

A

SERMON,

DELIVERED IN THE CITY OF NEW-BRUNSWICK,

ON THURSDAY, JULY 30, 1812.

BEING

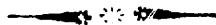
THE DAY SET APART BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

FOR

Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer.



BY THE REV. JOSEPH CLARK, D. D.



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THE following Discourse was prepared and delivered, without any thought of its ever going to the press. It is now published at the request of many who heard it ; and precisely as it was prepared for the pulpit, except a few lines at the close of the discourse, and the two short sections included in brackets.

SERMON.

Jeremiah 5. 29. Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

MY BRETHREN,

WE are not assembled this day to meddle with subjects of political debate. He who now addresses you has not the remotest intention to irritate party feeling. Fain would he, rather, were there a prospect of success, attempt to allay these feelings, and to bring back that harmony, so desirable to peaceable citizens and christians. No, brethren, we are met to consider our departure from the living God; to look deeply and seriously into our ingratitude and rebellion against him; to humble ourselves, as a people, before him; and to implore his mercy on us and on our afflicted country.

Thousands of our fellow-christians, of various denominations, are this day uniting with us in this work of humiliation. With ours, their prayers are ascending to that offended God, who, at this eventful period, has come forth to shake terribly the earth! The hand of heaven is raised over a guilty world! His chastening rod is stretched out over our country! The destroying angel has received his commission; the sword is made bare, and becoming drunk with the blood of the slain!

The old world, the habitation of ancient nations, and the seat of mighty empires, long since sunk into infidelity, and polluted by its vices and its crimes, now lies groaning beneath the oppressor's iron rod. The sword hath gone through it, and marked its progress with *thrones overturned; with sacked and smoking towers and cities; with garments rolled in blood; with heaps of*

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mighty slain; and with the unavailing tears of bereaved widows and orphans! The besom of destruction has *there* swept before it almost all that is dear and valuable to man: abject and broken, the wretched inhabitants lick the dust, and tremble at the haughty tyrant's frown. The country whence our forefathers sprung, partaking deeply in the common guilt of the neighboring nations, is sharing in their plagues. Contending abroad, perplexed and distress at home, they are now left to struggle *alone* against a world in arms. The islands of the sea share in the general commotion. Harassed with fear, distress with want, or subdued by conquest, they have been handed over from master to master. And even the sea itself has become one extended theatre of plunder and carnage! The vast southern continent, breaking away from its antient government, is now experiencing all the horrors of a revolutionary state. Heated by party rage, the miserable inhabitants are rushing on mutual destruction. Indeed, the general relaxation of the restraints of religion, which have taken place within the last half century, seem to have *let the world loose upon itself*, and rendered man, every where, the foe and the scourge of man!

By terrible things in righteousness, the Lord is proclaiming that he has a controversy with the nations; that he is coming forth in judgment to take vengeance for abounding iniquity! Earthquakes and volcanoes rend the mountains, involve cities in ruin, and speak in terror to a guilty world! *In our own country*, the earthquake's repeated and alarming shocks have been felt. These, and other signal visitations, in providence, which have been experienced of late years, admonish us that the Lord is on his way. Very recently, the savage tribes have been permitted to disturb the quiet, and endanger the safety of our frontier settlements. And the cruel thirst for blood is increasing its rage among them.

At length the negotiations, so long carried on between our general government and foreign nations, have issued in a declaration of war! Yes, the cup is come round to us; our country is now involved in war, one of the sorest judgments with which God usually visits a people! The

word is drawn ; but God only knows to what extent its ravages may reach, and how long e'er it shall be sheathed ! It is drawn, too, under circumstances calculated to excite the most serious alarm. Party spirit amongst ourselves has already weakened the harmony of society, and assumed a threatening aspect. Should war, undertaken in such a state of things, increase the flame of party passions, and embolden to acts of outrage on the peace of society, who can calculate the extent of the mischiefs that are preparing to flow in upon our country. Dear brethren, these suggestions are not to be lightly received. Such calamities have befallen other countries ; they may befall ours.

We have long been a highly favored people ; but, with other nations, we have become an ungrateful people, and rebellious against the Lord our God. The most High, that rules over all the kingdoms of the nations, marks the returns we are making to him for all the multiplied favors he hath heaped upon our country. And he is now speaking to us in the language of the text.—“ Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord ? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this ? ” An interrogatory full of terror to a guilty people ; and especially when the Lord is coming forth to execute his work, his strange work of judgment upon them.

This solemn interrogatory was first addressed to the Jews. It is twice repeated in this chapter, to shew the certainty of the thing, that the divine indignation was impending over that guilty people : they had, as a nation, gone away from the ordinances, forsaken the worship of the true God, and turned aside to idolatry. The effect was, their attachments to idolatry had *obliterated* the sentiments of religion from their hearts ; had exceedingly *relaxed* the sense of moral obligation, and they were sunk into an awful excess of profaneness and licentiousness. They had been often admonished and warned ; the hand of heaven had again and again scourged them for their iniquities ; but they refused to return. The time was, therefore, fast approaching when the nation was to be visited by a signal display of the divine displeasure.

Jeremiah, the mourning prophet, who foresaw the calamities coming upon them, and deeply lamented the hardness of their hearts, was employed to carry to them the solemn warning from the mouth of God himself. As a faithful messenger of God, he reminded them of the abominations into which they had sunk, and then presses the interrogatory in the text. “Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?”

The sentiment in this passage is, that from the very character of God, a people signally favored must expect the visitations of his righteous displeasure, when they fall away to high-handed iniquity.

I say, from the character of God himself, they are to expect this. This truth is manifestly implied in the appeal in the text. “*Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord?—I, who am the Creator, the Supreme Ruler, and Sovereign Lord of all nations—I, who have planted the nations in the earth, and fixed the bounds of their habitation—I, by whose providence the nations are sustained, and who have given to the nations my law—I, by whom kings reign and princes decree justice—I, whose eyes run to and fro under the whole heaven, to mark the conduct of the nations—I, whose prerogative it is to judge amongst the nations; to rebuke or to bless; to exalt or to bring low—I, who am bound, by my own perfections, to maintain the honors of my throne, and to vindicate the cause of truth and righteousness in the earth—I, who love righteousness and hate iniquity; shall not I visit for these things, saith the Lord?*”

How forcible is the appeal! It proceeds on the solemn truth, that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth; that he hath not forsaken the work of his hands, nor ceased to sway his righteous sceptre over the nations of men. It carries in it the idea that it is a righteous thing with God to take vengeance; that to him it belongeth to execute judgment and justice on the earth; and that it is inconsistent with his character and government to leave high-handed iniquity without those visible and awful visitations which constrain nations and individuals to acknowledge, to tremble and fear before him.

The appeal seems to be made to the nation's *own sense* of right. *Shall I not visit?* How then shall the wrath of man, and the raging of iniquity be controlled? How shall guilty nations be kept in awe, and effectually taught, that verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth? Does not the well-being of my universal government, and the honor of my great name, *require* that I should visit for these things? Have I not declared that *I will do this?* My truth stands pledged; and shall I not make good the thing that hath gone out of my mouth? Is much forbearance expected? It hath been manifested! I have borne long with your sins, and warned you by my servants the prophets, *in vain*. And shall I not, *now* that justice admits of no longer forbearance; *now*, that the day of your visitation is come; shall I not *now* visit for these things?

Had Israel hearkened to my voice, then should I cause mine anger towards them to cease. * But my people would *not hearken* to my voice, and Israel would none of me; therefore *now* also will I give sentence against them. I will spend mine arrows upon them! At my wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide mine indignation! However I may deal with other nations, less guilty, whose crimes have not been so highly aggravated, yet, shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as *this?* A nation that mine own right hand hath planted; whom I have nourished and brought up as children; a nation, once holiness to the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase. But ah! *now* a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters! They have forsaken the Lord; they have provoked the holy one of Israel to anger; they are gone away backward! Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as *this?*—This language still further unfolds the reasons on which the divine conduct proceeds, and teaches us that God, in a special manner, whets his sword, and prepares the arrows of his indignation against a nation or people who, having been long blessed with distinguished privileges, have abused, and become hardened in iniquity under them.

Such was particularly the case with the Jews. They were a highly favored nation, in possession of a large and

good land, which the Lord had copied for them, and given to their fathers for an inheritance to them, and to their children after them. In this land they had long enjoyed the divine protection, and experienced many signal interpositions of his providence in their favor. They had grown up and become great, increased in population and wealth, and were respected by all the neighboring nations. Their obligations and motives to cleave unto the Lord and serve him, were set before them by a clear revelation from God himself. And they were favored with the established means of instruction and grace above all other nations. Of this they were reminded by Moses, *Deut. 4. 7, 8.* “For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them as the Lord our God is, in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law which I set before you this day?” Of the same thing they are reminded, *Psal. 147. 19, 20.* “He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with *any nation*; and as for his judgments, *they have not known them.* Praise *ye* the Lord!”

But notwithstanding the *greatness* of their privileges, they had abused them all, and forsaken the Lord their God. To that pitch of ingratitude and rebellion against God had they proceeded, that “they *mocked* his messengers, *despised* his words, and *misused* his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people till there was no remedy!” The day of their visitation was come. God, who had brought them up out of Egypt, and had done such great things for them, was now preparing to execute upon them his sore displeasure, for their breach of covenant, abuse of mercies, and high-handed iniquities. *The greatness of the mercies*, which they had abused, served but to render the judgments with which they were threatened the more certain and the more severe. So they are admonished, *Amos 3. 1, 2.* “Hear this word that the Lord hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt. *You only have I known* of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish *you* for all your iniquities.”

This last cited passage, with the preceding remarks, are in full confirmation of the sentiment expressed in the text, viz. that, from the character of God himself, a people signally favored must expect the visitations of his righteous displeasure, when they fall away to high-handed iniquity.

Let us now apply the subject to our own state and character. The history of the Jews is a history of God's providence. In this history we learn the true character of God, and what every nation may expect will be the course of his dealing toward them, accordingly as they wisely improve or wickedly abase the privileges and benefits he bestows upon them. The things that were written aforetime, were written for our learning. God is the same God, yesterday, to-day, and forever. Did he visit that ancient nation for their iniquities? Is his hand still stretched out over them? Then let no nation expect to escape his righteous displeasure, while they persist to provoke him to anger by their iniquities.

From every view of our own state and character, we have much reason to fear and to deprecate the impending judgments of God. Our land has been long distinguished by the abundant goodness of God toward us. There is not, perhaps, this day, *on earth*, a nation or people so highly favored, in every view, as the American States.

In many parts of our history, a striking resemblance may be traced to that of the Israelites. Like them, our forefathers were brought from a state of oppression, and planted in a good land. The Heathen were subdued, or removed from before them. Their enemies that were attempting to hedge them in on every side, were compelled to relinquish their attempts. The infant settlements rapidly increased in numbers, extended their borders, and enjoyed the peculiar smiles of a kind providence. When afterwards their liberties were threatened, and the country invaded by a foreign power, the Lord spread the shield of his protecting providence over our country; he raised us up a deliverer; he went forth before our armies, and, by a series of signal interpositions, wrought deliverance for us. Our liberties were established; the limits of our territory abundantly enlarged; the heathen nations on our frontiers sued for peace, and submitted to

treaty. Peace now smiled through all our borders, and plenty blest the land.

To crown our privileges as a nation, a constitution, or form of civil government, was deliberately prepared, adopted and ratified by the States. By this instrument, the full enjoyment of every civil and religious right is secured to us. Neither tyranny nor anarchy are permitted to invade our liberties as a civil community, nor to rob us of the rights of conscience as religious denominations. In point of privilege, we had nothing more, as a nation, to ask. And under a wise administration of the government thus established, our country has enjoyed unparalleled prosperity. It has increased beyond all former example, in its population, its wealth, the productions of its soil, the extension of its commerce, in its improvements in arts and manufactures, and in its liberal establishments for the promotion of literature, science and religion. From a small people, we have grown up, under the fostering hand of heaven, to be a great nation. The gospel, in its purity, took refuge in our country with the first settlers; its truths have been preserved and handed down, from generation to generation. Through the good hand of our God upon us, our land is a land of Bibles and Sabbaths, and the churches planted through our country have been blessed with the pure worship and ordinances of God. Times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord have been often experienced, and the churches, "walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the communion of the Holy Ghost, have been multiplied." With evident propriety, therefore, may be applied to us the words of the Lord by the prophet—"What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?"

But what requital have we made for all those privileges and blessings, temporal and spiritual, which the Lord hath so abundantly bestowed upon us? This is the momentous enquiry! We are assembled, my hearers, not merely in compliance with an ancient, decent custom, nor to offer to God an empty, ceremonious devotion; but to confess and humble ourselves before him for our sins. Let us then look into our real character. Let us, as under the eye of him with whom we have to do, and who has

to do with us as a people, consider seriously our ingratitude to God and abuse of his mercies.

[When the prophet was sent to the rebellious house of Israel, he was charged, "Lift up thy voice like a trumpet, shew the house of Jacob their transgressions, and the house of Israel their sins." This is peculiarly the duty of God's Ministers on such a day, and at such a season as this. It therefore becomes my duty on the present occasion. The Lord grant that I may be enabled to do this duty faithfully.]

It is an awful and an undeniable truth that iniquity abounds, and the love of many is waxen cold! And it becomes every one to reflect seriously on his own share in the general guilt. I despair of reaching in detail the whole of our prevailing iniquities. Our country is deeply involved. We are chargeable before God, and manifestly in *our own view*, with abuse of the divine goodness. Our cup has been made to run over with temporal blessings, and, Jeshurun like, we have waxen fat and kicked. "When I had fed them to the full," saith the Lord by the prophet, "they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses. They were like fed horses in the morning; every one neighed after his neighbor's wife." Nor is *our land* free from abominations of this nature. *Pride, idleness and extravagance* follow in the train of abuses. Hence the lamentable departure from those industrious, sober habits, frugal and simple manners, so favorable to morals and religion, and which, in happier times, characterized the people of this country. With multitudes *now*, the rage is all for *idleness, gaiety, splendor in dress and equipage, fashionable amusements*, and those *dissipations* which corrupt the mind, unhinge the moral order of society, lead to forgetfulness of God, and are the direct abuses of the bounties of his goodness. How prone are youth, in this way, to depart from the God of their fathers. Alas! the sad prospects, with respect to the rising generation, in many parts of our country! Multitudes of otherwise promising and amiable youth, immoderately devoted to amusements and scenes of corrupting dissipation, can no longer relish the serious instructions of religion, nor submit with patience to its restraints.

Among the alarming sins of the present day, we must certainly rank—a growing relaxation of parental authority, neglect of parental instruction, and an increasing decline of filial subordination. Sins, these, which taken in conjunction with the growing thirst for dissipation, threaten the most serious calamities both to the church and the state. And already, with multitudes, have the theatre, balls, routes, gambling matches, and bewitching novels, destroyed all relish for the Bible, the worship of God, serious reflection, and the duties of devotion. Wherever these destructive amusements are generally countenanced and prevail, the moral and religious virtues are rapidly declining, and the flood-gates are thrown open to more wide-spreading abominations!

We have, this day, also to take up a lamentation over our degraded country for the prevailing sin of *drunkenness*, with its attendant crimes and calamities, *prophanity, violence, domestic wretchedness, ruined families*, with the ruin, both in soul and body, of its miserable victims! This vice, of late years, is prevailing to a most alarming degree in our country. All orders in society are becoming more and more affected by it. In many cases, even members in the communion of our churches have not escaped the dreadful pollution! It is storied of the pious Doctor Cotton Mather, one of the early Ministers in Boston, that when on a visit to England, he declared that he had lived in a country where, for more than twenty years, he had not heard a prophane oath, nor seen a man drunk! Alas! how is our glory *now* departed! There is perhaps *no country* on earth, so sunk and sinking in sottish drunkenness as our own country. While we confess and bewail this growing sin, as threatening to draw down the judgments of God on our land, how should Legislatures, Magistrates and Citizens exert themselves, in every practicable way, to *diminish*, and if possible, to do away its prevalence from amongst us?

I name next, *the awful sin of Sabbath-breaking*. The religious observation of this sacred day the Lord hath wisely ordained for the security of morals and religion; that the *fear, worship and service* of the true God may be preserved amongst men. It is a sign, or memorial, between God and every people, wherever the light of di-

vine revelation extends. And experience universally proves the fact, that in proportion as the religious observation of the Lord's Day declines, in any place, in the same proportion morals and religion decline. How *fearfully ominous* then, to our country, is the growing prevalence of this sin of Sabbath-breaking. Many of those highest in authority in our country pay but little respect to the Lord's Day. This, from the weight of the example, has a most pernicious and extensive influence. How affecting is it to see the most barefaced profanation of this sacred day, by the running of public stages, of private loaded carriages; by journeying, on that day, for the purposes of secular business, on parties of pleasure, or in customary visiting. No respect for the *authority of God*, the laws of the land, for the interest of morals and religion, nor for the opinions and feelings of the sober and virtuous part of the community, are sufficient, with multitudes, to restrain them from frequenting places of public resort on the Lord's Day for the purposes of pleasure. It is an acknowledged fact, that horses and pleasure carriages kept for hire, find more employment on *that day*, than on any other day of the week. Laws, indeed, are enacted for the suppression of this vice; but where do we observe either magistrates or private citizens exerting themselves to enforce the laws, and to restore and preserve the due observation of the holy Sabbath?

By something, *too much like common consent*, this iniquity, with all its threatening evils, is suffered to grow and prevail *unrestrained* among us. If the children of Israel were held in captivity in their enemies' land, till *their own land* had enjoyed her Sabbaths, what will be the account which our country must ere long settle with Him who rules over all the nations of the earth?

I proceed to observe, our country has cause to mourn the existence and prevalence of an impious infidelity among us. This heaven-daring iniquity which, under the name of philosophy, has deluged Europe in vices and crimes; and which has, at length, drawn down the righteous visitations of Heaven on that unhappy country, has found its way here. *In some parts* of our country, the writings of those impious men, styled Modern

Philosophers, are, by multitudes, read with avidity, and treated with regard; while the pure word of God is, by them, neglected and despised! The contagion of this infidel philosophy has been spreading amongst us for years. That father of his country, the late General Washington saw and lamented the fact. His discerning and correct mind saw clearly the destructive tendency of this infidelity to all that is dear and valuable to man. And fearing, if it should be countenanced and prevail here, that it might, in its issue, overturn the liberties and happiness of his country, he, in his farewell address to the people of these states, pointed out the evils to be apprehended from its prevalence; and, with paternal solicitude, exhorted them to adhere to the holy religion of God's word, as the very basis of all their national blessings. Ah! had his counsels been regarded, "then had our peace been as a river, and our righteousness as the mighty waves of the sea!" But, notwithstanding his warning voice, and that of thousands both in Europe and America, the awful contagion has spread! In many parts of our country, the bold profession of it has, indeed, been checked; but it exists. And the alarming effects of it are seen, in a growing relaxation of morals, and a declension of respect for religion.

The effects are seen particularly in that neglect and indifference with which many treat the word and the worship of God; the cold and contemptuous treatment shewn, by them, to the subjects of religion altogether; in a spirit of scepticism which opposes itself to sober, candid discussion; in absurd notions of the divine character; slight views of the evil of sin; surprizing callousness of conscience; and in proud notions of the dignity of man, and his sufficiency to his own happiness, independent of the foundation which God hath laid in Zion. Alas! for our country, once "holiness to the Lord, and as the first fruits of his increase," now *going away backward*, and practically saying to the Almighty, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways!"

I cannot forbear to name, as among the prevailing sins of our country, that the violence of party spirit, which has taken place amongst us, has led us to forget and forsake God in the exercise of one of our most important duties as citizens. God, in his providence, has favored us with a free government, by the provisions of which, the election of our counsellors and rulers, to manage our public affairs, is put into our own hands. The duty of electing to office is an important one; and the honor of God, no less than the happiness of our country, require that we should perform this duty *conscientiously*. Thus we are instructed in God's holy word, *Exod.* 18. 21. "Thou shalt provide out of all the people, *able men*, such as *fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness*, and place such over them to be rulers." *Deut.* 1. 13. "Take ye *wise men and understanding, and known among your tribes*, and I will make them rulers over you.

[Here the Lord condescends to teach us the character and qualifications requisite in those who shall be called to fill the important stations of public rulers. And he hath expressly directed us to make choice of such to fill those stations.

Such characters, compared with the mass of society, are indeed rare characters in every community. But such, doubtless, in every country, may be found. And when it is considered that God gives them all their qualifications; that he fits them for the work, and directs us to make choice of them for our rulers, what shall we say of those who will pay no respect to the divine authority in this matter. If we will forsake God in this thing, have we not cause to fear that God will forsake us? And do not the common sentiments of our own minds tell us that, if the interests of our country be at all affected by the character of our rulers, these interests have abundantly the most to hope and expect from the character of intelligent men, who, in all they do, are governed by conscience toward God?]

Indeed, the very principles of our holy religion, and the whole history of God's providence teach us, that in the exercise of this duty we should *conscientiously* regard the honor of God, and the interests of truth and righteousness in the land. No truth is more fully confirmed in the history of the Jews, than this, that when wise and good men ruled, the nation prospered, the Lord was with them, and the people rejoiced; but that when wicked men bare rule, affairs went ill, iniquity abounded, and the people mourned. When, therefore, we have such clear instructions and striking examples before our eyes, is it not an awful sin in the sight of God, that, when called to the exercise of suffrage, we should totally lose sight of the principles that should govern us, and suffer ourselves to be led by a violent spirit of party? This is a sin which, at this day, is, I think, fairly chargeable on *all parties* in our country. It is a sin dishonorable to God and ruinous to our country; and while it is tolerated and kept up among us, must provoke the divine displeasure to leave us to reap the fruit of our own wickedness.

I name lastly, as a crying sin in our land, *immoderate worldly-mindedness*; or that covetousness which is idolatry. The best things are liable to abuse. The prosperity of our own country hath corrupted its inhabitants. The wide field for speculation and enterprize that hath been opened before us; the many avenues to wealth that have been presented, have intoxicated the inhabitants of our country, and urged them on, almost universally, to an immoderate pursuit of gain. It is, indeed, the idolatry of the land, that we have come to love the creature more than the Creator; to forget the giver and regard only the gift: to set our affections supremely, not on the things that are above, but on the things that are on the earth; to prefer our temporal prosperity to our spiritual and eternal interests.

Alas! to what a God provoking excess has this spirit reached among us! The greater part seem wholly immersed in the world. Their thoughts, time, pursuits drive all at this object, and hereby the minds and consciences of many have become defiled. This very spirit has had a most powerful influence in perverting multitudes from the right ways of the Lord. Governed by this idolatrous attachment to the world, many have been led to shut up the hand of charity and benevolence, and to reject the most important claims that the public good, or private distress could present to them. With others this greediness of filthy lucre has been an overpowering temptation to acts of gross fraud and injustice; and with multitudes, to practise all the varieties of little low tricking and overreaching in their dealings. But with *all*, even with the best, it has operated, with other causes, to bring on a sad alienation from God; to chill the spirit of vital godliness; to weaken the faith and pious zeal of christians, and to cause the Lord to withdraw his wonted presence and gracious influences from his churches. Heated in our eager pursuits of the world; and heated by our political animosities, the harmony of society is sadly diminished; and a serious concern for maintaining the life of religion in the soul, and fervent engagedness for the interests of Zion, seem almost to be withering away! Such is the awful state of Laodicean luke-warmness into which we have sunk, that we have reason to fear, the Lord, in righteous displeasure, will spue us out of his mouth. Add, to all that has been said, the prevailing impurity, unbelief, rejection of Gospel offers, abuse of the means of grace, and the ungodly, unexemplary

eyes of many professing Christians, and the view of our character as a people, may well make us tremble. But a very faint and imperfect sketch has now been given of our prevailing iniquities. And yet enough has been shewn to teach us, with what propriety may be addressed to us the words of the text: "Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"

If such be our character and state, it is surely a most natural and interesting inquiry—What is to be done? In what way may we hope to escape the evils we either feel or fear, in this day of rebuke? God himself shall furnish the answer to this inquiry. Thus saith the Lord—"Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people.—Put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well.—Amend your ways and your doings.—Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.—If ye seek the Lord, he will be found of you.—He will repent himself of the evil which he thought to do unto you. He will make his face to shine upon you; and cause your health, as a people, to spring forth speedily!" Repentance, reformation and prayer is a work to which our country is, at this day, loudly called. We have forsaken the Lord; we have gone away backward; all ranks, all classes have sinned; our iniquities have gone up over our heads, and our transgressions have reached unto the heavens! If repentance and reformation prevent not, we have every reason to fear that calamity shall follow on calamity, and stroke upon stroke, until the Lord hath taken vengeance upon us, as a people, for our iniquities. "When I begin I will also make an end;" saith the Lord. Think not that, appointing days of fasting and humiliation; nor that the observation of these days with *exterior decency*, will avert calamity from us. All this may be done, and done in such mere formality and hypocrisy, as to render us even more guilty in the sight of God. No, brethren, it is real repentance and reformation that is now our duty. God cannot be deceived; he will not be mocked. Return unto me, with all your heart; and I will return unto you, saith the Lord. In vain do we endeavor to shift the blame from ourselves to our rulers, and to charge them as the cause of our calamities. The language of God's rod is—"your own iniquities have procured these things unto you." Whether our rulers have acted their part *well* or *ill*, it is our duty to regard the calamities, with which we are afflicted, as the retributions of a righteous God, chastening us for our iniquities. We may look to our own government, or to the governments in other nations, and indulge the hope that, by a change in their political measures, our calamities will all pass away. But so long as the Lord has a controversy with our land, for its abounding iniquities, in vain shall we hope, in this way, to escape from calamities. God has many judgments in store, with which to afflict guilty nations. The calamities that now threaten our country, are of the most serious and alarming nature; calamities sufficient to appall the stoutest hearts! May God, in his infinite mercy, avert the threatened evils! and that he may do so, let it be the sincere concern of every one, to repent and return to God from all his transgressions. Ah! brethren, it is time that our political fermentations ceased; that the rage of party spirit was come to an end. By such unhallowed, destructive passions, we may be preparing the way for evil days, and for sore work both to ourselves and to our posterity. Let us humble ourselves before God, and earnestly beseech him to return and have mercy on our country; to turn us from our transgressions; to heal our divisions; to pour out his spirit upon us, and abundantly to revive his work through all our churches. Ye professing people of God, be ye his remembrancers in this day of rebuke. Let your earnest cries ascend to that gracious throne, whence you have so often experienced deliverance to your souls in times of trouble! Let all that fear the Lord, in our land, be found with his ministers, weeping between the porch and the altar; and let them say—"Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach!" And may the Lord, in mercy, hear our prayer, and be intreated for our land. Amen.