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National Troubles the Result of National Sins: A Fast Day Sermon, preached in Pottsville, Penna., April 30th, 1863

Thompson, Charles I

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Boston University
National Troubles the result of National Sins.

A

FAST DAY SERMON,

PREACHED IN POTTSVILLE, PENNA.,

APRIL 30th, 1863,

BY

Rev. CHARLES I. THOMPSON,

Of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

POTTSVILLE:
PRINTED BY BENJAMIN BANNAN.
1863.
CORRESPONDENCE.

REVEREND C. I. THOMPSON:

Dear Sir,—The undersigned having listened with much gratification to the excellent and patriotic sermon preached by you on the late National Fast Day, respectfully solicit from you a copy for publication.

Very truly yours, &c.,

B. W. PATTENSON,
RICHARD COCHRAN,
JOSEPH S. PATTENSON,
ISAAC BUEK,
B. T. TAYLOR,
JAMES FOUNT,
JOHN T. WERNER.

POTTSVILLE, May 24, 1863.

To MESSRS. BURD PATTERSON AND OTHERS:

Gentlemen:—Having been requested by the Ministerial Association of the M. E. Church of Schuylkill County, together with yourselves, to furnish a copy of the sermon delivered by me on the National Fast Day for publication, I cheerfully comply with your united request.

Your obedient servant,

C. I. THOMPSON.

POTTSVILLE, May 8th, 1863.

SERMON.

22. Who among you will give ear to this? who will hear a voice and hear for the time to come?
23. Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel for the robbers? did not the Lord, against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law.
24. Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle: and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart.

—Isaiah 46:10, 11, 20, 24th and 25th verses.

We have assembled together to-day, my friends, as a congregation of mourners. Not are we singular in this. The loyal portion of the nation is at this moment in humiliation before God. And therefore do we mourn? Over both our national calamities and sins, and more particularly over the latter, for the former have arisen from the latter. God no more afflicts a nation than an individual with out cause. Punishment, with Him, is first with a view to correction; but if this fail, destruction will follow, for He will be glorified. This is insinuated in the case of His ancient people the Jews, to whom the text was originally addressed.

In the very act of observing a national Fast day, we acknowledge this principle in the Divine economy, and I trust that we have assembled not only to acknowledge our sins, but to be in this war of the same duration. Not only put them away from us, for it is only by so doing that we can expect the Divine favor. This is plainly exhibited in the 58th chapter of Isaiah. If this chapter had been penned with an especial view to our case, it could not have been more appropriate thereto. Let us inquire—1st. Whether God hath chastened us. 2d. Why? 3d. The design. 4th. Enforcement.

1st. Wherein &c. That God hath chastened this nation is too evident to need an argument to prove. Our country to a large extent, has been given for a spoil; it has been plundered by the robbers; the Lord has poured upon us the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle; the fire has been kindled round about us, and has seriously burned us.

The greatest calamity which can befal a nation is war. It brings in its train every other evil; the destruction of life; the bitterest extremities; national indebtedness; onerous taxes; increased prices for the necessaries of life, and a general corruption of public morals. But civil war is the most grievous of all others, for it is a weakening of the national resources, both personal and public, and continually endangers national existence and even national existence. In foreign wars only half the expenditure is borne by one nation, in civil, we acknowledge that they are; and
2d. Enquire why? We answer, because we are a sinful nation. Our great sin, that of which all the rest is, we have forgotten God and given him glory to another. This is a sin which he never fails to punish.

God has mercifully favored us as a nation. From being no people he has made us one of the mighty ones of the earth. He brought this vine out into the wilderness and planted it, and protected it, and caused it to grow and expand, until it fills the land. He has given us the fairest domain upon which mortal eyes ever gazed, and the best form of government by which peoples was ever ruled; but we have said in his presence, O Lord, our God, have mercy upon us, who deal falsely with thy name. We would see what a great people we have made ourselves, and have sighted to the overruling Providence of God. We read of one of old who said, "is it not this great Babylon that I have built by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty? when a voice came from heaven saying the kingdom has departed from thee?" and that mighty Babylon has passed away, its site not to be found; and so will God punish every nation which does not glorify him.

We call this a Christian nation, but is it filled with the spirit of the lowest to the highest places of society?

What is the principle upon which men are selected to fill the offices of the land, from the President down to the constable? Is it not moral character? If men of this character are ever selected, it is more the result of accident than design.

Availability, not morality, is the test; who will give party success, and not who will best preserve the office of intelligence.

We venture to say, that nowhere upon the face of the earth, can an assemblage of more corrupt, irreligious men be found, than have been gathered together to represent this nation in the capital of Washington.

There profanity, drunkenness, licentiousness, and a disregard of God's Holy Sabbath, have prevailed. Our legislative halls for years past have been the scene of political and anti-political, where political gladness and sorrow are the triunph or the championship. Nor is this to be wondered at, when we examine the condition of politics as at home. While the ruling spirits in our primary departments are the most corrupt persons of a community. So shockingly bad have these assemblages become, that moral men, to say nothing of religious men, rarely go there, but shun them as places of too great contamination for them. In the electioneering campaigns, he most potent engines of success are, rum, fraud, and bribery. The partisans rarely rise superior to their partisan influences. The chief object of this engine is a distraction and abuse; its design seems to misrepresent the views of its opponents, than to give light upon its own particular tenets, and not only have politicians to exercise a censorship over the ministers of the gospel, and prevent them from declaring the whole counsel of God. — They set up their party, array themselves against any moral measure, and must be silent on that subject, though from time immemorial it may have been a legitimate one, or be subjected to their anathemas. For instance: it is a temporary measure from the pulpit, but politicians please to array themselves against it, and then the pulpit must be silent or be accused of preaching politics. Slavery has always been a legitimate theme in the pulpit, but politicians please to array themselves against it, and then the pulpit must be silent or be accused of preaching politics.

While there is corruption in politics, there is equal corruption in trade. Mammon is the god which has taken trade under his especial care.

If we understand a trade according to its extent to give laws for its regulation, and the laws that agree with the moral law, while if not, the law of God must give way to the laws of trade. Gain is the primary principle of trade, and if a business will pay, it is legitimate, no matter how immoral, or how detrimental to all the interests of religion or good morals.

It is universally admitted that the traffic in ardent spirits is the greatest means of corrupting morals; and yet, not only are hosts ready to engage in such a business, but they are countenanced by good citizens and legalized by the Government.

Business men acknowledge that some kinds of business cannot be pursued, practicing and fraud, and yet they unhesitatingly pursue such business. Even in legitimate business the study generally is, to be sharp rather than honest. The effects of articles of merchandize are carelessly considered, and their excellencies over extolled, until as general has become the habit of truancy and neglect, and almost every man deals with his customer with distrust. In no branch of trade is fraud more extensively practiced than in the manufacturing, for here the fraud can be most easily concealed from unexperienced eyes. Not only is base material substituted for good, but everything that will bear it is deteriorated, until no one thinks himself safe in purchasing the most common and necessary commodity, lest he should be mortified to find he has expended his money for trash utterly useless.

Now let the profession rise superior to the people of trade, and it will lead to the general corruption, and lead and guide public men, and the laws of the land must be silent on that subject, though of time immemorial it may have been a legitimate one, or be subjected to their anathemas. For instance: it is a temporary measure from the pulpit, but politicians please to array themselves against it, and then the pulpit must be silent or be accused of preaching politics. Slavery has always been a legitimate theme in the pulpit, but politicians please to array themselves against it, and then the pulpit must be silent or be accused of preaching politics.

Politics, like Satan, can turn preachers, moral lessons to God's ministers, lay all their own sins upon their shoulders, and consign them, at pleasure, to the tombs of the damned; but ministers must never meddle with politics; however good they are, they must not be commanded; however bad, not rebuked.

But it is said that slavery is a scriptural institution. If it is so, then we have no right to assail it. If it is not a scriptural institution, then the scriptures give license to one institution to violate every moral law. The whole of these overruling evils of slavery certainly violates the principles of justice, mercy, truth, honesty, charity, brotherly kindness, humility, &c., and the golden rule. Some people say: we are so attached to it, that we should do unto us. That is not, evidently the voice of the church throughout the world. For however the light has been cast out, outside of this own country, there slavery has disappeared.

That a system of slavery did exist in the early church, both the Patriarchal and Moabite, is true, but it was such a system as tended rather to the elevation than the depression of its subjects, and such a system was not sustained by the example of the church, but rather the example of the church. This system became obsolete, and is almost entirely disappeared. All that we ask of the advocates of Bible slavery is to place American slavery on a footing with either Jewish or Patriarchal slavery. Did not slavery exist in the Christian Church in the days of the Apostles? Undoubtedly it did, if that might be expected of Christians, that is, that they would adopt the system, and abuse the institution.
to their mutual relationship, and this it has not failed to do. And be it observed here that there are only two addresses to believing masters in this state. In the first, there is a warn ing that believing masters are exceedingly few in comparison with believing servants. These addresses will be found so completely nullify the relations of their spirit, if not its letter. In Eph. 6:9, 10, masters are warned that “they have a master in Heaven, and with whom there is no respect of persons.”

In Col. 4:1-5, masters are commanded to speak good of their masters, and that which is just and equal, and are warned that they have a master in Heaven. Now let masters be governed by the spirit of these two exhortations, and it must be quelled by such laws. Nothing but the shadow. For be it remembered that the principle of justice and humanity by which masters are to be governed, is not that which emanates from human codes, which have one principle of justice and equality for the white men, and another for black men; but it is that which emanates from the law of God, which in express terms declares he is no respector of persons.

But we are not to judge slavery alone by the letter of the gospel, but also by its spirit, and who will dare assert that there is one feature in it in consonance therewith. Thus it is in the words of St. James: It is: “First, pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.” And surely the same is true in the spirit, as well as in the letter of God, and it is the only way to be kept submissive; consequently, not only do the masters refuse to educate them, but they do not permit them to obtain education from such sources as may be within their reach. A slave thus ignorant and degraded, their moral sense is very dull. All who are acquainted with them, know that they have scarcely any moral sense in regard to truth, honesty, and justice. Masters must be like the Jews, read their scriptures, and keep their laws, and the master of the slave, and give us the opportunity to put it away; but when it is now pro claimed that not only is it no evil, but a blessing, and this not only by force; but the slave, even if it be done, the spirit of the gospel, and that it is the Mammon kin of sin.

But may it be asked whether I am not making a Southern sin a national one? I answer no. It is not Southern but national, for there are more pro-slavery men in the North than in the South; and the anti-slavery sentiment in the North prior to this conflict is the sentiment of the nation; it has been at war. There are less than three hundred thousand actual slaveholders in the United States, and yet it is apparent that slavery has ruled and controlled the government from the beginning of its history. Now if there were no other sin to be laid at the door of twenty-seven millions, seven hundred thousand and seven hundred thousand and seven hundred thousand, it would be a crying sin, that he who reigns should be such a slaveholder and be free from the words of St. James: “First, pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.” And surely the same is true in the spirit, as well as in the letter of God, and it is the only way to be kept submissive; consequently, not only do the masters refuse to educate them, but they do not permit them to obtain education from such sources as may be within their reach. A slave thus ignorant and degraded, their moral sense is very dull. All who are acquainted with them, know that they have scarcely any moral sense in regard to truth, honesty, and justice. Masters must be like the Jews, read their scriptures, and keep their laws, and the master of the slave, and give us the opportunity to put it away; but when it is now pro claimed that not only is it no evil, but a blessing, and this not only by force; but the slave, even if it be done, the spirit of the gospel, and that it is the Mammon kin of sin.

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