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CHRISTIAN PATRIOTISM:

A S E R M O N

PREACHED IN

CUMBERLAND-ST. M. E. CHURCH, CHARLESTON, S. C.,

On Friday, Dec. 6, 1850.

**BEING THE DAY APPOINTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE, AT
THE SUGGESTION OF HIS EXCELLENCY GOV. SEABROOK, FOR
FASTING, HUMILIATION, AND PRAYER.**

BY

T H O S . O . S U M M E R S .

CHARLESTON, S. C.

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SERMON.

“I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks, be made for all men: for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour: who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”—1 Tim. ii. 1, 4.

The resuming particle, “therefore,” connects this passage with the eighteenth verse of the preceding chapter: “This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy.” The epistle contains apostolic canons for the regulation of the worship and polity of the Church, together with other matters of high practical concernment. And, “first of all,” the apostle gives a special injunction in regard to certain points, to which a prominent place must be assigned in our addresses to the throne of grace. He exhorts the evangelist to secure the due performance of intercessory devotions in behalf of all mankind, and especially of civil rulers; specifying sundry beneficial results of a political and religious character, as a reason to enforce the duty enjoined.

We are, therefore, naturally called upon to notice, first, the duty, and then, the reason by which it is enforced.

Let us notice the duty.

It is, to make supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks for all men, and especially for kings and for all who are in authority.

Some consider the precative terms employed by St. Paul

synonymous in their import; but others assign to each a distinct and specific sense. By the first—which some derive from a word denoting *fear*, and others from a word denoting *want*—is understood *deprecations*, or prayers against evil: by the second is understood, *supplications*, or prayers for some positive good: by the third, *occasional intercessions*, or prayers for some special mercy: by the fourth, *thanksgiving* for blessings received. We are not much concerned for the accuracy or credit of these criticisms: the general meaning of the apostle is sufficiently obvious.

By making it the duty of christians to pray for all men, the text opposes that selfishness which would restrict the favor of the Most High to our own particular sect, party, or state, as if all beside were ostracized and execrated by Him who is the Father of the spirits of all flesh.

St. Paul may have had specially in view the peculiar and powerful prejudices of his own nation. How strong they were, may be seen in the case of St. Peter—a miracle being necessary for their removal. And when his Jewish brethren brought a grievous complaint against him for associating with Gentiles, he had to detail all the particulars of that miracle to convince them that he had not committed a mortal sin. He, however, succeeded in satisfying their minds, so that they were free to acknowledge that God had provided the means of salvation for Gentiles as well as Jews, and that therefore no man is to be excluded from the pale of christian charity on the ground of his national extraction. This catholic principle is postulated by the injunction to pray for all men, and constitutes one of the grand peculiarities and prime recommendations of our benevolent religion.

By instructing them to pray particularly for civil rulers, the apostle endorses the practice of the ancient Jews, who

offered sacrifices and prayers for those who were in authority over them, even when they were held in captivity by a heathen power. Ezra vi. 10. Baruch i. 10, 11. This was in conformity with the divine command: "Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace."—Jer. xxix. 7. The apostle seems to have had his eye directly upon this passage; and he might have deemed it necessary to engraft this precept formally into the *agenda* of christianity, as it had been for a long time contravened by the Jews in their wide-spread dispersion. Many of the bigoted zealots among them, not only refused to pray for heathen rulers, but utterly denied the propriety of rendering obedience, or paying tribute to them, under any circumstances whatever. Hence they were constantly raising seditions, tumults, and rebellions against the constituted authorities of the various heathen states in which their lot was cast. And as the Judaizing teachers that had crept into the church were ready enough to inoculate it with this pernicious and malevolent sentiment, the apostle found it expedient to give specific direction for the discharge of the duty in question.

And if, my brethren, it be obligatory upon christians to pray for their rulers when they are idolatrous in their religion and tyrannical in their rule, it cannot be less than a duty to pray for them when they are christian in their profession and constitutional in their government, having been elevated to office by those whose interests they serve. And such, with us, thank God, are "the powers that be."

Let us now notice the reason on which the apostle has based his exhortation.

It is politico-religious, and thus corresponds with the duty enjoined.

We will first glance at its political aspect.

Why are we to pray for all men? The answer is: "That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."

Now, it is not difficult to discover the connection between the course prescribed and the end proposed.

The praying for all men, which the apostle enjoins, originates in a pacific disposition—in a sentiment of charity, grounded on the principle of universal brotherhood. There is no readier way to fulfil the injunction of Peter, "Honor all men," than to carry out the injunction of Paul, acting as their beadsmen. This principle of general benevolence, expanding itself in friendly regards, and manifested by fervent prayers for universal humanity, is perfectly compatible with the most devoted patriotism. Indeed, it may be doubted, whether a man can be a true patriot without cherishing the sentiment in question.

The discharge of this duty nourishes the feeling in which it originates. We cannot willingly injure those for whom we pray. On the contrary, as we seek to interest in their behalf the beneficence of Heaven, we shall be prompted to do them all the good we can ourselves. We shall be ready and facile instruments of Divine philanthropy, thus, in a qualified sense, answering our own prayers. And we shall rejoice in the happiness of all men, as it will be associated in our minds with our intercessions for them; and, therefore, the text specifies the giving of thanks as well as the offering of petitions. The gratification which we shall experience when the objects of our prayers are realized, will naturally assume the form of gratitude, which, when exercised in regard to the well-being of others, is one of the purest and strongest expressions of benevolence.

But we shall not only be inclined to live peaceably with

all men, in proportion to our praying for them, the discharge of this duty is philosophically adapted to develop a disposition in them to live peaceably with us.

If the Most High will condescend to hear our petitions and honor them with the "answer of peace," this blessed result will involve the impartation of a pacific disposition to those for whom we pray. If they have entertained evil designs towards us, they shall be averted and substituted by "thoughts of peace." Their cupidity, malice, envy, and rage, shall be neutralized by an agency, whose operation will be incomprehensible and the result astonishing, not less to themselves than to others. Even if the gall of bitterness cannot be transmuted into the milk of kindness, its overflowing may be prevented by our fervent supplications. "Surely the wrath of men shall praise thee : the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." God can control the malicious machinations of men, and turn the counsel of Abitophel into foolishness. He can enervate their force, as well as circumvent their fraud, causing their mischief to return upon their own head, and their violent dealing to come down upon their own pate. Ps. vii. 16.

Although we may pray for our enemies, and get nothing better from them in return for our benevolence than crucifixion, or stoning to death, still the discharge of this duty is naturally adapted to dissolve their enmity and secure their friendship. And this will be the result in all cases where the better feelings of our nature are not completely held in abeyance by diabolical envy, malice, and hate. And viewing the matter in any light, if we can secure their friendship without the sacrifice of principle, we had better have the good-will than the ill-will of men, whether they be civilized or savage, at home or abroad. We can thereby widen the range of commerce and enrich the state—enlarge the empire of philosophy and secure intellec-

tual opulence. Such aims are eminently patriotic: such results are more desirable and advantageous to a commonwealth than the most successful feats of diplomacy, or the most glorious achievements of arms; and we are not of the number of those who think contemptibly of either of the latter.

But why are we to pray especially for our rulers? For the same political reason that we are to pray for all men: "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."

We must pray for our rulers in order to secure the ends of government, both with respect to our domestic and foreign relations.

As it regards our domestic affairs, it is obviously of immense importance that we should live under a wise and virtuous government. And to secure this, we ought not only to be cautious in the use of our electoral privileges, but we ought to accompany the discharge of this responsible duty with fervent prayer that the God of nations would place over us men after his own heart, whose enlightened and upright administration of public affairs may result in universal and permanent prosperity.

It is not, indeed, the province of government to make the public rich, virtuous, or happy: individuals must become such by their own personal endeavors, with the divine blessing. But it is the prerogative and the duty of those who are in authority to secure to all who by their suffrages have elevated them to place and power, the unobstructed rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. This must be done by the enactment, application, and execution of wholesome laws—functions involving responsibilities scarcely inferior to those of the sacred office. What stores of wisdom and knowledge—what firmness and integrity—what dignity and magnanimity—

are necessary to those who are invested with the legislative, judicial, and executive functions of civil government! Our rulers may indeed possess the requisite qualifications for their responsible position, and yet may not be able to enrich the state, but then they will not impoverish it: they may not be able to enlighten the ignorant masses of society, but they will not take away the key of knowledge: they may not be able to make the people virtuous and pious, but they will not lay an embargo upon piety and virtue. They will so exercise their functions as to repress vice and punish crime, thereby protecting the virtuous and avenging the innocent. At the same time, the excellence of their moral character will extend and strengthen the wholesome influence of their official administration. Their example will be most salutary as the example of wicked rulers is most pernicious. From their high position they can do much to create a healthy tone of public sentiment and opinion, which is of more consequence than the wisest laws, however faithfully executed.

Under such a regimen, we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty: there will be no breaking in nor going out, and no complaining in our streets. Ps. cxliv. 10. Peaceful, happy state! How worthy of our most ardent, most persevering prayers, and when realized, our devout and glowing gratitude!

As it regards our foreign relations, it is the province of those who are in supreme authority to perpetuate them on the most advantageous basis; and to this end the maximum of intelligence, wisdom, and virtue is imperatively demanded.

Our rulers owe it to us to use all lawful and laudable endeavors to preserve us in peace and amity with all other nations and states. Hasty legislation, an unadvised juridical decision, a puerile or pragmatical message

careless or intriguing diplomacy—these or any of these, or any other act belonging to this category, may be the means of scattering fire-brands, arrows, and death. This, in fact, has been the “sport,” the magnificent pastime of kings, from Chederlaomer, of patriarchal memory, to the bloody belligerents of our own times. How easy is it for those who are in authority to let slip the dogs of war, and spread havoc and destruction all over the land, deluging whole states and nations with tears and blood! All this, in thousands of instances, might be prevented, and the untold blessings of international peace, friendship, and commerce be secured, by a judicious exercise of the functions vested in “the powers that be.”

It is, furthermore, the province of our rulers to prevent other sovereign states from impinging upon the rights of those over whom they have been placed, and to resist and resent all such encroachments.

Every citizen of a republic or free commonwealth, every subject of a monarchy, has a right to expect and demand that his privileges and immunities shall be kept intact and defended by the government under which he lives from fraud or force, no matter from what quarter it may come. My citizenship is of but small avail if it will not secure this end. It must avail for the protection of my rights of person and property, from foreign as well as domestic cupidity and injustice, or I may be forced to renounce my allegiance to my native country, and seek a better home, even if it should be a lodge in the wilderness, where “the man of the earth may no more oppress.”

The maintenance of birth-right, constitutional privileges and the redress of all grievances and wrongs, in reference to other states, should be attempted on the part of those who are in authority by mild and pacific procedures, Friendly overtures and honorable mediations should be

proposed and repeatedly urged, and the hope of adjusting the difficulty, or redressing the grievance, should not be abandoned until the case is obviously desperate. Harsher measures must not be resorted to, until forbearance ceases to be a virtue.

To that pass, however, it may come ; and when that is the case, the *ultima ratio* must be resorted to and pressed to its terrible results. The code of Christianity interdicts private revenge ; but it does not forbid the civil magistrate to avenge the wrongs of the innocent. "He beareth not the sword in vain ; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." And if he is to take revenge on those who offend against the commonwealth to which they belong, and of whose interests he is the guardian, *a fortiori*, if the offence be perpetrated by a citizen, subject, or government of another state or nation, he is not to let it pass with impunity. This would be a misjudged clemency—it would be a cruel wrong, to both the state whose interests he is sworn to defend and to all other states, particularly that from which the insult or injury might have come. It would leave the unprotected citizens of his own country in a state of painful solicitude and anxiety in regard to their lives, liberties, property, and reputation ; and it would invoke the repetition of foreign encroachment. A government that will make no effort to defend its independence and honor, and to avenge the wrongs of its subjects, deserves nothing but speedy subversion, and it rarely fails to receive its desert.

We are, perhaps, as much impressed with the horrors of war as any of the clamorous champions of peace. We admit that between *militia* and *malitia*, there is as little difference in sense as sound. We hold in utter and eternal execration the Nimrods and Alexanders, the Cæsars and Hannibals, the Tamerlanes and Napoleons—the blood-

hounds of ancient and modern times. It were easy to present a picture of war which would almost freeze the life-current in its channel. Nevertheless, there may be just occasion to proclaim war and to wage it vigorously when proclaimed. And when such occasion occurs, it would be malfesance, criminal delinquency, in the powers that be, to forbear the terrible task on the plea of philanthropy, which perchance may be another name for a very different sentiment. War is always either an awful duty, or a horrible sin. When it is a duty, as the last resort of a sovereign state to maintain its honor and its rights, we may enter upon it with great reluctance in view of its tremendous issues, without being justly chargeable with pusillanimity; but if we do not unsheathe the sword, we are obnoxious to the charge, and neither God nor man can excuse the dastardly dereliction.

The profession of arms may be a dangerous one, in respect, not merely to exposure on the field of death, but also to temptations to ambition, rapine, revenge, and other evils; but it is not consequently unlawful. When the soldiers applied to John for counsel, he guarded them against the easily-besetting sins of their vocation, but left them to follow it as before. It was a military officer of the Roman army, upon whom our Lord pronounced that fine eulogy: Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. The Saviour recognized his claim to a seat in the kingdom of heaven, dismissed him with a signal reward of his faith, but dropped no hint concerning the unlawfulness of his profession. It was a military officer of the same grade that is reported by St. Luke to have feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always—to whom the angel and the apostle were sent by miraculous arrangements, and upon whom the Holy Ghost so signally fell.

And modern times are not without similar examples of piety in the garrison, camp, and field of battle. Men, therefore, can be soldiers, without ceasing to be saints; and we do not see how they can be saints without being soldiers, when patriotism demands their services, and the quarrel of truth, justice, innocence, and our country is to be avenged. And if those are *curse*d who, under such circumstances, keep back their sword from blood, we do not see how those rulers can be *bless*ed who are too faint-hearted to call it forth from its scabbard, when every other honorable means of redressing the grievances of the nation or commonwealth have been tried in vain.

But who does not see that responsibilities so great, involving interests so manifold and important, demand for their due discharge, extraordinary knowledge, wisdom, prudence, self-possession, firmness, patriotism, and the fear of God? And to this end, my brethren, you are exhorted to pray for your rulers, that they may be endued with those excellent virtues, that they may be equal to all the ordinary tasks of government, and to the exigencies of any crisis that may arise in their administration, and that, if possible, as much as lieth in you, you may live peaceably with all men; or if that be not possible, you may not be afraid to speak with your enemies in the gate, or *reason* with them at a different tribunal.*

We will now glance at the religious view of the apostle's reason.

He would have us pray for all men, as the performance of this duty tends to quietness and peace, which are specially promotive of godliness and honesty: the former, having reference to our religious obligations, and the latter, importing gravity, decency, and propriety of conduct, referring more particularly to the offices becoming our

* See Note in Appendix.

social rank and relations. This is not only good in itself, but also acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.

Without enlarging upon the fact, that all the graces and virtues take root and thrive when planted in the soil of peace, prepared by the process which the apostle proposes, it is obvious that the course prescribed must be good and acceptable to God, as it is a recognition of the Divine benevolence. We should pray for all men, because God desires the salvation of all men, and because Jesus Christ is a mediator between God and man—universal humanity—having given himself a ransom for all. It would be folly, presumption, blasphemy, to pray for all men, if any of the children of Adam were excluded from the benevolent regards of Heaven—debarred the mercy of the Father, the merit of the Son, and the grace of the Holy Ghost. But if all are interested in the boundless benevolence of the Deity, it is not only proper to pray for all, but it is one of the highest acts of piety so to do, as it is a recognition of the world-wide benevolence of God our Saviour. To decline this duty—to restrict our intercessions to an “elect world”—is a virtual impeachment of the Divine perfections, as if it were possible for God to be partial and capricious in his favors, arbitrary and discriminating in his compassions—whereas he is the merciful Redeemer, as well as the “faithful Creator” of all men. He is, indeed, the special Saviour of them that believe—from which number, however, none are excluded by any horrible decree of predestinating wrath. The Most High designs that all men should come unto the knowledge of the truth, and he has accordingly commanded his ministers to preach the gospel unto every creature; and on this reason the apostle erects his exhortation that prayer and thanksgiving should be made for all men.

It is not only a recognition, but an imitation of the Divine

benevolence. If any might be excluded from our charitable regards, we should naturally exclude our enemies ; and, yet, we are commanded to love them and pray for them, and the duty is enforced by the reason : "that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven ; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust." And over and above all this, he desires the eternal salvation of all men, and has made ample provision for it in the gospel of his Son. When, therefore, we pray for all mankind, we imitate the benevolence of God ; and the most acceptable, as well as the most effectual method of magnifying the bounty of Heaven, is to address ourselves diligently to its imitation.

The argument enforcing the offering of prayers and thanksgivings especially for rulers has a decidedly religious as well as political aspect.

As it has respect to a quiet and peaceable life, the result of a wise and righteous administration, for which we pray, it is consequently propitious to the interests of godliness and honesty.

We admit that the graces and virtues *may exist* in times of anarchy and misrule ; but under such circumstances they *cannot flourish*.

In seasons of persecution the loftiest examples of moral heroism have been produced. This is admitted. Yet no one will contend that persecution in itself is desirable, or on the whole as friendly to the interests of religion as "freedom to worship God."

We therefore deprecate the decay or perversion of civil authority—we supplicate for our rulers the spirit of wisdom, vigilance, and integrity—we intercede for them with special interest in seasons of emergency, that they may be equal to any crisis that may arise—and offer thanksgivings on their behalf and on our own, when they have acquitted themselves

well, as the ministers of God for the good of those over whom they are placed.

The religious complexion of this duty is obvious, in that it is a recognition of the Divine origin of civil government. A state, of nature is not isolation or anarchy, but society and order. Men were not created savages, destined to pass through a lengthened process of improvement to fit them for civilized life. It was not left for some master spirit, some extraordinary genius, to excogitate the idea of civil government, and to impose its restraints upon others, with or without their suffrages. Civil government is the positive institution of God, coeval with our race, and not the happy invention of man, originating in his progressive development. "The powers that be are ordained of God." He may not have prescribed an imperial, royal, ducal, oligarchical, democratical, or any other precise form, as of binding, universal, and perpetual force; but *government* he has prescribed. Magistracy is the ordinance of God; and wo to the sacrilegious wretches that attempt its subversion! Subjection to the laws and authorities of the land is as much a religious duty as any observance of the first table. "Wherefore," says the apostle, "ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but conscience sake." The sovereign power must be obeyed; "and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." Rom. xiii. No "higher law" absolves us from the obligation to obey the powers that be, except in such cases where human law contravenes Divine; and then, while active obedience is rendered to the latter, passive obedience must be rendered to the former—we must patiently suffer the penalty, where we cannot conscientiously perform the precept.

When, therefore, we pray for those who are in authority, we solemnly recognize the divinity of this institution and its vast importance, both with respect to the glory of God and the good of man.

The performance of this duty is, indeed, a recognition of the constant and peculiar interest which God takes in the persons and actions of those who are in authority.

They are the shadows of his sovereignty—the vicegerents of his majesty—and he accordingly calls them “gods,” clothing them with a portion of his own prerogative, and claiming for them the semblance at least of that worship which is paid to himself. Hence the throne as well as the altar has ever been guarded and defended by his special providence, and will continue to be to the end of time. Government, sovereignty, law, and order, however modified by social compacts and conventional agreements, will be perpetuated till the grand catastrophe of earth and time, when all delegated power shall revert to the Universal Sovereign, and God shall be all in all.

How important it is, in a religious point of view, that this should be distinctly and constantly had in view, we need not attempt to show. It is but a modified atheism to exclude the Most High from all concern in the civil and political affairs of men. It is absurd and blasphemous to imagine that God has nothing to do with the rise and fall of empires and states—that he takes no supervision of the acts of rulers and magistrates—that he exercises no appointing, preventing, or controlling power over the interests, operations, and ends of government. Horrible, detestable infidelity! Perish for ever the profane conception! It can have no place in the minds of those who sincerely perform the duty prescribed in the text. By offering prayers and thanksgivings to God in behalf of our rulers, we virtually acknowledge the Divine origin of their authority, and tacitly admit that they and their acts are subject to the control and supervision of that Higher Power, which has for its prerogative the original, appellate, and absolute jurisdiction of the universe.

We repeat: it requires no argument to prove that this is

propitious to the interests of religion. It must be both good and acceptable to God. Tending to a quiet and peaceable life, it subserves the interests of godliness and honesty.

The course prescribed by the apostle is therefore good at all times. And it is not to be doubted that he designed this text as a canon to regulate the stated performance of Christian worship. He has given the Church the elements of a prayer to be used in her liturgy to the end of time.

But, as the text itself suggests, there are seasons of emergency when it is emphatically our duty to pray for all those who are in authority over us. Such a crisis has arrived. Those who hold the helm of state are "at their wits' ends." And never, since the glorious revolution, have our rulers stood so much in need of the wisdom which cometh from above and which is "profitable to direct." Never were all the virtues of statesmanship so much in requisition as at this moment. Never, therefore, was there so great need of fasting, humiliation, and prayer on behalf of those who bear rule among us.

And it is specially binding upon us to be serious and fervent in our devotions for them, as they have solemnly invoked the assistance of our prayers. Suggested by the chief magistrate of the Commonwealth and appointed by the Senate and Representatives of the State, this day has been set apart as a day of holy convocations, in which as a people we may afflict our souls in view of our sins, and humbling ourselves before the Divine Majesty may seek and secure such an interest in the Divine Mercy as will be a pledge that God will not forsake us when most we need his aid. His interposition in our behalf will be seen and felt in the calm, cautious, wise, and prudent, yet firm, independent, and consequently successful course of those into whose hands have been committed the destinies of the State.

APPENDIX.

Note to page 15.

No obligation has been laid on the pulpit to enter into what are popularly called political discussions. It has to do, however, with great moral principles, which should be stated with all possible definiteness and simplicity, so that their practical application by the people at large may be both facile and safe. The dual government under which our citizens are placed and the consequent complexity of their allegiance, together with the responsibilities devolving upon them under republican constitutions, make it highly expedient to use great plainness of speech in setting forth the principles by which they ought to direct their course.

The several States of the American confederacy are sovereign and independent in all respects, except in those points specified in the federal constitution, which by the consent of the States are under the cognizance of the general government. As the States existed before the confederacy, the duty of the citizen is first to the State, then to the federal government; as indeed in some cases his duty to the latter cannot be performed at all, except through the former, as his constitutional exponent. If the citizens or government of any particular State infringe upon the rights of the federal government, as defined in the constitution, that government has the means of redress; and when it resorts to them, all the other citizens and States in the confederacy are bound to make common cause in maintaining its rights, no less than if the infringement was from a foreign power. If, on the other hand, the federal government exercise its functions unconstitutionally, so as to oppress the citizens of any particular State, or to put their rights in jeopardy, they must look for redress and protection to their own State. And the State government is bound to interfere and to seek by all honorable, pacific measures the satisfaction required.

If it fail in the effort, it must call a convention of the people of the State, who are, under God, the fountain of authority, having originated the State constitution, and made the State a party in the federal compact.* That convention is competent to determine the question by submission to the grievance, by compromise, or by resistance, involving secession or revolution. And it is the duty of the citizens of any State so circumstanced, to abide the decision of the sovereign power, or quietly seek another home.

* See Hildreth's Hist. U. States : vol. iii. p. 537.