

built up and strengthened for conquest by a piety and patriotism which was in large measure, simple and unselfish; it was prepared for its fall by lawlessness, by varied oppression and unbridled sensuality.

The Hebrew people are another illustration of this. They fell short of the lofty ideal of their prophets, they still pay the penalty of rejecting God's anointed one, but the ministry of God's Spirit was not altogether in vain. They were comparatively a righteous people, sober, clean, devout, hence Jerusalem, "the joy of the whole earth," is still a type of the city of God. So many righteous men have walked its streets that the blood shed by fierce bigots was not completely desecrated it. On the other hand Sodom and Gomorah are quite buried in the grave of their own lusts, there has been rained upon them the fire and brimstone of an everlasting shame.

The distinctive feature in the life of Hebrew prophets was, that they, through the insight given them by the inspiring Spirit of God, saw these truths clearly, and had such perfect faith in them that they could proclaim them boldly. The prophets saw that, only righteousness can really exalt a nation and that there is a day of judgment in which the unrighteous nation is shattered. Let us now lay these principles to heart and apply them to our own social life.

Righteousness is the only thing that really exalts a nation. Righteousness, stern and strong, righteousness kindly and attractive, this is the fruit of communion with God, it shows that in spite of glaring defects, the nation's heart is sound, and that it possesses a healthful life. This pure life buoys up a nation and sends it out on the paths of usefulness and progress. The prophet looked out upon some small kingdom or great empire lifted up by pride and boasting in its strength. He saw all its brilliant pomp, the glory of its palaces, the splendid pageantry that surrounded its princes. He saw behind this a career of wickedness and below it oppression and corruption. He did not ask does righteousness pay? Fitful impulsive saints might have raised that question, but a living, thinking prophet saw too deep to ask such a shallow question. Even the false-hearted Balaam cried "let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his." The prophet saw that such worldly splendour is not real exaltation, all that glitters is not gold, the flash of pride is not the power of life. So the prophet took up his solemn burden and in tones of sympathetic sorrow he spoke of judgment and future doom. The most terrible vision that prophets ever unrolled or providence ever fulfilled grew out of this conviction that righteousness is the real source of national power. I was reading one day of a chapter of English history. It was the summary of an important period. I put it down with a feeling of sorrow approaching to disgust. One has a similar feeling in reading the history of the later kings of Israel and Judah. You read of cunning intrigue, of wild faction fights, of cruel oppression and want, or bloodshed. Politics was a desperate game in which men staked their lives. Churchmanship was a sharp struggle for power. The nations did not attain to greatness, through these things but in spite of them, because men like Elijah, the prophet, and Hugh Latimer, the pre-

aches, did in their own way contend for truth and righteousness. In quiet places and in lonely hearts the flame of love to God and goodness did live on, and was a mightier power than it seemed. Britain's greatness is not in her material resources or in her flagrant sins, not because she forced the damnable opium traffic upon an unwilling people, not because godless traders carry fire-water to poor savages, not in her gin-palaces or gambling hells. England's strength, these would have weighed her down to hell if there had not walked through her streets thousands of God's saints, following the lowly Christ and being as salt in her society to keep it sweet and pure.

Permanent glory and strength comes through righteousness alone. Military power and commercial success may do much toward national prosperity of a certain kind, but both these cannot long keep a nation on a lofty height unless it has in it a spirit of righteousness, of reverence for truth and God. The history of the world is the history of the rise and fall of nations and dynasties. The world is full of change and it may be that no nation can last forever. But to us it is clearly demonstrated that peace and length of days are given to the nation that walks righteously. Even in the comparatively righteous people the wickedness, injustice and folly of the fathers entails conflicts and miseries upon the children. A nation may suffer for its sins, and through suffering rise to nobler life. The money spent in war during the conflict between the Northern-Southern States of America would have bought the liberty of the slaves, but possibly the terrible baptism of blood was a part of the penalty of past transgressions and a severe discipline out of which future blessings may come.

The day of judgment for nations is in this world. It is a solemn day when Jehovah comes forth to judgment, doing terrible things in righteousness. God appears to us within the nation, seeking to renew its life through varied influences and manifold ministers. In one sense every day is a day of God. He is speaking to us by sun and moon and stars of light, by fruitful seasons, by godly men and noble women, by the glory and gentleness of His Christ. When these are despised and society becomes corrupt, the dark threatening cloud hovers over us, hesitating before it bursts in terrible fury. The day of the Lord bears down upon a guilty people and a king of righteousness goes forth to judgment, so that scoffers are rebuked and the godless are afraid. It is not enough to cry, "give peace in our time, O Lord!" we must build the foundations in righteousness that there may be an everlasting peace.

(1) The life of the family is all important. Carelessness of parents and irreverence of children are the source of many evils. If we encourage lax views of the sanctity, and obligation of the marriage tie, we are snapping the foundations of society. Let marriage grow out of pure love, then let the union be marked by mutual thoughtfulness, and trust in God. Let children be received as a sacred trust for which we are responsible to a just God. One of the finest, sweetest words in our language is the word "home," the home is the corner stone of a strong stable nation. The four walls of a home do not make a home though they are filled with all the finery that the upholsterer or the

artist can furnish. Pure life, the life of love of mutual sympathy and helpfulness, these are forces that make a home and we can all supply them out of a believing spirit.

(2) Literature is a great force in a nation's life. Think of the God-inspired literature of the Hebrews, how powerful it has been and how permanent in its championship of righteousness and liberty. The men who wrote did not seek what would pay, but truth that would rebuke the sins of their time and live as an inspiration for many days. With all the increasing knowledge of our time we are in danger of shallowness. Yet we are thankful that there is so much wholesome reading at hand that we have no need to waste our time over petty personalities, vile slanders, or blood-curdling sensational stories.

(3) We all help to make what is called the tone of society. If the community thinks more of wealth, of fashions and glittering sham, than of goodness, we are partly to blame. We show our want of faith in righteousness by smiling at tricks of trade and condoning immorality when it wears a thin veneer of beauty and fashion.

(4) In politics of every kind we can choose men of sterling moral character. Our sectarian tests and party watchwords are often less important than straightforward honesty and pure patriotism. It is to our shame that sect and party causes professedly Christian men to make great sacrifices, sacrifice of principles. We should honor morality in all our dealings, but especially in public life.

"What can we do?" you say. "I am only one." Moses was only one. Elijah was only one. Paul was only one. John Wesley was only one. Wilberforce was only one. But all these men were faithful to God given gifts and opportunities. It is simply required of us that we be faithful in our own sphere and bear our single share of responsibility. If we all do that, it will be seen that religion has a power to bless society. Then shall be fulfilled the grand prophecy: "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree, and it shall be to the Lord for a name; for an everlasting sign which shall not be cut off."

Belfast Witness: Is the Premier a Presbyterian?—The Right Reverend the Moderator of the Church of Scotland, has been asked to arrange some ecclesiastical recognition of the alleged point that Mr. Balfour is the first Presbyterian Premier. It would be well if we were assured of the Prime Minister's Church loyalty. But it is pointed out that Lord Roseberry was Premier before this and that his Presbyterian Churchmanship is as dubious as Mr. Balfour's. The fact appears to be that Mr. Balfour is a Presbyterian in Scotland (his parish minister there has published a delightful life of his mother). But in England he attends the Anglican Communion. We have heard it stated that when in Ireland as Chief Secretary, Mr. Balfour never entered a Presbyterian church. This is a kind of amphibious Churchmanship, which deprives a man of the love and respect of either of the ecclesiastical bodies to which he is semi attached.

I have known college boys who would lie out on the campus under the trees and look up at the clouds, and aspire—and aspire—and aspire—until they expired.