
SERMON

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THE GENERAL-ASSEMBLY

OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

IN THE

UNITED STATES,

TO BE SET APART

FOR

Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer.

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SERMON, &c.

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THE AUTHOR of this Discourse had not the least tho't of the Press when he composed it : He wrote it in great haste, in the midst of numerous avocations. Depending, however, more upon the opinions of others, than his own, he consented that it should go to the Public thro' the medium of the Press.

“LET us search and try our ways, & turn again to the LORD.

“Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the Heavens. We have transgressed and rebelled : thou hast not pardoned.”

NATIONS as well as individuals are the objects of Divine Providence. It is therefore the duty of the former as well as the latter to search and try their ways. Political combinations, not existing, as such, in the future world, can be rewarded or punished only in this world. According then as the prevailing and general character of nations is, they have reason to expect Divine favor or judgment. This may be evinced both by the knowledge which we have of Divine justice, and also from the history of nations. The Lord reigneth king over all the earth. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right.” The history of the Jews peculiarly illustrates this truth. Whenever they in general, worshipped God, and observed his ordinances, he gave them victory over their enemies, caused them to dwell in peace, and made them a prosperous and happy nation. But when they and their rulers neglected his ordinances, became irreligious or worshippers of idols, God brought his judgments upon them, either by pestilence or famine, or by giving them into the hands of their enemies, or by some other severe affliction. The prophet in this book in the

most pathetic strains laments the distressed situation of the Jews, and exhorts them "to search and try their ways;" to examine and ascertain in what respects, they, as a nation, had offended God, and provoked him to bring upon them such severe Judgments. And he farther exhorts them, after they had ascertained their Sins, to forsake them and turn again to the Lord. This he considered as the only way, by which they were to expect a removal of their calamities. He next describes to them the manner, in which they should turn to the Lord. "Let us, saith he, lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens, and confess, saying, we have transgressed and rebelled: thou hast not pardoned." By these last words "thou hast not pardoned," the Prophet meant, that the Judgment still continued; for if God had pardoned, it would have been removed; and this was a proof, that they had not repented.

No sooner do a people repent sincerely, than God, who is still waiting to be gracious, pardons and blesses them. By the expression "we have transgressed and rebelled," we may understand not only a confession, but also a declaration, that their transgressions were the cause of the divine judgments. Where there is no transgression, there is no guilt, and where there is no guilt, a just God will not punish.

The same God rules over the nations now, who did in the days of the Prophet. The same causes too still produce the same effects; and similar effects may be still traced to similar causes. Do we then as a nation either at present experience the frowns of heaven, or are we threatened with approaching calamities? it is because we have transgressed, and our national guilt has gone up before God,

Was it the duty of the Jews in a similar situation, to search and try their ways and turn unto God? it must also be our duty. And was there nothing but repentance and turning unto God, that would deliver them from the evils already inflicted, or avert those which were threatened; so nothing but the same can save us.

OUR TEXT THEN CALLS UPON US,

I. To examine ourselves as a nation, that we may ascertain our national guilt. And,

II. To repent and turn to God, as the only way by which we are to expect deliverance from calamities, whether they be present, or only threatened and yet to come.

I. Then we are exhorted to examine into our national guilt.

And here it is necessary to the due measurement of our guilt, that we enquire into our privileges as a nation. "Where much is given, much also shall be required," applies to nations as well as individuals. The privileges of the Jews, being peculiar but much abused, greatly enhanced their guilt. Had they not been the chosen people of God, their crimes had not risen to heaven, so deeply dyed with a crimson color and scarlet hue.

The histories of no two nations, perhaps, ever coincided in more particulars, as to their privileges and blessings, than that of the Jews, and that of the people of these United States. The Jews were delivered by a train of miracles from the severe bondage of Egypt: By breaux from Heaven they were supported in their passage thro' the wilderness: By the outstretched arm of Omnipotence the Heathen were driven out before them, and they were settled

in the delightful country of Canaan, dwelled in peace and became a great, rich and respectable nation.

Our forefathers fled to this country to escape civil and religious persecution. When they arrived here, they had to settle in the midst of the ravenous beasts of the forest, and the savage tribes of the wilderness, and in a land entirely uncultivated, and totally destitute of provisions for civilized life. Were not their preservation and support then next to miraculous? Certainly that hand, which drove out the Canaanites before the children of Israel must have driven away the savage tribes of America, before the small number of our primogenitors, who first arrived on these shores; and they must have been supported and fed by the same power, which rained down bread from heaven for Israel in the wilderness. Through divine protection, guidance and support then, our fathers were preserved, greatly increased and prospered. Before them, thus aided, the wilderness was made glad, the desert blossomed as the rose and abundantly rejoiced.

Their sun-shine of prosperity increasing was reflected across the Atlantic, and was caught by the eagle-eye of jealousy and envy, and the iron rod of oppression was stretched out to retard their progress. A European Pharaoh saw, that the people of this land were greatly multiplied, and were becoming rich, and his jealousy was inflamed. We were still comparatively weak and defenceless. Numerous and powerful armies, confident of success, invaded us; but the same God, who before had protected our fathers from the heathen, now stretched out his arm for our defence. An American Joshua was raised up, and the God mighty in battles fought for us. Never scarcely

were the favor and assistance of Providence more conspicuously evinced, than in the late emancipation of the United States from European thralldom. Our illustrious Washington, the Joshua of America, was frequently almost forsaken, and the enemy appeared triumphant: But he prayed to his God, and multitudes flocked to his standard, and, to the astonishment of the world, we defeated the most powerful nation on the face of the earth, and became a free and independent people. The olive branch of peace waved itself over our land, and ever since we have been, till very lately, increasing in strength, prosperity, opulence and respectability: Several occasional clouds, it is true, have in the mean time collected in our own hemisphere, and for a while threatened to disturb us, but as it were by a ray of light from heaven, they were soon dispersed. And if at this present period our prospects are gloomy, and God appears about to withdraw his former protection, it is because we have abused our privileges; and because our national sins have ascended to heaven.

But, that we may still father "search our ways," and ascertain our peculiar privileges, and consequently our guilt, it is necessary that we contrast our situation with that of other ages, nations and countries. This we shall do by taking a view of our natural, civil and religious advantages.

1st. We shall speak of our natural advantages. Being happily removed from the polar and equatorial regions, we experience neither the frozen cold of the frigid, nor the burning heat of the torrid zone. We enjoy a climate agreeably temperate and mild. In this happy clime the scorching wind never blows, carrying with it disease and

death. Here clouds of sand have never buried whole caravans. In our forests the fierce tyger, the destructive lion never prowl; neither are our woods infested with the stinging adder, nor the gigantic serpent. Our waters are not filled, nor their banks covered with the mortiferous crocodile. Here armies of locusts never invade us, destroying every species of food for man and beast. Our soil and climate, happily calculated to produce every kind of grain, thro' the goodness of God, pale and ghastly famine have never visited us. If one crop fails, another succeeds, and therefore our land has always been filled with abundance. Rivulets of water too flow every where for our refreshment. In this happy country the plague has never ravaged, slaying its thousands; the burning mountain has never sent forth its streams of fire, destroying whole neighborhoods: Neither hath the earth opened her tremendous jaws, and devoured whole towns and cities! These evils have been often experienced in many other countries. Hence it is evident that our natural advantages, compared with other countries are great—"Where much is given, much also will be required."

2ndly. We shall speak of our civil privileges.

In this nation no absolute monarch sways his sceptre; no tyrannical despot, whose will is the law of the land, here breathes his noxious breath—here we have none of the unmeaning distinctions of noble and ignoble born; none, who are lords over the lives and properties of the citizens. In this happy land none are enchained in bastiles; none immersed in dungeons, for asserting the rights of man! Here no scaffold has been stained with blood; no guillotine has expanded its voracious jaws! From our fortunate clime

none have been driven into exile! Our land has never been watered with the tears of a loving wife; our hills or vales have never echoed with the doleful shrieks and cries of affectionate children, because a fond husband or an indulgent father was torn from them, and driven into banishment!—Here every man is born free, has an equal chance for promotion, and enjoys uninterrupted every species of civil and rational liberty. Exactly the reverse of these blessings has been and still is experienced by many nations—Are we not then a highly favored people!

3dly. We shall contrast our spiritual and religious privileges with those of other nations:

In the greater part of the world Paganism with all its ignorance and idolatry prevails: in a very considerable part Mahometanism with all its delusion and cruelty; and in some, persecution and superstition in their various haggard forms reign triumphant. In casting my eye over the world I see in some places thousands of the human race bowing down to stocks and stones, cutting themselves with knives, spears or lancets, or performing painful pilgrimages over rugged rocks and craggy mountains on their bare feet or naked knees, or with shoes pierced thro' with sharp nails. Their path as they go is crimsoned with their blood—thro' fatigue, pain and loss of blood they faint and fall—a little recruited, they again struggle up and pursue the same journey of torture and pain. This they persevere to do, at the risque of their lives; for if they fail, they expect no pardon for their sins! The God too, whom they suppose they have offended, is nothing but an imaginary deity. Poor deluded mortals!—Who would not drop a tear over their delusion!

In other countries I see crowds pressing to the over-

whelming flood, or the burning altar, to plunge themselves or their children, into the waters or the flames. I see and hear the tender infant expiring in shrieks, and screams, and blood ! Here the parent offers up his body, or “ the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul.” From this melancholy scene I turn my eyes, and behold numbers running to throw themselves under the chariots of their Gods ; and others flying to the wilderness never to return, there to endure hunger and every dire distress. But what is this I see !— A funeral pile, the fuel ready, and the fire kindled : for what purpose prepared ? An affectionate husband is dead, and the loving wife is coming to offer herself a sacrifice to his regardless ghost !—the pile she ascends, and in the flames she expires. Oh the doleful effects of heathenish ignorance and idolatry ! Where *they* reign, *there* is truly “ the land of the shadow of death.”

These are all voluntary victims. Would to God, that the melancholy scene here closed : But it is not so. Infatuated superstition and bloody persecution present scenes, if possible, much more dreadful. To unfold these we must bring to your view all the instruments of tortures, and forms of death, which the savage mind of man or the genius of Devils thirsting for blood, could invent. We must shew you men and women sawn asunder, rolled in casks lined with the points of sharp iron spikes—clothed in skins and devoured by wild beasts—scalded to death by burning wine poured into them—expiring on the gibbet, on the rack and at the stake, and in a thousand other forms too tedious and too shocking to mention !

I shall detain you to particularize only one species of persecution, and which yet prevails in some part of Europe,

if not very lately abolished, I mean the bloody Inquisition. A court is established, which is called the court of Inquisitors. “ This diabolical tribunal,” saith a certain author, “ takes cognizance of heresy, judaism, mahometanism, sodomy and poligamy ; and the people stand in so much fear of it, that parents deliver up their children, husbands their wives, and masters their servants to its officers, without daring in the least to murmur.”

Nothing more is necessary than a bare suspicion of a person’s guilt, and he is immediately dragged off and immured in a dreary prison. As soon as this happens his friends go into mourning and speak of him as dead. They dare not solicit his pardon, lest they should be seized as accomplices. After he has been imprisoned for a considerable time he is brought forth and called upon to confess his crime, without even being charged with any, or knowing for what he has been confined. If he do not confess, he is put upon the rack and tortured, till perhaps a number of his joints are dislocated. Thus he is alternately imprisoned and tortured, and if at length, he do not confess, and there is not a shadow of proof against him, he is discharged, but not without the loss of a principal part of his property, in addition to his great torture and long imprisonment. But if the persons thus tried are in any way convicted, as soon as it is thought there is a sufficient number, they are brought forth in great solemnity and pomp for execution. There are as many stakes prepared, as there are criminals : Each stake is about 12 feet high. Near the top there is a board fixed on which the unfortunate victim is seated. Upon this a great shout is raised ; and the cry is, “ Let the dogs beards be made !” This is done by thrusting flaming torches,

fastened to long poles, against their faces, till they are burnt to a coal; and this is accompanied by the loudest acclamations of joy. At last fire is set to the fuel underneath the criminal; but he is chained so high, that the flame scarcely ever reaches him. He is therefore rather roasted than burned. This is beheld by all ages and sexes, with transports of joy and satisfaction. There cannot be a more lamentable spectacle. The poor sufferers are continually as long as they are able crying out, pity for the love of God! pity for the love of God!"

Let us now call our eyes home; and let us with rapture and gratitude survey the beautiful picture, compared with this, which our own country exhibits. From our happy land, "the darkness, that covered the earth, and the gross darkness, which overwhelmed the people," hath fled away beyond, far beyond the cloud capped mountain: and the sun of righteousness, the light of the gospel shines with meridian and uneclipsed splendor. Here no altars burn to idols; no temples are erected to demons. Here the hearts of mothers are not pierced, nor their nerves convulsed with the cries of their children, expiring in flames, as offerings to dumb idols. In this happy country we lie down and rise up without the fearful apprehensions of the bloody inquisition. Here the sword of persecution is sheathed, the flames of martyrdom are extinguished, and every person, unmolested, may worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience.

It is evident then, that we enjoy great spiritual and religious privileges. We must not however forget to notice the peculiar blessing of peace, which is vouchsafed to us, at this time, whilst many nations are harrassed with war in

all its ghastly terrors. In Europe we may see armies, in numbers equal to locusts; but in destruction infinitely worse, entering flourishing and populous countries, richly stored with wealth collected by many years careful industry. Terror, dismay and wild consternation go before them;—devastation and violence, carnage and death accompany them;—pain, distress and famine, pale and direful, follow them. I see the signal for battle given. I hear the terrific and thundering sound of the instruments of destruction. I see death raging in all its frightful forms. I see the plains deluged with blood, and filled with carnage. I hear the mountains re-echo the shrieks, the sighs and the groans of the wounded and the dying. If, however, the evils of war were confined to the field of battle, they would be comparatively small; but they spread themselves throughout the whole land. The doleful tidings fly in every direction. A father, a son, or a husband has fallen! A sight then still more dreadful, if possible, presents itself.—In one place I see a group of fatherless children, bathed in tears, in a second I see a distracted mother; and in a third place a widow overwhelmed with woe. She refuses to be comforted for the beloved husband of her youth is dead. The streams of tears, which now flow, mingle with the streams of blood, which were previously flowing: and the bitter cries of the living are united with the groans of the dying. Behold then a dreadful spectacle! the whole land is a land of weeping of sorrow & of carnage. Hark the whole country resounds nothing, but the bitterest accents of mingled pain, woe and anguish unutterable and full of horror. Great indeed then is the contrast between our situation, and that of Europe. There you see every where the bloody flag of war; but in America you see every where the olive branch of peace. Whilst they

are convulsed with terror, we recline in safety. Whilst they experience and are shocked with the doleful cries of sorrow ; we are enraptured with the sweet accents of joy.

Hence it is evident, that our blessings of every description have been peculiarly great. "God has not," for many ages "dealt so with any other, as he has with this nation." Certainly then we are bound by every tie to acknowledge his great goodness, to be exceedingly grateful, to be very zealous for his honor and glory, and to be peculiarly devoted to his service.

Let us then search and try our ways, that we may ascertain, whether we have suitably appreciated, and improved our unexampled privileges and blessings. We have long been a happy ; are we a holy nation ? Are we as famous for our gratitude and devotion to God, as we are for the favors, which we have received at his hand. Does "righteousness run down our streets like a stream and judgment like mighty waters." If this is our character, our blessings shall be continued. That God, who hath hitherto protected us will still continue to sway the sceptre of our Nation, defending us from external violence, and preserving internal harmony, peace and prosperity.

But have we not reason to fear, that the reverse of this picture is true ? In but few instances do we recognize the Author of our numerous and peculiar blessings ; and instead of ascribing all the glory to him, we arrogate the praise to ourselves. The charges, that were brought against Israel may be justly brought against us. The Lord said of them, "that they did not know, that he gave them their corn, and wine and oil, and multiplied their silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal, and of their silver and their

gold they have made them Idols. Jeshurun hath waxed fat and kicked ; then he forsook God, who made him and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation. Of the Rock, that begot thee, thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God, that formed thee."

Have not we too multiplied our idols in proportion to the increase of our gold and silver ? Have we not increased in luxury, extravagance, vice of every description ; in impiety, irreligion and ingratitude to God, as rapidly, as we have grown in wealth, influence and respectability. Are not the barriers against vice laid prostrate, its flood gates thrown wide open, and does it not, like a mighty torrent sweep thro' our land ? Do not profaneness, debauchery, sabbath-breaking and a neglect of God's ordinances greatly abound. Must not rulers and people smite upon their breasts, and with one voice exclaim, guilty, guilty, exceedingly guilty !!! Let us now measure our guilt by the standard of our peculiar privileges, before described, but which we have shamefully, and ungratefully abused.—How tall it rises ! It reaches even to the Heavens. How ungrateful, ungenerous and base is it, to make the very blessings, which God hath given us, the instruments of rebellion against him !

We may however ascertain, that we are guilty, not only from an examination into our crimes, which are the cause ; but also by viewing calamities impending and threatened, which are the effect. Do we as a nation experience calamities at present, or do we fear greater yet to come ? it is because we are guilty. A just God will by no means, punish nations or individuals who are not guilty. Still, tho' we do experience afflictions, we have great reason to be thankful, that they are so gentle and light. They are much

fewer and milder, than our iniquities deserve; and than those, which are now experienced by other nations. The cloud, which at present impends our country, is but as the palm of a man's hand, compared to those, which impend and are now pouring their tremendous contents upon Europe. Here our hearts are not pierced with the cries of our children for bread, whilst there is no bread to give them! Here our hills do not ring with the horrid din of war, neither do our plains or streets flow with streams of human blood. What, suppose you, is the present state of Spain! wrapped in the tremendous and united clouds of domestic and foreign war, in all its haggard forms! Property and life are every where sacrificed—brother dies by the hand of brother; and the son thrusts the murderous dagger into the breast of his own father!—Death in all its varied forms every where rages; and men, women and children lie dead in promiscuous heaps! Consternation wild is painted in every face, and terror dreadful convulses every heart!

How comparatively happy then are we! Yet great are our murmurings, and numerous are our complaints: Some say our situation could scarce be worse; war would be better than our present condition. We admit that the condition of some of our citizens and valuable citizens too, is truly distressing; and with them we sincerely sympathize, and deeply lament that some provision was not made for those, who, by our present state, are thrown out of business, and in a measure deprived of support for themselves and their families. Yet, tho' some of the members suffer, the great body of our country enjoys sufficient support: Bread, the staff of life, and provisions of every description abound. Must not our unreasonable murmurings & complaints then,

about our *small* calamities, whilst we forget, and are unthankful for our *great* blessings, exceedingly augment our guilt? If we thus murmur when only the finger of God's chastisement is laid gently upon us; have we not great reason to fear that he will lift against us his whole hand, and chastise us according to our accumulated guilt?

Other persons are for throwing the blame off the nation at large, and for attaching it elsewhere: Some attaching it to one source, and others to another. Some say the fault is all in our rulers; that they are unwise, corrupt, or pusillanimous—If they were not so, they suppose these difficulties would not have befallen us. We shall admit, for sake of argument, that the conduct of our rulers is the proximate cause; but still it is evident that our guilt is the remote cause. This may be proved by the history of the Jews—When they became a sinful & idolatrous nation, God threatened that he would punish them in their rulers: This is God's declaration to them by the Prophet Isaiah, "Behold the Lord, the Lord of Hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem, and from Judah the mighty men and the men of war, the Judge and the Prophet, and the prudent and the ancient, the captains of fifty and the honorable men, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer and the eloquent orator. And I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them." Did their sins bring these evils upon the Jews; & suppose it to be the fact, that our distress has come upon us, thro' the weakness or misconduct of our rulers, should we not conclude, that our sins have provoked God to give us, or rather to permit us to have such men to manage the affairs of our nation.

Other persons say, that our present situation arises

from a peculiar conjuncture of affairs in Europe. Admit this to be the fact, still we must trace the matter to the same causes. God has the hearts of all men, kings and emperors, as well as others in his hands, and as the rivers of waters are turned, so can he turn them. Would he then permit the princes of the earth to pass and execute such decrees as would distress us, if we were not a sinful people? Hence it is evident, whatever be the second or immediate causes of our present or our contemplated situation, we must plead guilty. Since then we are guilty, there is no way by which we are to expect safety and peace, but by repentance and reformation.—This naturally leads me to the

Second head—to shew, that “to repent and turn unto God,” is the only way by which we are to expect that calamities, either experienced or threatened, shall be averted.

To prove this, we need add but a few words—“Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish,” may be applied to nations as well as individuals. This was God’s uniform language to the Jews, and according to their penitence or impenitence he still dealt with them. Whenever the children of Israel repented and turned unto the Lord, he returned unto them, and delivered them from their various calamities; he saved them from their numerous enemies. The God mighty in battles, fought for them; and one man chased a thousand. Did the king of Nineveh proclaim a fast; and did the inhabitants repent in sackcloth and ashes? and did not God withhold for a season the threatened judgments? The same God rules over us, and no doubt, will deal with us in the same manner. Our text therefore exhorts us, *to turn again to the Lord, and to lift up our hearts with our hands unto God in the heavens.*

It might perhaps be proper for us here to explain the nature of that repentance, in consequence of which, God pardons the sins of nations, and turns away from them his judgments. The subject however, not being properly before us, since our text is rather exhortatory than doctrinal, we shall make only an observation or two upon it: we observe then, that the repentance required of nations is the same in nature with that required of individuals in common, except, that it requires them to recognize in particular, their blessings as a nation; and the guilt, of whatever kind it be, which they have incurred in consequence of their abuse of these; and that agreeably to this recognition they repent of their national sins. It is necessary too, that each person recognize his peculiar station, and accordingly repent. The rulers should repent of the sins which they have committed in their official capacity, as well as those which are personal; and the citizen should repent of the sins, of which he as such, is guilty. Let every man sweep clean before his own door, and the whole street will be clean; let every individual repent and turn from his evil ways according to his station and the whole land will be pure. Agreeably to our text too, we would observe, that national as well as personal repentance must have its seat in the heart. Let us lift up our *hearts* unto God. This is still farther confirmed by the exhortation of the Prophet Joel—“Rend your *heart* and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God.”

We shall now enforce the exhortation to repentance, by the following arguments:—

1st. If we repent God will remove our calamities; will bless us and make us a happy nation. He has promised & will perform it. If God be for us, nothing can be against

us—Famine shall not distress us; the pestilence shall not walk in darkness amongst us, nor waste at noon-day; neither shall the sword be permitted to shed the blood of our citizens. These are generally the means by which God punishes wicked and impenitent nations—“Blessed is that people whose God is the Lord.” Let us then “turn again to the Lord, and lift up our hearts with our hands unto God in the heavens.”

2dly. Let the dreadful judgments inflicted upon other nations for their crimes, alarm and excite us to repentance.—Behold the whole world destroyed by water; and Sodom and Gomorrah consumed by fire, and tremble!—Read the histories of Nineveh, Babylon, and Jerusalem, and take the alarm: Nineveh and Babylon were once the greatest cities in the world, and were considered impregnable; yet when the measure of their iniquities was filled up, God gave them over to total and awful destruction. Jerusalem was often besieged and taken; so dreadful too was the situation of the inhabitants at some of the sieges, as the scriptures had predicted,—that mothers, forgetting maternal ties and affection, eat their own children. Josephus, the famous Jewish historian records the fulfilment of this and several other predictions.

One very affecting instance he relates with its circumstances—“A woman distinguished by birth and wealth, after she had been plundered of all her provisions, boiled her own sucking child, eat part of it, and concealed the rest, reserving it for another meal.” He farther states that, “women snatched the food out of the very mouths of their husbands, sons out of the mouths of their fathers, and mothers out of the mouths of their infants.” When Jerusalem was besieged by the Romans, it presented scenes, within and

without, the most horrible. Within, the streets and the houses were filled with thousands perishing by famine and by faction. Without, five hundred were crucified every day till room was not to be had for the erection of crosses, nor cou'd timber be procured to make them. At length the city was taken and plundered, and the whole of the citizens were either destroyed or carried away captive into different nations of the world. During the siege one million and one hundred thousand were destroyed. To this day the Jews, sifted thro' the nations of the earth, and wofully degraded, are awful monuments of the wrath of God. It is therefore “a fearful thing for nations as well as individuals to fall into the hands of the living God. Let us then, lest the same awful judgments befall us, take warning and repent, and turn unto the Lord.

Lastly, the evil times predicted in the scriptures, but yet to come upon the world, should arrest our attention, excite our fear, and constrain us to repent.

Be assured, times fraught with every temporal evil, which is dreadful to man—times, that will make the stoutest heart faint, and boldest face pale, are coming, yea fast coming, nay perhaps they have already commenced; and therefore will be experienced by us and our children! Nation shall be dashed against nation. God will overturn, overturn, and overturn, till he come, whose right it is to reign, and establish his kingdom over the whole earth. The sword, the sword is drawn for the slaughter, it is furnished to consume and punish the nations for their wickedness, for the blood of the saints.

Let us hear a few of the Divine predictions on this subject; and whilst we hear, let us tremble. This is God's address to the prophet Ezekiel—“Therefore son of man prophecy and say unto Gog, thus saith the Lord God, in that day, when my people of Israel dwelleth in safety, shalt thou not know it? And thou shalt come, thou and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company and a mighty army, against my people Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days. And it shall

come to pass at the same time, when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord God, that my fury shall come up in my face. For in my jealousy, and in the fury of my wrath have I spoken, surely in that day their shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; so that the fishes of the sea, the fowls of the Heaven, and the beasts of the field and all creeping things, that creep on the face of the earth, and all the men that are on the face of the earth shall shake at my presence; and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord God: every man's sword shall be against his brother. And I will plead against him with pestilence and blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his lands, and upon the many people, that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hail stones, fire and brimstone. I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured."

So numerous shall the armies be, which shall be destroyed, that the scriptures state, that the implements of war shall serve the inhabitants of the adjacent cities for fuel seven years; and men shall be employed seven months in burying the bones of the dead. Daniel records that "there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time." In the revelation by John, we read, "And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues with pain. And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air, and there was voices and thunders and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty & so great an earthquake. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell; and every Island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent." And it is said of majestic Babylon, "that her plagues shall come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine: and she shall be utterly burnt up with fire. The kings of the earth shall bewail her and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her

burning. And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandize any more. They shall stand afar off, for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, and saying, Alas, alas!"

The same John also records, that "he saw an angel standing in the sea; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both bond and free, small and great." He saw also an angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and he gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the wine press of the wrath of God. And the wine press was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the wine press even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs."

Are such evil times yet to come upon the world, and is it probable they will be cotemporary with us, or at least with our children? Certainly then our attention ought to be seriously arrested, and our most anxious alarm excited. Whether these evils shall be experienced in their greatest height in America God only knows. In the old world they certainly shall. The cry of the blood of the Martyrs which has often stained the earth there, has gone up before the throne of God. The cry of any human blood is dreadful; the cry of the blood of the saints hath rent the heavens. Did the cry of the blood of Abel set a mark upon Cain, and shall not the cry of ~~that~~ millions of Abels mark out that nation for destruction, where their blood has flowed in streams.

Thanks be to God, that this land has not yet incurred such accumulated, such crimson guilt! We have, however, incurred great guilt; and the only way by which we can expect to escape the great distress of those evil times, is to press down the cloud of our sins, and prevent it from ascending to heaven: Let us not put our trust in physical nor artificial strength; in the multitude of our armed men,

nor in the strength of our fortifications, nor in the aid of foreign alliances; but in the favor of God, and the protection of Omnipotence:—and let us not presume upon these, except we repent. Jerusalem thought as she was called the city of God, was in herself strong, and had powerful allies, she should still be safe: Her alliances, however, became her snare: She trusted in the aid of nations, rather than in God; was polluted with their irreligion and vices, and therefore the Almighty, being still more provok'd, cut her off from the face of the earth. If ever a city had reason to consider herself safe, Nineveh had; the wall that surrounded her was 200 feet high, and so thick that three chariots abreast might have been driven along the top; on the wall were 1500 towers, each 200 feet high; she possessed incalculable wealth; had numerous and powerful armies of her own, and was aided by numerous and formidable allies; yet the judgment of Heaven being upon her on account of her sins, she was destroyed, apparently with ease, and so totally demolished, that even her site cannot be ascertained.

How vain, then is it to depend upon physical or artificial strength for safety! How absurd to put confidence in allies! In proportion as they are guilty, they will be punished; and in proportion as nations are connected, in the same proportion the punishment experienced by one, will by its vibrations convulse the other. Let us as a nation, put our whole dependence in that God, who sways the sceptre of worlds!—and if we, in this new world, would escape the awful convulsions now experienced, and yet much more severely to be felt by the old world, *Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord. Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the Heavens.*

And now may God who hath hitherto protected us, and who hath the hearts of all men in his hands, dispose us to repent of our national guilt; and may he, in his great goodness, keep us free from external violence and internal convulsions; and forever avert from us the dreadful judgments yet to be poured out upon the nations of the earth. And to his adorable name be ascribed all the glory and all the praise. Amen, and Amen.