

JUDGMENTS, A CALL TO REPENTANCE.

A SERMON

PREACHED BY

APPOINTMENT OF THE LEGISLATURE

IN THE

HALL OF HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

BY

JAMES H. THORNWELL, D. D.,
PRESIDENT OF SOUTH CAROLINA COLLEGE.

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STATE CAPITOL AT COLUMBIA,
December 11th, 1854.

TO THE REV. DR. THORNWELL.

Dear Sir: As a Joint Committee from the two Houses of the Legislature, the grateful duty devolves on us of tendering you, in their behalf, thanks for the able and eloquent discourse pronounced by you on Saturday last, at their instance.

We are also charged with the further duty of requesting of you a copy of that discourse for publication, and indulge the hope that you will, by consenting, put it in the power of the Legislature to disseminate truths and precepts which are calculated to effect so much good throughout the State.

We remain, dear Sir,

With considerations of the greatest respect,

Your obedient servants,

I.D. WITHERSPOON

On behalf of the Senate.

J. HARLESTON READ,

On the part of the House.

SOUTH CAROLINA COLLEGE
December 12, 1854.

GENTLEMEN: I have received your kind and flattering note, requesting a copy of my Sermon, preached last Saturday, for the Press. Though, on many accounts, I would prefer not to publish it, yet, as it seems hardly to be my own property, I place it at your disposal, with the humble prayer that God may use it for the good of our people and for the glory of his own name.

Very truly,

J. H. THORNWELL.

J. HARLESTON READ, ESQ.,

I. D. WITHERSPOON, ESQ.,

Committee.

SERMON.



THOUGH a minister of God should, on all occasions, magnify his office, and not be afraid of the faces of men, whether kings, princes, or people, yet, while cherishing the profound conviction that the protection of the Almighty is a defenced city, and an iron pillar and brazen walls against the whole land, I confess that a feeling of deep solicitude oppresses me in undertaking this service to-day. These are no ordinary circumstances under which we are convened—this no ordinary congregation which I am called to address. The august image of the Commonwealth rises before me. By her trusted agents and chosen representatives, South Carolina, in her organic capacity—as a distinct political community; in the person of our honoured Chief Magistrate, in the two Houses of the Legislature and the venerable Judges of the land—presents herself, in humility and mourning, before the footstool of Him who standeth in the congregation of the mighty and judgeth among the gods. A Sovereign State prostrate before a Sovereign God. This is the spectacle which we behold to-day. And is it strange that I should tremble in being called to declare the word of the Lord to such an audience? I do tremble—not for myself; not for my own name, or character, or fame; God forbid that such unworthy considerations should enter here. My only apprehension is that I may give a wrong touch to the ark of God; that I may fail to speak those words in season, which, taking advantage of the interest naturally awakened by the scene, may contribute to guide the confused emotions, and vague and indefinite impressions it suggests, into the channels of salutary thought. It is a great occasion, and I am deeply

sensible that nothing but Divine wisdom can fit me to discharge the duty it imposes. The guidance of that wisdom I humbly and fervently implore; and your prayers, I trust, will be joined with mine, that these rare and imposing solemnities may not pass away like an empty pageant, the mockery of a pompous hypocrisy. It is at all times solemn to appear before God; it is almost awful to do so with protestations of extraordinary penitence—professions of extra-ordinary reverence. Above all things, He requireth truth in the inward parts; and if we would not insult him to-day, and forfeit all the blessings which we hope to gain, let us see to it that our hearts are in unison with the language and worship of our lips.

There is a circumstance, trifling in itself—a coincidence perhaps not worthy of notice, which yet may be mentioned, as by that mysterious sympathy on which our emotions so much depend, it has inspired me with something of confidence and hope, and thrown an additional interest around the services of the day. When I received the notice of this appointment, and reflected that its fulfillment was to take place upon the anniversary of the day on which I first beheld the light of the sun, I could not but regard it as an omen of good. It seemed a sign that God had called me to this work. There is certainly no enterprise in which I could embark with a less divided heart, than that of presenting the Commonwealth, which I love next to God himself and His own Divine cause, an offering upon His altar. Everything which indicates a growing regard for the kingdom of Jesus Christ on the part of this State I hail with joy, as I am assured that God will never leave nor forsake the people that are steadfast in His covenant; and if there were but one prayer that I were at liberty to offer for the land of my birth, for the home of my children, for the resting-place of my fathers, that prayer would be that her people might be all righteous, fearing the Lord. That would include every-

thing. With God for us, it would matter little who or what was against us. That I may contribute some small degree to this blessed consummation, I have selected for the occasion the words contained in the 26th chapter of Isaiah, 9th verse:

“For when thy Judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.”

The judgments to which the prophet refers are those visitations of Providence which are evidently expressive of the Divine displeasure, and because they are universally regarded as the penal inflictions of a Judge or Ruler, they have received the appellation of the text. The conviction is a part of our nature, and no sophistry can eradicate it, that the sufferings to which sentient beings are exposed are either directly or remotely the consequences of sin. It is not so much any abstract views of the Divine benevolence or refined deductions from the phenomena of the case, as the spontaneous suggestion of conscience; the immediate promptings of our sense of good and ill desert, which impel us to recognize, in rude traces, at least, even in the present life, a moral dispensation in which death is the wages of sin. We cannot, without atheism, deny, that, as the connection between the finite and the infinite is that of personal will, all the events which constitute the course of nature or the history of the world are the appointments of God. There are no powers, whether physical or otherwise, but those which are ordained of Him. Secondary causes or general laws are only expressions for that uniformity and order which He originally established and constantly maintains. Motion, action, change, are all from Him. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without His will. When, therefore, adversity overtakes us, our troubles do not spring from the dust, nor our afflictions from chance. Is there evil in the city, and hath not the Lord done it? God being a person like our-

selves, we judge of the purpose or design of Divine dispensations from the obvious tendency. We reason from the analogy of our own natures, and transfer to Him something like the motives which would influence us in visiting those who are subject to our jurisdiction with similar distresses. We tremble at His anger, and dread His justice. Conscience reminds us that we are guilty, and consequently worthy of death; and hence those representations of afflictive providences, which resolve them into God's displeasure on account of sin, are the very voice of nature. They cannot be set aside without setting aside the belief in Providence, or setting aside design and purpose as characteristic of a personal God. We feel these judgments to be just, and we see that they have a natural tendency to stigmatize transgression and to preserve the innocent, by a salutary fear, in their integrity.

So strong is the impression of the moral connection between suffering guilt, that unreflecting minds are apt to make the degree of suffering the exponent of the measure of guilt. They look upon extraordinary judgments as proofs of extraordinary sins. It was this feeling which our Saviour designed to rebuke when he was told of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices; Think ye, said he, that these were sinners above all the other Galileans? I tell you nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell and slew them; think ye that they were sinners above all the men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

The doctrine is this: That sin is the cause of all suffering and pain. None would ever be visited with any species of calamity unless they were guilty. But, as the present state is only moral government begun and not completed, and as other ends among the guilty may be answered by affliction as well as those of punishment, we can never infer the degree

of guilt from the degree of suffering though the general fact may be universally concluded. Is a people visited with pestilence, famine, or war? We may infer with absolute certainty that there is sin among them. These scourges could, under no circumstances, be inflicted upon the innocent. Not a tear can fall, nor a sigh be heaved where sin has not entered. But we cannot infer that they are more guilty than their neighbors. It may be, on the contrary, that they are less offensive to God, and that these judgments are designed to awaken them to a general sense of sin, and to bring them to repentance. God has purposes of mercy towards them and makes bare His arm that wrath may be subservient to love. All that we can conclude with absolute certainty is the necessity of repentance. Judgments are a call, a loud and solemn call, to the inhabitants of the world to learn righteousness, and are addressed to others as well as the victims themselves. Except ye, the spectators of those woes, except YE repent, ye shall all likewise perish. The great lesson, and it is a lesson to all alike, is that there is *sin* and that God hates it, but how much sin there is, and how aggravated, it is presumption to conclude.

The Legislature of this State, therefore, has wisely attributed those severe dispensations which have wrapped so many families in mourning, and carried desolation to so many hearths, to the penal visitation of God. Though the product of natural causes and secondary agents, they ultimately proceed from Him, and proceed from Him distinctly as a moral Ruler, a just and righteous Judge. The benevolent design may be inferred from the effect already produced. We are beginning, I trust, to learn the righteousness, to practise the repentance which He exacts at our hands.

The first step has been taken—we have heard God's voice—we have trembled at the rebukes of His providence, and we have publicly confessed that our mourning and woe are the sad desert of our sins. It is a source of heartfelt satis-

faction that the State has not been stupid nor insensible— that she has not shut her eyes to the prime cause of these dispensations— that she has seen and kissed the rod in the hands of the Almighty. She has bowed before that sovereign Ruler whose favor is life, whose frown is death—she has resorted to no carnal expedients, to no mere prudential policy as the means of averting future calamities—she has not consulted diviners or physicians—she has gone directly to Him whose prerogative it is to kill and to make alive—she has spread her cause before His throne, and in humility and penitence has implored Him to put up the sword into its scabbard, to let it rest and be still.

The next step is a genuine repentance—a hearty confession and a sincere renunciation of the sins which have provoked the displeasure of God. The reason of these calamities must be removed—the cause must cease to operate, if we expect the effects to terminate. As the judgments themselves do not specify the sins, and as our Saviour has taught us that it is sin in general, as much as any special sins in particular, that provoke peculiar calamities, the only safe course for us is to go into the depths of our hearts, and bring out and destroy all the forms of iniquity that lurk there. We should spare none. Every man, and, every family, should mourn apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart. Repentance must begin in every man's own soul, and the first care which the solemnities of this day imposes upon every one of you, is to see to it, that his own heart is right with God. Nothing will or can be done effectually, unless it is done in the spirit of personal/and individual repentance. *Your* sins may have contributed to provoke these judgments of the Almighty.

You are a citizen of the commonwealth—a member of her legislative councils. Are you, or are you not, an enemy to God by wicked works? Have you kissed the Son—have you been redeemed by the blood of the cross? Depend upon it, that the personal character of those who are placed in authority, have much to do, from the very nature of moral government, with the prosperity of the State. The rulers are the representatives of the land, and in God's word no more tremendous judgment is threatened against any people than the sending among them of ignorant, debauched and wicked counsellors. Manasseh's sins drenched Jerusalem in blood, and Ahab's idolatry made the heavens as brass and the earth as iron. No man can say to what extent his own personal transgressions enter as an ingredient into that cup of trembling which God administers to guilty nations. The best servant of the State, is the faithful servant of God; and you would do more to-day, my brethren, for the prosperity and glory of this great Commonwealth which we love, by consecrating each man himself upon the altar of religion, than by all your eloquence, prudence and skill. Verily, there is a God that judgeth in the earth, and He does visit a people for the sins and iniquities of their rulers. Virtue is power, and vice is weakness, and every corrupt Senator, every debauched councillor, every wicked man, is like a crumbling stone in the foundation of an edifice. They weaken infallibly—they may destroy. In your official relation to the State, therefore, it is a matter of the last importance that you should all be friends of God. Imagination can hardly conceive the strength and beauty and glory of that Commonwealth in which the people should all be righteous—in which no rivalry should be found but the rivalry of excellence—no selfishness, ambition or partizan zeal—no demagogues nor placemen. Butler's imagination was even roused to something like fervour and eloquence when he undertook to depict the effects of the universal prevalence of virtue

among any people or in any kingdom; and inspiration itself never rises to higher, or breathes in sweeter strains, than when it dwells upon the consequences of the universal diffusion of holiness; and what is especially to be observed, these effects are attributed to the character and influence of the Ruler. It is when righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins, that the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them; and the cow and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and the sucking child shall play on the hold of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. There is a natural and necessary tendency in holiness to bring about this delightful state of things—a corresponding tendency in sin to prevent it. Society is the moral union of moral agents, and the strength of their union is the perfection of the moral ties which connect them. All sin is, therefore, essentially weakness and misery—all virtue essentially power and happiness. To make a great people, you must make a pure people, and every man must begin with himself. To the extent of his depravity, he is an element of weakness in the State; and if all were corrupt and reprobate, there would be speedy anarchy and dissolution. Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.

Bowed as you are before God this day, my brethren, and charged with solemn duties to the Commonwealth, let me beseech you to seek that fitness for your task which can be found only in the favour and friendship of Heaven. See to it that *your* sins do not interpose a veil between God and the land. You stand in high places; make them as pure

and holy as they are high, and you will find that God has never said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye my face in vain. Sow to yourselves in righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, till He come and rain righteousness upon you. His repentings will be kindled together, He will not execute the fierceness of His anger.

But next to this inquiry into our own State, the judgments of God should direct our attention to those forms of iniquity which most extensively prevail in the land. And, although, we cannot say with absolute confidence that these are the specific offences for which the sword has been drawn from the scabbard, it is enough to know that they are sins, and sins which will inevitably be punished, unless a timely repentance intervene. When God's judgments are abroad in the land, they put us upon general inquiry. They proclaim the fact of sin, and that sin we are to search out and expel wherever we find it, whether in our own hearts, or in the customs and usages of the people.

We should ask, then, to-day, whether there are any sins that pre-eminently attach to the people of our State; or if not peculiar to us, which have a wide-spread and controlling influence.

That there are any which are peculiar to us, I am not prepared to say; but the people of this Confederacy are certainly distinguished, to an extent unknown in other countries, except, perhaps, Great Britain, by profaneness and intemperance. These deserve to be called national sins. A stranger might infer from the tone of popular conversation; from the exclamations of excited individuals; from the clamors of anger and passion, that we acknowledge the Almighty for no other purpose than that we might have a name to swear by, or a convenient expletive to fill up the chasms of discourse. Profaneness, that I may repeat what I have elsewhere said, is a sin, the enormity of which the imagination cannot conceive;

because no thought can compass the infinite excellencies of Him, whose prerogative it is to be, who sits upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers, who stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in. That a puny creature of the dust, born to-day and gone to-morrow, should have the audacity to pour contempt upon that glorious name which Seraphs adore with rapture, is enough to astonish the heavens and convulse the earth. Yea, still more astonishing is that miracle of patience which endures the monsters, when one word would arm all nature against them; make the ground treacherous beneath them, heaven terrible above them; and hell ready to meet them at their coming. The magnitude of sin cannot be exaggerated. It is enough to make the blood curdle to think of the name of God bandied about as the bauble and plaything of fools, to point a jest, to season obscenity, and to garnish a tale.

This offence cannot go unpunished. If there be a God, He must vindicate His own majesty and glory. There must be a period when all shall tremble before Him, when every knee shall bow and every heart shall do reverence. The sword of justice cannot always be sheathed, nor the arm of vengeance slumber, and who shall say that the pestilence which has been walking amongst us, and slaying its thousands upon the right hand and the left, has not received its commission on account of the abounding profaneness of the land? Who shall deny that the deep has been evoked in storm and deluge to proclaim the name of the Lord as terrible and glorious? In the sight of angels there can be no greater sin than that of profaneness. They know something of what God is. They fear that dreadful name, and their imaginations, lofty and expanded as they are, cannot measure the height and depth of that iniquity which can make light of so tremendous a being. It is the very spirit and core of all evil—the quintessence of ungodliness.

In its influence upon society, hardly less disastrous are the ravages of intemperance; and what makes the case so alarming, the moral sensibilities of the people are hardly alive to the real character of drunkenness as at once a sin and crime. The associations which are thrown around it, and the circumstances under which the thoughtless and unsuspecting are betrayed into it, conceal its real features, and screen it from that moral indignation which, when seen in its true light, every unsophisticated heart must visit upon it. In one aspect, the predominance of the animal over the rational, it is a conspiracy against the law of a refined civilization. This feature of it Aristotle long ago pointed out, and in this aspect, it is confessedly the parent of vulgarity and coarseness, and presents the strongest obstacle to the moral elevation of the people which society has to encounter. Refinement proceeds upon a principle which drunkenness directly contradicts, and, as it is the end of civilization to develop and carry out this principle, the drunkard stands in the way, a monument of degradation and of barbarism.

In another aspect, it is a crime whose name is legion. It is a sin, as an ancient Bishop has beautifully observed, against the whole man and the whole law, against both tables of the one and both parts of the other. It prostrates the body, palsies its muscles, and exhausts its energies. It invades the soul, and undertakes to suppress those very principles of reason and conscience on which the dignity and excellence of man depend. It is an effort to extirpate our moral and rational nature, to root out the very elements of responsibility, and to make man worse than the tiger or the bear. They were made to obey their impulses; we to follow reason and law; and when we have expunged reason and law, we have reversed our natures, and left it a prey to impulses wilder and fiercer than any which rule the beasts that perish. When I look at the subject in this light; when I see that what drunkenness does is really to extinguish for the mo-

ment those very properties of our being which link us with the angels and with God, I am utterly astonished at that obtuseness of moral sentiment which hesitates to brand it as a crime of the deepest dye. The drunkard is not the object of peculiar sympathy or compassion. He is as truly criminal, though it may be not in the same degree, as the robber or the assassin. And this sin never will be put down until it is placed on the footing of other crimes, and visited according to the demands of justice. These truths may seem harsh, but they challenge scrutiny, and on a day like this, we should forego all prejudices and customary modes of thought, and endeavor to look upon this crying evil in the light in which God regards it. Let us not extenuate or excuse. Let us confess our own sins and the sins of our people, and humbly implore that this prolific fountain of disease, suffering, and death may be closed. Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. The man who loves an appetite more than the improvement of his spiritual nature, who, for the sake of what is not so excellent as a mess of pottage, will sell the birthright of his moral dignity, does he not deserve to die? Is he not essentially low, and would not the thought be monstrous that such a spirit should be found among the children of light? I speak as unto wise men: judge ye what I say.

The sins which have been mentioned, and which confessedly prevail to a melancholy extent through the length and breadth of the land, though they call for humiliation and repentance here, are, perhaps, not so appropriate to this occasion, as those which spring from the tendencies and workings of our forms and principles of government. Bear with me in briefly stating what seems to me to be a species of idolatry which cannot fail to bring down upon us, sooner

or later, the righteous judgments of God. I allude to what may be called the *deification* of the people. They are frequently represented as the source of all political power and rights; the very fountain head of sovereignty. It is their will which makes law; it is their will which unmakes it. A supremacy is ascribed to that will which he who reads the Bible and recognizes a God that has dominion over the children of men, must feel to be shocking. They are really treated as a species of Deity upon the earth. Now this whole representation is not only inconsistent with religion, it is equally inconsistent with the philosophy upon which our popular institutions are founded. The government of this country does not proceed upon the maxim that the will of the people is the will of God, and its arrangements have not been made with a reference to the end, that their will may be simply ascertained. This legislature is not a congregation of deputies, or ministerial agents, and you have, and know that you have, higher functions to perform than merely to inquire what do the people think. I do not underrate their opinions; they must always enter as an element in sober and wise deliberation; but what I maintain is, that the true and legitimate end of government is not to accomplish their will, but to do and enforce what reason, conscience, and truth pronounce to be right. To the eternal law of right reason, which is the law of God, all are equally subject, and forms of government are only devices and expedients to reach the dictates of that law and apply it to the countless exigencies of social and individual life. The State is a Divine ordinance, a social institute, founded on the principle of justice, and it has great moral purposes to subserve, in relation to which the constitution of its government may be pronounced good or bad. The will of the people should be done only when the people will what is right, and then primarily not because they will it, but because it is right. Great deference should be paid to their opinions, because general consent is a presumption of reason and truth.

The peculiarity of a representative system is that it governs through deliberative assemblies. Their excellence is in the circumstance that they are deliberative, which affords a reasonable security that truth and justice may prevail. So far from being mere exponents of public sentiment, their highest merit is that they are a check upon popular power—a barrier reared against the tide of passion, to beat back its waves, until reason can be fairly heard. There is no misapprehension more dangerous than that which confounds representative government with the essential principle of a pure democracy. It is not a contrivance to adapt the exercise of supreme power on the part of the people to extensive territory or abundant population, to meet the physical impediments which in large States, must obviously exist to the collection of their citizens in one vast assembly. It is not because the people cannot meet, but because they ought not to meet, that the representative council in modern times is preferred to the ancient convocations in the forum or market place. It is to be prized, because it affords facilities and removes hinderances in the discovery of truth; but the supreme power is truth, and not man; God, not the creature.

Now whatever representations diminish the authority of the Divine law as the supreme rule, and make the State the creature and organ of popular will, as if an absolute sovereignty were vested in that, are equally repugnant to religion and the true conception of our government. An absolute democracy is the worst of all governments, because it is judicially cursed as treason against God, and is given over to the blindness of impulse and passion. I am afraid that in this matter we have trodden upon the verge of error—we have forgotten that the State is ordained of God, and that our relations to each other are those of mutual consultation and advice, while all are absolutely subject to Him.

In proportion as we lose the true conception of the State, we fall short of realizing in ourselves that perfection of devel-

opement and happiness which it was instituted to achieve. Hence, it is not unusual that as extremes meet, those who in theory clothe the people with the prerogatives of God, practically degrade them below the level of intellectual existence. When we cease to regard the State as a great instrument of moral education, it is not surprising that the education itself should be disregarded, and these Gods be left to demonstrate that after all, they are but men.

Let it be once conceded that government is but an organ of the popular will, the business of the statesman is very simple—it is only to find out what the people wish; and as all courts are attractive by the patronage they bestow, we may expect to see a system in operation, whose only tendency is to secure personal popularity. The ambition of Legislators and Senators will be directed to the gaining of popular favour, and whatever arts promise to be most successful, will be held to be legitimate, as they are the customs and usages of the Court, whose seal of approbation is desired. The consequences must be disastrous to all the parties concerned. There will and must be corruption and bribery. There will and must be unbecoming condescensions. The aspirants for distinction, however they may abhor these practices, and reproach themselves in stooping to them, feel compelled to resort to them as the conditions of success, and it will always happen that where the people are deified in theory, they will be degraded and corrupted in practice. Men will be promoted, not according to their wisdom and worth; not according to their ability to answer the ends of the State in eliciting the voice of reason and of truth, and securing the reign of universal justice—they will be promoted according to their pliancy in pandering to popular tastes. The demagogue will supplant the statesman—the representative be replaced with a tool.

These untoward tendencies should be checked in their very beginning and the most effectual method of doing so,

is that each and every educated man should feel the responsibility upon him of contributing to the moral and intellectual improvement of the masses around him. We are all brethren, and as members of the same commonwealth should aim at the culture of the whole community. No man liveth to himself; no man dieth to himself. Let every one who is blessed with influence, position, and power, use these advantages in bringing all classes to that point of moral elevation in which the ballot box becomes the exponent of worth, and office the badge of merit. What a blessed consummation! We may never see it realized, but we may see it approximated. That approximation must be made by the influence of the rich upon the poor, the intelligent upon the ignorant. Each man may do much, and it would be a glorious result of this day's services, if each should resolve that what he can do, whether much or little, shall be honestly and faithfully done among his own constituents.

I shall mention but one other instance of sin which, on this day, calls for humiliation and correction. It may be a consequence of those which have just been insisted on; it is the deplorable extent to which our laws, especially in the punishment of crime, are prevented from being executed. It is a lesson which pervades the Bible, that States and communities may be dealt with as guilty of the crimes which they refuse or neglect to punish. The sixth of the seven precepts of Noah, which enjoins generally government and obedience, insists particularly upon the punishment of malefactors, as an indispensable condition of national prosperity and honour. When that species of transgression, which it is the proper office of the civil arm to rebuke, is permitted to escape with impunity, the land is defiled. The magistrate is not at liberty to bear the sword in vain—he must be a terror to evil doers, as well as a praise to them that do well. It is to be deplored, however, that while the moral sense of the community is properly shocked at the enormous wicked-

ness of condemning the just, and dealing with him according to the deserts of iniquity, there is no such disgust at the equally revolting spectacle of treating the guilty with the impunity which is due only to innocence. A man may violate the law by crimes which cry to heaven for vengeance, and after the first ebullition of resentment has subsided, a sickly and mawkish benevolence interposes to arrest the progress of justice; a feeling of pity and of childish tenderness to the person of the criminal prevents any adequate expression, and, in many instances, any expression at all, of indignation and horror at the crime. In such cases the community assumes the guilt. It is regarded by God as endorsing the transgression, and in the righteous retributions of His providence, may, sooner or later, expect to reap the consequences in the judgments of His hand. There is no principle which is more plainly stated, more clearly illustrated, more frequently exemplified in the sacred Scriptures, than that the punishment of malefactors is a duty. It is not discretionary; not a thing of expediency or policy; it is a duty. God exacts and demands it, and no State or community can disregard this high and solemn obligation, without taking the place, in the sight of God, of the criminal it protects and favours. If it refuses, for example, to shed the blood of the murderer, the blood of the murdered will be visited upon its head.

There are two ways in which communities are punished for unpunished crimes. The first is by diffusing the contagion of the sin. The restraining influences of Divine grace and of human law are equally withheld, and the crimes which have been permitted to escape with impunity become multiplied. God permits numbers to fall into them. The moral ties of the social fabric become loosened, and general insecurity is the fatal result. Other societies look upon them as wanting in dignity of moral sentiment. They are contemplated abroad in the light of the crimes they permit; they

allow abominations among them; and this is regarded, and very justly regarded, as sufficient proof that they feel no strong resentment against them. From the necessary operation of moral causes, the standard of character must become extremely low among any people who have no public and national expressions of displeasure against crime, or who, having them in form, a dead letter upon the statute-book, fail to make them real and effective in practice. It loses its position among surrounding States; forfeits the favour of God; contains the elements of weakness, which are inseparable from a low standard of morals; the land is defiled, and will soon be prepared to spue out its inhabitants under the curse of God.

There are, besides, specific and positive judgments which the great Disposer of events has in store for the people that despise justice. The pestilence and earthquake, the caterpillar and palmer worm, the heaven as brass and the earth as iron, war, blood and famine—these are but samples of the scourges which God has employed in former times, which He is employing now, and which He may employ hereafter to teach the nations of the earth; that it is righteousness alone which can exalt them, and that sin is a reproach to any people.

On this day, my brethren, have we not reason to apprehend that our land mourns on account of unpunished crime? Does not the voice of innocent blood cry to us from the ground? Is not violence increasing in our borders? Is it not a fatal symptom, at once the cause and the effect of evil—a pregnant sign of the increasing insecurity of life, that secret weapons can be carried without branding their possessors as sons of Belial? No people has reached the highest stage of refinement until the authority of law and public opinion exactly coincide; and whenever this result is secured, private protection becomes unnecessary and gratuitous insult impossible. Let the law have its way; visit blood

with blood; seize the murderer at the very horns of the altar, and let him not escape; and that process of deterioration, which begins in unpunished crime, will speedily be checked, and every honest man will be ashamed to be found with an implement of death about his person. It would brand him as a murderer at heart. This shocking practice of carrying concealed weapons ought, in some way, to be rebuked. It is a stain upon us. The first step is certainly to make human life secure, by never suffering it to be taken with impunity. But how bribed and corrupt juries are to be dealt with, except by the gradual progress of truth, civilization and religion, is a problem which I am incompetent to solve. It is something to know and confess the evil, and if we can do no more, we can this day cleanse our own skirts by taking shame and confusion to ourselves on account of the abounding iniquity. The repentance of the rulers may prevail on God to change the hearts of the ruled. Our earnest prayer that we and our land may be delivered from blood-guiltiness, may be heard in a blessing upon the whole Commonwealth.

My brethren, my task is done. I have endeavored to deal faithfully in showing the house of Judah their transgression, and Israel their sin. The consequences of this day will reach forward to eternity. If we have, indeed, humbled ourselves before the Lord, and repented of our own sins and the sins of our people, the same mercy which spared Nineveh and restored Manasseh to his country and his throne, will be full of blessings to us. If we can truly say of the Lord that He is our refuge and our fortress, He will surely deliver us from the snare of the fowler and from the noisome pestilence. We shall not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day, nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. It is he that giveth salvation unto kings—who delivereth David his servant from the

hurtful sword. Now, in the name of this Commonwealth, the common mother of us all, let us offer up our fervent and united supplications, that ours may be that happy people whose God is the Lord. O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do Thou it for thy name's sake; for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee. Oh, the hope of Israel, the saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldst thou be a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night? Why shouldst Thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save? Yet Thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by Thy name; leave us not.