

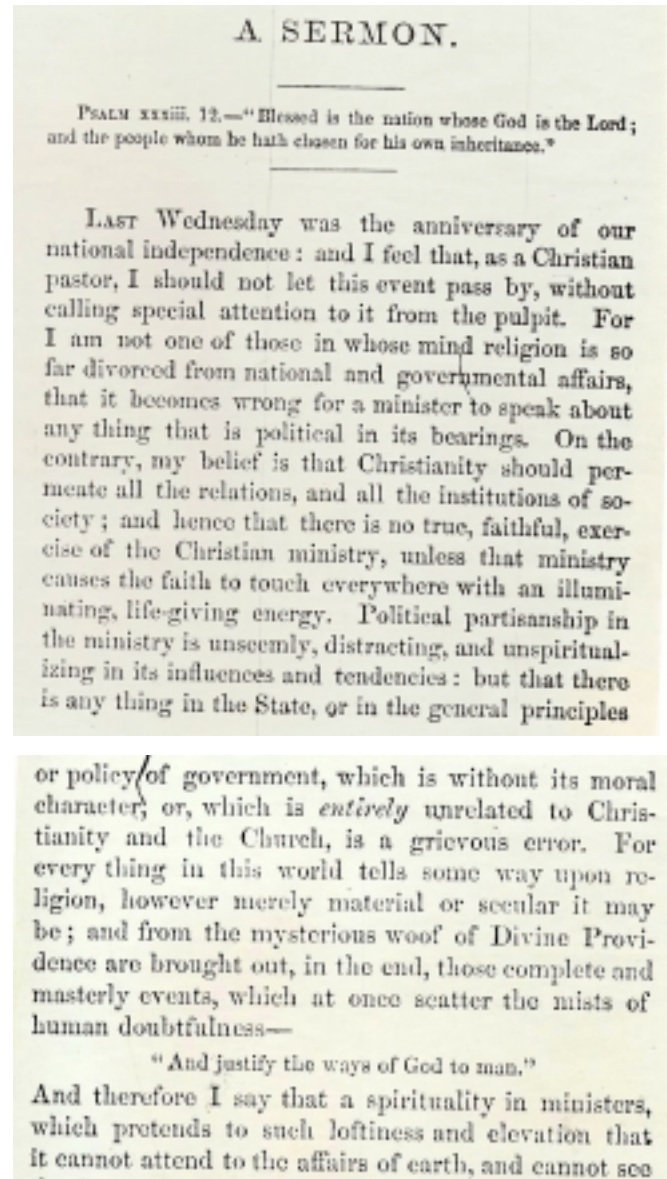
A SERMON.

PSALM XXXiii. 12.—“Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.”

LAST Wednesday was the anniversary of our national independence: and I feel that, as a Christian pastor, I should not let this event pass by, without calling special attention to it from the pulpit. For I am not one of those in whose mind religion is so far divorced from national and governmental affairs, that it becomes wrong for a minister to speak about any thing that is political in its bearings. On the contrary, my belief is that Christianity should permeate all the relations, and all the institutions of society; and hence that there is no true, faithful, exercise of the Christian ministry, unless that ministry causes the faith to touch everywhere with an illuminating, life-giving energy. Political partisanship in the ministry is unseemly, distracting, and unspiritualizing in its influences and tendencies: but that there is any thing in the State, or in the general principles or policy of government, which is without its moral character, or, which is *entirely* unrelated to Christianity and the Church, which is a grievous error. For every thing in this world tells some way upon religion, however merely material or secular it may be; and from the mysterious woof of Divine Providence are brought out, in the end, those complete and masterly events, which at once scatter the mists of human doubtfulness—

“And justify the ways of God to man.”

And therefore I say that a spirituality in ministers, which pretends to such loftiness and elevation that it cannot attend to the affairs of earth, and cannot see



the bearing of Christianity upon government, and laws, and policy, is vain and illusory. There *is* a relation of the pulpit to the commonwealth. Religion *does* take cognizance of all national affairs. Christianity does maintain its ascendancy on the State, and all its concerns: for one of the prime ideas of the Word of God is, the fact of Divine Sovereignty over all the nations of the earth; and the magnificent idea of the Scripture is, that the Lord Jesus Christ is of right “King of kings”—the Great Spiritual Potentate over all the EMPIRES OF CREATION; and that all of them are yet to be brought into subjection to His rule and under the authority of His laws! As an officer in the Kingdom of His grace, that Kingdom which He has established in this world;—a Kingdom which is yet to rule over *this* and all other nations; and, as a citizen of this country, I deem it fit, and meet, that while the ideas of freedom, nationality, and independence, are fresh and lively in your minds, to bring before you the *relation of Christianity to our country*:—or, GOD IN A NATION; with the moral and spiritual lessons connected therewith.

There are *three* principles pertaining to this subject, to which I desire to call your attention:

First, that national greatness is always correlative with the ideas of God and religion.

Second, that the true ideas of God and religion, if maintained in purity by a nation, will make that nation immortal.

Thirdly, that the greatness and renown generated by these ideas, depend upon the *individual* character,

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Thirdly, that the greatness and renown generated by these ideas, depend upon the *individual* character,

spirit, and enterprise of the people.

FIRST. I am to show that national greatness is always correlative with the ideas of God and religion. By this I mean that a nation is great just in proportion to the clearness of its idea of God. If a people think that God is a Spirit, that idea raises, or will raise them among the first of nations. If, on the other hand, they think that God is a stone, or a carved image, or a reptile, they will assuredly be low and rude. A nation that worships stocks, or ugly idols, can never, while maintaining such a style of worship, become a great nation. In ancient times, it is true, there were great nations that were idolatrous, but their infancy was religiously simple; and it was only as they increased in power, dominion, and military renown, that they receded from the simple, natural forms and rites of their fathers; and fashioned, by their gross imaginations, or brought home from their conquests, the hideous idolatries which ruined them. While yet fresh and young, with the mighty power of natural religion in their souls, they were strong, mighty, and prosperous. When luxury and affluence were secured, idolatry arose; and they gradually failed, and at last perished! No nation that we know of ever became great whose origin was *coeval* with a worship of stocks and stones. And however mighty a nation, that *is* idolatrous, is, if it clings to idolatry, it must fall! Should England, or Holland, or Prussia, or the United States, renounce reverence of the true God of heaven, and determine, that henceforth they would worship some noble animal or some carved image; they would at once bid “a long fare-

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well to all their greatness." And not only because God would frown upon them for such base apostasy; but, as I think I may state it—on the abstract principle that the idea of God contains, inherently, such transforming power in a nation, that it makes or un-makes, according as it is clear, and right, and grand; or, on the other hand, is low, and rude, and sensual.

This is what I mean by the statement, that national greatness is correlative with the ideas of God and religion.

And now, for a few moments, let us think upon this subject, and endeavor to see what measure of truth it contains, and how we may appropriate that truth to our own profit, to the good of our neighbors and country, and to the glory of God.

Now, if you take up the speeches or treatises which explain such national or economical questions as I have referred to, you will find much said concerning the source and origin of the greatness of nations. We shall find sage and weighty observations concerning trade and commerce; industry and manufactures; agriculture and production; wealth and luxury; science and art. As a general thing, these are considered the fountain-heads, whence have arisen the mighty streams of national greatness in the different ages of the world.

There can be no doubt whatever that commerce has a vast deal to do with increasing the might and power of nations: and so has agriculture; and so manufactures; and so likewise science, in its various departments.

But then the question arises, what leads to com-

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merce? to agriculture? to manufactures? to wealth?
to art? I am speaking now, understand, not of the
mere supply of natural wants, by fitful activity, as
in the savage state—I refer to SOCIETY, if you please,
in the early buddings of civilization. What leads, I
ask, to these developments of organized society? Why,
the enterprise of men! But what is the main spring
of human enterprise? Thought. But then, again,
what is the generative principle of the mind's active
power and activity? THE IDEA OF GOD!

Let me present a few facts, which I think will
neither be doubted nor denied. Look around you
among the nations, and notice for a moment their
characteristics. There is England, and Holland, and
Prussia, the United States, and France, and Belgium.
They are the greatest nations on the face of the earth.
In their religious ideas they entertain the true and
pure idea that God is a Spirit. But the time has
been when their ancestors were barbarians; without
commerce or enlightenment; and then they wor-
shipped dumb idols, and bowed down in fear and
awe to graven images. Christianity was introduced
among them a few centuries since, and the night of
ancestral darkness departed; and it is a fact that this
idea, that is, of the oneness and essential spirituality
of the Divine Being, has been unfolding and develop-
ing itself; that has caused their rise, gradually, and
in proportion as they received it with more and
more clearness and distinctness, to their present com-
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But perhaps some one here will want to know whether these principles pertain to those ancient States, whose names are associated with so much grandeur and magnificence. There were Nineveh, and Babylon, and Egypt, among the first empires of the world. He may ask, "Was it the idea of God which carried them up to the height of their glory?" This, without doubt, was the case. When our first parents left their Paradisiacal home they carried with them, though tarnished, those pristine ideas of God and His attributes, which had been their crown and glory in Eden. And there is evidence in the Bible and in profane history, that the enlightenment of our first parents was transmitted, for centuries, to their descendants; and was the cause of all that wondrous refinement and civilization, the fragments of which have been disintombed from the sands,—the obelisks and the pyramids of Egypt; and the monuments are now being dug up from beneath the banks of the Euphrates; and which, transmitted to England and to France, adorn the Tuileries and the British Museum. It is a wrong idea to suppose that the first ages of the world were blind and uncultivated; and equally wrong is it to suppose that man *advanced* from barbarism to civilization, instead of that he fell from it. Adam was doubtless a most complete and proper man; and his descendants, although they carried with them for many hundred years, some of his high enlightenment and rare capability, still must have greatly deteriorated from the high pattern of their great progenitor. But still, though fallen, they did carry with them, as they spread abroad in the

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earth, those lofty ideas of the great God, with whom their Father talked in Paradise: and those ideas made them great, started thought, kept up the consciousness of a high manhood, led to enterprise, originated large ideas and grand purposes, prompted them to build great cities, and to lay the foundations of magnificent empires. But, alas! so soon as they lost those lofty principles, then commenced the facile process of sure decline. As they became idolatrous, weakness advanced, and ruin ensued. This was doubtless the downward course of the first *five empires of the world*. By the inspiring force of simple, natural religion, they were raised to power, majesty, and culture. But when they became deceived and seduced by the idolatries of their neighbors; or allowed a loose authority to a corrupt imagination; and fashioned the forms of a Divine Power to themselves; then, not all their intellectual greatness, nor the vastness of their imperial power, could preserve them from decay and ruin. The whole process is detailed by St. Paul, in his epistle to the Romans—"Because that when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." And when they took the birds, and beasts, and creeping things as their deities, God brought them down to the level of beasts and creeping things! and laid Nineveh, and Babylon, and Egypt, low in the dust!

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And where, I ask, on the face of the earth, can you find a nation that worships birds, and beasts, and creeping things, that is great, powerful, and free? Where? Not one! A people are always as high as their idea of God. If their idea of God is a reptile or a worm, they must grovel, they cannot rise; they cannot be great; no commerce, laws, nationality, art, or manhood can proceed from such a people. The ideas of God and religion rule the human being; and if, in a nation, those ideas are low, then the heads and souls of that people are bowed down, and know no elevation. But, on the other hand, the true idea of God magnifies a nation's mind, and leads to development in every mode and direction: for it lifts up man to every thing great and noble; and so enlarges his soul that the depths of the earth are not deep enough for his penetrating gaze; and the boundless seas not grand and majestic enough for his swelling thought; not the illimitable spheres above vast and extensive enough for excursive reason; and so, after all adventurous daring, and grand endeavor, and ennobling effort, his soul is forced back to the Great Being, the idea of whom, within his soul, originated all his thought and action; to seek satisfaction in the Infinite and the Eternal! But the soul that worships things low and grovelling, clings to the dust; and is not only divorced from all spiritual greatness, but knows not even the simplest beauty of nature, nor yet the excellence of its own being!

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SECOND. I advance now to the second point which I was to speak of, that is, that the true ideas of God and religion, if maintained in purity by a nation, will

make that nation immortal.

I present this consideration because every thoughtful man desires that his country may live; and hence it is a matter of importance to all such, to learn and know what will prolong, and hand down to the future that nation's life, with which he is connected, and which he loves. There are various causes which cause this solicitude in the breast of a good citizen: the great poet of our language says that "man is a creature who looks both before and after;" and among his many cherished sentiments, are hope for his children and love of his country. And I have no doubt that, to a great extent, it is because reason and manly feeling thus act in man, that, besides anxiety for a pure *past* history, a Christian patriot ponders deeply upon the interests of the *future*. It is the wont of most men, in the ordinary current of life, to think but little whether they shall live *very* long in this world: they know they must die; they know the allotted period of man's life, and they look for the bound of their earthly existence at no very remote period. But no good citizen, no true patriot, wants his country ever to die; but wishes rather that, when buried and cold in the tomb, his country may live on, and be immortal! But here the question arises—"Is immortal life a possible element in a nation's being? Such a thing has never been. Man has never witnessed vitality of this kind and of such a measure in history. China, though dating back, it is said, to the time of Noah—China, whose age numbers thousands of years—China, the oldest of all governments, is going to ruin! And when we read

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the history of mankind, we see nothing but the rise and fall of nations; but *permanent*, national existence—nowhere. Even Macaulay looks forward to the time when some civilized New Zealander shall come across the wide Ocean; and standing on London bridge, look around upon the ruins of St. Paul, and the fragmentary and columnar remains of the fallen Metropolis of Britain.

But though this *has* been the fashion of past national existence, yet I must confess, that I cannot approve the reasoning, which would necessarily make it the certain destiny of all *future* nationalities. For one thing seems quite clear, that the promises of perpetual endurance of divine favor, for “thousand generations,” were made to the Hebrews in their *corporate* capacity; and imply also, that if that people had been true on their part, to the covenant made with them; God, on His part, would have been faithful *forever to them*. Moreover, there are causes which now affect the fate of nations, which never did before in all ancient history; and it is only, by parity of reasoning, that is, that like causes produce like effects, that we can conclude that, because past nations have all perished, therefore all modern nations *must* perish. The reason why the great nations of antiquity perished, was because they lacked some strong preserving element, an unrelaxing conservatism; which could redeem them from the shock of adverse circumstance or ruinous influence, and yet live; they had it not, and they died! Their commerce, letters, laws, luxury could not preserve them; for there is no inherent life in commerce, letters, laws, and luxury.

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Their religions did not, for they were false, and all error is full of death; and therefore these nations died. but now an element *has been* brought into modern civilization, which was never known before, and which makes it a question, whether all nations must go down into decay and ruin. Since the coming of Christ, a new principle has been introduced into this world of ours, and into national life, which can become part of a nation's existence, and thus preserve, intact, its vitality! I know the objection: —"Man dies, and he is necessarily mortal. *What is a nation but the aggregate of the individual men it contains?* Therefore a nation is necessarily mortal and decaying." But I doubt much the correctness of this mode of thought. I cannot think that the assertion that "a nation is *but* the aggregate of the individual men within it," contains the full and the complete idea of national being. A nation is SOCIETY, in an organized state, under the influence and control of broad principles and superior ideas. *This* does not define man, the individual: neither can any single incident or accident of the one or the other, be presented as representing the proper idea of either. The necessary mortality of man, therefore, cannot imply the necessary decay and ruin of the State, for the man dies; nay, whole generations of men die; but the State lives and flourishes; and it is my belief, that now, under the vital influences of the pure religion of our Lord Jesus Christ, the nation that recognizes the God of heaven as its supreme Governor, and places itself even under the sanction of His laws and governance, may look for the infusion of a

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higher life than has been the usual wont of nationalities, and may run along the pathway of a glorious immortality. And here the Christian patriot of Liberia can see whence *this* nation, though young, weak, without resources, and yet in feeble infancy, can lift up its head, and look down calmly, and with assurance, through the deep vistas of the future; and purpose in God, to have for her children, in ages yet to come, national life; and live on forever, mindless of decay, and fearless of ruin! We know that there is no trust in wealth; for Babylon was wealthy, and she is gone. We know there is no reliance to be placed in power and luxury; for Rome had these, and they could not save her. We know that great commerce and extensive trade can give no security; for the Phoenicians were thus distinguished, and they went down. We see that national life and perpetuity do not spring from learning and wisdom; for old, cultivated, and elegant Greece is now a "base kingdom." But independently of all this, we also know that if the light of letters grows dim; if the power of commerce and of wealth relaxes; if luxury cloyes and enervates; and the might of arms becomes nerveless and fails; we know, I say, a power which knows no decay and which repels all weakness; which is all-vital and energetic; which, amid the transitoriness of all temporal things, retains the fixed reality of heaven; and which, here, amid the things of time, shows even now the might and endurance of eternity:—I mean the religion of Jesus.

THIRDLY. But these various suggestions I have made are not alien from duty, but rather have a

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weight of individual responsibility connected with them; and hence I have joined with my two former propositions, the principle, namely—"That the greatness and renown which the ideas of God and religion generate, depend for the vitality, in a nation, upon the individual character, spirit, and enterprise of the people in that nation." I beg to call your attention to this point, and I desire to impress it most strongly upon your minds. We talk of a nation, but too often forget that a nation is made up of the aggregate of the individuals that live in that nation. We speak of our country, but should never fail to remember that this, our country, is composed of all the integral persons who are citizens of this country; that you and I, and your neighbor beside you on your seat, and my neighbor by me here, and all the other men, women, and children in the land, make up our country and compose this nation. And hence, whatever greatness or renown a country may have, it flows in from the *individual*, personal contributions of this, and that, and the other man, and of *all* our fellow-citizens; who, either by industry, enterprise, skill, talent, statesmanship, learning, or, far above all, by character and goodness, give the country a name, and add to its greatness and renown. For you should remember that no one man can make a country. We say that Peter the Great made Russia, that William Pitt saved England. But these expressions are only figurative. What we mean by them is, that these master minds directed the spirit of their respective nations; and, by their talent and character, led the people to do those things which, in the one

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case, raised Russia from barbarism, and in the other kept England out of the greedy grasp of Napoleon.

For any one can see that neither monarch nor the statesman could do these things alone. There is every probability, moreover, that there were as great men in Russia and England as these men, only that they were not in the position to lead the national mind; and, still further, that these other great men, in their several positions, were large contributors to the whole mighty mass of virtue, enterprise, and character, which swelled up the honor and the fame of their respective countries. And herein we have *our* individual teachings, each and every one of us, as Christian patriots of Liberia. Whatever Liberia be *now*, or may become in the future, depends upon the aggregate character of her citizens. No one man can make Liberia a great nation. Her greatness, which is all in the distant future, if, indeed, she ever attain it, can never come from any single individual, be he who he may. But if you and I, and all our compatriots, “quit ourselves like men,” for the glory of God in this land, and for the honor of our country; and transmit a pure piety and masculine virtues to our children; then the name and the institutions of Liberia shall be perpetual, and she herself immortal! But you will notice the condition I introduce, that is, that we quit ourselves like men—like *godly* men—each and every one of us, in our respective spheres. To this end the scholar must bring his lore; the merchant his enterprise and wealth; the man of letters his refinement; the artizan his skill; the mechanic his plodding energy; the agriculturalist his

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industry. Every effort must be made to deepen the tone of morals among us; to increase a sense of personal honor and manly integrity; to make the attainment of mere self-ends to be regarded as low and vulgar; to create a public sentiment in which the baseness of men, and womanly shame, shall, perforce, seek obscurity instead of exhibiting a brazen front; and, in fine, to give such an ascendancy to Christian truth and principle, as may strengthen and encourage good men, and delight the heart of our God. Our children must be trained up in intelligence, manners, and virtue, and our wives and daughters must present to the world an unstained chastity, a purity and simplicity of manners, at once pleasing and attractive, and a womanly dignity and self-respect, which shall both demand respect and excite admiration.

A spirit of vigorous enterprise must be at once originated by government as well as individuals: bold, but judicious ventures must be made in every direction—in farming, in trade, in commerce—to give importance to the nation in foreign lands, and to increase the individual wealth of our merchants and citizens. I speak of wealth as a desirable acquisition; and, as a Christian minister, I have no hesitation in doing so: for with proper aims and purposes before him, any man may as properly be ambitious of riches as of health, or shelter, or mental growth, or of innocent recreations. For although *godless* riches and unsanctified wealth “make themselves wings and fly away,” and “perish by evil travail,” and are filled with “deceitfulness,” and are spoken of as “corrupted,” yet we see, both in sacred writ and in God’s

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providence, that He gives riches, and wealth, and affluence, as precious gifts and favors, to the chosen one whom He wills. For "Abraham was very rich" through His favor; and David had earthly prosperity in his day, and "died full of riches honor;" and to Solomon the Lord declared—"I will give thee both riches and honor." Moreover, we find the record that "the Lord maketh poor and maketh rich"—that "the blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich"—in the blessing of Solomon—"both riches and honor come of God," and that "by the fear of the Lord are riches and honor." When I speak of wealth, however, I do not refer to the pitiful sums, which some minds of narrow scope aim after, for mere personal pride and luxurious content; but rather to the solid accumulations—to the grand acquisitions which may *approximate*, in our humble circumstances, to the great capital of merchants, and traders, and landed proprietors, in great lands abroad. And this, not that it should make men foolish—priding themselves on the perishing things they may amass; which is the most ludicrous thing the angels look down upon;—but wealth to do good, to glorify God, to add to the nation's importance, to push forward civilization through Africa, to promote science, to found virtuous families, to increase comfort, and to provide for those, for whose existence and well-being we as parents are responsible. And thus, by industry, by enterprise, by skill, by learning, all colored and characterized by genuine piety; let us each and all, in our several positions in life, and in the fear of God, make a new start for the upbuilding of the Republic and the glory of the land!

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In conclusion, let me make a few suggestions, which, I think, are in their nature calculated to give encouragement, self-reliance, and incentive to the manifestation of high and manly citizenship.

1. First, then, let me say that the fact, that we belong to *that* race of which we are members, is incentive to earnest endeavor for the Commonwealth. A prime consideration here, is the fact that we are members of a but rising race, whose greatness is yet to be achieved—a race which has been spoiled and degraded for centuries, and in consequence of which has been despised. For the name, and fame, and character, and well-being of this race, in every quarter of the globe, let us, as we are in duty bound, strive, by the means of this our nationality, to afford them cheer, by the sight of manhood and of progress here, and give them

“Secret refreshings that repair the strength,
And fainting spirits uphold.”

In another respect, moreover, we are stirred to energy and activity. We belong to a race possessed of the qualities of hope and endurance, equal at least, to any class of men in the world. The mid passage alone was enough to exterminate any people; but we, in large remnants, have survived it, both in body and soul! We have lived through all the lacerations and soul-crushings of the deadly system of slavery, and the miserable influences of caste. Not merely the life of the *body*, but the moral being, the *SOUL* of this poor race, has stood the shock of mental pain, and anguish, and sorest desolation, and yet come forth at last triumphant! Signal examples

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are vouchsafed us for courage and for hope. Bear witness, departed shades, who attest the moral strength and endurance of this race! Thou immortal Toussaint! Statesman, General, Ruler! Thou generous Eustace! Christian and Philanthropist! and all the other unnumbered hearts who have struggled, alas! in vain for freedom! Or ye, who on many a plantation have calmly, quietly died, rather than submit to the yoke! Or, ye other children of faith, who, under the saddest of all earthly ills, have manifested the wondrous power of grace, by the wisdom of patience and the calm dignity of hope!

2. I remark, *secondly*, that we have a further inducement to pious patriotism, from the fact that God's gracious favor is evidently manifested to our race. For three centuries we have been passing through the ordeal of trial and suffering, in the severe school of slavery: and yet in all these days God has been with our fathers, upholding and sustaining them. Other races have been swept out of existence, but God has preserved *our* life; and, in the lands of our captivity, has given our brethren freedom from the yoke, the light of Christianity, and some of the enjoyments of intelligence and culture. And now, wherever we look, the acknowledged manhood of the race has been won, and the race is going upward and onward to high intelligence and increased power. Not only are the emancipated and freed in the British and French West Indies, but, in the changes which emancipation has caused, the children of the former oppressors of our race are being reduced; and the blacks are rising to influence, and

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are fast coming into the possession of the property of their former masters. The whole of the British West Indies are yet to form, under English authority, one large black empire. In Brazil the same genial process is being eliminated out of all the dark obscurities of slavery. In Hayti there exist undoubted evidences of a growing civilization, refinement, intellectual culture, and commercial expansion, and clearly showing, that, were it not for the incubus of Romanism, Haytian civilization would fast run up to its culminating point. In the United States the free black men of the North, by the encouragement of friends, by the formation of High Schools and the opening of Colleges, are making rapid progress in the acquisition of leaning and in strength of character.

Now, with these evidences of God's favor upon our race, can we do otherwise than hold up our heads and press on with vigor. Sixty years ago the savans of Europe and America were debating the question—"Whether the Negro is a man?" and now there is no moral interest in the world which commands so much attention and regard as that of the black man; agitating even disinterested but generous Europe, from Britain to the domains of the Czar; and shaking, from centre to circumference, the fabric of American nationality. And with all the prerogatives and advantages of our own nationality and Protestantism—the latter of which is not possessed either by our French West Indian brethren or by Hayti—shall we not strive to take the lead, ere long, of the entire black race, and by our pure example, by the

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manifestation of thrift and high endeavor, cheer them on their way, and give them full demonstration of the real though latent capacity we possess? Let us accept with gratefulness the indications of God's gracious favor to us, and tread with firmness the open pathway of science, letters, religion, and civilization!

And now I close as I began, holding up before you, in conjunction, the ideas of "GOD AND OUR COUNTRY." It is a matter of the prime importance that we keep ever fresh and lively in our minds this grand relation: "GOD AND OUR COUNTRY." Not God alone, regardless of human relations, for that is nothing but fanaticism: as if there could be a healthy piety indifferent to the family or the nation! Nor yet, on the other hand,—"*OUR COUNTRY*"—mindless of God and regardless of the sanctions of religion, for that is Atheism; and in the end, in its effects, confusion and ruin. Our only safety under the moral government of this world is in fastening our country upon the throne of God. For without Him there is no life, in the body nor in our souls; in states nor in institutions; in nature, in plants, nor in trees; in the depths of the seas; amid the whirling hosts of the heavens. And so there is no life in a nation without God. "In Him is life," and there is none besides. All growth proceeds from Him, whether it be the tiny plant "beneath a mossy stone," or the spiritual vitality of the grandest Archangel in the eternal heavens! All fixedness, all endurance depend on Him, whether it be the firm seating of the hills around us, or the

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“GOD AND OUR COUNTRY”—for if this idea, in all its true relations, governs the minds of this people, then shall your country be unto God for ever, for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory.
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