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SERMON CCCIII.

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**GOD EXALTED IN THE DISCIPLINE OF NATIONS.**

A Sermon delivered on the 14th day of May, 1841;

**BEING THE DAY OF THE NATIONAL FAST**

Recommended by the President of the United States.

“ *The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of man shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted on that day. For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low: and upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan. And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, and upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, and upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures. And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.*—Isaiah, 2 : 11—18.

How often in the annals of the ancient church did Jehovah announce himself a jealous God! He declared that he would share his honors with no rival power, whether it were the deity of a depraved fancy or the occupant of an earthly throne. Any approach to idolatry he viewed as casting contempt on his infinite majesty. He alone must be exalted by his creatures as the object of their supreme homage.

It was in view of this high claim, and of its practical disregard by the Israelites, who had become the imitators of proud and idolatrous nations, that Isaiah was directed to utter that pro-

phetic vindication of the Divine honor which constitutes the text, "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low: and upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan. And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, and upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, and upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures. And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day."

From the general tenor of this prediction, its application was evidently not intended to be confined to the Jewish nation. It seems to convey the idea of a comprehensive vindication of insulted deity, to take place among all nations whose arrogance or whose idolatry had reached the limit of the Divine forbearance. It is an extended commentary on the declaration that "no flesh should glory in his presence." It announces God's determination to stain the pride of human glory—to reduce men and nations to their appropriate sphere; and to bring the whole world to a practical acknowledgment of the Divine supremacy. Such a result the Almighty had in view from the earliest date of individual and national existence. It has been ACCOMPLISHED to some extent in different ages of the world; but the acknowledgment has been of short duration, and the memory of the Divine judgments has seldom been retained for more than a single generation.

In the primeval state, God alone was exalted, and the moral order of this lower universe was undisturbed. Pride, however, soon took the place of humility. From that moment the haughtiness of man was placed in opposition to the supremacy of God. The moral order of the universe experienced then a second disturbance. Man wished to be as God. He rushed out of his appropriate sphere. It was necessary for Jehovah to place a restraint upon this new rebellion—to vindicate his own dignity, and to impress upon the culprit a sense of wrong. Accordingly we find an immediate and melancholy change in the character and the circumstances of our race. A tremendous and prolonged retribution is inflicted. When this retributive day of the Lord was upon Eden and its inhabitants, we may suppose that humility again succeeded to pride—that the haughtiness of man was brought low, and that for a brief season the Lord alone was exalted.

From this date we contemplate the human race under a new aspect, *which we shall designate as the era of experimental depravity.*

It had been seen what human nature was in its state of inno-

cence—how weak to resist temptation—how ready to yield at the first onset of hell. It was now to be demonstrated what that nature, fallen under the dominion of sin, was capable of perpetrating, if left to its unrestrained selfishness and ferocity. How soon, therefore, did a heaven-daring arrogance break forth! We take but one step and we reach a murderer, who first insults his God, and then determines to obliterate the only resemblance of him to be found in the second generation of mankind. Did insulted justice look calmly on? The scathed oak bears not more evident traces of the thunderbolt, than did the forehead of Cain the mark of heaven's retribution. That signature of wrath, however, was not transmitted. The next generation inherited the pride but not the physical punishment of Cain. Driven out from the presence of the Lord—from the precincts of his gracious covenant—they began to build great cities, and to set God at defiance. They gloried in their gigantic strength. They boasted of their Cyclopean towers. They strode the earth clad in their armor of brass and iron. They usurped the prerogative of heaven, grasping the sword of vengeance, and filling the earth with violence and blood. "They set their face against the heavens, and said, Who is Lord over us?" The time at length arrived when this haughtiness of men was to be brought low. Ordinary discipline would not now avail. The vindication must be on a scale commensurate with the wickedness. Hence the solemn declaration, "the end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them, and behold I will destroy them with the earth." Thus ended the first era, viz. that of experimental and unrestrained depravity.

*Mankind now entered on the second great era, which may be included in the space between the deluge and the coming of Christ, AN ERA OF RESTRAINTS both physical and moral.*

Let us see how human nature conducts itself under a change of circumstances. The period of human life was rapidly diminished; and miraculous interpositions of heaven were not infrequent. How soon, however, the awful catastrophe just alluded to lost its influence on the general conscience, may be seen in the fact, that scarcely had the survivors emerged from the ark when they proposed to frustrate the councils of God by building a tower whose top should reach to heaven. They intended thereby to make to themselves a name in the earth. The pride and haughtiness of human nature was thus strongly developed. Here again it was necessary for God to interpose. These oaks of Bashan were accordingly scattered, and that vast monument of human arrogance and ambition never reached its intended elevation.

Broken up and separated by diversity of language, each division of the race took up its line of march in search of countries

and climates suited to its taste. Impressive as had been the Divine dispensations toward them, none seem to have carried along with them the fear of the great Jehovah. The lingering traces of the true religion served only as a basis for the erection of a vast system of idolatry. By the calling of Abraham, the Almighty saved out of this general moral wreck a fragment of the ancient faith, and thus perpetuated the existence of vital godliness. Great nations now begin to appear. Human pride and ambition are written on their escutcheons. Their walls of defence—their temples of idolatry—their war-chariots—the very names and titles of their monarchs, all indicate the same heaven-daring arrogance. When they had reached a height which they considered inaccessible, and had attained a strength which they deemed impregnable—that is, when human ambition could scarcely go higher, and human pride had no object of envy left but the very throne of God—and when, as in the case of Babylon, even that throne was menaced, did the Almighty write out a solemn edict for their destruction. It was proclaimed by prophets, not as a means of repentance—their day of grace had gone by—but as a judicial testimony against their pride and haughtiness. God saw himself dethroned, whilst the impersonations of Baal and Astaroth, of Isis and Osiris, were installed amid the gorgeous architecture of Egypt and of Babylon. The general course of a vindicatory Providence, however, lay in the natural operation of that very depravity which Jehovah designed to punish. He deviated, in some cases, from this order, and effected by miracle what he ordinarily brought about by the slower but not less sure influence of moral and physical causes. One of these exceptions was when his enslaved people were released from Egyptian tyranny. In such cases, we cannot fail to see in the peculiar circumstances a reason for such deviation. But whether by miracle, or by the less impressive agency of natural causes, it was equally the outstretched arm of an incensed but holy God, asserting his high moral prerogative and vindicating his insulted majesty. Hence he would dash one nation against another; and when the victor stood in triumph over the ruin of his proud competitor, he would give this victor to be crushed in turn by some succeeding conqueror. Or, as was not unusual, he would extinguish the warrior in the voluptuary, and consume by sensuality what had not been conquered by power.

In various ways, by the operation of human depravity, the pomp and glory of mighty kingdoms were brought to the dust. Without the prophecies in our hands, we should be very likely to overlook the agency of heaven, and to attribute the changes of empire to a blind fatality, instead of referring them to that Almighty Power which has not only linked together causes and results, but which renders that very connection, in many cases,

the retributive minister of his vengeance. Examples of this, familiar to your own minds, might be adduced ; and, did time permit, it would be an instructive lesson to trace out the connection between the pomp and pride of ancient nations and their downfall, according to express prediction. Every person acquainted with his Bible, who has compared its prophecies with their fulfilment in the facts which profane history has collected, will be at no loss for illustrations of the point before us. This rise and decline of empires has been going on since the first city was founded east of Eden. The causes lie deep in the character of man and in the designs of an overruling Providence. Certain it is, that, but for the upholding hand of God, there exist in every organized state or community elements of ruin of sufficient potency to ensure its speedy extinction. Human depravity in its various developments is sufficient to uproot the deepest foundations of empire. Even where the true religion exists, and exerts a restraining influence ; yet if the influence be partial and not pervading, the state will in that case be proportionably exposed to premature ruin.

The philosophy of history consists not, as I apprehend, in gathering from the experience of the past *political* maxims simply, but in deducing moral instruction from providential dispensations. To the character of the historian and the politician we must add that of the moralist and the christian. We must take a **LOFTY** station as our post of observation. We must go high enough to look through the vista of years, and trace the meanderings of that stream which had its rise in Eden, and which is to disembogue at last in the great ocean of eternity. We must keep in view the ever-present and all-pervading providence of God. The grand end and design of our creation must not be lost sight of. We forget an important item, if we forget that man has a higher destiny than the present life, or when we overlook the sublime fact that this life is but the vestibule of human existence.

We have marked off the age of the world into grand divisions. The first, we have said, terminates with the flood. *That* we have called the age of *experimental depravity*. All restraints were then withdrawn. "The thoughts of the imagination of men's hearts were evil, and *only* evil, and that continually." They were left to act out this gigantic power of evil within. Longevity furnished the occasion for awful excesses of depravity. The earth was literally saturated with crimes. This age ended with the general destruction of the human race. By a most fearful judgment, the haughtiness of man was brought low, and God was exalted amid the terrors of his justice. This was the awful experiment of human depravity unrestrained.

The second age terminates at the advent of Christ. This was the age of partial restraint by providential interference, and by

an increase of moral light. Men lived but a few years; so that their depravity, if excessive, was soon ended. In Judea—the centre of the civilized world—a light was kept burning for two thousand years, which radiated in every direction, scattering a few feeble rays in remotest kingdoms. This light shone with more or less vividness on the altars of religion until the great light of the world arose upon mankind. Nothing surely but a special providence, imparting and sustaining religion, could have saved the Jewish nation from extinction. By her side, perished Egypt, Babylon, Tyre and Nineveh. Wanting true religion—the only conservative influence of nations—those mighty collateral empires rose, culminated, and descended into oblivion. The Almighty gave mankind a chance, so to speak, for the development of social improvement and of political aggrandizement. He allowed them full latitude in the erection of great cities and strong fortresses. He gave them Nebuchadnezzars, Pharaohs, and Solons; whose enterprise and wisdom were exerted to the utmost to lay enduring foundations under the rising fabric of empire. He furnished ample scope for the human faculties, in the researches of philosophy and in the maxims of uninspired wisdom. But, alas, all could not give security to empire. The very license to do and to devise, to build and to beautify, became the occasion of their ruin. Men gloried in their strength—gloried in their fortitude—in their power—in the durability of their works. They asked not even for the arm of Omnipotence to lean upon. They were disposed to inscribe *Eternity* on the pillars of their temples and on the pillars of the state. They had lofty looks and a proud heart. They said, in the spirit of the king of Babylon, “I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God.” From this proud pre-eminence, how did these empires, in funeral train, descend into the tomb! The wing of time had scarcely made one sweep in its progress, ere an impressive desolation reigned over these haughty monarchies. What shall we write as their epitaph? “All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man is as the flower of the grass.” What human strength could do was done. What human wisdom could achieve was achieved. Mind and muscle did their utmost. Human genius allied itself to human strength, and dared, in its mighty creations, to fight against destiny. But all would not do. Man without God, and without an acknowledgment of God, what is he? He cannot contend successfully with time. The dust of oblivion must settle upon his noblest works; and if, in past ages, he would not learn humility, his successors *should* over his undecyphered tomb.

When this second experiment had been fully made; when the pride of man lay mortified in the rubbish of a hundred empires, God appeared upon the stage in a new and third development of his moral government.

*The advent of Christ was the grand era in human existence.* Nothing that went before—nothing that shall come after, can be compared with this. Indeed all that shall come after, is but the prolongation of this glorious epoch. It took place when, after the first era, human depravity unrestrained had deluged the earth with crimes and blood; and after the second era, when human nature, under favorable circumstances, had another trial of self-government and had failed—when pride, in both cases, had gone before destruction, and the haughty spirit before a fall; it was at this juncture that a new dispensation was ushered in, intended to show, that whilst men and nations without God, become proud and hasten to extinction; *with* God, and by the grace of God, they may achieve triumphs without pride, and may earn and ensure immortality without self-idolatry. From this date onward a new face entirely is given to the moral aspects of the world. This religion is designed to have an all-controlling sway over men and over masses of men—over individual and national character. To existing nations not embracing or obstinately rejecting christianity a certain period of probation will no doubt be given. But the Almighty will vindicate its claims, as the last grand experiment on fallen humanity.

As yet we can scarcely be said to have had a perfect model of a christian nation. I do not regard the Roman state under Constantine as such. There was too much pride and paganism there. It was christianity with its incipient corruptions, rendered still more corrupt by a partial amalgamation with paganism. The pomp and pageantry of that ambitious emperor ill-assorted with the humility and simplicity of the real cross. A state religion, I apprehend, can never be otherwise; certainly not whilst the power of human depravity is as strong as it now is. I would make a difference between a state religion and religion acknowledged by and influencing the state. To God, under all circumstances, must be rendered the things of God, whilst Cæsar, in all his principles and doings, must humbly defer to Him who is "the King of kings and the Lord of lords." Politics must have the sanction of religion, or they have no substantial basis, and can have no virtuous efficiency.

The error with Constantine consisted in an effort to strengthen religion by an appeal to human pride. The very thing with which christianity is at war was forced, as an unnatural ally, into her service. Hence the splendid cathedrals—the showy ritual—the gorgeous vestments of the priesthood. How in contrast was all this with the meek and lowly Jesus! This savored of the lofty looks and pride of man. No wonder, then, that the church became more corrupt and the state more insecure. A proud hierarchy grew up under the wing of the empire; and overshadowing the empire itself, aimed at length at universal dominion. The

secular and the spiritual power became united in one sceptre, and under this twofold despotism the human soul for ages forgot the very sentiment of liberty. This hierarchy claims the venerable name and the exclusive privileges of christianity, pretending that power is hers alone "to bind and to loose," and coolly turns over to damnation all who are without her jurisdiction. Who could have supposed, standing on some fête-day in the porch of St. Peter's, and viewing the regal priesthood as it defiles in splendor under its lofty dome, that all this originated in the lowly circumstances of Jesus and his impoverished disciples? Fearful are the prophecies which foreshadow the doom of this presumptuous system of baptized idolatry. "For the day of the Lord shall be upon her hills that are lifted up; and upon her *high towers*, and upon her fenced walls, and upon all her pleasant *pictures*, and the haughtiness of her power shall be made low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." Yet must it not be forgotten, that even amidst her appalling wickedness there remained secreted in her cloisters enough of the christian religion to operate as a conservative influence amid the general wreck of nations. The smothered spark of existence was there. Christianity, bound and fettered, heard at length the voice of her deliverer; and when at the era of the reformation she came forth, her beauty was undimmed and her power undiminished.

I regard the long night of papal despotism as another experiment, if not the very last, of human weakness in contrast with the simple grace of God. Men were left to mix up religion with the pride of power—to use it as an iron sceptre over the trembling conscience—to wrest it out of its legitimate sphere, making it the lever of ghostly authority, instead of the regenerator of the human soul. That experiment—so awful in its consequences—is, we have reason to thank God, hastening to its close. Religion is now better understood. Her province is now conceded to be, a renewing influence on the heart and life. Instead of sealing up the word of God, she opens its page to the people as well as to the priesthood.

*The religion of the Bible is hereafter to be emphatically the test of national endurance and of national prosperity.*

Mohammedism is not only on the wane, but is hastening rapidly to its tomb. The followers of the false prophet, by inscribing the crescent on their war-standards, have symbolically "turned the moon into blood." Let them not be surprised to see the red symbol of their power *extinguished* in blood; for "HE," said Jesus, "who *taketh* the sword shall perish with the sword."

Papacy, by the voice of prophecy, must die. It is the very personification of lofty looks and arrogant pretensions. It "opposeth and exalteth itself above all that is called God, or that



is worshipped ; so that as God, it sitteth in the temple of God, showing itself that it is God." Its doom is sealed, alike by the Bible and by the tendency of its own policy. The human mind is too far emancipated to be quiescent under its imposed fetters. This Goliath of Gath has strode across the Atlantic, and is now defying the armies of Israel in this land of their inheritance. Let not the vauntings of the foe intimidate us. The word of God, like the simple weapon of the shepherd youth, shall smite him to the dust.

It seems to me that we have now arrived where the clouds have in some measure cleared off, and the moral scenery of the universe is well-defined. We occupy a post of observation, from whence we can survey, backward and forward, the vast movements of providence, and can deduce the clear intimations of the Divine will. We are on the third era of human existence, the most eventful of the whole, and we cannot be at a loss as to what the path of duty is. I have no hesitation, therefore, in declaring as my settled belief, *that any nation which does not connect itself with the true religion, as its conservative principle, is destined to a speedy extinction.*

This may be inferred from what has already been said. The historical argument is forcible. It is with nations as with individuals, without Christ and his religion they can do nothing, that is, they cannot prosper in a way to render the government enduring and the people happy. If history speaks any truth, it speaks this. Nor is it difficult to see that what history announces reason corroborates. It would be easy to show that human nature, without the influence of religion, is incapable of self-government. But on this discussion we cannot now enter. All that remains is to point out some dangers to which even protestant or christian nations are exposed.

I am no advocate for a union of church and state, but I am in favor of the union or intermixture of RELIGION with the state. Moral principle, having for its source the Bible, must lie at the basis of our government. Any other foundation—as for instance a selfish policy, otherwise termed expediency—is but a foundation of sand. I consider the proclamation, under which we this day convene, as a union of religion with the state ; but every one must see there is no union of church and state. I look upon the daily religious services in the halls of Congress as a union of religion with the state. I consider the general respect paid by the government to the moral sense of the people, in the discontinuance of official duties on the Sabbath, as expressive of the same thing. So far as all this goes, it betokens good for the nation.

But it is noticeable that an extreme jealousy seems to have been entertained by many, in relation to the influence which religion and

religious men might exert upon the government. The danger, in my opinion, lies on the other extreme. The tendency has been not to lean *too much* upon religion, but to refuse her help altogether. There being among us no church establishment, the tendency has been to discard even that moral strength of which the church is but the organized symbol. This *has* been and this *continues* to be our point of danger. Self-government is the pride and boast of Americans. Public sentiment—well or ill founded—is the deity we are in danger of worshipping. “Free and independent”—the watch-words of the revolution—have been rung in our ears for half a century. See ye no tendency in all this to swing clear of our dependence even on the God of nations? We boast of what we have done, and we boast of what we *intend* to do. We glory in the past and we forestal a revenue of glory for the future. Is it not enough that we refuse to succumb to any or to all the powers of earth—must we declare off even from the Sovereign of the universe? Is it wise for a nation but little more than half a century old to treat with indifference the offered arm of Omnipotence? Is it wise, with the examples already cited before us, to rest on mere human wisdom, or on any theory of government, however perfect, which that wisdom has originated? The tendency, I repeat, even with christian nations, is to rest in man—to glory in man—to set up the state as an idol—to talk of their statesmen as if they were gods, and of their power as if it were omnipotent, and of their resources as if they were exhaustless. What arrogant language do even *christian* nations adopt! Who is she that styles herself the mistress of the ocean? Proud and presumptuous nation! Her usurpation of heaven’s prerogatives is not unregarded in the council-chamber of the Eternal. The time *may* come when this haughty diction shall be brought low. What are her floating batteries but feathers in the hands of God! How easily could that ocean—of which she styles herself and is styled the mistress—play in derision with her mighty armaments, and then swallow them up for ever! She *is* a christian nation, we admit; she has performed many noble achievements; but her lofty style savors of any thing but of christian humility. Whatever part *she* may be destined to act in the great developments of the third era, she is yet to be humbled ere that office can be meekly fulfilled. She must put herself upon her knees, or God may see fit to place her in that position by unlooked-for judgments.

Humility is as becoming to a nation as it is to an individual. Never since our country had an existence has she stood in a more sublime attitude than she this day assumes whilst doing homage to the God of nations. *She* has been hitherto a recreant child. She was nursed on the bosom of piety. She was rocked in the cradle of persecution. From first to last she has been the child of providence. Amid the storm of elements—the howling wilderness—the savage foe, what could have saved her from extinction but the

hand of God? Again her existence was in peril. She was seen planting her foot against arbitrary power, backed by the stern arguments of fleets and armies. What succor less than Omnipotent could have sustained her then? For seven long years she tracked her way to liberty, with bleeding feet. In that night of despondency was not God her friend? Did he not set the day-star of freedom on the brow of the firmament to cheer her desolate spirit? Did He not send an angel of mercy to guide her through the conflict? Can all this be forgotten; or must it be remembered to eulogize only the instruments—to glory only in the results—whilst the unseen hand of God is disregarded? And now that she reposes on the basis of a free constitution, enjoying privileges that were bought with blood, and a prosperity which contrasts strongly with the afflictions of her youth, shall she forget that she was the child of Providence? Shall she turn against her foster-mother, true religion, and talk and act as if she no longer needed her aid? Can this be done without incurring the displeasure of heaven? Yet this has *been* done. Fast were we marching in the track of ungodly France. We not only imitated her fashions, but we borrowed her philosophy. We caught the tone of her reckless materialism. We talked as if the state was our deity, on whose altar every thing must be sacrificed, even religion itself. Our congress could meet for business on God's holy day, and thus practically put the claims of politics above those of religion. From the high places of power and trust there went forth a malign influence, against which the ministers of religion and the ministers of justice united their strength in vain. A reckless, law-defying spirit seemed to be in the ascendancy. The tyranny of the mob—worse a thousand fold than the tyranny of a monarch—threatened not only to disturb the peace of society, but to uproot the very pillars of public justice. Like the prodigal in Scripture, this nation seemed bent on spending the rich inheritance which God has given it, in riotous living. The very liberty for which our fathers fought and bled, seemed fast coming into actual jeopardy.

We were becoming also a nation of gamblers. The citizen played for stocks, and the agriculturist for farms. The spirit of avarice, under the plausible name of speculation, was let loose upon the whole community; so that even the hallowed precincts of our churches were in danger of being converted, like the temple of Jerusalem, into places of merchandise. As a vast community, it may be said of us, that we sacrificed to covetousness the highest moral considerations. The accumulation of wealth was the all-engrossing object of pursuit. If religion interposed her authority between the votary of the world and the object of his heart's desire, her authority was trampled under foot. If a pecuniary loss was threatened by carrying out a religious principle, the principle was not carried out. How has mammon swayed his tyrant dominion

over the soul! How has covetousness robbed it of its godlike attributes! This is a sin which has pervaded the entire nation. "Covetousness," says the voice that never errs, "is *idolatry*." To this idol we have as a nation paid willing homage. Like the Israelites at the foot of Sinai, we have, in the presence of a revealed God, set up and worshipped a golden calf. Can such a sin go unpunished? Has not God, as it were, broken up that golden image, ground it to powder, and made us drink of it to our sorrow? Are we not at this very moment reaping the bitter fruits of our idolatry? Oh yes, the accumulated treasures, the golden stores were found to be but "the baseless fabric of a vision." Men were rich in imagination, but poor in reality. They had all the *vice* of avarice without any of its ordinary gains. How offensive must such a course have been to that Being who has said, "lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth"—"love not the world"—"ye cannot serve God and mammon!" Fearfully has that displeasure been expressed. Look over the scene and see the wreck of human hopes which has followed. First came the panic and then the explosion. Every heart trembled as the fiery flood laid our merchant princes in the dust. Still the angel of retribution, though passing over the land, was not recognized by a suffering community. Instead of looking to God and their own desert of evil, men began to perplex themselves with the assignable causes of their embarrassments. They fell into a system of mutual distrust and recrimination. It was at length decided, that a great political change was requisite, in order to rebuild the dilapidated fortunes of the republic. This the people willed and effected. But it is admitted that in *this* change there was too little reference to the providence of God. Must we not so judge, in view of the marked interposition, which, amidst a nation's grief and disappointment, declares "that no flesh shall glory in his presence?" In the personal character of our late chief magistrate, religion promised once more to grace our councils, and to shed her hallowed influence in the high places of power. But it seems we were not yet prepared for so great a blessing. The hand of God had not been sufficiently acknowledged. We talked of human wisdom too much and of Divine wisdom too little. The qualifications of the high incumbent were of such acknowledged appropriateness, we were tempted to forget that he held his office by a higher power than the will of the people. The feeling, if it did not amount to official idolatry, was sufficient to exclude a practical recognition of Divine Providence. Hence God has taught us, in this unlooked-for national affliction, that there is One to whom all power and wisdom are to be referred; and that "it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes."

How this sad event may be viewed by others I cannot say; but for one, I am disposed to look upon it as a judgment of heaven for our national sins. It has moral aspects which I trust will not be

disregarded by this nation. It has a voice for the heart and the conscience, as well as for the speculating and restless mind. God intends, by this providence, to make himself heard. It speaks to the sensibilities and the anxieties of millions. Here is not the death of an ordinary individual, filling a common sphere of life, and touching by his influence but a few minds and hearts. When such die, there is indeed a little sanctuary of the affections, within which their memory is fondly cherished; but they are neither missed nor mourned by the community at large. But what shall we say of a death like this; which first enters the loved circle of home, crushing the hearts of affectionate relatives, and then takes in a wide range of personal friends; whose grief, if less in intensity, is not less sincere; and as the wave of sorrow rolls on, invades the hearts and disappoints the hopes of a nation of freemen? Is not this a judgment of God?

*Consider also the circumstances under which it came.* The storm of political strife and turmoil, which kept the horizon darkened for so long a time, had rolled off; and on the retiring clouds was seen the bow of promise, at which all eyes were willing to gaze. A man whom the people delighted to honor, was called by their suffrages to the most exalted and responsible station which they have it in their power to confer. The veteran soldier and statesman acceded to his country's wishes. He laid down the implements of husbandry and assumed the helm of state. He did it with the solemnity of one conscious that the voice of the people was, in this instance, the voice of God. It was too late for the stirrings of ambition. He trod too near the confines of another world to be elated by his elevation in *this* world. In his own language, he expected to end his days in peaceful seclusion on the banks of the Ohio. But he left that seclusion, under the impression that God and his country demanded his services in a wider sphere. Hence all his bearing, from the first announcement of his success, partook of that solemn and sublime spirit which bespoke a consciousness of high trusts committed to a dependent mind. The situation of the country—its internal difficulties and its external perils, formed a crisis too eventful, to uncertain, too allow either of levity or of sanguine expectation. Accordingly he declared to us that he felt his dependence on God. He combined, as every man in his circumstances should do, the spirit of religion with the responsibilities and the dignity of office. It was a noble spectacle, when in presence of assembled thousands, and within hearing of the universe, he stood forth and did public homage to christianity, declaring that he felt bound on that occasion to profess his respect for religion, and his belief that its influence is necessary for the security of our institutions and the happiness of the people. *That* was indeed an auspicious day, which saw our late chief magistrate taking the oath of office on the portico of our capitol! With the

constitution of his country in one hand and the word of God in the other, he acknowledged their mutual dependence, and swore fealty alike to patriotism and to religion. An unclouded sun shone upon that scene. Millions who were not permitted to witness it, imagined and felt with patriotic sympathy the sublime transaction. Yet how in one short month is that scene reversed! The athletic form—the beaming eye—the lofty mind, had passed away from earth, and left in the heart and soul of the nation a void, which it seemed vain to think of supplying. “It seems,”—in the language of the eloquent Hall on a similar occasion—“as if providence placed him on the pinnacle of society for the express purpose of rendering his fall the more conspicuous, and of convincing as many as are susceptible of conviction, that man in his best state is altogether vanity.” In view of all the circumstances, must not this event, I again ask, be viewed as a judgment of God? Is it not a sufficiently marked providence to justify, nay to *demand* this day of national humiliation? Let the whole nation then go down upon their knees, and with one voice confess the accumulated guilt of ages. Shall this dark dispensation have in it more of mercy or of wrath? It is for us to say. It is for us to give it a character by our penitence or by our obduracy. The voice from heaven inquires over the grave of HARRISON, “Why should ye be stricken anymore?”

In the third era of the human race, we as a nation have a part to act. It is not simply, as some would affirm, to show to Europeans our power of self-government. This is, indeed, a noble tribute which we hope to pay to freedom; but even this tribute cannot be rendered, if we base not that freedom on religion. There is, however, a still higher part which, we trust, is to be enacted on this soil. The tree of life planted here two hundred years ago is to strike its roots so deep that its towering foliage shall overshadow the world. It is here to stand on its own eternal basis, nourished by no state patronage, but drawing its sap from “the fountain of living waters.” “Its leaves are to be for the healing of the nations.” Is such the high destiny to which the providence of God calls us? We are incapable of fulfilling it until we are humbled. Let the nation be prostrated before God. Let us mark his hand. Let us no longer seek for vain glory. Let us seek for peace—for rational liberty—for human happiness.

Ye men of influence and of power, our appeal is to *you*. The promptings of ambition must surely receive a check, as ye recur to the triumphs of death over strength, dignity and glory. That office which has been so suddenly vacated by his mandate, is in my view peerless among the dignities of earth. What an impressive lesson of the vanity of this world! How *small* when *greatest*, how weak when strongest does man appear! It is said of Massillon, when the mortal remains of his illustrious monarch lay before him in funeral state, that he looked down into the coffin

from the high altar, and broke the awful stillness of the scene by these words, "There is none truly great but *God*." The sentiment was just, and the circumstances gave it weight. What is human glory but as the flower of the field, which flourisheth one moment and withereth the next. On a dying bed how contemptible a thing is fame! Edmund Burke exclaimed at the death of his only son, "What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue!" Yes, noble statesman, if thou speakest only of our *earthly* relations. But *all* is not shadow. The soul is not a shadow; nor is its fearful retribution. Amid the shifting scenes of earth, there is something that endures. It is virtue—truth—piety—God. These are the stabilities of the universe. These live, when every thing else dies. It is the nature of these to be undecaying, eternal. Hence I commend to your chief pursuit, not the distinctions of earth however alluring in prospect, for often they dazzle but to blind. They absorb without satisfying the soul. If you seek these alone; or if for these you set aside God and religion, you act the part of a profane Esau who sold his heavenly birth-right for a sensual dish. But if the grave of HARRISON be not a sufficient lesson, go to that of Napoleon. The hero of a hundred battles reposing under the dome of the Invalids, illustrates both the strength and weakness, both the greatness and littleness of man. He ascended step by step the slippery height of power. He strode where others walked. His eagle eye sent its keen glance to the summit of universal dominion. But his lofty looks and his proud aspirations were the precursors of his ruin. So will it be with all who exalt themselves and who do not honor God. So will it be with our own nation, if she seek for any other glory or immortality but those which sacred truth shall sanction. We may strew our coast with lines of defence—multiply our ships like Tarshish—boast of our mighty men, our tall cedars and our oaks of Bashan, all will be vain if God see fit to withdraw from us the wing of his protection. Religion then must be acknowledged, revered and obeyed. She must furnish us with motives, and preside as the conservative influence in our councils. She must extinguish those lusts "from whence come wars and fightings." She must unbind the burden of the oppressed. Instead of being quoted as authority for the continuance of slavery, she must be allowed to dissolve its chain by her own sweet spirit of love. "Is not this the fast that I have chosen, to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?"

The prospect for a sin-ruined world seems to me to brighten. The day of a false illuminism has passed by. Even France, the home of atheism, is turning her eyes upward in search of a God. She has seen what it is to have a corrupt religion, and what it is to have *no* religion; and God grant she may feel her way to the true liberty of the Gospel. As to our own country, a most auspi-

cious event occurs this day in the solemn prostration of the nation before the King of kings. This surely betokens good for America and for the world. The thunderbolt strikes not the lowly but the lofty object. May the cloud of indignation pass over us with but one startling shock! That has riven our hearts, and laid a noble citizen in the dust. Yet in *his* case it was not an *avenging* but a gracious stroke. It took him, as we have reason to believe, from an earthly to a heavenly principality. The hero, the statesman sleeps, but the *christian* lives. Life is renewed at the fountain of life. Oh may his mantle be transmitted to his successors; and may we derive from his death a benefit, which, perhaps, in our ingratitude, we might have been unwilling to have acknowledged in his life, however devoted to his country's good! May this day's humiliation precede a return of the smiles of heaven, expressed in the revival of true religion—in a general respect for law and social order—in the diminution of partizan strife, and the prevalence of christian patriotism—in the suppression of intemperance, profaneness and infidelity! Then shall our nation, as with the predicted moral beauty of ancient Zion, "arise and shine, her light being come, and the glory of the Lord having risen upon her."

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## SERMON CCCIV.

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BY REV. J. B. WATERBURY,  
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### "THE ISSUES OF THE FINAL JUDGMENT."

*"And the books were opened."*—Rev. 20 : 12.

Amidst much that is obscure, the Revelation of St. John presents occasional gleams of prophetic truths too plain to be misunderstood.

Towards the close, especially, the lurid clouds are gilded by a terrific brightness. The awful future is unveiled. Scenes of overwhelming grandeur come into view, as the destinies of an accountable universe are plainly foreshadowed. If critics are at a loss for a clue, amid the accumulated imagery of the central portions of this wonderful book, they must be all agreed as to the import of the close. Let any mind contemplate the chapter from which the text is taken, and it will be seen that the final conflict between