

DEVELOPMENT:

A

THANKSGIVING DISCOURSE,

PREACHED

NOVEMBER 26th, 1868

TO THE CONGREGATION OF THE

FIRST AND SECOND REFORMED CHURCHES,

OF

Tarrytown, N. Y.

BY JOHN B. THOMPSON.

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REQUEST.

TARRYTOWN, N. Y., November 26, 1868.

REV. JOHN B. THOMPSON:

Will you let us have your Thanksgiving Sermon for publication? The morning was so stormy that few could get out to hear it, and we think that it will do great good in both congregations if printed.

JOHN MILDEBERGER, WILLIAM SEE;
JAMES M. SWIFT, J. BENEDICT LEE,
MARSHALL H. BRIGHT, HORATIO G. GILBERT,
WILLIAM BACON, J. ALEXANDER SEE,
WILLIAM F. VAN WART, JOHN A. VAN TASSELL,
AND OTHERS.

REPLY.

GENTLEMEN: The Discourse was hastily prepared for the congregation of these two Churches. I prefer that it should not be PUBLISHED. If, however, you wish to PRINT it for the benefit of those for whom it was designed, I ought not to refuse. Trusting that none of us shall ever be content with present attainments, but that we shall all go on unto perfection in the Church and in the State, I remain,

Very truly yours,

JOHN B. THOMPSON.

MANSE OF SLEEPY HOLLOW, November 27, 1868.

DEVELOPMENT.

"In the year which is now drawing to an end, the art, the skill, and the labor of the people of the United States have been employed with greater diligence and vigor, and on broader fields than ever before, and the fruits of the earth have been gathered into the granary and the storehouse in marvelous abundance. Our highways have been lengthened, and new and prolific regions have been occupied. We are permitted to hope that long protracted political and sectional discussions are, at no distant day, to give place to returning harmony and fraternal affection throughout the Republic. Many foreign States have entered into liberal agreements with us, while nations which are far off, and which heretofore have been unsocial and exclusive, have become our friends. The annual period of rest which we have reached in health and tranquility, and which is crowned with so many blessings, is, by universal consent, a convenient and suitable one for cultivating personal piety and practising public devotion."

It is for these reasons that the President of the United States has recommended that this day

' Be set apart and observed by all the people of the United States as a day for public praise, thanksgiving and prayer to the Almighty Creator and Divine Ruler of the universe, by whose ever watchful, merciful and gracious providence alone, states and nations, no less than families and individual men, do live and move and have their being."

Similarly also does the Governor of our own State remind us that

"Each year has its own special grounds for thanksgiving. Bringing a return of the common benefactions of life, it brings also its own peculiar and distinguishing blessings. Not alone in the recorded annals of the state, but in the unwritten history of every fireside are these signal benefits clearly perceptible.

The past year has been no exception. In many ways it has illustrated and enforced the truth thus wrought into the immutable law of God's beneficent providence. The earth has not forgotten to yield her increase;

the toil of the husbandman has received generous reward; the thrift of trade has followed in the train of industry, and abundant prosperity has crowned all our citizens with its manifold benefits. No pestilence has come to imperil the health of our people, and no great calamity has cast a shade over the blessings so profusely showered upon them. The multiplied and economical agencies for the attainment of intellectual and moral culture, have encouraged our youth to greater effort, and have advanced the character and intelligence of our whole people. The skill of the artisan has enriched society with continued contributions of use and beauty, and the triumphs of labor, as well as the agencies of commerce, have more widely diffused the comforts and enjoyments of man. The security of life and property; the wide and searching political discussions, and their salutary influence; the general regard for law, unite in calling for cheerful and hearty thanksgiving. And yet above them all is the manly and generous recognition of the rights and welfare of others, as resting on the same foundation with our own high claims. Abroad, as well as at home, in lands long subject to illiberal restriction, as well as in our own with its more exalted aspirations, the mind is asserting its freedom, and the emancipation of men from the dominion of prejudice and caste is steadily making its way."

In view of these blessed facts, well are we exhorted to dedicate this day

"To General Thanksgiving and Praise, that we may be prepared to enter upon a new year with larger conceptions of our duty, with a more resolute consecration to the cause of humanity, and a more devout obedience to the will of God."

The key-note to these suggestions of our rulers was struck long ago when the preacher said:

"Say not thou,
What is the cause that the former days were better than these!
For thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this."

[Eccl. vii: 10.]

In every land throughout the whole habitable earth there are traditions of a golden age long past, when man dwelt in uninterrupted happiness, and held immediate intercourse with the endeared inhabitants of the celestial world. Confused and indistinct as these traditions are, they afford strong confirmation,

to those so unhappy as to need it, of the Paraisaical history given us in the books of our holy religion.

The confused memory of these days of sinless happiness in Eden, in the lapse of years has been brought down into later, though still ancient days, the days since the world was cursed by sin.

In looking back from our present standpoint in the world's history, we do not really separate events which were thousands of years apart in their actual occurrence. Practically, to us, the times of Enoch and of Abraham are as one. Yet, a longer interval elapsed between them than has elapsed between us and the day in which our Saviour talked face to face with our fellows. And it is this blending of the sinless with the sinful which has done much to induce men and women in every age to think and talk regretfully of "the good old times."

To this must be added the happy tendency of the mind to forget the evil that is past and remember the good, so that

"Mem'ry the scene gaily covers with flowers,
And restores every rose, while secreting its thorn,"

and the harmless vanity of the old man who loves the old ways simply because they are old, and as he approaches second childhood, loves to boast of how much better things were "when I was young."

Taking all these together, it is not strange that two thousand years ago the poet Horace spoke of such an one as a "Querulous lauder of things done when

he was a boy;" nor that one thousand years before that the preacher thought it necessary to caution his audiences in words which the Holy Spirit has seen fit to speak also in our ears, for our warning and instruction: "Say not thou, what is the cause that the former days were better than these; for it is not wisdom which prompts this inquiry!"

The text is the conclusion of a decalogue of instruction on the sufferings of the people of God, and of consolation and admonition in regard thereto. Attention is directed, on the one hand, to the fruit of righteousness which suffering brings, to its blessed termination; and on the other hand, God's people are warned not to permit themselves to be drawn aside to murmurings. The people of God, if patient *and content to follow the teachings of their God*, will receive the best at the end.

This is as true of the Church of God now as it ever was. The hope of the Church has always been, and must always be, in the future. It cannot be otherwise. The consummation of the race is to be participation in the Divine Nature. The object of Divine Revelation is to make us partakers of the Divine Nature. God became a partaker of human nature just that He might make man partaker of His nature. And this participation of the human in the Divine must always be a thing of progress. It can never be complete. The soul of man, considered in relation to its Creator, is like one of those two mathematical

lines which may approach each other to all eternity without the possibility of touching.

“Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee!”

is the ceaseless aspiration of the wisest and happiest human soul.

Now in this progress of the Church toward perfection in God the Church grows, develops, like a child. In infancy she was in leading-strings, “Under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.” But in due time she grew beyond the jurisdiction of Judaistic governors, and became the Lord’s freeman. And so from the day in which she attained her majority, on that memorable pentecostal, has she been going forth conquering and to conquer.

Never content with any present attainments or conditions, she has been continually sloughing off the dead skins of old formalisms and increasing strength and beauty with every effort. There have been attempts to hinder such progress. Good men in the Church, forgetting that she can only be “partaker of the Divine nature” by growing and changing continually as the future becomes the past, remembering with gratitude the blessings of the past, and fearful lest the change (which is only growth) may forfeit that and not secure the future, such men have often become such ardent admirers of the “good old times” as to do all they could to hinder the growth into the future, the growth Godward.

It was so when the Latin Church seceded from the

Greek. The Church of the Apostles was the Greek Church. But in the course of years men settled down into dead formality, doing as their fathers did, no more. And the result was stagnation, stupor, death.

At that time, the Latin Church was full of life and vigor. And the fulness of its life could not be repressed. Hence, it burst the bonds and went to work valiantly for the future. And its success was commensurate with its life. It became, in its turn, successful, powerful, rich, and then, cold, formal, and stolid. It, too, began to look backward rather than forward, and as it stood looking regretfully back, hardened into adamant, like Lot's wife. But the life could not be repressed. The Reformed Churches burst the bonds of Rome as the Roman had those of Constantinople. And everywhere spread the good work, and our Christianity to-day is the result.

Nor is the progress of the Church since the reformation less obvious. There has been progress in Doctrine. "The Zwinglian theory of theology, taking as the central truth of its structure the truth that the word of God alone can be any authoritative rule to the conscience, developed from that point a true, in opposition to a false gospel; yet a gospel too easily perverted by reason of its tendency to exalt the rational man of earth into a center of the spiritual system, or at least from its narrowness of view, to obscure the higher truths of the scheme of Redemption. The Lutheran theory, taking as its central principle

the justification of the sinner by grace alone, through faith, after the fashion of Copernicus, exhibited Jesus Christ, the Sun of righteousness, as the real center to whom the rational man of earth, with all that concerns him, is attracted, and around whom he revolves. Calvin, while perceiving that the great central truths of both Zwingle and Luther were indeed great truths; yet, with the still wider vision of La Place and the moderns, beheld not only the rational man revolving around the mediatorial Sun of righteousness as his true center, but also that man and his central Sun revolve again around a still profounder center, even the Eternal Purpose of God, fixed in the counsels of Eternity before the world began." But this theory, like the others which it transcends, has also been pushed too far, so far as to destroy personal accountability. Any one of the grand truths revealed by God to man, if pressed too far, so as to obscure and cover up others, deforms and debases the whole. And yet, perhaps for a time, such prominence of certain truths was necessary, that they might always have due weight in the Church of the future. It seemed necessary that the Church should pass through the Petrine age of Authority, and the Pauline age of Doctrine before she could reach the Johannean age of Love, upon which she is just entering; and not until this principle shall have time to work its effects, as those before it have had, will the Church know the fullness of the meaning of the Apostle when he says,

“God is Love.” But when the Church appreciates this truth, then, and not till then, will it be seen that, higher than Authority, higher than Doctrine, higher even than Love, the energizing principle of the consummated Church will be that enunciated in the words “Partaker of the Divine Nature.” The word of God is our only rule of faith and practice, but in the careful study of that word in the light of the other revelations which God has made of Himself in nature and in history, our knowledge of God and of His Will for us is continually increasing. More and more, in all science and art and history is the Spirit of Christ, taking of the things of Christ and showing them unto us. And so continually are humble and believing souls growing both in knowledge and in grace, approximating the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Encouraged and warned by the past, let us live for the future! There was once a Roman soldier, for some offence, chained hand to hand with a criminal, and they twain banished to some barren land, where in process of time the convict died, and the living man was compelled to drag about with him from day to day, the loathsome, mouldering corpse, which not only impeded his progress, but also sowed thick and fast within him the seeds of death. Such is the sad fate, although he know it not, of the man who is so chained to the dead past that he cannot cast off the shackles which bind him to it. Let us bury our dead, that we may live!

The essential Life of God exists in Christ for us. In Him is Life. He is come that we might have this Life. It is this Life which passed from Him as healing virtue to the sick whom He touched when upon earth. It is this same Life which passes from Him into the souls which come to Him and heals all their diseases. The contact of the bodies healed was physical. The contact of souls with Him is spiritual. In His Divine Spiritual nature He is everywhere present and the simple will of the soul to be healed by the virtue, the energy, the Life in Him, *is* contact. This is "coming" to Him. This is "believing" on Him. And thus is this Life, this Divine nature mediated to us through Him, and more and more as we wish it so to be, as we will it so to be, as we yield ourselves to its pervasion. Thus is our progress Godward continually according to our faith. If faith be continually increasing as knowledge increases, our path shall shine more and more unto the perfect day. If faith be dead, if there be no further communication of this Life, of course there will be, there can be, no progress. But progress is an inseparable consequent of all true faith in the Mediator as the source of Life.

And there *has been* progress in Life as well as in Doctrine. Say not what is the cause that the former days of the Church were better than these! They were worse. Was it better when children died and were lost because the Church thought it useless to try to teach the way of salvation to them until grown up?

When there were no foreign or domestic missions; when there were few revivals? Was it better in the days when Christianity consisted largely in going to church once on Sunday and to Sacrament twice a year, and there was little or no religious literature, few good books, few meetings for prayer, and few conversions? When a large part of the time of religious bodies was consumed in settling quarrels between Christian men and Christian ministers?

Was it better in the days of Wesley and Toplady, when one of these pious men could write a tract and forge the other's name to it; and when they could quarrel and abuse each because one was Calvinist and the other an Arminian? Was it in the days when Baptists were banished and Quakers burned in Boston, and Indians and Negroes treated as worse than beasts in New York and New Jersey? Was it in the days of the Reformers when Calvin could assent to the burning of a heretic, and Luther print and publish pictures and books which even the New York police would not allow to be seen in public to-day? No, no; the days that are past were not so good for the Church as these. If they were, we should have nothing to be thankful for to-day beyond what our fathers had. But there has been progress; and we should recognize it and give God thanks! We must not despise the past. It had not the light that we have. According to the light they had, the fathers of the Church did nobly. But the Spirit is more largely

poured out in our day. There is more light, more knowledge, more development. We have more knowledge of the word of God, more evidence of the presence and power of the Spirit, more opportunity to work for Jesus, and (blessed be God!) more of a heart to work for Him. Thank God for Christian Commissions and Associations! Have we not abundant reason to thank Him for His goodness to us in these respects?

What is the case as regards these two Churches here gathered together? Have we not a fuller and clearer understanding of the duty and privilege of Christian work than we have ever had before? Do we not see more clearly what the Lord will have us do? Are not our individual positions as laborers for Christ more obvious to us? Does not each one of us hear a voice saying in his heart: "The Lord hath need of THEE!" What abundant cause, then, have we for thanksgiving? But shall our thanksgiving be only to-day, or shall it be from day to day? Shall it be only in word? Or shall it be in deed also? There will be many hungry mouths and many cold feet in Tarrytown this winter. Are there not many to-day? Shall each of us thank God by working *steadily* to relieve the suffering? "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of these," says Jesus, "ye have done it unto me!" Shall each of us here and now resolve, for Christ's sake, to do what we can to bless our fellows, and thus show that we have been with Jesus and learned of

Him? Shall we treat the poor and the vicious *as they deserve*? Or shall we leave their judgment to God? Does He treat us as we deserve? Do we want Him to do so? Or shall we imitate Him in doing good to all men, that we may be the children of our Father in Heaven, who sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust, and doeth good to the unthankful and the evil? Bear with me, Brethren in Christ, while I say that the curse of these two Churches is *selfishness*. Most of us think more how to promote the interests of "our Church" than how to bless the world with our piety. "*He that watereth others shall himself also be watered.*" "Give, and it shall be given to you," saith our Saviour.

But I cannot dwell longer on this topic. Dear Christian friends! If we do not make our Reformed Churches (our Reformed Church, let me say, for we are one) an efficient, faithful, strong, steady, self-denying power for Christ here, we shall be faithless to our trust! And the Lord of the vineyard will take away the vineyard from us, and let it out to other husbandmen, who *will* render Him the fruit in due season.

But common usage has set apart Thanksgiving Day as the day in which the Minister of the Gospel should instruct his people respecting their duty as citizens of the Republic, and I should be recreant to my duty to God and man did I disappoint so reasonable an expectation. And in these days, when godlessness decries the piety that rules a man's business

and politics, as well as his Sabbath services, it is important to keep it continually before the mind, that if there is any man whose religion does not influence and regulate his politics, *that man's religion is vain*. The words of the wise man apply as well to the state as to the Church: "Say not thou, what is the cause that the former days were better than these! for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this."

The Church exists for the race. The progress of the Church Godward is that the progress of the race Godward may be more rapid. The progress of the race includes the progress of the State. I will not stop to speak of the early governments of the world, the first steps in the history of the world's progress. I will not dwell upon the imperfections of the ancient empires and republics, whose glory shines across the gulf of time even to our own day. Their glory was their shame, for it was bought by the enslavement and degradation of millions whom it was the business of government to comfort, to enlighten, to elevate. I will not stop to speak of the governments of the present day throughout the world. Enough that in our own has culminated the experience of past ages, and that here we are having opportunity in a new land to work out our destiny, untrammelled by the memories of past ages and unimpeded by precedents established in barbaric ages. This world has seen many great days; days of reform, as when Luther resisted the decrees in the Imperial Diet; days of

revolution, when the events of centuries seem crowded into moments, dynasties shivered as by a blow; but the greatest day it has ever seen was when this Republic broke the chains which bound her to the effete past, and stalked like a young giant into history. A nation was born in a day. And from that day to this the history of our nation has been but the evolution of the principles which gave it birth. "Say not thou, what is the cause that the former days were better than these!" They were not.

How is it as regards the comforts of the people? Take our own village as an illustration. The fathers who first tilled these valleys and hill-sides were the serfs of Lord Frederick Phillips. Many of them were "Redemptioners," sold to him by the captains who brought them to this country. But over all of them alike he ruled, holding his courts leet and baron at the manor house, at such times and so often as he saw fit, levying fines and inflicting punishments at will, exercising the power of life and death over his vassals, and even deputing the same to his steward! Such authority no master has exercised over his slaves in this land since the Declaration of Independence was signed. The consequence of this vassalage was that our fathers and their children lived and labored, and Lord Phillips reaped the fruit of their labors. No wonder that his pious Lady Catharine thought it meet and right, and her bounden duty, to erect a house of worship for their vassals. And

no wonder that when the Revolution came the lofty "Thrones," as they were called, which had been erected on each side of the pulpit for My Lord and Lady, were wrenched from their places by indignant hands, now free, and the crimson curtains torn and scattered by the wayside. No wonder———— but I forbear. Even when the Lord of the Manor fled and his estates were confiscated for his treason, but a small portion inured to the benefit of those whose hands had rescued them from the forest wildness. And though it was better after this, still it was much worse than now. I ask you who are old and can still remember those days. Did you have more comforts in your early days than your children and grandchildren have now? Could you earn more than they could now, if they would work as you did? Were life and property more secure? Were drunkenness and profanity less prevalent? Were your public schools and Sunday-schools and Churches better conducted? In a word, were those times better than these? Or, were they worse? Did not the cider and the whisky flow freely? Did not the negros and the boys drink and swear and steal, and live so licentiously and talk so grossly as you are now even ashamed to think of? If these things be so, and I appeal to those who know, then, in this place at least, the former times were not better than these! And so it is everywhere.

But how is it as regards the character of our public men?

You may say "corruption in public places is shocking." So it is. God forbid that I should say one word to lessen your detestation of the men who stuff the ballot-boxes and cheat us of our chosen rulers, in order that they may rob us of our money through instruments of their own selection; or, of those high in authority who connive at wrong, and take bribes, and make common cause with perjurers and robbers. But men have taken bribes before; and have debased and disgraced themselves and the nation by language and by deeds in the halls of legislation, and have boasted of them, of which, now at least, they have the grace to be ashamed. I will not take up the ungracious task of recalling these sad things of the past. I will only note that John Randolph, of Roanoke, in his day, could not only attack a co-legislator in the halls of legislation, but could issue a tract with illustrations, showing and boasting how he had maliciously assaulted one whose words he did not like.

I trust I may write as a thing of the past, also, that a Representative in Congress could strike down a Senator at his desk with the premeditation of an assassin, because he had depicted in colors which we all now can see were but life-like, "The Barbarism of Slavery"! And though we have had good men and true in the councils from the very first, when was there a time when, on the list of the great of our land, were so many names of those whom Christian men and women delight to honor? When was there ever such

an intelligent, progressive, Christian General as Oliver O. Howard! Such Christian Senators as Frederick T. Frelinghuysen, Alexander G. Cattell, Henry Wilson, and such a Speaker of the House or Vice President of the United States as Schuyler Colfax, known and loved as an officer of our own Church? Thank God for Public Men who, whenever they stand up, and wherever they stand up, stand up for Jesus!

And what shall I say of the progress of our people *as a people*. God designs all men to enjoy "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." It is only so far as men are possessed of this privilege that they can glorify God in their bodies and in their spirits which are His. We can see now, what some of us could not see before, that human slavery is as contrary to the principles of Christianity as rapine and robbery. We thought little of it in the days before the war, though four millions of souls for whom the Saviour died were kept in ignorance like the beasts, and in sins worse than beastly, while compelled to labor and to toil that others,—bought with the same precious blood,—might dwell at ease. The messengers of Jehovah went forth from among their myrtle trees, and returned and reported that, notwithstanding this evil, "the whole earth sitteth still and is at rest." And then, from the rivers of Virginia to the Mexican confines of the Republic arose a mournful wail: "How long, O Lord, how long?" It came from the weary laborer, leaning on his hoe in the cotton-fields under

the noontide sun; it came through the moaning midnight forests, solemn and clear above their multitudinous inarticulate sounds; it came from children torn from their parents, from wives and husbands parted at the auction-block, from mothers in despair, from strong men fainting under the lash, from the aged whose heads were frosted by time. In their quaint prayers the Africans talk to God as a man talks face to face with his friend. Slavery made Him their friend. By the flickering fires of their cabins they stealthily spell out the Bible, to see what He had promised to them. It was their dreadful lot which had caused Jefferson, himself a slave-owner, to expostulate solemnly with his countrymen, and to deprecate the wrath of God. For who shall escape when from the hand of Eternal Justice her scales have dropped as useless; when from her brow the bandage has been raised, that her uncovered and angry eyes may gaze upon unutterable wrong; when her uplifted arm, quivering with indignation, is ready to strike a blow that shall make a whole continent tremble. The blow came. The continent did tremble. The red war horses of Jehovah went forth into all the land, and the curse causeless did not come. We had all grown rich on the labors of the oppressed, and we all joined in thus defrauding them, until their cry entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth; and he heard and answered "by terrible things in righteousness." And now the millions that sat in dark-

ness have seen a great light. To-day there stand up to praise the Lord four millions of free American citizens, for whom the Saviour died, with liberty to read the word of God and practice its precepts, and to provide for themselves and their own households, without fear of the oppressor.

I know how dearly this has been bought; at what an expense of blood and treasure. I know how many near and dear to us have paid for it with their lives. I will not stop to recount how many in whose veins ran the same blood that runs in mine have yielded up their young lives and eaten the flesh from their arms for very hunger before they died in Southern prisons! God forgive us if ever we have thought of vengeance!

I know, too, that at the first we did not design to "proclaim liberty throughout the land to all the inhabitants thereof"; but God did! *God meant the end of slavery.* If those who held slaves had trained them for ultimate freedom, the transition might have been comparatively easy. If we who had shared in the profits of their labor had been willing to share in the expense of peaceful emancipation, it would have been better for them and for us. But we all were covetous, and therefore blind. And we all helped to rivet more and more firmly the chains of servitude, until God was compelled to do His strange work. We would not free the slave as we might, and He did it as He must.

It may be profitable for us to look at this sub-

ject in the light we now have. Of the nations professing Protestant Christianity, we only held slaves. We only upheld slavery. The sentiment of the civilized world had long been strong against it. But we loved it. At least we loved the result of it. We loved the cheap cotton, and rice, and sugar, which were cheap because those who raised them were robbed of their earnings. We loved the wealth and the honor which these things purchased for our nation; and we could not see the iniquity as God saw it. We were blinded by our prejudices. We fawned upon those who reveled in wealth obtained by oppression; and all the while the cries of those whose wages were kept back were entering into the ears of the God of the oppressed. But God has taught us. He has shown us that the habits of mind and body engendered by slaveholding are inimical to free government; that they tend directly towards aristocratic and monarchical views and customs; that they enfeeble both mind and body, encourage vice, dignify idleness, and bring destruction in their train. He has enabled us to see that "slavery" and "freedom" are contradictory terms, and that slavery is a curse to slaveholders and the nation which they constitute.

It is true that much good has been accomplished through slavery. Thousands on thousands are now rejoicing before the throne of God, who, in their native wilds, would never have heard of Jesus. But it was none the less evil to enslave them. God

brought good out of the sale of Joseph by his brethren; "God meant it for good;" but it was none the less evil in them. The most wicked act the world ever saw—the judicial murder of our Lord Jesus Christ—was a part of God's plan for the redemption of the world; but it was none the less sin on the part of those who crucified the Lord of glory.

It may be also true that most of the freedmen of the present day are not competent to use their freedom aright; though no men were ever more cruelly slandered in this respect. It may be that most of them were inherited by their masters; and that it would have seemed unwise to free them at once. They should, however, have been regarded and treated as human beings, whose souls equal in value those of their masters. They should have been taught to labor and to think intelligently, and to read the word of God that they might know and do His will. Many individuals, Christian and philanthropic men and women among the slaveholders, did attempt, or at least allow this. And blessed were the results where attempted. I bless God for those who, not few in number, had the moral courage to violate both law and custom when law and custom were opposed to the law of God. But what were these among so many! And the *system* was degrading. It was readily perceived that "knowledge is power," that intelligence is incompatible with slavery; and in many of the States it was a penal offence to teach a slave to read. The whole sys-

tem was arranged to reduce these men and women as nearly as possible to the level of the beast. It was designed that they should be beasts of burden to their masters. Studious care was taken to prevent intellectual development. Religion of a certain kind was encouraged, an ignorant, blind, emotional religion, which might save the master's property, and perhaps, salve his conscience; but this was all. What kind of a religion could it be without the Bible? God requires parents to train their children for Him. But these parents were not allowed to train their children at all. In the States most severely punished by this war, children were habitually raised for market on the same plan and with the same care as beasts of the stall. Nay, more, the marriage tie was ruthlessly broken; husbands and wives whom God had joined together, man put asunder; and, when put asunder, compelled to submit to such enormities and to join in such sins as would have defiled Sodom. God's people were among these slaves. But on the side of their oppressors was power; and, like Jeroboam the son of Nebat, they made Israel to sin. Such was the practical working of the system, notwithstanding the many personal exceptions to which I have already given due credit. *States* must be punished for their sins in this world; and is it any wonder that wrath comes upon the guilty to the uttermost?

“The mills of God grind slowly; but they grind exceedingly small.” “Whom God wishes to destroy,

He first makes mad." The madness of the rebellion was the beginning of the punishment for sins which had long deserved destruction. The hire of the laborers, so long kept back by force and fraud, has long been crying for vengeance against the oppressors; and now their riches are corrupted and their garments moth-eaten; their gold and silver is cankered, and the rust thereof is eating their flesh as it were fire. "When the tale of bricks is doubled then Moses comes;" and when the iniquities of chattel slavery had reached their climax, then God appeared to deliver the oppressed and to punish the oppressor. "By terrible things in righteousness dost Thou answer us, O God of our salvation." Those who had lived in pleasure in the earth and been wanton, are in straits for bread, And those who were enslaved are set free. Not by the will of man, but of God.

By the very constitution of our National Government no interference could be made with slavery. But when the slaveholders became traitors and public enemies, they forfeited all their privileges under the Government. Still slavery was untouched. Even when one and another of our Generals declared slaves contraband of war, and proceeded to use them in subduing the rebellion, their acts and words were disavowed by the Government, and they compelled to recede from their positions. And, though the war had been going on for three years, not until positive assurances were received from our Ministers abroad,

that unless we proclaimed "freedom throughout all the land to *all* the inhabitants thereof," Foreign Powers would end the contest by recognising our opponents as a nation, not till then, as the last resort, was issued the proclamation which gave the slaves of those in rebellion the legal right to be "FOR EVER FREE!" So hard was it for us to yield. So determined were we in resisting God's purposes. Moved only for our own interest, we were nevertheless moved by the hand of God; and now the voice of rejoicing is heard in the tabernacles of the righteous and more souls are being educated, trained, developed Godward under proper Christian care as a consequence of the war, than has resulted from all the foreign missionary operations of the century.

It may be true that the emancipated suffer more than they would have suffered as slaves. "It is the nature of the devil of tyranny to tear and rend the body which it leaves. But are the miseries of continued possession less terrible than the struggles of the tremendous exorcism!" The Israelites suffered more in the wilderness than they did in Egypt. Nay, that generation all died in the wilderness. But on the fortunes of that band of emancipated slaves hung the destiny of the world. The emancipated slaves of this day may suffer and die, as did their prototypes. But suffering and death are not the worst evils that can befall men. Debasement and death of soul are worse. And if God fill the places of debased slaves

and debased slaveholders with a new generation taught in the furnace of affliction to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before God, who shall say that He has not dealt mercifully with the world? In the long and bloody wars of Canaan, each party at times seemed near extermination. But in process of time the land became densely populated with a people loving and serving God, and from the soil which formerly drank the blood of human sacrifices went up the souls of generation after generation of those who lived and died and entered into glorious rest, as the result of the discipline to which the nation had been subjected in its youth. "The years of God are long." And, whatever may seem, God reigns.

"Evil is only the slave of good ;
Sorrow the servant of joy ;
And the soul is mad that refuses food
From the meanest in God's employ."

Man cannot predict the future. But man can judge the future by the past. And in looking out from his lofty position upon the nation, with its myriads of free voters, so lately slaves, the President of the United States sees ground for hope "that long protracted political and sectional discussions are, at no distant day, to give place to returning harmony and fraternal affection throughout the Republic."

When a nation is born in a day, or "born again," he must be a very blind partisan, or an inexperienced observer, who can mistake the throes of birth for the agonies of death.

The country is loyal. The people have spoken. And spite of all the mistakes and errors, spite of all the waste of treasure, spite of all the wickedness of wicked men, spite of the bickerings of party and the ravings of

“Vaulting ambition which o'erleaps itself,”

spite of any and all the countless temptations to disloyalty, the people are loyal. From Maine to California they testify their adherence to the supremacy of the Federal Government. The Western States, where temptation was strongest, speak loudest! Henceforth, let no man despair of the Republic. Through the judicial blindness of certain self-constituted party leaders, the people have been enabled to signify clearly their preference; and the decision is made, a decision so clear and unmistakable as to furnish proper cause of thanksgiving to every patriot in the land. In it we hear the voice of God, saying, “Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward.”

Nor is it less cause of thanksgiving that those who could not at the time rise above the toils of party, acquiesce so heartily in the decision. The mists of prejudice are cleared away. The dust of the arena has settled, and men now see clearly what they could not see through the thick clouds of party strife. Such union of sentiment is doubly a cause for thanksgiving. Our country seems to be entering upon a new life of peace and prosperity. Commerce, manufactures, and the pursuits of agriculture are incited to

renewed vigor and activity. Personal liberty and public security seem to be insured to us all the time. The enduring triumphs of the principles of free government over rebellion and anarchy in this land is regenerating the nations of the earth, and the liberal principles of equality and recognition of man as man are working a good throughout the world, which none can limit."*

We are working out our destiny as a nation. The principles of the Declaration of Independence are triumphing over the opposing evil which still remained within our polity, and the leaven is leavening the nations of the earth.

Let us show our gratitude for the past by our zeal for the future. Remember that it is not possible to stand still. Progress is the universal law of God's creation. The veriest trilobite of the lower Silurian epoch rolls round with the stratum to which he belongs, keeping time to the march of the ages, even though he knows it not. We must see to it that the progress of our nation is in the right direction. By our words, by our deeds, by our votes, we must do all that in us lies that our citizens, of whatever origin, are protected in all their rights and privileges as citizens, that the ignorant are educated, the vicious reclaimed, and all alike trained to habits of industry and virtue. Let loyal men be on their guard.

*Thanksgiving Proclamation of Marcus L. Ward, Governor of New Jersey.

“Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.” Beware of the entanglements of party. Set your faces as a flint against everything that is wrong, from whatever source. Let “God and our country” be the motto of our political lives, and not the miserable Satanic watchword: “The party, right or wrong.” Let the word of God be the test by which we try every measure. Let the voice of public opinion be heard always for the right. So shall success crown our efforts. So shall prosperity attend us. So shall righteousness exalt the nation:

“And God, even our own God, shall bless us;—

God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.”

Remember that it is ours to help on this advancement of our country, our Church, our race, toward God and goodness continually. “Say not what is the cause that the former days were better than these?” Wisdom looks forward rather than backward. There is no present. While we speak of it, it is gone. The past is behind us: the future, before us. The language in which the text was written by the Holy Ghost, has no present tense. What we unnaturally call “the present” is a piece of the past arbitrarily joined with a piece of the future. We stand really between the past and the future, like Aaron between the living and the dead. The past is finished, unalterable. Let it go. Let the dead bury its dead. Let us show our thankfulness for the mercies it brought, as well as our penitence for the neglected opportunities it took away,

by living in and for the future. Let us expect the world to grow better, and do all that in us lies to make it so. Let us set our faces as a flint against every thing in the nation which looks like keeping up the old system of slavery, the festering sores of corruption in the halls of legislation, on the bench, and at the ballot-box!

Let us try to feel the indignation which God feels at sin, whether it be cognizable by human law or not! Let us show that our thanksgiving to-day is real, not hypocritical, by endeavoring henceforth to make our own progress Godward by His grace more steady and rapid than heretofore! Let us from this day forth show our gratitude to Him by being more zealous in our labors for the promotion of His glory in the salvation of souls and the upbuilding of His Church! Let us give of our time and our money and our prayers for this cause! Freely we have received, let us freely give to those who have not! "Rejoice in the Lord!" And that you may be able to rejoice, cause others to rejoice that you are the Lord's, by sharing with them His benefits towards you! "And again, I say, Rejoice!"

"Sing aloud unto God our strength;
 Make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.
 Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel,
 The pleasant harp with the psaltery.
 Blow up the trumpet in the new moon,
 In the time appointed, on our solemn feast day."

And now, "Go your way! eat the fat and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom noth-

ing is prepared, for this day is holy unto our LORD; neither be ye sorry, for the joy of the LORD is your strength!"

And, the blessing wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Joseph be upon you!

"Blessed of the Lord be this land,
For the precious things of heaven,
For the dew,
And for the deep that coucheth beneath,
And for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun,
And for the precious things put forth by the moon,
And for the chief things of the ancient mountains,
And for the precious things of the lasting hills,
And for the precious things of the earth and fulness thereof,
And for *the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush!*"

He hath not dealt so with any nation! He hath delivered us, and doth deliver; in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us!

"Blessed be the LORD the God of Israel,
Who only doeth wondrous things!
And blessed be His glorious name forever!
And let the whole earth be filled with His glory!"

AMEN AND AMEN.

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