1863-04-30

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

Thompson, Charles I

Benjamin Bannan

http://hdl.handle.net/2144/3717

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.

POTTSVILLE, May 24, 1863.

REV. 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.,

BORD PATTERSON,
RICHARD CORRAN,
JOSEPH S. PATTERSON,
ISAAC BRUCK,
B. T. TAYLOR,
JAMES FOOTE,
JOHN T. WERNER.

POTTSVILLE, May 8th, 1863.

TO MESSRS. BORD 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.

SERMON.

22. Who among you will give ear to this? who will hearken and hear for the time to come?
22. Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel for the spoil of 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.
23. Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of his battle: and he hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart.

—Isaiah, 41st chap., 20th, 26th and 27th vers.

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 wherefore do we mourn? Over both our national calamities and sins, and more particularly over the former, we 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 instanced 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 renew war of the same duration. Not only put them away from us, for it is only by so doing that we can expect the Divinity's 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 enquire—1st. Wherein God hath chastened us. 2d. Why? 3d. The design. 4th. Enforcement the inquiry.

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 his battle; the fire has been kindled round about us, and has, so far, been the burning of the past of vamps to seek out the inglorious blood of the nation. We have not only suffered, but we must acknowledge the truth, the nation has suffered defeat. In the beginning it was considered that we were an independent, rebellious people, would be crushed, but now times have passed, and its head is now fiercely bruised, and it not only appears more ominous, but more powerful than it was in the beginning. It must be admitted that the human spirit has failed all the gigantic efforts of the nation have failed of success.

If these evils are not at the hand of God, where are they? If they are not, we are destruction. In foreign wars only half the expenditure is borne by one nation, in civil, we acknowledge that they are; and
2nd. Enquire why? We answer, because we are a sinful nation. Our great sin, which may be said to be the cause of 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 wonderfully 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 finest domain upon which mortal eyes ever gazed, and the best form of government that the people was ever ruled; but we have said in our pride, we will see what a great people we have made ourselves, and have sought out the overruling Providence of God. We read of one of old who said, "Is 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 Christian nation, but it is not filled with the meekness 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 that of merit or 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 advance the interests of the country.

We venture to say, that nowhere upon the face of the earth, can an assemblage of more corrupt, irrereligious men be found, than have been gathered together to represent this nation in Washington. There profanity, drunkenness, licentiousness, and a disregard of God’s Holy Sabbath, have prevailed. Our legislative halls for years have been frequented by a political amphitheatre, where political gladiators have contended for the championship. Nor is this to be wondered at, when we examine the condition of the politics at home. Who are the ruling spirits in our primary, secondary, and the most corrupt persons of a community. So shockingly bad have these assemblages become, that moral men, to say nothing of religious, are driven from them, but show them as places of too great contaminations or them. In the electioneering campaigns, he most potent engines of success are, fraud, bribery, and bribery.

The partizan press rarely rises superior to these partisan influences. The chief object of this engineering a destruction and abuse; its design seems rather 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.—Whenever they, for party sake, array themselves against any moral principle, they 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: Temperance, whatever it may be a temporary and private interest, has been a legitimate theme from the pulpit, but politicians please to array themselves against it and the pulpit must be silent or be accused of preaching politics. Slavery has always been a legitimate theme. When the days of Isaiah, who declared that every voice should be broken, and that the oppressed should go free, but politicians make it a political hobby, and forever the pulpit must be quiet.

Politicians, 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 commended; however bad, not rebuked.

While there is corruption in politics, there is equal corruption in trade. Mammon is the god which has taken trade under his especial protection, and he has been pleased to give a code of laws for its regulation, and its protection. These laws agree with the moral law, that if the law of God must give way to the laws of trade. Gain is the primary motive of trade, and a business will pander to it. It is legitimate, no matter how immoral or how detrimental to the interests of religion or good morals.

Unfortunately, the traffic in ardent spirits is the greatest means of corrupting this moral; and yet, not only are hosts ready to engage in such a business, but they are countenanced by good citizens and legislated by the Government. Business men acknowledge that some of their kinds can not be properly handled and sold, and they unhappily pursue such business. Even in legitimate business the study generally is to be sharp rather than honest. The prospects of articles of merchandise are carefully concealed and their excellencies over extolled, until as generally becomes the habit of treachery and deceit. No branch of trade is fraud more extensively practiced than in the manufacturing, for here the fraud can be most carelessly concealed from the inexperienced eye. 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 that he has expended his money for trash utterly useless.

Nor do the most religious professions rise superior to it. There is one profession which, next to the ministry, should rise superior to the general corruption, and lead and guide public morals, and protect the law, and punish, if too many of them are too many, it is one that calls for intelligence and education. The law of the land is based upon the moral law of God. Lawyers, professedly, are trained in the law, in the rights and duties of man, and the advocate of justice. They are to be found in almost every pair of balance in their hands, and to be clubbed with a hopeless dilemma. But O Lucifer, son of the morning, how art thou fallen! There is no case so unjust but lawyers will defend it, if it will pay. They are not so anxious to be adopted as justice in a shrewdness.—They are not so anxious to give their clients the benefit of the law, to save them from it. Other men may be innocent, but rarely they; other men may reverence the sanctuary, and reverence the holy Sabbath, but they scarcely ever.

Today we hold the ministry from their part of the blame for the general corruption. Instead of Crying aloud, spurning not, lifting up their voice like a trumpet, and showing the people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sin; or which they are called "dumb dogs," failing to declare the counsel of God, or failing to stay the tide of immorality, lest they should give offence to prominent transgressors.

No command in the decalogue stands more prominent than, "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," and yet no law is broken with more general impunity. True, the Bauker’s Sabbath last year was not closed, but taverns and rum shops on that day do not do business. Farmers must not plow, nor sow, nor reap upon that day, but corporations may run their cars, and government have been closed, and the quiet of the valleys be profoned by the shrill shriek of the locomotive.

While this is the character of the public houses, the State, of course, is no better, for it is of the same material as the public houses are formed, and the parts are of the same nature as the whole. Because of swearing, the land groans; because of drunkenness, it is starved; because of licentiousness, it rots; because of the desecration of the Sabbath, it weeps. Indeed there is a general unfitness of living, as well as public morals.

But the great sin of the nation is SLAVERY. Mr. Wesley pronounced it the "sum of all villanies" and indeed it is a proposition which embraces all crimes in its ample folds of the master toward his slave, or in respect
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; that of the邦主, showing that believing masters were exceedingly few in com-
parison with believing servants. These ad-
dress will be found so completely to nullify the rela-
tionship itself, that its spirit, if not its letter. In Eph. 6, 1st. 2, 5th. verss, masters are
warned that "they have a master in Heav-

nen with whom there is no respect of persons.
are commanded to treat their servants as
which is just and equal, and are warned that they have a
master in Heaven. Now let masters be gov-
erned by the spirit of these two exhortations, and it
must be question be left? Nothing
but the shadow. For be it remembered that the prin-
ciple of justice and equality by which
masters are to be governed, is not that
which emanates from human codes, which
have one principle of justice and equality for
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

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 factor
in it in consonance therewith.

Then, too, there is the spirit of the slave
in the two exhortations. The spirit of
the slave has been very kind and con-
scientious. There are less than four hundred thousand actual
shareholders in the United States, and yet
it is apparent that slavery has ruled and con-
trolled the nation from the beginning of its history. Now
if there was no other sin to be laid at
the door of twenty-seven millions, seven hundred
thousand, it has been so 

and cruel enough to be ruled and governed
by three hundred thousand, it would be a

The world's work is done. The
slave is the first to be kept subservient; 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
means.

But this is not the whole story. There is a
morality which exists among the whites, for
while female slaves are

Heaven, for which we are barriers and may
expect to feel more keenly His retributive
justice.

These then, my brethren, are the reasons
why we are opposed by so many. So many of them have
been put away from us by God's will, and in doing so He will bless us, and cause us
to prosper as a nation, for we have never done
before, for the sake of obedience to be
which has displeased Him, and "walking
forth from henceforth in His holy ways." In
the language of the prophet: "The wicked must
forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man
his thoughts, and return unto the Lord, and
He will have mercy, and to our God, and He
will abundantly pardon." This is as binding
upon a nation as upon an individual. But
it may be said that there are barriers in the
way of a nation, in the putting away of nation
al sins, which do not exist with individuals
in putting away private sins; and it is
said that a constitutional barrier exists with
our nation, except with ancient people, the Jew.

4th. Lastly, let us inquire in the language
of the text, "Who among you will bear you
to this? who will be willing to listen to the
forbearance of the Lord? who will admit the
truths, but will not apply the remedy
of the world are too apt to look upon national
crimes as too high for them to meddle with,
forgetting that nations are made of individ-
uals, and that each must act his part in the
reforming of national abuses.

It is "righteousness which excites a nation,
while sin is a reproach to any people. In
the name of the Lord, and the people to whom He has chosen for

Without overlooking any longer the
tendency to corrupt the morals of the whites, for while female slaves
are lacking in the principles of chastity, the

3. Three hundred thousand slaves would
hold in restraint four millions of slaves.

4. We enquire: Wherefore does He afflict
us? First, to lead us to repentance, and re-
formation, in order to bless us. Second, if
the gospel is true, it must be this: He brings
his people to the end of the road, and when
He has done His work, He says, "I have
endured others, and now I must leave them
in order to work in me."

5. First, this chastisement is to lead us to
repentance, and this repentance is not to be
simply in form, but in spirit. It must be ex-
horted from the heart, from the inmost
being of man, which has displeased Him, and "walking
forth from henceforth in His holy ways." In
the language of the prophet: "The wicked must
forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man
his thoughts, and return unto the Lord, and
He will have mercy, and to our God, and He
will abundantly pardon." This is as binding
upon a nation as upon an individual. But
it may be said that there are barriers in the
way of a nation, in the putting away of nation
al sins, which do not exist with individuals
in putting away private sins; and it is
said that a constitutional barrier exists with
our nation, except with ancient people, the Jew.

4th. Lastly, let us inquire in the language
of the text, "Who among you will bear you
to this? who will be willing to listen to the
forbearance of the Lord? who will admit the
truths, but will not apply the remedy
of the world are too apt to look upon national
crimes as too high for them to meddle with,
forgetting that nations are made of individ-
uals, and that each must act his part in the
reforming of national abuses.

It is "righteousness which excites a nation,
while sin is a reproach to any people. In
the name of the Lord, and the people to whom He has chosen for

Without overlooking any longer the
tendency to corrupt the morals of the whites, for while female slaves
are lacking in the principles of chastity, the