

27
A

THANKSGIVING SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE NATIONAL PALACE, CITY OF MEXICO, ON
SUNDAY, OCTOBER THIRD, A. D. 1847,

ON THE OCCASION OF A PUBLIC THANKSGIVING FOR THE VICTORIES
ACHIEVED BY THE ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES, IN THE BASIN OF
MEXICO, UNDER COMMAND OF

MAJOR-GENERAL WINFIELD SCOTT:

CONSUMMATED BY THE CAPTURE OF THE CAPITAL.

BY THE REV. JOHN McCARTY, CHAPLAIN U. S. A.

"Only fear the Lord, and serve Him with all your heart; for consider how great things
He hath done for you!"—1st Samuel, 12th Chap., 24th verse.

(PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF MANY OFFICERS OF THE ARMY.)

MEXICO, OCTOBER, 1847.

Printed at the office of the "American Star," Mexico.

THE ANKHOVING PERMON

RESOLVED IN THE NATIONAL HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
MARCH 1847

BY THE ORDER OF A JOINT RESOLUTION FOR THE PURPOSE
OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES IN THE HOUSE
OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAJOR GENERAL WINFIELD SCOTT

COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE ARMY

BY THE HON. JOHN M. CALHOUN, SENATOR

IN SENATE

APPROVED BY SENATE

MAJOR GENERAL

MAJOR GENERAL

A THANKSGIVING SERMON:

"Only fear the Lord, and serve Him with all your heart; for consider how great things He hath done for you."—1st Samuel, 21th Chap., 12th verse.

My Brethren of the Army: Our General-in-chief, having in an order, prompted by christian duty and feeling, and highly proper and becoming in an official point of view, called upon his "brethren in arms, to return both in public and private worship, thanks and gratitude to God, for the signal triumphs, which they have recently achieved for their country"—and assembled as we now are thus publicly to acknowledge the favoring Providence of the "Lord of Hosts," and to render to His Holy Name, our praise and thanksgiving for the same; which is our reasonable and bounden duty—let us my brethren of the army, consider with some attention the nature and greatness of the blessings for which our gratitude is called forth.

Although it has been questioned—still it can be shown to be the duty of a christian people, and more so of the army of a christian land, to offer thanksgiving to the great Ruler of Nations, for the victories by which He has crowned their arms—as well as for all other blessings of His Providence—and if so, who will measure the amount of gratitude due Him from our country and its army, for the uniform and great successes, which have attended our arms at large, from the first battle to the last—and more especially of this portion of our forces, from our landing at Vera Cruz, to the termination of the campaign by our victorious entry into this capital of the nation?

War—though a great calamity—attended with much that

is to be deplored—and involving a terrible responsibility on the governments who are parties to it—is still in the actual condition of mankind, necessary and right, at least on one side—as the means of national defence and preservation—of preventing the repetition of national wrongs, by their punishment—of redressing injuries inflicted and obtaining rights withheld—When, therefore, a people succeed in a war, waged by the government for these ends, they have cause of thanksgiving to the great Disposer of events, from whom that success has proceeded—For victory in war is not only amongst the greatest of national deliverances and blessings, considered in itself—but it is the only means of gaining the object contended for, and procuring an honorable and advantageous peace—the true end of victory.

It should however be borne in mind, that the responsibility of the war, as before observed—that is to say, the determination of its necessity and righteousness, rests not on those who serve in the army, but on the constituted authorities of the country, whose orders it is the soldiers duty to obey and execute—He should be sure, in his private capacity, desire and pray, that he may never be called to do battle, but in a righteous cause—righteous on the part of his government—Still as a general rule it is his duty, to submit to the official determination of the authority of the country, over him—and with courage and might to prosecute, in his station, the war it has declared or sanctioned—And without reference to the origin of this war, it is unquestionably our duty as officers and soldiers, vigorously to wage it, in order to obtain the ends for which it exists—and to conquer a just and honorable peace, as its happy conclusion. In the prosecution of this war—waged, as it has been, with the most scrupulous regard, on our part, to the laws of warfare recognized by the civilized and christian nations—valor on the part of the soldier, whether in command or in the ranks, is due to his country—and on the other hand, his achievements should be

celebrated, and his services rewarded by appropriate distinctions—for he not only renders the most important service to his country, but in doing so, braves the greatest dangers and perils his dearest possession—life itself.

My brethren—we have cause of gratitude to God, in the reflection that we belong through his providential appointments to a brave as well as a free race—and that He has inspired our commanders with wisdom and military skill, to combine these elements of individual power, in the achievement of exploits, which as they are the proper subject of our own wonder—we may modestly deem, will be that of our country's admiration—But that we may be truly influenced by gratitude, we must believe, what we acknowledge in the thanksgiving of the church, that “as the Sovereign Commander of all the world,” He is indeed “the only giver of all victory”—and that not unto us—not unto us—but to the Lord belongs the praise—And assuredly, if the hand of the Almighty Disposer, is ever to be recognized in the affairs of the world, it would seem that it must be, in such signal and important events, as those we are now called upon to consider, and be thankful for—And all but the utterly irreligious will own His favoring Providence, manifestly displayed in our behalf—not, indeed, that we infer from success, his approval of the cause of our country, or that he has taken our side, because we are better or more deserving than our opponent—no—for often does He in his inscrutable wisdom permit the apparent wrong to succeed, and the right to be defeated—Such an inference is not involved in our thanksgivings, which have a distinct and all-sufficient object in our individual deliverance from great and imminent danger from “the arrow that flieth by day”—from “the pestilence that walketh in darkness”—and from “the destruction that wasteth at noon-day”—that while “a thousand have fallen at our side, and ten thousand at our right hand” He, in his mercy, hath not permitted this sudden death to “come nigh us”—We find

a further object in the benefits conferred by these repeated victories on our army and country, and the more unmerited are our blessings, the warmer should be our gratitude.

In considering, how great things the "Good Lord hath done for us" we must regard the *uniformity* of our success—What is true of the whole war, is especially so, of this entire campaign, from the landing of our army at Vera Cruz, up to the capture of this city—We have succeeded in all we have undertaken—never engaged in fight, but to conquer—never attacked, but to defeat our enemy; All difficulties, however great, have been overcome—all opposition, however formidable, borne down—No place of defence, so strong by nature or by the art of fortification, has been able to resist our assault; And more remarkable still, the peculiarities of the climate and seasons have not presented their anticipated obstacles—and the very elements have been made to minister to our aid—the "fortune of war" (so called) has been uninterruptedly with us—crowning with eminent success all our plans and battles, and consummating the campaign in our possession of this capital of Mexico—Say then, ye oppugners of Providence—ye advocates of blind chance, can aught but the admission of a purpose in the mind of the great Disposer of events, who holds the very winds in his fist, account for such marvellous uniformity?

Then, further, to see the hand of God in all this, let us consider that in all our principal battles, we have been greatly outnumbered by the enemy, who nevertheless instead of making attack, has awaited it from us, and that too in positions selected and fortified, so as greatly to increase his power of resistance—yet all in vain. Well might our foe be astonished at our daring with such diminutive forces, to penetrate so far into the interior of a country, inhabited by at least seven millions of people—at our venturing to march so far from the sea-board, thereby encountering the great difficulty of keeping open our communications with the

places whence our reinforcements and supplies were to be drawn; and how greatly must that astonishment have been increased, when they saw us, with forces so apparently inadequate to the object, abandon that very communication, those reinforcements and supplies, and with a hardihood, which can only find a parallel in the army of Cortez, trust to our stout hearts and strong arms in forcing our subsistence from themselves. It only remained that their emotions should amount to the wonder which now possesses them, when in despite of all these disadvantages added to our deficiency in heavy artillery—(since supplied from their own superabundance at Contreras and Churubusco,) we forced our way into the very heart of a country so capable of defence by passes and defiles that it seemed to bid defiance to all skill and numbers! Yet such is the fact; and “when” (in the words of the order before referred to,) “the very limited numbers who have performed those brilliant deeds, shall have become known, the world will be astonished and our own countrymen filled with joy and admiration.”

Again, we have cause to thank the Lord that our operations have been conducted under a commander who has felt and avowed his responsibility to God, for the lives of the men committed to his charge; who not seduced by the vulgar reputation of fighting bloody battles, has sought and gained victory by the application of his own generalship—baffling the councils of the enemy by superior talent, availing himself of every advantage which keen military sagacity could discover, and saving as far as possible the lives of his soldiery, while winning the numerous victories, in which they have been perilled. Accordingly, it is cause of grateful joy that with but one exception our loss has been small in comparison with that of the enemy, and with the advantages gained.

But while we award praise, high and merited to the generalship and heroic courage displayed in the achievements of our army, let us not forget that it was God who not only

bestowed these abilities, but by his assisting hand, crowned the employment of them with success. The history of war, in which so much is ascribed to the "fortune of war," verifies the saying of the wise man, that "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, but time and chance happeneth to all;" teaching us it is not in human wisdom or might to ensure victory, but "time and chance," by which is meant, the unseen hand of the Almighty, by interposing circumstances, prosperous or adverse, gives success where often it could not have been expected, and produces defeat where frequently it could not have been looked for. And this is wisely so ordered that men in the enterprises of war, as in other things, may feel their dependence on God for success, and so be led to implore his aid, and render him grateful thanks, as we would now do, for the victories they ascribe to his goodness. To feel this more, by a reference to particulars, let us but suppose the weather, in the rainy season, when we entered into this basin of Mexico, had been as wet as it proved unusually dry, that the rain had fallen in torrents and flooded this low country as is the common case, how could we have traversed this valley at all, much less with our artillery and baggage? What but disaster in every form could have resulted? Had our army, indeed, through one of the many mischances that might have happened, in our circumstances, sustained a single defeat or even met a reverse we might have feared it would so have encouraged the Mexicans, so have roused and united their efforts, that the result of the campaign would have been far different—aye, even as disastrous as it has been successful. And the few of us who might have survived, would now have been deploring our failures and defeats, instead of rejoicing in our victories. But God be praised, who has seen fit to order it otherwise, who has permitted no adversity to come nigh us, who has favored us greatly, crowning us with complete success.

We should also consider the *results* of our battles and

victories, that the numerous army we have contended with has not only been defeated, but captured or dispersed, and the enemy's government almost without organization, deprived of the means of equipping and furnishing an other army. Our foe, then, as a consequence, is at this time, to say the least, incapable of a further prosecution of the war with any vigor or effect; and now that we are safe in the heart of the country and in the capital of the nation we may thank God, in the hope that there is well nigh an end to fighting and the horrors of war; and in the anticipation that a campaign so entirely successful, will probably result in what is so much to be desired for us and this people, in a just and honorable peace, we may hope soon to change our notes of praise into thanksgiving for the latter.

Furthermore we have cause to thank God, with grateful hearts, when we consider that never was there war, carried into an enemy's country, with so little of suffering and injury inflicted on the unarmed people. Never have the peaceful inhabitants of a theatre of hostilities had so little cause to complain of the treatment received from invaders and conquerors. Yes we may boast—thanking the Lord—that we have sacked no cities, robbed no towns, violated no women, that we have never authorised any plunder of the people, and that very few outrages of any sort have been committed by our soldiery; and that instead of subsisting on the country without making compensation, as we might have done, under the laws of war, we have paid for all we have consumed and that at the highest price. They have been better treated by us than by their own armies; indeed we have been rather protectors than destroyers of the Mexican people. Although we have contended with enemies often cruel, treacherous and regardless of the usages of civilized warfare, yet we have never retaliated the wrongs and cruelty we have received from them. The hearts of our soldiers, that never failed them through fear, did fail them through humanity and pity,

when—under other influences—they might have cut down the defeated and unresisting. We have heard of no instance in which quarters have been refused, and that to an enemy too, who has often robbed and murdered our wounded. Yes, we may thank God, with heartfelt satisfaction, that we were too American; have had too much respect for the rights of humanity, too much regard for our character, to come down to the low level of a Mexican soldier's notions of humanity, honor and civilization. And though *here*, we must not glory in our courage and prowess, nor on this occasion exult in our achievements; yet we may glory and exult [so that we be humble before God] in our having most scrupulously observed and upheld the laws which mitigate the horrors of war, and prevent the soldier's valor from degenerating into personal hatred and destructive ferocity. Estimating things in the light of Divine truth, the glory of our superior generalship and courage, of our splendid victories and wonderful success, is a small thing when compared with the glory resulting from the humanity, justice and generosity displayed in our warfare with this people.

Such, however, is the character of war, that our song of triumph and thanksgiving, must be mingled with notes of woe, at the recollection of the brave men who have fallen or suffered in achieving our success. While mourning for the dead, we sympathise with the wounded; yet our pity and their sufferings are relieved by the consciousness that their wounds are honorable testimonials of their valor, and will be regarded by their country as marks of distinction and praise. When we recount our battles or rejoice in our triumphs, none but have to lament the loss of some dear companion or esteemed friend, who fought their last fight and to whom our victory was their death. Still whilst we give the sigh of regret and the tear of affection to their cherished memories, we feel relieved and reconciled by the reflection that they fell in the discharge of their duty, on the field of their glory, and have met the

most appropriate and honored end of the soldier. Their deeds and names will ever be associated with the history of our exploits, in this memorable campaign and honored by our nation's tribute of grief and praise; and it will be said, in all time to come, wherever their remains may repose---

"That honor comes, a pilgrim gray,
To deck the sod that holds their clay."

When we thank God for our victories, let us consider what is due to the private soldiers, by whose courage, and in so many cases, by whose lives and wounds, our success has been achieved. And recollecting, how little they individually share in the distinction and advantages of victory, let their officers not only sympathise with them in their privations and sufferings, but be led to pay a scrupulous regard to their rights and feelings--to treat them in word and deed with justice and kindness, giving them every privilege and indulgence consistent with subordination and the maintenance of discipline; taking a lively interest in their welfare, exercising their power over them and treating them, as under a change of circumstances they would have their superiors do to themselves.

When our saddened thoughts turn to the sorrowing relatives of the lamented dead, who when the nation at large rejoice and triumph in the victories gained, must mourn their sad bereavement; let us realise it as our duty not only to sympathise in their affliction and to aid them to the utmost of our ability, from our own means, but employ whatever influence we may possess to direct our country's gratitude to make a far more adequate provision for the families of those who by the sacrifice of their lives have conferred such benefits on our country; and thus to rescue our republic from the charge of ingratitude and injustice, in neglecting to provide for those, by whose husbands' and fathers' deaths in their country's cause they have been made sorrowing widows and orphans.

Furthermore, in offering our thanksgiving each of us should consider the goodness of his Heavenly Father, in his own

preservation, not only from the violence of the enemy, but from the hand of disease. When we reflect that so many during this campaign have languished on beds of sickness—to how many their last—those who have been preserved, especially those who have been blessed with health, should thank God with an unfeigned heart, for this the greatest of temporal blessings, so indispensable to enjoyment and usefulness; gratefully owning the preserving care of the Lord, “in whose hands are the issues of life and death.” And such as have escaped the imminent perils of our battle fields, should seriously consider their own wonderful preservation, while the instruments of destruction flew thick about them and their companions and fellow soldiers were falling on every side.—They should deeply consider and gratefully acknowledge, not their good luck and fortunate escape, which is but the religion of the atheist, but the sparing goodness of their Great Preserver, owning in the words of Holy Writ, “God is the Lord, by whom we escape death.” Yes, my brethren, it seems, that escape from the great dangers to which our officers and soldiers have been generally exposed, would constrain the most irreligious gratefully to unite with the warrior Psalmist in the acknowledgement “the Lord hath covered our heads, and made us stand in the day of battle,” and with him to call upon their souls “to praise His Holy Name, who saveth our life from destruction and crowneth us with mercy and loving kindness.”

In the next place, let us regard the end for which we should now “consider the great things the Lord hath done for us,” in these deliverances and victories. It is not to foster national pride and vain glory, for these need rather to be restrained, but that we may be led, according to our text, “to fear the Lord and serve him with all our heart.” We recount the victories which by the help of the God of Battles we have achieved, not that we may sacrifice to our own valor and might, but be led “to fear the Lord and depart from evil”—“to fear Him and

keep his commandments;” that a sense of his goodness manifested in preserving our lives and crowning our arms with success, may constrain us, to serve our Great Benefactor “with all our hearts.” As in the thanksgiving for victory we pray Him “to give us grace to improve the great mercy to His glory, the advancement of his gospel, the honor of our country, and as much as lieth in us, the good of all mankind;” whilst we ascribe to Him all the glory, as our preserver and the giver of victory, let us see that we “glorify Him in our bodies and spirits, which are His”—let us realize that he has not preserved and brought us here to “revel in the Halls of Montezumas,” but to serve Him and do our duty; especially by turning our success and our consequent influence over this people into the means of enlightening their religious ignorance and raising them from the degradation to which they are reduced. And this by extending the light and the blessings of our purer faith; so that by our christian influence and example and by the intercourse between us, they may imbibe something of our free spirit and throw off the shackles of military and spiritual despotism. Believing that the Mexicans most need for their improvement, a purer exhibition of the Gospel of Christ (which toleration and the light of the scriptures would eventually give them,) may it be ours to secure by all proper means the toleration of Protestants, so clearly their right and which we know from experience in other countries would exert an enlightening and purifying influence on the church of this country, May we as Protestants keep in mind that we have to recommend our profession of christianity to them by our example, and that we are accountable as far as we have any influence, for the impression they receive of our religion. Let neither the neglect of our religious worship nor our vices strengthen the belief, sought to be impressed on them, that we are not only heretics, but are not christians, and have no religion at all. Let them have no reason to infer that what we regard as superstitious and idolatrous in

them is at least as good, if not better, than our Protestant irreligion. But let us show by our piety, humanity and benevolence, and by our exemption from vice, the blessed fruits of our more scriptural faith; our purer and more edifying religious services. That witnessing our superiority not only as soldiers, but as christian men, they may honor our land, not only as free, enlightened and prosperous, but as blessed by superior means of christian knowledge and piety, which are the foundations of all.

Devotion to God and good will to this people, who are equally with ourselves, his children, are enforced by a grateful sense of our personal deliverances from sickness and the perils of battle, and it becomes us, in acknowledging his preserving goodness "to show forth his praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives by giving up ourselves to His service and by walking before him in holiness and righteousness, all our days." Let us dedicate the lives he has spared us, to his service, improving our lengthened day of grace, by being better prepared for death, to which we are always exposed. When we render thanksgiving to God, let us recollect that this is a vain oblation in those who continue to abuse his blessings, disregard his authority and neglect his reasonable service. Offering our thanks as members of the army may we be reminded of the duty of abstaining from the vices to which military men are most tempted and addicted, imitating the Centurions, whose piety is recorded in the New Testament one of whom, Cornelius, was the first fruits of the gospel among the Gentiles; and thus keeping in mind what their good examples were designed to teach us, that the soldier's life, so far from excusing allowed wickedness or irreligion, is perfectly compatible with christian piety. Let us remember and act under the conviction, that religion is alike binding on us in every station and in every place, and that no where, and under no circumstances, can we be absolved from its obligation

to lead a goodly, righteous and sober life. To none is christian piety more indispensable than to those who serve in the army, and no where are its restraints, motives and ordinances, more needed, than in this country, where we are exposed to many temptations to vice and irreligion.— Standing before God, this day, as those who have been mercifully spared and greatly blessed, let each and every one resolve hereafter to guard against yielding to passion or pride, to violence or hatred; and to cultivate the mild, humble and benevolent virtues, which becomes us as gentlemen as well as christians. Putting away the vices of profanity, licentiousness and intemperance, let us be men of chastity, sobriety and reverence for sacred things. Remembering it is as true of an army as of a country that “righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people;” may gratitude to God, for all his benefits, restrain us from profane swearing and execrations in our conversations, which not only tend to destroy all reverence for the Deity and holy things, but are expressly forbidden in his commandments, and are in express violation of the laws of the army. These vices, therefore, are as contrary to our duty as soldiers as they are inconsistent with our religion.

Then let us conclude by praying God, that as soon as we shall have finished our tour of duty in this land, and a just, and as we may hope, a lasting peace shall have been made between our United States and those of Mexico, we may leave it and its influences so unfavorable to our piety and virtue, but leave it in good will towards its people, wishing them toleration, a purer form of religion, better and more stable government. And returning to our own country, let us be more thankful to God from what we have here seen, for having cast our lot in a land of civil and religious freedom, and for having given us so goodly a heritage. Here let us determine that when again restored to our dear homes and to those we love, we will show forth our gratitude to the “Giver of every good

and perfect gift," by being as entirely devoted to his service, and zealous for good works, as becometh those "to whom much hath been given and of whom much will be required;" and employ our lives and influence to make our people as eminent for christian holiness and virtue, as they have been "highly favored of the Lord."