the master, who preach the Gospel just as faithfully as it is preached anywhere in the world. I will not suffer myself to be arrayed against these brethren. I will not be alienated from them. I will teach my children to love and honor them as fellow citizens to a great national heritage, as fellow members in Christ's mystical body, as fellow-heirs to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away in heaven. And I exhort you, by the memory of all that is dear in the past history of our country and our church, by all the obligations that bind you to the law of the land and the law of God, by your love for the peace and security of your own fireside, by the privileges that make the Sabbath and the Sanctuary your delight, by your hope for a perishing world, by your regard for the unity of the body of Christ, I exhort you to banish from your household, and your lips, and your heart, all wrath, and bitterness, and ridicule, and evil surmising against any portion of our common country.