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CAUSE, CHARACTER AND CONSEQUENCES  
OF THE  
WAR WITH MEXICO.

A  
DISCOURSE

DELIVERED ON THE  
DAY OF THE ANNUAL FAST,

APRIL 8, 1847.

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BY THOMAS N. LORD,  
PASTOR OF THE SECOND CHURCH, BIDDEFORD, MAINE.

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## SERMON.

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THEY chose new gods ; then was war in the gates.—JUDGES 5 : 8.

The great truth which the history of Israel forces upon every attentive observer is, that its national crimes were the cause of its national calamities. This fact is presented in the text, which forms a part of the "triumphal song, sung by Deborah and Barak after the signal victories of the forces of Israel over Jabin and Sisera." After an expression of praise to God for his merciful interposition, and wonderful deliverances wrought for Israel, the song refers, in the most vivid manner, to the miserable condition into which the nation had brought itself, by its apostacy from the true religion, in which it had been educated. Between the two statements in the text, there is an intimate connection. The one is the cause, the other the effect. The nation departed from the true God, and plunged itself into idolatry, and as a punishment for its sin, he suffered it to be involved in war, and experience the calamities which follow in the train of this dreadful scourge.

What was true of Israel, has been true of all the nations which ever existed. God has dealt with them according to their character. When they have filled up the measure of their wickedness, He has meted out a full measure of national retribution. This truth is written in letters of light on the page of history, and he who runs may read. This is the principle upon which God is dealing with this nation. He will decide our national destiny according to our national character. If righteous, he will exhalt us, if wicked, he will

bring us low. The curse causeless shall not come, nor deserved wrath be withheld.

One of the sorest judgments which God brings upon the nations which will not serve him, is war. This judgment has befallen us. What the text affirms of Israel is true of our own beloved country. The peace we have been permitted to enjoy for more than thirty years has departed. We are now in arms against a neighboring nation, and every days report makes us acquainted with scenes of suffering in the camp, and of slaughter on the battle field. With propriety, may it be said of this nation; they chose new gods; then was war in the gates.

If there is any thing which should affect the hearts of Christians, and call forth their united, fervent supplications on this day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer, it is the fact that this nation is actually engaged in a desperate contest with a neighboring people. This fact makes this day, a day of darkness and gloominess, and should lead us to look to God for grace to support, and for wisdom to direct. It is a fact of such a nature, and of so much importance, as to warrant me to make it the theme of my discourse this morning. Say not I am meddling with what does not concern me, because I am a minister of the gospel. My official station does not annihilate my right as a citizen, or my obligation to use my influence to oppose what is wicked, and defend what is righteous. So far from this, my position, as a minister of the gospel, imposes a fearful responsibility upon me, and subjects me to a fearful doom, if I meet not that responsibility with unshrinking fidelity. My immortal destiny is suspended upon the manner in which I serve God and my generation, in the place I occupy. God says, if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned, if the sword come and take away any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.

I am aware that the subject I have chosen is intimately connected with the politics of parties. But the subject is not political merely. It has its moral and religious aspects. Its political bearings I leave in the hands of politicians. Its moral and religious aspects come within the province of the ministers of the gospel, and it is in reference to these that I shall speak at this time, confining myself to the cause, character and consequences of the present war.

What then has been the procuring cause of the war in which this nation is now engaged? The same which involved the people of Israel in war. The procuring cause of their calamity was their choosing new gods. They forsook the Lord God of their fathers, and served other gods. They bowed down to idols, and provoked the Lord to anger, and he suffered them to fall into the hands of the spoilers, that spoiled them.

The history of events which have transpired in reference to the war we are waging, shows most conclusively, that it is a reckless disregard to God's authority, the spirit of daring impiety which has brought us to our present position. If, as a nation, we had heeded the teachings of the Bible, if those who fill our most important public stations, and direct our great national interests, had regarded God's law, we should have been saved from the curse of war, "the abomination which maketh desolate."

We have a system of iniquity among us as hateful to God, as unreasonable, cruel, and destructive, as any system of idolatry and heathenism which ever existed. I mean American Slavery. This is the Moloch which our national government have long worshipped, and the demon to which is sacrificed the peace, prosperity, and purity of the nation. This monster of deformity and cruelty has so much beauty and benevolence in the eyes of many politicians, that they cannot endure the expression of a sentiment against it.— Those who will not bow down and worship it, must be cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace of political reprobation, heated seven times hotter than usual. Every

northern statesman who has dared to open his mouth against the iniquitous policy of slavery has been brow beaten, and insulted. Hideous as the monster slavery has become in the eyes of christianity, cruel as are the sacrifices it demands, wide spread as are the scenes of desolation it has caused, powerful as has been its influence to corrupt and destroy our fair inheritance, yet it receives the patronage of the general government, and is nourished as the child of promise. Whenever a decision is to be made between slavery and freedom, that decision proves that the sympathy of the government is with slavery, and that its energies are employed to sustain and extend it.

It is the "evil genius" of slavery that has led us into war with Mexico. Had it not been for the "peculiar institution," and a fixed determination of the government to strengthen and perpetuate it, we should have remained in the enjoyment of peace, and all the waste of property, and profusion of blood, and sacrifice of life which have occurred, would have been prevented. Why was Texas annexed to this Union? The interests of slavery demanded it. And what has the annexation of Texas to do with our war with Mexico? It was the fatal step which led to this war. These are stubborn facts which wily politicians in vain attempt to gainsay or resist. It is already acknowledged by some of the chief actors in the scene, that taking Texas as we did, is the real cause of our war; and that the South desired the war, and has enlisted its energies in its prosecution, for the sake of promoting the interests of slavery.

It was then the rapacious, devouring spirit of slavery that led to the present hostile movements against Mexico. The spirit of liberty could not have perpetrated the deeds of selfishness and injustice which have resulted in the present war. Slavery has done it, and it is a work worthy of itself, and in bringing about which, it has revealed its odious nature, and given its hateful character to the civilized world. It has shown itself in its violation of the constitution, in its reckless disregard of solemn treaties, in its readiness to trample upon



the rights of others, and most of all in its bold defiance of the law of God. It has written its own disgraceful history, and stamped upon its forehead the mark of its abominations.

I am aware that many are slow to believe that the present war is owing to slavery, and is encouraged for the purpose of perpetuating it. We are told of wrongs which Mexico has done us, of redress she has been slow to make. Yes after slavery has obtained her main object, and placed things in a train to secure all the rest, as she hopes; after she has taken a whole province from Mexico, and sent an army of invaders to plant themselves a hundred miles upon her territory, and driven the inhabitants from their own land; then she raises a huge cry of the wrongs which Mexico has inflicted upon this country. These doings of slavery will not bear the light. There is the spirit which is not of God, that has directed this whole affair; and I tremble for my country, when I behold what slavery has done for it, and what my countrymen are willing to do for slavery. I am alarmed, when I reflect, that the devotion of this government to a system which bids defiance to the Almighty, and dethrones the noblest workmanship of his hands, has subjected us to the scourge of war. It is for such a system that we are spending millions of dollars, sacrificing thousands of lives, and dooming a multitude of souls to the perdition of hell. What a record are we making for the generations which shall come after us, when, in the light of truth, they shall see what American Slavery was in its nature and its effects. The fact that slavery is the real cause of the present war, and that the extent and perpetuity of this unchristian, and heaven-condemned institution were the objects for which the crusade was undertaken, makes it a terrible wicked enterprise. The cause of it is horrible, the motives which led to it detestable.

We will next consider the character of the war. One thing is certain; the contest is not that trifling affair which many supposed it *would* be. When some of our flaming politicians were told that their measures, carried out, would certainly in-

volve us in war with Mexico, they replied, "that is of no consequence; we can carry on such a war without feeling it; we can make Mexico do as we please without much exertion or expense." But have these anticipations been realized?— I think the event has already proved that this war with Mexico is a serious affair. We find ourselves engaged in a strife of some consequence. Let the *cost* of this war speak. Let the poor soldiers, who have sacrificed their lives speak. *Should* the war cease this very day, the winding up of the scene *would* make it appear that it has been a thing altogether different from what it was foretold to be. When I think of the spirit of boasting manifested by many who supposed that the conquest of Mexico could be easily accomplished, I am reminded of the laconic reply of Ahab to the threats of Benhadad, Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off. If the sacrifice and suffering which this war has already occasioned should induce some of our public men to regard the advice of Solomon, it would be well for the country. He says, the beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water; therefore leave off contention before it be meddled with.

Another thing concerning this war is, that it is "exceedingly unpopular" with a large majority of the people. Mr. Calhoun, the most strenuous advocate of the measures which have caused the war, made the following remark in the senate. "It cannot be denied, or disguised, that the existing war is exceedingly unpopular with the great mass of the American people." There is too much light abroad upon the subject of war; this people have too long been blessed with the teachings of christianity, to make them approve of commencing hostilities with a friendly power, for trifling reasons. When the Oregon question was creating some probability of a rupture with England, the voice of the people was for peace. They did not believe there were sufficient grounds for war. Neither do they believe that war with Mexico was necessary. They did not desire it, and many, whose hands are in it, have always had their hearts against

it. Many of those gallant officers now in the field, or who have already fallen in battle, have ever been opposed to the war. They have been forced into the contest by the recklessness of ambitious men, who suffer passion to overpower reason, who make a show of patriotism in their war speeches, but would be the last "to take the field in person," and engage in bloody conflict of "embattled hosts." From considerations of interest, some of the people have desired the present hostile movements against Mexico. If they can gain wealth or power by it, they care not what slaughter is made upon the battle field, or what havoc is experienced of individual, social, or national interests. But the great majority of the people, without distinction of party, those who constitute the stay and the staff of the nation, have given in their verdict against the war. They pronounce it impolitic, unnecessary and useless.

But the *moral* character of the war more especially deserves consideration. Whenever war is desired, by designing men, it is an easy matter to find some plausible reason for it. It has well been observed that "Cabinets have many secret motives of wars, of which the people know little. They talk in public of invasions of rights, of breaches of treaty, of the support of honor, of the necessity of retaliation, when these motives have no influence on their determination. Some untold purpose of expediency, or the private quarrel of a prince, or anger of a minister, are often the real motives to a contest, whilst its promoters are loudly talking of the honor or the safety of the country."

In my inquiry into the moral character of the war which is agitating this nation, I shall not test it by any political standard, or by the principles on which nations have governed their conduct with each other. I appeal, not to the law of nations, but to the law of God. We profess to be a christian nation, and are bound to decide the question of war or peace upon the principles of christianity. Political creeds may tell us that "religion and humanity have nothing to do with the question ; interest alone is the governing principle

of nations." But the creed of christianity teaches a different doctrine. Nations are responsible to God, as well as individuals, and disregard of this truth has effected the entire destruction of powerful kingdoms. Abiding by the law and the testimony, most wars are wicked; and in the sight of God, *murder*, upon an extended scale. If nations waged war only when the gospel would warrant them to do so, there would be but little sacrifice of life on the battle field. As a pure christianity diffuses itself, and its true spirit is imbibed, nations will scorn to let their national pride stir them up to the unnatural deed of butchering their fellow men. They will adopt the heaven-taught sentiment, that it is never disgraceful to submit to injury without seeking revenge.

With the gospel as my guide, I do not hesitate to call the present war wicked. On no principle of religion can it be justified. Reason about it as we may, it is not only a war with Mexico, it is a war with Jehovah, with the eternal principles of rectitude which He has established. It cannot be called a war of resistance. Mexico has not invaded our territory, attempted to lay waste our cities and villages, plunder our treasures, and destroy our lives. She has not committed depredations upon the province which has rebelled against her, and which we have received. This war, on our part, is any thing else, but a war of resistance. We ourselves are the invaders, and Mexico is struggling to repel an invading army.

But we are told it is a war for redress. Mexico owes us, and does not seem inclined to make payment. Admit it, and does this justify America in sending an invading army into her territory, in desolating her cities, in destroying her inhabitants? When we consider the character and condition of Mexico, the withering influence of her religious system, the instability of her government, the disorder which pervades all her public affairs, does she not deserve forbearance and compassion at the hands of this government? Has our treatment of her been christian? Was it right for this government to undertake a crusade against her, for the purpose of

revenge, and labor to make her confusion, worse confused, and increase the dregs in her bitter cup of misery? The right to do this, is the same that the South has to reduce millions of men to chattels; the same that England has to extend her iron hand of tyranny over India and China; the same that every high-way robber has to strip the defenceless traveler; "that is, in respect to God and intrinsic justice, no right at all." I envy not the man, either his head or his heart, who attempts to justify this war on the principles of the gospel. I pronounce it wrong, wicked, because our grievances might have been peaceably adjusted, and because every thing at stake was not of sufficient importance to compensate for the sacrifice demanded. When we consider what a calamity war is, the waste of property, the amount of suffering, the sacrifice of life, the increase of wickedness, the detriment to civil, literary and religious institutions it occasions, it must be plain that nothing short of "*obvious* necessity" can justify a nation in resorting to it.

I pronounce the war unrighteous because it is evidently aggressive, waged for the purpose of acquiring territory.—The object of the war is to force Mexico, to renounce her title to certain possessions which she claims. There has been a determination to acquire certain territory, without regard to right or wrong. The object of the war is to get it. The devouring "genius," slavery, demands it, and means to have it. In reference to this whole affair with Mexico, the spirit of Southern injustice and oppression has goaded the government to desperation. It has changed the policy of the republic, and instigated to deeds which will bring down upon us the reproach of nations. Usually, when there has been a dispute about a territory, our government has manifested no disposition to over-reach and defraud. It has not rushed madly to arms, and involved the country in war. Contrast the conduct of Congress, when the question of the North Eastern Boundary and the Oregon Territory were being discussed, with its conduct in reference to Texas, and the war it has produced. Why the forbearance, and disposition to

seek the things which make for peace in the former cases, and such rashness and readiness to rush to mortal combat in the latter? The simple reason is found in the fact that slavery was immediately interested in the latter case and not in the former. Slavery caused the war. The motive for which it was undertaken was to extend this system of abominations. The object which slavery means to accomplish, is to acquire empire and dominion. To every thing in her path, no matter how valuable or sacred, she says, bow, or be crushed beneath my iron hoof.

But let us remember that might does not make right. We may prosecute this war till we force the objects of our vengeance to sue for mercy. We may yet gain, what we term "splendid victories." But all these things do not prove our cause righteous. The best soldiers, the most destructive weapons, the greatest success, are not always on the side of justice. The tribunal before which the moral character of every contest must be decided, is the tribunal of the Sovereign Ruler of the Universe. He is a God of truth, without iniquity, just and right is He. He sees the cause of the war we are waging, the motives which led to it and the objects it was designed to secure. If they meet his approval we have nothing to fear. If he condemn them, we have nothing to boast of in the past, nothing to hope for in the future.

I proceed to take a hasty view of the consequences of the war. These are beyond the reach of mortal ken, and seen only by Him who knows the end from the beginning. We must wait till the end come; not only the end of the war, but the end of time. We must wait till the winding up of earth's history, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, before we can read the consequences of the event we are contemplating; and even in the disclosures of the final day, they will not be fully realized, for they take hold of that *eternity* which will still be before us. Yet enough of evil has been witnessed to sicken us of the war, and clothe its authors with shame and remorse. Already do some, who with infuriated madness, plunged the country into its present

deplorable contest, begin to feel alarmed in view of their doings, and are willing to make peace on almost any condition, providing the "peculiar institution" be guarded. But the mystery of this iniquity has scarcely begun to work, and its injury to our national character and interests is yet to be experienced.

The cost of war is one of its least evils, yet it is something. "Freaks of fashion," says the poet, "regulate the dress, but drain the pocket dry." Of all the freaks of politicians, none are so expensive as those which plunge the country into war. They cause the "pocket-vein" of the nation to bleed profusely. This trifling war with Mexico, as many would regard it, has already subjected this nation to an expense of a hundred millions of dollars, and ere we are aware, if the present movements go on, we shall find it has imposed a heavy national debt. This burden will come chiefly upon the North, upon the laboring class. And for what have these millions been expended? for internal improvements? for the cause of education? for the interests of morality? for any enterprise of usefulness? No, but for a pro-slavery war. And can freedom afford to feed slavery at the expense of so many millions? Is the "peculiar institution" so sacred, so profitable, that the government must call out the national force to fight for it? *A hundred millions of dollars swallowed up in a war of a few months for slavery?* These millions, and millions more which might be specified, have been expended for the support of a system, most unrighteous in its nature and withering in its influence. A system which is keeping the church and the State in constant turmoil, which is sundering the ties that bind us together, which has caused the greater part of all the disgraceful scenes that have transpired in our country, which has brought down upon us the hiss of heathenism, which is crippling the energies of the nation, drying up its deepest fountains of prosperity, dooming the immortal mind to darkness, and sinking the image of God to a level with the brutes.

But trifling would be the sacrifice of war, if it were

only a sacrifice of money. War is not only a waster of wealth, but of life. The consequence of the present war is, that many thousands have been deprived of their existence on earth, and hurried into eternity under circumstances inconceivably dreadful. The loss of life already, is enough to eclipse the glory of our boasted victories.— They have been gained by a sacrifice so great that they afford ground for sorrow, rather than for exultation. We hear them called “brilliant achievements,” “glorious exploits,” but are they such in reality? Can American Christians thank God for these victories, and pray that we may have more of them? How mournful the fact, that the unholy alliance of this Republican Government with the most wicked system of oppression and cruelty, has resulted in a war, which has deprived thousands of life, and ushered them uncalled, into the presence of their Judge! When before the Judgment seat of Christ, the multitude, who have been doomed to death in the camp and on the battle field, shall confront the responsible agents of their misery, what a meeting that will be! Then, when the books are opened, and each one judged according to his works, the hidden things of darkness will be brought to light; and then will be seen the selfishness, injustice and wickedness of slavery which exalted itself by occasioning so much suffering and wo.

The influence of war upon the morals of a people is always destructive. The camp is a school of vice, and trains men to the commission of the worst crimes. The consequence of the present war has been a great deterioration of moral character on the part of many, a vast increase of wickedness. It has caused the desecration of the sabbath, the increase of profanity, the prevalence of intemperance, and licentiousness, and of all that is evil. All manner of cruelties and crimes have been perpetrated by soldiers of the American Army. An eye witness of these things says, when speaking of the effect of the present war, “its demoralizing influences can never be adequately realized by those who have not personally observed them.

And there is still another consequence of the war which we must be prepared to meet. Say what you may of Mexico, it is not a slave-holding country. The chattel system is not there. If we come into possession of any portion of that country, the question will be, shall it be cursed by slavery? This question has already begun to agitate the nation, but if the spirit of liberty lives, there will be commotion and contention, before it is settled. The slave-holding interest will demand that whatever territory of Mexico may come into



our possession, shall not be the home of freemen, but the den of slaves. If opposed, she will roar and rave, and threaten, and perhaps terrify, and thus carry her point. Judging from the past, we must expect trouble in the future. The "evil genius" that has made war in the camp, will make war in the council, when the time of gathering spoil shall come. It would not be strange if there should be a convulsion which will shake this nation from "centre to circumference."— "The slave-holding power has avowed its determination to extend and perpetuate its pernicious influence, and the freemen of the North have been taught that they have in the bosom of their own country, masters, whose willful blindness and haughty violence could claim kindred with the most despotic spirits that the world has seen." I fear the consequence of this war will be to loosen the bonds of our Union, and create a spirit of alienation which will work our ruin. *Would* that we could feel that our hope is in God alone, and be led to look to him for help?

But will no good result from this war? God does bring good out of evil, and cause the wrath of man to praise him. He over-rules the wickedness of men, so as to promote his own glory, and the general good. Perhaps the present war may prove, in the event, the source of blessing to coming generations. It may be the way by which God means to disenthroned the man of sin where he is now keeping his palace, and disenthral a people from their spiritual bondage. God has caused the cruel war which England waged against China to result in good. It has opened her ports for the Christian missionary, and prepared the way for him to preach the gospel to perishing millions. But no thanks to England. She had one object in view in doing her wicked work, and God another in permitting it to be done. So, if this war results in good to Mexico, if it bring about changes in which posterity shall rejoice, no thanks to American slavery, no lessening of her guilt. God will hold all responsible for what they do, and judge them according to their works, though he cause their works to fulfill his deep designs, and promote his glory.

I have now stated my views of the war. I have spoken freely, and I trust, in the fear of God, and in the spirit of good will to men. I have discharged a solemn duty which I felt devolved upon me. My object will be accomplished, and my effort richly rewarded, if it cause you to realize the evil of departing from God, and the danger we, as a nation, expose ourselves to, by disregarding his authority. If we mean to be a prosperous and happy people, we must be careful to

have our ways please the Lord. "Happy is the people whose God is the Lord." "But the nation and kingdom that will not serve Him shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted."

The present aspect of things calls loudly on every lover of his country to be diligent and self-denying in laboring for her good. It is for such to decide questions of the deepest interest to the nation. It is for them to say whether we shall be exalted by righteousness, or destroyed by wickedness; whether America shall immortalize herself by public acts of justice and mercy, or by deeds of oppression and cruelty; whether liberty shall live, our free institutions be preserved, our rights perpetuated, or whether they shall be buried together in one common grave. The question is now before the people; shall our free inheritance, purchased by toil and blood, and preserved hitherto by the interposition of an Almighty arm, be handed down to coming generations, or shall it be destroyed? I appeal to you as patriots, as philanthropists. Hate oppression and robbery. Do justice. Love mercy. I appeal to you, who bear the name of Christians, who profess to be under the influence of a gospel which breathes the spirit of good will to all, which inculcates the duty of loving others as we do ourselves, of praying for those in authority, that we may live quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty, which urges upon you whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report, which directs you to seek for things which make for peace. I urge you to make yourselves the salt of the earth, the light of the world, to aim at a high standard of Christian feeling and action. I urge upon you the spirit of love, the zeal for truth, the uncompromising fidelity, the unwearied effort in alleviating human misery, which you behold in your Divine Master. I urge you to abound in fervent prayer that the general wickedness may cease, that the vicious may be reclaimed, that war may end, that oppression may soon give place to the enjoyment of equal rights, that righteousness may become prevalent, that wisdom and knowledge may be the stability of our times, and the fear of the Lord our treasure. Do all in your power that God may not have occasion to say, "*This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the Lord their God, nor receiveth correction; truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth.*" May God baptize his church with the Holy Ghost! May he give this people peace! May he save our country, and cause glory to dwell in our land.

"And from all lands may rise the solemn strain,  
Christ, as the Prince of peace, has come to reign."



