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GOD'S HAND

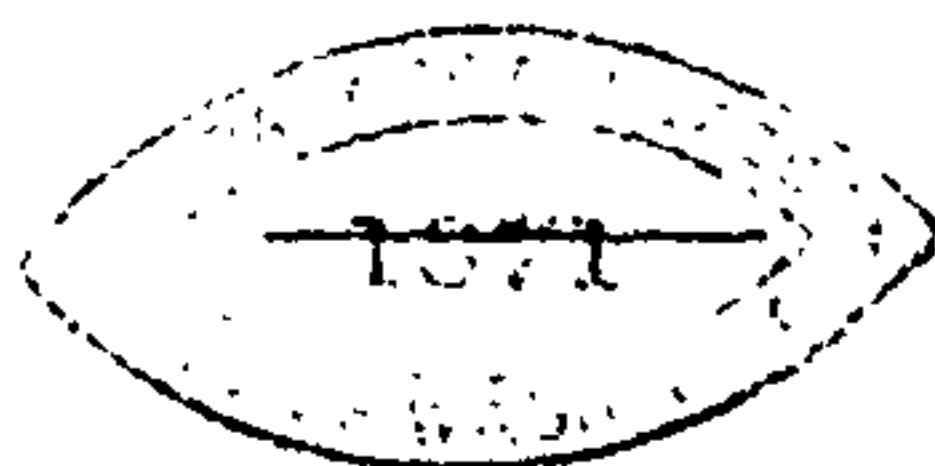
IN

AMERICA.

BY THE REV. GEORGE B. CHEEVER.

WITH AN ESSAY,

BY THE REV. DR. SKINNER.



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Change wide, and deep, and silently performed,
This Land shall witness; and, as days roll on,
Earth's universal frame shall feel the effect,
Even till the smallest habitable rock,
Beaten by lonely billows, hear the songs
Of Christianized society, and bloom
With civil arts, and send their fragrance forth,
A grateful tribute to all-ruling Heaven.

THE EXCURSION. Book IX.

ESSAY.

It has been groundlessly objected to the Ethics of Christianity, that they deny Patriotism a place among the virtues. Although there is no specific inculcation of this sentiment in the New Testament, it should not be hence inferred that the Gospel either disowns or underrates it, as one of the modifications of that love which is the fulfilling of the law. The Jews were now in a state of vassalage to Rome, and appeals to the love of country, in their circumstances, would have been understood by them as a summons to rebellion against the established government; and had Christianity made such appeals, it would have taught disobedience to one of its sternest precepts,—that which demands submission to the civil authorities. Again; this unhappy people were, at this time, the subjects of a fanaticism which made malignity towards other nations a duty in their eyes, and addresses to patriotism would, in their case, have

been, in effect, only supplying fuel to the fire of an already rancorous hatred of mankind. But more than all, this disobedient and gain-saying nation, whose history from the beginning had been little else than a record of abuses of miraculous mercy, had only to perpetrate the murder of Christ, in order to fill the measure of their guilt, and bring on themselves those unexampled visitations of the Divine wrath, by which their political existence was destroyed ; and our blessed Saviour, who was well aware of the gathering of the storm, and of the desolation it would produce, was too deeply moved with compassion, to be instilling lessons of patriotism into their breasts, while every thing in their condition demanded alarms and calls to repentance.

The time, moreover, had arrived when the dispensation of Liberty was about to supersede that of Restraint, and all nations, in respect of religious privileges, to be placed on the same level. The middle wall of separation between Jews and Gentiles was in the process of demolition, and exhortations to the love of country, either in the one or the other, would have had no other tendency than to engender mutual antipathies, and thus prevent the accomplishment of the gracious design.

But the silence of Christianity on that topic, at such a time, no more implied either hostility or indifference to patriotism, universally and absolutely, than our silence as to the sin of intemperance, on a sacramental occasion, supposes us indifferent to the guilt and ravages of that sin.

The Gospel indeed proclaims peace and good will to the world ; it seeks to make all men, in reference to earth, pilgrims and strangers, to unite them in one holy and happy brotherhood, and to subject them to new and celestial relationships strong and lasting as eternity, and embracing, in their wide scope, the entire universe of the virtuous and the good, both on earth and in heaven. But the reasoning which would hence infer any inconsistency in the spirit of the Gospel with the highest degrees of devotion to the welfare of our country, would make Christianity subversive of the foundations of society ; and opposed not to nationality only, but to the continuance of the human race. For if the love of country be excluded by the predominance of that heavenly-mindedness which the Gospel inculcates, so are the love of neighborhood, and the love of domestic relatives, and all the endearments of friendship, and

all local attachments, and the pursuits of business, and labors for a household provision, and whatever else is necessary to the continued existence of man in this world.

It is admitted that PHILANTHROPY, and not patriotism, is the comprehensive expression of the spirit of the Gospel, in reference to mankind. But there may be expansion without inconsistency ; and there may be limitations and degrees, and various forms of interest and affection, along with the most perfect harmony and unity of spirit. A philanthropy which has no particular localities, no definite spheres of labor, no fixedness of regards, no specific tasks, no preferences, no individual or vicinal trials and pleasures, is a mere abstraction : why then may not the love of country consist with, nay be a genuine modification of the *love of man* ? Nothing is more manifest, than that the same law of nature, which unites us, in different degrees of affection, with different portions and individuals of our kind, must originate a peculiar love of country, in every unperverted, undebased heart ; and therefore to make the spirit of Christianity opposed to patriotism, is to make it unnatural.

There is a species of patriotism, so called,

which the Gospel does not approve. It was the maxim of Themistocles, that whatever is advantageous to one's country is just; but as that self-love is criminal which pursues its purpose in violation of another's rights, so is that love of country, if it must be so termed, which wantonly interferes with the peace and independence of other nations. Christianity has no encouragement for the darings, no sympathy with the spirit, of an Alexander or a Napoleon, or of any one of the great conquerors, whose exploits history has recorded or poetry sung. On the contrary, language has no terms of reprobation, strong enough to express its hostility to all, whether individuals or nations, who trench on the peace and liberty and inalienable rights of others, to aggrandize themselves. A plundering army is, in the sight of God, but an association of robbers and murderers, whose individual retributions, will be neither stayed nor alleviated, in the day of judgment, because they were banded together and headed by a brave and skilful chief. The triumphs of the Roman generals, which filled the imperial city with exultation, moved Heaven with purposes of exterminating wrath against the nation.

The religion of Christ, is also opposed to

the vaunted patriotism of the spirit of party. The Gospel obliges us to seek the country's good ; not the success of one portion of the community, in opposition to another. It may be, that the interests of the party and of the country, are identical ; in which case, while Christianity requires us to pursue those interests, it forbids our doing so with the feelings of rivalry ; and, if we disregard the prohibition, however successful we may be, it denies us the praise of love to the nation. Good may come to the country by our means, but our condemnation will be just, unless an honest zeal for the nation's happiness, not the party's triumph, be the motive of our conduct.

It has been questioned whether Christians, and especially ministers of the Gospel should not stand aloof from all political contests, and either not vote at elections, or conceal their votes, so that their preference among rival candidates for office shall not be known. But it is a purely selfish and time-serving prudence which ordinarily suggests this course. There may be rare occasions, when reserve and even inaction may be demanded ; and our moderation and equanimity should always be exemplary ; but the cause of our country is in all respects too important, and especially

too closely connected with the interests of religion, to permit any one who is controlled by principle and the spirit of the Gospel, to be, in common cases, either negative or unknown, in the influence which he exerts. Shall the interests of the nation be abandoned to the blind and headlong action of partizan zeal? Where the State, as with us, deprives no man of the elective franchise, no man should deprive himself of it; and if public sentiment is anywhere opposed to a clergyman in the calm and regular exercise of this privilege, he ought therein to be opposed to public sentiment; showing that he loves his country and his Saviour too well, and is too sensible of his final responsibility to God, to consent to the perpetual disuse of any talent, which has been put into his hands.

A patriotism, governed in its exercises by the precepts of the Gospel, cannot be *revolutionary*, so long as government is administered according to legitimate authority or the commission granted by the laws. We may have, and frankly express, our opinions of cabinet measures and legislative enactments. Under our responsibility to God, we should examine, and judge whether the executive head of the nation, and all subordinate officers,

act in their respective stations, with or without authority ; and if the limits of power are transgressed by them, we are not bound either to silence or to passive submission. A peculiarity of circumstances may render resistance unavailing, and therefore inexpedient ; but to maintain that non-resistance is universally our duty in such cases, is to place God on the side of absolute tyranny, and to deny the permanent obligation of patriotism, unless it be the invariable fact, that the interest of the country demands that magistrates, do what they may, should be left unmolested. But so long as the government which is administered is that which has been established, and so long as the administration is constitutional and regular, however imperfect in other respects, the spirit and proceedings of true patriotism will be anti-revolutionary ; and while it may regret and censure freely, the want of wisdom, firmness, clemency, and principle, in the powers that be, will not only obey, but sustain, if need be with arms, those duly constituted powers, against all rival ones, foreign or domestic ; and this it will do from regard at once to the country's welfare and the will of God, who has declared the established authorities to be his own ministers, and those who resist them to be adversaries to his ordinance.

It is said that Christianity forbids the use of arms, and every form of war, and thus makes martial courage, if not patriotism a sin. But though the Gospel would beat swords into ploughshares, and spears into pruning-hooks, and fill the world with love and peace and joy, and though it employs a tone and emphasis of teaching against wars and fightings, which makes the responsibility for them dreadful, yet it gives no ground for the conclusion, that it is unchristian or unlawful to serve one's country in the camp or on the field of battle. When we consider what is written concerning the four centurions; and the advice of John the Baptist to the soldiers; and that the principle which so expounds the scriptures in question, as to draw from them testimony against arms, has not its limit in that inference, but equally condemns all punishments of crime, and either takes the sword from the magistrate, or makes him bear it in vain, if it does not render government itself a crime,—we find ourselves obliged to protest against this interpretation of the Gospel, as in the highest degree rash, fanatical and injurious. Great as are the horrors of war, the same principle which vindicates the Divine Government, in permitting these and infinitely greater evils, namely, that the high-

est good of the whole must be maintained against all opposers, at whatever hazards or consequences,—vindicates and demands the use of weapons of war in support of the government of the country, legitimately administered, against all assailants from without or from within.

The spirit of true patriotism is one with the spirit of all just government in seeking as its last end, not the good of the rulers but the ruled. And because this is not to be identified with increase in numbers, or territory, or wealth, or magnificence, but with intelligence and virtue, the only ground of solid and permanent happiness; and because these are to be secured in their highest measures only by the prevalence of religion, through the land, therefore, while an enlightened love of country must zealously promote the cause of popular education, it must be mainly intent on the evangelization and conversion of all the inhabitants. They unquestionably are the nation's best friends, who by holy living, and missionary labors and sacrifices, are infusing the leaven of the Gospel into the mass of the population. In this country, the State cannot use the public treasure in advancing Christianity, but that every statesman

and ruler, and judge, should be a Christian in all his conduct, private and official, and should particularly be a zealous and liberal patron of Home missions, is demanded alike by patriotism and by religion.

One of the greatest duties that we owe to our country, is Prayer for those who are in authority over it. If they are wise and holy men, they certainly have a claim on the nation's prayers, and much more if they are not. It is a good thing among the English, though their enforcing it by law is not good, that their established Church never performs the divine service, without a distinct and solemn and supplicatory mention of the chief magistrate, and the legislature of the nation; and it is also a good and a patriotic thing, that the branch of the American Church which uses a liturgy, has obliged itself to do the same in respect to the civil authorities of this country. If any christian denomination be wanting in this particular, they are reproved by these examples. But it should content no one, in this high matter, to offer with others, ceremonious prayer, however solemnly and constantly. In the hands of those who hold the high places of magistracy, legislation and judgment, lie the springs of

the national weal, and they cannot be touched without consequences of good or evil to every interest, civil and spiritual, throughout the whole land. There is not a village, nor a church, nor a family, nor an individual, whose interests are not committed to the country's head and council; and though the Christian's life be hid with Christ in God, and though the final triumph of the Church be certain, and though the country's purest and best men have the management of its affairs, yet it is only presumption to expect that the happiness of either country, church or christian, is safe, if importunate and continual prayer be not offered on behalf of those who bear the responsibilities, burdens and temptations of government. The most earnest prayer for them is specifically and urgently demanded of every individual; and he is the true patriot who meets the demand.

Though the Church in this land be separate from the State, there is no power which can be brought into action in favor of the nation's happiness, equal to that of the Pulpit. The energies of this divine means of every good to man, are greatly increased with us, by its disconnection from all civil advantages and aids. If it receive no support, it is under no

obligations but those of love. If it stand alone, yet it is independent and free; while there is no place near or remote, no person high or low, no subject-matter, whether of politics, legislation, morals, religion, science or art, to which it may not boldly apply its appropriate influence, under protection of the government, so long as it violates no one's civil rights. This privilege has the American pulpit:—its field is boundless, its way is unobstructed, it may make a full experiment of its powers, and if it does this, the proof to the country will be perfect, that the Gospel is the best friend to all human interests, national and individual, temporal as well as eternal; the State will reverence and cherish, though it cannot espouse the Church, and the peace of our rising and spreading republic will flow as a river, and its righteousness as the waves of the sea.

The volume, from which this essay has too long detained the reader, shows that its author is aware of the breadth of his proper sphere as a minister of Christ. He supposes himself empowered to treat other subjects besides those to which the assiduities of the pulpit are generally given. In his character as a clergyman, he has felt himself authorized,

to address his fellow citizens, as in the pages of this book, on relations and responsibilities of infinite moment, involving every interest of their own and their posterity. And while he has endeavored to enlarge their view of the ulterior influence of the country, on the welfare of the world, he has added new and overpowering force to every other motive to the discharge of all individual and national obligations.

We owe the author our thanks for thus directing our attention to GOD'S HAND IN AMERICA. That Hand has been progressively revealing itself from our commencement as a people, until at length in vivid distinctness, and in great power of instruction, admonition and promise, it is lifted high before the eyes of the world. In the operations of Providence, no man can fully understand the beginning till the end is known. It has been profoundly remarked, that as there is nothing in the universe, not even the minutest atom which floats in the sun-beam, nor the dew-drop which covers the most secret flower, that stands alone, but all blends with all; so individual existence and individual phenomena can only be explained by explaining the whole. The progress and connexions of

things however, discover with increasing light, that the divine agency in them is ever directed by reference to a definite purpose and a settled plan; and "men of wisdom" perceive with the liveliest interest the traces of design as they gradually unfold themselves, and like the angels, have a holy desire to know as much as possible before-hand, concerning the final result. This country is yet in its early youth, but the steps of Providence toward it have been so remarkable, that it stands in the world almost as a finished monument of the divine power, and from the opposite shores of the Atlantic, "the eyes of the oppressed are even now turning wistfully to the land of freedom, and the kings of the continent already regard with awe and disquietude the new Rome rising in the west, the foreshadows of whose greatness, yet to be, are extending dark and heavy over their dominions, and obscuring the lustre of their thrones."

Nevertheless, no principle of God's administration hath received more signal illustration from the past, than that privileges imply duties; and well does this book remind us that, *the Divine Being might make a short work upon the earth, and yet within its limits there might be traced the overthrow and destruction of a*

nation like our own, because of our ingratitude, and the selection and preparation of another people for the accomplishment of the Divine purposes of mercy to the world. The Jews themselves had scarcely greater reason to fear that the vials of the wrath of God, would be emptied upon them if they should prove rebellious, than have the inhabitants of this land, if they fail to recognize and fulfil their peculiar obligations as the most favored of mankind.

INTRODUCTION.

THE bearing of the political and social relations of the world at the present moment upon the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom, is a topic so fruitful in interest and instruction, that whatever thoughts, in a reverential spirit, may be thrown out upon it, can scarcely fail to find a welcome. The series of experiments and demonstrations in truth and error, of which this world has been for thousands of years so grand a theatre, there is some reason to believe is drawing towards its close, and is soon to be followed by the perfect reign of righteousness on earth. There appears to be an enlargement of the movements and indications of Divine Provi-

dence, from particulars to generals ; and there is a concentration of interest upon our own country, looking a few years in advance of our present position, which invests the study of the principles of the divine conduct with the most absorbing importance.

A general view of the grounds of national responsibility and retributive providence may fitly precede a more particular examination of the divine providential dealings and indications towards us as a people. This current of thought the author has pursued in two discourses, delivered in the Allen-street church, the first on occasion of the day of public thanksgiving in this State, and the other on the first Sabbath evening in the year, the evening previous to the day of prayer for the world's conversion. The second discourse was also repeated in the Mercer-street church, in this city.

The substance of these discourses is now presented in a shape somewhat different, but adapted to exhibit more impressively and clearly the unity and importance of the theme. The general propositions traced in its first division may be enumerated as follows:

I. That God is governor among the nations.

II. That he deals with nations on the same principles as with individuals.

III. That the responsibilities and duties of nations as individuals, are commensurate with their capabilities, opportunities, and mercies.

IV. That the disregard and violation of this principle will be followed with the divine retribution, and if persisted in, must result in national degradation and ruin.

V. That in the light of these principles an enumeration of the elements of

national gratitude, is an exceedingly solemn and admonitory service.

These propositions may occupy two or three of the following chapters, and afterwards the main subject to which they are introductory will be discussed, viz: The opportunities and responsibilities of this country for its own and the world's evangelization. Here opens that most striking aspect of providence and duty, to which I have referred in the general title of this volume ; a title which may be pardoned for its apparent singularity and quaintness, in consideration of its condensed expression of a most comprehensive and important theme.

PART FIRST.

**A GOVERNING AND RETRIBUTIVE PROVIDENCE
AMONG THE NATIONS.**

Vengeance will sit above our faults ; but till
 She there do sit,
We see her not, nor them. Thus blind, yet still
We lead her way ; and thus, whilst we do ill,
 We suffer it.

DONNE.

CHAPTER I.

GOD THE GOVERNOR AMONG THE NATIONS.—UNIVERSAL DISREGARD OF THIS TRUTH.

THERE are a few passages in Scripture where the rule of God's providence, and the mode of his dealings among the nations, are quite as explicitly revealed, as the precepts of the divine law in the decalogue. Of this nature is that most remarkable passage in the xviiith chapter of the prophecy of Jeremiah, of which the ninth and tenth verses constitute an important portion. Considered in connection with the xxvth chapter of the same prophecy, and the illustration of it, on so vast and awful a scale, in the destruction of

the Jewish people, it becomes exceedingly solemn. *At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said I will benefit them.*

Here there is a light, by which one may read the history of the world with great clearness and advantage, a key to the interpretation of many volumes of the divine providence otherwise inscrutable. There is clearly the reason of the instability of human things, and the secret of those perpetual overturnings amidst kingdoms and empires, the record of which forms the great body of the annals of all history. Human affairs are unstable because they do not please God, they are not in accordance with his will, and they must be changed until they become so. When they become so, then there shall be rest and per-

manence among the nations ; but at present there is no peace, nor any possibility of it.

The proposition that God is governor among the nations, it would seem as if no man in his senses could possibly deny. A man might as well disbelieve that God made the world, as that God governs it. And yet the doctrine of a divine superintending providence, the doctrine of God's personal presence and agency in the affairs of this world, although it be so clearly revealed in the Scriptures, has the smallest possible hold upon men's minds. Even among Christians there is but a very indefinite knowledge or belief of its truth. And among men of the world, among the nations at large, there is such a practical disregard and denial of it, and of the divine proprietary claim in human affairs, that the honest assertion and application of it in

any deliberative public assembly is very likely to be ridiculed as the dotage of a superstitious mind.

There is a perpetual practical atheism among men, so that however God may be acknowledged as the object of individual worship, he is, in fact, thrust out, in men's minds, from the world of his creation. And in truth the nations are so accustomed to regard existence as merely earthly in its principles, purposes, and enjoyments, and to attach a sense of truth, value and importance only to things connected with their temporal interests, that there has come to be a complete divorce between the maxims of worldly expediency and those of Christianity, a relinquishment of temporal and state policy to the god of this world. That very expression, *the god of this world*, shows most impressively the world's condition in rebellion against its Maker. The spirit of rebellion runs

through the whole body of its international law and policy, and infects even the volumes of its domestic statutes. This is so very generally the case, that the individual conscience is warped by it, and men come to inquire in reference to a particular employment, decision, or line of conduct, not,—Is it right? Is it in accordance with God's will?—but, Is it legal? Human law, law suggested and promulgated by the god of this world, is often thus enthroned in the place of God to the conscience. The laws for the protection and maintenance of the system of slavery are a striking example of this fact. The law of divorce is another. Nothing can be more explicit than the legislation of our blessed Lord on this subject. “Who-soever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery; and whosoever shall marry her that is put away, committeth

adultery." And in the apparently extreme strictness of this provision, it cannot be doubted that the Divine Being pursued the very course which he knew to be requisite, if he would regulate and train society to its most perfect state of order and happiness. Now the statutes in nearly all our courts are utterly neglectful of this revealed law, if not point-blank contrary to it. In some of them a divorce can be obtained for so slight a reason, that if you were to draw your conclusions of the sacredness of the marriage contract from such legislation, the harem usages of the Turks would be quite as respectable.

This supreme enthronement of human law is sanctioned sometimes, even by the professed and public expositors of the divine law, declaring, in particular cases of iniquitous legislation, cases where the human and divine governments clash,

that we ought to obey men rather than God, inasmuch as the powers that be are ordained of God, and therefore in obeying men we do obey God! With what vast displeasure must the Divine Being look upon such a condition of things, existing in the world even under the light of revelation! There was a period when nothing better could be expected, and the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent.

No nation, in its national capacity, has yet been brought under the full influence of the divine law. Perhaps the Sandwich Islands come nearer to such a realization of Christianity than any other community; but the Baptism of the Nations has never yet taken place. A glorious spectacle indeed it would be, if any one kingdom, even the smallest, basest, most despised, should become so imbued with divine

grace, so subjected by the principles of allegiance and love to God, as to regard him in all its operations ; to serve him as a reflex picture on earth of angelic obedience in the hierarchies of heaven ; devoting its revenues to the accomplishment of his purposes ; sending out its ships for missionary enterprise and discovery, and regulating its policy with other nations by a celestial disinterestedness and nobleness of principle. What a blessed picture for the imagination of a sanctified mind to dwell upon, could we think of this country, for example, with a government like the constitution of a holy family for its simplicity and sacredness, its governmental altar of prayer and praise morning and evening, a sentiment of sincere love to God in all hearts connected with it, and a sacred regard to the divine glory in all the circumstances of its policy. This indeed is supposing the consumma-

tion of blessedness to the world. It would be the Saviour's prayer illustrated and fulfilled, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." It would be the realization of the brightest visions of prophecy. It would be God governing among the nations. And this would be that union of Church and State which will spring inevitably from the presence of the Spirit of the Lord. Not the embrace, legislation and protection of the Church by the State, but the adoption and sanctification of the State as a portion of the Church—the unity, and not the mere union of both. To this, it is to be hoped, all things are tending; we know that they are in the end, when the times of the restitution of all things spoken by the prophets shall have come; and we have fondly hoped that this blissful era was near, even at the doors. But if we were to stop where we are now, little or

no advance has been made towards that millennium of glory, in which the kingdoms of this world shall have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ. What, at present, is the State? An engine of worldly, selfish, atheistic, and often reckless, oppressive and despotic policy and expediency. What ought it to be? An institution as sacredly regardful of God's glory, and of man's highest happiness, as the Church itself.

CHAPTER II.

PRINCIPLES OF GOD'S DEALINGS WITH THE NATIONS.

THERE can be no doubt that God deals with nations on the same principles as with individuals. The application of his laws is the same. Their accountability to him is the same. The principles of truth, holiness and justice, in each direction, are the same. Morality is not one thing in an individual, and a different thing in a nation. A nation may, by its own statutes, render a course of conduct lawful, but it cannot make it right. There may be legality, even in hell, under the laws of Satan's dominion; but not righteousness. Then, too, the dispensations of God's providence are as definitely, and with as much selection and

meaning, directed toward the nations as to individuals. They too are under a system of discipline mingled out of the treasures of mercy and chastisement. They have a life to lead, a career to run, a probation to accomplish. The means of usefulness, the opportunities of happiness, are placed at their disposal. They have a collective moral agency and obligation, a national as well as an individual conscience, and a national obedience to it, or violation of it. The national existence and responsibility is not a mere figment of the mind, not a mere collection of individual responsibilities and existences, but a great and awful reality, and as such God deals with it. As such he has provided for it a system of principles and statutes in his Word, a revelation to the nations as well as to individuals.

I am glad to justify this position by the declaration of a very profound and

original thinker, though neither theologian nor statesman, (the author of the *Aids to Reflection*,) that "as the *New Testament* sets forth the means and conditions of spiritual convalescence, with all the laws of conscience relative to our future state and permanent being, so does the *Bible* present to us the elements of *public* prudence, instructing us in the true causes, the surest preventives, and the only cure, of public evils. The authorities of Raleigh, Clarendon and Milton, must at least exempt me from the blame of singularity, if, undeterred by the contradictory charges of paradoxy from one party, and of adherence to vulgar and old-fashioned prejudices from the other, I persist in avowing my conviction that the inspired poets, historians, and sententiaries of the Jews are the clearest teachers of political economy: in short, that their writings are the STATESMAN'S BEST

MANUAL, not only as containing the first principles and ultimate grounds of State policy, whether in prosperous times, or in those of danger and distress, but as supplying likewise the details of their application, and as being a full and spacious repository of precedents and facts in proof."

It follows, of course, that the responsibilities and duties of nations, as of individuals, are commensurate with their capabilities, opportunities, and mercies. These all are the result of God's sovereign disposing Providence. "He hath made of one blood all the nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation, that they should seek the Lord." All circumstances wherein they differ, all forms of language, all convergencies of events, all inventions and dis-

coveries, all varieties of climate, all aspects of earth and heaven, all things and influences that may train them up to glory and happiness, he dispenses to each as he pleases, just as he allots the gifts and varies the circumstances of individual life. To one nation he gives one talent, to another two, to another five or ten, so that nations as well as individuals are but the stewards of his mercies, for the use of which he will require a strict account.

It was a saying of Mr. Coleridge that the word privilege is the correlative of the word duty ; in other language, that every privilege has a corresponding duty connected with it. This is true ; for if no other duty were required but that of gratitude, every privilege from the greatest to the least, involves that, and indeed gratitude to God comprehends every duty. All our mercies are foundations of responsibility, and the greater they are, the

greater our obligations become, and the more God expects of us. This is in every respect as true of nations as of individuals. It is as solemn and awful a thing, whether for a man or for a nation, to be greatly favored of God, as it is to be greatly tried and afflicted. The enjoyments of civil and religious liberty, of the opportunities of education, of the word of God, of the Christian Sabbath and the Gospel in its purity, lay a mighty weight of obligation upon any people; they trace a pathway of responsibility and duty, in which a failure must be as dreadful as success is glorious.

These principles are exhibited and sanctioned, not only in the whole course of the Divine discipline with the Jews, that people whom God seemed to have selected as a lasting example of the operation of his laws in their application to the nations, but in definite and very fre-

quent passages of Scripture. The climax of national blessings enjoyed among the Jews, was the possession of the written word of God. "He showeth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation." But then, in consequence of this discipline of mercy, came another discipline, introduced by their abuse of it. "*You only have I known of all the nations of the earth; THEREFORE YOU WILL I PUNISH FOR ALL YOUR INIQUITIES.*" And precisely the same strictness of judgment is applied by our blessed Lord to communities in his own day, which, in their disobedience and rejection of the Gospel had manifested a greater degree of wickedness, than the most ancient and depraved among the cities of the Gentiles. "Wo unto thee Chora-zin! wo unto thee Bethsaida! And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for

if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day."

And if the pages of revelation had been continued down to modern times, and the names of other nations had been recorded visibly in the places which, though unrecorded and invisible to us, they do actually occupy in the scale of God's discipline of judgment, we should have had a history of the world as full of sacred instruction in the retributive interpositions of God, marked out and noticed for us, as ever was the history of the Hebrews in the highest and most instructive inspiration of its pages. Touched by such enchantment, the profane and atheistic atmosphere of a work like Gibbon's would have been filled with angels to our view, the revealed and busy messengers and causes of divinely appointed degradation and decay.

CHAPTER III.

NATURE AND EXECUTION OF THE DIVINE RETRIBUTIVE PROVIDENCES.

WE are brought to the consideration of our fourth proposition, that the disregard and violation of the principles we have been contemplating will be followed by the divine retribution, and if persisted in, must result in national degradation and ruin. "THE NATION AND KINGDOM THAT WILL NOT SERVE THEE SHALL PERISH; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted." This most absolute and tremendous declaration may be accomplished in two ways. First, there is a connection as natural and inevitable between the evil courses of na-

tions and their own destruction, as between the iniquities and the miseries of individuals. If, therefore, God shall speak concerning any nation as concerning his people of old : “ Israel would none of me, so I gave them up unto their own hearts’ lusts, and they walked in their own counsels : ” — then the destiny of that nation is settled, its race is run. For doubtless there is no more possibility of the repentance of a nation, except the divine grace intervene, than there is of an individual. And therefore no farther penal infliction, or retributive justice, is really requisite on the part of the Divine Being, than just to leave a nation in the unrestrained indulgence of its sins. Luxury, avarice, pride, injustice, cruelty, work the overthrow of empires, as well as the fiat of the Almighty. They are sometimes the very means of fulfilling that fiat, the very accomplishment of God’s predictions of evil against

a disobedient people. These dreadful ministers of wrath work with so much certainty, except repentance for the iniquity that issued their commission intervene, that oftentimes you may read its fate in the countenance of a nation, as palpably as you may the death of the drunkard in his fiery features. It needs no divine inspiration in such a case to paint the judgment of an evil kingdom ; the sins of the people are the prophets of their coming woes.

On the other hand, if governments are luxurious and selfish, then there is a case pending not only between them and God, but between them and the people ; in the progress of things, the people must inevitably be victorious, and those forms of empire have insured their destruction. So far as the constitution and the measures of human governments run counter to God's word, they also run counter to the inte-

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rests of mankind ; they oppose a perfect state of society ; they maintain causes of discontent and revolution. There is this selfish disregard to the ordinances of God and the interests of the subject all over the world. There is at the same time a ceaseless struggle towards happiness and rest, an instinctive, irrepressible tendency and movement in the chaos of society towards order, in the prison of society towards liberty ; but the divine order being the only possible one, the existence of this is impossible, so long as the maxims of worldly governments move contrary to the principles of God's word ; and the divine liberty being the only possible one, the enjoyment of this is impossible, so long as the people themselves are undisciplined and vile. In the eloquent language of Edmund Burke, " It is written in the eternal constitution of things that men of intemperate minds cannot be free. THEIR

PASSIONS FORGE THEIR FETTERS." Until, therefore, the word of God becomes both the rule of the citizen and the Statesman's Manual, the volcanoes of political revolution will continue to disgorge their fires. The prediction runs with the reality, and is the assertion of a necessary principle. "I will overturn, overturn, overturn, till He shall come, whose right it is, and I will give it Him."

There is also, in the second place, a direct, divine retribution. It has been remarked that this world is the judgment place for national sins. There is truth in this; and yet it is in the power of God in the future world to mete out strict and impartial justice to nations as well as individuals, and to make the universe see and admire the process. God knows the precise share of every individual in forming the character and conduct of the nations, and whatever the amount of guilt contracted by any na-

tion at any given period, or through its whole existence, he can assign to each individual of all the millions of its inhabitants his exact proportion, and whatever be the punishment due, he can distribute its sufferance in the same manner. This is the only way conceivable in which the judgment of nations in eternity could be conducted. The judgment of individuals themselves must be in some sense a national judgment, since it is by individuals that every national crime is deliberated upon, and carried into execution. The making of unjust laws and treaties is an act of national guilt, in which it is very easy to see how every individual concerned in passing and executing such enactments may be arraigned and punished in eternity. The appropriation to individuals of the guilt incurred in maintaining those laws is a more difficult thing. As in individuals, so in nations, acts and

habits of sin, with their consequences, are more easily avoided before they are committed, or inwrought into the system, than repented of and renounced afterwards. It is easy for one man to kindle a conflagration, which a thousand cannot master.

The life of a nation is a unity and continuity of generations. It is made up of a stream of existence, in which you cannot mark the point where one generation begins and another ends; like a woven fabric, in which you cannot tell where one thread ends, or passes into another. There are habits of feeling, opinion and conduct, therefore, that belong to the same nation for ages, and in reference to which the whole continuous stream of generations from beginning to end must be judged, just as the responsibility of every part of a man's course of conduct is his own through his whole life. Then again the sins which a nation completes in one gene-

ration may have been resolved upon and commenced in another ; it would therefore be manifestly unjust to judge merely that part of the existence of the nation into which the actual commission of the crime fell, while the previous generation is left unjudged or unpunished. If, for example, our own nation were now to be judged for the sin of slavery, and punished to the uttermost, we cannot suppose that this would be all, or that the share of the previous generation in permitting and entailing this guilt would be unnoticed.

In this world the retributive consequences of national guilt are not experienced sometimes till all the actors have passed from the stage of existence. While they lived, the nation might have been enjoying the fruits of its fraud, tyranny, injustice, as yet uninterrupted by the retributive providence of God, so that when that providence at length is unfolded, not

a being may remain in existence, who bore any part, direct or indirect, in the commission of those crimes. This is mysterious, but not more so than the visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children. In such cases it is not to be supposed that the generation of actual sinners, who died while flourishing like a green bay tree, have escaped the divine vengeance. That part of the nation certainly must be judged in eternity, and one ground of judgment will be the miseries they have entailed upon posterity. Now it is no more inconsistent with the justice of the divine government that posterity should suffer for the sins of a nation, than that children should suffer for the sins of their parents, or an innocent wife and family for the drunkenness of the husband. In all such cases it is to be remembered that the suffering inflicted, though produced by the sins of others, falls, not upon the

guiltless, but upon those who deserve it all and more than all, on account of their own sins, and oftentimes by similar transgressions.

Something of this is to be regarded in the denunciation of our Saviour against Jerusalem. "That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zacharias. Verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation." This was not saying that preceding generations would escape, but simply that the crisis, in which the divine retributions were to be experienced in this world, was deferred till the measure of iniquity should be full; and those crimes for which, from generation to generation vengeance had been denounced, but no repentance exercised, were at length all visited upon an unrepenting generation, who themselves were guilty of the greatest crime in the whole annals of the race.

The retributive providence of God is sometimes evolved in the sure though distant operations of natural causes, which he does not interpose to prevent ; as, for example, the unjust conquests of the Romans were followed by the introduction of habits that led to the ruin of the empire. And the iniquitous conduct of Spain, in the discovery and possession of the South American continent, though for a time it filled the nation with wealth, is, by natural causes, connected with her present miseries. Just so, an unjust accumulation of wealth by individuals, though it may go unpunished during a man's lifetime, is not unfrequently followed by evil courses in his children ; the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children, in being made the progenitors of their sins ; with their own concurrence, certainly, and a guilty concurrence, but not the less a visitation, and a dreadful one,

from God ; for had those parents been virtuous, then those very same children, in all likelihood, had been virtuous also. And this proverb, " he that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house," is as true of nations, as it is of individuals.

The retributive providence of God may be prevented by repentance, nor would it, in any of those cases where it has been so signally and awfully illustrated, have received such an illustration, if repentance had intervened. " At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and pull down, and destroy it, if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I WILL REPENT OF THE EVIL THAT I THOUGHT TO DO UNTO THEM." Here stands out a great and most merciful provision in God's national statute book. Sincere repentance prevents the threatened evil, in nations as

well as individuals. There is, besides, another wondrous shield that stands between God's wrath and the nation that deserves it, and that is his own constituted church, and the prayers of his redeemed people. The Sodoms and Gomorrabs of our day would doubtless flame up to heaven in their ruin, as they cry up to heaven in their sins, were it not for the righteous men, that by God's grace, instead of five or ten, answer his requisition to Abraham sometimes by hundreds and thousands. How beautifully is this truth conveyed in those lines of the poet Cowper, which I love to repeat and dwell upon, descriptive of the world's dependence, for its happy existence, upon the living presence of the Christian!—

“ Perhaps the self-approving haughty world,
That, as she sweeps him with her whistling silks,
Scarce deigns to notice him, or, if she see,
Deems him a cypher in the works of God,
Receives advantage from his noiseless hours,

Of which she little dreams. Perhaps she owes
Her sunshine and her rain, her blooming spring,
And plenteous harvest, to the prayer he makes,
When, Isaac-like, the solitary saint
Walks forth to meditate at eventide,
And think on her, who thinks not for herself."

Sometimes the Church herself becomes participator in the sins of a rebellious people, and then the shield against God's wrath proves its conductor. It is a fearful climax of evil when this is the case. This, in truth, especially in the Oriental world, reads the history of more than one nation, once Christian, but now blotted from existence, or lost in heathenism.

Sometimes the long suffering of God is carried so far, that it seems as if there were no cognizance taken of national crimes, iniquities being committed at which the heavens and the earth cry out for their enormity, and yet God's justice sleeps. This makes the nations hardy in their sins ; they laugh at the predictions

of God's wrath, and scornfully ask, where is the promise of his coming? The Antediluvians did this, and when Enoch preached with such prodigious eloquence and power, like the outpouring of the seven vials, his predictions of the deluge of divine vengeance, he was assailed with the fury of unbelief and wrath. The facility with which nations become atheists in their public capacity, and scorn the idea that God interposes in human affairs, is partly because some mighty and astounding interposition, enough to compel the awe of the universe, does not take place in their own generation. They are more obtuse in their discernment, and blind in their unbelief than hardened individuals, and the most terrific of the divine judgments being sometimes slow in their progress, and unperceived, unnoticed, except by spiritual observers, have little power to arrest the deep tide

of profligacy. They are the more dreadful because unrecognized.

God's retributive providence may be invisible as the angel of death, and gradual as the remorseless tide that steals its march for centuries, or the malaria that depopulates cities, and makes the very sight of them the dread of the traveller. One might, with almost as much impunity, go into the tomb of a plague-stricken mortal, as linger among the beautiful remains of some of those buried cities, whose inquest would rightly be written, **DIED BY THE VISITATION OF GOD!**—and yet that visitation unknown and unacknowledged even by the sufferers. Sometimes a series of retributive providences is unfolded, no one of which, by itself, excites alarm or surprise, till in the lapse of ages the solemn work is done, the nation has passed from existence, and historians write its epitaph, and philosophize upon

the causes of its fall. A lingering decay may be far worse than a sudden overthrow ; so that, in such a case, the common lamentation of mankind may be deeper for the degradation that remains, than the glory that has departed. It is the same with individuals. And this perhaps was the meaning of that melancholy breathing of the poet :—

“ Thus fares it still in our decay ;
 And yet the wiser mind
 Mourns less for what age takes away,
 Than what it leaves behind.”

A nation dies when the spirit of every thing good and noble dies in it. The name may live, when the elements of life and beauty have departed. God may suffer the sins which a nation is cherishing to consume its energies, till the gangrene becomes incurable, and then his abused mercies work their own revenge. How solemn, in such a case, are the re-

cords and the proofs of the divine indignation—the prediction and the fulfilment seen and read together !

I have stood beneath the walls of the Coliseum in Rome, the Parthenon in Athens, and the Temple of Karnak in Egypt :—each of them the mighty relic of majestic empires, and the symbol of the spirit of the most remarkable ages in the world. The last, carrying you back as in a dream over the waste of four thousand years, might be supposed to owe its superior impressiveness to its vast antiquity ; but that is not the secret of the strange and solemn thoughts that crowd into the mind ; it is the demonstration of God's wrath fulfilled according to the letter of the Scriptures ! No ruins of antiquity are so overwhelming in their interest as the gigantic remains of that empire, once the proudest in the world, and now, according to the very letter of the divine predic-

tion, "the basest of the kingdoms." From the deep and grim repose of those sphinxes, obelisks, and columns,—those idols broken at the presence of God,—as the mind wanders back to the four hundred years of Israel's bondage in Egypt, methinks you may hear the wail of that old and awful prophecy, with the lingering echo of every successive prediction—
THE NATION WHOM THEY SHALL SERVE
WILL I JUDGE! Who would have believed it possible, four thousand years ago, amidst the vigor and greatness of the Egyptian kingdom, that after that vast lapse of time, travellers should come from a world then as new, unpeopled, and undiscovered, as the precincts of another planet, to read the proofs of God's veracity in the vestiges at once of such stupendous glory and such a stupendous overthrow! And now, if any man, contemplating the youthful vigor, the energy,

the almost indestructible life of our own country, finds it difficult to believe that the indulgence of the same national sin, under infinitely clearer light, may be followed with a similar overthrow, let him wander on the banks of the Nile, and think down hours to moments in the silent sanctuaries of its broken temples.

CHAPTER IV.

ELEMENTS OF NATIONAL GRATITUDE AND RESPONSIBILITY.—THE WORD OF GOD.—THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH.—A CONVERTED MINISTRY.—THE HOLY SPIRIT.—A GOOD GOVERNMENT.—FREEDOM OF OPINION.—COMMON SCHOOLS.

WE are now prepared to realize the truth of our fifth proposition, that the enumeration and acknowledgment of the causes of national gratitude is an exceedingly solemn service. It becomes so just in proportion to the number and importance of our blessings. What then are the elements of national gratitude? We can notice but a few of the most important, but in doing this we shall find a most impressive picture of

our own national responsibilities. The first to be mentioned is the possession of the word of God, in our own language, and without restriction on the reading or the publication of it. Let any man travel in Catholic countries, and he will feel the importance of the two latter adjuncts of this blessing. To possess the Scriptures, but in a dead and foreign tongue, is, for the mass of the people, equivalent to being deprived of them. To possess them in the vernacular, but with the ban of the church against their perusal, is, if possible, still worse. The free gift of the Holy Scriptures to any people is one, the greatness of which, as of the responsibilities connected with it, is not to be described in language.

Next to this blessing is that of the Christian Sabbath; and connected with it, the gospel preached in its purity by a holy and enlightened ministry. The word

of God itself would do us little good, if the Sabbath were blotted from existence, or if the constituted expounders and teachers of the word were unconverted men, or falsifiers of its doctrines. Without doubt the gospel is preached in this country with a simplicity and plainness more accordant with its nature, and by men more generally of experimental piety, than in any other country in the world. The greatness of this blessing, again, we cannot adequately appreciate.

The gift of the Holy Spirit, in connection with the proclamation of the gospel, is another vast and incalculable blessing, without which indeed, those already mentioned, though they might benefit the temporal condition of our race, would be of no avail for their highest interests. The effusion of the Spirit of God, to render divine truth effectual in the conversion of men, is the culminating gift in

the series of blessings purchased by the crucifixion of the Saviour. It is the last object of prayer, the only possible ground of the advancement of the Redeemer's Kingdom, the only hope of individual or national salvation. In the continued outpouring of the Spirit, and the revivals of religion consequent upon it, we are enjoying the highest possible proof of the divine favor, the highest possible assurance of our country's safety, and the highest possible means of usefulness. Our moral power over the nations is increased and enhanced in an incalculable degree, and our preparation for the mighty part which we fondly hope God destines our nation to take in the world's evangelization, must become, by the continuance of this blessing, well-nigh perfect. Our responsibilities are greater than those of any other nation, just in proportion as we precede the rest of the world in the enjoyment of

this new and marvellous element of national gratitude, the Baptism of the Spirit.

These are the four highest elements of mercy and responsibility, our four greatest blessings, because they are religious blessings, and constitute, in their union, the perfect gift of our religion. Three other elements may be named, comprehending our political and social interests.

A wise and good government well administered. A government may be good in its constitution, but spoiled in its administration. It may be evil in its constitution, and therefore evil in its administration, even though conducted with all the wisdom and benevolence of which it is capable; and it may be both bad in itself and badly administered. Most governments in the world come under this last description, for they have generally been but so many organized systems of despotism and oppression; the power and

luxury of the few, built upon the crushed minds, hearts, and hopes of the many. In such a world of violence and misrule, a good government is a gift of God's mercy of inappreciable value, an element of national gratitude and responsibility as precious as it is rare. A good government is an essential requisite for a grand and lasting instrumentality in the world's evangelization. Most governments are so wicked in their very essence, that the kingdom of Christ will have to be established on their ruins. Now we think it must be admitted that there are fewer evils in the theory and administration of the government of this country than of any other in the world. It is perhaps the best adapted to the growth of a people in knowledge, usefulness, and holiness. At any rate, in comparison with the unhappy constitution of other governments, it is of such supreme excellence and

blessedness, as to constitute for us an immense ground of thanksgiving and responsibility.

A sixth element of national gratitude is freedom of opinion. I mention this as being the surest index and the most important result of civil and religious liberty. We can scarcely appreciate this blessing in our own country, for, like the air that we breathe, it has been round about us from our infancy. But the pages of history are a perpetual record of wars and persecutions on account of opinion. Political opinions, religious opinions, and even philosophical opinions, when they have been supposed to run counter to the tenets of the Church, have been prosecuted as crimes. Our discourse would be filled with names only, should we attempt to enumerate even a small part in the list of the martyrs of opinion. But are not all men free to think? it may be

asked. Yes! as much as a prisoner in his cell is free to go the length of his chain, or to walk from one wall to the other. But can outward shackles or threats of persecution stop the freedom of opinion? Most assuredly. They induce the habit of slavish thinking; they make the mind's habitual state a state of bondage; they make it think, not freely, but according to received rules and dogmas, and paths traced out. The interdict against the free publication of opinion is an interdict also upon the formation of opinion, for it is as true, as it is beautifully expressed, that

—— Thoughts shut up want air,
And spoil, like bales unopened to the sun:——

and so, in a very short time there will be no wholesome thought at all. The mind suffocates in such a prison, just as a light, put beneath an air-tight receiver, is extinguished. Even in this country, free as it is, there is yet the element of bondage and

of persecution. Even here there are so many adverse influences, that in making your investigations in dark quarters with the torch of truth, you need to have a safety lamp, like Sir Humphrey Davy's invention, which you may thrust, with its light, into the midst of the impurest gases, or the moment it touches them they will blow you up. Still, there is a freedom of opinion in this country greater and more absolute than any where in the world. It constitutes a most important element in our causes of national thanksgiving.

The seventh and last element, which I shall mention, is that of good common schools. I take this as the criterion of excellence and universality in a national education. No language can tell the greatness of this blessing. In the possession and the right use of it, any country would rise to greatness and prosperity. Good common schools, the common schools of

New-England, are a mighty and blessed discipline to the mind, the heart, the conscience. They put the elements of power into every hand, and teach every mind to govern them. It were to be wished that a vast deal more of care and attention were devoted to them in this state and city. We have only to step over into England, and we may there see, for want of that common blessing of our land, common schools, the benefit of that other great blessing, Sabbath schools, in a great degree unknown. For the Sabbath school in England is merely two hours of the common day school of this country turned into the Sabbath, to give to the poor the miserable apology for that inestimable blessing, from the enjoyment of which they are excluded during the week.*

It is a good element in our common school instruction that it is not sectarian.

* Note A.

And it ought never to become so. In countries the least enlightened, and the most despotic, it is; the genius of the Roman Catholic religion makes it so. And, truly, I wonder that the advocates of that religion in this country should have had so little of their wonted sagacity as to be willing to expose and obtrude into notice so obnoxious a feature in their system. I wonder that they do not also claim that a particular portion of heaven's atmosphere be walled up from the rest of the canopy that overhangs our city, and consecrated to their exclusive possession. The air that we breathe is not more the free, unmortgaged, unprejudiced, and equal property of all, than ought to be the element of common school instruction.*

With these grand elements of national blessedness and thanksgiving, a world might be up in arms against us, and we

* Note B.

could stand the shock ; a world might be sunk in wretchedness, and we could bless, redeem, and save it. We are bound to see to it, that we do not neutralize the power and benefit of these blessings, and the power of our own example over the nations, by the practice of iniquity among ourselves ; of iniquity, perhaps, which every civilized nation under heaven has abandoned. It is to be fondly hoped that God will not permit us so to thwart his goodness. In the atrocious iniquity committed by the English nation in its attack upon the Chinese Empire, for the defence of the privilege of poisoning the natives of that Empire with smuggled opium, we can see how far even a professedly Christian people may go in acts that renders its moral power over others a nullity and a laughing stock. We are bound to avoid such monstrous inconsistencies, and not only

to take care, for ourselves, of the blessings God has bestowed upon us, but to use them as the means of blessedness to the world. We are bound to watch over, for ourselves and others, the element of freedom of opinion, that it do not degenerate into licentiousness and atheism ; of a free government, that it be justly administered ; of common schools, that they be well taught and every where provided for ; of the word of God, that it be every where disseminated ; of the Gospel, that it be preached in purity ; of the Sabbath, that it be not desecrated and abused ; of revivals of religion, that they be not, through the sins of the people, and the lukewarmness of the Church, permitted to cease from existence.

Perhaps there is not another nation in the world that possesses together all these elements of blessedness, these merciful tokens of God's peculiar favor.

I am sure there is no other people possessing them to the degree that we do. Nor is it in the power of language to describe, or of the mind to measure, the extent of obligation and responsibility with which they load us as a nation. They open before us, and urge upon us, a career of benevolence and glory, such as no other people ever entered on, such as no other can command. They mark as distinctly a great design of God in regard to us, as if some aged prophet of the Lord—some majestic, heaven-inspired Isaiah—three thousand years ago, had written down, as in the case of Cyrus, our very name and character in the scroll of his predictions. The thought of the possibility of a waste and abuse of these mercies, a failure of these high purposes of God in regard to us, is painful in the extreme. How much more so, if the view of our obstinately cherished sins, our

forming habits, and the festering evils in our system, render it in the least degree probable. Surely, there is a voice to us, as there was to ancient Israel, from the bright array of our spiritual mercies especially, and in reference to their peculiarity—"YOU only have I known of all the nations of the earth, therefore YOU will I punish for all your iniquities!" And God has preserved that degraded and all but annihilated people, with the marks of his wrath upon them, in the sight of the nations, as it were like a lost archangel with the deep thunder scars of his fall entrenched in his once bright countenance, to teach surviving empires, on a most mighty and terrific scale of vengeance, the awful consequences of despised mercies, guilt persisted in, and vast responsibilities abused. Let me repeat the lesson,

copied by the instructive genius of Cowper, from the pages of inspiration :

Their glory faded, and their race dispersed,
 The last of nations now, though once the first,
 They warn and teach the proudest, would they learn,
 Keep wisdom, or meet vengeance in your turn ;
 If we escaped not, if Heaven spared not us,
 Peeled, scattered, and exterminated thus ;
 If vice received her retribution due,
 When we were visited, what hope for you ?
 When God arises, with an awful frown,
 To punish lust, or pluck presumption down,
 When gifts perverted, or not duly prized,
 Pleasure o'er valued and his grace despised,
 Provoke the vengeance of his righteous hand,
 To pour down wrath upon a thankless land,
 He will be found impartially severe,
 Too just to wink or speak the guilty clear.

“ Behold, therefore,” says the apostle Paul, in reference to the same grand and tragic lesson ; “ behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God ; on them which fell severity, but towards thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness : OTHERWISE, THOU ALSO SHALT BE CUT OFF.”

PART SECOND.

**INDICATIONS OF THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE CONCERN-
ING THE DESTINY AND DUTY OF THE
UNITED STATES.**

The time of rest, the promised Sabbath, comes !
Six thousand years of sorrow have well nigh
Fulfilled their tardy and disastrous course
Over a sinful world ; and what remains
Of this tempestuous state of human things,
Is merely as the working of the sea
Before a calm, that rocks itself to rest :—
For he, whose car the winds are, and the clouds
The dust that waits upon his sultry march,
When sin hath moved him, and his wrath is hot,—
Shall visit earth in mercy ; shall descend
Propitious in his chariot paved with love ;
And what his storms have blasted and defaced
For man's revolt, shall with a smile repair.

THE TASK. Book VI.

CHAPTER V.

**PARTICULARS OF THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE.—OUR
ORIGIN.—OUR GOVERNMENT.—OUR PREVIOUS AND
SUCCESSIVE DISCIPLINE.—FREEDOM FROM A RELI-
GIOUS ESTABLISHMENT.**

It would be difficult to find a more solemn and definite announcement of the rule of God's providence towards us as a people, than is contained in the passage adduced at the close of the preceding chapter. There can be no doubt that it is addressed to nations as well as individuals ; to the Gentile nation in contradistinction from the Jewish nation. We are admonished by the fall of the Jews, the rejection of the natural branches of the olive, to beware, lest on account of our

sins, God reject us also, who at best, are only grafted in upon the original stock.

For eighteen centuries the experience of nations has been commenting upon this text; and even that of England and America may yet have to be annexed to it, in the course of the divine indignation on account of national sins. Doubtless, there is ample time and verge enough within the scope of the vast circle of prophecy, for such an additional illustration of God's justice on a mighty scale. The Divine Being might make a short work upon the earth, and yet within its limits there might be traced the overthrow and destruction of a nation like our own, because of our ingratitude, and the selection and preparation of another people for the accomplishment of the Divine purposes of mercy to the world. Nevertheless, we hope that in regard both to our own and the whole world's evangelization, the commands

laid upon us, are no greater than God will yet bestow the power, the willingness, and the grace to accomplish. In this hope, after the survey we have taken of the more general methods of God's providence among the nations, and of the more important elements of national gratitude and responsibility, let us now endeavor to trace a little more closely the tenor of God's discipline in regard to ourselves, and the grand divine purpose indicated by it.

Among the circumstances that combine to put a great degree of moral power into our hands, and to invest us with great responsibilities, we may enumerate the following particulars.

1. Our origin as a people has been noble. We are made out of the sternest materials the world could furnish. Our ancestry were self-denying, heroic, energetic, pious. The older the world grows,

the more will it honor the name of PURITAN. That title will be a synonyme for all that is illustrious in patriotism, fearless in liberty, devoted in piety. Our Puritan fathers were the best spirits of England. Born in agitated times, nursed in the iron cradle of persecution, freemen of the freest country then upon earth, and freemen by a yet nobler title, with the liberty that Christ gives to his people.

A truly virtuous parentage, is the noblest inheritance of individuals. The son of Edmund Burke would have been moulded by the spirit, and animated by the memory, and mantled around with the moral power of so illustrious a father. It is still nobler for a whole people. None can tell the prodigious moral power we derive from habits induced, and sentiments instilled into the common mind in the childhood of our existence, by men that walked with God. They kept the

Sabbath ; and to this circumstance is owing the superior sacredness of that day's observance in this country, compared with its almost universal desecration in other countries. You may call it a prejudice, if you will, that extreme veneration of feeling and strictness of practice, but to be girded in our infancy by such prejudices, is to have an iron constitution for God's service in our manhood.

In every respect our origin imposes upon us vast obligations. It was so extraordinary as to fix upon us the gaze of nations. Born of such parents, it is demanded, it is expected, that our whole existence shall be a lofty course of freedom and piety, expansive as the world, and lasting as the continent we inhabit. Our ancestors were men of prayer. Their supplications gird us about, even now, like a wall of adamant. They offered them in faith and fervor, amidst trial and

distress ; they probably behold an answer every day, in the blessings that we receive. By the power of such prayers they are, as it were, still in the midst of us, a band of righteous men, for whose sake we may be spared and redeemed, though our own guilt threatens destruction.

2. To such a discipline in our parentage God has superadded the great and blessed gift of a free government, simple in its constitution, and emanating from the people. It was necessary to prepare a people for such a gift by such a discipline. It could not have been bestowed upon any other people already in existence, and educated under the power of principles, habits, and manners, at variance with it and inadequate to its support. It grows out of and is adapted to our circumstances ; our political freedom springs from our religious freedom ; and

a form of government beneath which any other people would run wild, or else would soon convert it into some iron form of despotism, fits us in its spirit and texture as a coat of flexible mail fits the body, and forms an instrument of prodigious power in all our movements.

We have a government that leaves us at leisure to prosecute our purposes ; it is a part of ourselves. In most cases the government and the people, in theory if not in practice, are at variance, just as if the one were in essential enmity and jealousy against the other. Hostility of course arises, and nations have too much to do with their own political struggles to look after the world's spiritual interests. With us it is not so. Our government is the people's government, and in it they are secure. Whatever dispute there may be as to the theoretical merits of different forms of government, whether

the monarchical or the republican form be the best, the question for us is settled by a degree of happiness and prosperity resulting from our republican constitution unexampled in the whole world.

I believe that a republic, with that preparation for it which God has granted us, is better fitted than any other form of government for the accomplishment of his spiritual purposes of mercy to the world. Its unostentatious frame-work and the simplicity of its aim, admit of a perfect alliance with the spirit and precepts of our religion. Most governments, being in their very constitution nothing but contrivances of individual or oligarchical luxury, power, and pride, the religion of the gospel cannot mingle with them, but is compelled to stand aloof, and at the uttermost can only do something to neutralize and mitigate their evil. The Baptism of the Nations will doubtless be

vouchsafed to those first that are best prepared for it ; and in our view a republic rightly administered constitutes a State, in which there are the fewest obstacles in the way of such a regeneration. Inveterate ,national prejudices, antique cherished abuses, and unjust practices indulged, constitute a ground of resistance to the Holy Ghost in nations as well as individuals. The various establishments of Great Britain are opposed to such a National Baptism by the Divine Spirit as has been referred to. The simplicity of our institutions, on the other hand, favors it.

3. The discipline by which we were prepared for such a government has been followed by a discipline in its establishment equally adapted to honor and sustain it. The character of our revolution was worthy of the character and struggles of our Puritan ancestors. The same lofty

principles were involved in it, and developed, and established by it, in the sight of all the world. It was a great thing, besides the blessing of a Puritan ancestry, to be honored with the gift of such a being as WASHINGTON for the second father of his country. We came into existence as an independent people under the most favorable circumstances. Our birth was not premature, nor were we rocked and dandled into manhood. We were disciplined by adversity, and had enough of storm to indurate, without breaking our frame. Our revolutionary contest is known to have been sustained by prayer; the formation of our constitution is associated with pious recollections; for that, too, was built up under the influence of prayer. The more our history becomes known, the more we shall be expected to exhibit, wherever we go, a model of piety

to God, as well as freedom and fearlessness towards man.

Our atmosphere is the natural mountain air of liberty and piety, and as fast as other nations become sufficiently enlightened and religious, our institutions, in essence and in spirit, will probably prevail. As fast as wise revolutions take place in other countries, as fast as thrones crumble, and tyranny breaks up, and the people grasp the power, they will look to us with more earnestness, and a deeper veneration. We shall have a hold on the esteem and affections of the world, which nothing but our own betrayal of their confidence by a career of crime can diminish. Our very existence, in freedom and happiness, under a government more purely popular and republican than has ever prevailed among civilized men from the beginning of the world, exerts, of itself, a power over the nations utterly incalcula-

ble. All Europe would be in a very different condition, if, from the influences that have made Europe what it is, you could abstract merely the example of the continued existence of this nation.

4. In granting us the blessing of a free government, God has also graciously separated his Church in this country, from a base and unnatural dependance on the State, and has granted us the blessing of a free and independent church organization. He has blessed us with a freedom from church establishments, such as the world has not seen, nor the church known, for many centuries. He has not permitted that politico-spiritual incubus to weigh us down ; that source of pride, contention, worldliness, and vainglory to exist among us. The deliverance of the Church from this monstrous evil, it has cost long time, and a world of patient labor to work out. It was no part even of the Reformation to

accomplish this blessing. A refuge in the wilderness of this western world must be provided, and a band of holy men driven into it by persecution ; and even now it is only a few years since the perfect separation of the Church from the State was accomplished in this country. The era was worthy of a place in the chronology of the most remarkable events in the world's history ; for the perfection of religious freedom is as rare and wonderful a possession as the perfection of civil freedom. Indeed, till within a few years its very existence has been supposed impossible, and what men have termed the voluntary principle, has been regarded with the utmost horror, as if it were the very annihilation of religion among men, the disorganization and destruction of all religious societies.

The idea that God has instituted a Church which cannot stand without the

arm of the civil government to lean upon, is but part of that system which supposes the people to exist for the pleasure of their rulers, and not the rulers at the will and for the good of the people. Religion being the dearest of all human possessions, if the civil government can tyrannize over that, its despotism over all other things is unlimited and secure. The idea, therefore, that religion is not a great governmental establishment, but a popular and voluntary thing, annihilates an old and sanctified prejudice, and strikes down one of the strongest buttresses of tyranny. In truth, voluntary associations of any kind, contain within themselves the germ of civil and religious freedom. If men can do one thing without the intervention either of a bench of bishops or a bench of peers, they can another, so that voluntary associations do, sooner or later, carry in themselves the death warrant both of civil and

ecclesiastical despotism. In the successful example and experiment of the Church in this country, a monstrous and tyrannical prejudice has been shaken and rooted from its foundation, which, under whatever goodly name or form, has filled society with persecution, bloodshed, and bondage, and which, if not overthrown, would have rendered the complete triumph of the Gospel, in the accomplishment of the world's evangelization, impossible.

To show, in one particular direction, the nature of establishments, as an obstacle against the spread of the Gospel,—the unalterable essence of the spirit of bigotry, domination, and exclusiveness connected with them,—it is enough to notice the following fact. A clergyman of the Church of England, being on heathen ground, proposed attending a prayer-meeting held by the missionaries of the American Board. He was threatened

by another Episcopal clergyman, though not of the Church of England, but of this country, and it would seem outrunning even his brother of the establishment in the comprehensive energy and despotic consistency of High Church principles, that if he did dare attend the unhallowed conventicle, he should be complained of to the established authorities of his Mother Church. Rather than make difficulty, the divinely ordained servant of the establishment, exorcised of the inconsistent spirit of liberality and lowliness, submissively repressed his yearnings after communion with his missionary praying brethren, and inasmuch as that was all that an establishment could there do to show its superiority, or to maintain the exclusive divine right and dignity of Episcopal ordination, left the unanointed missionaries to pray alone ! Poor, forlorn, proscribed disciples ! Had it been a

little earlier in the world's history, instead of quietly pursuing your holy work, with silent pity for the arrogant assumptions of your brethren, and the exhibition of a spirit so inconsistent with the business of the world's conversion, you would have expiated your offence perhaps within the walls of a prison ! In the good providence of God, it is mainly through the existence of a Church without an establishment in this country, that it has come to be possible for a society of Christians not only to pray alone and unmolested any where, but even to be honored and revered of men, and sanctioned and glorified in the descent of the Divine Spirit, though untitled, and unsanctioned, either by the seal of Pope or Bishop, King or Queen.

What could be supposed, as to the prospect of the world's evangelization, if the spirit of the gospel, instead of being that

free, unshackled, benevolent, ethereal essence that it is, had been the narrow, proud, exclusive, dictatorial, persecuting, papistical spirit, that constitutes the essence of a prelatical, and,—in reference to the war it has waged against all sects not within its own bosom, I had almost said—piratical establishment ! To convert this world unto Christ, a religion is needed, not of forms and ceremonies, and arrogant assumptions and titles, but a religion of humility, meekness, and love ; a religion that can, if need be, become all things to all men, and not a religion which, even on heathen ground, would rather part with the spirit of the gospel itself, than relinquish a solitary jot of its unhallowed, haughty, bigoted pretensions.

I regard the delineation of the New Jerusalem, in the Book of John's revelation, as a remarkable description of the nature of that religion which is to fill the world.

I SAW NO TEMPLE THEREIN : FOR THE LORD GOD ALMIGHTY AND THE LAMB ARE THE TEMPLE OF IT. A most significant indication is here presented of the liberty, universality, and omnipresence, like the all-penetrating and surrounding air, of that worship of God, which is one day to fill the earth with its blessedness. There will be no mediatorial images, crosses, liturgies, or exclusive ceremonies, to come between the soul and God ; or to monopolize and stereotype the expression of its piety ; no self-assumptive titles, or arrogant pretensions to the sole divine sanction ; no cathedrals or oratories where God so exclusively abides, that none can rightly worship but within their sacred precincts ; but a presence and a worship that gathers, not sects and churches merely, nor Presbyterian, nor Episcopal, nor prelatical establishments, but whole nations into its bosom !

CHAPTER VI.

PARTICULARS OF THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE CONTINUED.—A REGENERATED AND EDUCATED MINISTRY.—REVIVALS OF RELIGION.—PREVALENCE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

5. NEXT to the blessing of freedom from a religious establishment may be named, as fitting us for a great share in the world's evangelization, an enlightened and converted ministry, and a high standard of theological education. For the last great conflict with the powers of darkness, a ministry is needed possessing the spirit and conversant with the riches of God's word, a ministry girded with the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, and of practised skill in the use of it. Now there can be no doubt

that theological education is advancing to a perfection in this country, the education both of knowledge amassed and practical experience gained, such as it has reached in no other ; a circumstance that may encourage us to believe that we are destined for an instrumentality in the advancement of the Redeemer's Kingdom among the nations, not local or temporary, but universal and perpetual.

6. Next to this, and in close connection with it, is to be named the gift of the Holy Spirit in revivals of religion. Year after year we may hope they are becoming wider, deeper, more constant. We may hope in the divine mercy, that throughout the nation this leaven of blessedness will continue to work, till the whole is leavened ; nay, we have some reason to believe that God will make even us, as a people, his first example of a great nation wholly penetrated with the influence, and obe-

dient to the principles of Divine Grace. At any rate, the moral power which revivals of religion continued must give, is immense ; the responsibility they lay upon us cannot be conceived. To what extent it may please God to work speedily, in the same glorious manner, in other countries, we cannot tell ; we may hope he is preparing the way ; and doubtless, if we are humble and prayerful, he will continue the blessing to us, and make revivals here the forerunners and instruments in producing them elsewhere. Thus, while religion flourishes at home, our religious power abroad will be magnified to a gigantic extent. As the fountain deepens and widens here, we may multiply its streams throughout the earth ; not only to carry salvation to the heathen, but to refresh, invigorate, and purify the old and corrupt establishments of all Christendom.

Our revivals are a display of God's mercy and grace, that already has stirred up the dormant energies of the English church, and has excited the wonder, the investigation, the prayers, and the imitation of pious men throughout Great Britain. Then, too, the greatest revival of religion in modern times, the revival in the Sandwich Islands, has taken place by God's mercy, under the instrumentality of our missionaries. The influence of these things must be felt, wherever they are heard of, and the transaction of religious phenomena so wonderful, so glorious, will make the nations be looking for a vast increase of our pious enterprise and activity. And while these effusions of the Spirit must, of necessity, rouse such an expectation, they will give us the power, provided we keep at the foot of the cross, where only our safety lies, amply to fulfil it. They are, indeed, a consolation amidst all

our fears ; they call for unceasing gratitude to God, of whose patience, forbearance, and infinite compassion, they are so astonishing an exhibition. Notwithstanding the dark signs of the times, they hold out to us the animating hope, that he designs this country to be yet the main instrument in the world's regeneration ; and that he is beginning to prepare the American church, by a vast access to her numbers, elevation of her purity, and increase of her light, for the magnificent scale of exertion on which her enterprises are hereafter to be conducted.

7. We speak a language containing vast treasures of religious wisdom, and vernacular, more or less, over a large portion of the globe, and for this and other causes, perhaps destined to become an organ of international communication more universal than any other tongue. The students at the missionary seminary at Basle in Ger-

many, well denominated the English language the missionary language. It might almost be called the language of religion, in reference to the vast treasures of theological science, the mines of religious truth, and above all, the inestimable works of practical piety, of which it furnishes the key. There is in it a capital of speculative and practical theology, rich and deep enough for the whole world to draw upon. From time to time, God himself has especially honored it, and prepared it more and more for his glory, by giving to the world, through its medium, such works as the Pilgrim's Progress and the Paradise Lost. It is the language of Protestantism, the language of civil and religious freedom, the language of commercial enterprise, the language spoken by the greater portion of seamen in the world. It is the language of the two freest, most enterprising, most

powerful, and so far as the appellation can at present be admitted in a national sense, most truly Christian nations on the globe.

The English tongue owes so much of its power and beauty to the Scriptures, that for this reason alone it is almost a sanctified instrument for the Church to work with. The common translation of the Bible, both in Germany and England, exerted the most beneficial influence in moulding the language, as well as the mind and morals of the people. Perhaps it has done more in the formation of our language, and the preservation of its purity, than all other causes. Bunyan is the most remarkable example of its agency in the development of genius. It was his intense study of the English Bible that gave him the command of a style of such native, idiomatic, simplicity and beauty. For him the Scriptures were his mind's

sole storehouse, both of words and images, and his sensibilities opened beneath their influence, as the flowers open to the sun. To the same ennobling inspiration the greatest of the English poets were indebted almost as much as he. So were the best prose-writers. Their minds were all baptized in the same cloud of glory, and all passed through the same invigorating, shining sea. And indeed, if we could suppose the whole of that part of British literature drawn away, w^hich is in thought and imagination, in feeling and energy, sprung from the same fountain, there would remain hardly the skeleton of its living beauty. It would be like the lifeless, inexpressive canvass of a vast painting, from which you have destroyed the whole perspective, and blotted out the imaginative lights and shades.

Taking all these influences into consideration, there is not another language

in the world so sacred, so connected with holy associations, and, for the treasures of religion which it embalms, so important to man's highest interests, as the English language. We therefore cannot but regard its increasing prevalence as a great and special indication of the providence of God. The time is not far distant, other causes being supposed to maintain their influence, when this language shall have become an organ for the world's literature ; and in addition to this, if we mistake not, the world's religious book-mart, and most elevated and important literary centre, will be found in America. The probability of this will be made more evident in the light of the next grand topic in our enumeration.

CHAPTER VII.

ENUMERATION CONTINUED.—RAPID INCREASE OF OUR
POPULATION.—OUR COMMON SCHOOL EDUCATION.—
OUR RELATIVE GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION.

8. THE immense population, speaking the English language, which is soon to swell the census of the United States, is another point of God's providence and discipline towards us, of incalculable importance. It gives to every other consideration a hundred fold weight in our view. It gives magnitude even to trifles. The tide of our population rolls on with tremendous rapidity and power. When Mr. Evarts committed the last gift of his devoted spirit to the church of Christ in this country, in that sublime, prophetic,

and almost inspired production, on the Moral Destiny of the United States, he made the calculation, based on the safest and most probable positions, that in one hundred and seventy years from that day, the descendants of the present inhabitants of the United States would amount to ONE THOUSAND MILLIONS! If any one is startled at such an assertion, this being a number greater than the present entire population of the globe, let it be remembered that it has been computed, after a careful estimate of the capabilities of America, that, with the present degree of knowledge, and without any reliance upon future discoveries in agriculture and the arts, this whole continent will sustain at least two thousand millions of inhabitants in circumstances of comfort.

But the extreme nearness of this vast population to ourselves, and the consequent incalculable power which the insti-

tutions and the spirit of this present generation are to exert in moulding its character and destiny, constitute the grand point of importance in every benevolent mind. Within the period when the grand-children of those now upon the stage of action shall be the actors and spectators in our stead, the population of this country will have nearly or quite reached the sum of two hundred millions. In all human experience, no community were ever placed, by their mere relative position on the banks of the stream of time, at a point of such commanding, such overwhelming influence and responsibility. The drama which successive generations have been playing on the theatre of existence, becomes a transitory, dream-like mockery, when compared with the seriousness and lasting importance of ours.

Our population doubles once in twenty-three years. But to keep within the

most probable limits, and on this side reality, we may best take the period for doubling at twenty-five years. Our population may now be safely assumed at eighteen millions. In twenty-five years from this time, in the year 1865, it will therefore be thirty-six millions. In 1888, in fifty years from this present period, it will be seventy-two millions. In seventy-five years it will amount to one hundred and forty-four millions. And in one hundred years, there will be in these United States, and by the good pleasure of God, under the same government that now blesses us, and speaking the same language which we speak, two hundred and eighty-eight millions of human beings. Going one step further in the calculation, in the space of only one hundred and twenty-five years from this day, five hundred and seventy-six millions of im-

mortal beings will form the tremendous mass of the population of this country !

The thought becomes so overwhelming, that it seems wild, chimerical, incredible. And yet, allowing the ratio between holiness and wickedness to remain even as it is, and that there be no increase in the proportion of piety in our land, even on such an unfavorable supposition, except God himself interpose, with some vast and awful judgment, the computation is sure. Methinks now we are ready to exclaim that the welfare of such a future population of our own is an object of quite as vast importance, as the evangelization of the whole world besides. And this is most true. But it is equally true that, so far as we are concerned, the two enterprises of this country's and the world's evangelization must advance or fluctuate, stand or fall together. Our own destiny is not more indissolubly

linked with the one than with the other. If we do our part for the evangelization of the world, we save ourselves ; if we neglect that, we destroy ourselves. The two experiments are before us, and the one is just as completely under our control, as the other.

If the influence exerted over the thronging multitude of our posterity be such, that holiness shall grow up among us as fast as our knowledge and population, it is easy to see that the whole world's evangelization through our instrumentality is within our reach. We may soon command the moral machinery of all the globe. Not the most distant and the wildest of earth's inhabited regions, but must be moved and shaken by the impulse, whenever we touch the spring. We may take whole nations by the hand, and raise them up to civil and religious liberty, and, under God, infuse into their

very frame-work the vital spirit of the gospel. No alliance of tyranny and superstition will be able to stand before us ; by a single look we might almost frown down the strongest combinations of wickedness. By the pure, simple, blessed, legitimate influence of united knowledge and holiness, we may exert over all nations a power more absolutely despotic, and for its spirituality, infinitely more glorious, than Rome, with all her legions, ever possessed, in the most universal extent of her empire. Let the bare existence of a truly christian nation, with a population of five hundred millions be supposed, and the whole world's evangelization follows almost inevitably. On the other hand, if wickedness prevail, while population and knowledge increase, what imagination can picture the tumultuous frightful reign of anarchy and crime. It will be as if the infernal fiends had

moved up from hell to earth, and made this the grand scene of their most gigantic operations.

9. In the light of this last topic of the increase of our population may be viewed, in the ninth place, the real importance of that great gift of God's providence to this country, the universality of a good common education. There is among us an universal diffusion of knowledge, which is unexampled in the world. If this be continued, and the salt of divine grace be cast into our common schools, we have a security for order and happiness among ourselves, and a sure foundation of intelligent benevolent effort throughout the earth. There is no way in which we can do more for our future welfare, more to accomplish God's designs of mercy, and in the language of Scripture, raise up the foundations of many generations for the divine glory, than by devoting the most

scrupulous, unremitting, religious attention to our common schools.

10. In the tenth and last place in this enumeration, the geographical position of our country must be considered as not the least among the circumstances favorable to the vast extent of our moral power. Our situation with respect to other countries and political powers, gives us security and repose. The state of all Europe is in the highest degree critical and uncertain. In the calmest times there are tremendous causes at work, volcanoes that may break forth at any moment. In a time of profound peace, I have passed, in European cities, through public squares faced with cannon, and have been pressed by the soldiery on guard, within the line of enclosure which I had transgressed. Whence was this? Was it because, in a period of excitement, or with causes existing to produce it, those squares would

become the places of assemblage, and therefore must be fortified *in terrorem*, beforehand? Men walk, in that part of the world, over hidden, hot embers, *suppositos cineri doloso*, seemingly dead and covered with ashes, but ready at any moment to burst into a devouring flame. The elements of democracy are at work, a republican tendency and struggle is manifest, the day of retribution for ages of misrule and oppression is yet to come. Envy and discontent, the consciousness of misery and tyranny, and the desire of change, are at work in the lower ranks, without knowledge and virtue to balance and to guide. Many overturnings must take place, and perhaps an universal breaking up of the established order of things in Europe, before the preparation necessary for the coming of Christ's kingdom in power and permanence shall be found among the nations.

In comparison with ourselves, Europe is like a region at the base of a volcano. How narrowly have the nations just escaped being hurried into universal war! War is their passion and their habit, and the slightest cause may prompt it; and then the kingdoms that have heretofore been most actively engaged in the enterprises of christian benevolence, may be thrown back in piety, and paralyzed in their spiritual energies, to an unspeakable degree. We look on, from this distant side of the world, in quiet and security. We are now, and unless the curse comes upon us for our ingratitude, and we be smitten with madness and blindness and astonishment of heart, so as to rush uncalled into the battle, we may keep ourselves to the end of time, utterly aloof from the wars and fightings that agitate and tear the bosom of the continent of Europe. We hear the din of their quarrels, the shock

of their contending armies, but have no motive whatever to engage in the commotion. We may go on rapidly and silently, and peacefully in the great work to which the Lord our God hath called us, overshadowed by his wings; and supremely blessed in being made his instruments to carry the glad tidings of salvation even to the ends of the earth. As the tribe of Levi was separated from among the rest of the tribes of Israel, and consecrated to the exclusive service of Jehovah, so may this great people, while other nations are waging bitter strife, or absorbed in earthly pursuits, advance in an uninterrupted career of holy benevolence, and become GOD'S PRIESTHOOD TO A WORLD!

CHAPTER VIII.

**DESIGNS OF GOD IN OUR DISCIPLINE, AND THE
BLESSEDNESS OF THEIR FULFILMENT ON OUR
PART.**

HAVING endeavored to trace some of the circumstances of God's discipline in regard to us, and to weigh the degree of moral power over the nations which those circumstances conspire to put into our hands, it is hardly necessary to ask what are the designs of God in laying upon us such responsibilities. The responsibilities themselves indicate a mighty design, and mark out a magnificent career of duty. The blessings that constitute the foundation of our responsibilities, constitute also the revelation of God's will concerning

us, and afford, at the same time, the means of fulfilling it. That the discipline of the divine providence in our case has been peculiarly grand, intense, and blessed, it would require the stupidity and blindness of an atheist to deny. We may say with as much propriety as Israel of old, "He hath not dealt so with any people." That this peculiar discipline indicates a peculiar and equally important purpose is just as manifest; and it is difficult to believe that God will suffer the moral, intellectual, and physical training of this people on so magnificent a scale, and with such vast and glorious objects to be accomplished by it, utterly to fail. Nevertheless, the voice of warning issues from the sacred word, with a solemnity deepened by the fall of the chosen people of God, after a majestic training and probation of more than a thousand years,—“At what instant

I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom to build and to plant it, if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of this good wherewith I said I will benefit them."

And the echo of this solemn declaration comes to us from the New Testament, "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God ; on them which fell, severity, but towards thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness, OTHERWISE THOU ALSO SHALT BE CUT OFF !"

We think there are indications which show two great lines of the Divine Providence converging. One is in the manifest general preparation going on among the nations for the accomplishment of God's great purposes, as revealed in his word ; the other is in the corresponding discipline of our own country in particular. We are little more than a half century old, and yet in this time we have become

a strong nation, and as a church, able, perhaps, to do more than any other in the world. The blessing of youth as a nation, at such a period as this, it is difficult to realize. Compared with the stiffness and rigidity of age in some nations, and the marks of decay in others, our spirit is as fresh and elastic, our strength as vigorous, and our mind as ductile, as if ours were indeed the glow of unperverted childhood. We have no national habits or prejudices formed under the old order of things, and difficult to be relinquished, and there is in us a quickness and ability to embrace opportunities and conjunctures, which in the nature of things other nations cannot possess. Our religious enterprises and our benevolent societies, as well as our secular and business undertakings, have the same glow of life and activity, and almost every train of influences that could

be desired is in some way or other in operation.

All this has taken place suddenly ; we being like a nation born in a day, and at a time which constitutes a great crisis, a radiating point, a magnetic pole, as it were, in the world's history. There is a universal movement in society, a new arrangement of its elements, an increase of its inventions and discoveries, the casting up of a grand highway of the Gospel among the nations. There is a cluster of events and thoughts, in the present aspect of things, of great power and significance. It is but three or four centuries since the very first discovery of this continent by Columbus. In connexion with that world-awakening event, and as if on purpose to secure it from being turned into the service of the Man of Sin, then ascendant and triumphant through the nations, came the great religious irradiation, the Refor-

mation through the instrumentality of Luther, the discovery of a new world of piety and intellect for men's souls to dwell in. About the same period, and as if on purpose to fulfil the designs of God in those events, the invention of printing rose into useful and almost universal application. Immediately upon these things, almost as suddenly as report succeeds report in the earthquakes that shake the physical world, followed the preparation and planting of a church of Christ and a Protestant nation growing out of it in this country ; a church and a nation whose increase and results are watched with an intense interest, in comparison with which the whole continent besides, from north to south, scarcely attracts attention. Meanwhile, knowledge is every where increasing, steamships traverse the ocean, the barriers material and moral, between the nations, are breaking down, and old

systems, religious and political, are fast giving way.

Bringing thus into one view some of the most grand and prominent events in the world's recent history, and remembering that at this moment our own population has reached a census, from which it is to rise with a suddenness that is almost startling, to the highest amount admissible in the nature of things upon this continent, we cannot but feel that we are upon the very eve of a development of great grandeur and importance.

The lines of prophecy are converging, and the trains of God's providence are growing nearer and more crowded, as if deepening to a great centre, and indicating some mighty consummation, just as the near approach to a vast metropolis is indicated by the multiplied avenues, the augmented crowds, and the increasing grandeur of the buildings. With every

division and variety of its processes centering to one sublime purpose, the plan of God moves forward to its completion. Empires and armies, wars, whirlwinds, and pestilences, evil men and devils, good institutions and bad ones, commotions and revolutions, all prepare his way. He goes on overturning, and overturning, and overturning, and when about to revive his work and in wrath remember mercy, sometimes the signs among the nations are more full of commotion and terribleness than ever.

There is certainly no presumption in the supposition that God has created, is educating, and will sustain a peculiar people to accomplish his great purposes at such a crisis. Whether there be any presumption in the supposition that we ourselves are marked and destined for so great and glorious an instrumentality, depends much upon our own manifestation of character thus far, beneath the divine

discipline, and upon the right study and interpretations of the divine providence.

We cannot but hope, looking at the present state of the globe, and at the peculiarities of our own national and ecclesiastical history, that God is preparing the political and social relations of the world for the philanthropic movements of a nation and a church so constituted and disciplined.

The divine providence has as marked and definite a meaning in regard to nations as to individuals, and sometimes even more manifest. In this view, there is, if I may so speak, the commencement of a new phase of prophecy, and the grandeur of the scriptures, in their national proclamations, will arrest every mind. A change passes over the prophetic canvass ; it is filled with grand and august figures. God is coming to use nations like individuals, for the fulfilment of his purposes. His long rejected

people, the Jews, begin to appear in the picture, and those two great lines of prophecy, running consentaneously upon them and other nations, seem ready to unite in that point of glory indicated by the great apostle to the Gentiles, when the coming in of the fulness of the Gentiles and the salvation of the Jews together, as mutual cause and effect, shall fill the world with righteousness, and hasten the scheme of redemption to its completion.

Let us look, for a moment, at the blessedness of the fulfilment, on our part, of the great designs of the divine providence, so marked and manifest in regard to us. On the supposition, that, as a people, we fulfil our personal duties to God, and grow in holiness in proportion as we grow in power, the only supposition on which the church ought to act; the supposition, indeed, which the church is bound to realize; the picture that unfolds before the

mind of the Christian, is such an one as might employ the pencil of Isaiah. We may realize, indeed, the brightest visions of holiness, mercy, and happiness, contained in the scriptural delineations of the reign of the Prince of peace. As individual Christians, we may sit each under his own vine and fig tree, and devoutly study our Bibles and grow in grace beneath the influences of the sanctuary, and no war shall desolate our habitation, or grieve away the Spirit of the Lord. We may walk about Zion, and tell the towers thereof, and glory in her increasing strength, and mark well her bulwarks, and consider her palaces, and meet together to pray and consult for the advancement of the cause and kingdom of our Saviour, and none shall molest us or make us afraid.

As a nation of Christians, we may be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord,

and a royal diadem in the hand of our God. We may increase in spiritual wisdom and humility, and universal devotedness to God, till holiness shall be written even on the bells of our horses; till our officers become peace, our exactors righteousness, and every place religion. We may cover our land with goodly temples rising to the peaceful worship of Jehovah, till from every elevation the eye may rest upon their consecrated spires. We may multiply societies of benevolence till misery shall scarcely be known, and allurements to reformation, till hardly a prison shall rear its black walls to the sight. No slave shall then breathe in our air, or tremble, in this land of freedom, beneath the rod of a taskmaster. Every yoke shall be broken, every evil statute cancelled, and the oppressed shall go free. Violence shall no more be heard in our land, wasting nor destruction in our bor-

ders ; we may call our walls salvation, and our gates praise. We may build up the schools of the prophets, and send the Bible to every family, and a faithful, affectionate pastor to every hamlet, till the days of our mourning shall be ended, and the cry of the spiritually destitute no more heard among us ; till indeed it shall be said of us, “ Thy people are all righteous.”

Then no ordinance in our country's statute book shall legalize the national violation of the Sabbath, and no rude noise of secular business intrude upon its heavenly repose. Here I cannot forbear a quotation from the sublime language of that eloquent production of the former Secretary of the American Board, to which I have already referred. Speaking of the time “ when all the happy millions of this continent shall live together as brethren, adoring their Creator and Redeemer,” “ Then,” said Mr. Evarts, “ will be a day

of glory, such as the world has never yet witnessed. As the sun rises on a Sabbath morning, and travels westward from Newfoundland to the Oregon, he will behold the countless millions assembling, as if by a common impulse, in the temples with which every valley, mountain, and plain will be adorned. The morning psalm and evening anthem will commence with the multitudes on the Atlantic coast, be sustained by the loud chorus of ten thousand times ten thousand in the Valley of the Mississippi, and prolonged by the thousands of thousands on the shores of the Pacific. Throughout this wide expanse, not a dissonant voice will be heard. If, unhappily, there should be here and there an individual whose heart is not in unison with this divine employment he will choose to be silent. Then the tabernacle of God will be with men. Then will it be seen and known to the universe,

what the religion of the Bible can do even on this side the grave, for a penitent, restored, and rejoicing world.”

But this is not all ; it is the spirit of **MISSIONS** which constitutes the spirit and power even of a vital home religion. Happy in the care of Him, who visits and redeems his people, blest with civil and religious freedom, and enjoying all the privileges of the sanctuary ourselves, we may carry forth these blessings to the darkest and most sorrowful corner of the earth. We may enlarge and strengthen our missionary societies, till their power is felt through the habitable world, till their ministers of mercy go forth to tell the farthest and saddest outcasts of Israel that Christ died to redeem them. With no foreign armaments to support, and no exhausting wars to drain us of our wealth, we may pour incalculable riches into the Lord's treasury for the heathen.

We may in literal truth cause the outgoings of the morning and of the evening to rejoice at the footsteps of our benevolence. We may become the main instrument, in the hands of Jehovah, of accomplishing the day and the state of universal millennial glory. In the sweet language of Isaiah, whenever he speaks of such a period, the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for us, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. We may apply to ourselves the blessed predictions of the prophet, in all their fulness and sublimity.

What we *may* do is but the index of what we *ought*. What God, in his providence, has given us the ability and the opportunity to accomplish, becomes our duty to perform. For it is as true of nations as of individuals, that **TO HIM THAT KNOWETH TO DO GOOD, AND DOETH IT NOT, TO HIM IT IS SIN.**

CHAPTER IX.

INTEREST AND GRANDEUR OF THE DIVINE EXPERIMENT WITH US AS A PEOPLE.—CONDITIONS OF SUCCESS.—CAUSES AT WORK TO DISTURB AND THWART IT.

WE cannot conceal from ourselves, nor would we wish to do it, that the responsibilities of every kind resting upon this country are mightier than those which belong to any other nation in the world. Especially is this the case with the religious responsibilities of a Christian church which God has so remarkably blessed. If we redeem them, it will be glorious for us and glorious for the world. It is good for us, on this mount of vision, commanding on all sides an immense moral view, to call to mind our multiplied responsibilities, and see what sublime

motives animate us onward. We stand upon a lofty and imposing situation. We are compassed about by a great cloud of witnesses, being made a spectacle, not only to the world, but to an innumerable company of angels and the spirits of the just made perfect. It may be no dream of the imagination, but an undoubted reality, that higher orders of intelligences are watching our movements with intense interest, and that Paul, and Peter, and John, and all the beloved apostles of our Saviour, and all who have since trod in their footsteps, and through toil and pain and death inherited the promises, are looking down upon us, and waiting, I had almost said with painful anxiety, the result of this mighty experiment. It seems as if Heaven had placed our country in this situation to try us ; to see whether we would faithfully use the incalculable power in our hands

for speeding forward the world's regeneration, and if not, how many accumulated blessings we could waste and reject.

In contemplating the picture of our happiness in a course of national piety, and in making such an enumeration of our national talents for a wide moral influence, we are not to forget that it is only through a probation of severe and holy discipline, that we can hope to arrive at the attainment of such glory. Nor must we for a moment let the remembrance pass from our minds, that it is "not by might, nor by power, BUT BY MY SPIRIT, SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS," that the great work is to be accomplished. We may have had the noblest and most pious ancestry on earth ; we may possess the freest institutions, the strongest physical power, the most inexhaustible wealth, the highest foreign influence and reputation ; we may

enjoy the most universal diffusion of knowledge ; and what is more than all, the Spirit of God may be poured out upon us for a time in accumulated revivals of religion ; and yet we may turn every one of our vast capabilities to ruin, except God keep us humble, and preserve in us a spirit of deep contrition and dependance on him.

Besides, there is another and a widely different view of our whole subject. There is a gloomier prospect in the probabilities of our country's future destiny. There is at least one dark spot in our moral and political horizon. Yet we cannot suffer ourselves to believe that God will permit, with the growth of our nation in populousness and power, the continuance of the enormous evil of SLAVERY, the indulgence of that great sin, which would inevitably prove the destruction of all our hopes of usefulness and glory. If he

should do this, and give us over, like his ancient people, to our own heart's lusts then we should indeed become a signal and terrible example of God's holy indignation. Then, in the prophetic language of Milton, and with allusion to our past extraordinary history, "*as if God were weary of protecting us, we shall be seen to have passed through the fire, that we might perish in the smoke.*" For we cannot ourselves remain free, and yet persist in imposing bondage on others. "And it usually happens," (that great writer profoundly remarks in his Second Defence of the People of England,) "by the appointment, and as it were retributive justice of the Deity, that that people which cannot govern themselves, and moderate their passions, but voluntarily crouch under the slavery of their lusts, should be delivered up to the sway of those whom they abhor, and made to submit to

an involuntary servitude." But if after all our lofty privileges and excitements to glory, we do deny God, and turn from following his pleasure, to follow our own depravity, and fill up the measure of our iniquities, then our fall and punishment must be a second Jewish tragedy on a wider and more awful scale, and all the curses written in the book of the law cannot but descend upon us. "And it shall come to pass that the generation to come, that shall rise up after us, and the stranger that shall come from a far land, shall say, when they shall see the plagues of this land, and the sicknesses which the Lord hath laid upon it, and that the whole land is brimstone and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim, which the Lord overthrew in his anger and in his wrath ;—

even all nations shall say, Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this land? What meaneth the heat of this great anger?"

Perhaps we are in danger of indulging a sort of indolent pleasure in the expectation that the millennium is soon to open on the world, without reflecting how great must be the increase of personal piety for a long previous period, how deep, severe, and self-denying must be the probationary discipline of the church, and how little we know what unexpected means God may take to signalize the glorious scheme of redemption, or what may be the duration or the nature of the scene that is yet to come of his moral administration on this globe. For aught we know, the passions of mankind may yet again be let loose to rage and devastate through a long and dreary duration of moral gloom ; the fountains of the

great deep may be broken up, and a deluge of wickedness heave its vast surges over the earth, till scarce a vestige of the great moral landmarks even of Christianity itself can be discovered. This may take place after a universal diffusion of every kind of knowledge, the speculative knowledge even of the Scriptures not excepted, that it may be shown on a scale as broad as the earth, that the highest and most widely diffused intellectual refinement without regeneration will be no sort of barrier to the violence of human depravity, but on the contrary, by increasing its ingenuity, augment tenfold its dire and untameable fury.

God may offer the precious gift of the Gospel to every nation under heaven, and it may be in turn proudly and awfully rejected by them all ; and after leaving it to be demonstrated by the universal wicked-

ness of men that of all modern ages and nations, with all their boasted superiority and improvements, there is not one but will outdo in depravity that ancient people, so long an astonishment and a by-word, he may take the cup of trembling from them, and make every christian people drink it to the dregs. He may leave their own infuriated wickedness to sweep from all Christendom the light of holy truth, and then, when the Bible is a proscribed book, to be read only by stealth, and when earth seems about to become the empire of Satan, he may appear in his glory, and build up Jerusalem, and bring back from their dispersion his ancient covenant people, and use them as the willing, grateful instruments in carrying the religion of that Saviour whom their fathers crucified, forth from the scene of his sufferings into every quarter of the globe.

Though this be all hypothetical and visionary, yet we do not know that there is any thing in the record of prophecy to conflict with the supposition or the possibility of such an additional scene in the great instructive drama, which God is permitting to be played in this world, and which he will suffer to be played out without interruption. At any rate, however far the designs of God's providence may seem manifested and in process of execution in regard to ourselves, and however important the instrumentality of a nation and a church so trained and disciplined might appear in the midst of a world so depraved and degraded, it becomes us to remember that as God out of the stones in the streets of Jerusalem could have raised up children unto Abraham, so he can now just as easily accomplish his purposes and his prophecies without our aid.

CHAPTER X.

**LESSONS OF INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY AND DUTY.—
A HIGH STANDARD OF PIETY.—A HOLY EDUCA-
TION.—THE RIGHT USE OF PROPERTY.—THE RIGHT
USE OF PRAYER.—CONCLUSION.**

In the mirror of this great subject we behold reflected the solemnity and responsibility of our position as individual Christians. It teaches the necessity of an immediate elevation of our individual standard of piety.

The resolution of the mighty problem as to the world's evangelization by us, rests more entirely on the holiness of individual Christians than any of us can possibly conceive. Wherever there is an eminently holy saint in our country, there is one of the pillars of our greatness. When such an individual dies, if there be

none to take his place, the shock sustained in his departure is irretrievable. Looking back upon the American Church in all her past history, we shall find, in every period, that her advancing strength has resulted from the eminent piety of a few distinguished Christians. Blot out, if it could be done, the name and memory of Brainard and Edwards, and draw off from our system by a mighty moral exhaustion the influence which their characters have exerted in building up our country's church, and we should blot out some of the fairest of her christian graces ; we should draw away the very life-blood in her veins. Let the same be done with a few other holy individuals, and though diminished as to numbers, but little in every ten thousand of our ranks, we should be left faint, exhausted, prostrate in the dust, and able to prosecute hardly the smallest of our present widely-extended enterprises.

Great numbers do but encumber our moral vigor, unless holiness increases in a greater ratio. Doubtless, the piety of many is so low, that the holy minority could do better without them. It would be better to proclaim, as when God sent Gideon against the Midianites, "whoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early;" and if then only the efficient part were chosen out, there would hardly remain, as on that occasion, three hundred out of every thirty-two thousand.

We do not sufficiently consider, that to sustain great operations abroad, we must have a deeper piety at home. The self-denial of our missionaries, must be sustained by the self-denial of the Church; nor ought we to be willing to live at ease in America, and deny ourselves only by proxy in Africa or Asia. Moreover, the power and success of our missionaries

among the heathen will depend upon the power in prayer and holy living possessed by the churches that sustain them. But a small portion of our work is done, even when we have provided the men, and sent them abroad with the gospel of life in their hands ; they are still connected with us, and greatly dependent on our piety :

“ They drag at each remove a lengthening chain,”

and if we do not communicate an electric, life-giving impulse, it will prove a perpetual clog. They are the clouds that take the water of life from this continent, and wafted by the breath of prayer, sail away to pour it down on the thirsty land of the heathen. If the fountains here be shallow, it can fall there only in scanty and inconstant showers.

It is to be feared that we are daily and hourly departing wider and wider from

the searching, self-examining, closet piety of our fathers, and becoming more and more exclusively external in our efforts. We are living on the patrimony that has descended to us, without continuing to increase it by the same labor, with which it was acquired. It may be all gone before we are aware ; and if we do not keep up the fires beneath, our whole machinery will suddenly stop.

It is by no means a matter of course, that the next generation of Christians will be more devoted, more holy, and self-denying than we. The next generation will be moulded by the spirit of our piety, and if they should grow up in our external and undevout habits, there would be even less of spirituality in them than in us. The natural course of things, owing to the powerful tendency of the heart to depart from God, is downwards ; declension, not advancement ; a truth which

is not more perfectly displayed in the history of the Hebrews, than in that of the whole Gentile Church ; and the grand lesson we are to derive from it, is the necessity of a high standard of individual piety. Even in the midst of external prosperity, we must enter into our closets, and shut the door, and pray to our Father in secret. What we admit speculatively, we must feel and acknowledge practically, that the missionary work, in all its departments, from the foundation in Christendom to the completion amidst heathenism, *is a purely spiritual work, and demands spiritual instruments.* It demands, not grand and powerful societies merely, but self-denial, deadness to the world, spiritual habits, clear views of eternity, knowledge of the Bible, consciousness of the value of the soul, an affecting sense of the insignificance of earthly things, deep love to Christ, strong

and panting desires after the glory of God. It demands that the Church, like the soul, should rise out of the vanities of time into the riches of eternity, and take hold on God by faith, with a moral courage and an endurance of fatigue, of which we have little conception. If the Church will not learn this in sunshine, perhaps God will teach it in persecution, for the work of missions cannot go forward without deep piety. It would be a falsification of the whole spirit and tenor of the Gospel, if it were found that men or Churches can engage in the labors of christianity, and obtain its glorious rewards, without self-denial, deadness to the world, spirituality of heart and life, incessant prayer ; without partaking somewhat in the trials as well as the enjoyments of the apostolic Christians ; without the elements in action of the same enduring faith and dauntless moral cou-

rage, which in them burned so brightly. It is one of the signets of the Christian Religion, which we may well believe God will never suffer to be entirely blotted out, that *through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of Heaven.*

It is in the light of such a survey as we have taken of the divine discipline towards us, and especially of our rapidly advancing population, that I love to view our individual responsibilities and duties. It gives to every movement of benevolence and piety, especially if connected with the training of the rising generation, an indescribable dignity and importance. The business of preparing the materials for the fulfilment of the divine purposes, the business of moulding the minds and hearts of those whose character and conduct are to decide this grand experiment, places those engaged in it at the very springs of our country's future greatness; it makes

them the guardians of the vast hopes which the gracious indications of God's providence lead us to form for ourselves and for the world. Never before, in the history of the world, have great results been brought so near to their apparently trifling causes. If an angelic visitant to our globe, or a being from another planet were in the midst of us, desiring to be made acquainted with the sources of our future destiny, I would take him to some of the most unostentatious and unnoticed spheres of industry and piety ; he should visit an unpretending common school, a Sabbath school, a tract-distributor's prayer-meeting. Viewed in their results, and looking a few years onward, these humble spheres of duty become the centres of a mighty influence and responsibility.

The teacher of a common school in this country, bringing before his mind the

period which he can almost touch and mingle in himself, when the pupils whose moral and intellectual frame he is moulding, shall stand amidst seventy millions more in the strife of existence, to be the parents of those with whom there shall stand up four hundred millions, cannot but feel that there is a solemn responsibility as well as a blessed privilege connected with his duties. The Sabbath school teacher, who pursues his sacred round of duty faithfully, in love and prayer, looking to the nearness and incalculable glory of its results, may wonder at the grace of God in permitting him to occupy a post of so much importance and blessedness. The mother, who seeks, in humble dependance on the grace of Christ, to find the reflection of his blessed image in the opening mind even of her infant offspring, and to train her beloved children from their earliest hours, into habits

of obedience and piety, is doing a work for the happiness of her race, the salvation of the world, and the glory of the Redeemer, which angels might envy for its simplicity, its beauty, and its grandeur. And in every sphere of influence that can be mentioned, we are made to feel the mingled blessedness and responsibility of occupying a place in the world at such a crisis;—a period when every movement tells so directly in great results, both for time and eternity.

The consideration of this subject, teaches us the right use of property, and the great value of it, when devoted, at such a crisis, to God. It is rarely, if ever, in the world's history, that an opportunity has been offered to the rich, of engaging, by their wealth alone, in movements of such intense glory. The Divine Being ordinarily avoids even the appearance of magnifying the instrumentality of wealth in human

estimation. He calls us to stand beside his treasury, and as our eye scans the persons of the comers, and the costliness of their offerings, he tells us that this poor, unnoticed widow, whose loving heart consecrated in two mites her whole living, hath cast in more than they all. So it is in every age ; and every widow's mite, as well as the precious incense of her prayers, is needed, and at a time like this, goes immediately to a result of practical utility, of incalculable importance.

Nevertheless, to those Christians whom God has permitted to amass wealth, a post of usefulness is now offered, in the support of theological and missionary institutions languishing by pecuniary pressure, which, considered in the magnitude and nobleness of its results, is truly sublime, and which, if they beheld it with the eye of faith, they would exult, like the angels of God, with gratitude and praise

to occupy. And the Churches of Christ in this country are called upon to give a steadiness to the Missionary Enterprise by the steadfast abundance of their offerings, and not to leave the sacred cause to fluctuate, and the hearts of those engaged in it to sink and die within them, in the perpetual prospect of poverty and disaster. Is it possible that in the midst of all our responsibilities and opportunities of glory, we can consent to leave our benevolent societies to languish and die from pecuniary starvation, and that, too, at a period which is the very harvest time of the world? God forbid that we should be guilty of so dishonorable a betrayal of the trust committed to our care !

Above all, we are taught by this great subject, the necessity of fervent prayer. It is nothing but God's grace that can enable us to redeem the responsibilities that rest upon us ; nothing but his Holy Spirit

poured out in revivals of religion that can save us from absolute and most tremendous destruction. That Christian therefore, who is doing most for the promotion of a revival of religion in his own church, and that church which is laboring most fervently for a revival in its own village or city, is doing most, and most directly, for the conversion of the world. O ! in the light of our advancing population, who can estimate the importance of one revival of piety ! And here the poorest, most unlettered Christian may bear a part, and a great part, in the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. This surely is our grand field of labor, and the consummation of predicted glory waits for the Church of Christ to enter upon it.

Let it be remembered that every Christian in this country possesses as much power to intercede for the millions of China as he does for the children of his own house-

hold or the families in his own neighborhood. Blessed is he who realizes the privilege of prayer and uses it accordingly. The period will arrive when, for every half hour given to the business of intercessory communion with God, the Christian will wish he had given days, and for every little sacrifice made in this cause he will wish he had made a thousand. The time will come, when the memory of the shortest interval so spent, of the smallest sacrifice so made, will be a possession of glory to the soul, which he would not part with for the riches of the material universe !

BLESSING, AND HONOR, AND GLORY, AND POWER, BE UNTO HIM THAT SITTETH UPON THE THRONE, AND UNTO THE LAMB FOR EVER AND EVER !

NOTES.

Men well governed should seek after no other liberty, for there can be no greater liberty than a good government.

SIR WALTER RALEIGH.

The distinguishing part of our constitution is its liberty. But the only liberty I mean, is a liberty connected with order; a liberty that not only exists along with order and virtue, but which cannot exist at all without them.

BURKE.

NOTE A.

It has been a melancholy consequence of the neglect of common school education in England, that the sacredness of the Sabbath should have to be violated in teaching the most common rudiments of knowledge. "Some of our friends of the independent class," says a member of the committee in an attempted vindication of this system in one of the large cities, "have forsaken us because we teach writing and accounts on Sundays. We would willingly teach these on week-day evenings,

but *the factory hands work so late that we have found it impracticable* ; therefore we put this on the score of works of necessity and mercy, considering our Saviour as sanctioning the pulling out of sheep from the pit on the Sabbath." The difficulty is, that they themselves put the sheep into the pit on the week-days, and on the same days should do the work of pulling them out. Here is the spectacle of the richest nation in the world tasking its immortal energies so fearfully in the pursuit of wealth, as not to allow its children time to gain the lowest rudiments of education ! Working them in the service of mammon all the week, and then stealing a portion of the season of spiritual rest to shut them up to the study of writing and arithmetic !

NOTE B.

THE question as to the alienation of a portion of the school fund in this state from a common and impartial to a sectarian disposal has been happily set at rest for the present, and we trust will never again even be looked at. The proposition was one, which we really believe if it had come from any other sect

than that of the Catholics, would have been treated with contempt, as a most rampant and disgusting exhibition of bigotry. It has been remarked with equal severity and justice, that "the conduct of the priests and leading men in holding Irish catholic meetings, for the purpose of subverting the institutions of this country, and getting possession of its school funds, is impudence of no ordinary cast, and shows that something has stultified their perceptions. What scorn would Americans justly bring upon themselves, were they to make such attempts upon the monasteries of Spain, or the domestic institutions of any other country of Europe. What scorn, if instead of sending missionaries unarmed to teach justice and temperance from the Bible, they should send their ships of war to force Protestantism and brandy on the heathen at the cannon's mouth!" This allusion to the tyranny exercised over the Sandwich Islands in the violent introduction and establishment of the Roman Catholic religion, with the trade in brandy, by the aid of French ships of war, is appropriate. Who can doubt that similar measures would be pursued for the same ends by the same sect in this country, if it were but sufficiently powerful?

NOTE C.

WE have referred to the publication by Mr. Evarts of the paper on the Moral Destiny of the United States. It is one of the most grand and eloquent productions ever issued in any shape from the American press. We well remember the electric thrill of feeling, and impression of the moral sublime produced by its first appearance as a Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. It was written shortly before the author's death, and seems to glow not merely with the spirit of piety, but of prophecy. Its closing paragraphs are worthy of a place in the *Vade Mecum* of every Christian Pilgrim in America.