

DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED ON A

Day of Fasting and Prayer,

IN THE

FIRST PARISH,

IN

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1808.

A DISCOURSE.

Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly.—JOEL, II. 15.

THE nation of Israel were a people highly favored of the Lord, and were under peculiar obligations to love and obey the author of all their mercies. From a most wretched and forlorn condition, they were raised to great national prosperity and happiness. When mankind were almost universally sunk into idolatry, and the true religion had nearly lost its existence in the world, excepting where it was retained by a few individuals; God was pleased to call Abraham, their progenitor, from his country and kindred, and make of him a great nation. The God of heaven instructed them in the knowledge of his own character, and in the duties which he required of them. Many were the interpositions of his providence, to deliver them from those who sought their ruin. When oppressed and enslaved in the land of Egypt, he delivered them from their proud and tyrannizing enemies, and led them to a land flowing with milk and honey.

The favors which were bestowed upon them, are described in the following beautiful language penned by "Moses the man of God." "He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness: he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange God with him. He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock. Butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the

breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat, and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape.”

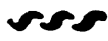
God not only bestowed upon them the most peculiar favors of a temporal kind ; but he likewise gave them the ordinances of religion, and the instructions of his prophets. These blessings, which should have led them to repentance, were improved in a very different manner. Their hearts were lifted up with pride, and they rendered not according to the benefits done unto them. They forsook the God who made them, and lightly esteemed the Rock of their salvation. In proportion as favors were multiplied unto them, in such proportion were they ungrateful and rebellious. God frequently expostulated with them, by his prophets, and shewed them the danger to which they exposed themselves, by their base ingratitude. But they shewed less ingenuousness than the stupid ox, and the still more senseless ass ; for “ the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib,” and with a clumsy gratitude, acknowledge his beneficence. But Israel did not know, neither consider the author of all their blessings. Instead of worshipping and serving the God, who was their political, as well as moral governor ; they forsook him, and went after the gods of other nations, which are no gods. They sacrificed unto devils, not God ; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods, which came newly up, whom their fathers feared not. God therefore denounced against them, the most grievous and sore calamities. And when the Lord saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters. And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be. For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth, with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.

In the chapter, which precedes the one containing our text, we have an account of the calamities which were brought upon the Jewish nation, in consequence of their ingratitude and rebellion. “ That which the palmer worm hath left, hath the locust eaten ; and that which the locust hath left, hath the canker-worm eaten ; and that which the canker-worm hath left, hath the caterpillar eaten. A

nation strong and without number, whose teeth were as the teeth of lions," had come up and besieged their cities, and laid waste their pleasant habitations.

The prophet here directs them what to do, that they might avert impending judgments. "Therefore also now saith the Lord, Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil." Repentance and reformation are the means, which God has appointed for nations and individuals to recover his forfeited favor; and in no other way can we reasonably hope for the continuance of the bounties of his providence. The Israelites enjoyed many peculiar favors, which they frequently abused, and for the abuse of which, they were often made to feel the rod of correction.

"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." Our nation, like ancient Israel, have been a people "highly favored of the Lord;" and our situation resembles theirs in many respects. When our pious fore-fathers were "evil entreated," in the land of their nativity, on account of the manner, in which they thought it most suitable to worship the Supreme Ruler of the universe; they fled to this country, which was then a howling wilderness. The Most High was very kind and gracious to them, and suffered not their enemies to prevail against them. "The lines have fallen to us in pleasant places, yea we have a goodly heritage." Our indulgent Parent has caused "the wilderness to bud and blossom as the rose;" and the abodes of savage men have become the delightful residence of a civil and enlightened people. While our nation was in its infancy, and exposed to all the horrors of anarchy, God mercifully raised up wise and discerning men, who like Moses and Joshua, led us to national prosperity and glory. He gave us likewise learned and pious men, who were inspired with a noble and ardent zeal for the cause of God, and for the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom.



Since our national independence has been established, we have enjoyed an unusual share of prosperity as a nation. We have reason to exclaim, with pious fervor, "Happy art thou," O America, "who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency!" When we recount the favors bestowed upon us, by the bounty of heaven, we find continual cause for gratitude and thanksgiving. But instead of being grateful for the favors which we have received; and instead of rendering that obedience which is justly due from us; we have been "unmindful of the Rock which begat us," and forgotten the God whose bounty has continually sustained us. Though his gentleness has made us great, we have vainly imagined that our own arm has gotten us the victory, and our own wisdom acquired us this renown. Like the people of Israel, we have waxed haughty and rebellious. Is it not evident, that in proportion to the favors bestowed upon us, we have moved the LORD to jealousy, and provoked him to set his face against us, in anger and in furious rebukes?

When the children of Israel rendered themselves deserving of divine judgments, God manifested his mercy and loving-kindness towards them, by sending his prophets to warn them of their danger, and to call them to repentance. He manifested himself, "not willing that any should perish," but that they repent, and return unto him, that they might live. It gratifies the feelings of his heart to shew mercy; but punishes, only, where the public good requires it. Many are the calls of his word and providence to us, to renounce our sins, and obey his voice, that we may share his tender mercies.

The dark and gloomy providences of God, have rendered it suitable that we should devote a day for the "purpose of confessing our disobedience and ingratitude to our Almighty Benefactor;" and of imploring the pardon of our sins, and the removal of those calamities which threaten us. By looking into our situation, we shall find abundant cause for humiliation, fasting and prayer, on account of our own sins, and the manifold sins of our nation.

In attending to the passage of scripture, which has been read for the theme of our present meditations; let us in the first place consider some of the reasons, which render it proper, that we should sanctify a fast, and call solemn assembly. Secondly, we will attend to the obligation of the ministers of religion, to blow the trumpet in Zion, and give the people warning of impending danger.

1. In attending to the reasons which render it proper, that we should humble ourselves before the LORD, our condition, as sinners and apostates from GOD, presents itself. We are all by nature “children of wrath,” and enemies and rebels against GOD. Though he has nourished us from our infancy, and brought us up as children, we have rebelled against him. It is not our design, at present, to attempt a formal proof, of the universal and total depravity of mankind. Whoever reads his bible with an honest and impartial mind, must be convinced that “all have gone out of the way”—“that every imagination of the thoughts of man’s heart is only evil continually.” And it is equally evident, by attending to the conduct of mankind in the various situations in which they have been placed, that there is in them a natural “bent” to backslide. The natural language of mankind concerning GOD is, “depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?” “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.”

Abundant reason have we, therefore, to humble ourselves before the Most High, and to lament our awful apostacy from GOD. If we have the true knowledge of ourselves, we shall see much cause for humiliation in our own hearts. Though the true christian cannot but see, and lament the wickedness of others, he sees that his own heart has cast forth wickedness, as a fountain casteth forth waters. He is ready to confess, that should “judgment be laid to the line, and righteousness to the plummet,” he must be consumed. Though it is his anxious concern, that he may keep a conscience void of offence, towards GOD and man, he sees that in many things he offends, and that he has need to resort to the mercy of GOD in

CHRIST JESUS. Instead, therefore, of spending his time in finding fault with others, he mourns over his own sins, and feels that he should have no reason to complain, if he were to be visited with the sorest calamities.

Persons of this character are, in a great measure, the bulwark and defence of the nation. By their ardent prayers and supplications, at the throne of divine grace, they are honored as the instruments of averting divine judgments, and of procuring national blessings. We have great reason to be humbled, that the number of such persons is so small in our land. We have reason to fear that there are, comparatively, but few prayers addressed to the God of all grace, for the prosperity of our country. But few pray "the effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous man;" which "availeth much." It is the character of the generality of men, in our land, that they "cast off fear, and restrain prayer before God."

2. That spirit of infidelity and impiety, which is so prevalent in our land, at this day, calls for mourning and humiliation. Infidelity, for a number of years past, has been marching through our land, with hasty and gigantic strides. It is no longer anxious to hide itself in corners, but comes forth, with bold front, into public view. The enemies of our holy religion have become animated with success, and grown zealous by numbers. That heaven-born religion, which is the only consolation of the afflicted, and the support of the dying, is attacked with a zeal worthy of the most benevolent institution; and with a perseverance, similar to that of the grand enemy of God and man. Once those, who rejected the sacred scriptures, were more modest in their pretensions; and though they despised christianity themselves, they were willing to allow, that it had a good effect upon the weak and ignorant. What they wrote was not for the common people, but for those of a speculative turn of mind, and cold-hearted like themselves. But finding that infidelity was congenial to the human heart; and that unhinging the minds of men, from the belief of a future state of rewards and punishments, was the most ready way to promote their own selfish plans, they have labored hard to poison the minds of all classes of people. By this means, multitudes have

imbibed its contagion, from those who sit in "high places," down to those who grind at the mill.

The abettors of infidelity are not content with destroying their own souls, but they labor with incessant activity to destroy the souls of others. It is not enough for them to neglect the only hope of salvation; but they endeavor to overthrow the faith of others, and treat the blessed SAVIOUR with the most contemptuous scorn. We live in a time when the most daring impiety is practised. The holy scriptures, which, next to the SAVIOUR, is the most precious favor ever bestowed upon a guilty world, are openly denied by many, and treated with neglect by multitudes, who dare not deny their authority. Is it not evident, that a large portion of our citizens, have been pleased with the successes, which have attended a whole nation of atheists and infidels? Our charity can hardly permit us to believe, that their joy was occasioned by the emancipation of mankind from the shackles of superstition, but because they hoped to see themselves at liberty, from the restraints of moral and religious obligation. Have we not reason to believe, that this is the liberty for which many are contending? Are not these considerations a sufficient reason why we should in a public manner humble ourselves before God, and earnestly deprecate the divine wrath, which we as a people have merited? We have been exalted to heaven by our privileges; but when we view the improvement we have made, we have reason to fear that we shall be cast down to hell. It is a fact which cannot be denied, that many who are clothed with power, and have extensive influence, are in their practice infidels, and take pleasure in the character of those, who blaspheme that SAVIOUR, whom our fathers loved and trusted in for salvation. We could heartily wish, that you were able to prove, that the contrary of this were true. Shall I not visit for these things, saith the LORD? And shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? Have we not reason to be afraid of his judgments? God has said, "them that honor me, I will honor, and they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed."

Among those who profess to believe the holy scriptures, how many are there, who deny the essential doctrines of the gospel, and in this way, attempt to subvert the religion of CHRIST! How many are there, who live where the gospel is preached, who have no realizing sense of its importance! How is the sabbath neglected, and the ordinances of religion contemned. We have reason to believe that there has been a remarkable declension in our land, from that virtue and piety, which adorned former times. Instead of serving and obeying God, we have cast his fear behind our backs, and have practically said, that we will not be subject to his dominion and laws.

3. The profanity which is so prevalent, at this day, in our land, is a reason why we should sanctify a fast, and call a solemn assembly. By reason of swearing, the land mourneth. It has become extremely fashionable, in our days, to take the holy name of GOD in vain. How often are our ears stunned, by the foul imprecations, which we cannot but hear, while walking the public streets, in most parts of our land! I hope there are but few, in this place, who would cast such contempt upon their Maker, and so grossly violate the letter of the divine command. But we have reason to fear there are some, who take the name of GOD in vain, upon the most trivial occasions. They trample upon that holy law, which says expressly, "thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy GOD in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless, who taketh his name in vain." Such will permit me to remind them of the greatness of that Being against whom they sin. The majesty and glory of his nature is "high as heaven, what canst thou do? Deeper than hell, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." "The heaven is his throne, and the earth is his footstool. Is there any number of his armies? And upon whom doth not his light arise? He is the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords." If he withdraw his sustaining hand, his creatures return back to their original nothing. If he speak the word, his enemies will be confined in chains of everlasting darkness.

Such is the excellency and power of that Being, with



whom we have to do: and yet weak and contemptible man, is fool-hardy enough to trample on his holy laws, and tempt him to his face. They dare to live in the commission of those crimes, against which the Most High has denounced "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish." They act as though they thought themselves able to withstand the power, and elude the sight of him, who made the world, and sustains all things in existence by his universal providence. They hate and contemn God, and "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." That awful name which angels adore, and at which devils tremble, is tossed about by worms of the earth, with such lightness and vanity, as if the greatest of all beings, were the meanest and most despicable; or as if the honor of speech consisted in dishonoring him who bestowed it.

We have the most abundant reason to humble ourselves before the Majesty of heaven and earth, and to be covered with sack cloth and ashes, because of the iniquity which abounds among us. Those who fear God, and reverence his word, I am sure must feel alarmed, when they take into consideration, the general prevalence of profaneness and impiety in our land. You, who believe that righteousness exalteth a nation, and that sin is a reproach to any people, cannot but lament the growth of wickedness among us; and the great declension from that piety and virtue, which was the ornament and glory of former times. No nation has more rapidly increased in numbers, than the people of the United States; and none doubtless ever exhibited, so early, such wickedness and contempt of God, as the people in this country. In luxury, dissipation and licentiousness, it is probable that we are scarcely exceeded by the nations of Europe. In the midst of our prosperity, we have forgotten God, and highly provoked him to take from us the privileges, which we have so wantonly abused.

When we review the conduct of those men, who first settled this country, we have additional reasons presented to us, why we should be ashamed of our degeneracy, ingratitude and wickedness. Our fore-fathers left the land of their nativity, and braved the dangers of the ocean, and

all the inconveniences of settling a new country, inhabited by beasts of prey, and still more savage men, for the sake of enjoying a pure and undefiled religion. They were not ashamed to appear on the side of virtue and religion, and to exhibit the amiable character, which adorns the humble follower of the meek and lowly SAVIOUR of men. Then men were held in estimation according to their established characters for virtue and religion. But has not a change, in this respect, taken place in our land? Are not those who cast contempt upon religion, as likely to succeed in obtaining the suffrages of the people, as those who fear God, and work righteousness? We could wish that facts, which are so much to our shame, were not so notorious. It would be much to our honor and reputation, if we could say in truth, that none were likely to succeed in obtaining public offices, but those who shew respect to divine institutions. But is it not evident that many in our land, consider religion as no qualification for public offices? We are told in the sacred oracles, that “when the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice, but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.” We have reason to believe, that many in our land do not give credit to the testimony of scripture, in this particular; and that they will have to learn its truth, by the evils to which their conduct will expose them.

4. That spirit of disunion, which has so long existed among us, calls for mourning and humiliation before God. We have long been a divided and contending people. By the blessing of God, we obtained a good constitution of government, and providence placed over us wise and faithful men to manage our public affairs. But have not those men, who were the instruments in God's hand, of atchieving our independence, been loaded with the greatest abuse, because they were too inflexibly just and honest, to comply with the humors of the wicked and abandoned? Do not such things prove that we have arrived to a high pitch of national wickedness and base ingratitude? It is certain that our land has enjoyed a large share of national happiness and prosperity. But have we not murmured as though we were reduced to the most wretched servitude and abasement? Are we not provo-

king God, by such unjust murmurings and complainings? Do we not make the most ill returns for all that goodness and mercy, which he has exercised towards us? Are not good government and laws, and faithful men to conduct our public concerns, the greatest national blessings that God bestows? And have not these fallen to our share in an eminent degree? Our controversy is not barely with men, but with God. When we unreasonably find fault with the men, whom God, in his providence, places over us, we in reality quarrel with him, and refuse to submit to his government. What acts of oppression have ever taken place, in our state government, to warrant all those complainings which we have heard; and all that opposition which has been made against the men, who have been chosen to execute the laws? We have as a people, the greatest reason to be humbled, as in the dust, for our ingratitude, in thus murmuring against our government and rulers. Finally, when we reflect upon the infidelity and wickedness, which have so rapidly increased in our land, and the party spirit, which has so long violently raged among us, have we not reason to fear, that the day of our calamity is fast approaching?

Let us now, secondly, attend to the obligation of the ministers of religion, to “blow the trumpet in Zion,” and to give the people warning of impending danger.

The ministers of religion are placed as centinels, to watch the approach of danger, and give the people warning that they may escape. Their duty is clearly marked out in the sacred oracles, and they are not allowed to deviate from the rules there prescribed. To reprove mankind for their sins, is a task from which flesh and blood would gladly be excused. But saith God to the prophet, and to every minister of the sanctuary, “son of man, I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.” The christian minister is, by office, a reprove in the gate. He must reprove and rebuke, with all long suffering. His obligation to warn the wicked of their danger, is indispensable, and his duty plain. When God’s judgments are approaching, he is to blow the trumpet and sound the alarm.

It has been discovered, in these days of superior light and knowledge, that ministers have nothing to do, but to preach morality. They are hardly allowed to preach against national sins, lest they meddle with politics. But do not those, who thus prescribe the measures of their duty, discover a great degree of wickedness? Is it not because they dread to hear those truths, which ministers cannot withhold, without a cowardly desertion of their post? A great part of the duty of the ancient prophets consisted, in warning the people against national sins. They were directed, to “cry aloud and spare not, to lift up their voice like a trumpet, and shew unto the people their transgressions, and to the house of Jacob their sins.” The christian minister stands in the same relation now, that the ancient prophets did, under the Jewish establishment. If they do not warn those who transgress, and they die in their sins, their blood will be required at the watchman’s hand. We would ask, if one does not transgress with a high hand, who seeks to place men in important offices, who fear not God, and openly contemn the institutions of religion? and whether such conduct does not have a tendency to bring down divine judgments? If this be the case, then it is evidently the duty of the christian minister, to warn his people against such conduct. He must say to the wicked, thou shalt surely die, except thou repent. How can they be silent, when such woe is denounced against them, if they do not faithfully perform their duty? It is an idea embraced by many, in these times, that religion and government are entirely disconnected, and independent of each other; and that they were established for very different purposes. But do not the scriptures assert, that all power, both in heaven and on earth, is in the hands of CHRIST? Are not civil rulers subject to the great head of the church? By him kings reign, and princes decree justice. God has but one object in view, in the creation and government of the world, which is the advancement of his church, the body of CHRIST. For the promotion of this object, he has ordained civil and religious institutions. It is incumbent upon civil rulers and religious teachers to combine their efforts, for the building up of his cause and



kingdom. Each of them ought to do all in their power, to prevent the spreading of wicked and licentious principles. When the enemy is coming in like a flood, the ministers of CHRIST should, in a special manner, stand in the gap to oppose their inroads. Shall they basely desert their post, when iniquity abounds? Shall they refuse to warn and rebuke, though kings transgress? Shall they for the sake of popularity, or through fear of offending their hearers, abandon the cause, which they were sent to defend? If iniquity abounds, there is the more need of their exertions. If men transgress with a high hand, there is a louder call for their activity and diligence. Do the rich, the great, and the honorable of the earth, make void GOD's law, and threaten to lay waste the pleasant places of Zion? The true minister of CHRIST is animated by dangers, and grows bold by opposition. He will not lightly touch the vices of mankind, though ejections, prisons, and tortures are the rewards of his faithfulness. It is readily granted that politics, disconnected with moral duties, are not to find a place in the sacred desk. But when national sins abound, and iniquity lifts up itself, then the ministers of religion are to "blow the trumpet in Zion." They are to publish GOD's threatenings against sin, that the people may repent, and reform, and do no more so wickedly. They cannot with a good conscience be silent, when GOD's law is trampled upon, and the institutions of religion profaned, by wicked and ungodly men.

Reviewing our situation, in connection with our subject, we find much cause of gratitude and thanksgiving. Notwithstanding our ingratitude and rebellion, GOD has very liberally bestowed upon us the bounties of his providence. Concerning his goodness to the people of the United States, it may be said with propriety in the language of divine inspiration, "he hath not dealt so with any nation; and as for his judgments, they have rarely known them." In addition to the rich variety of his providential favors, he has given us his holy word, "to guide our feet in the way of peace;" and which by the influences of his holy Spirit, "is able to make us wise unto salvation." He has given us the most gracious assurance, that

if we walk in wisdom's ways, we shall enjoy his favor and protection in this world, and in the world to come we shall receive crowns of never-fading glory "in the kingdom of CHRIST and of GOD." The rewards of grace, promised to obedience, are no less than eternal life and happiness. They are rewards suitable for GOD to bestow, and they are the greatest that mortals can enjoy.

But how have we improved, under the bounties of his providence, and the still richer blessings of his grace? Is it not very evident, that we are an ungrateful and unthankful people? Have not the favors, which GOD has bestowed upon us, served to nourish our pride, and render us deserving of his displeasure? We can none of us pretend, that we have rendered unto the LORD according to the benefits which we have received. As individuals, we are every one of us very much wanting in this respect. Like Jeshurun of old, we have "waxed fat and kicked." Ranging in the fat pastures of GOD's providence, we have grown turbulent and rebellious. We have not submitted ourselves to the voice of GOD. He has sent unto us his servants, and by them addressed us in the most affectionate language, saying, "O do not this abominable thing that I hate." But how have we slighted the invitations of mercy, and turned a deaf ear to his kind exhortations! We have very wantonly abused his mercies, and provoked him to come out in judgment against us. When we reflect upon that spirit of impiety and profaneness, which abounds among us, and the contempt cast upon that holy religion which was so dear to our fathers, and under the influence of which, we were so prosperous and happy, have we not reason to fear that GOD will take from us our civil and religious privileges, and leave us to wander in the mazes of error and delusion, till we are made to prize them, by all the horrors of anarchy, and the terrors of the midnight assassin? If GOD has mercy in store for an unthankful and rebellious people, he will doubtless humble us, and make us retrace the steps we have taken. He will make us learn the necessity of practising the social and christian virtues, that we may be a free and happy people. This is the only way to preserve our dear-bought liberties, both civil and

religious, and the only way in which God ever bestows lasting blessings upon a nation.

If we examine God's dealings with nations, we shall find that he has not suffered those to go unpunished, who have become signally wicked and impious. He avenged himself upon the old world, by a deluge of waters, and burnt up the cities of the plain, when they had rendered themselves vile, that he might teach mankind his feelings towards sin. But I would ask if it is not possible, that we are more wicked than they were? Have we not abused much greater light, than they ever enjoyed? They enjoyed only the first rays of the twilight; but we have enjoyed the meridian sun.

We have the greatest reason to fear that God will send us the sorest judgments, unless we repent and reform. Have we not already begun to experience the bitter consequences of our sins? If we examine our public concerns, does it not appear evident that God has a controversy with us? The evils, which afflict so many of our citizens, ought not to be considered as coming of themselves, without an over-ruling providence. They should admonish us that God is angry with our nation. He is chastizing us for our manifold sins and iniquities.

The aspect of divine providence indicates, that God is about to accomplish some great thing in the earth. "His judgments are broad in the earth," and we live in an "evil day." "Behold," saith the prophet, "the Lord cometh out of his place, to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and no more cover her slain." We live in the time, when there is "distress of nations with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." God has for a long time been permitting a lawless tyrant to scourge the nations of Europe; and we have much reason to fear that he will lay his cruel fangs upon us, unless we "break off our sins by righteousness, and our iniquities by turning unto the Lord." It will be in vain to plead our strength, if God give him a commission to chastise us. But this is not the only way in which God may punish us. He can make us the

instruments of our own ruin. If he suffer wicked men to take the reins of government, they may easily enslave us, and take from us every temporal blessing, which we hold most dear. If he withhold wisdom from our men of council, our public concerns will soon assume the most gloomy aspect.

Let us while confessing our sins, and imploring protection, present our petitions before his mercy seat, that he would impart to us the sanctifying influences of his Holy Spirit, and not suffer us any longer to abuse his favors. Let us be importunate at the throne of divine grace, that he would pour his Spirit upon the people of this land, and humble them for their transgressions, and make them a holy people, that they may be prepared for national blessings. We live in a time when the friends of religion should not be dormant. Those, who pray for the peace of Jerusalem, should not keep silence. While the enemies of our holy religion are pouring in their blasphemous invectives like a torrent, and threatening to "crush" the cause of CHRIST, the friends of the Redeemer should be on their guard. Let them retire to their closets, and pour out their hearts before God, that he would appear in the greatness of his power, and remove from the minds of men that pride and self-conceit, which oppose the humiliating doctrines of the gospel. Though ours is a time of trouble and of gloominess, it becomes us not to be discouraged. Though God is hiding his face, behind impenetrable clouds of darkness, let us "look towards his holy temple." If we "faint in the day of adversity," it is because our "strength is small." If we are in heart united to the cause of CHRIST, we shall never "be confounded." Though the workers of iniquity do for a while flourish and magnify themselves against God, they "shall suddenly be destroyed." "Associate yourselves, O ye people," saith the LORD, "and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought: speak the word and it shall not stand: for God is with us." Their covenant with death shall be disannulled, and their agreement with hell shall not stand. CHRIST has promised that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against" his church: and has he not as



yet made his promise good? Has his promised faithfulness ever failed? Has he not always been the defender of the righteous cause? These considerations should animate the friends of religion, and cause them to press forward, with the greater engagedness. They have the promise that "all things shall work together for good to them that love God."

Do we feel solicitous for the future prosperity of our country? And do we earnestly pray that God would continue to us the blessings of civil and religious order? We should remember that these can only be preserved among an enlightened and virtuous people. Let us cherish all those salutary institutions, which were the means of raising our country, to such a pitch of eminence and prosperity. If we believe the holy scriptures, we are persuaded that God will prosper us as a nation, when we pay attention to the duties of piety, justice, and christian morality: but if we neglect these virtues he will punish us for our sins.

In this gloomy and distressing time, it becomes each one to look into his own heart to see whether he is the subject of true repentance. If we are not the subjects of godly sorrow for our sins, we are increasing the burden of our national guilt, and rendering our ruin more probable. If we are not truly penitent, we are "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath." We are urged by the most powerful arguments to immediate repentance. Time is hastening us to the verge of the grave. The scenes of eternity will soon be present. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

THE END.