

TOLERATION: THE CUT-THROAT OF TRUE RELIGION

The Presbytery testify against a sinful and almost boundless toleration, granted anno 1712, a woeful fruit of the union; by which toleration act, not only those of the Episcopal communion in Scotland have the protection of authority, but a wide door is cast open, and ample pass given to all sects and heretics (popish recusants and anti-trinitarians some way excepted, who yet are numerous in the nation), to make whatever attacks they please upon the kingdom and interest of our glorious Redeemer, in order to the advancement of their own and the devil's, and all with impunity. The foresaid act warrants the Episcopal clergy publicly to administer all ordinances, and perform their worship after their own manner with all the popish canons and ceremonies thereof, and obliges all magistrates to protect and assist them, while it destroys the hedge of church discipline against the scandalous and profane, and is, therefore, a settling and establishing of prelacy in Scotland, giving it a security, little, if anything, inferior to that which the established church has. Again, by a clause in the toleration bill, the security given by former laws to Presbyterian church government and discipline, is undermined and taken away, at least rendered ineffectual, and made the subject of ridicule to the openly profane, by the civil magistrate's withdrawing his concurrence, in as much as it declares the civil pain of excommunication to be taken away, and that none are to be compelled to appear before church judicatories. There is nothing in religion of an indifferer nature; "For whosoever [saith Christ] shall break one of the least of these commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven." It must, then, be the most daring wickedness, and an affronting of the Majesty of Heaven in the highest manner, for an earthly monarch to pretend to enact a toleration of religions, and thereby give a liberty where the divine law has laid a restraint; it implies an exalting of himself, not only to an equality with, but to a state of superiority above, the God of glory. Whatever principles are of divine authority require no toleration from man; it is wickedness to pretend to do it, seeing whatever comes under the necessity of a toleration, properly so-called, falls, at the same time, under the notion of a crime. And no less wicked is it for a magistrate to protect, by a promiscuous toleration, all heretics, heresies and errors; yet, it is a manifest breach to trust, and plain perverting the end of his office, seeing he is appointed to be *custos et vindex utriusque tabulae*, intrusted with the concerns of God's glory, as well as the interests of men. Experience has, in every age, taught, that a toleration of all religions is the cut-throat and ruin of all true religion. It is the most effectual method that ever the policy of hell hatched, to banish all true godliness out of the world. But however manifold the evils be that toleration is big with, this church, instead of opposing, seems to have complied therewith, and to be of toleration principles; which is evident, not only from their receiving into communion the Scots curates, of which above; but from their joining in communion with Mr. Whitefield (an English curate and member of that church, and ring-leader of the Methodists there), when he is in Scotland. Again, it is known, that when the Scots gentlemen are sent to attend the British parliament, or at any time in England, they do, many of them, join in communion with the prelatial church — nay, are guilty of taking the sacramental test (that is, taking the sacrament after their superstitious manner, to qualify them for any public post); yet this church receives them into the closest communion, without requiring any satisfaction for these evils; whereby they act contrary to Christ's example, in purging and keeping his house pure, and contrary to the Scripture; Rev. ii, 14, 15, 20.

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THE FALL OF BABYLON THE GREAT,

BY THE
AGENCY OF CHRIST,

AND

Through the Instrumentality of His Witnesses:

IN FOUR DISCOURSES.

By ARCHIBALD MASON,

Minister of the Gospel, Wishawtown:

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1821.

CALVINISM & THE LAST DAYS

The following is a list of influential theologians who are both Calvinists and Postmillennialists: Matthew Henry, John Knox, John Calvin (claimed by both Post and Amillennialists), Samuel Rutherford, George Gillespie, Alexander Henderson, Robert Fleming, Charles Spurgeon (claimed by Post, and Premillennialists), Charles Hodge, A. A. Hodge, George Whitefield, W.G.T. Shedd, J. Gresham Machen, Jonathan Edwards, David Brown, John Brown (of Wapray), James Renwick, Richard Cameron, B.B. Warfield, Thomas Manton, R.L. Dabney, J.H. Thornwell, O.T. Allis, J.A. Alexander, A. Alexander, Loraine Boettner, John Owen, A.H. Strong, Andrew Fuller, David Brianer, Theodore Beza, Robert Haldane, Thomas Boston, Richard Sibbes, J. Marcellus Kik, John Flavel, John Murray, Stephen Charnock, David Dickson, Augustine (claimed by both Post and Amillennialists), John Cotton, J.A. James, William Perkins, H. Witsius, Samuel Hopkins, Joseph Bellamy, William Gouge, John Howe, William Greenhill, Patrick Fairbairn, Robert Baillie, Thomas Shephard, Greg Price, Gregory K. Barrow. May our Lord bless this earth with many more such as these! This list is by no means exhaustive. None of these men were dispensationalists, as that system was not invented until 1830. Some books (and magazines) used to compile this list and suggested reading:

1. *The Original Covenanter and Contending Witness* magazine (P.O. Box 131, Pottstown, PA, 19464, USA or email: 103331.1673@compuserve.com)
2. *Notes on the Apocalypse* - David Steele (Without a doubt the best single book explaining and expanding the meaning of the book of Revelation. Forthcoming, probably in mid-1997)
3. *Prophecy Viewed in Respect to its Distinctive Nature, Its Special Function, and Proper Interpretation* (as a rare bound photocopy) or *The Interpretation of Prophecy* (Banner of Truth) - Patrick Fairbairn
4. *The Rise and Fall of the Papacy...* - Robert Fleming
5. *Unity and Uniformity in the Church* - Thomas Houston
6. *The Millennium: Peace, Prosperity and National Covenanting* - Matthew Murray
7. *Hand-book of Prophecy, Containing a Brief Outline of the Prophecies of Daniel and John, Together with a Critical Essay on the Second Advent* - James Stacy
8. *Messiah the Prince, or the Mediatorial Dominion of Jesus Christ* - William Symington
9. *The Westminster Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, etc.* - Westminster Divines
10. *Christ's Second Coming: Will It Be Premillennial?* - David Brown
11. *The Puritan Hope: Revival and the Interpretation of Prophecy* - Iain Murray
12. *The Pope of Rome is Antichrist* - Henry Wilkinson
13. *The Subjection of Kings and Nations to Messiah* - James M. Willson
14. *Prince Messiah's Claims to Dominion Over All Governments: and the Disregard of His Authority by the United States in the Federal Constitution* - James R. Willson
15. *The Second Coming of Christ as Righteous Motivation* - Greg Price (Cassette)
16. *The Two Sons of Oil* - Samuel Wylie
17. *The Prophetic Future of the Church and Kingdom of Christ, in their Relation to the Character, Working and the Fate of the Antichristian Apostasy* - Patrick Fairbairn
18. *The First Principles of Apocalyptic Interpretation* - Robert Fleming
19. *The Last Judgement, Conversion of the Jews, the Millennium, and the Unpardonable Sin* - Andrew Fuller (Baptist)
20. *An Eschatology of Victory* - J. Marcellus Kik
21. *The Apocalypse: Its Structure and Primary Predications* - David Brown
22. *666: Antichrist in Scripture (Luther and Calvin's Doctrine of Antichrist)* - F.N. Lee
23. *Hal Lindsey and the Restoration of the Jews* - David Brown (and Steve Schlissel)
24. *The History of Redemption* - Jonathan Edwards
25. *The Apocalypse Translated and Expounded* - James Glasgow
26. *An Exposition of the (Book of) Revelation* - Thomas Goodwin
27. *Dispensationalism: Today, Yesterday, and Tomorrow* - Crutis Crenshaw and Grover Gunn
28. *The Two Babylons or the Papal Worship Proved to Be the Worship of Nimrod & His Wife* - Alexander Hislop
29. *The Application of Scripture* - A.W. Pink (Anti-dispensational)
30. *Heiland* - Franklin Sanders (a novel)
31. *Antichrist* - Ian Paisley (Historicist)
32. *Babylon Mystery Religion: Ancient and Modern* - Ralph Woodrow (Historicist)

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof (Matt. 13:31-32).

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE first and second of the following Discourses were preached and published, in the year 1800. As the former Edition was circulated, almost exclusively, among the Author's connexions, in church communion, and as the subject of them has such an intimate relation to that of the other two Discourses, they are now republished in this form. A few pages of the Application, in the former Edition are left out in this; because they contained matter which related to public fasting, the duty in which the Author's congregation was employed when they were delivered.

On a similar occasion, the third and fourth of these Discourses, were preached to his congregation, in Feb. 1821. Since the subject which is considered in these Discourses is awful, solemn, and necessary to be understood, they are now published that they may be instrumental, by the Divine blessing, in directing our attention to the word of God, which seems to be fulfilling in these eventful times in which we live.

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SERMON I.

CHRIST JESUS, THE MEDIATORIAL ANGEL, CASTING THE FIRE OF DIVINE JUDGMENTS INTO THE EARTH.

Rev. viii. 5. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth; and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

THIS book contains a variety of prophetic visions in which the Lord Christ shewed to John the great events which should take place, both in the world and in the church, from the time he received these discoveries in the Isle of Patmos, till the consummation of all things. These events are principally represented by the opening of seven seals, the sounding of seven trumpets, and the pouring out of seven vials. It is generally agreed, that the period of the seals extends from the days of the apostles, through all the heathen persecution of the church, and ends at the time when Christianity was embraced by the Roman Emperors, and was established in the empire: That the period of the trumpets comprehends the time of the overthrow of the Roman Empire by dreadful and barbarous wars, and the rise and reign of Antichrist in the Christian world: And that the period of the vials refers to that time when the Lord would pour his judgments upon Antichrist, upon his supporters, and upon all the enemies of his church for their destruction; which should be followed immediately with the prosperous period of religion in the glory of the latter day.

In the first verse of the chapter where our text lies, the seventh seal is opened; and in the second, the seven angels, who stood before God, receive seven trumpets which they were afterwards to sound. In the mean time, we have a representation of the mediatorial administration of Christ Jesus, both with respect to his

church, and her enemies. This is introduced prior to the angels' actually sounding the trumpets. Christ is the glorious person who is called in the third verse, *another angel*. He is *another* in his person, office and work, than all the angels of God. His work concerning his church, before the coming of the days of fearful trial is begun in the foregoing chapter, where he is represented as bearing the seal of the living God, and sealing his servants on their foreheads. His further employment about them is marked in the two verses preceding the text. As the high priest of old stood at the golden altar, which was near the mercy seat, to burn incense in behalf of Israel before the Lord; so Christ Jesus, the Great High Priest of our profession, stands at the golden altar before the throne, with the golden censer in his hand, and having added the much incense of his merit and intercession to the prayers, or all the religious duties of the saints, he causes them to come up with acceptance before God, out of his hands. Having thus secured his church, and prepared them for the approaching storm, he proceeds to a very different work, of which the words of the text give us an account, and in which we may observe the following particulars:—

1st, The person who is employed as the great agent in this work, "The Angel." He is the same glorious one who is mentioned in the two foregoing verses, the Lord Jesus Christ, the mediatorial Angel. The Son of God, in his mediatory character, sometimes receives this name. Jacob calls him "the Angel who redeemed him from all evil;" Isaiah gives him the name of the Angel of Jehovah's presence, who saved the church; and Malachi represents him as the Angel or Messenger of the covenant.

2d, The instrument he had in his hand; he "took the censer;" the same golden censer which he had used in making intercession for the church in the third and fourth verses. Censers were holy vessels used by the priests under the former dispensation, in carrying fire from the altar of burnt offering for different purposes. They probably were somewhat in the form of a large bowl, with an handle, fitted for bearing live coals from one place to another. The Divine appointment concerning their use is recorded, Lev. xvi. 12, 13, "And he shall take a censer full of burning coals from off the altar before the Lord, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the vail. And he shall put the

incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not." We find an instance of their using the censers, on a particular occasion, in Num. xvi. 46; "And Moses said unto Aaron, take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them; for wrath is gone out from the Lord; the plague is begun.

3d, The text informs us of the use the Angel made of the censer; "he filled it with fire of the altar." The fire with which Christ's censer was filled, denotes the Divine wrath, which in his awful judgments, is inflicted on the children of men. The fire which burned continually upon the brazen altar of burnt-offering came down from heaven, both at the erection of the tabernacle, Lev. ix. 24, and at the consecration of the temple, 2 Chron. vii. 1, and was kept continually burning there, by the ministry of the priests, in all their generations: This fire, by which the sacrifices were consumed, was a type of God's wrath which is poured out on fallen angels, which was endured by Christ in his human nature as the sacrifice for his people's sins, which shall torment the wicked for ever in the place of misery, and which is poured out on sinners in this world, in all Divine judgments: it is in this last sense that it must be understood in the words of the text.

4th, We have also an account of the use the Angel made of the fire with which his censer was filled; "he cast it into the earth." He poured the fire of the altar, from his censer into the earth, as a representation of the execution of Divine judgments on the inhabitants of the world.

5th, The text unfolds the effects of this act of Christ; "and there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings, and an earthquake." These words signify the various and distressing calamities, which the Lord sends upon nations, churches and individuals on account of sin. It may be observed, that this work of Christ in casting the fire of the altar into the earth, which produces these effects among the children of men, is not to be confined unto the period of the trumpets, which is past; but also extends to the time of the vials which is going on at present, and partly is yet to come. This will be evident if we consider that the period of the seventh seal comprehends the whole of the trumpets. As the angels

receive the trumpets immediately upon the opening of that seal, all the events signified by them are transactions under this seal. The period of the sounding of the seventh trumpet extends also over all the vials, and the prosperous state of the church after they are poured out; because the destruction of the church's enemies, and the conversion of the nations to Christ are marked, at the end of the eleventh chapter, as the things which take place under that trumpet. If Christ cast the fire of the altar into the earth, upon opening the seventh seal, which comprehends the period of the trumpets and of the vials also; the effects of his doing so must reach, not to the time of the trumpets only, but likewise to that of the vials. As a further confirmation of this it may be observed, that the effects of the seventh vial are the same with those which are mentioned in the text. "And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake and so great," Rev. xvi. 18. The act of Christ and its effects, which are contained in the text, refer, therefore, to our own time, as well as to a former period.

The text now explained furnishes us with the following observation:—

DOCTRINE—That the Lord Jesus Christ, the Mediatorial Angel of Jehovah's presence, is the glorious person, who, in executing his mediatory office, pours on his, and on his church's enemies, the sin-avenging judgments of the living God.

Although this doctrine is abundantly confirmed from the text, yet it may also be illustrated and established from a similar vision which Ezekiel saw, and which is recorded in the ninth and tenth chapters of his book. In the ninth chapter, the Lord Jesus is represented as a man clothed with linen, with a writer's ink-horn by his side, employed in marking on their foreheads, those who were truly godly in an evil time; a work similar to that of sealing the servants of God on their foreheads. He was followed by six men whom Ezekiel saw in vision, each with a destroying weapon in his hand, who were appointed to slay all the other inhabitants of Jerusalem. In the tenth chapter we have the following remarkable words:—"And he spake unto the man clothed with linen, and said, Go in between the wheels, even under the cherub, and fill

thine hand with coals of fire from between the cherubims, and scatter them over the city; and he went in in my sight. And one cherub stretched forth his hand from between the cherubims, unto the fire which was between the cherubims, and took thereof, and put it into the hands of the man that was clothed with linen; who took it, and went out," verses 2—7. In these words we have an equally clear representation of the mediatorial work of Christ, in executing the judgments of God on incorrigible sinners, as that which is contained in the words of the text; "And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth; and there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings, and an earthquake."

In speaking from this text, the following method is proposed,

I. To shew what kind of fire Divine judgments are, which Christ inflicts on sinful persons, nations and churches, for their iniquity.

II. To state some reasons why Divine judgments are called fire of the altar.

III. To consider the import of Christ's inflicting Divine judgments on the children of men.

IV. To mention some of the effects of Christ's work, which are here represented by voices, thunders, lightnings, and an earthquake.

And then to subjoin some inferences, for improving the subject.

I. It is now to be shewn what kind of fire Divine judgments are, which he inflicts upon his enemies, in this world, for their sin.

1st, These judgments are a Divine fire. They are the doings of the Lord. Wherever the Scripture speaks of their coming on men, it represents them as the work of God. So universal is this, that the Prophet Micah observes, "Is there evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it." The fire of Divine judgments, wherever it is cast upon the children of men, is a burning which the Lord hath kindled. Of every calamity which is brought on persons or societies, it may be said, "and the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it." Whatever instrumentality of the creatures he may be pleased to use in these matters, yet the work is wholly his own. This necessarily belongs unto him, and makes a part of that glory which he will not give to another. It

belongs to him as the Moral governor of his creatures. The causes of these judgments are the creatures' rebellion against him, and therefore it belongs to him alone to punish them for their sin. The threatenings, in which these judgments are revealed to men, are the threatenings of God, and therefore the execution of them must be his work.

2d, Divine judgments are a just and righteous fire. They are not inflicted on men without a cause, nor without a cause that is fully adequate to the misery that they suffer by their execution. Our sins, which are an open rebellion against the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, the only wise God, are the procuring causes of these judgments. Whatever slight thoughts men may have of sin, in its nature and principles in their souls, or in its effects in their conversation, by the omission of duty and the commission of sin, which thoughts of it are great sins in themselves; yet the Lord, who knows all things as they really are, has no such views of it. Sin is that abominable thing which God's soul hates, it is exceeding sinful in its nature, it robs God of his glory, it is a violation of his righteous commandments, and a contempt of the fearful threatenings by which they are fenced; and, therefore, in all the misery he will inflict on men for sin, either in this or in the other world, he shall be righteous when he speaketh, and clear when he judgeth. The church discerned this properly of those judgments which were inflicted on herself, and therefore said, "And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve," Ezra ix. 13. The church shall also clearly see the holiness and righteousness of God, in the unparalleled plagues which he shall bring upon Antichrist; and, therefore, when these take place, she shall triumphantly sing, "Alleluia; salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God; for true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand," Rev. xix. 1, 2.

3d, The judgments of God are a wrathful and vindictive fire. To all who are strangers to Christ as a Saviour, and are in heart enemies to him, they are wrathful and vindictive. The judgments of God which are inflicted on wicked men in this world, whether of a personal or of a public nature, come on them from an angry and

sin-avenging God; they are poured on them as an execution of the wrathful threatening and curse of the broken law; as the first drops of the storm of eternal vengeance; and shall be succeeded and perfected by their everlasting punishment. That temporal judgments are wrathful and vindictive is evident from their being, in scripture, frequently called the anger, the wrath, and the fury of the Lord. That these judgments are of this kind, will appear from the name which the Lord gives to the objects of them; "Cut off thine hair, O Jerusalem, and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for the Lord hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath," Jer. vii. 29. This is likewise clear from the scriptural character of the season when they are executed on men: it is called a day of wrath; "For the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand," Rev. vi. 17. And this is further evident from what the Lord is said to do, when he executes these judgments on men; "He made a way to his anger, he spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence," Psal. lxxviii. 50.

4th, Divine judgments are a destroying and consuming fire. Fire consumes all combustible matter that is cast into it; so the fire of God's judgments consumes the objects of them; "For our God," in the execution of his judgments on the workers of iniquity, "is a consuming fire." This fire consumes the wealth of its objects. This it will do to Antichrist; Rev. xviii. 16, 17. "Alas! alas, that great city, that was clothed in linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls, for in one hour so great riches is come to nought." It consumes their armies; Isaiah xxxiv. 2. "For the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies; he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter." It consumes their means of safety and defence; Isaiah xxv. 2. "For thou hast made of a city an heap; of a defenced city a ruin; a palace of strangers to be no city, it shall never be built." It consumes their power and authority; of Old Testament Babylon it is said, "Come down and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground; there is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans." Of New Testament Babylon these words shall have their complete fulfilment; "And the fifth angel poured out his vial on the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness, and they gnawed their tongues

for pain," Rev. xvi. 10. It shall consume their pleasurable enjoyments; "And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things that were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all," Rev. xviii. 14. It shall consume many of their persons. Of the execution of Divine judgments in time past this has been the effect; witness the generation in the days of Noah, the inhabitants of the cities of the plain, the Israelites in the wilderness, and many others. We have reason to believe that what has been done by the execution of Divine judgments in time past, will be accomplished likewise in time to come; for the Divine prediction concerning them, which shall be fulfilled in its season, is delivered in the following words; "And I saw an angel standing in the sun; 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 free and bond, both small and great," Rev. xix. 17, 18.

5th, The judgments of God are an increasing fire. When fuel is furnished to fire, it does increase; so are the judgments of God. They are a spreading fire when they wax worse and worse, and bring upon men more distress and misery. When the flame, instead of abating, becomes more dreadful, and carries more destruction in its train. When it is not confined to a few of the concerns of men, or to those of the smallest importance; but when it extends its wasting influence to many of their enjoyments, and even to those of the greatest necessity and value.—Divine judgments are a spreading fire when their number is increased. When one judgment follows another, and one calamity gives birth to more. In a day of Divine recompences on his enemies, it frequently happens, that while one judgment is spending its force upon them, the Lord inflicts another, and before this is well begun a third opens to their view. As the children of men have multiplied their transgression against the Lord, so he, in his righteous displeasure, increases their plagues.—They are also a spreading fire when they extend to a greater number of objects. When their hurtful influence is not restricted to a few only, or to persons occupying certain situations in life; but when it reaches many, and affects men of every degree. When the Lord's

judgments are not confined to one nation, but are poured out upon many lands; so that he is punishing many nations at the same time. When the days come that he inflicts his judgments upon "them that are circumcised with the uncircumcised; Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon and Moab, and all that are in the utmost corners, that dwell in the wilderness; for all these nations are uncircumcised, and the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart," Jer. ix. 25, 26.

6th, These judgments are a painful and distressing fire. The action of fire upon men gives them pain; so Divine judgments occasion distress to the children of men. As the wrath of God which he will inflict upon the wicked in the place of misery, will give them everlasting pain; so the judgments, with which he visits them in this world, will bring distress on them, on their persons, relations, and enjoyments. This is evident from the inspired account of the judgments that were inflicted on Judah by means of the Chaldeans; "That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness. And I will bring distress upon men, and they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord," Zeph. i. 15, 17. This is also stated as the effect of the wrathful dispensations of God, by the Redeemer himself; "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth 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; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken," Matt. xxi. 25, 26. The same thing is mentioned as the consequence of God's judgments upon the Antichristian world. The events under the fifth vial, which shall be poured on the throne of the beast, are represented in the following words:—"And his kingdom was full of darkness, and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds, Rev. xvi. 10, 11.

7th, The judgments of God are an unquenchable fire. That this is a quality of these operations of God is evident from the words of the prophet; "But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the Sabbath-day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath-day; then will I kindle a fire in

the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched," Jer. xvii. 27. The fire of judgments is unquenchable, because it is impossible for men to extinguish it. They can no more do this, than they can stop the sun in his course, destroy the balancing of the clouds, or hinder the ebbing and flowing of the sea. It sometimes happens, that the means which creatures use, for removing from them the judgments of the Lord, cause this fire to burn with the greater violence. They are unquenchable, because God himself will never interpose to remove their raging and destructive influence, till he hath accomplished his designs. Though the judgments of the Almighty should sist for a time, if nations, churches and individuals continue impenitent in sin, the dying like embers of that fire, being blown by the breath of the Lord, shall return upon them till they are consumed, and driven away to that place, where the chaff shall be burnt with unquenchable fire.

8th, The judgments of God are a purifying and refining fire. They are of this nature to all true believers, and they produce this effect upon the church of Christ. The same judgments, which consume and destroy the wicked, purify and refine the saints. The same calamities which distress and ruin the public enemies of Christ, prove highly beneficial to his church. To the former they come from an angry God, executing on them the curse of the law, from which they take occasion to sin the more, and to blaspheme the God of heaven; but to the latter they proceed from a reconciled God, attended with his blessing, by which their holiness and spiritual exercise are increased, and on account of which they celebrate his praise. By these judgments which he brings on men for their sin, he turns his hand on his church, and purely purges away all their dross, and taketh away all their tin. By such strange works as these, shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and all the fruit of them is to take away their sin. In a day of sore judgments upon men, this is his work toward his people, whose fire is in Zion, and whose furnace is in Jerusalem. In the glorious issue which the judgments of God shall have upon the nations of the world, they shall prove a purifying fire even to them. They shall be a mean of delivering them from their ignorance, idolatry and wickedness, and of bringing them under Messiah's gracious rule; for, after they are executed, not only shall that cry go through the world, "Babylon is

fallen," but it shall be succeeded by that more delightful sound, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever."

II. The reasons why the judgments of God are called fire of the altar are now to be stated.

1st, They are so called, because they proceed from him who is the God of the altar, and who is revealed to men, by the gospel, as a reconciled God in Christ Jesus. The execution of judgments on sinners is the work of him who is not only the God of the spirits of all flesh, their creator, preserver, and moral governor, but who is also revealing himself to sinners from the throne of grace. Not only does the law of gospel grace come from Zion, and the word of salvation from Jerusalem, but the threatening proceeds also from the same place, and the execution of it is the work of him who dwelleth there; "The Lord shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth shall shake," Joel iii. 16. A similar declaration is made by the prophet Amos, chap. i. ver. 2. The Lord's roaring and uttering his voice refer both to his giving and executing his threatening; and his doing so out of Zion and Jerusalem plainly proves, that these are the works of him who is the God of the altar. The church also praises the Lord, Psalm lxxviii. 35, saying, "O God, thou art terrible," in fulfilling thy threatening on the wicked, "out of thy holy places." This truth is also clearly made known in the visions of John; Rev. xv. 6, "And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles." They came out of the temple, signifying plainly, that they were standing in the presence of the God of the temple, and had received their commission from him. The same thing is declared, chap. xvi. ver. 1, "And I heard a great voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth." Since the great voice, by which these angels were authorised to pour judgments on men, proceeded from the temple, the work of judgment must be the doing of him who is the God of the altar.

2d, They are the fire of the altar, because they are inflicted on man by the special agency of Jesus Christ, the church's great high priest, who ministers before the altar. It is the work of Christ to

pour the judgments of God on his enemies. To him the Father hath committed all judgment, and this he executes, not only at the last day, when all mankind shall appear before his judgment-seat, but also by his operations upon them in this world. From several portions of this book, this truth may be established. "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them," Rev. xvii. 14. They make war with the Lamb, by opposing his interests in the world; and the Lamb shall overcome them by executing on them the judgments of the Lord. In the latter part of the sixth chapter, and at the close of the sixth Psalm, the triumphs of the mediatorial Angel over his enemies are celebrated in the loftiest strains. Besides, from the words of the text, and from the vision of Ezekiel, formerly mentioned, it is unquestionably evident, that the Mediator has a special agency in executing Divine threatenings on the children of men. Now, it is the peculiar work of this glorious person to minister at God's altar. In the days of his incarnation, he ministered at the altar as an atoning high priest, when he, through the Eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot unto God, and put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. In his state of exaltation, he still ministers before the altar, when he, as an interceding high priest, appears in the presence of God for us. His mediatorial execution of his threatening on his enemies belongs unto his administrations at the altar, and on these accounts the judgments, by which the threatening is executed, are fire of the altar.

3d, Those judgments receive this name, because they are inflicted upon men chiefly for their despising the gospel of Divine grace, or their contemning God's altar. If the principal grounds of God's controversy with persons, churches and nations, are examined, it will be found that their sins about the altar, or the gospel and worship of God, are the chief causes of it. The children of men are guilty of profaning the altar, despising the gospel, and neglecting the great salvation. Many, both in their personal and collective capacities, are involved in the guilt of opposing Christ in his person, divinity, office, grace and salvation; in his priesthood, atonement and sacrifice; and in his royal and kingly prerogatives; and, therefore, those judgments, by which these sacrilegious abominations are avenged, are justly called the fire of the altar. Men's opposition to the gospel, their holding errors contrary to it, and their neglecting to receive and believe the word of salvation, are eminent causes

of the Lord's judgments. Their corruptions of God's sanctuary and altar, by changing the ordinances of his worship, altering the laws concerning the government, and censures of his house, and setting office-bearers in his church, which have no warrant in his word, are standing grounds of the Lord's controversy with sinful churches and nations. Since such sins as these, which have a special relation to God's altar, are the principal causes of judgments, they may be represented as fire proceeding from it.

4th, Divine judgments are fire of the altar, because they are inflicted on men in answer to the prayers, and for avenging the blood of those who were slain for the word of God, and the testimony which they held, whose souls are under the altar. When the fifth seal was opened, John "saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, how long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood, on them that dwell on the earth," Rev. vi. 9, 10. These words assure us, that when the Lord executes his judgments on them that dwell on the earth, it is in answer to the prayers of those whose souls are under the altar; and therefore it is fire of the altar by which they are devoured. The saints' prayers, which are like incense on the golden altar, cause fire to proceed from the brazen altar, to consume their enemies. It is also evident from these words, that by the judgments of the living God, the saints' blood, which has been shed for his name's sake, is fully avenged. Of ancient Babylon the church says, "The violence done to me and to my flesh be upon Babylon, shall the inhabitants of Sion say; and my blood upon the inhabitants of Chaldea, shall Jerusalem say," Jer. li. 35. In answer to which it is declared, ver. 49, "As Babylon has caused the slain of Israel to fall; so at Babylon shall fall the slain of all the earth." New Testament Babylon shall not escape similar retribution. The song of the angel of the waters confirms it; "Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus; for they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy," Rev. xvi. 5, 6. In the eighteenth chap. of this book we find a very detailed account of the unexampled calamities that shall be inflicted on the Antichristian state, and the last verse mentions one of the principal causes of them; "And in her was found the blood of prophets, and

of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth." As the persecutors of the church have cruelly shed the blood of the saints of God, and as these precious sons of Zion have not loved their lives unto the death, but have offered their blood, so to say, on God's altar, for the glory of his name, and as a testimony to his cause; so the Lord will make the fire of his jealousy, issuing from the altar, to devour the wasters of his heritage, either in their own persons or their seed, who continue to oppose the cause for which the blood of the saints was shed, or support that interest for which persecution was carried on.

5th, The judgments of God are fire of the altar, because they often begin to be executed on those who are, either by profession or in reality, standing before the altar. The persons who profess to be standing before the altar, but are the chief corrupters of it; and those who say they are apostles and are not, but are deceitful workers, are often first destroyed by the fire of Divine judgments. We have an affecting instance of this, Ezek. ix. 6, 7: "Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women; but come not near any upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house; and he said unto them, Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain, and go ye forth; and they went forth and slew in the city." In this vision, by which the Lord represented to the prophet the execution of his judgments on Jerusalem, the leaders of the people, who were chief in the trespass, perished first in the day of calamity. So shall it be done in every land. When the days of Jehovah's retribution come, he will, in his operations by which his judgments are executed, mark out his victims, and cause the leaders of a nation in apostacy, superstition, idolatry, and wickedness, feel the first and heaviest strokes of his vengeance. It also happens, that even those, who are in reality before the altar, may first experience Divine judgments. Of this dispensation of an holy God, we have an account, 1 Pet. iv. 17. "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" On account of the manifold and aggravated provocations of sons and daughters, the Lord brings judgments upon his church in various ways, which often are the forerunners of days of awful calamities, on those who corrupt and despise the gospel of Christ.

6th, The Lord's judgments are called fire of the altar, because he has a sacrifice to consume upon the earth. Fire was taken from the ancient altar for the purposes either of burning incense in other places, or of burning certain pieces of the sin-offering without the camp. "And the bullock for the sin-offering, and the goat for the sin-offering, whose blood was brought in to make an atonement in the holy place, shall one carry forth without the camp, and they shall burn in the fire their skins, and their flesh, and their dung," Lev. xvi. 27. They shall burn in the fire: What fire? The fire of the altar, no doubt; for it does not appear that common fire could be lawfully used in this solemn work, any more than it could be employed in burning incense. When the congregation saw one of the priests carrying fire of the altar in a censer without the camp, they would know that there was a sacrifice to consume with it; so when we hear of the Great High Priest casting the fire of the altar into the earth, we may be sure he has a sacrifice to consume there, by this fire of Divine judgments. He has persons to destroy, nations to afflict, churches to punish, and a sinful generation of his wrath in the earth, on whom he must take vengeance. Language similar to this is used by the prophet Isaiah, "The sword of the Lord is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, and with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of kidneys of rams; for the Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea," Isa. xxxiv. 6. Of the same import are the words uttered by the angel standing in the sun, relative to the last and most fearful execution of Divine judgments on Christ's enemies, "Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God," Rev. xix. 17. Since God has a sacrifice to consume on the earth, by the execution of his judgments on his enemies, the fire by which it is accomplished must be fire of the altar.

7th, These dispensations of God unto men are called by this name, because they are designed for the purification of the altar, and for the honour of those who are connected with it. Jehovah is nearly connected with the altar, it is before his throne, and he is worshipped there. For advancing his honour and glory, and for making men know that he is the Lord, are all his judgments executed on his enemies; and therefore they are the fire of the altar. Jesus Christ, the minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man, is also intimately connected

with the altar. That his mediatorial glory may be advanced, his spiritual kingdom enlarged, and his gospel and cause vindicated, do these judgments come on men; on this account also are they fire of the altar. The servants of Christ belong to the altar, they minister daily there, and all their work as such is about this holy thing. For the vindication of the messages of grace which they have delivered, the calls to duty which they have given, and the threatenings which they have denounced, all in the name of the Lord and according to his word, shall days of calamity come on men; and therefore these visitations are fire of the altar. The whole believing race are allied to the altar, for they have an altar at which they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle. It is for the purpose of manifesting the acceptableness to God of their profession, testimony, holiness, sufferings, and zeal, that days of vengeance come on the wicked; and therefore these must be fire of the altar. For the purification of the altar, also, are judgments executed on those who profane it. That the doctrines of the altar may be cleansed from error, that the ordinances of the altar may be purified from human inventions, that the sons of Levi may be refined as gold and silver, to offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness, that the worshippers at the altar may be purged from their iniquity, and be enabled to compass God's altar aright, and that every thing relating to the house of the God of heaven may be done according to his will, shall all these judgments found written in his word be executed in their season; and surely all this glorious purification of the altar can only be effected by its own fire.

8th, Divine judgments are called fire of the altar, to shew that God is well pleased with them, and that they tend to pacify him. When the fire of the ancient altar consumed the sacrifices which were offered to God, he was pleased, and it was a mean of reconciling him to the people. The judgments of God are called fire of the altar, because they are pleasing to him, and, after their execution, he is reconciled to the land. When Divine judgments were executed on Achan, and on all that he had, for his transgression, on account of which the Lord was angry with all Israel, it is said, "So the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger," Josh. vii. 26. When the threatenings were fulfilled on Saul and his house, and on many of his adherents, it is declared, "After that the Lord was intreated for the land," 2 Sam. xxi. 14. In the sacred oracles, we have tes-

timonies to this truth, of another nature than these; testimonies, wherein the Lord represents the effect, which the execution of his judgments on his enemies, has upon himself. He declares that he is eased thereby; Isa. i. 24. "Therefore saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the mighty God of Israel; Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies." The Lord of hosts, the mighty God of Israel, speaking here after the manner of men, represents his enemies as a distressing burden to him, from which he eases himself, by taking vengeance on them. He also declares that he is comforted by the execution of his judgments on the workers of iniquity; "Thus shall mine anger be accomplished, and I will cause my fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted," Ezek. v. 13. When the fire of the altar, in the judgments of his hand, breaks out, and destroys his implacable enemies, it is a comfort unto him; and, therefore, with these operations of his power, justice, holiness, and truth, the Eternal God is well pleased. Dispensations of this kind are also said to quiet his spirit; "Then cried he upon me, and spake unto me, saying, Behold, these that go toward the north country, have quieted my spirit in the north country," Zech. vi. 8. The execution of Divine judgments, signified by the chariot of black horses going forth into the north country, as well as the bestowal of mercies, pointed out by the chariot of white horses, that followed them, ver. 6, quiets the Lord's spirit, and brings glory to his name. Seeing these things are so, the judgments of God are with great propriety denominated fire of the altar.

9th, These operations of God on his enemies are represented by one censer filled with fire taken from the altar, to shew that the wrath of God against sinners is only inflicted in part upon them in this world. When the ministers of the house burnt the sacrifices of the people without the camp, with fire from the altar of burnt-offering, they did not carry away all the fire of the altar for this purpose, but only a small part of it. One censer filled with fire was only removed for this end, and a great quantity of fire remained burning continually on the altar. When Christ is represented as casting the fire of Divine judgments on the earth, it is only one censer filled with this fire of the altar which is taken for this design. The great mass of fire remains burning on the altar, which shall be cast upon them for their destruction and punishment, through the endless ages of eternity. As there was far more fire left at the altar

than was removed in a censer, for burning sacrifices without the camp, so there is no proportion between Christ's censer-ful of fire, which he casts into the earth, in temporal judgments on men, and that infinite wrath which is reserved for the wicked in the place of misery. However awful those judgments may be, which the wicked suffer in this world, they are as nothing when compared with that unquenchable fire that they shall endure, in that place where the Lord's mercy is clean gone, where he has forgotten to be gracious, and where he will be favourable no more. Afflicting as temporal judgments may be to the children of men, and tedious as their sufferings are under their painful influence, yet the Divine wrath that they shall endure hereafter, shall be infinitely more distressing to them, and endless in its duration. In this world, it is only one censer filled with fire of the altar that is scattered among them; but, in the world to come, they shall be laid on the altar, and the infinite mass of fire which burns continually there, shall eternally consume them; "For every one shall be salted with fire," Mark ix. 49.

10th, Divine judgments are called the fire of the altar, because the wrath of God, which the wicked suffer both in this world and in the next, is the same in its nature with that which Christ endured and exhausted, by his sufferings and death, in the room of his people. Jesus Christ not only stands at the altar of incense, "and makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God;" but he also stood at the altar of burnt-offering, "and gave himself for us an offering and sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour unto God." As he fully executes his priestly office, in making intercession for us, so he completely fulfilled that office, "when he appeared once in the end of the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." His Divine nature was the glorious altar, his human nature the sacrifice, and he, as God and man in one person, was the priest, who offered this sacrifice to God on this altar. When Jesus offered himself a sacrifice, the fire of Divine wrath, which was due to the elect, whom he represented, on account of their sin, brake out upon him, and consumed his human nature in death. With respect to this infinite pouring out of Divine wrath on him, we find him saying, "My heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels," Psal. xxii. 14. His human nature was melted and dissolved in the pains of death, by the fire of Divine wrath, which he endured for

the salvation of his people. When he ministered at God's altar, as an atoning high priest, the fire of the altar took hold of him; and he, on account of the Divine dignity of his person, as the Son of God, entirely quenched this vindictive flame for all who believe in him to salvation. The judgments of God on men are called the fire of the altar, to shew that they endure the same wrath both here and hereafter, which Christ entirely finished in his sufferings and death, for the redemption of his people. And how can it be otherwise? As they reject the glorious and only Saviour, and exercise not a saving faith in his blood, their sin is not expiated, guilt remains on them, to the curse of the law they are liable, and they must suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, both in this world, and in that which is to come. The fire of the altar must have a sacrifice; and as they reject the only propitiatory atonement, and are, by their daily rebellion against God, treasuring up wrath to themselves against the day of wrath, this fire will break out upon them, and consume them. These Divine judgments which the wicked suffer here, as well as their eternal punishment, are an execution of the same Divine wrath on them, which Christ suffered for his people, and for ever removed from them, when he was wounded for their transgressions, and bruised for their iniquities; and therefore it is called fire of the altar.

With a few inferences from what has been said, this Discourse will be concluded.

1st, From this subject we may see the awful nature of Divine judgments. They are most solemn and tremendous operations of Jehovah's holiness, power, and justice. A serious consideration of them made the Psalmist say, "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments," Psalm cxix. 120. The greatness of God, who is the Most High over all the earth, and with whom is terrible majesty, ought to impress our minds with the conviction of the dreadful nature of his judgments. The concern which the Lord Jesus, who is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, has with their execution on men, may discover unto us their awful nature. The greatness of that guilt, which it is the design of these judgments to avenge on impenitent sinners, also discovers their terrible nature and effects. The representations of them in the text, are calculated to affect our hearts with their awful nature. They are compared to

fire, which is a most terrible, destructive, and raging element. They are the fire of the altar. When the fat and other parts of the sacrifices were burned upon the brazen altar, which stood in the court of the priests, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, it would send up into the air a most vehement flame, which the worshippers, standing in the court of the people, would see, and consider as an affecting emblem of that Divine wrath, which they deserved, on account of their sins. This is the metaphor, whereby the execution of Divine judgments on men in this world is represented in the text; and certainly they must be very consuming and destructive plagues. As they are compared to voices, lightnings, thunders, and an earthquake, which comprehend a most frightful storm in the natural world, they must be very awful visitations of Jehovah's arm and power on the children of men. Let none despise these doings of the Lord, either in the threatening, or in their execution; but let all reverence God, and fear his judgments.

2d, This subject presents to our view the evil nature of sin. It is sin that procures these judgments of God to the children of men. It kindles the fire of the altar, causes Christ take the censer, fill it with this fire, and cast it into the earth; it must, therefore, be an evil and bitter thing to depart from the living God. The Lord is righteous and holy in all his words of threatening, and in all his works, by which these are fulfilled; and seeing his temporal judgments on sinners, and those which are eternal also, are caused by sin, it must be a great evil. It is the procuring cause of the voices, lightnings, thunder, and the earthquake, by which the children of men are destroyed. Such is the nature of this evil, that God, to testify his abhorrence of it, hath laid the earth and all things in it under a curse. For the same reason, the Lord, on special occasions, ceases to exercise his patience with men, and brings on them the desolating strokes of his anger. In proportion as these judgments contain penal evil, so may we see the moral evil of sin. The sins of persons, churches, and nations, are very heinous in their nature, various in their kinds, long continued, and exceedingly heightened by their aggravations; there is, therefore, no wonder that they bring down on their guilty heads, the awful judgments of God. O that we were made to see the evil of sin, to hate it with perfect hat-

red, to mourn for it before the Lord, and to turn from it with all our hearts.

3d, This subject discovers what is the condition of all unconverted sinners. They have sinned against God, and have come short of their duty in glorifying him; and therefore they are exposed to the penal fire of the altar. This includes Divine indignation and wrath, producing in them that everlasting tribulation and anguish, which will come upon every soul of man that doeth evil. Being by nature dead in trespasses and sins, they are children of wrath. Lying under the guilt and power of sin, as persons who are legally and spiritually dead in it, they are the objects of Divine wrath. That the charge of their guilt, and the declaration of their misery are just and true, their walk and conversation are a sufficient proof. "Ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom they have their conversation in the lusts of their flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." If sinners are dead in trespasses and sins, and children of wrath, they are guilty before God, and obnoxious to everlasting punishment. In all their diversified troubles of body or mind in the present life, the fire of the altar, or the wrath of God, takes hold of them and scorches them. When they die, this fire will torment their souls till the day of judgment. After the resurrection of their bodies, and the final sentence of the Judge, they shall go away into everlasting punishment, where their worm dieth not, and where the fire is not quenched. Who can conceive the greatness of this punishment which shall be inflicted on sinners by the power and justice of God, and the wrath of the Lamb! And who can form any adequate idea of its duration, for it shall be everlasting!

4th, From this subject, we may consider, what Jesus has done to redeem his people from this fire of the altar. For delivering them from guilt and punishment, believers are infinitely indebted to the Lord Jesus. God's own Son took our nature on himself, and God sent him, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons. The precepts of God's holy law he perfectly obeyed, in the stead of those who are saved; that through his obedience they might be made righteous and entitled to eternal life. That he might redeem them from everlasting condemnation and misery, he

completely endured for them the threatening and curse of the law. Having been delivered to sufferings and death for their offences, he triumphantly rose from the dead for their justification, ascended into heaven as their forerunner, is now on the right hand of God as their representative, and in the character of their glorified High Priest makes continual intercession for them. This most merciful and all-sufficient Saviour is freely offered to sinners, that they may believe in him and be saved. Under the influence of the Divine Spirit, those who are saved have embraced Christ as their Mediator and Redeemer, have believed in him as their Prophet, Priest and King, have put on his righteousness, have taken hold of his covenant and promise, and have entrusted him with the salvation of their souls. In consequence of this, they are united to his person, interested in his merit and satisfaction, and entitled to eternal life. There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are in Christ, for he hath delivered them from the wrath to come. In this way they are rescued from the fire of the altar. Neither in this life nor in the next, shall the burning flame of Divine wrath come near them. Neither in temporal calamities nor in everlasting punishment, shall this flaming fire be cast on them. He is their hiding place, he will preserve them from trouble, and will compass them about with songs of deliverance.

5th, The duty of gospel hearers is pointed out by what has been said. It is indispensable to them to fly by faith to the Mediatorial Angel, that they may be saved from the hot consuming flame which shall burn up the wicked. In the two verses before our text, Christ is represented in his blessed work for them who are saved; and in our text he is exhibited in his awful operations on them who perish. The state of those who are under his blessed charge is unchangeable; but the condition of those who are exposed to this burning flame may be altered. For this purpose he says, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The angel's words to Lot may be considered as Christ's call to sinners who hear the gospel: "Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain, escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed," Gen. xix. 17. By complying with this call, Lot and his family were preserved from that flaming fire which destroyed the wicked, "When the Lord rained upon Sodom, and upon Gomorrah, brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven,"

ver. 24. Of the spiritual and everlasting misery of the wicked, this wrathful visitation was an emblem. It is, therefore, our duty to fly from the wrath to come, and turn into Jesus, as the strong hold of safety and rest. If we receive him, and believe in him alone for salvation, we shall enjoy the blessings which he has purchased, and shall escape the vindictive fire of the altar. Be convinced of your guilt and danger, cast yourselves on the mercy of God, embrace by faith the Lord Jesus Christ, cry for the influences of the Holy Spirit, search the Scriptures, draw near to God in religious duties, abhor and forsake all sin, so ye shall never perish, but shall have everlasting life.

SERMON II.

CHRIST JESUS, THE MEDIATORIAL ANGEL, CASTING THE FIRE
OF DIVINE JUDGMENTS INTO THE EARTH.

Rev. viii. 5. *And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth; and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.*

IN discoursing on the two foregoing heads, which have been already considered, it has been shewn in what respects the judgments of God are compared to fire, and why they are called fire of the altar. According to the method proposed, we shall now proceed to the

III. Head, which was to shew, what is imported in Christ's inflicting those judgments on the children of men; "He took the censer, he filled it with fire of the altar, and he cast it into the earth."

1st, Christ's inflicting Divine judgments on men imports, that all the agency which he employs about them, is in consequence of a delegated power over all things, which he has received from God the Father. He could have no official concern about the judgments of God, were it not given him by Jehovah. As he is the Son of God, and possessed of the Divine nature and perfections, his necessary concern about all Divine works toward the creatures, is the same with that of the Father, and the Holy Spirit. It is not of this, however, that the text speaks. Concerning that employment of the Lord Christ about these works of God, especially his works of judgment, which is peculiar unto him, does the text give us information. It is true, the Lord Jesus could have no ability for this official and peculiar work about either the judgments or the mercies of God, were he not possessed of that original and necessary concern about them, which belongs to him as a Divine person. It is, therefore, of that work of Christ about Divine judgments which is pecu-

liar to him, and which is official in its nature, that we are now speaking; and this he performs by virtue of a power over all persons and things, which is given him of the Father. Ample and numerous are the Divine testimonies by which this truth is confirmed; a few of them only shall be mentioned. In the vision of Daniel this truth is clearly represented. "I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him," Dan. vii. 13, 14. Without particularly explaining these majestic words, it may be observed from them, that the Lord Jesus, "the one like the Son of man," has received from Jehovah, "the Ancient of days, dominion," power and authority, "and glory," honour and renown, "and a kingdom," subjects to rule, "that all people, nations, and languages should serve him," that all mankind should be subject to him, either in receiving the blessings of salvation from him, or in having the fire of the altar scattered among them by his hand. This power "is given him," and it is given to him "who is like the Son of man," to shew that it is his official or mediatorial power, and not that Divine power of which he is necessarily possessed. On two very remarkable occasions, Christ asserts this truth, in the hearing of his disciples. When the seventy returned with their joyful report, Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, "All things are delivered to me of my Father," Luke x. 22. When he gave his servants their commission, after his resurrection, he prefaces it with these words, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," Mat. xxviii. 18. Our Mediator is the person to whom these things are delivered, and this power is given. These things are delivered to him, and this power is given him, to shew that it is an official or delegated power and charge that are here mentioned. The power that is given him is extensive, it is all power in heaven and in earth; and the things which are delivered to him are universal, they are all things. The glorious person, who has delivered all things to him, and has given him all power, is his Eternal Father. Twice does the Lord Christ assert this truth in the same discourse, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son;" and again, "The Father hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man," John v. 22—27. Jehovah the Father

hath committed all judgment unto the Son, and hath given him, who is the Son of man, authority to execute judgment; by acquitting and blessing his people, and by condemning and punishing his enemies, both in this world, and in that which is to come. When our Redeemer addresses his holy and righteous Father, he uses the following words, "As thou hast given him," thy Son, "power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him," John xvii. 2. From these words it is evident, that our Mediator has a gifted or delegated power over all flesh from the Father; that the principal end of his possessing and exercising this power over all flesh, in reference to the creatures, is that he may bestow the blessings of eternal life on the objects of the Father's love; and that, as his power extends over all flesh, he exercises it also in casting the fire of Divine judgments into the earth, for the punishment of his implacable foes.

2d, Christ's casting the fire of the altar into the earth imports, that he inflicts judgments on men in the execution of his mediatorial office. He not only does so, by virtue of a power delegated to him of the Father; but he also accomplishes this work, in his mediatorial character. The inferior name, the Angel, by which he is here called, clearly confirms this truth. As he is the Son of God he is never called by this name; but as he is our Mediator, God and man in one person, he is, in different parts of the Divine word, represented in this manner. The casting fire of the altar into the earth, therefore, belongs unto the mediatorial work of Christ. The works which are ascribed unto Christ, in the two verses before the text, are purely mediatorial. It is only in his mediatorial character that he stands at the golden altar, like an officiating priest, has a golden censer, and receives much incense. It is as our Mediator only that he offers this incense with the prayers of all saints, on the golden altar, in his prevalent intercession for them before the throne. It is in his mediatorial character alone that the prayers of the saints, perfumed with his incense, can ascend with acceptance before God out of his hands. It is the same person, he is called by the same name, and is still employed about things which belong to the sanctuary, who is mentioned in the words of the text, and the Angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth; it must therefore be in his mediatorial character that he performs this strange act.

3d, Christ's casting the fire of the altar into the earth imports, that judgments are inflicted on men according to the purpose, and in obedience to the command of God. This work is performed by the Mediator according to the decree of God. The unalterable purposes of Jehovah are the rule, according to which he himself performs all things among the creatures. All his works, whether in creation, providence or grace, are an exact fulfilment of his decree; "For he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," Eph. i. 11. As the decree of God is a rule to himself, in all his dispensations towards the creatures; so this purpose is a rule to Christ, in all his mediatory administrations, both when he causes those who love him to inherit substance, and when he throws the fire of Divine anger upon his enemies. The purpose of God fixes the time, the objects, the instruments, the measures, and the duration of Divine judgments in the earth; and from its appointments, in these and the like particulars, the Mediator, in his administrations, will never depart. As Mediator, he is perfectly acquainted with the Divine decrees, and is a faithful servant to his Father, and, therefore, every part of that purpose must be exactly fulfilled by his operations. He hath ever been, and ever will be faithful as a Son over his own house, and faithful to him who appointed him to his mediatory office; deviations, therefore, from this supreme rule in his official work, are impossible.—As the decree of God is the rule of his mediatory administrations, so the command of God is the reason why he actually administers, in the kingdoms of grace and providence. The words of Jesus respecting his death and resurrection apply to every part of his official work; "This commandment have I received of my Father," John x. 18. When Christ takes the censer, fills it with fire of the altar, and casts it into the earth, he may say, this commandment have I received of my Father. When Christ performs his official works in these particulars, he neither runs unsent, nor acts without proper powers; but he is clothed with a commission, and is invested with authority from Jehovah for this purpose. Every operation of Christ, in bringing either mercies or judgments on men, is performed according to the purpose, and in obedience to the command of God.

4th, Christ's casting the fire of the altar into the earth imports, that it is done by the power or influence of God. The mediatorial administration of Jesus does not set aside the supreme working of

the Three One God. The Redeemer's giving eternal life to his people does not prevent the Father's gift of eternal life to them; "For the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Christ's judging the world, in his mediatorial character, does not contradict that truth, that God is the judge of all. The Mediator's inflicting Divine judgments on the children of men, does not hinder the bringing these judgments on them to be supremely the work of God. There is no inconsistency between the Divine operations of the Three One God, in governing all his creatures and all their actions, and the mediatorial administrations of Jesus Christ. These are connected together, and their consistency is asserted by Christ himself when he said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," John v. 17. It is impossible that Jehovah can surrender to any the supreme government of all things, either in the right or in the exercise of it; because it necessarily and essentially belongs to the Divine nature. The mediatorial power and administrations of Jesus do not withdraw the supreme government of all things, either in the right or in the exercise of it, out of the hands of the Three One God. His power as our Mediator, and his administrations in that character, both in grace and providence, are essentially different in their nature, from the power and operations of Jehovah, both among his saints and his other creatures. The latter is underived, the former is communicated; the one is essential, the other is official; this is supreme, that is subordinate. When Christ casts the fire of Divine judgments into the earth, his Father worketh hitherto, or unto this end, and he also works. The power or influence of Jehovah, of which Christ as the Son of God is essentially possessed, is exercised in pouring Divine judgments on men; while the Lord Christ, as our Mediator, has an official concern in casting them into the earth. Now, this work is accomplished by Divine power, because the exercise of that power which is official, plainly supposes the exertion of that which is supreme; because he who is entrusted with mediatorial authority, as he is the Son of God, is possessed of this almighty power; and because Jesus in all his mediatorial administrations, respecting either his people or his enemies, is upheld and supported by the power of the Three One God.

5th, The Mediator's casting the fire of the altar into the earth imports, that the treasures of wrath, as well as the treasures of grace and salvation, are at his disposal. As it hath pleased the Father

that in him all fulness should dwell, that out of his fulness his people might receive and grace for grace; so it hath pleased the Father also to commit all judgment unto him, that he might have authority to execute judgment also upon his enemies, because he is the Son of man. He not only reigns over his church, by the sceptre of his grace; but rules in the midst of his enemies, and, with his iron rod, dashes them in pieces like a potter's vessel. He has not only a power to forgive sins, and to exalt the law-condemned sinner into a state of justification before God; but he has also power over fire, and can cause it burn up his enemies. The fire of the altar is at his disposal, and, therefore, he takes it into his censer and casts it on the inhabitants of the earth. He is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, not only to give repentance to Israel and the remission of sins; but also to avenge all the wrongs done by his incorrigible enemies, to God, to himself, and to his church, by executing Divine judgments upon them. That wrath by which God's enemies are destroyed, is not the wrath of him only that sitteth on the throne; but it is also called the wrath of the Lamb. It is the wrath of the Lamb, because those judgments are the effects of the Mediator's displeasure, as well as the effects of the anger of God. It is also the wrath of the Lamb, because the wrath of God, in its terrible effects on his enemies, is inflicted on them by the agency of our Mediator, who is the Lamb in the midst of the throne.

6th, The Mediator's casting the fire of the altar into the earth imports, that Christ does every thing which is necessary for the infliction of Divine judgments on his enemies. Three actions are ascribed to him in the text, relative to this work; and no more is necessary for its accomplishment. He took the censer,—he filled it with fire of the altar,—and cast it into the earth. There was no more needful to be done, by the priests under the former dispensation, to burn, without the camp, the bodies of those beasts, whose blood was brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, than to take their censer, to fill it with fire from the altar, and to apply it to the combustible materials, by which they were reduced to ashes. In like manner, Christ has nothing more to do, for consuming the Lord's sacrifice on the earth, or for destroying those who have trodden under foot the court without the temple, and the holy city, forty and two months, than to take the censer, to fill it with fire of the altar, and to cast it into the earth; and all these,

the text assures us, the Lord Jesus does perform. It is an orderly, progressive and complete service which is here represented. It is begun, he took the censer; it is continued, he filled it with fire of the altar; and it is finished, he cast it into the earth. This inspired representation of the Mediator's work, which John saw in the visions of God, being so particular and full, plainly proves that every thing necessary, for the execution of Divine judgments on his enemies, shall be performed by the Lord Christ.

7th, Christ's casting the fire of the altar into the earth imports, that all the instruments of the Lord's anger are under his command, and at his direction. When the Lord executes his judgments on his foes, he employs the agency of his creatures whether animate or inanimate. In his entrusting the Mediator with authority to execute judgment, he puts all these inferior agents under his power. Are the angels employed in this work? "Christ is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels, authorities, and powers being made subject unto him," 1 Pet. iii. 22. Is the agency of men employed by the Lord in destroying his enemies? "The Father hath given him power over all flesh," John xvii. 2. Is the inanimate creation sometimes employed by the Lord, in bringing to pass his strange act of judgment? The winds and the sea obey our Redeemer, and "he hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be head over all things to the church," Eph. i. 22. Whatever the creatures are whose instrumentality the Lord Jehovah is pleased to employ, as inferior agents in his works of judgment, they are all "the armies which are in heaven." And whom do they follow? At whose direction do they move? They follow that glorious person who sat on the white horse, who is called faithful and true, whose eyes were as a flame of fire, on whose head were many crowns, who had a name written that no man knew but he himself, who was clothed with a vesture dipt in blood, and whose name is called the Word of God. This is a glorious description of our Mediator, and it is immediately added, "And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean," Rev. xix. 14. They follow him to receive their orders from him, and to act according to his will. They follow him to be used by him as he pleases, in bringing judgments on the children of men. That they follow him to a work of this kind, is evident from the

remaining part of the chapter, and from the next verse; "And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the wine press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."

8th, Christ's casting the fire of the altar into the earth imports, that all the effects of Divine judgments on the children of men are produced by his agency. As he casts these burning coals from the altar into the earth, the effects they produce on men are caused by his mediatory administration. Since the blessings enjoyed by the church come to them through his work, as the interceding High Priest, standing at the altar with the golden censer in his hand, and much incense to offer it with their prayers; the evils also which befall the children of men, suffering under the judgments of God, are brought on them by him who casts the fire of the altar into the earth. The mercy and grace of God are the supreme foundation of the church's felicity, and his wrath and justice are the chief cause of the misery of his enemies; but both are produced also by the ministration of the Lord Jesus. He has an immediate, ministerial and subordinate agency in the production of these things both to his friends and to his enemies; an agency to which he is honourably exalted because he became the son of man, and finished in our nature the infinitely arduous work that was given him to do. Whatever, therefore, are the effects of Divine judgments on men, they are produced by the power and working of Jesus. If they suffer by these judgments, in their persons, in their wealth, in their honours, in their power, in their relations, or in their lives, all this accumulated woe is hurled on them, by the hand of him who casts the fire of the altar into the earth. Are they overcome? It is the Lamb that overcomes them. Are they slain? It is with the sword of him that sat on the horse. And are they trodden in the wine press without the city? It is he who treadeth the wine press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. We now proceed to the

IV. Head of the doctrine, which was to mention some of the effects of Christ's work, which are here represented by voices, thunderings, lightnings and an earthquake.

When the mediatorial Angel casts the fire of the altar

into the earth, voices and thunders shall be heard, lightnings shall be seen, and an earthquake shall be felt by the inhabitants of the world. When those things happen together, they constitute a most dreadful tempest in the natural world. When the noise of loud sounding winds and roaring thunders is heard, accompanied with frightful flashes of vivid lightning, which strike the eye, and when these are attended with the shocks of a terrible earthquake, great terror seizes the minds of men, the earth seems to be convulsed, and much devastation is often brought upon the works of it. By these outward tempests, which are brought on men by the hand of God, he has often executed his displeasure upon his enemies; and Divine providence may still employ them to a considerable degree for pouring his vengeance on the wicked in the day of his recompences. In that part of the solemn transaction at Sinai, which was intended to represent the Lord's displeasure at sin, and his punishing sinners, and to re-exhibit to that people the covenant of works, all these particulars are found; for the alarming voice of the trumpet and of thunders was heard, lightning and fire were seen, and the whole mount quaked greatly. When the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, the temple of God shall be opened in heaven, and there shall be seen in his temple the ark of his testament, for the comfort and salvation of his people; but, at the same time, it is declared, that there shall be, for the punishment of his enemies, lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail, Rev. xi. 19. When God's judgments shall be finished on Turk and Antichrist, with their supporters, we are told, "there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake and so great. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent," Rev. xvi. 18, 21. Not in the words of our text only, but in other parts of Scripture also, the wrath of God, which is inflicted by his judgments on men, is set before us in these striking representations. From this it is evident, that the judgments of God on sinners in various periods of time, though they may differ in their degree and duration, are yet the same in their causes, in their substance, and in the manner of their execution. The voices, thunders, lightnings, and the earthquake, mentioned in the text, are metaphors taken

from these frightful occurrences in the world of nature, to represent the sin-avenging judgments of the living God, and the awful dispensations of his providence, by which the men of the world shall be distressed, and many of them destroyed.

We shall now mention some of these Divine judgments, which are represented by the voices, thunders, lightnings and the earthquake, that are produced among men by Christ's casting the fire of the altar into the earth.

1st, These represent the judgment of division. This is a sore evil which is brought on men by the hand of God, and which often extends both to their religious and civil concerns. As it is a great mercy which the Lord has promised to his people, to give them one heart and one way; so it is a sad stroke of his anger when he divides them in Jacob, and scatters them in Israel. How mournfully prevalent is the spirit of division among the children of men, relative to religious things! Different voices are heard in the church of God. The watchmen do not see eye to eye in matters of religion, nor do they sing together with the voice; but Ephraim is against Manasseh, and Manasseh is against Ephraim, and these together are against Judah. The Christian people, instead of holding the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, are split into parties, and altar is set up against altar in every corner of the land. Ecclesiastic teachers and rulers have been suffered, for a long time, to pursue measures which have had a mournful tendency both to occasion and confirm religious division. We have divided away from the Lord, by turning from his truths and ordinances, and so have broken the staff of beauty; he has therefore been provoked, as a punishment of our sin, by sending a spirit of division amongst us, to break the staff of bands. The judgment of division, respecting our civil concerns, is not less remarkable. To this token of the Lord's anger, nations are greatly subjected. Many are found, in the same country, rejoicing at events, which occasion to others grief and mourning. Multitudes highly applaud some measures of public administration, which are reprobated by a numerous and respectable class of the same community. Almost every where, plans of government are pursued which occasion the increase of political division. The systems which are established in nations, as they have many who are engaged in their support, so there are others found who are endeavouring to pull them down. These

things are mournful evidences, that the Lord has brought the judgment of divison, in a remarkable way, upon the children of men: And a sore judgment it is; for it prevents unity of affection, and of exertion for the public prosperity, both civil and religious; it makes every man, in some respects, his neighbour's enemy; and it gives us reason to fear, since we are thus divided, that we cannot stand.

2d, These words contain the judgment of desolating wars. The sword of destructive war was often threatened by the Lord in the writings of the Old Testament, both against his own people, and the nations around them. By this judgment they were all often brought very low, and at last totally destroyed. It is in this calamity, that the fire of the altar, on many occasions, consumes the enemies of the Lord. Of this the instances, both in sacred and profane history, are innumerable. A dreadful and destructive period of desolating war is foretold, in the pouring out of the sixth and seventh vials, by which the public enemies of Christ shall be overcome, and which is called the battle of Armageddon. All wars are in their nature a judgment of God on the children of men. Foreign wars, by which nation rises against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, are great calamities inflicted by the King of nations on the inhabitants of the world. Civil wars, or the inhabitants of the same kingdom rising up against one another, and destroying each other's persons and property, are also singular calamities from the hand of God. Long continued wars which are carried on by the obstinacy and pride of both, or of one of the parties, to a distressing length, are great judgments on the inhabitants of the earth. Extensive wars which are carried on by many nations at the same time, and in many places of the earth, are, in a special manner, Divine punishments inflicted on sinners. Wars which are prosecuted with uncommon bitterness and energy, producing frequent battles, great slaughter, and much local desolation, are particularly the effects of the fire of the altar upon the earth. Wars attended with uncommon expense, whereby nations and their posterity are subjected to great pecuniary burdens, are a sore calamity from the righteous Judge. And above all, wars which have had for their effect the overturning the thrones of princes, and still seem to have for their object further alterations of this kind, are peculiarly judgments from God, and shew that they are of the same nature with those predicted in the

ninth chapter of this book, which caused the world change its masters, and brought dreadful distress on men. The wars by which the nations of the earth are at present* suffering, have been, and still are of the description now mentioned, and therefore they must be the effects of the fire of the altar cast into the earth.

3d, The words comprehend the judgment of famine. This is another dispensation, by which God often inflicts his anger on the workers of iniquity. This was one of the judgments with which God's ancient people was sometimes chastised, and it is one of the wrathful strokes which shall contribute to the destruction of Antichrist. When the Lord, in his righteous providence, withholds his blessing from the earth, prevents it from yielding its strength to the sinful generation upon it, and sends unfriendly and barren seasons, he is testifying his displeasure, in the plainest manner, against the children of men. When the Lord prepares and employs the insects and reptiles of the earth to devour a part of the fruits of the field, he is bringing this judgment on a land. This he did to his people of old, Joel i. 3, 4. "Tell ye your children of it, and let them tell their children, and their children another generation. 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." When the Lord, by sending unnatural cold, excessive drought, or immoderate and unseasonable rain, refuses to bless the springing of the year, this calamity is brought on men. When the Lord makes the harvest an heap in the day of grief, and of desperate sorrow by shaking winds, rotting rains, and destructive frost, he is visibly contending with the inhabitants of the earth. By these operations, he breaks the staff of bread, and sends amongst a people the evil arrows of famine, by which many come to be hardly bestead for those things which are needful to the body. The alarming scarcity and extravagant dearth of the necessary supports of human life are a great judgment from God; as thereby the outward situation of many is materially changed to the worse; the honest savings of better times are expended; hunger and nakedness are endured by many; and disease and death sometimes follow in the train. These isles of the sea to which we belong, are at present smitten with this sore judgment

* This Sermon was preached, on a Public Fast, 13th Feb. 1800.

from the hand of God. He hath in the last season* given us the blade and the ear, but he hath withheld from us the full corn in the ear; by which many have been reduced to great perplexity and distress. Our iniquities have procured these things unto us. We have been unconcerned for the interests of his glory, and therefore has he brought this evil upon us, as he did upon his people of old; "Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it; why? saith the Lord of Hosts, because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house," Hag. i. 9. The national support and countenance are bestowed upon many things in religion which are not the Lord's; and therefore he has laid this judgment upon us; for to us the words of the Prophet are applicable, "For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal; therefore will I return and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness," Hos. xi. 8, 9. Our criminal abuse of plenty which the Lord hath formerly given us, by luxurious eating, immoderate drinking, vain and expensive clothing, and sinful amusements and diversions, has also procured this evil unto us. Oh! that the children of men were religiously exercised under this sore judgment, were not only crying what shall we eat? but also, what shall we do to be saved?

4th, These words include also the judgment of the pestilence, as another effect of the fire of the altar. With this judgment Israel was threatened; "And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant; and when ye are gathered together within your city, I will send the pestilence among you; and ye shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy," Lev. xxvi. 25. This judgment sometimes accompanies war and famine, and at other times it comes by itself; but, in any of these ways, it is a most alarming dispensation of Divine providence. By it many parts of the world, have been at different times dreadfully distressed. When the Lord sends mortal and pestilential diseases among men, it is a great evidence that his anger has gone forth against them. By these many of them are cut off from the land of the living; and great terror and perplexity, inconvenience, and worldly loss are en-

* See the Note in the preceding page.

duced by those who escape. Of late years, different parts of the earth, and some of the armies of the nations, have been, by the righteous hand of God, smitten with this sore judgment. The nations have not been careful to counteract the disease of sin, in its different appearances among them, by which God is dishonoured, and his law is broken; and therefore he may be provoked to suffer outward pestilential diseases to spread their contagious influence among men, till many of them are destroyed. When epidemical diseases, occasioning a slight and short trouble, pass through a land, they are warnings to the inhabitants, because he who has sent them, can as easily send the pestilence for their destruction. In the days of the Lord's vengeance upon men, when the fire of the altar shall be cast into the earth, we are sure that by this judgment, as well as by war and famine, many shall be destroyed. It is mentioned by the Lord Jesus, in the enumeration he gives of Divine judgments, which shall come upon sinful nations in the times of the gospel; "And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences," Luke xxi. 11. Of the destruction of Antichrist it is said, "Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine," Rev. xviii. 8. The noisome and destructive pestilence, is therefore one of the effects of the fire of the altar.

5th, National poverty and bankruptcy may be considered as another Divine judgment which is included in these words. The public prosperity of nations is in itself a great blessing from the Lord; but when he dries up the sources of national wealth, and brings poverty and dependence upon men, the hand of the Lord, in his judgments, is against them. The former was promised to Israel, in their keeping the commandments of the Lord; and the latter was threatened to them, in case of their departing from him. "The Lord shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the works of thine hand; and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow," Deut. xxviii. 12. In the 43d, and 44th verses of the same chapter, one of the judgments for their disobedience is expressed in the following words; "The stranger that is within thee, shall get up above thee very high; and thou shalt come down very low; he shall lend unto thee, and thou shalt not lend unto him; he shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail." Whatever are the springs of a nation's wealth, the productions of the earth, the labour

of their hands, or their extended commerce, the Lord can easily blast them, and overwhelm men with distress and perplexity. Ancient Tyre, who was abundant in merchandize and in treasures, is a singular instance of the justice and power of God, in bringing upon nations, the most opulent and strong, great poverty and ruin. Both her prosperity and overthrow, are described by the Prophet Ezekiel, chap. xxvii. from which the following expressions are selected: "And thou wast replenished and made very glorious in the midst of the seas. Thy riches, and thy fairs, thy merchandize, thy mariners, and thy pilots, thy calkers, and the occupiers of thy merchandize, and all thy men of war that are in thee, and in all thy company, which is in the midst of thee, shall fall into the midst of the seas, in the day of thy ruin," verses 25, 27. Our land has often suffered by the partial execution of this judgment. The stagnation of trade, as well as unfruitful seasons, occasioned by numerous bankruptcies, which circulate their hurtful influence through many orders of men, has sometimes brought us into great distress. When the fire of the altar shall consume Antichrist, this judgment also shall be found among her plagues. "And the merchants of the earth shall weep over her, for no man buyeth their merchandize any more," Rev. xviii. 11.

6th, Popular commotions are a judgment which is pointed out in the words of the text. These are moral earthquakes, or violent shakings among rational creatures, and moral agents, which often prove a dreadful scourge to the children of men. When the Lord takes off the restraints of his providence from the minds of the multitude, and sets them loose against their superiors, or one another, it is a great judgment from God to the nation where it happens. These insurrections are lawless, ungovernable and violent; and the persons concerned in them are often carried to the greatest excesses. They greatly disturb the tranquillity of cities and of nations, and frequently occasion the destruction of much property, and the loss of many lives. In some parts of the world, these are more frequent and mischievous; and in others, they are both more seldom and moderate. Whatever may be the causes of these popular tumults, and however much sin may be committed in them; yet the holy and righteous God may order and overrule them, as a judgment of his hand, in punishing sinners for their iniquity. When the fire of the altar shall be thrown among men, there is reason to conclude,

that by such dreadful moral earthquakes as these, he will arise and shake terribly the earth.

7th, The overturning the established systems of nations, is another effect of the fire of the altar. In the righteous judgment of God upon sinful nations, he sometimes overthrows both their civil and ecclesiastic establishments. These are spiritual and political earthquakes, which are brought on men, by the power and justice of God, as a punishment of their sin; and always occasion much distress to the inhabitants of the world. These alterations, relating as they do to the most important concerns of men, involve nations in sore calamities; for they are accomplished by many voices, much thunderings, and frequent lightnings of the Lord's displeasure. The kingdom of the ten tribes had this judgment executed on them, in their captivity by the king of Assyria. The kingdom of Judah suffered the same calamity in their captivity in Babylon. The kingdom of Babylon itself came under the same stroke, by the hand of the Medes and Persians. It would be endless to enumerate the many instances of the execution of this judgment on the nations of the world. Almost every kingdom in the earth, at one time or another, has experienced earthquakes of this kind. These have chiefly been brought on them, by means of the invasion and conquest of a foreign power. In the new heavens and the new earth, for which believers do earnestly look, and patiently wait, both civil and ecclesiastic tyranny shall be destroyed; and, therefore, spiritual and political earthquakes must happen in many lands, before the coming of that happy period. When the fire of the altar shall be sent forth to destroy Antichrist finally, his spiritual system shall perish, and all that tyranny by which it has been upheld shall fade away. These shall be the effects of the voices, thunders, lightnings, and earthquake, under the seventh vial; for it is said, "And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell; and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath," Rev. xvi. 19.

8th, Natural earthquakes, storms, and tempests may belong unto those judgments, which are the effects of the fire of the altar. The Lord has often employed these for visiting on men their aggravated iniquities. There have been dreadful destructions brought on sinners, by these effects of Jehovah's power, and tokens of his wrath.

The words may not only be understood in a figurative, but also in a literal sense; and, in this view, they represent to us also the effects of the fire of the altar. By the natural winds, thunders, lightnings and earthquakes, the Lord has brought, and may yet bring judgments on men. With respect to the first of these it is said, "Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty waters," Exod. xv. 10. Relative to the second, we have the following declaration; "The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken in pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them," 1 Sam. i. 10. The operations of the third are stated in these words, "He shot out his lightnings, and discomfited them," Psalm xviii. 14. And with reference to the last, we have the following account; "Yea, ye shall flee like as ye fled from before the earthquake, in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah," Zech. xix. 5. Tempestuous winds, destructive thunder and lightning, and the terrible earthquake, are in the hand of God, and he can by them, as means, bring great desolations on the earth, and misery on its inhabitants. By their operations many have perished, both by sea and land; and in days of fearful calamity on men for sin, there is reason to think, that they will again be the instruments of his wrath.

These are some of the judgments of God, signified by the voices, thunderings, lightnings and earthquake, which are mentioned in the text, as the awful effects of Christ's taking the censer, filling it with fire of the altar, and casting it into the earth.

This subject shall now be concluded, by deducing some inferences for improvement.

1st, The glorious exaltation and work of our adored Mediator may be learned from what has been said. He is now before the throne, and is standing and ministering before the golden altar, which is in Jehovah's immediate and glorious presence. Because he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, God the Father hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name. He hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he has, in our nature, finished the work of redemption, in the purchase of it. As he ministered at the altar below, in the character of an atoning high priest, and hath then put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; so he is now set at the right hand of God, placed in the midst of

the throne, clothed with his royal robes, intrusted with all the treasures of mercy and judgment, and employed in his mediatorial administrations. These administrations are great and glorious, they comprehend his mediatorial work in his exalted state, they are necessary to his Father's glory, his own honour, and his church's benefit, and they are proportioned to the honourable station which he now occupies. In the holy place not made with hands, he administers with respect to his people, by interceding for them according to the will of God, by delivering them from all their miseries, and by bestowing upon them the blessings of eternal salvation. His administrations as our Mediator extend also to his irreconcilable enemies. With respect to them, he takes the censer, fills it with fire of the altar, and casts it into the earth, for their destruction. He threw the fire of the altar into the earth, an expression which signifies that Jesus performs this work with earnest concern, with special care, with holy indignation, and with Divine violence; with earnest concern for the glory of God, and for bringing down the loftiness of his enemies; with special care that no part of his wrath may fall upon his people, whom he keeps as the apple of his eye, but that it may alight upon, punish, and afflict the workers of iniquity; with holy indignation at the rebellion and wickedness of the children of men; and with Divine violence, that it may effectually consume and destroy his irreclaimable foes. It is a great mistake to confine Christ's ministrations to his redeemed church, and to exclude from his official rule his implacable enemies; for with respect to the latter, as well as the former, he has a glorious work to accomplish. It is indeed an eternal truth, and full of consolation to the people of God, that Jehovah, the Father, has said unto Christ, their Lord, "Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool;" but he has also said to him, in the same affecting and solemn manner, "Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies;" and again, "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Jesus is commissioned by the Father, both to give spiritual and eternal life to the objects of his everlasting love, and to execute judgment upon his enemies in this world, and even to turn the wicked into hell at last, with all the nations that forget God.

2d, From this subject we may be informed, that the enemies of the Lord, and of his Christ, shall certainly be destroyed. The ho-

nour of the Divine and Mediatorial government requires it. In many of the prophecies and threatenings of God's word, this is plainly declared; and will he not do as he has said? "God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent; hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Numb. xxiii. 19. He hath not declared it in words only, but he hath assured us of it by most solemn and significant actions, which the servants of Christ have seen in the visions of God. Many of those are to be found in this book of the Revelations, and in other parts of Scripture. The text contains three of them. John saw the Mediatorial angel take the censer, fill it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth, which produced among men voices, lightnings, thunders, and an earthquake. Shall he not act those things in reality, which John saw him do in vision? To this the words of the prophet may be applied. "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry," Hab. ii. 3. As the visionary representations of the work of Christ, relative to his people, which are contained in the two verses preceding the text, shall be accomplished; so the significant actions, by which his work respecting his enemies is exhibited in the text, shall be fulfilled in their season. Concerning the numerous and mighty hosts of foes with which his church is surrounded, and by which his kingdom of grace is opposed among men, the Lord hath said, "To me belongeth vengeance and recompence, their foot shall slide in due time; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste," Deut. xxxii. 35. The belief of this truth, should be pressed upon the minds of Christ's enemies, that they, foreseeing the evil, may hide themselves, by abandoning their course of opposition to him, and by submitting to the person, righteousness, gospel, and law of the Redeemer. The belief of this truth should also be pressed on the hearts of Christ's followers, to prevent them from sinking into despondency, and giving way to unbelief and slavish fear during the period of the wicked's triumph; and to enable them to live in the exercise of an holy, joyful, and certain expectation of the accomplishment of all the great and glorious things, which the Lord hath promised to his church, both in this world and in that which is to come.

3d, The great folly of the children of men, in opposing the in-

terests of Christ in this world, is evident from what has been said. Against whom are they acting? To whom are they making opposition? It is He who is God as well as man, who has all power in heaven and in earth, and who has the fiery judgments of God at his disposal. Can they be safe in this course? Certainly not, for he must reign till his enemies are made his footstool. He shall assuredly bring them low, by scattering these burning coals among them, and by casting the fire of the altar into their bosom. To him the destruction of his enemies, even the most powerful and stubborn, is easy; for he has only to take the censer, fill it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth, and instantly there shall be voices, lightnings, thunders, and an earthquake of personal or public judgments, by which they shall be overthrown. Their opposition to Christ contains the basest ingratitude; for they are despising and rejecting him, who has come in the flesh, and is now coming in the gospel, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. He is revealing to them statutes by which they may live, and speaking words by which they may be saved; and can they despise these statutes of life, and reject this word of salvation, without being guilty of the greatest folly and basest ingratitude. In the words of Moses they may be addressed, "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise?" Over them we may lament, in the words of that prophet, "O that they were wise, that they understood this, and that they would consider their latter end," Deut. xxxii. 6, 29. This melancholy opposition to Christ, is managed by the children of men both in their personal and collective capacities. By the unbelief and enmity of their hearts, by their corrupt and erroneous sentiments, and by their immoral and ungodly lives, they, as individuals, rage and imagine a vain thing against the Lord and his Christ. In their civil and ecclesiastical capacities, the children of men, by forsaking and opposing the concerns of the Mediator, and by practising and supporting these things which are contrary to his word, do set themselves and combine against the Lord and his anointed. All this will be found to be folly and presumptuous madness; for he that sitteth in the heavens will laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision; and the time shall come when he shall speak to them in his wrath, and shall vex them in his sore displeasure. How necessary and suitable then, to all ranks of men, must these exhortations be, and how worthy are they of their most hearty ac-

ception! "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: and be ye instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little: blessed are all they that put their trust in him," Psal. ii. 10, 11, 12.

4th, From this subject we may also see the safety of the people of God in a day of public calamity. When the fire of the altar is cast into the earth, not even the smallest sparks of it shall ever reach those who have fled for refuge, and laid hold on Christ by faith, as the hope set before them in the gospel. Their interest in Christ is the ground of their safety. By believing in him, they are for ever secured from the curse of the law, and the wrath of God; for they are brought within the bond of the covenant of grace, are clothed with the righteousness of Christ, are interested in the promises, and are entitled to the blessings which they contain. They are partakers of the infinite merit and satisfaction of Christ's obedience, sufferings, and death, by which they are delivered from the guilt of sin, the condemning sentence of the law, and the stroke of Divine justice. There is no fire at the altar for them; because their Surety has endured it on their account, and has removed it from them entirely, and for ever. Christ will never cast the fire of the altar, the vindictive judgments of God, upon any for whose transgressions he was stricken. He will never cast any part of the fire of the altar into the earth, which he himself has endured, when he bare his people's sins in his own body on the tree. They are in him, as their hiding place from the storm, and covert from the tempest, through which the wrath of God can never penetrate; they shall, therefore, enjoy perfect and eternal safety. An habitual improvement of Christ, by faith in his person, righteousness and grace, is necessary both unto our glorifying him, and unto our enjoying a comfortable sense of our safety in him. Our failing in this most important exercise, as it is greatly to the Redeemer's dishonour, so it will both deprive us of much spiritual comfort, and bring upon us days of darkness and sorrow. Those who live daily by faith on the Son of God, shall be enabled to sing, with holy joy and triumph, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, though the waters thereof roar, and be troubled, though the mountains

shake with the swelling thereof." They indeed may endure many trials, in a day when the Lord is shaking terribly the earth; but in these there is no part of the fire of the altar for them. The various tribulations which they may suffer shall, by the blessing of God, enlarge their spiritual exercise, promote their happiness and comfort, and prepare them for the inheritance of the saints in light. The consideration of the glorious person, to whom the execution of Divine judgments is committed, and of their relation to him, may assure believers of perfect safety from the wrath of God, in the midst of public calamities. These are in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is their Redeemer and Saviour, their Head and Husband, their Shepherd and Physician, their Brother and Friend. Can it ever be supposed that he will suffer the dearly beloved of his soul to fall under the wrathful judgments of God? Shall ever any of those who stand in such blessed relations to him, fall under the effects of that wrath which he endured for their sake? How is it possible that the saints, whose prayers and other religious duties, are presented to God with acceptance by his Mediatory intercession, can ever be smitten with any of these plagues which are prepared for his enemies, and of which he himself has the direction?

5th, Some of the evidences of true believers whom Christ will preserve in the midst of public calamities, from the fire of the altar, may be suggested by what has been said. We may find some of those evidences in the description of those who were preserved from destruction, in Ezekiel's vision, which was formerly mentioned. Of them it is said, "Set a mark on the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry, for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof," Ezek. ix. 4. These words contain an account of their spiritual exercise, in three parts, by which we may examine ourselves. They were acquainted with those abominations which were done in Jerusalem. They were convinced of their contrariety to the nature and law of God. They were not inattentive to the sins which abounded in their day, neither were they disposed to vindicate them.—They sighed for those abominations. They were troubled in spirit; they mourned and wept before the Lord; their souls were afflicted; their bowels were moved; and they grieved at their heart for the sins which prevailed in the land.—They also cried for all those abominations. They cried before God by prayer and confession; and they cried before men by an holy life, and a public

testimony against those evils. By these religious exercises, let us examine ourselves. Do we observe and consider the abounding sins by which God is dishonoured, his law is broken, and his wrathful displeasure is incurred? Do we really mourn before God on account of them? In seeing and hearing, are our souls vexed from day to day, with those unlawful deeds? Do we cry to the Lord for conviction and forgiveness to sinners, for reformation to the land, and the coming of his kingdom in the earth? If these are our attainments, there shall no penal evil befall us, nor real plague come near our dwelling.

In the vision to which our text belongs we may also find marks of those who shall be saved. In the two verses preceding our text there are also three evidences of those who are religious in an evil time. They are saints, or holy persons. They do not live in sin; but they earnestly study holiness. They do not walk according to their corrupt inclinations; but they endeavour to regulate their thoughts, words and actions, according to the Divine law. Having received from the Lord the principles of holiness, in their regeneration, they sincerely desire, and actively strive to grow in grace and holiness, by a work of sanctification.—They are also a praying people. They give themselves unto prayer. In every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, they make their requests known unto God. This is included in the Mediatorial angel's work, in offering up his incense with the prayers of all saints. The saints, therefore, pray always. The Mediator could have no prayers of saints to present on the golden altar before the throne, if his people did not frequently perform the duty of prayer.—They are convinced that their persons are unworthy, and that their prayers are imperfect. For this reason, they pray in Christ's name, they put their prayers into the hand of the Mediatorial angel, and they expect acceptance with God to their persons and prayers only for his sake. Let us try ourselves by these things. Are we really holy? Do we hate all sin? Do we take delight in holiness? Is it our earnest desire to be conformed, in heart and life, to the Divine image, to the example of Christ, and to the holy law? Do we also take pleasure in the duty of prayer, and do we conscientiously perform it? Do we pray to God in secret, in private, and in public? Do our souls pour out their desires to God, and can we not live in peace and comfort without prayer? Are we convinced that our voice cannot

be heard, nor our prayers come up to God's holy habitation, even unto heaven, either for our sake, or for their worthiness? Do we, therefore, rest all our hopes of acceptance with God, either to our persons or prayers, on the mediation of Christ alone, both as our atoning and interceding High Priest? If these things agree to our exercise and experience, we are partakers of the merciful administrations of Christ as our intercessor within the veil; and shall never be subjected to his sin-avenging operations, either in the present or in the future state.

Lastly, From this subject, O Christians, learn your duty when times are evil and perilous, both by sin and judgments. Pray much for the Spirit of God to apply the gospel to the souls of men, that individuals and nations may profit savingly by Divine judgments. It is not by these fearful works, that the Lord accomplishes any gracious deliverance for the children of men. If the judgments of God are not accompanied with the application of the gospel, by the power of the Divine Spirit, to men, these operations of Jehovah will do them no good. When Elijah heard a great and strong wind, which rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks, it is said the Lord was not in the wind. When he felt a terrible earthquake, the Lord was not in the earthquake. And when he saw a devouring fire, the Lord was not in the fire. But when he heard a still small voice, the Lord was in it; for whenever he heard it, "he wrapped his face in his mantle, and stood in the entering in of the cave," 1 Kings xix. 13. In like manner, when the voices, thunders, lightnings, and the earthquake of Divine judgments, prevail in the world, God, in the gracious manifestation of himself to sinners, is not in them. It is only by the still small voice of the everlasting gospel, accompanied with the power of the Spirit, that any gracious and saving blessings can be communicated, either to the souls of men, or to the nations of the world. Judgments may be the mean of humbling the pride of men, and of disposing their hearts to give attention to the gospel of Divine grace; but further they cannot go. The other parts of the work the Lord performs by a very different instrument, even the gospel of our salvation. Let us therefore cry unto him, that he may send the gospel with Divine power after his judgments, and may cause the chariot of white horses to go forth after the chariot of black horses, for the conversion and salvation of the nations.

Seek preparation for these trials, to which you may yet be exposed, by the execution of Divine judgments. Those which we have already seen, and those of which we have heard, may be only the beginning of sorrows. We may be assured, that the pouring out of the seven vials of the wrath of God upon the earth, which is described in the xvth chapter of this book, is begun, is going on at this time, and is not finished. The evils which the nations are suffering, may be considered as a part of the accomplishment of this vision. As the work of judgment is not yet fulfilled, we may expect the calamities of men to become still more extensive and distressing. Whether the Lord will, without intermission, carry on his strange act, finish his work, and cut it short in righteousness, or give intervals of quietness to the nations between the storms of his anger, we cannot say; but certainly the word and providence of God concur in calling us to prepare to meet our God, as he is coming forth to execute judgments in the earth. By seeking an interest in the Lord as our God, and in Christ as our Saviour, by avoiding all discontentment with the holy providence of God; by being willing to suffer whatever he may bring upon us in the way of his judgments; by keeping the great and assured designs of God's judgments in view, which are his own glory, the honour of Christ, the overthrow of his enemies, and the salvation of his church; and by looking carefully into the word and providence of the Lord, let us endeavour to prepare to meet with our God, in whatever way he may come to us. O ye fearers of the Lord, and ye lovers of Christ, come, then, enter into your chambers, shut your doors about you, and hide yourselves for a small moment, till the indignation be overpast; for behold the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth, for their iniquity, and the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.

Study, O Christians, to grow in grace. Be diligent in your attendance on the ordinances of God. Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, in any religious duty, but exhort one another, and so much the more, as you see days of fearful calamity approaching. Give yourselves unto prayer. Be concerned in this duty for the glory of God, for your own souls, for the ministers of the gospel, for the rising generation, for your Christian brethren, for your fellow-creatures, and for the interest of religion in the world. Keep yourselves from the evils that are abounding among men, and have

no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. Let the life which you live in the flesh, be by the faith of the Son of God, in a daily improvement of his person, offices, righteousness, fulness, covenant and promise; so shall you be enabled to see, without dismay, the Great Mediatorial Angel take the censer, fill it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth, though those operations should produce among men voices, thunders, lightnings, and an earthquake.

SERMON III.

CHRIST'S TWO WITNESSES SMITING THE ANTICHRISTIAN EARTH
WITH ALL PLAGUES, AS OFTEN AS THEY WILL.

Rev. xi. 6. These, two witnesses, have power to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

IN the tenth and eleventh chapters of this book, one of the solemn prophetic visions, which John saw in the Isle of Patmos, is told by himself. He saw a mighty Angel descend from heaven, clothed with a cloud, a rainbow round about his head, his face as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire; having in his hand a little book open, and taking his most majestic station, "he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth." After the Captain of the Lord's host, and of his people's salvation, had been presented to his view, he heard seven thunders utter their voices, he heard a voice from heaven forbidding him to write what the seven thunders had uttered, he heard the solemn oath of the Mediatorial Angel, stating the duration of the church's troubles, and the season of her deliverance, he heard again the voice from heaven, commanding him to receive out of the hand of the Angel the little open book, and he heard, after he had received the book, the Angel's instructions how he should use it, and how he should afterward be employed.

The chapter where our text is recorded, contains the other part of the vision, in which he obtained a discovery of the low state of the church, her important duties, and glorious triumph, together with a view of the character and operations of Antichrist, from the time when he, in his rise, should become the Man of sin, till the time when he, by his fall, shall be made the Son of perdition. A measuring reed having been put into John's hand, the Angel, who

still occupied his most sublime position, said unto him, "Arise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein," ver. 1. The same symbol is mentioned, Ezek. xl. 5, Zech. ii. 1, 2, and Rev. xxi. 15. The measuring shewn to Ezekiel represented the glory of the church under the gospel dispensation, or her purity and beauty during the millennium, or rather the excellency of the Christian church among the Jews during that period. The measuring of which Zechariah speaks, signified the prosperity of the Jews after their return from Babylon. And the measuring which John saw, chap. xxi. ver. 15, is a description of the church's inconceivable blessedness in her heavenly state. The object which John was commanded to measure, was the true church, her ordinances, and her members; and his measuring this object, signified God's relation to his church, Christ's interest in her, the purity that should be maintained in her, and the protection that should be afforded to her, amidst the pollutions and cruelties of Antichrist.

The Angel proceeds with his instructions, ver. 2, "But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles, and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months." The court without the temple symbolized that mass of carnal, ignorant, and hypocritical worshippers, who, upon the appearance of the Man of sin, wondered after the beast, fell under the power of his strong delusions, and believed his lies. The followers of Antichrist are denominated the Gentiles. As the church in this vision is characterised by names taken from the former dispensation, so her enemies are described in the same way. The Gentile nations that surrounded Canaan were the enemies, and often the oppressors of the children of Israel. The head and members of the Antichristian church have always hated, and have frequently persecuted the followers of the Lamb. Besides, this name is properly bestowed on Papists, because those abominations by which they have completely perverted Christianity, have been adopted from the dogmas and rites which originally belonged to Satan's heathenish kingdom among the Gentiles. The holy city is mentioned, in allusion to Jerusalem, which was both the city of Israel's religious solemnities, and the royal city; "for there were set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David." This city the popish Gentiles should tread under foot. They should be

permitted to corrupt and oppress the Christian church in her outward form and administrations, and to exercise an authority over the kings of the Antichristian nations. This should continue forty-two months, or three years and a half.

In ver. 3, the Angel gives John information concerning another party which was to exist throughout the same period; "And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth." The two witnesses are the same with the measured company, ver. 1. They are the worshippers of God in spirit and in truth, while the nations are worshipping the beast. They are the true church, the temple of God. They are in possession of the sacred altar. They have access to God on his throne of grace, through Christ, who is their Great High Priest, their altar, and their sacrifice. They believe and profess the truths which God has revealed, and they observe the ordinances that he hath instituted. They are Christ's witnesses. "My witnesses." They are the witnesses of the Mediatorial angel who stood on the earth and the sea, to shew his dominion over all creation, and his power over the beast that rose up out of the sea, and the beast that came up out of the earth. They are two witnesses, to mark the smallness of their number, and their sufficiency to attest the truth—Christ gives them power. This word is a supplement, and is very properly supplied from ver. 6, where it is mentioned twice.

They are called witnesses. A cause is depending between Christ and Antichrist. While many false witnesses appear for the latter, the former maintains two witnesses, whose testimony will ultimately prevail, for the refutation of falsehood, and the establishment of truth, to the conviction of the whole world. Like intelligent and unimpeachable witnesses among men, Christ's witnesses must possess a distinct knowledge of the matter of their testimony, a firm belief of its truth, a love to their Redeemer's cause, an holy zeal for its propagation, prudence to manage their testimony with discretion, boldness to appear for the truth, meekness and humility in giving their testimony, a disposition to confirm their testimony with all instituted solemnities, with a call from the Lord to appear in his cause, for which this is sufficient—"Contend earnestly for the faith."

A witness has a necessary relation to a testimony. Christ's wit-

nesses must regulate their testimony by his word. For nothing but what is contained there must they bear witness, and for every truth that they discern in it, they must give their testimony. The scriptural attainments of the church, are a subordinate rule, by which Christians should regulate their testimony; "Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. I will put upon you none other burden, but that which ye have already, hold fast till I come." The church's testimony must also be accommodated to the apostacy of the times, and the opposition of the enemy. Whatever truths they may relinquish, and whatever errors they may imbibe, the church is bound to follow them with her testimony, in favour of those truths, and in opposition to those errors.

Christ's witnesses shall prophesy. The church shall carry on her work in spite of all opposition. The ministers of religion shall preach and dispense ordinances, and the people shall attend them. The Spirit shall work by the word, sinners shall be converted, the saints shall be edified, God shall be glorified, and the Redeemer's cause shall be maintained, amidst the gross darkness of the apostacy. They shall prophesy in sackcloth. This figure represents their low condition, while Antichrist possesses the outward court, and tramples on the holy city; their poverty, their sufferings, and their mourning. They shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days. Counting 30 days to each month, these days make 42 months, or three and a half years; and reckoning each day for a year, there are 1260 years, during which the Gentiles shall tread under foot the holy city, and the witnesses shall prophesy in sackcloth. It is a display of infinite wisdom, that the duration of the popish system, to mark the darkness and changeableness of it, is represented by those natural divisions of time, which are regulated by the moon; and that the season of the church's suffering state, to shew the light, the comfort, and stability of her system, is symbolized by those natural divisions of time, which are governed by the sun.

The dignity, the safety, and the employment of Christ's witnesses, are described in the three following verses. Christ declares their dignity; "These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks, standing before the God of the earth." In those words, Joshua, the High Priest, and Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah,

are referred to. The office and work of the former are stated, Zech. iii. and in chap. iv. the station and employment of the latter are mentioned; and of them both it is said, ver. 14, "These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth." Like these two eminent persons, who built the second temple, after part of the Jews had returned from Babylon, Christ's two witnesses are called, qualified, and supported by him; are admitted into the presence, and are engaged in the service of the living God; may consist of persons who move both in the civil and ecclesiastic departments of society; and are standing in opposition to the corruptions and tyrannies, both of the secular beast that rose up out of the sea, and of the ecclesiastic beast that came up out of the earth.

Christ also assures them of protection and safety; "And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies; and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed." To God's miraculous operations for defending Elijah from the wrath of the king, by destroying with celestial fire the two captains and their companies, whom the enraged monarch had sent to bring the prophet down to him, there is in these words a pointed allusion. They shew us that as God protected Elijah, by two miracles, so he will, by his providence, preserve his witnesses, as far as it shall be for his glory and their good, from the wrath and cruelty of their implacable enemies, and will, in due time, bring upon their malicious opposers the punishment of their sin.

In the verse where our text is recorded, Christ describes their power and employment. "These have power to shut heaven that it rain not in the days of their prophecy." To another part of Elijah's conduct Christ again refers. Directed of God, Elijah said to Ahab, 1 Kings xvii. 1, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." Christ's witnesses, like Elijah, are instruments in the hand of God, for intimating Divine judgments on sinful nations, through the whole period of their sackcloth prophecy. "And have power over waters to turn them to blood." The reference here is to Moses and Aaron. The turning all the waters of Egypt into blood, was the first plague which Israel's God, by the ministry of these holy men, inflicted on the cruel and un-

grateful oppressors of his church. This allusion may assure us, that Christ's witnesses, under the reign of Antichrist, are as really employed in the Lord's work, and are as truly the objects of his care and approbation, as these eminent men were, in the days of their existence and labours in the church.

The allusion to Moses and Aaron, who smote the land of Egypt with all her plagues, is continued in our text; "These two witnesses have power to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will." A party is mentioned, These. As this pronoun refers to its antecedent, My two witnesses, we have supplied these words in our text.—Their endowments are also mentioned, they have power. The Master whom they serve, sends none a warfare on their own charges; but he gives them abundant supplies for their work.—The object against whom their power is exerted, is the earth. In the visions of this book, the word heaven is used to signify the church of Christ, and the earth is the symbol of her enemies. The word earth must, therefore, signify the Antichristian earth, or Babylon the great.—The text informs us also of what is reserved for this symbolical earth, plagues, all plagues. As Egypt was subdued, and Israel was delivered from her bondage, by the plagues which God brought on that land; so Antichrist shall perish, and the church shall be redeemed and advanced, by the Divine execution of judgments on popish states.—The text also contains the employment of Christ's witnesses, with respect to those plagues. They smite the earth with those plagues. As Moses and Aaron had a special ministry by Divine appointment, concerning the plagues which brought Egypt very low; so Christ's witnesses have a special service to perform, relative to those judgments which shall accomplish the fall of Babylon the great.

In discoursing on this subject, it is proposed,

- I. To make some observations concerning that power with which Christ's witnesses are endued.
- II. To mention some of those ways in which they are called to exert this power.
- III. To describe those plagues with which the Antichristian earth shall be smitten, in an illustration of some of John's prophetic symbols, by which they are represented to us.

IV. To state some of the witnesses' operations, by which they smite the Antichristian earth with those plagues.

I. The first division of the subject is, to make some observations concerning the power with which the witnesses are endued.

1st, The power which Christ's witnesses possess is the gift of God. It does not belong to them in their fallen state; "For they were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." Neither can they, by their strenuous exertions, acquire this power; "For without me ye can do nothing." No creature, human or angelic, can bestow it on them; for all refuge of this kind will fail them. It is the free and precious gift of God. The gift of this power to the witnesses, the Scripture assigns to each of the Divine Persons. This work is ascribed to the Father; "And, behold, I send the promise of the Father upon you, but tarry ye at the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high," Luke xxiv. 49. This power is one of those good gifts, and perfect gifts, that are from above, and come down from the Father of lights, James i. 17. Christ also gives this power to his witnesses; "Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases," Luke ix. 1. In Christ's answer to Paul's prayer, this is also asserted; "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me," 2 Cor. xii. 9. To Christ's witnesses this power is likewise given by the Holy Ghost; "But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin," Micah iii. 8. "But truly ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth," Acts i. 8. If these Divine Persons had a distinct agency in bestowing this power on prophets, apostles, and saints; they must have the same concern in granting to Christ's witnesses this special blessing. The Father gives this power to the witnesses, by authoritatively appointing it for them, by accomplishing his promises in Christ to them, and by pouring out his Spirit upon them. The Saviour gives this power to his witnesses, as it is bestowed on them by his Mediatorial

agency, as it is conveyed to them through his merit and satisfaction, as it comes to them out of his fulness, and as he sends the Comforter to them. The Spirit gives them this power, by his dwelling in them, by his influences upon them, and by his communicating grace to them, through the instrumentality of the word of God; "For all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every one severally as he will." By this Divine and mysterious process, do Christ's witnesses obtain their power. How precious must this blessing be! How high in favour with God must its possessors stand! And how diligently should they employ it, for promoting the glory of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost!

2d, The power that is given to Christ's witnesses, contains moral and spiritual ability to perform the duties to which they are called; "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me." In the day of their effectual calling, when he performs on them the work of regeneration, does the Three-One God begin to confer on them this spiritual ability. At this time of love, they are born again, of the water, and of the Spirit, are quickened together with Christ, and are created in him unto good works. Then their darkened understandings are enlightened, their corrupt hearts are made new, their stubborn wills are subdued to the obedience of Christ, their deranged affections are reduced into spiritual order, their impure memories are sanctified, and their defiled consciences are purged. At the same time, they are vitally united to Christ, are brought into the bond of the covenant of grace, are justified freely by the grace of God, through Christ's redemption, and are all the children of God, by faith in Jesus. At this blessed season, they are made free from sins, and become servants to God, and have their fruit unto holiness, and their end everlasting life.

This moral and spiritual ability is gradually increased in their souls; "For the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." The time of conversion is not the only season of conveying grace to their souls; "For he giveth more grace." At all times, believers are commanded to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; and to come boldly to the throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. These renewed communications of grace, imparting more light, life, and strength to the soul, are made in

the same way in which the primary communication of it to them was accomplished. To the witnesses, those communications are made in proportion to the difficulties which they have to surmount, the troubles they have to endure, the temptations they have to resist, and the solemn and important duties they have to perform. This moral and spiritual ability is conferred on them, according to the stations in which they are placed: whether they are heads or members of Christian families, rulers or the ruled, teachers or the taught, in the Christian church, God in Christ, by the Spirit, "is able to make all grace to abound toward them, that they always, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work."

3d, The power which Christ's witnesses possess, contains moral and spiritual authority. As they must be Divinely qualified for their work, so they must be authorised of God to perform it. The moral and spiritual ability, whether initial or progressive, is bestowed on them, by the accomplishment of Divine promises to them; and they are vested with this moral and spiritual authority, by the application of Divine precepts to their understandings and consciences. Vain, enthusiastic, and hurtful, will our attempts be to obtain a warrant for any action, if we look to any object above or beside the precepts which are written in God's holy word. In that word there are Divine promises, which are adapted to the Christian's comfort, in every situation; in that word there are also Divine precepts, which are sufficient to direct them in the way of duty. Christ's witnesses cannot err in any case, if they do as Christ's disciples did, on a particular occasion; "And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them." The Divine precepts, rightly understood and applied, are sufficient authority to warrant Christ's disciples in the performance of all the duties that are incumbent on them. Professors of religion have often erred, by neglecting the duties which the Divine law requires, and by committing the sins which that law forbids; but they cannot err, when, in compliance with his authority, they endeavour to do what he has commanded. Since God has commanded us to believe in Christ, to exercise ourselves unto godliness, to mortify our members that are upon the earth, to be holy in all manner of conversation, to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather to re-

prove them, to witness against all antichristian corruptions, and to prepare for our latter end, every one of us must have abundant authority from God himself, to endeavour the performance of those, and of every other commanded duty. Official authority in the church, is the ordinance of God, who has also appointed the form for vesting men with ecclesiastic office. When those rules are carefully observed, the persons who are set apart have sufficient authority to perform the duties of their office, and the Christian people are abundantly warranted to submit to their administrations in the Lord.

4th, Christ's witnesses must exercise their power according to the rules which are prescribed in the Divine word. "And if a man strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned except he strive lawfully." Having obtained from God this ability and authority for performing their various services, Christ's witnesses will also endeavour to perform them in the appointed way. They must do all things in obedience to the Divine command. They will not only do that which is commanded; but also, because it is commanded. They will make the Divine law not merely the rule, but God's authority in it, the reason of their obedience. The frequent remembrance and conscientious study of this frame of mind, will strengthen their hands and encourage their hearts in the service of their God.—This power must be exerted, in a dependence on the mediation of Christ for the acceptance of their services. Convinced as they are that there is nothing about themselves, nor in their duties that can merit the Divine approbation, but that there is much in both of an opposite nature, they will place all their hopes of acceptance with God on the meritorious obedience, the satisfactory sufferings, the penal death, and the prevalent intercession of their High Priest. Under this impression, they will say with holy humble joy, "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."—Christ's witnesses will also exert their power in the performance of all duty, depending on the Spirit's influences to help their infirmities, and to strengthen their hearts in all their work. The believer's strength is not in himself, for it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. In renouncing his own strength, and relying on the powerful influences of the Holy Spirit, the Christian will venture forward to the discharge of the most difficult, dangerous and solemn duties of religion.—Christ's witnesses

must exercise their power for the promotion of the Divine glory. This will be their chief end in all their performances. Being not their own but bought with a price, they will desire to glorify God with their bodies and spirits which are his. Convinced that the manifestation of the glory of God is the highest end of all Divine works, they see it as both their duty and happiness to promote the same end in all their services. They will earnestly desire and pray that God may glorify himself by their instrumentality, and that he may enable them, whether they eat or drink, or whatsoever they do, they may do all to the glory of God.

The next division of the subject was,

II. To mention some of those ways in which Christ's witnesses ought to exercise that power of which they are possessed.

1st, They ought to exercise it by working out their own salvation, with fear and trembling, knowing that it is God who worketh in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure. If Christians do not exert the power that God has given them, in this way, they will not comfortably exercise it with reference to any other object. But if they are laborious and unwearied in using their power for promoting the salvation of their own souls, they will be spiritual and active in employing it for other purposes. That Christian, who exercises his power aright in this way, will frequently meditate upon the Divine sovereignty, love, grace, and mercy, which are the moving cause of his salvation; on the person of Christ, and on his mediation which procures his salvation; and on the Eternal Spirit by whom salvation is applied. He will diligently search the scriptures, which is the word of salvation, and attend on Divine ordinances, as the means of his salvation. That he may sensibly enjoy the blessings of salvation to the comfort and edification of his own soul, he will live a life of faith on the Son of God: and that he may prove the truth of his faith; he will endeavour to purge himself, in heart and life, from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness, inward and outward, in the fear of God. He will also strive to keep his heart with all diligence, to avoid the snares with which he is surrounded, and to resist the temptations of the wicked one. Mortified to the world and all its enjoyments, he will live in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began.

2d, Christ's witnesses must employ their power by displaying their testimony for Divine truths, and against all those errors, by which they have been corrupted and opposed. They overcome the enemy by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony. As the former is the meritorious, and the latter the instrumental cause of their victory; while they rest by faith on Christ's sacrifice for purchasing the victory to them, they must diligently use the mean of bearing testimony for him in order to obtain it. This testimony may either be verbal or written, personal or social. In it the witnesses must approve, and adhere, to the things that God has revealed, and disavow and condemn all those evils which the enemy has devised and propagated to pervert the gospel, and to defile the ordinances and administrations of God's house. The office-bearers and the members of the church are equally interested in this testimony, and are alike bound to maintain it. For their direction and encouragement in this important service, Christ's command and promise are addressed to the angel and to all the members of every Christian church. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." To their trust and care, as well as for their salvation, are all Divine truths committed. Having, therefore, believed and embraced the revelation of grace, that they may be saved, they will also be valiant for the truth upon the earth, and act for the defence of the gospel. Against every thing that is contrary to Divine truths, in the doctrine and worship, the constitution and administrations of the church, whether they exist in the corrupt system of popery, or appear among those who are called by another name, the faithful witnesses will display their banners. That this is the duty of all Christians is evident from Christ's words to his disciples, "And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning."

3d, Christ's witnesses must exert this power, by their public administrations in the church. Gospel ministers, who labour in word and in doctrine, and the Christian people who come before the Lord to hear the gospel, are concerned in these administrations; the teachers, that they may declare to men the whole counsel of God, and the people, that they may learn the law at the mouths of such as are the messengers of the Lord of hosts. Were there no teachers, these administrations could not be carried on; and were

there no hearers, they behoved to cease. A gospel minister and a christian people, are necessary to the existence of those administrations. Christ's witnesses exert this power, when the teachers, in preaching the gospel, keep alive the Church's testimony, by doctrinal declarations in favour of truth and against error; and when the people, in hearing the gospel, understand, receive and improve those declarations. There are in the church of Christ, judicial, as well as doctrinal administrations. By the former as well as the latter, the church must exert the power which Christ has given her for edification, but not for destruction. The church may be visited with particular seasons in which she is called, in her judicial capacity, to make a public appearance in favour of Divine truths, and against error and corruption. In such times, it is the duty of the teaching and ruling elders of the church, to sound an alarm of danger to Christ's cause, on God's holy mountain, for the warning of all. The Christian people, hearing and concurring with the decisions of their chosen representatives, who are over them in the Lord, their determinations may go forth like the apostolic decree, The Apostles, and Elders, and Brethren.

4th, Christ's witnesses must employ their power by their united, public, and zealous profession of all Divine truths, and by their joint and open hostility to antichristian abominations. Those persons who join the communion of the church in all Divine ordinances, profess themselves to be members in the one body of Christ, animated by the one Spirit, possessed of the one hope of salvation to which believers are called, subject to the one Lord Jesus Christ, believers of the one faith, expectants of those blessings which are signified by the one baptism, and true and spiritual worshippers of the One God and Father of all; in consequence of which profession they are solemnly bound to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace with all the members. The christian profession, containing a very solemn and most cordial adherence to all those objects, binds all the members to maintain a constant and universal opposition to every thing that is contrary to them. These comprehend all popish and other errors, whether in doctrine, worship or administrations. While they embrace and affirm the former, they will negative and repel the latter. This profession must be personal, because it is made by every individual; and it must be collective, because it is the work of the whole church. By this profession, a

public and faithful testimony is exhibited for Christ's cause, and an open and continued demonstration is made against the enemy. It is the duty of Christians to engage in this profession. For this they have the highest example: "Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good profession," 1 Tim. vi. 13. They have also the inferior example of Timothy, in the preceding verse; "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses." Having made this profession, they must maintain it to the end. "Seeing, then, that we have a Great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession."

5th, Christ's witnesses must exert this power by maintaining an holy conversation in the world. This very important part of their duty, Christians perform, when they deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, and righteously, and godly, in the world; and when they put off, as concerning the former conversation, the old man which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts; and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. If this is not the study and attainment of Christ's witnesses, they will rank among them "who profess that they know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate." By the unholy conversation of professed witnesses, their testimony is despised, the truth is reproached, their own conscience is defiled, their brethren are scandalized, the opposers of the truth are hardened in their sin, God is dishonoured, Christ is wounded in the house of his friends, and the Holy Spirit is grieved and resisted. O how many, how injurious, and deplorable are the effects of the sinful and untender conversation of Christian professors! It is their duty, therefore, to live constantly under the impression of these exhortations: "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance; but as he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation. Because it is written, 'be ye holy, for I am holy,'" 1 Peter i. 14, 15, 16. This holiness consists in our conformity to the moral image and law of God, and that in all manner of conversation. Faithfully must we discharge the duties of our domestic relations. In all our ordinary intercourse with men, we must be pure, instructive and courteous. In all our world-

ly transactions with others, we must be honest, upright, and charitable. In all our communications with our fellow-christians, we must be spiritual, affectionate, and sympathizing. And in all our approaches to God, we must be humble, sincere, and exercised to godliness. By such a conversation, Christians will adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour, in all things.

6th, Christ's witnesses must exercise their power by prayer, with fasting, and the use of other means for promoting the success of their testimony, and the prosperity of the church. When Jacob's children were in the wilderness, and when by their rebellion they had provoked the Lord to anger; O how often, and how successfully did Moses, in this manner, interpose on their behalf! When they had made and worshipped a golden calf, when they were in danger by the rebellion of Korah and their own murmurings, when they were engaged in a war with Amalak, when they credited the false report of the unfaithful spies, and on other occasions, he stood between the Lord and them to turn away from the congregation the effects of God's displeasure, and to procure for them the Divine favour and blessing. When Daniel knew that the years of the captivity were coming to an end, how earnestly did he set his face unto the Lord God to seek the church's deliverance, by prayer and supplication, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes; how richly was his intercession rewarded, and how speedily were his prayers answered! When Ezra was informed of the transgression of the Jews who were returned from Babylon, he was filled with heaviness and grief, he prayed to God most earnestly for pardon, and he succeeded in using the means for their reformation. When Nehemiah heard in the land of Babylon, that the remnant of the Jews, who had returned from the captivity, were in great affliction and reproach, that the wall of Jerusalem was broken down, and that the gates thereof were burnt with fire; he sat down and wept, and mourned, certain days, and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven, that he would give him mercy in the sight of the king. When the king had given him leave of absence for twelve years, and had appointed him to the government of the province of Judea, he immediately repaired to Jerusalem, and with much religious zeal, extraordinary activity, uncommon disinterestedness, and undaunted courage against the enemy, he began and finished the building of the wall, the setting up of the gates, and the bars of it. The examples of these

holy men are worthy of our imitation. They employed that power which God had given them, in their stations, and according to their ability, for advancing the honour of God, and the church's prosperity. In the same way, Christ's witnesses must exercise that power of which they are possessed, suitable to the stations in which they are placed, and according to the ability that God giveth for promoting his glory and his church's good. There is great need for prayer with fasting, that the church's sins may be forgiven, that the iniquities of the darkened nations may be blotted out, that Babylon may fall, and that the latter-day-glory may be hastened. Moses, Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah exerted their power according to the circumstances in which Divine Providence had placed them. We should go and do likewise. In the all-wise and powerful providence of God, we are placed in extraordinary circumstances. On the one hand, there are tokens of dissatisfaction, war and alterations among the kingdoms of this world. Fervent prayer, with fasting, that these things may pave the way for the coming of Christ's kingdom, is the indispensable duty of his witnesses. On the other hand, for the conversion of the nations, men are now employing the most precious and suitable means; for their continued operation, increased activity, and extraordinary success, Christians are bound, both in a spiritual and temporal respect, to make the most strenuous exertions.

Intending to consider the other two heads in the next discourse, we shall now conclude with a few inferences.

1st, Every land, where God's word has free course, and where Christ's witnesses reside, enjoys a great blessing from the Lord. This was the happiness of Israel in the land of Canaan, when they walked in the ways of God. This is the privilege of those parts of the earth where Christ's church has an existence. There the doctrine of his holy word is known, and Christ's witnesses are found. In such a land, the word of God has free course and is glorified, and the interpreters and believers of it are there, holding forth the Divine word as the ground of their own hope, as the mean of salvation to others, and as a rule of direction to both. In heathen and mahomedan lands, among the dispersed of Israel and Judah, and over the kingdoms of the beast, O what moral and spiritual darkness reigns! Into Satan's kingdom, subsisting in those different forms, inroads are now made. The Divine word is taking free course

among them, and the interpreters are sounding it forth, and not a few are receiving it, and testifying of it to others, as the ingrafted seed, which is able to save their souls. The enjoyment of God's word and Christ's church is a great blessing to men; for "happy is that people whose God is the Lord." For this blessedness, nations are indebted to the Lord Jesus; for he hath said, "I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy." Christ's witnesses, whether ministerial or christian, "are the salt of the earth, and the light of the world." Happy are those nations who are salted with the Spirit and grace which the witnesses possess; and who are enlightened with the rays of the Sun of Righteousness whom they preach, and in whom they have believed. Destitute of them, the nations are without spiritual form, are a moral void, and darkness is on the face of the land. O let us pity and pray for the nations that are in such a case; and let us improve the privileges we enjoy, by walking in the light as he is in the light, that we may have fellowship with him, and may be enabled to say, the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.

2d, All true believers are witnesses for Christ. In their state, in their new nature, and in their practice, they are Christ's witnesses. By their conversion, they have passed from death to life, from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Separated from the first Adam, and united to Christ, they stand in all new covenant relations to God, and to the Lord Jesus. They are his redeemed people, his adopted children, his spouse, his beloved, his servants, the members of his body, and the subjects of his spiritual kingdom; and, therefore, they must also be his witnesses. In their enjoyment of a new nature, they are advanced to the same dignity. By this change, in their regeneration, God's moral image is implanted in them, Christ is formed in their hearts, the Spirit dwells in them, and the Divine law is written on their inward parts. By this renovation, they are qualified to witness for Christ, they are inclined to perform all duty, and are constrained to appear for him. In their practice also, they are his witnesses. Their evangelical views of the scheme of salvation, the holiness of their lives, and their attendance on gospel ordinances, are a testimony for Christ, and a witness against those who corrupt his gospel, violate his law, and neglect the institutions of religion. In so far as they are enlightened in the knowledge of the truths of God, they will embrace

them, cleave to them, and profess them before men. Though their knowledge of many things may be very imperfect, and their opinions about other things may be incorrect, yet, on account of their attachment to Christ, and to his truths, in the knowledge of which they have been instructed, and the influence which they have on their hearts, their lives, and their profession, they must be recognised as his witnesses.

3d, All Christian churches, in so far as they cleave to Divine truths and ordinances, and state themselves in opposition to popish errors and idolatries, are witnesses for Christ. When the churches of the Reformation separated from the communion of Rome, and adopted the system of true Christianity, in greater or less purity, they appeared and acted in the character of public witnesses, both for the truths of Christ, and against the Antichristian apostacy. Though some of them attained to greater purity than others, yet in all of them there was given a most seasonable and real testimony to the truths and kingdom of Christ on the earth. By continuing in their opposition to popery, and in the profession of their constitutional principles, by which popery is condemned, they are to be considered, in so far, as witnesses for Christ. Though the churches of the Reformation have neglected to advance in conformity to the word of God, and though they have, in some things, rather fallen back; yet, as they are still maintaining their separation from Rome, and their condemnation of that system, there is reason, notwithstanding all these defects, to acknowledge them as witnesses against Antichrist. Though they have many things in their constitutions and administrations, which fully warrant and constrain other churches to testify against them: so long, however, as they adhere to some Divine truths, and stand on the ground of a protest against the abominations of Babylon the Great, they should be considered, on those general causes, as ranking among the witnesses for the truth.

4th, Those churches and individuals, whose testimony contains the most perfect system of Divine truths, and the most particular opposition to all Antichristian corruptions, are Christ's most intelligent and faithful witnesses. There are different degrees of ecclesiastical and personal attainments, both with respect to faith and practice. It is our duty to covet earnestly the best gifts, and to endeavour to reach the highest attainments, that we may both strive together for the faith of the gospel, and display our banners against the enemy.

Christ's ministers are enjoined by himself, to teach Christians to observe all things whatsoever he hath commanded them. As they should declare to the people the whole counsel of God, so Christians should believe and profess the whole revelation of grace, and of Christian duty. Those churches and individuals, therefore, whose faith and profession comprehend the greatest number of those special revelations, their testimony for Christ is more to his honour, than those which are more imperfect. In judicial trials among men, there are generally some persons who are accounted principal witnesses. Their testimony tends more to decide the cause, than the testimony of those witnesses who have not had an opportunity of knowing so much of the matter in dispute. It is thus also with Christ's witnesses. Among them are found some principal witnesses, by whose testimony the controversy between Christ and his enemies will chiefly be decided. In trials among men, the testimony of the less principal witnesses is not without its use. In many respects, it may corroborate the clearer testimony, and may more fully satisfy the judge in giving the decision. This also applies to Christ's witnesses: The collateral testimony of others may strengthen and illucidate the more full and circumstantial testimony of Christ's most decisive witnesses. By a testimony for scripture truths, concerning the doctrine, worship, and administrations of Christ's kingdom, the errors, idolatry, and corruptions of popery are exposed and refuted. In so far as we espouse the former, and reject the latter, we are on Christ's side; but those who do this with the greatest clearness, and to the greatest extent, are Christ's principal, and most efficient witnesses. In this manner, does the Lord of the church employ and maintain witnesses for himself on the earth, till he come to destroy his enemies, and to establish his church among men.

5th, Profane and irreligious men, contending for what they call civil liberty and the rights of man, must not at all be ranked among Christ's witnesses. By these I understand atheistical men, who pretend to deny the existence of God; deistical men, who deny the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures; and immoral persons, who live as if there were no God, by the constant neglect of Divine ordinances, and by the habitual commission of gross immoralities. The operations of such men, like those of other creatures, the Mediator will employ and over-rule, for the accomplishment of Di-

vine predictions; but to a place among his witnesses, they cannot be admitted. In every part of John's visions, where the witnesses are brought forward to our view, they are always represented as religious characters. When their intercession is described, their souls are said to be under the altar, and they were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held. When their sufferings are mentioned, the persons with whom the dragon made war, are the remnant of the woman's seed, who keep the commandments of God, and who have the testimony of Jesus Christ. When their victory is predicted, they overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony. When their station is pointed out, we find them in God's holy temple, standing near the altar, and acceptable worshippers before the Lord. And when their work is stated, it is prophesying. All those characters are essential to Christ's witnesses; and to every one of them, the persons to whom we have alluded, are total strangers. What resemblance is there between them and Zerubbabel, Joshua, Elijah, Moses, and Aaron, to whom, in the context, Christ's witnesses are compared? Surely there is none. To them who would intrude upon us, in the amiable character of Christ's witnesses, those very worst classes of human beings, it may be said, "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" In so far as any of the things for which they contend, are scriptural, they are, or ought to be, engrossed in the witnesses' testimony; but to place them among those whom Jesus calls "My witnesses," is certainly without his authority.

6th, It is the duty of Christians, and of churches, to exhibit and maintain the most full and faithful testimony for Christ's interests, and to exert their powers most earnestly for their Redeemer's glory. Has Christ called them forth to witness for his truths? Has he furnished them with spiritual powers for this work? and has he given them opportunities to perform it? It must, therefore, be their duty to obey those calls, to exercise those powers, and to improve those opportunities, by witnessing for every Divine truth, and by testifying against all popish corruptions. Witnesses, in a cause among men, are not to be blamed for the imperfection of

their testimony, if they faithfully declare all that they know about the matter in controversy. But it is not exactly so with Christ's witnesses. In his holy word, he hath revealed to them the matter of their testimony, consisting both in the truths for which they should appear, and in the errors which they ought to oppose; imperfections, therefore, in their testimony for him, are culpable defects. If they remain ignorant of any Divine truths, by neglecting to use the means of obtaining the knowledge of them; and if they continue attached to some corruptions, by prejudice in their favour, and a voluntary ignorance of their evil nature, and come forth in behalf of Christ's interests, and against those of his enemy, with a partial testimony, and defective profession, they will certainly be reprehensible for this, in the sight of God. That they may be faithful to Christ in their generation, it is the duty of Christians and churches, to cast out of their profession, and to avoid in their practice, every thing which God's word condemns; and to incorporate in their testimony, and observe in their conduct, every thing which that word approves. Having settled their profession according to the Scripture, it is incumbent on them to exert their powers for promoting Christ's kingdom, and for overturning the systems of error and corruption. None should hide his talent in a napkin, nor bury it in the earth. Every one is bound to use his powers for the glory of the Giver, according to his own command, "Occupy, till I come." If we consider what he has done for accomplishing our salvation, we will be determined to do all that we can for promoting his glory. If Jesus, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate, shall not we, that we may promote his cause, and oppose his enemies, go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach?

7th, This subject discovers to us the true extent of the witnesses' testimony. The common enemies of Christ and the church are the secular beast of the sea, and the ecclesiastic beast of the earth. By the former, the Divine ordinance of civil government is perverted, and the civil rights and privileges of men are invaded. By the latter, the religion of Jesus is entirely corrupted, and the precious souls of men are ruined. The witnesses' testimony, therefore, must contain a vindication of the purity, and a condemnation of the abuses of civil government, with a defence of the true religion and an exposure of Antichristian corruptions. Partial must that testimony be,

that does not contain a solemn declaration against both those systems which prophecy denounces as the implacable enemies of Christ and his church. Every person who carefully examines the Revelations of John, will see these two objects rising together, acting in concert all along, and perishing in company, "at the time of the end." It is, therefore, the church's duty, while those systems exist, to display her banners against them both, and in behalf of those Scriptural truths which relate either to the civil or religious interests of men. The neglect of either of these, will involve Christians and Christian churches in the sin of unfaithfulness, and expose them to the charge of being partial in the law. This double view of the object of the church's testimony, does not warrant a division of the witnesses into two classes. By the visions of this book, we are not authorised to view one class of men as political witnesses, and another class of men as religious witnesses. Christ's witnesses must not be divided in this manner. Though the objects of their testimony are complex and many, the witnesses themselves are simple and one. They are the same persons who witness against the beast that came up out of the earth, that display their testimony against the beast that rose up out of the sea. Let not any Christian, nor any Christian society, be satisfied with sighing and crying before the Lord on account of ecclesiastical and spiritual corruptions, without being sorrowful and pained at their hearts, for the dishonour done to God, and the injuries endured by men, through the unrighteous constitutions and administrations of those who are in civil authority.

8th, This subject assures us that there has been, and will be a succession of witnesses in the church, till the beast and the false prophet shall be taken and destroyed. The predictions assure us, that the popish Gentiles shall possess the outer court, and shall trample under their feet the holy city forty and two months. The same predictions clearly ascertain that the two witnesses shall prophesy in sackcloth, a thousand two hundred and three-score days. In those visions we are told, that "power was given to the beast to continue forty and two months," chap. xiii. 5. In them we are also informed, that "the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there, a thousand two hundred and three-score days." "And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished, for a time, and

times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent," chap. xii. 6, 14. As these predictions pointedly determine that the secular and ecclesiastic beasts shall continue, blaspheme and tyrannize over men for the long period of 1260 years; so they, with equal precision, declare that the woman of the church, or the two witnesses, will be preserved in their existence and operations, during the same length of time. There shall be, therefore, a succession of witnesses against Antichrist till the time of his fall. One generation of wicked men has arisen on the earth after another, to perpetuate, increase and defend secular and religious corruptions; and by these occurrences, one part of the prophecy has been realised. The Lord has also raised up one generation of professors of his name after another, to witness for his truths and ordinances; and, by this operation of his grace and power, the other part of the prediction has been fulfilled. During the darkest ages by the prevalence of popery, some witnesses have been raised up and preserved in one part of the earth or in another, and under one designation or another, to bear witness to the great substance of revealed truth, and to oppose and testify against the corruptions of the beast, when the inhabitants of the world were wondering after him. At some times the number of those holy inhabitants of the wilderness was small, and their situation was obscure and hidden; yet they were enabled to hold fast the truth, and to preserve themselves from the abominations with which the votaries of Antichrist were defiled. While we adore the goodness, the faithfulness, and the power of God in this dispensation, let us remember that it is our duty to rank among those who faithfully witness for Christ, who zealously oppose every thing that belongs to the errors of popery, and who carefully endeavour to follow the Lamb, whithersoever he goeth.

SERMON IV.

CHRIST'S TWO WITNESSES SMITING THE ANTICHRISTIAN EARTH
WITH ALL PLAGUES, AS OFTEN AS THEY WILL.

Rev. xi. 6. *These, two witnesses, have power to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.*

WHEN the Mediatorial Angel appeared to Moses out of a flame of fire in an unconsumed bush, that he might send him to Pharaoh to bring forth his people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt, He said to him; "I will stretch out my hand and smite Egypt with all my wonders, which I will do in the midst thereof; and after that he will let you go." When he had associated his brother Aaron with him, in the Divine commission to go to Pharaoh, they both went to the king, and, in the name of the God of Israel, demanded the release of the Israel of God, from their cruel bondage and oppressive servitude in that land. "And afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord the God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness." To this most reasonable request, the haughty Monarch replied, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go; I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." Though Moses and Aaron wrought several miracles before Pharaoh and his servants, to convince them of their supernatural authority, yet they continued inflexible in their purpose to detain, under their cruel oppression, the chosen tribes of God. By the instrumentality of Moses and Aaron, the Lord brought on Egypt nine dreadful plagues, by which that land was reduced almost to a desolation. Notwithstanding of this, Pharaoh and his servants persisted in their refusal to let Israel go. Having secured his people from the destruction, by their sprinkling on their door posts, the blood of the Pascal Lamb; and

having prepared them for their journey, by feasting on its flesh according to his command, the Lord brought on Egypt the tenth and last plague, of which the following words contain the account. "And it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the first born in the land of Egypt, from the first born of Pharaoh that sat on the throne, unto the first born of the captive that was in the dungeon, and all the first born of cattle. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead. And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both you and the children of Israel; and go serve the Lord, as ye have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also."

That Egypt was a type of the Antichristian kingdom, is evident from the second verse which follows our text. "And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified." The popish system is compared first to Sodom, because of its uncommon wickedness and singular overthrow; and then to Egypt, on account of its cruelty to the church, the plagues with which it was visited, and Israel's triumphant deliverance out of that land. In the case of Egypt the following objects are found:—The Divine Agent, the Angel who appeared to Moses in the bush; the instruments whom he employed, Moses and Aaron; the people against whom they were sent, Pharaoh and the Egyptians; the objects whom they delivered, the people of the God of Abraham; and the means by which this deliverance was accomplished, the plagues that were inflicted on the land of Egypt. All these particulars are most perfectly applicable to the church's victory over the beasts of the sea and of the earth. The glorious agent is the Lord Jesus Christ, whose name is called the Word of God; the instruments are his two witnesses; the object he will come to destroy is the Antichristian earth; the people whom he will deliver are the members of his church which he will set up in all the earth; and the means, by which this work shall be completed, are the vials of wrath that will be poured on his enemies. All these things are included in our text; "These, two witnesses, have power to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will."

Some observations have been made concerning that power which Christ's witnesses possess; and some of the ways, in which they are commanded to exercise it, have been mentioned, the

III. Branch of this subject was, To describe those plagues with which the Antichristian earth shall be smitten, by endeavouring to illustrate some of John's prophetic symbols by which he represents those plagues to our view.

1st, The plagues, with which the Antichristian earth shall be smitten, are represented by mental distress. In the chapter where our text is found, there are two proofs of this. "These two Prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth," ver. 10. "And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come," ver. 18. Their doctrine, their testimony, and holy practice, in opposition to the errors, apostacy, and immorality of the beast and his followers, tormented their hearts. The signs of the destruction of tyranny and popery, and the church's song on the appearance of them, will fill their minds with anger and rage. There are several proofs of the same thing, in the xviii. chapter of this book. "The kings of the earth shall bewail her, and shall lament over her, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city, for in one hour thy judgment is come," ver. 9, 10. "The merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her, for no man buyeth their merchandise any more, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, for in one hour so great riches is come to nought," ver. 10, 16, 17. "The ship-masters and sailors cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, for in one hour is she made desolate," ver. 17, 19. When the labour of the witnesses, in circulating the scriptures, educating the unlearned, preaching the gospel, and displaying their testimony, begins to be successful, the dwellers on the Roman earth will be grievously tormented. This is remarkably accomplished in our own day. The bulls of the pope, the circulars of his dignified clergy, the bitter opposition of his priests, and the schemes of the leaders among his laity to prevent those labours, or to counteract their influence, are a satisfactory proof that they are filled with torment and anger. The dispensations of Divine providence for uprooting secular tyranny, and for establishing among the nations limited and representative governments, have given such alarm to the despots of the earth, have occasioned such consultations among them,

and have produced such military movements, as clearly demonstrate that their minds also are filled with fear, anger and torment. When God, by the administrations of the Mediatorial Angel, shall complete his work of judgment on his enemies, all men who are interested in the existence of this complex system of wickedness, shall be filled with lamentation, mourning and woe.

2d, By pouring out seven vials of wrath on the Antichristian earth, the plagues with which it shall be smitten are set before us, in one of the visions of this book. This vision is contained in chap. xv. and xvi. It is introduced with these very remarkable words: "And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them is filled up the wrath of God." It was a sign of those Divine judgments by which the secular and ecclesiastic tyrannies shall be overthrown. It is a great and marvellous sign, the realization of which will fill the world with wonder. Seven angels are employed in this great work. They came out of the temple, they enjoy the favour, and bear the commission of the God of the church. They are clothed in white linen, an emblem of the justice of their cause; and they are girded with golden girdles, to indicate their dignity and strength. In those vials are filled up the wrath of God, they contain the seven last plagues, they are called the vials of the wrath of God, and they are said to be full of his wrath. These different expressions teach us that the vials signify those Divine, final and vindictive punishments which shall be executed on the enemies of the Lord and of his Christ. The first vial is poured out on Antichrist's earth, or dry land; the second on his sea; and the third on his fountains, and rivers of waters. The fourth vial is poured on the sun of the popish world; the fifth on the seat, or throne of the beast, signifying his power and authority; the sixth on the river Euphrates; and the seventh was poured into the air of the Antichristian earth, upon which there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven from the throne, the throne of grace, for other thrones in the temple besides the mercy-seat there were none, saying, It is done. The effect which the first vial produces on its object, is a noisome and greivous sore, which fell upon the marked and idolatrous subjects of the beast; that of the second causes the waters of his sea to become stagnant like the blood of a dead man; and that of the third turns the waters of the rivers and fountains into blood.

The vial on Antichrist's sun causes him scorch men with fire; the vial on his seat fills his kingdom with darkness, and the vial on the Euphrates dries up its streams. Whatever may be the meaning of these prophetic figures, and it is perhaps impossible to point it out with certainty, we may rest assured that each of them brings on the Roman earth, a distressing and destructive calamity. As there is some reason to conclude that the five vials, counting from the beginning of the series, have either already spent their force on their objects, or rather are continuing to exert their influence on them, we shall enter into no further discussion about them. As the effects of the seventh vial are more decisive and interesting, we shall take a more particular view of them afterwards, and in the mean time we may take a view of the sixth vial, whose object is the river Euphrates. Because that river is mentioned under the sixth trumpet, which obviously foretells the rise of the Mahomedan empire and religion, and is introduced again, under the sixth vial, there are strong grounds for believing that it predicts the downfall of the Turkish empire, and the extinction of their religion. As the Euphrates, flowing through ancient Babylon, was useful both for the defence and supply of that city and its inhabitants, there is much probability in the opinion, that it signifies some object belonging to Babylon the Great, that is a mean of defence, and a source of supply to the kingdom of the beast, and by the removal of it, the destruction of that system will be greatly facilitated. Which of these opinions has the preferable claim to be the event which will fulfil the prediction of the sixth vial, I am not able to determine. Though the preparation of the way of the kings of the east, which is mentioned as the end of drying up that river, signifies the removal of obstructions to the conversion and restoration of the Jews, it will not satisfactorily decide the matter. It is true indeed, that as the Turks are in possession of Canaan, the fall of that Empire might prepare their way for returning to it; but it is equally true that as the popish corruptions of Christianity, prejudice their minds against it, the fall of that system would prepare them for believing in Christ as their Messiah. It becomes us, therefore, with a humble and contented uncertainty as to this, to watch over and observe the dispensations of Divine providence, both with respect to the Turkish empire and the See of Rome, that we may understand, pray for, and welcome

the accomplishment of this prediction which will be fulfilled in its season, if its accomplishment has not already commenced.

3d, The plagues with which the Antichristian earth shall be smitten, are symbolized by a stormy tempest. When the seventh vial was poured out, there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent—and the plague of the hail was exceeding great," chap. xvi. 18, 21. When the combined army of ten nations, emblematical of the ten horns, invaded the land of Judah, they said, "Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession." At this day of Jacob's trouble; this was the church's prayer, "O my God, make them like a wheel, as the stubble before the wind, so persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm," Psal. lxxxii. 12—15. As God's operations for punishing the enemies of his church under the former dispensation, were compared to a storm, or tempest; so in John's visions, this figure is employed to exhibit the same Divine works on behalf of his church, in the days of the gospel. The blowing of mighty winds, whose motions produce sounds resembling different voices, the rattling of tremendous thunder, continuing long and frequently repeated, the flashing of terrific, forked lightning, accompanied with the falling of great and destructive hail, form such a natural hurricane as terrifies the world's inhabitants, and destroys the lives, the property, and the habitations of men. The judgment of which this storm is the symbol was exemplified in the seventh plague which Moses and Aaron, at the command of God, brought on the land of Egypt.

Natural storms are the work of God, they are often preceded by signs of their approach, they sometimes continue for many days, they are a combination of various causes of distress, they visit all persons and things within their range which yet is limited, they are procured by the sins of men, they generally produce very hurtful effects, and they are succeeded by a calm. All these things will apply to that storm of Divine judgments which will destroy Babylon the Great. By the power, in the justice, and according to the purpose and word of Jehovah, this storm shall overtake that great city; "For strong is the Lord God who judgeth her." This storm shall be preceded with such tokens of its coming, as the wise, who can observe these things, will be

enabled to understand. This storm will continue till the purpose for which it is sent, the ruin of the great city, shall be completed. This storm is composed of many Divine judgments, signified by the voices, the thunders, the lightnings and the hail. It will pass over the whole of the kingdom of Babylon the Great, and will prevail to its entire destruction. The sphere of operation, however, is circumscribed, for to it the Lord will say, as he says to the sea, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." The causes which procure this storm are the iniquities of the object on which it is inflicted: "For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities." This storm will accomplish the final fall of Babylon, for the words by which it is intimated to us, are sufficiently decisive, "And she shall be utterly burned with fire." This figurative storm, like those in nature, shall be succeeded by a calm. Into the millennial rest which is prepared for her, shall the church immediately enter. When Christ has fulfilled his purposes with this violent storm, he will say to it, "Peace, be still," and then his church shall arrive at the haven which they desired to see.

4th, Antichrist's plagues are figured out by an earthquake, "And there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great," ver. 18. As this symbol is mentioned in other parts of this book, and of the New Testament, to represent the judgments of God on his enemies, so it was used for the same purpose by the ministry of the ancient prophets. A very singular instance of this is found in Hag. ii. 6, 7. "For thus saith the Lord of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land. And I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts." Earthquakes are terrible visitations of God. By them parts of the earth and the sea have been convulsed, cities have been sunk and destroyed, countries have been desolated, and many of their inhabitants have perished. They are the scriptural emblems of those great, moral, political, and religious changes which God has decreed to work among men, and of those judgments by which they shall be produced. The earthquake, which Haggai mentions, predicted those alterations that took place in the earth, and especially among the Jews, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ

into the world. When the Jewish ceremonial system was abolished, their land desolated, their holy city destroyed, their temple burned with fire, and themselves either killed or scattered among the nations; and when the Christian church was established, and the Christian faith was embraced by multitudes of the Gentiles, and even by many of the Jews, this earthquake passed away. The earthquake mentioned by John predicts other events, and refers to another time. When the thrones shall be cast down, when the Ancient of days shall sit, and when the judgment shall be set, and the books shall be opened; when He who is like the son of man shall come in the clouds of heaven, shall be brought to the Ancient of days, and shall receive from him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, and nations and languages should serve him; when the beast shall be slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame, and when the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever, then this earthquake shall be terminated. This earthquake is declared to be so mighty and so great, as to have no parallel, since men were upon the earth. The greatness of that Divine wrath which it will inflict, the dreadful nature of those judgments which it represents, the vast extent of the space in which it will operate, the malignity of those abominations which it will avenge, and the blessedness of that state into which it will be the mean of introducing the church, are some of the reasons why this earthquake will be so peculiarly great and mighty. If the Lord, according to his own word, brought an earthquake on the earth, for removing a system of his own institution, after its time had come to an end; will he not, in fulfilling his own prediction, bring this earthquake on the nations for destroying that system of wickedness by which he has been so eminently dishonoured, after his patience with it and its deluded votaries shall be no longer exercised?

5th, The plagues by which the Antichristian earth shall be smitten, are represented by the effects of this earthquake. These are mentioned in ver. 19, 20. They are four in number, and they are arranged in that order in which they will be accomplished.

The first effect of this earthquake is stated in these words, "And the great city was divided into three parts." By the great city we must understand these nations, over which the dominion of Anti-

christ has been extended, and by whose influence his kingdom is still supported. This great city has all along been divided into ten parts. Of this, the fall of the tenth part of the city, mentioned in the chapter where our text is found, is a proof. If the tenth part of a city fall, there must be nine parts of it yet standing. This division of the great city agrees exactly with the ten horns, signifying the ten distinct and independent kingdoms, the rulers of which give their power to the beast, make war with the Lamb, and constitute that scarlet-coloured beast, on which sat the woman, whose name is, Mystery, Babylon the Great. This effect of the earthquake will reduce these ten kingdoms into three classes. These ten kingdoms who had one mind to give their power to the beast, to support secular and ecclesiastic tyranny, shall be reduced to such a situation, as to have three different objects in view, or to be of three different minds. In the over-ruling providence of the Almighty, there has happened, at this time, among these nations, a division which seems to be an accomplishment of this prediction. There is one class of these nations, who are of one mind to reform their civil and ecclesiastic constitutions and administrations, and who have made some progress in this necessary and important work. There is another class of them, who are of one mind to prevent the accomplishment of this object, and who are combined to deluge these countries with blood, if they do not desist from this scheme of reformation. And there is another class of these nations, who are of one mind to remain neutral, while this conflict is in progress. I will not presume to assert positively that this providential division of the ten kingdoms is a complete realization of this prophecy, nor that it may not afterwards obtain a more bright development; but if the nature of this division, the causes from which it has proceeded—the shaking of the nations, the effects which it may produce, and the time at which it has happened, be fairly considered, it will deserve the careful attention of those who are waiting for the kingdom of God. It will not militate against this view of the fulfilment of this prophecy, though this threefold division of the horns should cease to be active, nor though some nations may change their class; for so long as it exists, on things of this kind, it may be said, The great city is divided into three parts.

The second effect of the earthquake is thus expressed, "And the cities of the nations fell." We may be assisted in understand-

ing the meaning of these words, by attending to the explanation which is given to the 13th verse of the chapter where our text is recorded; "And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell." The falling of the tenth part of the city, has generally been understood to signify this important event, that one of the ten parts of the great city, or, which is the same thing, one of the ten kingdoms on the Roman earth, should break off from all connexion with the See of Rome, and from all conformity to the beast, both secular and ecclesiastic. The falling of the cities of the nations, may signify the same thing. They will first shake off the tyranny of the secular beast of the sea, and then they will deliver themselves from the errors, idolatries, immoralities, and abominable delusions of the ecclesiastic beast of the earth. Unless they obtain deliverance from secular tyranny, the ten kingdoms will never be freed from that which is ecclesiastic; and without ecclesiastic reformation among them, that which is secular can never be securely established. This glorious fall of the cities of the nations will follow the division of the great city into three parts. This happy change will prepare those rulers for performing that honourable and hallowed work, which God, in this prophecy, has assigned them; "And the ten horns which thou sawest on the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire," Rev. xiii. 16.

From what has been said, the third effect of the earthquake will be of easy explanation. "And Great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give to her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath." After reading the inscription which was on the woman's forehead, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth, it will be impossible to entertain a doubt about the application of this effect of the earthquake to the whole system of popery, and to all its incorrigible supporters. When the earthquake shall produce this effect, by the Almighty power, and in the righteous judgment of him who sitteth on the throne, and of the Lamb, all those persons and things will be completely and finally destroyed.

The fourth effect of the earthquake is mentioned in ver. 20, "And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found." Earthquakes have sometimes sunk islands in the sea, and embosomed mountains in the earth. To remote islands, and to the tops of

high mountains, persons, in times of great danger, have often fled for refuge. The disappearance of islands and mountains, represents the removal of all support from the abominations of popery, and of all safety from those who pertinaciously adhere to them. On them those words of inspiration shall be fulfilled, at this day of the Lord's vengeance, "There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves." These effects of the earthquake will continue from the beginning to the end of Antichrist's final catastrophe, under the effusion of the seventh vial. At what particular times, and by what means, they will be effected in succession, the friends of Jesus, till the day declare it, will be willing to remain uninformed; but if our calculation of the prophetic numbers be correct,* they will terminate before the year 1842 expire, when the sanctuary will be cleansed; and that the consequences of them will be swept from the earth before 1867, when the millennium will begin.

6th, By the symbol of a terrible battle, or a bloody war, the plagues which shall destroy Antichrist are, by the Spirit of prophecy, exhibited to the church. This is declared, ver. 13, 14, 16, "And I saw three unclean spirits, like frogs, come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth to the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. And he gathered them together into a place called, in the Hebrew tongue, Armageddon." The means by which this war will be undertaken, the parties who will be engaged in it, and the Divine agency in the solemn transaction, are contained in these verses.

The means of engaging the nations in this destructive war, are three unclean spirits, coming out of the mouth of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. These spirits signify wicked councils and decisions, suggested by Satan, consulted and determined by some of the secular rulers on the Roman earth, and approved and recommended by Antichrist, who had horns like a lamb, but spake as a dragon. There are many reasons for believing, that this awful prediction also, is, at the present time, finding its initial accom-

* See Inquiry, Appendix, and Essays.

plishment, in that league into which some of the European powers have entered, and in their proceedings upon it; a league, which its Imperial and Royal framers have called, The Holy Alliance. The object of this alliance, and of their operations in fulfilling it, is to prevent changes in the civil and religious condition of the European nations, and to perpetuate things as they are; or in other words, to support the kingdoms of the beast of the sea, and the beast of the earth, and to hinder the coming of Christ's kingdom, in its millennial glory. We all know that the Eternal God hath purposed, and promised, that the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and that, in order to the fulfilment of this prediction, great changes must be produced, both in the civil and ecclesiastic departments of the nations. When some of the horns of the beast are roused to war and destruction, upon the appearance of some of those changes, in a few of these nations, it may be considered as a commencement of this war.

The prophetic representation of the parties who will be engaged in this contest, before its termination, is terrific, indeed; the kings of the earth, and of the whole world. Though this war may begin with a few of the kings on the Antichristian earth, it will draw into its vortex, not merely the other kings on that earth, but the kings of the whole world. "There went out a decree from Cesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed," Luke ii. 1. "All the world," signified the whole extent of the Roman empire, when it comprehended almost all the parts of the earth which were then known, in Europe, Asia, and Africa. The kings of the whole world, as distinguished from the kings of the earth, must signify the European, Asiatic, and African dynasties, besides the ten kingdoms of the ten crowned horns of the beast. The contest which will take place in this war of reformation, is not merely about the fall of Antichrist, and the erection of Christ's church, where this enemy had his seat; but also about the Jews possessing the land of Canaan, in all the extent of the ancient promises: it will, therefore, necessarily involve all those nations which, in the days of John, were called, The whole world. It is not easy to perceive how the nations of the New, or American world, will be able to preserve neutrality at such a time as this. Some of them have been visited, and others of them are now under the operation of wars of

this description; and if they shall be involved in this last struggle, the prediction will be fulfilled in its highest meaning, The kings of the whole world.

The agency of God in this war is stated in two parts of this prophecy. It is called, "The battle of that great day of God Almighty," ver. 14. It is also said, "And he, God Almighty, gathered them together," ver. 16. While the councils of the dragon, of the beast, and of the false prophet, have a criminal influence on the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, by inducing them to engage in this wicked and destructive war, The Lord of hosts, who "mustered the hosts of the battle," which overthrew ancient Babylon, will exercise a holy and righteous superintendence of this terrible conflict, by which his judgments will be finally executed on his enemies, and the kingdom of his grace will be established in all the earth.

The final issue of this battle, or war, is predicted, chap. xix. ver. 19, 20, "And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." Though the complete destruction of the dragon is reserved for the day of judgment, chap. xx. ver. 10, the secular beast of the sea, and the ecclesiastic beast of the earth, their respective systems of civil tyranny and false religion, and all those who obstinately adhere to them, shall then go into perdition, and perish from the earth. Blessed shall all those nations be, whose armies are then found on the side of Him who shall sit on the white horse, on whose head are many crowns, and on whose vesture and thigh this name is written, King of kings, and Lord of lords.

7th, The plagues which God has appointed for Babylon the Great, are symbolized by a harvest. "And I looked, and, behold, a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat, like unto the Son of Man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he thrust in his sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped," Rev. xiv. 14, 15, 16. The Lord of this harvest is Christ, the Divine and Mediatorial Angel, for he who reaped the

earth sat on a white cloud, resembled the Son of Man, and wore a golden crown. With the sharp sickle of Divine judgments, this Sovereign and Almighty King, by the operations of those whose instrumentality he may employ, will completely reap the harvest of the popish earth. That the harvest is a scriptural figure of a season of judgment, is perfectly evident from God's threatenings concerning ancient Babylon. "For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, The daughter of Babylon is like a threshing floor, it is time to thresh her; yet a little while, and the time of her harvest shall come," Jer. li. 33. Babylon the Great has enjoyed her seed-time, she has been sown in the earth. She has also passed through her spring and her summer. She has already ripened for her harvest. As the harvest is a season of most important labours among men; so in the harvest which cuts down Antichrist, operations which are of infinite importance to the Divine glory, the church's prosperity, and the salvation of the nations, will be performed. The harvest among men has its commencement, its progress, and its completion. This symbolical harvest, under the direction of him who sat on the white cloud, will begin at the proper season, will be carried on in the days of labour, and will be finished at the appointed time. In the natural harvest, all the productions of the fields are reaped down by the sickles of the reapers. Under the command of this Great Lord, who had in his hand a sharp sickle, the luxuriant fields of New-testament Babylon shall be cut down, and removed for ever. Her erroneous doctrines, her corrupted ordinances, her idolatrous worship, her superstitious practices, her gross immoralities, her Popes and Cardinals, her Priests, and all the orders of her clergy, regular and secular, will, in the time of this harvest, be completely reaped and taken out of the way. In the natural harvest there is joy. The termination of its labours is celebrated with a song. When He, who was like unto the Son of Man, shall have reaped the harvest of the Roman earth, then "the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, will fall on their faces, and worship God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, who art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned." As these operations will then be the causes of their joyful praise, let them now be the matter of our importunate supplications in the house of prayer.

8th, Antichrist's plagues are also compared to a vintage. This symbol was shewn to John immediately after he had seen that of the harvest. "And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar who had power over fire, and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe. And the Angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great 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's bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs," Rev. xiv. 17—20. In the land of Canaan, the labours of the vintage immediately succeeded the work of the harvest. After they had reaped the produce of their fields, they began to gather the increase of their vineyards. Till their vintage was finished, the annual productions of the land were not entirely taken up. The Spirit of prophecy beautifully observes the natural order of things, in giving this vision to his servant John. As the labours of the husbandman, to secure, for the support of his household, the productions of the land, began with the harvest, and was finished by the vintage; it is very probable that the pouring out of some of the vials, perhaps the first four, may fulfil the symbol of the harvest; and that the effusion of the last three may accomplish the vision of the vintage. We may be certain, however, that as the labours of the husbandman were not completed, till the vintage as well as the harvest was finished; so the plagues of Babylon the Great will not be fully executed on her, till the Divine judgments, which are signified by the vintage, make a full end of her enjoyments, by being superadded to those calamitous events that are predicted by the harvest.

There are several things most terrific in this part of the vision. As the last three vials will be more destructive than the rest, so the account of the vintage is more horrible than that of the harvest. The Angel is commanded by a messenger who comes from the altar, who had power over fire, the fire of the altar, to thrust in his sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth. The Angel immediately obeyed. He thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth. The vine of the earth, Antichristian,

and all the clusters produced there, comprehending her honours, pleasures, riches, delights and enjoyments of every kind, were gathered and cast into the great wine-press of the wrath of God. It is a wine-press, which bruises and destroys the things that are cast into it. It is a great wine-press, sufficiently capacious for containing them, and abundantly powerful for destroying them. It is a wine-press of wrath, not intended for the good, but for the ruin of the popish grapes. It is the wine-press of the wrath of God. It is not the wrath of man, but the wrath of the Lord God Almighty. By this infinite wrath Antichrist will be overthrown.

The operation of the wine-press is also stated. And the wine-press was trodden without the city. This is the work of him "who came from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength, speaking in righteousness, and mighty to save." "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me; for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance," against mine enemies, "is in mine heart; and the year of my redeemed" church "is come," Isa. lxiii. 1, 6, 7. Of him who sat on the white horse, and whose name is called the Word of God, it is said, "And he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God," Rev. xix. 15. But what shall be the effects of this operation? "And blood came out of the wine-press, even to the horse' bridles, by the space of 1600 furlongs." No wine flowed from the treading of those grapes in this wine-press, but abundance of blood issued out of it. The depth of this mass of blood is to the horse' bridles, and the extent of this field of blood is 1600 furlongs, or 200 miles. This is the distance between the city of Rome, near the shore of the Mediterranean sea, to the southern border of his territories, at the Adriatic. The Spirit of God may have mentioned this number in the prophecy, to reveal to men either the scene of the last conflict, or the cause for which the Antichristian powers will engage in this war. That the last judgments on popery and tyranny will be penal, extraordinary, dreadful and destructive, these frightful symbols sufficiently declare. Dreadful as they may be, they are in perfect unison with the final and decisive battle, and will be fulfilled at the same time, when the Angel standing in the sun shall cry with a loud

voice, "saying, to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come, and gather yourselves together, to 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 free and bond, both small and great," Rev. xix. 17, 18. By such terrific figures, does the Spirit of prophecy represent those unparalleled plagues, by which the two beasts of the sea and the earth shall be punished and cut off.

9th, The plagues which shall smite the Antichristian earth are represented by God's executing on it the law of retaliation. In different parts of John's visions this righteous judgment of God is threatened. Some of these may be mentioned. In the 18th verse of this chapter, it is said, "And that thou shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth." The secular and ecclesiastic beasts have brought much destruction on the earth. The operations by which they have done this, in their different departments, have been many, cruel, wicked, and long continued; but the time will come when they will meet with an equivalent destruction. It is certainly a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them who have troubled the church and the world. We have another declaration to the same purpose, chap. xiii. 10: "He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity, and he that killeth with the sword shall be killed with the sword." In unlawful wars, cruel persecutions, and indiscriminate massacres, these beasts of the sea and the earth have led into captivity, and killed with the sword, millions of the world's inhabitants, and of the members of the church. The righteous Lord, to whom vengeance belongeth, will give to them that measure which they have mete to others. Then they shall go into an ignominious captivity, and shall be killed with the sword. The faithfulness and justice of God, in executing this law on those ravenous beasts, are celebrated in the song of the angel of the waters. "Thou art righteous, O Lord, who art, and wast, and shall be, because thou hast judged thus; for they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so; Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments," chap. xvi. 5, 6, 7. The woman who was drunken with the blood of the saints, shall be drunken with her own blood. This is a Di-

vine operation which must be performed, that the God of the church may "avenge the blood of his servants at her hand." The last instance of this that I shall mention is found, chap. xviii. 6: "Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works; in the cup which she has filled, fill to her double." They have rewarded the saints and servants of God with oppression, imprisonment, confiscation of goods, insult and mockery, slaughter and death. But in the season of recompenses on the enemy, these punishments shall be heaped on their own heads. The cup which she has filled, shall be filled to her double. They could not mix up the wrath of God in the saints' cup; for they could kill the body only. But the cup that shall be filled to them will be full of the wrath of God, as its most bitter ingredient; and therefore it shall be filled to her double.

10th, The Antichristian plagues are symbolized by the sudden falling, and the violent casting down of an object. This complex symbol is contained in the vision, which is recorded in chap. xviii. The first part of this symbol is found in the proclamation which was made, ver. 2d. The celestial Herald is described, ver. 1st: "I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power, and the earth was lightened with his glory." The glory that shone around him, and the glory of the good tidings he announced. "And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the Great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and every hateful bird." In the xiv. chap. of this book, before John saw the vision of the harvest and the vintage, he saw three angels who appeared in succession, and each of them had a different message to deliver to the sons of men. John saw the first of them flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth. This part of the vision seems to be receiving its fulfilment, in those wonderful, extensive and successful exertions that are now made for circulating the Scriptures among all nations, for preaching the gospel every where, and for giving to men the knowledge of the only way of salvation by Jesus Christ our Lord. The second angel followed, proclaiming the fall of Babylon the Great, "saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." This event shall be realized in consequence of the success of the

angel whom John saw flying, to signify speed and activity; and flying in the midst of heaven, to shew the vast extent of his operations. The third angel followed the second, and proclaimed the certain and unavoidable perdition of those who may attempt to defend or rebuild this fallen and accursed city. In the proclamation of the second angel, this symbol of Antichrist's plagues, with the principal cause of it, are clearly stated. A similar proclamation was made concerning ancient Babylon. "And he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken to the ground," Isa. xxi. 3. To impress our minds with the importance and the certainty of this event, the fall of Babylon is repeated, in each of these proclamations. By turning the waters of Euphrates into another place, which they had prepared to receive them, the Medes and Persians, on a night of profane feasting in the city, entered it by the dried channel of the river, slew all who opposed them, and put an end to the Babylonian empire. In like manner, Babylon the Great, her defences being removed, shall suddenly fall, and that without remedy.

The other part of this symbol is recorded, in ver. 21. "And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great milstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all." This is a most clear, majestic and appropriate symbol. There is the agent, a mighty angel; there is the instrument, a stone which he took up like a great milstone. There is the action, and he cast it into the sea; and there is an explanation of this action: Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. The angel represented the God of the church, or the Lord Jesus. The stone signified Babylon the Great. The casting this stone into the sea, represented the violent overthrow of that complex system of tyranny and idolatry, which has opposed and suppressed Christ's kingdom of peace and righteousness on the earth. As a great stone that is cast into the depths of the sea cannot again be taken up; so, when Antichrist falls, that system of wickedness shall be found no more at all. These are some of the symbols by which the Spirit of prophecy exhibits, to the children of men, those plagues with which the Antichristian earth shall be smitten, till it is destroyed. They are many, they are appropriate, they are various, they are Divine, and they deserve our careful attention.

IV. The last branch of this subject was to mention some of the witnesses' operations, by which they smite the Antichristian earth with all those plagues.

This they cannot do in the way of efficient agency. That work belongs to the God, and to the Head of the church. It is a part of that glory which cannot be given to another, and is among those works which no creature can perform. Christ's witnesses cannot infuse into the hearts of their enemies this mental distress; they cannot prepare the vials, nor command their effusion. They cannot raise the storm, excite the earthquake, nor make it produce its effects. They cannot muster the hosts to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. They can bring on neither the harvest nor the vintage. They cannot execute on the enemy the law of retaliation. They cannot accomplish the fall of Babylon the Great, nor throw it down into ruin and oblivion. These things are performed by him who hath said, "To me belongeth vengeance and recompense;" and to Him who is "clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, and whose name is called, The Word of God." The work which is assigned to Christ's witnesses in the text, is altogether ministerial, is performed by them, in the character of servants, and must be understood only in the way of instrumentality. The following particulars may give us some view of it:—

1st, Christ's witnesses smite the Antichristian earth with those plagues, when they exhibit the causes which procure them. These causes are found in the great, innumerable, and long continued abominations of the church of Rome, and of its head, that man of sin. Some of these abominations are contained in the following things:—The power which he has usurped over the kings of the earth, when he exalted himself above all that is called god, and is worshipped—His blasphemy against God, when he sat down in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God—His opposition to the one Mediator, by blaspheming his person, offices and work, and by pretending to be his vicegerent—His blaspheming the Spirit of God, breathing on men, and saying to them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost—His corrupting Christ's ordinances, and the Christian's religious duties, by removing from them important parts of Divine institution, by adding to them human inventions, by superseding some of them altogether, and by substituting in their place superstitions of his own—His corrupting the government and discipline of

the church, by his tyrannies and penances—His gross idolatry and immoralities, "in their worshipping idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood; and in their murders, sorceries, fornications, and thefts."—His bloody persecution of Christ's church, "for in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth." And his cruelty to his own subjects, both as to their temporal and spiritual interests, "for if any man worship the beast or his image, he shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God." By making a declaration of these and the like things to men, Christ's witnesses smite the popish earth with those plagues which will procure their ruin. This painful work they must perform, that they may discharge their duty, that they may maintain and increase in the hearts of Christians an holy aversion at the Antichristian system, that they may withdraw some from fellowship with that society, and that they may vindicate the Divine justice, in bringing on the popish nations the judgments that are written in this book.

2d, Christ's witnesses smite the Antichristian earth with those plagues, when they unfold to men the nature of them. They must not only exhibit their procuring causes, but they must explain their essential qualities. In making this disclosure, it will appear that they are Divine plagues. Of every one of them it will be said, "This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." The seven angels, bearing the vials of wrath, came out of the temple, where Jehovah hath his throne of grace. The voice which authorised them to pour them out on the earth, proceeded from the same place. The cup which they must drink contains the wine of the wrath of God, and the wine-press in which they shall be trodden is the wine-press of his wrath. When Antichrist will be judged, it is the Lord who judgeth her. In describing their nature, it will also appear that they are many plagues. In the text they are called plagues, and all plagues. Since the symbols by which they are represented are so many and so different, the number and variety of the plagues, signified by them, must be very great. When the Lord punished Egypt and delivered Israel, he brought one plague on that land after another, till the last and most afflicting plague, and even finished the destruction of his peoples' enemies, when Pharaoh, his servants and his army, sank like lead in the mighty waters. So

shall the Antichristian plagues be many. By unfolding their nature it will also appear that they are universal plagues. Nothing shall escape them. They shall not smite a few objects on that earth, but every thing essential to its existence shall be smitten. The dry land, the sea, the rivers and the fountains of waters shall be smitten. Its sun, its throne, its Euphrates, and its air shall be smitten with those last plagues. From this description of the nature of those plagues, it will appear that they are destructive judgments. They are not designed for correction and amendment; but they are wrathful plagues which shall destroy and annihilate that kingdom for ever.

3d, Christ's witnesses smite the popish earth with all plagues, when they demonstrate the certainty of their execution. This may be proved from the faithfulness, the power, the justice and the mercy of God. Against the man of sin the King eternal has spoken in his holiness, by many threatenings, in his holy word. The execution of those threatenings has been declared in many supernatural visions, and by many prophetic symbols. He is a God of inviolable veracity and will do as he hath said. He is a God of Almighty power and can do every thing, and no thought can be withheld from him. He is a God of justice, and will recompense tribulation on them who have so eminently troubled the saints. And he is a God of infinite mercy to his church, and will accomplish her promised deliverance, and prosperity. From these considerations we may be assured of the certain execution of those plagues. This may also be demonstrated from the accomplishment of Divine threatenings on those nations, to which the Antichristian kingdom has been compared. Sodom, Egypt, and Babylon, are those nations. As Sodom was destroyed, as all the threatened plagues were inflicted on Egypt, and as ancient Babylon has perished from the earth, so by similar calamities shall that idolatrous, blasphemous and immoral system, which is their antitype, perish from among men.

The execution of those plagues may be ascertained from the minute fulfilment of the predictions, in those parts which are past, both respecting Antichrist and the Church of God. The rise, the reign, the tyranny and wickedness of the secular and ecclesiastic beasts, and the low and suffering state of the church under their hand are clearly predicted in those visions. The whole of this dismal

secne has been, in the Divine providence, exactly fulfilled. These predictions also foretell the judgment of the great whore, and of the beast that carrieth her; and also the church's escape from their power, and her glory after their destruction. Shall not these parts of the prophecy also be accomplished? Will the Lord fulfil one part of the vision, and leave the other unaccomplished? Will he verify the prediction in those parts by which he has been so remarkably dishonoured, and will he not also realize it in those things by which he will be so eminently glorified? These suppositions are impossible. The threatened plagues shall, therefore, overtake and destroy the enemies of Christ and of his church.

4th, Christ's witnesses smite this earth with all plagues, by describing the objects on whom they shall be inflicted. The head and chief of these are the secular beast, and the ecclesiastic beast. The secular beast exists in his ten horns, or ten kings; and in the ten parts of the city, or ten kingdoms, over which the power of Antichrist extended. The ecclesiastic beast is the Popes of Rome, symbolized by a woman with a golden cup in her hand, filled with all spiritual abominations, and called also the false prophet, because he and his clergy are blasphemous teachers of a false and idolatrous religion. Their dismal end is foretold, Rev. xix. 20, 21. "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet.—These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." At the final destruction of the third party in this unhallowed combination, they too are again brought before us. "And the devil that deceived them, was cast into a lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever," Rev. xx. 10. Their evil counsellors and active agents shall perish with them. These two classes of men are as criminal as their masters; the former by the proposal and argumentative enforcement of their unrighteous plans, and the latter by a more merciless execution of them than their superiors intended. Their armies are also ranked among the objects of those plagues, Rev. xix. 17, 18. Their incorrigible adherents and active supporters, must likewise be arranged among those objects. All who will not obey that merciful call, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye share not of her plagues," render themselves obnoxious to her calamities. From this view which the predictions

give of the objects of those plagues we may conclude that the number of sufferers will be very great, that the calamities will be long continued, and that the places where those plagues will take effect will be very many.

5th, Christ's witnesses smite the popish earth with those plagues, when they denounce them unto their objects, or threaten Antichrist and his votaries with the execution of them. This must be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, and in the exercise of that authority with which he has clothed them. In conformity to the Divine word, Christ's witnesses must perform this work. Moses, the man of God, discharged this duty to the Israelites; "If thou do at all forget the Lord thy God, and walk after other gods—I testify against you this day, that ye shall surely perish." And again he said to them, "But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be driven away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish," Deut. viii. 19; xxx. 17, 18. In his public ministry, our Divine Lord exemplified this important duty, Luke xi. 42—54. From many parts of their writings, it is very evident that the prophets and apostles laboured in the same work. Every gospel minister, who declares the whole counsel of God, will sound the alarm of the tremendous threatenings on God's holy mountain, as well as he will utter the still small voice of the gospel promise. For explaining and applying the threatenings, they have the same warrant that inspired men had for revealing them to the church. Since God has given us, in his word, a peculiar revelation of the plagues which he will inflict on Antichrist, and has so minutely delineated the objects of them, it is the duty of our Redeemer's servants, to proclaim in his name the awful calamities which await the great whore, that sitteth on many waters. This service must be performed, for advancing the glory of God; with reverence, fear, and trembling; and for warning the church and the world, what dispensations of Divine providence they have reason to expect.

6th, Christ's witnesses smite the Antichristian earth with all plagues, when they declare the effects which the execution of these judgments will produce among men. It is a precious excellency of Divine predictions, that, while they clearly state the sins of men, and the Divine judgments by which they suffer for their iniquities, they contain also an infallible account of the consequences that will

follow. This proves that those predictions, and their realization, proceed from Him who both knoweth the end from the beginning, and worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will. Since a declaration of those effects glorifies God, encourages the church, warns the Antichristian party, and edifies all, such a declaration ought to be emitted. These effects are either primary or secondary, direct or consequential. By the primary and direct effects of those plagues, we may understand the events which the execution of them will immediately accomplish; and by those effects which are secondary and consequential, the events which will naturally follow them, must be signified. Without entering into any particular detail of them, all that is necessary to be said on this part of the subject, may be taken from the inspired account of the final issue of the war between Him who sat on the white horse, and the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, as it relates to the principal leaders and supporters of this kingdom of darkness and delusion: "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire, burning with brimstone." The beast is the symbol of secular tyranny, and the false prophet is the symbol of a false and idolatrous religion. The former is maintained and exercised by the ten horns, and the latter is practised and upheld by the Pope and his clergy. The capture and destruction of the beast, signifies the removal of despotism and misrule. This is the immediate effect of the infliction of the plagues on the Roman earth. Upon its removal from the nations, with all its hurtful and degrading consequences, they will obtain constitutional, limited, and equitable governments, under which they shall enjoy all the civil rights and privileges, that God hath appointed for men. This is the consequential effect of the execution of those plagues. The precious and innumerable advantages of this desirable and salutary change, cannot be fully understood by the men of this generation. The imprisonment and perdition of the false prophet, secure to the nations the total abolition of that blasphemous, immoral, and persecuting religion of popery, as the other immediate effect of the execution of those plagues. In place of the abominations of the Mother of harlots, the nations shall be blessed with true Christianity, as the consequence of the plagues falling on the Man of sin; "For the kingdoms of this world will then become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ."

Who can express or conceive the felicity of the nations, when this blessed alteration among them shall be effected! This is a very general view of the effects of this Divine work. It is the duty, however, of those who minister to men in holy things, that they may perform the work assigned them in our text, to publish them in detail to gospel hearers.

7th, Christ's witnesses smite the popish earth with those plagues, by fervent desires and prayers for the accomplishment of those predictions, by which the earth will be regenerated. All who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, will earnestly desire the prosperity of his kingdom. These desires they will offer up to God, that peace may be within the walls, and prosperity within the palaces of gospel Sion. The prophet's resolution they will cheerfully adopt, "For Sion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest; until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." With that exhortation they will readily comply, "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth," Isa. lxii. 1, 6, 7. The language of the souls under the altar, will be their holy, humble, and reverential expostulation and prayer to God, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood," the blood of thy saints and servants, "on them that dwell on the earth?" For every blessing that God has promised to the church, the saints are warranted to pray. Fervent prayer for the church's prosperity, is both a mean of obtaining this blessing, and a token of its coming. Since God is the Hearer of prayer, and has promised speedily to avenge his own elect, who cry to him day and night, their effectual and fervent prayers, by which they have power with God, and prevail, are an appointed mean, which they must use, for procuring the church's prosperity, and for hastening Babylon's fall.

8th, Christ's witnesses smite this earth with those plagues, when they direct the attention of Christians to the time at which the execution of them may be expected, and to the signs of its approach. There were visible signs of the coming of that time when the Jews were delivered from Babylon. These signs were both of a religious and a political description. Jeremiah's seventy years, during which the captivity was to continue, were expiring; Daniel was fasting

and praying; and the religious captives were looking, and longing, and crying for deliverance; "The violence done to me and to my flesh be upon Babylon, shall the inhabitant of Sion say; and, My blood upon the inhabitants of Chaldea, shall Jerusalem say," Jer. li. 35.—The profligacy and inactivity of the rulers of Babylon, were visible to all. The designs of the Medes and Persians were well known. And their activity, perseverance, and success, had alarmed the people of Babylon. There were also most conspicuous signs of that change which was accomplished in the church, by the incarnation and work of the Son of God. These signs were also both political and religious. The sceptre had completely departed from Judah, and the Lawgiver from between his feet; and, therefore, Shiloh was come. Judea belonged to the Roman empire, and the Jews were governed by a heathen ruler.—Daniel's seventy weeks were expiring. A virgin had conceived and born a son. Christ's harbinger had cried in the wilderness, and had prepared the way of the Lord. His own ministry and miracles proclaimed him to be the Deliverer who should come out of Sion, to turn away ungodliness from Jacob. These signs were increased at his crucifixion, by his resurrection, and ascension, at the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit was poured out, and in the apostles' success in preaching the gospel, both unto Jews and Gentiles. Analogous to these are the signs, both religious and political, which, in the merciful providence of God, we may now behold. Daniel's 1335 days, his 2300 days, and John's 1260 days, are seemingly near their termination. Suitable, extensive, diversified, and extraordinary means, are now actively and perseveringly employed, for circulating the Holy Scriptures among the nations, for preaching the gospel to them, and for bestowing education on the unlearned. By these operations there is encouragement to hope, "That all the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord; and that all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him." Besides, the nations of the earth, in their political state, are full of those signs which indicate the approach of those felicitous changes that shall prepare them for being moulded into the form of "the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ." A well founded declaration of Babylon's fall as near, according to the light of scripture predictions, and the application of Divine providences which seem

to fulfil them, is one of the ways by which the two witnesses should smite the popish earth with her threatened plagues.

Our text also assures us, that these witnesses perform all this work as often as they will. For the explanation of this, these few observations are made:—Christ's witnesses are always under a Divine obligation to perform this important duty.—They have no aversion at this employment, however difficult it may be; but they rather possess an inclination for the glory of God, and the good of men, to exercise themselves in this way.—When, in the providence of God, they have an outward call to this work, they listen to the call, and endeavour to obey it.—When they are inwardly stirred up to this service, they cheerfully undertake and perform it.—When the subjects which they are directed to consider, in their public ministrations, lead them to the discussion of any of those topics, they, according to the grace given to them, will endeavour to unfold them to the church.—With respect to the seasons of the progressive or final infliction of those plagues on the Antichristian earth, all Christ's witnesses, having their minds subjected and reconciled to the will of their Lord, will be disposed to say, with cheerful resignation, "Our eyes wait upon the Lord, until that he have mercy upon us."—And when they, as persons who cannot forget Jerusalem, and who prefer the prosperity of Christ's kingdom above their chiefest joy, do express the habitual desire of their souls, by fervent prayers for the fall of Babylon the Great, and for the salvation and deliverance of the church; when these are their attainment and exercise, they smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

With a very few inferences from what has been said, we shall conclude this discourse.

1st, This subject should affect our hearts with the terrible nature of those sufferings which are appointed for these enemies of Christ. The symbols by which their punishments are Divinely represented, are extraordinary, and very plain. From them we may be convinced, that Antichrist's calamities shall be very many. The variety of the symbols demonstrates the number of the plagues. The judgments which are represented by the successive pouring out of seven vials must be many.—Some of their sufferings will come on them suddenly. The casting of a milstone into the

sea, indicates the sudden destruction of the object, whose ruin it represents. Some parts of God's judgments, and of Babylon's plagues, will be rapidly executed. An earthquake and a violent shower of hail are soon over: Though the effects they produce are great, many, and permanent, they are often produced in a very short time. So shall it be with some of those calamities by which Antichrist shall be brought low; "Therefore shall her plagues come in one day;" "For in one hour her judgment is come." If the one day, Rev. xviii. 8, and the one hour, ver. 10, 17, 19, are prophetic numbers, there shall be one year of remarkable judgments upon Antichrist; and as one hour is the 12th part of a day, and the 24th part of a day and a night, there will be 30 or 15 natural days in that year, in which signal and decisive judgments will be inflicted on Christ's enemies. By dividing 360, the days in a prophetic year, by 12 and 24, we have these numbers, 30 and 15. But taking the words, day and hour, as they are used in ordinary discourse, they shew the rapidity with which Antichrist's last plagues will be executed. When great, interesting, and public transactions are performed in one day, or in one hour, they are effected suddenly. So will it assuredly be with Antichrist's final calamities.

Nothing shall be done, by the judgments of God, to that wicked company, but what they, in the plenitude of their power, have performed on others. They have persecuted the church, by exterminating wars, indiscriminate massacres, lawless plundering their property, cruel imprisonment, and legal murder. We are, therefore, warranted to believe, that sufferings and death, in all those ways, will overtake them. The symbols of Babylon's drinking the cup of the fierceness of the wrath of God, of the treading of the wine-press, and of the termination of the battle of the great day of God Almighty, plainly prove, that the slaughter and destruction of the beast and his followers will exceed any thing that has ever happened among men. Without impiety, we cannot imagine that those symbols are exaggerated paintings of the things they are intended to reveal. If we consider the Holy Spirit, who is their author, the solemn manner in which they were intimated to John, the clearness with which they are announced to us, their number, their variety, and the objects familiar to men unfolding them to our view, we may assuredly believe that the holy, righteous, and faith-

ful Jehovah will, in the dispensations of his providence, completely realize every one of them. We have never heard of any Pope; nor any generation of his clergy or followers, humbling themselves before the Lord for the cruelty and wickedness of their predecessors; but we see them, to this very day, believing all their absurdities, practising all their idolatry, and arrogantly claiming for their church exclusive salvation; and, therefore, God will visit on that generation of men who shall exist on the popish earth, at this season of retribution, all the plagues that are found written in this book.

2d, This subject teaches us the duty of Christ's witnesses, while the scarlet-coloured beast, and the woman who sits on it, exist and operate in the world. When this monstrous beast is ravaging among the nations, and when the woman whom it carries is holding forth to men, her golden cup, which is full of abominations and filthiness, Christ's witnesses must be at their post. They must act according to their character, witnessing for Christ's truths, contending earnestly for the faith of which he is Author and Finisher, and opposing the heretical and degrading system of popery. They must exert their power to the utmost, in smiting the Antichristian earth with the plagues that are appointed for it. Since he has promised to renew their strength, they may go in the strength of the Lord God.

Watchfulness, mourning, prayer, hope and active exertions against the enemy are incumbent on them. This watchfulness, which is a prominent part of their duty, must be exercised over themselves, by keeping their heart with all diligence; over the dispensations of Divine providence, that they may discern the doings of the Lord; over the subtle windings of the old serpent, by means of popery and papists, his chief instruments; and over them with whom they are connected, lest they, by turning aside after the error of the wicked, fall from their own steadfastness. Mourning is also their duty, for they are in sackcloth. The dishonour done to God and to Christ, the opposition that is made to the doctrines and ordinances of the gospel, and the spiritual and everlasting ruin that is brought on immortal souls, should bring sighs from our hearts, tears from our eyes, and lamentations from our lips. At such a time, Christians should pray without ceasing. Prayer, with fervency and in faith, with holy importunity and perseverance, will contribute, by the Divine bless-

ing, to increase our knowledge of God's word and works. "Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons; and concerning the work of my hands, command ye me," Isa. xlv. 2. This exercise of prayer consists in asking of God concerning the future destinies of his church, which is the habitation of his adopted children; and in commanding him, or humbly pleading with him, by an assured faith in his promises, that he would, in the operations of his power and goodness, fulfil them, for his own glory and his people's deliverance. The Christian, who is enabled to continue instant in this kind of prayer, will enjoy pleasant thoughts of God's gracious purposes concerning his church, and of the works of his hand for fulfilling them. Christians must also entertain hope. A lively hope of good things to come is supported by faith in the Divine promises, is accompanied with patient waiting for their accomplishment, and is exercised in desiring, looking and longing for the church's expected felicities. If these exercises abound in us, we will exert ourselves in behalf of Christ's interests, and in opposition to those of his enemies.

3d, This subject also teaches us, that it is both necessary and profitable for Christians to have some knowledge of those providences by which Divine predictions are verified. When Jesus, in company with Peter, James, and John, descended from the mount of transfiguration, he charged them to tell the vision to no man, till the Son of Man be risen again from the dead. In this charge, Christ intimated to them the truth of his Messiahship, his death and sufferings for his people's redemption, and his triumphant resurrection on the third day. The disciples then mentioned to him an argument of the Scribes against what he had said; and, perhaps, it was a difficulty to themselves. "Why then say the Scribes, that Elias must first come." Jesus begins his reply by admitting the truth of what the Scribes had asserted; "Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things." He continues and concludes his answer by declaring to them, "That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed; likewise shall also the Son of Man suffer at their hand." On the minds of the disciples, this statement had a happy effect; "Then they understood that he spake to them of John the Baptist," Matt. xvii. 9—13. The Scribes were correct in their opinion, that, before the advent of Messiah, a great Teacher should arise, and make ready a people prepared for

the Lord: but they were obstinately blind, when they refused to admit that this prediction was fulfilled in the person and ministry of John the Baptist. Their rejection of Christ, as the promised Messiah, on this ground, or on other grounds of the same kind, terminated in their temporal and everlasting destruction. This instance proves that ignorance of God's works, which fulfill his word, produces hurtful effects on the human mind. It demonstrates also how necessary and profitable a proper knowledge of Divine providences, which are the accomplishment of Scripture predictions, is to the members of the church. The want of this understanding may keep them in the dark, concerning the doings of the Lord, may deprive them of that comfort which otherwise they might enjoy, and may prevent them from the performance of some duties, which the Lord is requiring at their hand.

Some may suppose, that the slaying of the witnesses—their resurrection—the great voice which they heard—the falling of the tenth part of the city, and the sounding of the seventh trumpet, which are all mentioned in the verses following our text, are yet to come; and, therefore the millennium may be at a great distance. Without entering at all on the consideration of those matters, as this discussion here, would be out of place, it may be said, that there are much better reasons for believing that they are past, than that they are future. Besides, as there were abundant proofs of Christ's Messiahship furnished to that generation, in his doctrine, miracles and holy example, without any reference to John's mission; so there are great indications of the near approach of the millennium, in the sad convulsions which have prevailed among the nations during the last thirty years, and which are still heaving among them, and the extraordinary operations of providence, in sending the Divine word, and the preaching of the gospel into all the earth, notwithstanding any uncertainty that may rest on our minds concerning the accomplishment of those predictions to which I have alluded. Let Christians, therefore, perform the duty, and expect the blessing which these remarkable words contain; "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord."

4th, From this subject, we may take occasion to inquire, how the work of the witnesses is now going on in the world. Many are now employed in smiting the Antichristian earth with those plagues

which are destined for it. By the happy revolutions which have lately been established, both in Europe and America, this earth has been severely smitten; revolutions which are sufficiently important for introducing a new era in the accomplishment of prophecy, for exemplifying the work which will ameliorate the condition of men, and for beginning the work of destruction on the popish system. By their rise the auspicious era of civil reformation has more brightly commenced, by their progress this reformation of the nations will be extended, and by their consummation the world at large will be regenerated. The inveterate hatred, which the priests of the Romish idolatry bear to this reformation, is constraining them to such a line of conduct as will render them, as they justly deserve to be for other causes than this, odious and contemptible to the people.

The circulation of the Scriptures among men, and the preaching of the gospel to them, are now every where smiting the popish earth. This is the sword of the Spirit, the instrument by which he works for the salvation of men, for the destruction of corrupt systems of religion, and for the spiritual instruction of the nations. How many, and how deep, are the wounds which this sharp two edged sword, the word and the preaching of it, has inflicted on the popish system? They have entered the places where Antichristian darkness prevailed, and have illuminated many. As there are few parts of the earth into which popery has not penetrated, the circulation of the Bible, and the preaching of the gospel in heathen and mahomedan lands, while they overturn heathen idolatry and the delusions of Mahomet, they will, at the same time, expel this system of corrupted Christianity, from those places into which it has been introduced.

The successful endeavours to give education to the unlearned, both at home and in foreign lands, has also smitten the popish earth. This is a most eligible mean for dissipating darkness from the human mind, and for conveying into it the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. O how numerous and powerful are those efforts which have been made, and are still progressively making, to effect this most charitable and important object! How new and unprecedented is this blessed invention of these last days! And, O how subservient to the instruction of men, to the prosperity of true religion, and to the abolition of popery has this system of education been. Educated children read-

ing the Bible in their families, and teachers and others reading it in houses crowded with hearers have been instrumental, by the Spirit's operation, in smiting the kingdom of Satan in the heart, and the kingdom of Antichrist in the world.

By the writings of the witnesses, the Antichristian earth is also smitten. By their creeds, confessions, testimonies and warnings, the Antichristian system has been opposed. Besides, many publications and periodical works* have been sent from the press, containing an exposure of the abominations of the Man of Sin. In every one of these, which it is both impossible and unnecessary for me to enumerate, we should recognise the progress of the Lord's work, and of his witnesses, smiting the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

The bountiful contributions of Christians throughout the world, in support of the means now in operation, for enlightening men, do also promote the smiting of the popish earth with those plagues. Without such contributions, those means could never have commenced; and unless they are continued, they cannot be upheld. Every Christian who gives part of his worldly substance for this hallowed purpose, should devote it to God, for bringing down false systems of religion, and for propagating among men the knowledge and the kingdom of his Redeemer. Conscientiously obeying his command, and studying to advance his glory, the Christian will dedicate it to the Lord, accompanying it with his prayers, that he may use it and the contributions of others, for the good of men and the honour of his name; ever remembering that he hath said, "But to do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

To conclude, The nature, the necessity, and the harmony of Christ's agency, and the instrumental operations of his witnesses, in accomplishing the fall of New Testament Babylon, may be perceived from the scope of these Discourses.

As to their nature, Christ's agency is appointed of God. "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Sion." It is also supreme; "For Jesus Christ is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of

* That work, which is weekly published in Glasgow, entitled, The Protestant, having this object solely in view, is the most eminent, and deserves the careful perusal of every Christian.

God; angels, authorities and powers, being made subject unto him." And the Father "hath set him at his own right hand, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also, in that which is to come." His agency will be efficacious; "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet." It will also be wisely conducted; for of him the Father hath said, "Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high." The instrumental operations of Christ's witnesses are, likewise, a Divine ordinance; for they also bear witness; because on them have been conferred the knowledge, the belief, and the love of the truth. Their work is subordinate to his agency. Whatever they do is performed in his name; according to his command, and for promoting his kingdom and glory. Their work shall be effectual; for he hath given them power, and they shall both prophesy and smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will. Their operations, by that wisdom which they derive from their Head, shall be conducted with prudence and holy zeal.

Christ's agency and his witnesses' instrumental operations are also necessary. Christ's agency is requisite for the sake of direction, and their operations are required in the way of obedience. His agency is necessary to make every thing effectual, and their labour is needful in point of means. Their instrumentality is indispensable to address the ears of men, and his agency to convey the truth to the human understanding and conscience. Theirs is necessary to declare, his to apply; theirs to announce to the church his promises, his to accomplish them; theirs to threaten his enemies, his to execute the Divine threatenings upon them; It is their work to declare the Divine judgments on the nations; but it belongs to him to inflict them. It is his work to give existence to the signs of their coming, and it is their employment to direct men's attention to his operations. It appertains to them, to tell the blessed results of those works of Divine justice and power; but it is his peculiar work, to set this glory in the land of the living.

The agency of Christ, and the instrumentality of his witnesses, are perfectly harmonious. In the defence, and propagation of the truth, in the conversion of sinners, and in the edification and establishment of believers, there is a blessed consistency between them. He does nothing that they can perform in his name and by his

grace; and they are both unable and unwilling to intrude into any thing that belongs to him. There is most perfect harmony betwixt their declaring God's purposes on Babylon, or his merciful designs concerning his church; and his confirming the word of his servants, and performing the counsel of his messengers, by bringing to pass the events of which they have spoken. When Christ's witnesses keep by his instructions, in making known to men their Redeemer's word and works, he will never contradict, but will most minutely fulfil all the declarations they have made; and at the same time and by the same works, "he will frustrate the tokens of liars, make diviners mad, will turn wise men backward, and make their knowledge foolish."

In all those providential operations which are before our eyes, and in those that may yet be brought to our view, Let us observe, and reverence the agency of the Mediatorial Angel, in pouring from his censer the fire of the altar into the earth; and let us understand, and perform the duty of his witnesses, in all its parts, by smiting the Antichristian earth, with all plagues, as often as we will.

In this frame of mind, Let us comply with the Lord's call, and ponder the reasons by which it is enforced. "Come my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, 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 shall no more cover her slain."

THE END.

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REMARKS

THE SIXTH VIAL,

SYMBOLIZING

THE FALL OF THE TURKISH EMPIRE.

A SERMON

FROM REV. xvi. 12.

AND THE SIXTH ANGEL Poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates;
AND THE WATER THEREOF WAS Dried up, THAT THE WAY OF THE Kings OF
THE EAST MIGHT BE PREPARED.

By ARCHIBALD MASON,

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL, WISHAWTOWN.

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A SERMON.

REV. xvi. 12.

And the sixth Angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.

AN important prediction is contained in this verse, which may be divided into four parts. 1. An account of an Agent and his work—"And the sixth Angel poured out his vial." 2. A description of the object on which this vial was poured—"The great river Euphrates." 3. A representation of the effect which the effusion of this vial produced on that object—"And the water thereof was dried up." 4. A declaration of the end for which the waters of this river will be dried up—"That the way of the kings of the east might be prepared." It is proposed to offer a few remarks, on these parts of the text.

I. I am now to consider this Agent and his work—"And the sixth angel poured out his vial."

1. He is called an angel. This name is most frequently given to those holy, powerful and blessed spirits who surround God's throne above, who have never transgressed any Divine commandment, and who have been often commissioned to deliver to men Divine messages, both of mercy and judgment. In his mediatorial character, this name is also bestowed on the Lord Jesus Christ. He is called "the Angel of God's presence who saved the church," Isa. lxiii. 9.; and the Messenger, or the Angel, of the covenant, Mal. iii. 1. The ministers of the Gospel are also called angels. "The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches; and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest, are the seven churches," Rev. i. 20. In the book of Revelation, this name is frequently mentioned. It is sometimes used to signify the holy angels who have kept their

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first estate. "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power," Rev. v. 11, 12. "And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God," Rev. vii. 11. The name angel is also given to the agents who were employed in revealing to the Apostle John, the visions of this book. "And I saw the seven angels which stood before God, and to them were given seven trumpets," Rev. viii. 2. "And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God," Rev. xv. 7. We may conclude, that these agents in the visions were holy angels of God. Of those who had the trumpets, it is said, that they stood before God; and of them who had the vials, that they came out of the temple, where God's throne stood, and that they were clothed in pure and white linen, having their breasts girded with golden girdles. In their other appearances described in the Scriptures, there are some things analogous to these representations. Nor can we imagine any employment more worthy of the agency of the holy angels, their ministrations about the incarnation and birth, the sufferings and death, the resurrection and ascension of the Lord of angels excepted, than their instrumentality in shewing to John, the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to him, to shew unto his servants, things that must shortly come to pass. There will be a perfect agreement between the angel's work in the vision, and the work of Providence when the vision is fulfilled; between the object of the vial, and the party whom it represents; and between the effect produced on the object on which the vial is poured, and the punishment that will be inflicted on the party to whom the vial applies. There is also a resemblance between the angelic agents who are employed in these visions, and the instruments who are, or shall be God's servants in accomplishing those predictions. As the angels in the vision were chosen and called to that work, were Divinely directed and upheld in performing it, and were successful in finishing the extraordinary vision that John saw; so the agents who shall be engaged in Divine providence for fulfilling it, will also be chosen and called of God to that work, will be guided and strengthened in performing it, and will be enabled to bring it to a complete termination.

2. He is called the sixth angel. The report of this vision commences at chap. xv. 1. "And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God." They are called the last plagues, because they will completely destroy those who have destroyed the earth, and have both opposed the kingdom, and persecuted the subjects of the Lord of glory. No other judgments will follow them. Righteousness, peace, and joy, will then prevail among men. The celestial fire which shall destroy the apostates, at the end of the little season, will be a solemn introduction to the day of judgment, as the fire of the universal conflagration will be a most majestic conclusion of it. In verse 1st of chap. xvi, the seven angels received their final instructions, from the God of the temple. "And I heard a great voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth." This command did not enjoin them to go together and pour out their vials at once; but to go out in succession till all the seven had finished their work. Among the angels who sounded the trumpets, the same order was observed. The angel in our text is called the sixth angel, because the vial he had to pour out, contained a representation of the sixth scene of judgments by which God's enemies will be destroyed. When the great voice came out of the temple, commanding the seven angels to go and pour out their vials, it is added, "And the first went and poured out his vial, and the second angel poured out his vial;" likewise the third, then the fourth, afterwards the fifth, and then the time came when the sixth angel went forth and poured out his vial. On this account he is called the sixth angel. This order was appointed by the Lord, and observed by his servants. Each one of them knew his place, and poured out his vial at the proper time. According to the beautiful order maintained in the vision, the dispensations of Divine Providence which will fulfil it, will succeed one another till all shall be accomplished.

3. This angel, like the other six, had a vial in his hand. It is called "his vial." It is not called his, because it was his property, nor that he was the provider of its contents, nor yet indeed, because the fulfilment of it belonged to him, and far less surely could it be his vial, because the glory which would arise from its realization ought to be ascribed to him. In respect of these things they belong unto God only. He is their Author. Their contents were provided by

him. It is by his power and providence that they will be realized, and all the glory resulting from the revelation and fulfilment of them must be ascribed to him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb that was slain. The vial is called the angel's, because, as the servant of God and of Christ, the effusion of it, as a part of the vision, was committed to his care. Though all the seven angels had a connexion with the whole vision, as joint actors in it; yet each of them had a peculiar concern in that vial which one of the four beasts had put into his hand. The contents of all the vials are the same. In chap. xv. 1, they contain "the seven last plagues, for in them is filled up the wrath of God." In verse 7th, they are called, "seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever." And in chap. xvi. 1, they are said to be "the vials of the wrath of God." The effects they produce on the objects on whom they are poured, are all of a destructive quality. They are Divine executions of wrath, and nothing but wrath is contained in them. Though the effusion of them will promote the Divine glory, and make way for the church's blessedness; they will execute on their objects nothing but Divine judgments, and inflict on them nothing but human calamities: † Some of them appear to effect more dreadful destruction than others; but this makes no difference in the nature, but only in the measure of their contents. The effects they produce, are adapted to the object on which they are poured, and as they advance in their effusion, the calamities are more dreadful and destructive, till this work of judgment shall be finished, in the total ruin of the enemies of God and of Christ.

4. This angel poured out his vial. He performed his work. In the order of his course, he obeyed the Divine command, "Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth." After the five angels who preceded him had fulfilled their appointments, the sixth angel appeared on the scene, and poured out his vial. He performed that work which God, in his infinite wisdom, had appointed to be the emblem of those judgments which he, in his holy providence, would inflict on that enemy, who is represented by the object on which this vial was poured. The action of pouring out a vial hath a beginning, a progress and an end. The judgments signified by this, and likewise by all the rest of the vials, must assuredly commence at the appointed time. There was no delay on the part of the sixth angel, after the fifth had finished his work; neither shall there be any postponement of its execution when the season of

fulfilling it shall arrive. This symbolical action hath also a progress. The contents of a vial are not ordinarily poured out in a moment; but a vial is gradually emptied. The judgments that are signified by this vial, as they will begin at the fixed time, so they will continue during the whole period allotted for their objects to suffer. The operations by which those waters will be exhausted must be continued, and the causes and means by which they are dried up will become more effectual, until this important purpose of the Most High is fulfilled. The pouring out of a vial hath an end. The judgments of God on his enemies in this world, will have an end. This is not the place of everlasting punishment. When the time of the vial is expired, and the object of it is removed, the vial itself will come to an end. How majestic is this vision! How terrific are its symbols! And how grievous must be the sufferings of Christ's enemies! As certainly as John saw, in the extraordinary visions of God, the seven angels pour out their vials; so assuredly shall men behold the execution of the judgments signified by them, on the parties to whom they belong.

II. The object on which this vial was poured, is now to be considered:—"The great river Euphrates."

1. This river flowed through ancient Babylon, and was of considerable advantage to that city. In the visions of this book, Babylon of old, is employed as a most significant symbol of the Antichristian state and kingdom of Popery. It has therefore been the opinion of some writers, that the great river Euphrates signifies something belonging to Popery itself, closely connected with the Antichristian system, and eminently useful to it; the removal of which would expose Babylon the great to much danger, and deprive her of much safety and comfort. Under this belief, different things have been mentioned as the Euphrates of Antichristian Babylon. The great reduction in Rome's pecuniary resources, by which she is partly disabled to promote her destructive schemes among the nations; the partial removal, from the kings, the rulers, and the people on the Roman earth, of the dread of her bulls, edicts, excommunications and anathemas, which once made kings and their councils to tremble; and the gradual decline, among men, of her power and influence, which seem dwindling down into insignificance, have been considered as a realization of this prophetic figure. Plausible as these things may be, and hesitating as my mind once was about

the meaning of this symbol; I am now convinced that this explanation of it is erroneous; I shall, therefore lay it aside, and proceed to observe,

2. It may direct us to the knowledge of the object of this vial, signified by the great river Euphrates, if we attend to the events which were predicted by the sixth trumpet. "And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God; saying, to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates," Rev. ix. 13—21. It is universally agreed, I believe, that this trumpet predicts the rise, the power, the ravages, the cruelty, and the conquests of the Turks. To no other system will the particular parts of the prediction apply; but in it every circumstance in the prophetic description has been realized. The Turks dwelt originally, in four different governments, beyond or about the Euphrates. When they were united under one Head, and loosed in Divine providence, they marched forth from their own country, subdued the neighbouring nations, conquered the eastern empire of the christians, and established, in Asia and Europe, a very powerful empire, which has continued to the present time. It is a system of secular tyranny and false religion, established and maintained among men, in opposition to the kingdom of Christ; and therefore it must be destroyed. Its rise and prevalence have been clearly predicted in the vision of the trumpets, and therefore, we may be assured, that its destruction must be foretold in that of the vials. In no other vial can we discern any thing like a representation of its fall, but in that which is now under our consideration.—Besides, in the vision of the trumpets, the Euphrates is mentioned as the place where they had their origin, and from whence they came; and the same river is employed to represent them in the vision of the vials. In both visions, it is called "The great river Euphrates." That system of secular tyranny and religious delusion which originated at the Euphrates, according to the trumpets, must be the same object which is represented by the same symbol in the vials.—The meaning of the prophetic symbols must still be the same, it cannot be changed. On the one hand, the symbols of the glorious throne, of the four beasts, of the four and twenty elders, of the hundred forty and four thousand, of the woman in the wilderness, of the two witnesses, and the like, wherever they are mentioned in the visions of this book, always represent uniformly the same objects. On the

other hand, the symbols of the dragon, of the beast and the false prophet, of the great city, of the ten horns, of the harlot woman, of Babylon the great, and other symbols of the same class, invariably point out the same objects. Since these symbols, whether they relate to objects belonging to God or to satan, do always describe the same thing; may we not conclude with certainty, that the great river Euphrates, mentioned as it has been both among the trumpets and the vials, must, in both visions, represent the same object, which is the Turkish empire.—Another consideration, which adds to the proof of this, may be taken from the place which this symbol holds in the two visions. In the former vision, the Turkish empire, symbolized by the great river Euphrates, is introduced to our view under the sixth trumpet, and in the latter vision it is again brought before us in the sixth vial. In the sixth trumpet its rise is announced, and in the sixth vial its fall is proclaimed. That we might not mistake the object of this vial, God has mentioned the great river Euphrates as the place of their origin, and has employed the same river to represent them in the vials; and has predicted their rise in the sixth trumpet, and foretold their destruction in the sixth vial. It is therefore beyond all doubt, that the empire of the Turks, is the object of the predictions of our text.—Another argument which also confirms this opinion, may be derived from the end for which the waters of this Euphrates will be dried up; "That the way of the kings of the east might be prepared." The fall of nothing belonging to Popery, nor even of Popery itself, while the empire of Turkey continued, would produce any material effect on the kings of the east. Any influence that these events might have, would be chiefly confined to the kings of the west, or the ten horns of the beast. Since the Spirit of God assures us, that the drying up of the water of this Euphrates, will prepare the way of the kings of the east, it must be the eastern Antichrist, the tyranny of the Turkish empire, and the absurd delusions of the Mahometan religion, that are symbolized in our text by the great river Euphrates.

3. The fall of the Turkish empire will remove a principal defence from the Antichristian kingdom of Rome. When the Turk shall be driven from his seat, one post may run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to shew the Pope of Rome, that his city is taken at one end. The European Peninsula, consisting of Spain and Portugal, is Antichrist's western high tower; and the empire of Turkey is its eastern bulwark. By this view of the pre-

diction, Islamism is a kind of Euphrates to Popery. While the river Euphrates in this vial represents the Mahometan empire and religion, the destruction of it will deprive Babylon the great of much security, and render it very vulnerable. This will appear from the nature of the things, their present connexion, and the order of the vision. It appears from the nature of the things. The overthrow of one abominable tyranny naturally makes way for the destruction of another. The abolition of one system of false religion tends greatly to undermine another system, which is, though different from the other, equally abominable in the sight of God, and destructive to the souls of men. The example set by the fall of the former will excite others to exert themselves to cast down the latter. The privileges enjoyed by the nations, emancipated from Turkish tyranny and Mahometan delusion, will encourage the western nations to abolish the despotism of the ten horns, and to destroy the blasphemy, idolatry, and error of the Church of Rome.—The present connexion between them also confirms this opinion. The heads and supporters, both of Islamism and Popery, are set in opposition to the civil rights and religious privileges of mankind. Both of them are doing what they can to bind men down under the yoke of secular tyranny, and the belief and profession of false religion. They are combined to prevent the circulation of the Scriptures, and the diffusion of knowledge among men; especially the knowledge of the true religion. In these things they go hand in hand, mutually supporting each other. The Turkish Firman and the Popish Bull, on these important matters, breathe the same spirit, and speak the same language. The fall of the Turk will therefore render the Pope more insecure. For many years the Mahometans have given the Popish kingdoms no trouble. The heads of those systems, for some time past, seem rather to have acted in concert. The object of Turkish hatred seems to be the Greek Church, existing in Russia and their own dominions. With the former they have carried on bloody wars, and over the latter they have exercised the most cruel despotism; and, therefore, their existence is a defence to the antichristian beast.—This truth is also evident from the order of the prophecy. The Turkish empire must fall before the Man of Sin shall go into perdition. The predictions of the sixth vial must be, in a considerable measure, accomplished, before the judgments under the seventh will be inflicted on Babylon the great. The Pope of Rome must stand till the Grand Seignior shall be dethroned. The fall of the eastern Antichrist will be the

prelude to the fall of the western; and the overthrow of Popery will be the consequence of the destruction of Turkey. From these things we may conclude that the Turkish empire is the Euphrates of Babylon the great. As Babylon of old could not be taken, till the river Euphrates was dried up; so Babylon the great cannot be destroyed till the empire of the Turks shall perish. And as ancient Babylon was taken immediately after the water of the Euphrates was drained away; so the power and existence of the Beast and the false Prophet shall be speedily annihilated after the tyranny and religion of the Arabian Imposter have come to their end.

III. The effect that was produced on the great river Euphrates, by the effusion of this vial on it, is now to be considered; “and the water thereof was dried up.” On this we submit the following remarks:—

1. The waters of a river are necessary to its existence, and the waters of the Mahometan empire are essential to the being of that system. Different objects may belong unto the Euphratean waters; and they all have been, and still are, in a state of exhaustion. The inhabitants of this empire are its waters, Rev. xviii. 15. By wars, pestilence, earthquakes, and tyranny, their number has been greatly reduced. The fertility of their soil, the prosperity of their commerce, and the abundance of their wealth, belong also to their waters. These enjoyments also, have been exceedingly impaired. The greatness of their revenues, and the number and valour of their armies, pertain to their waters. In these things that empire has been brought very low. The subserviency of their tributary states, and the wisdom of their councils, may be ranked among her waters, but this stream likewise has been much dried up. When this political Euphrates overflowed all its banks, it was most abundant in all these things; but for more than an hundred years its water, in all its streams, has been greatly exhausted. This empire, instead of resembling a large, full, and majestic river, may now be compared to a rivulet purling in a broad channel.

2. The water of a river is dried up by a powerful and continued drought. This drought consists of two things; withholding from it a supply of rain and snow from the clouds, and subjecting the water to the operation of withering wind and scorching heat. By this metaphor, the overthrow of ancient Babylon was represented; “A drought is upon her waters, and they shall be dried up,” Jer. l. 38.

With the same visitation of justice and of power, the Turkish empire shall be destroyed; for our text assures us, that the sixth angel poured out his vial on the great river Euphrates, and the water thereof was dried up. A drought dries up the water of a river gradually. Thus has it been with this political Euphrates. For many years, its strength and influence have been wasting by degrees. Drought produces this effect on water imperceptibly. Those who were principally concerned perceived it not. Like Israel of old, "strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not," Hos. vii. 9. For producing this effect upon the waters of a river drought operates constantly. There is no total cessation of the wasting stroke. There are some seasons when the drought may operate more powerfully; but while it continues, and respecting the object of this prophecy it will continue to the end, the exhalation of the water will still go on. By this cause, the effect of drying up the water is produced irresistibly. Who can command the rain, the hail, or the snow, to fall on the earth, but that God who is the Proprietor and Disposer of their treasures? Who can restrain the withering wind, or quench the scorching heat of Divine judgments, but God himself? Who could prevent the sixth angel from coming forward in the vision, to pour out his vial on the great river Euphrates? And who shall be able to hinder the Eternal and Almighty God from fulfilling the prediction of this vial, by making this enemy of Christ his footstool. The operation of God's judgments on this empire has been gradual and unperceived by themselves, but they shall be continued, and at last it shall be irresistibly destroyed.

3. The drying up of the water of a river is the work of God. In his mercy to his people, he has sometimes performed it for their deliverance. When the tribes of Israel departed from Egypt, their God rebuked the Red Sea, and it was dried up, so that he led them through the deep as through the wilderness. When they encamped by Jordan near Jericho, their God did cleave the fountain and the flood, and dried up mighty rivers. For Israel's deliverance from Babylon of old, "He said to the deep, Be dry; and I will dry up thy rivers." It is the same God who will fulfil the prediction of the sixth vial, when the water of the great river Euphrates will be dried up. All the vials were full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. None but God can inflict Divine wrath on its devoted

objects. The seven angels were the servants of God. By Divine direction, they could exhibit the vision to the Apostle; but God alone can fulfil it. Concerning this most solemn vision, this was the church's belief; for whenever the seven angels, having the seven last plagues, appeared, they immediately sang, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints," Rev. xv. 3.

4. The magnitude of a river makes the operation of drying up its water more wonderful. This name is given to the Euphrates both in the vision of the trumpets and of the vials. The designation of it in both is, "The great river Euphrates." In its length, in the number and greatness of its tributary streams, and in the quantity of water that flowed down its channel, it was the largest river in the west of Asia. It is also a great river in the perpetuity of its name. In Gen. ii. 14, it receives this name. In the book of Revelation, it is called by the same name; and, when the names of many other rivers have been changed, it retains its primitive name to our own times. In these particulars, it is a proper symbol of the empire of Turkey. That empire is very great. In the vast extent of its possessions, the number of its provinces, the greatness of its armies, the multitude of its subjects, the original fertility of its soil, and the greatness of the power which it formerly possessed, it may be ranked amongst the greatest empires that have existed in the world. On this account, its destruction must be a wonderful work of God. As the work of drying up the water in a rivulet is not to be compared with that operation by which the water of a great and mighty river is exhausted; so the work of God in bringing down a small kingdom is not so wonderful as that operation of his Providence will be, when he shall annihilate a mighty empire. This dispensation of God's providence will fill the nations with wonder, the church with joy, and the hearts of tyrants with dismay. It will constrain many to exclaim, "How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"

5. When the waters of a river are greatly exhausted, it is prevented from overflowing all its banks, and spreading desolation in the fertile and extensive plains through which it flows. This is the present situation of the empire of Turkey. Times have been, but they have passed away, never we hope to return, when the rulers of Turkey sent forth their armies into Africa, Italy, Spain, Austria, Poland, and the Islands of the sea. Times have been when they

added to their dominions in the east cities and provinces from Persia and other states. But her waters are now so much dried up, that she acts but feebly on the defensive. In some of her late wars her waters have been reduced to the lowest ebb. The mutual jealousy of the European powers has been the sole cause of her protracted existence. But exist she must till the day of her visitation arrive. For many years, a small corner of her dominions in Europe, who revolted from her cruel tyranny, have successfully resisted her attempts to subdue them. In the accomplishment of the prediction of this vial, God hath so dried up her waters, that they are now greatly consumed by the drought he hath sent on them. "The number of the army of the horsemen, two hundred thousand thousand," is now greatly reduced. "The breastplates of fire, and of jacinth and brimstone," appear now to be destroyed. "The fire, the smoke, and the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths," are almost entirely quenched. "And their tails, like unto serpents," seem now unable to do any hurt: Rev. ix. 16—19.

6. When the waters of a river are completely dried up, the river itself will cease to exist. When the water's channels are seen, and entirely dried, grass will spring up where water flowed. To the following generations that river's bed will be unknown. Thus will it be with the temporal dominion and the religious system of Turkey. In our text, a complete absorption of her water is foretold; "And the sixth angel poured out his vial on the great river Euphrates, and the water thereof was dried up." No more water shall be there. No longer shall the object of this vial exist on the face of the earth. No more shall her immoral and wretched tyranny oppress men; nor her irrational and beastly religion deceive the hearts of the simple. In the doom of his brother and companion in wickedness, the Pope of Rome, he shall share; "Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and the water of the great river Euphrates be dried up, and shall be found no more at all." "Though he may plant the tabernacles of his palaces between the seas, in the glorious holy mountain," which, in his flight from his present seat, it is possible he may do; "yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him," Dan. xi. 45.

IV. To the important end for which the water of the great river Euphrates will be dried up, our attention must now be directed,—

"That the way of the kings of the east may be prepared." On this, I remark,

1. The parties who are intended in this part of the text are denominated "the kings of the east." They are represented as persons of royal dignity. As kings represent and rule over kingdoms; their subjects, as well as themselves, must be included in this description. They are called the kings of the east. By these we certainly must understand the kings and kingdoms of Asia, the eastern quarter of the world. They comprehend the rulers and inhabitants of the Asiatic continent and islands. These include the Tartars, the Chinese, the Indians, the Persians, &c. besides those parts of Asia that are yet under the dominion of Russia and Turkey. Some have supposed that God's ancient people, the Jews, are symbolized by the kings of the east. We are bound to believe that they are signified by this figure, but not exclusively. As their ancient possessions lay eastward from the place where John saw and wrote the visions of this book, as many of them reside in the east, and as the Hebrew tongue is introduced, and Hebrew transactions are alluded to in a following verse belonging to this vial, we are sufficiently authorised to include them under this symbol of the kings of the east. The inhabitants of the kingdoms of Asia, and the Jews who may be dwelling among them, are the objects designated by the kings of the east.

2. The existence of the tyranny and religion of Turkey forms a most powerful obstruction to the conversion of the Jews, and the eastern nations, to the Christian religion. This is plainly included in our text, "The waters of the great river Euphrates must be dried up, that the way of the kings of the east may be prepared." The object symbolized by this river must therefore be a great hinderance to the conversion of the parties who are denominated the kings of the east. As the drying up of the Red Sea was necessary that Israel might be delivered from their bondage and toilsome labours in Egypt; so those Euphratean waters must be dried up, that the eastern nations may be rescued from Mahometan delusions and heathen idolatry. The drying up of Jordan was not more necessary for Israel's entry into the land of Canaan, than the destruction of the Turkish empire will be for their accession to Christianity, and return to their father's inheritance. This is necessary both from the nature and extent of that religion. As to its nature, it is a system full of the most irrational and absurd dogmas, both with respect to faith

and morality, invented by one of the most wicked of the human race, forced on men at the outset by the edge of the sword, and supported by the most cruel and unrelenting tyranny that has existed among men. The necessity for the removal of it appears also from its extent. It is the religion of the great body of the inhabitants of that vast empire. There are other nations who are beyond the reach of Turkish tyranny, professing, in the substance of it, the same religious belief. Besides, the votaries of this delusion are mixed up among the inhabitants of the heathen nations of the east. Since the noxious streams of this river are diffused so extensively, it is necessary, for the salvation of Jew and Gentile, that they should be dried up.

3. It is a special end for which the Mahometan religion and tyranny will be subverted, that the way of the kings of the east, for embracing true Christianity, may be prepared. By this Divine work on the earth, other most important ends will be accomplished. God will be glorified, Christ will be honoured, predictions will be accomplished, joy shall prevail in the Church, shame shall cover the enemies of the Lord, and blessings shall be poured down upon men. But the immediate effect will be the preparation of the way of the eastern nations, Jew and Gentile, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, that they may be saved. Stumbling-blocks will be removed, light will arise and shine on them, and they will be constrained to forsake that religion by which they have been deceived, and to submit to our Redeemer's sceptre. It will be the preparation of the way suited to their condition. If the Jews require a sign; this wonderful work of God, in overturning the Turkish empire, will, by the Divine blessing, completely satisfy them. If the eastern nations are under cruel bondage, by this wonderful work they will be delivered. The preparation of this way will be necessary. How can the eastern Jews in general believe the gospel, and return to the land of their fathers, till the prediction of this vial shall be fulfilled? And how can the eastern nations embrace Christianity, till Mahometan delusions are removed? The preparation of this way will be visibly begun, when the fall of that empire shall strikingly commence, in tumults, revolts, and war. The preparation of the way will be carried on, when the destruction of that empire seems to be hastening, by disappointments, defeats, and the loss of provinces. And the preparation of the way will be finished, when the rulers, and the

armies, and the system with them, shall be hurled to destruction, and arise no more.

4. When the Mahometan religion and tyranny are destroyed, the conversion of the Jews and the eastern nations will speedily commence. The way will then be prepared, and it will not be suffered to mourn, because no man goeth on it. He who hath prepared it, is able to bring travellers into it. The end of this glorious work, by which their way will be prepared, shall not be frustrated. As soon as it is made ready for them, the kings of the east will begin to move, the people will gather together, and kingdoms, to serve the Lord. When it is prepared, the eastern Jews will also begin their march to their dwelling-place. At such a crisis, we cannot suppose that the western Jews will remain inactive, or stationary. The Turkish empire not only holds in its grasp their promised land, but its seat and principal strength are placed between their present abode and their fathers' inheritance. The fall of that empire will of course prepare their way also for returning to their Millennial rest. God will then begin, in a most visible manner, to give to his Son, our Mediator, the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. Then all the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. As the fall of Turkey will prepare the way of the eastern nations, so the fall of Popery will prepare the way of the western nations, to come to the brightness of our Redeemer's rising in the east. "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall the coming of the Son of man be." The fall of Popery will not be long delayed, after the fall of Turkey, because in a following verse belonging to this vial, he says, "Behold, I come as a thief, Blessed is he that watcheth." The fall of the eastern Antichrist will accelerate the fall of the western; and the fall of the western Antichrist will encourage and increase the travellers on the way prepared for them, by the fall of the eastern, till that declaration shall be fully accomplished—"The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever."

5. Men who are vested with civil authority will be employed in accomplishing the blessed alterations which shall take place in the world, both when the Euphratean waters are dried up, and when Babylon the great has fallen. They are the kings of the east who are mentioned in the text. This must import that persons in that

station will neither be violent opposers, nor indifferent spectators of this work of God; but that they will employ their regal influence and authority for promoting it. Since our Redeemer is King of kings, and Lord of lords, and Prince of the kings of the earth, and by him kings reign, and princes decree justice, men in these elevated stations must be under obligations to serve the interests of his kingdom on the earth. Since God has promised that kings shall be nursing fathers to his church, and that they shall shut their mouths at him, and that all dominion shall serve and obey him; it must be the duty of magistrates to serve the Lord with fear, to rejoice with trembling, and to kiss the Son. Since God has foretold that the kings of the east shall come, and that the ten crowned horns shall hate and destroy the whore; the rulers of the earth will perform important operations among men, in drying up the Euphrates, in casting Babylon down, and in building up Sion. Since the church in the wilderness had Moses as king in Jeshurun, and Aaron the high priest; since the church returned from captivity had at first Zerubbabel governor of Judah, and Joshua the high priest, and afterward Nehemiah the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest, who, in their different offices, acted for God's glory and the church's prosperity, it must be the duty of men who are in civil and sacred offices to unite their endeavours to promote the same ends. These precious promises to the church our honoured ancestors believed, and those approved examples they imitated in the periods of our Reformation; and the same course will be followed by the nations of the world, when they shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. In times of apostacy and division, under establishments of more or less purity or corruption, it is easy for men to speculate about subjects of this kind, but place them in a land that has lately received the true religion, or has reformed it from gross corruptions, and, from the circumstances of the case, if not from the word of God, they would soon be convinced that magistrates and subjects, ministers and people, according to their different stations, should unite their endeavours, both for advancing their reformation-purity, and for rendering it permanent.

A few inferences are now to be deduced from this subject.

1. All of us should improve it for affecting our minds deeply with those truths which the fulfilment of Divine predictions tends to display and confirm. That a multitude of Scripture prophecies have

been accomplished, no person, who has searched God's word, and observed his work in the earth, can deny. The gradual and increased fulfilment of the prediction in our text, will be evident to all those who know any thing about the former and the present state of the Turkish dynasty. These things should convince us of the glorious majesty of God. He knows the end from the beginning. In his wisdom he hath contrived, and in his sovereignty he hath appointed all these things. His power and faithfulness are glorified in bringing them to pass. His mercy and justice are manifested in them all.—The Divine origin of the Scriptures is also established by these works of God. Since the predictions of that book have been so visibly fulfilled, it must be the word of the living and everlasting God.—By the same means we should be convinced of the truth of the Christian religion. Since the fulfilment of the Divine predictions are a confirmation of it, how should we cleave to that religion, by believing its supernatural doctrines, obeying its holy precepts, attending on its instituted ordinances, and waiting for the accomplishment of its precious promises, to ourselves, to others, and to the church of God!—And on this ground, how assured ought we to be of the truth of that scheme of our personal salvation, by God's free grace, reigning through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.

2. This subject may remind us of the beautiful order of all God's works. The way of the kings of the east must be prepared before they can walk in it. This is a rule of the Divine procedure in all his works. He prepared the way for the public ministry and work of the Lord Jesus, by the ministry of John, who said to the Jews, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias." By a work of conviction, he prepares the way for the conversion of sinners. By a work of sanctification, he prepares the way for the glorification of believers. By powerful works of mercy and judgment, he will prepare the way for the coming in of the fulness of the Gentiles, and the salvation of all Israel. By finishing all his works here below, he will prepare the way for the coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, to judge the quick and dead. And by finishing this solemn work of judgment, he will prepare the way for the everlasting glorification of all his redeemed people. With humble adoration and praise, let us say, "O Lord, how manifold are

thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches."

3. Judgments make way for mercies. Christ can bring spiritual and everlasting good out of moral and penal evil. The execution of the threatening prediction of our text will bring great calamities on some; but by means of it, blessings both temporal and spiritual will be extended to others. With humility and reverence, let us adore the wisdom, sovereignty, justice, and goodness of God. Let us say with the prophet, "This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." With the saying of the angel of the waters, we should cordially join, "Thou art righteous, O Lord, who art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy." The renovation of the world bears some resemblance to the sanctification of believers. That they may grow in grace, God strengthens the principles of holiness within them, and subdues their iniquities. By his Spirit and grace, he enables them to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in his fear. He gives, in a higher degree, the renewing of the Holy Ghost to his saints, and causes them, through the Spirit, to mortify the deeds of the body, that they may live. When God shall purify the earth, he will remove from it political and ecclesiastic systems that are opposed to his glory and will, and shall establish on his footstool Christ's kingdom of righteousness and peace. By means of his judgments, he will destroy incorrigible sinners out of the world, and multiply by means of his Gospel, true believers in his church. Who can consider the Divine threatenings against wicked persons and nations, numerous and explicit in both Testaments, without being convinced that a season of awful calamities is approaching. And who can survey his promises to his church without being filled with the expectation of a glorious day, when the church shall triumphantly sing both of mercy and of judgment.

4. From this subject we may be assured that Christ's enemies shall be overcome, and that his kingdom shall be exalted. The great river Euphrates shall be dried up, and the kings of the east shall come, and the church shall be greatly enlarged. The Gentiles shall come to our Redeemer's light, and kings to the brightness of his rising. Babylon the great shall fall, and the marriage of the

Lamb shall be solemnized. Our text, and other predictions of the same kind, are the true sayings of God. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his word shall not pass away, till all shall be fulfilled. His counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. On this let our faith rest, let this encourage our hope, that we may patiently wait till we receive the promise. To encourage us both in hope and in prayer, let us remember "that the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither is his ear heavy that it cannot hear." To strengthen her faith in promised deliverances, and to encourage her hope of the glorious things that were spoken of the city of God, the church of old made mention of Rahab and Babylon to them who knew the Lord. Let us go and do likewise.

5. This subject shews us how easily the Lord can subdue his most powerful and implacable enemies. The symbol in the text is an action which can be performed with perfect ease, while the effect is grand and astonishing. Pouring the contents of a vial on a mighty river, and the water in it is completely dried up. This fire of the wrath of God will cause the waters to boil, and they shall entirely evaporate in smoke. When a person pours the contents of a vial on the water or the ground, he performs a very easy work. The angel's action, though exceedingly solemn and significant, was not laborious. This represents in a figure, the infinite ease with which the God and Possessor of heaven and earth can make Christ's enemies his footstool. Did he, in the creation of all things, only speak, and it was done; did he command, and all things were established; he shall, with equal ease, in the dispensations of his providence, overthrow the throne of kingdoms, destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen, put down the mighty from their seats, and exalt men of low degree. If he but look on the earth, it trembleth with terrific earthquakes; and if he touch the mountains, they emit the smoke of raging volcanoes. Let us, O Christians, believe in his Almighty power and Divine faithfulness, that he can easily accomplish his work, and that in all things he will do as he has said.

6. This subject makes it manifest that all creatures are under God's control, and that he employs them as instruments in his hand, for executing his works of mercy and judgment. All the holy angels are his servants. He employed their ministry in giving this most remarkable vision, to the Apostle John. He could have

communicated to him the knowledge of it in an immediate way from himself; but it pleased him in his infinite wisdom, to adopt the other method of doing it. As the vision was given by the disposition of angels, so it will be fulfilled, in a great measure, by the instrumentality of men. Though he could easily destroy his enemies, like the Antediluvians and the men of Sodom, with the blast of the breath of his nostrils; yet it has seemed good in his sight to employ in some degree human instrumentality. In the punishment of ancient Babylon, he commanded his sanctified ones, and mustered the hosts of the battle. When he shall arise to shake terribly the earth, in the destruction of the eastern and western Antichrist, it will be done by terrible wars and other dreadful calamities. The two verses which follow our text represent satan, secular tyrants and blasphemous ecclesiastics, plotting to excite the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. From the character of those parties, we may infallibly judge of their design in the war, which, no doubt, however wicked and cruel, they will denominate, just and necessary. The object of the dragon, "that old serpent which is the devil," must be to preserve and increase all kinds of wickedness and misery on the earth; that of the beast, must be to maintain and perpetuate secular tyranny with all its criminal, debasing and hurtful effects among men; and that of the false prophet must be to uphold and propagate in the world error, idolatry, ignorance, delusion and immorality. But after God had given a word of warning and a promise of blessedness to his people, we find all these armies gathered together in Divine providence into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon." The seventh angel then poured out his vial into the air, and all its desolating effects are recorded, unto the end of the chapter. Such frightful symbols,* must certainly predict extraordinary calamities among men. Let the saints believe that their God hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, that he is the disposer of all events, and that he will overrule all things for his own glory, his people's salvation, the church's prosperity, and the removal of his enemies.

7. This subject authorises us to believe that some remarkable change in religious matters will begin among the nations of the east,

* See these and others described in the fall of Babylon the great. Dis. IV.

before any thing very extraordinary will take place among the western nations. The sixth vial will be poured out, and some of its effects will begin to be accomplished, before the effusion of the seventh vial, or the appearance of any of its consequences. The vision of the vials is not designed merely to delineate Christ's enemies, or the judgments by which they will be destroyed; but it also gives us information concerning the order of time in which those enemies will fall, and the effects of their fall will begin to appear. This order is perfectly evident in the vision of the trumpets, and it is not less visible in that of the vials. In this vision, the sixth angel poured out his vial on the great river Euphrates, before the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air. The water of the great river Euphrates will be dried up before the voices, the thunders, the lightnings or the earthquake shall be heard, seen or felt. The way of the kings of the east will be prepared, and they will begin to walk in it, before the cities of the nations fall, and great Babylon come up in remembrance before God, to give her the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. We are therefore warranted to believe that, among the nations of the east, God will visibly begin that work by which the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. While other places were not overlooked, the eastern continent and islands were among the first objects to which the Bible and Missionary Societies turned their attention. Much success cannot be expected in the Turkish provinces, till its dynasty be dashed in pieces like a potter's vessel; but in the mean time, great preparations may be made in other kingdoms of Asia, for turning to that way and walking in it, when that absurd religion and tyranny, as the fulfilment of the sixth vial, shall perish from the earth. This consideration should encourage the Gospel labourers in the east, those who employ them, and those who contribute to their support. It ought also to excite those who give themselves to prayer for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom on the earth, to send up effectual and fervent supplications to the throne of grace, that God would cause the Gospel of Christ to penetrate into the midst of the eastern kingdoms and empires, making them ready for publicly walking in this way, when it shall be fully prepared for them. This consideration should also fill the hearts of the saints with a holy concern to observe the dispensations of Divine providence and grace in the land of the children of the east, and with a godly anxiety to hear good news from that far country.

8. This subject may guide us to the knowledge of the times that are passing over us. The sixth vial seems to be pouring out, in those days in which we live. The effects of former vials, especially the fifth, may be visibly continuing, and great preparations may be making for pouring out the seventh vial of wrath; but the present operations of Providence, seem to relate to the drying up of the waters of the great river Euphrates, the symbol of the Turkish empire, preparing the way for the conversion of the eastern Jews, and the kings, or kingdoms of the east. The fifth vial, which is poured on the beast's throne, or seat, signifying the unlawful power or tyranny of secular rulers, and the blasphemous dominion and oppression of Popes, Cardinals and Prelates, has been long pouring out and is not yet finished. The resistance that has been opposed to their tyranny, and the encroachments which have been made on their unlawful power, both civil and religious, continuing as they have done through several ages, are making progress in our days, and will be perfected in due time.* It is probable, from the nature

* In different publications, I have shewn my opinion concerning the calculation of the prophetic Numbers; and to that opinion I still adhere. My last and summary statement may be found in the Scriptural View and Practical Improvement of the Divine Mystery respecting the Jews and the Gentiles, Page 93—96. I am aware that some writers of eminence, by adding John's 1260 days, or years, to 756, the date of the Pope's exaltation to the rank of a temporal prince, have fixed the beginning of the Millennium at the 2016th year of the christian era. To this opinion there are several objections. In this calculation, no account is given of Daniel's numbers of 30 and 45 days. These are as really prophetic numbers, and as plainly belong to the fall of Antichrist and the commencement of the Millennium as John's number of 1260 days. That calculation which does not make their fulfilment appear, must be erroneous. If Daniel's numbers must be added to the number of John, the Millennium cannot begin till the 2091st year of the christian era, 265 years hence, which is not very probable.—The 756th year was the date of the Pope's highest advancement, and cannot be justly considered as the time at which he rose. Long before that period, he had existed in his true Antichristian character; had exercised his spiritual supremacy, and had introduced into the church a multitude of Popish abominations. It must therefore be highly unreasonable to calculate his rise from that date.—If that year, 756, be an epoch which has an era corresponding to it, the event at that era cannot be either the fall of Antichrist, or the commencement of the Millennium; because at that year the church did not begin to lose her independance and purity, nor did the Pope then begin to exercise his Antichristian supremacy.—If the trans-

REMARKS

ON

THE SEVENTH VIAL,

SYMBOLIZING

THE FALL OF POPY AND DESPOTISM.

A SERMON

FROM REV. xvi. 17. xxi. 5, 6.

And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air, and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And he that sat upon the throne, said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, It is done.

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THE first of these verses contains the account of the effusion of the seventh and last vial of Divine wrath on our Redeemer's enemies. In obedience to the Divine command, "Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth:" the seventh angel came forward at the appointed time, and poured out his vial. The object into which this vial was poured, is the air. This is different from the objects upon which the six preceding vials were poured, and its fulfilment will complete God's judgments on the Beast and the false Prophet. The text also mentions a voice which the apostle heard: "And there came a great voice out of the temple in heaven from the throne." Immediately before the seven angels began to pour out their vials, the apostle heard a great voice out of the temple. No voice was heard from the temple, while the angelic operations were going on. But as soon as their ministrations in this vision were finished, another great voice, which came from the same place, sounded in the apostle's ears. The solemn voice which introduced these operations, and the majestic voice that concluded them, as they add incomprehensible solemnity to this vision, they also demand of us the most humble and careful attention to its meaning and fulfilment. This verse contains the words which this voice uttered: "It is done." The voice mentioned in verse 1st of this chapter gave the angels authority to pour out their vials; and the voice in this verse intimates the termination of the vision, the Divine approbation of the angelic ministrations, and the certainty of their fulfilment.

In the two clauses taken from the 5th and 6th verses of chap. xxi, we have an account of a glorious Speaker, He who sat on the throne; of his merciful work, "Behold, I make all things new;" and of the important intimation he makes to the apostle, "It is done." This saying is the same with the saying in the other verse, "It is done." It was spoken from the same place, it came from the

throne; and was uttered by the same Speaker, for he that sat on the throne said it. These words, "It is done," as they are found in chapter xvi, spoken as they were in connexion with the vision of the vials, must refer to those judgments which will be executed on Christ's enemies, when that vision shall be fulfilled. But the same words in chapter xxi, standing as they do in connexion with God's work of making all things new, must relate to the blessed alterations which he will establish on the earth, after the judgments predicted in the vials are finished, "and he hath made all things new." That we may have a clearer view of the meaning of these important words, "It is done," spoken twice from the throne, in two different visions, we have taken them into our text.

In speaking on this subject, I shall—I. Offer some remarks on the object on which the seventh angel poured out his vial. II. Endeavour to illustrate the description of the voice which the apostle heard at the end of this vision. III. Mention some of those things that shall be done and finished, at the pouring out of the seventh vial. IV. Mention some of those things that will be done when the Lord shall make all things new.

I. A few remarks are now to be made on the object into which the seventh angel poured out his vial. "And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air."

1. This vial was poured into the air, to demonstrate its extensive influence, and the diffusive nature of its effects. The air constantly surrounds our globe, and is like the garment with which the Creator has arrayed it. The objects of the other vials are detached parts of the creation, but the air continually extends its influence to all things here below. The other vials were poured out on the earth or the dry land, the sea, the rivers, and fountains of waters, the sun or his rays, the seat of the beast, and the great river Euphrates. None of these are so extensive and abiding as the air, which always surrounds every one of them. This indicates the vast number and extent of the judgments of this vial. When it shall be poured out, every object existing on the Roman earth shall be smitten, and nothing shall escape its destructive power. Whatever objects the other vials have left, this vial will destroy. Neither root nor branch, blossom nor fruit shall be spared; all shall go up as rottenness and as the dust. By this vial which is poured into the air, that necessary and precious element will become as it were the mean of destruction to men. Those things that are necessary and profitable to

the beast of the earth, and the beast of the sea, as air is to animal life and vegetation, shall be destroyed and removed for ever.

2. The air is the object of this vial, because the terrific symbols, which represent the dreadful judgments of this vial, are formed in the air. These are voices, or the sounding of mighty winds, the thunder of the Almighty's power, the dreadful lightning, and the tremendous hail. These are all formed in the air. It is therefore with the greatest propriety, that this vial is poured out into the air, that this terrible storm may be raised by Divine power against secular and ecclesiastic despotism. This hurricane, accompanied, as hurricanes sometimes are, and as this one shall assuredly be, with a fearful and unparalleled earthquake, will be put in motion on the Antichristian earth. And what will its effects be? An account of them follows. "The great city shall be divided into three parts, the cities of the nations shall fall; great Babylon shall come in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath; every island shall fly away, and the mountains shall not be found." Such is the universal destruction which this vial will produce on Antichrist, and on every thing that is Antichristian, when the predictions that are contained in it will be realized. When the kingdom of Judah was invaded by a great army, composed of warriors from ten kingdoms, emblematical no doubt of the ten horns, who said, "Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession;" the Church prayed, "O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind. As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire; so persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm," Psal. lxxxiii. 13, 14, 15. Their prayer was heard, the invading army was destroyed, and the Church was delivered. Many have been the prayers of the saints for the destruction of Popish abominations, and a full answer will be given to them, when the predictions of the seventh vial will be accomplished.

3. To indicate the total destruction of Satan's kingdom in this world, the seventh vial was poured into the air. Such names are given to this enemy, and his infernal associates, as manifest their special concern in the regions of the air. He is called "the prince of the power of the air;" and they are characterized, "principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high, or heavenly, places." He is also denominated the prince, and even the god of this world. The most astonishing display of his power in the air, was his conveying the Lord Jesus through

it, from the wilderness to the temple, and from the temple, to an exceeding high mountain. He is represented not merely as going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it; but also as roaming hither and thither in the air. These things shew the multitude of subjects he has always had on the earth, and his unwearied activity in going about seeking whom he may devour. They also manifest that the Devil and his angels, by Divine permission, have a limited power both on the earth and in the air, where they display their malice, exercise their cunning, and exert their power in tempting men to rebellion against God, that they, like themselves, may at last be drowned in everlasting perdition. This vial is poured into the air, to signify that the usurped dominion of the god of this world, the unhallowed influence of the prince of the power of the air, and his kingdom of darkness and spiritual wickedness among men, shall be destroyed. At the effusion of this vial, Christ's words, in a most glorious manner, shall be realized: "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils." Then shall the whole earth behold Satan as lightning fall from heaven. At the period of this vial, the present war in heaven, between Michael and the Dragon and their angels, shall be finished, when the great Dragon, the old Serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, shall be cast out, dislodged from the air, banished from the earth, and apprehended, bound, imprisoned, and sealed in the bottomless pit.

4. The seventh angel poured out his vial into the air, to represent the removal of the smoke which came from the bottomless pit, as the smoke of a great furnace, by which the sun and the air were darkened. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth. And they had a king over them, the angel of the bottomless pit, called Abaddon and Apollyon, Rev. ix. 2, 3, 11. This is the first particular account which this book contains of the appearance of the man of sin and son of perdition in this world. We are assured that the sun, or the rays of the sun, and the air, were greatly obscured by the noxious influences of this smoke. The precious doctrines of the Gospel, the pure and beautiful system of Divine worship, the instituted form of the government, and the scriptural order of all the administrations of Christ's Church were greatly darkened by the introduction of Popish errors, blasphemies, superstitions, idolatries, tyrannies, and immoralities which have covered the earth. This

vial was poured into the air, to predict those final judgments on Antichrist, by which this smoke might be swept away, those locusts might be driven to the place from whence they came, and the beast and the false prophet, acting under the influence of the angel of the bottomless pit, might go into perdition. Then shall the sun and the air be purified, Christ shall appear in his glory as the Sun of righteousness, the Spirit shall awake and blow on the Church, and her members shall say, Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

II. To illustrate the description of this voice which the apostle heard at the end of this vision, is now to be attempted. There came a great voice out of the temple in heaven from the throne.

1. It is called a voice. It pleased God to make known to the apostle the important revelations of this book, by prophetic visions presented to his sight, and supernatural voices addressed to his ears; and therefore he says, chapter xxii. 3. "And I John saw those things, and heard them." As he saw many significant visions, so he heard many important sayings. The preceding part of this chapter contains one of the most solemn visions, and our text one of the most interesting sayings of this book. When Christ by his angel made known to his servant John the revelations which God gave to him, to shew to his Church the things that must shortly come to pass, he caused him to hear many different voices. He caused him to hear the voice of God, the voice of the Mediator, the voice of the Holy Spirit, the voice of angels, the voice of the Church, and the voice of her enemies. The voice which John did hear and record in our text, is an important saying of God himself. It is called a voice. It was not merely a sound making a noise, or giving an alarm; but it was a distinct and articulate voice, uttering plain words—easy to be understood. It was not an ordinary voice; but it was altogether supernatural and miraculous. It was not the voice of a creature speaking in the name and authority of God, but it was the voice of God himself.

2. It is called a great voice. When John heard the voice of Christ, chapter i. 10, he says, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet." At the beginning of his prophetic visions, chapter iv, when he saw a door opened in heaven, he says, "And the first voice that I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come; up

hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the Spirit." Similar to these, was the voice mentioned in our text. It was a great and majestic voice like a trumpet; for it was the voice of the Almighty. It was a great voice, on account of its powerful influence. To it, we may apply David's words, "The voice of the Lord is powerful, the voice of the Lord is full of majesty." Since the first voice that he heard, caused him to say, "And immediately I was in the Spirit;" it is reasonable to believe that the vision of the vials, the voice by which it was introduced, and this voice with which it was concluded, would fill his mind with wonder, faith, humility, reverence, joy, and praise. It was also a great voice, because the information it conveyed, and the discovery it made of the Divine will to the apostle, were of the greatest importance. "It is done." As the vision is finished in its exhibition, so shall it be verified in due time by its accomplishment. The tidings which this voice brought to the apostle's ears, would reach his heart, and call forth the exercise of all the powers of his soul.

3. This great voice came from the temple. In the visions of this book, the temple is sometimes mentioned: "And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple, the ark of his testament. And after that I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God." In the voice which he heard when the angel's ministrations began, and in the voice mentioned in our text when their ministrations in this vision were finished, the temple is also mentioned. This temple was neither the material temple at Jerusalem, nor the heavenly and everlasting temple of glory above; but it was a representation of the temple exhibited to John, in the extraordinary visions of God. When this voice came out of the temple, as did the voice at the beginning of the vision, it plainly imports, that it is the voice of the Church's God who sits between the cherubims on the mercy-seat, opening his armoury, and bringing forth the weapons of his indignation, to execute on Babylon the great the vengeance of the Lord, the vengeance of his temple. As this voice came from the temple, we may be assured, that it had a respect to spiritual and sacred things. The temple was a consecrated and holy place. This voice must therefore refer to religion, to the glory of the holy God, the salvation of the holy people, and the prosperity of his holy work among the children of men. While God is terrible to his ene-

mies out of his holy places, and bestows blessings on those who dwell in his house, it is our duty to believe and rejoice in the prophet's declaration, "But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him," Hab. ii. 20.

4. This great voice came from the temple in heaven. The heaven from which this voice proceeded, was not the heaven of heavens where the most bright displays of the Divine glory are made, where the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, enjoy and serve God, and where elect and redeemed sinners shall dwell for ever. As the temple out of which the voice came, was the temple seen in the vision; the heaven in which this temple stood, must signify the representation that was made of heaven to the apostle in the visions which he saw. In Ezekiel's vision which is recorded in the first chapter of his book, we read several times of a firmament, and a voice from it: "And there was a voice from the firmament that was over their heads when they stood, and had let down their wings," verse 25. The firmament in Ezekiel's vision, represents the same object as the heaven in the visions of John. The firmament in Ezekiel's visions was the scene under which, and the heaven in those of John was the scene in which all the discoveries of future things were made to them. When this voice is said to come from heaven, it shews that the God of heaven is the Speaker, that it is ratified by all the authority of Heaven, that it is worthy of our belief and attention, and that hell and earth combined, cannot prevent its accomplishment.

5. This great voice came from the throne. Of this throne, we have a description, chap. iv. 2, 3. "And, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald." The following verses describe the objects around and before this throne: "Round about the throne were four and twenty seats, and four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment, and had on their heads crowns of gold." Tokens of Divine majesty proceeded from the throne. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. A sea of glass, like unto chrysal, was also before the throne. Four beasts, or living creatures, full of eyes before and behind, were before the throne. And in chapter v. 6. "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain." Such is the view of this glorious,

majestic, and imperial throne which John saw in the visions of God, and from which this voice proceeded. A voice from a throne, is the voice of a king. This King is the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, the only wise God. A voice from a throne, is the expression of the will and purpose of a king. This voice declares the royal will, and the unchangeable purpose of the Lord, the true God, the living God, and the everlasting King; at whose wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation. A voice from a throne, is accompanied with power and royal authority. This voice is ratified in heaven, sealed with the seal of the Eternal God, and cannot be reversed.

6. This great voice out of the temple in heaven from the throne, came to the apostle John. There was no other person there to whom it could be addressed, or by whom it could be heard; and, as it was not spoken in vain, we may be assured that it came to him. Contemplating the extraordinary circumstances that accompanied them, and remembering the spiritual frame of his soul, we may conclude, that the impression which the vision and the voices made on him, would far exceed any thing we are able to express. This voice came to his ears, and he heard it distinctly. It came to his judgment, and he clearly understood it. It came to his heart, and deeply affected him. It abode in his memory, and he could not forget it. That he might have understanding in the visions of God, and of the things which must shortly come to pass; he was caused to see this vision, and to hear this voice. These came to him not merely for himself, but for the information of the Christian Church in every generation till the end of time. These visions and voices came to him, that he might record them in that book, which God had designed to form a most appropriate and solemn conclusion to the whole canon of his merciful revelations to men.

III. I am now to mention some of those things that shall be done and finished at the pouring out of the seventh vial; or when these predictions of the seventh vial shall be fulfilled.

1. At the effusion of the seventh vial, God's purposes and predictions concerning his enemies will be accomplished. God's purposes extend to all his creatures, and will be fulfilled on them all. "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." His purposes are from everlasting in their formation, and to everlasting in their accomplishment. The formation of his purposes, is an adorable act of wisdom. holi-

ness, and sovereignty; and the revelation of them to us, is an act of grace. The scripture predictions are a revelation of his purpose to us, and a declaration of his decree. When his predictions are fulfilled, his decree is accomplished, whether it be on a nation or a man only. This vision is a revelation of the Lord's purposes concerning the great Antichrist and his supporters; and when this part of his work shall be ended, both the purpose and the prediction will be done and finished. Whatever was said concerning Babylon of old, may be applied to Babylon the great; for the former was the type, and the latter the antitype. Of ancient Babylon it is said, "Hear ye the counsel of the Lord that he hath taken against Babylon; and his purpose that he hath purposed against the land of the Chaldeans." When the seventh vial shall be poured out, all God's purposes concerning Babylon the great shall be fulfilled, and all his predictions, by which he hath revealed them to us in this book, will be completely realized.

2. At the effusion of the seventh vial, God's threatenings and judgments will be completely executed on his enemies. The Divine threatenings reveal his destructive judgments on the objects to whom they apply; and the execution of his judgments on them will fulfil his threatenings. Every one of the vials predicts a scene of judgments which have been, and will be, inflicted on the enemies of our Lord and of his Christ. At the pouring out of the seventh vial, this strange work of God will be done; every threatening will then be fulfilled, and every judgment executed on God's Antichristian foes. The accomplishment of this is compared to the labours of the harvest. The luxuriant growth of all sorts of wickedness on the Roman earth shall be reaped down, by the sharp sickle of Divine judgments. It is also represented by the labours of the vintage. When this vial shall be poured out, the grapes of the antichristian vineyard shall be gathered together, "and cast into the great wine-press of the wrath of God; and the wine-press shall be trodden without the city," Rev. xiv. 14—20. This execution of judgments and accomplishment of threatenings is symbolized by a terrible war, Rev. xix. 17—21. At this time, God's threatenings and judgments shall be done and finished. The harvest shall be reaped, the vintage shall be gathered, and the great battle shall be won, by Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire, on whose head are many crowns; who is clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, who treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God,

and who hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

3. At the effusion of the seventh vial, the false religion of Antichrist shall be abolished. Before this time the religion of the Arabian imposter will be greatly subverted, Heathenish idolatry will be greatly removed, God's ancient people will be returning to their temporal and spiritual rest, the kings of the east will be walking in the way prepared for them, and the antichristian kingdom itself will be greatly shaken. But when this vial is poured out into the air, the Popish system of abominations, the offspring of infernal malice, and of worldly wisdom and carnal policy, shall be entirely annihilated. For the idols God will utterly abolish. The Apostle Paul predicted the rise and the ruin of the Popish system, "And that man of sin be revealed; the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped. And then shall that Wicked be revealed whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming," 2 Thess. ii. 3, 4, 8. When any object is consumed and destroyed, it is finally ended and annihilated for ever. He is the sun of perdition, and as his name is, so shall his end be. "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not, and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition; and the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seventh, and goeth into perdition," Rev. xvii. 8, 11. How solemn is the following proclamation of the angel who came down from heaven: "And the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen." Another voice from heaven proclaimed, "Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire; for strong is the Lord God that judgeth her," Rev. xviii. 2, 8.

4. At the effusion of the seventh vial, secular despotism shall be overthrown. The kings of the earth and their armies are among those enemies of Christ who shall perish in this great conflict. The beast of the sea, as well as the beast of the earth, must go into perdition. Secular tyranny, exercised by the ten horns, is the enemy of God and his Christ, as well as the antichristian beast, and therefore it must be destroyed. They are mentioned in Rev. xvii. 12, 13, 14. In these verses they are described, in their number, they are ten; in their dignity, they are horns of power, ten kings ruling over ten kingdoms; in their non-existence, they had received no kingdom as yet; in their reception of dominion, but receive power

one hour with the beast; in their harmony, they are of one mind; in the matter about which they are agreed, to give their power and strength to the beast; in their opposition to the church, they make war with the Lamb; in the result of this war, the Lamb shall overcome them; and in the reason of this victory, for he is King of kings and Lord of lords, and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful. These ten horns are the instruments by which the Pope of Rome has led the saints of God into captivity, and therefore they must go into captivity; by whom he has killed the saints with the sword, and therefore they must be killed with the sword; and by whom he hath destroyed the earth, and they themselves also must be destroyed. Every kind of secular oppression shall be banished from the earth. That they have neither been legitimate, nor have reigned by Divine right, shall then be known and read of all men.

5. At the effusion of the seventh vial, God will be glorified. Upon the fall of Babylon the great, the kings of the earth, the merchants of the earth, and the sailors, who trade by the sea, shall say, "Alas, alas! that great city Babylon, that mighty city, for in one hour is thy judgment come." God will be glorified in such lamentations as these. But his glory will be celebrated chiefly by his church's songs. At this time the four-and-twenty elders will fall on their faces, "saying, we give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come, because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned," Rev. xi. 17. In the tenth verse of the next chapter, a similar anthem is sung, "And I heard a loud voice, saying in heaven, Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accused them before our God day and night." At the beginning of chapter xix. the same song is renewed, and continued to verse ninth. The church at this time shall glorify God for the exercise of his faithfulness, in doing as he hath said. They have waited long and prayed fervently for this glorious work; but then they shall see such a display of Divine veracity, as will convince them that faithfulness is the girdle of his reins. They shall also celebrate the glory of his Almighty power. "And I heard as it were the voice of many waters, and as it were the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." They will likewise extol his inflexible justice. "The violence done to me and to my flesh be upon Babylon, shall the inhabitants of Sion say; and my blood upon the inhabitants of Chaldea, shall Jerusalem say." To these holy complaints the righteous Lord replies, "As

Babylon hath caused the slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon shall fall the slain of all the earth," Jer. ii. 35, 49. Corresponding to this is the song of the angel of the waters, Rev. xvi. 5, 6, "Thou art righteous, O Lord, who art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus; for they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy." The destruction of popery and despotism will be a monument to the praise of Divine faithfulness, power, and justice.

6. At the effusion of the seventh vial, the church shall be delivered. When ancient Babylon fell, the captive church was honourably relieved from her bondage, and restored to possess her possessions in the land of promise. When Babylon the Great shall fall, the Christian church shall be greatly exalted. While Antichrist reigned she was like two witnesses prophesying, clothed in sackcloth; when he shall be dethroned, she shall become a great multitude whom no man can number, out of all nations, and kindreds, and tongues, and people. While Antichrist triumphed, she resembled a woman flying for safety into a wilderness, and abiding there; but when his triumph shall cease, she shall recover her glory, being clothed with the sun, having the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. From all the sufferings to which she has been exposed, by the unrighteous administrations of men in civil office, she shall be delivered. From all the dangers and griefs she has endured by false religion, she shall be completely relieved. "In that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee, though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me."

IV. I now proceed to the last part of this subject; to mention some things that shall be done when the Lord shall make all things new.

1. When the Lord shall make all things new, the church of the 1260 days shall be purified and quickened. Of those blessings she will stand in great need. During the apostacy, and especially since the Protestant reformation, many and grievous corruptions have been introduced into the Christian church. They seem to hold them fast, and refuse to let them go. How many doctrinal errors have been maintained contrary to the truth as it is in Jesus, who is the centre and substance of all Divine truth! Many human inventions have been added to the pure system of Gospel worship. Much Antichristian disorder has been introduced into her government, respect-

ing both the constitution of her governors and the rules of their administrations. And how distressing is it to see the unfaithfulness and partiality manifested in executing the censures of God's house! But at this blessed era, the Lord Jesus will be like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap; purifying the sons of Levi, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then every Antichristian corruption shall be removed, and every thing in the house of God shall correspond to his law. On account of these defilements of God's sanctuary, a mournful degree of spiritual deadness has seized the Church of Christ. But at this period she shall be revived. Operations shall then be performed which, by the Divine blessing, will be to her like life from the dead. A resurrection is promised, and it will be fulfilled in its season. Those dry bones shall live and stand on their feet as an exceeding great army. Such a change will be effected, as will enable the Church to arise and shine, for her light is come, and the glory of the Lord hath arisen on her.

2. When the Lord shall make all things new, the Jews shall be converted to Christianity, and restored to their father's inheritance. For their unparalleled sins of rejecting the Messiah, crucifying the Lord of glory, opposing his Gospel, persecuting those who preached and professed it, and cleaving to the ceremonial system after it was abolished, they have been deprived of their high privileges, cast away, and scattered among the nations. But has God cast them off for ever? No, indeed. The time is at hand, when they shall be received again, and grafted into their own olive-tree. "And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins." As those verses assure us of Israel's conversion, they also display the glory of Israel's God when he shall again betroth them to himself for ever. They also shall return to their own land. Among the many Scriptures which ratify this truth, two only shall be selected. The first is recorded in Isaiah xi. chapter. The 10th verse proves that the events predicted in the following verses must be accomplished in the days of the Gospel, and the preceding verses show that they will be fulfilled in the millennial period of the Church. The gathering of Israel from their dispersion is foretold in verses 11, 12. Their cordial brotherly affection, and the extent of their possessions are predicted, ver. 13, 14, 15. The other portion of Scripture is found, Ezek. xxxvii. 15th verse, to the end of

the chapter. The first part of this prediction relates to the union of the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel, which fixes the realization of the other parts of the prophecy for a future period. In verses 21, 25, their return to their own land, their perpetual possession of it, and our New Testament David's government of them, are plainly foretold. Their temporal prosperity, and their spiritual blessedness, are described in the other verses.

3. When the Lord shall make all things new, the darkened nations shall be enlightened in the knowledge of the Gospel of Christ, and his Church shall be established in all parts of the earth. Their universal illumination is clearly stated, Isa. ii. 2, 3. "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it," &c. The same things are mentioned, Hos. iv. 1, 2. Respecting the same era, the Prophets Isaiah and Habakkuk assure us, that the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, and filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. In giving us an account of his vision of the Church of the thousand years, John says, "And after this, I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb," Rev. vii. 9, 10. All these glorious predictions, to which many might be added, assure us that a season is drawing near, when all nations shall obtain the light of the glorious Gospel, and shall be directed by that light to the knowlege, the service, and the enjoyment of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, that they may have eternal life.—Christ's kingdom shall also be established among them. Having been enlightened in the knowledge of Christ and his salvation, and many having believed in him to the saving of their souls, they shall set up and maintain Christ's kingdom in the land where they dwell. In order to this, they will renounce and abolish the systems of error, idolatry, and wickedness, under which they formerly lived. This is the work of God. "And the idols he shall utterly abolish." In consequence of this Divine work on them, they shall be active. "In that day, a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold which they made, each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats." They shall take on themselves the public

profession of the Christian religion, submit to the ordinances of Divine grace, observe all Gospel institutions, set up the office-bearers in the house of God, devote themselves to the Lord, and endeavour, as those who are washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God, to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly. The extraordinary operations which have been carried on, and still making progress, both for enlightening the darkened nations, and for converting the Jews, are the beginning of that Divine work, by which God will give his Son the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, when all the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him. While we wonder and praise the Lord for what he hath wrought; let us trust in him for perfecting his work.

4. When the Lord shall make all things new, the religious exercises, and spiritual enjoyments of believers, will be great and abundant. The exercises of their hearts will be elevated in their degree, and enlarged in their number. Their enjoyments from their God, will be high in their measure and kind, and frequently bestowed. Respecting both their exercises and enjoyments, they shall be fat and flourishing. The extraordinary things that they will have seen, the Divine influences that they will have experienced, the happy state into which the Church will then be brought, and the peaceful and prosperous condition of the nations, will constrain them, in a very singular manner, to exercise themselves unto godliness. Their knowledge of Divine things will be extensive, their faith strong, their hope lively, their humility deep, and their zeal warm and affecting. They will take great pleasure in searching the Scriptures, they will meditate in his law day and night, they will give themselves to prayer, and O how will they abound in praise and thankfulness to the God of their salvation! The public ordinances will be peculiarly beneficial and pleasant to them, causing them to say, "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth." In the public prayers and praises of the Church, they will take great delight; in preaching and hearing the Gospel, they will have much pleasure; and with the most enlarged preparation, and in the most religious frame, will they shew the Lord's death till he come. The private duties of Christian-fellowship will be very precious to them, and will be spiritually performed. To one another, they will say, "Come, and

hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." While walking thus in the fear of the Lord, they shall enjoy abundantly the comforts of the Holy Ghost. The promises of the Spirit will then be accomplished, and his influences communicated to the saints, in a very superior degree. By these influences accompanying the word and ordinances, the God of all comfort will display his glory to his people's souls. In the clearest manner, he will shew them the infinitely wise contrivance of the scheme of their redemption, the distinct work of each Divine person in carrying it on, and the harmony and glory of all the Divine perfections in its begun, progressive and final accomplishment. By means of the word and the power of the Spirit, the Lord Jesus will manifest himself to his millennial saints. They shall enjoy such discoveries of the glory of his person, offices, relations, righteousness, and fullness, as will constrain them to say, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth." In all these exercises and enjoyments, the saints in the Church of the thousand years shall enjoy such communion with the Father in his love, with Christ in his grace, and with the Spirit in his influence, as will fill them with that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory, with that peace which passeth all understanding, and with that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. While we are favoured with the same word and ordinances, by which these exercises and enjoyments of the saints of that age will be obtained; let us improve them most earnestly, that our exercises and enjoyments may resemble, as nearly as possible, those of the millennial believers.

5. When the Lord shall make all things new, he will cause all dominions to serve and obey our glorious Redeemer. This truth is confirmed both in the visions of Daniel, and in those of John. The vision that Daniel saw, and which he records in chapter vii, plainly asserts it. The conclusion of his account of it, is in the following words:—"And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." This is a plain prediction that, after the destruction of the Roman beast, the whole world will become Christian, and all rulers in it, will serve and obey our Lord Jesus Christ. The same revelation was made to the Apostle John. "And the seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of

this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." Since these kingdoms are destined to become the kingdoms of the Lord and his Anointed, it is evident, that at present, they are not such; but that in due time, they shall be brought to recognise God as their only King, Christ as their only Saviour and Lord, and his word as the only rule of all their administrations.

6. When God shall make all things new, all the inhabitants of the earth shall be blessed. In every period of time, God's creatures have received blessings manifold from his bountiful hand; but at this time, their blessedness shall be greatly enlarged. From many of those things which occasion both inward grief and outward trouble they shall be delivered. From famine and pestilence, scarcity and want of things needful for the body, and from epidemical diseases they shall be set free. Are Christians often grieved on account of the low condition of the Church, and the miserable state of Israel? This shall be at an end; for the Church will be purified, and all Israel shall be saved. Are they afflicted because of the dismal situation of Heathen, Mahometan, and Popish nations? This cause of sorrow will then vanish; for all nations shall then come to the Gospel light, and the brightness of their Redeemer's rising. Are they distressed with the oppression of civil and ecclesiastical rulers? At that day, violence shall no more be heard in the land. Are they perplexed by hearing of wars and rumours of wars? This also shall pass away; for then "men shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruninghooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." In seeing and hearing, do they often vex their souls, for the unlawful actions of men? This also shall cease; for the people shall be all righteous. Besides the removal of causes of grief, what pleasure and joy must it impart to their hearts, when they shall see all these glorious things accomplished. The Prophet's words will then be fully realized; "Blessed is he that waiteth and cometh to the thousand, and three hundred and five and thirty days," Dan. xii. 12. And then the Lord's oath shall be most completely verified, "But as truly as I live, the whole earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord," Num. xiv. 21.

This Discourse must now be concluded with a few inferences.

1. False religion is hateful in the sight of God. When he speaks to his Church, by the Prophet Jeremiah, concerning their idolatry

and other corruptions of his worship, he said, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate." The words are few, the address is earnest and affectionate, and shews how their conduct grieved and offended their God. That false religion, and idolatry, is equally hateful to God in the days of the Gospel, is evident from the following words of three of the Apostles. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, flee from idolatry," 1 Cor. x. 14. "For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in—abominable idolatries," 1 Pet. iv. 3. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols," 1 John v. 21. God is the alone author and object of all religious adoration. To him it belongs both to require, and to prescribe the form and manner of his worship. This he has done in his holy word, from which, in this solemn work, we should take all our instructions. When the doctrine, the worship, and administrations of the Church, are totally corrupted, as they are in the Church of Rome, instead of being the Lord's sanctuary, it becomes a synagogue of Satan. This is the object of the Lord's hatred, and this he will destroy. To testify his abhorrence of it, he will pour upon the supporters of that system the vials of his wrath, till it is completely removed from the earth.

2. Secular despotism is an abomination before God. The true character of the despot is described in Daniel's words. "Whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up, and whom he would he put down." This is said of the first beast, but it is applicable to the other three, especially the last. The seven-headed and ten-horned and crowned beast which rose out of the sea, and the beast with two horns like a lamb, but spake as a dragon, which rose out of the earth, have for many ages ruled the Roman world. They have supported one another, they have reigned together, and they shall perish in company, Rev. xix. 20. By the harvest, the vintage, and the war, false religion and tyranny shall be overthrown. The vials of wrath, which shall abolish popery, shall annihilate despotism. The great city shall be divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations shall fall, when great Babylon shall come up in remembrance before God, to give her the cup of wrath to drink. "It is not of the Lord of hosts, that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves with very vanity. For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," Hab. ii. 13, 14. At the universal diffusion of Gospel light, despotism shall be destroyed, and the people shall

not labour in the very fire; and then false religion shall be abolished, and the people shall not weary themselves with very vanity.

3. The Gospel of Divine grace, and the people who believe and profess it, are the objects of God's love and care. While popery and despotism shall perish, Christ's Gospel and kingdom shall continue to the end. The Gospel is the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. By it he discloses to us the infinite stores of his mercy and grace, that we may believe and be saved. It is a revelation and offer of Christ to us, that we may receive and employ him as our Mediator and Saviour. This is his delight, the chief of his ways, and the object of his infinite complacency. The people who embrace the Redeemer, and obey his law, are also the objects of his delight and care. "For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour; I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee," Isa. xliii. 3. He exercises the same love and care to his people, in the days of Babylon the great. "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." As the vials are poured out, that the enemy may be destroyed, so their effusion will pave the way for the Church's felicity. When the voice, "It is done," comes out of the temple in heaven, every thing that tends to hurt or destroy shall be removed; and when it shall come from the throne the second time, all flesh shall see the salvation and the glory of our God.

4. The solemn and majestic manner in which these important revelations are made known to us, is worthy of our most serious consideration. Let any intelligent person carefully read the vii. chapter of Daniel, and the xv. and xvi. chapters of the Revelation, and let him say, if there is not an extraordinary grandeur in the symbols, a singular majesty in the transactions, and an inconceivable importance in the results. The fitness of the symbols to represent the things they exhibit, the beautiful order in which the operations are arranged, and the minute accomplishment of many things contained in the visions, clearly demonstrate, that both the revelation and fulfilment of the predictions, are the work of the Omniscient and Almighty God. Contemplating these things, it will be better for us to be still, and wonder and believe, than to make an attempt at description. By the former, we will profit; but in the latter, we must fail.

5. The accomplishment of the events which are yet to be fulfilled at the appointed time, is absolutely certain. As a fulfilment of this

vision, many important events have been already realized, events which have been most dishonouring to God, and distressing to his church; and shall not the other predicted events be realized, especially as they are events which will most promote the Divine glory and the church's felicity? Respecting the period of this vision, I shall only say a few words. In calculating Daniel's number of 2300 days, and John's number of an hour, a day, a month, and a year, we were brought to the year 1843. In calculating Daniel's number of 1290 days, and John's number of 1260 days, we were led to the year 1866. Perhaps it may happen, that the effusion of the sixth vial, symbolizing the fall of the Turkish empire and the Mahometan religion, may be accomplished at or near 1843. That the effusion of the seventh vial, symbolizing the fall of popery and despotism, may take place at or near 1866; and that the millennium may commence at or near 1867, as the last year of Daniel's 1290 years, and the first year of John's 1000 years. The two first of these numbers refer to the dynasty and religion of Turkey, and they end in the year 1843. The complete effusion of the sixth vial, drying up the water of the great river Euphrates, signifying the total subversion of the Mahometan empire and religion, may be fulfilled at that era. The last two of these numbers which end in 1866, relate to popery and despotism: it is therefore reasonable to hope, that the seventh vial may be finished at that period, in the final destruction of the Antichristian religion and secular tyranny.—I am far from maintaining these things positively; but from the calculation of the numbers, and many operations in Divine Providence, there is strong encouragement to hope that the time is drawing near.

6. This subject exhibits the closing scene of popery and despotism. When the words of our text, *It is done*, are pronounced, Babylon the great shall be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. The harvest shall be reaped, the vintage shall be gathered, and the victory shall be gained by the captain of the Lord's host. This scene will close in the destruction and torment of the beast and the false prophet, Rev. xix. 20. It will close in the bitter lamentations of their friends, who will cry, "alas, alas." It will close in the triumphant songs of God's redeemed church. To that call they will yield the most cheerful obedience, "Rejoice over her thou heavens." It will close in the destruction of the kings of the earth and their armies. "And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat on the horse, which sword proceedeth out of his mouth; and all the fowls were filled with their flesh." This

scene will also close in the destruction of things. The blasphemous pretensions of the man of sin shall cease. The working of satan, with all power, and signs, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, shall come to an end. All popish errors, idolatries, persecutions, cruelties, and immoralities shall be driven from the earth. All profane encroachments on the church, national wickedness, injustice, wars, and even Divine judgments shall pass away. When all these things shall be destroyed, with the utmost propriety may He who sits on the throne proclaim, "Behold, I make all things new."

7. This subject exhibits also the opening scene of the blessed millennium. When these words, "It is done," shall be spoken from the throne the second time, this delightful scene shall be opened. All things shall then be made new. A new heaven and a new earth shall appear, when religious and civil society will be formed according to the word of God. The spiritual sanctuary shall be built and established according to the scripture pattern, and civil rule will be erected and maintained according to the Divine law. All ecclesiastical administrations will be conducted for the glory of the church's God, the honour of the church's King, and the happiness of the church's members. The Spirit will then be poured out on all flesh, and saints will increase in number and in holiness, till the whole earth shall see the salvation of our God. Civil authority will then be a real blessing to the nations. Having scriptural constitutions, and studying righteous administrations, "violence will no more be heard in their land, wasting nor destruction within their borders." When this scene shall open, how rapidly shall every kind of useful knowledge increase in the earth, and how powerfully shall their knowledge direct their conduct! Religion and righteousness shall prevail on the earth, from the rising to the setting sun, Mal. x. 11. All this shall be continued a thousand years. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection, on them the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

8. By this subject we should be directed to those religious duties which it suggests to us. We should consider the infinite wisdom and sovereignty of God, in appointing the periods of the world and the times of the church, which have succeeded one another from the beginning, and will continue to the end. The circumstances of the church and her members have altered greatly from one season to another. Concerning these we should say, with humble submission,

OBSERVATIONS
ON THE
PUBLIC COVENANTS,
BETWIXT
GOD AND THE CHURCH.
A DISCOURSE.

By ARCHIBALD MASON,
MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT WISHAWTOWN.

From JEREMIAH xi. 10.

*THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL, AND THE HOUSE OF JUDAH,
HAVE BROKEN MY COVENANT, WHICH
I MADE WITH THEIR FATHERS.*

GLASGOW:
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OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

PUBLIC COVENANTS.

A DISCOURSE.

JEREMIAH xi. 10.

THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL, AND THE HOUSE OF JUDAH, HAVE BROKEN MY COVENANT, WHICH I MADE WITH THEIR FATHERS.

IN the days of Jeremiah's prophecy, the people of God had greatly corrupted their way, and exposed themselves to sore judgments, which the Lord, during that period, actually brought upon them. His ministry among them was designed to convince them of their sin, to give them the knowledge of their duty, and to turn them from the evil of their ways unto the service of the Lord. Their acting in opposition to the solemn obligations under which they were to be the Lord's people, and to serve him, by the public national covenant which subsisted betwixt God and them, was one of the principal ways in which they had contracted great guilt, carried on rebellion against God, and incurred his displeasure. The prophet, therefore, in the beginning of the chapter, receives a commission from the Lord, to speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, concerning this covenant. His commission warrants him to make a declaration unto them concerning the origin of this covenant, which was the will and command of God;—the period at which Israel was first brought under the obligation of this covenant, when the Lord delivered them out of the iron furnace of bondage in the land of Egypt;—the design of this covenant as to them, their hearing the words of it, and giving obedience thereunto;—the misery they would

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bring upon themselves by breaking this covenant, they should be exposed unto the curse of God;—and the happy effects of their religiously fulfilling their covenant obligations, they should be the Lord's people, he would be their God, and would perform the oath which he had sworn unto their fathers, in giving them the land of Canaan for an inheritance. When the prophet heard the author of this message represent it to his mind, he was constrained to express his hearty approbation of it; *Then answered I, and said, So be it, O Lord.*

In the 6th verse, the Lord renews his royal order unto the prophet, to proclaim in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, all these words, and to say, Hear ye the words of this covenant, and do them. The 7th verse represents the condescending and importunate exhortation which the Lord, by the ministry of his servants, had employed with Israel, in their different generations, to excite them to keep, and to deter them from breaking their covenant obligations unto him. And the following verse exhibits to our view both their rebellious conduct, and their awful doom. The 9th and 10th verses contain that part of the prophet's message, which had a special respect to the men of that generation. A conspiracy is found among the men of Judah, and among the inhabitants of Jerusalem. A conspiracy, against the Lord and his anointed, against his authority and law, against the ordinances of his worship and the truths of his word, and against the purity, prosperity and interests of his church, was formed and acted upon by that people, upon whom the Lord had bestowed so many high and peculiar favours. The manner in which they executed the conspiracy against the Lord, is described in the verse which contains our text, in three awful charges which is brought against them. *They are turned back to the iniquity of their forefathers, which refused to hear my words; and they went after other gods to serve them; the house of Israel, and the house of Judah, have broken my covenant, which I made with their fathers.* These may either be considered as three separate charges, which the Lord brings against his people; or the first and second may be viewed as evidences of the truth of the third. They have turned back to the iniquity of their forefathers, and gone after other

gods, and in so doing have broken my covenant. In this manner they had conspired against the Lord, acted high treason against the God of Israel, and did what they could to dethrone him from his mercy seat. The last of the particulars, which are contained in this verse, being the subject of our present exercise, to it we shall now confine our attention. *The house of Israel, and the house of Judah, have broken my covenant which I made with their fathers.*

The speaker of these words is the Lord God of Israel. Although the prophet delivered them unto the people, he both spake in the name of the Lord, and had his commission from him; and, therefore, he says, verse 9th, *The Lord said unto me.*

The party addressed by the Lord is the house of Israel and the house of Judah. The house of Israel has formerly broken my covenant which I made with their fathers. The kingdom of the ten tribes, who were now in a state of captivity, are most frequently, in the writings of the prophets, called by this name, The house of Israel: If that part of the posterity of Jacob is meant in these words, the Lord brings their breach of covenant into the view of the house of Judah, that they might take warning from the low state to which the ten tribes were now reduced, on account of this sin, by the hand of the king of Assyria. And the house of Judah; that part of God's antient people which continued subject to the house of David, the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, who were yet spared, notwithstanding of great provocations, to possess their possessions, in the land of promise. Or, by the house of Israel, and the house of Judah, we may understand the kingdom of Judah, with those of the ten tribes, who, on different occasions, had fled to the land of Judah, had taken up their residence among them, and were incorporated with them; they and the house of Judah together have broken my covenant.

It is with respect to God's covenant that the house of Israel, and the house of Judah, are here charged with sin. God's covenant in scripture sometimes signifies that everlasting covenant which he made with Christ our mediator, from eternity, concerning the salvation of lost sinners, which was to him a covenant of purchase or redemption;

but, as it is revealed and offered unto the children of men in the gospel, is to them a covenant altogether of rich, sovereign and free grace. But by God's covenant, in the writings of inspiration, we must, at other times, understand that covenant of duties which takes place betwixt God and the church, wherein they devote themselves to the Lord, and engage to serve him all the days of their life. It is in this sense that the Lord's covenant is to be understood in the words of the text.

The persons with whom the covenant was made are also mentioned; which I made with their fathers. The covenanting ancestors of the people of Israel are here meant. That generation with whom the Lord made this covenant at Horeb, and the other generations of Israel, in whose days the covenant was renewed, and who formally entered into the bond of it, may all be considered as their fathers, with whom the Lord had made this covenant.

The text likewise contains an account of the sin, with which the Lord charges the persons, to whom the prophet was sent; it is the breach of this covenant, they have broken my covenant. They have not kept my covenant; they have neither fulfilled their obligations, nor performed their vows unto me. They have broken my covenant, not by the omission of duties only, but by the commission of sin, and walking in those ways which they had solemnly sworn to avoid, and vowed to forsake.

Having thus endeavoured to explain the text, and taken some view of the verses of the chapter which precede it, we shall now enter upon a more particular consideration of the subject, by prosecuting the two following designs.

I. We shall attempt to illustrate a few general observations concerning the public covenants betwixt God and the church, chiefly taken from the text.

II. Some practical inferences shall afterwards be deduced from the subject.

I. An illustration of some general observations on the public covenants betwixt God and the church, chiefly taken from the text, is now to be attempted.

First, God and his church are the parties in these solemn covenants, and both of them perform their part, in

their different capacities, for establishing them. This observation is evident from these words, which I have made with their fathers. The most high God, as a reconciled God in Christ, revealing himself as a God of mercy through the Redeemer, and as the glorious Lord, and King, and Governor of his people, is one party in these solemn covenants. The church or people of God, as a company of professed visible believers in the name of Jesus, subjecting themselves unto the authority, word, and ordinances of God in Christ, having hope of salvation thro' him, and conscientiously desiring and endeavouring to act for his glory, is the other party in these public federal transactions. In the establishing of these covenants both these parties are active, in their respective capacities. By looking into the scriptural account of those solemn deeds, both parts of this observation will be confirmed. The original transaction of this kind, which is largely recorded in the 19th chapter of Exodus, deserves first to be considered. In the third verse we are told, that Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, *Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel.* From the five following verses, which you may read from your Bibles, it appears, that the Lord, having employed the ministry of Moses to Israel, on this occasion, through him proposes the covenant unto the church, states the terms of it, makes the promise thereof, and, by his authority, lays it upon them in all its duties and obligations. The church, on the other hand, are also active, on their part, by giving an explicit, solemn, and voluntary consent thereunto, entering into the covenant, taking the obligation upon themselves, and promising obedience. The same things are evident from that covenanting which took place in Israel, before the death of Joshua. It is represented, at large, in the last chapter of his book, particularly, from the 14th to the 28th verse. Joshua, acting at this time in the name of the Lord, exhorts the people to their duty, calls them to chuse whom they will serve, describes that God into whose service they were entered, and the nature of that obedience which he requires. The people, acting their part in the solemn business, engage themselves to this service, saying, *We will*

serve the Lord, the Lord our God will we serve, and him will we obey. The consequence of which is declared, ver. 25. So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. The instance we have of public covenanting, in the days of Aſa, the fourth from David, which is mentioned in the 15th chapter of 2 Chron. confirms also the truth of this observation. The Lord begins the great work, by sending a prophet to the king and the people, upon their return from a most victorious conquest of the Ethiopians, who had come out against them, and he delivers to them, in the name of the Lord, a most affecting discourse, tending to encourage them in the work of reformation. The king immediately gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and out of Simeon. The people of the land, obedient to the call, assembled at Jerusalem, in the third month of the fifteenth year of the reign of Aſa. The divine account of the people's conduct, at this time, is conveyed to us in the following words: *And they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers, with all their heart, and with all their soul. And they swore unto the Lord with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets. And all Judah rejoiced at the oath.* These instances are sufficient to prove, that the parties in public religious covenants are God and his church, and that each of them is active in their formation. All covenanting, in after-times, must be of the same general nature, a solemn transaction betwixt God and the church, wherein the parties are not concerned only, but also actively employed. By giving the church the revelation of his will respecting this duty in his holy word; by allowing them covenanting seasons, and calls from his word and providence to engage in that duty; by employing some to be active in leading the church in this solemn work; by stirring up the hearts of his people, at large, to vow and swear unto him; by carrying on the work among them in the course of his favourable providence; and by giving them infallible signs of his presence, acceptance, and blessing in this service,—does the God of the church perform his part in constituting these covenants? The people of God act their part in this great work, when they,

being rightly informed about the nature of the duty, and convinced of the call which they have to perform it, do really vow and swear to the Lord to be his people, and to obey his voice; and in this manner join themselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, that shall not be forgotten.

Secondly, The public covenants betwixt God and the church contain his gracious engaging himself to be their God, and to bless them; and their dutiful obliging themselves to be his people, and to serve him. This is the nature of all religious covenants with God. If they are considered in any other light, they are misunderstood; and if they are held up to men in any other point of view, they are misrepresented. They come not at all in the room of the covenant of works, have no connection with it, or proper analogy unto it. They do not in any respect supersede or corrupt the covenant of grace; but are built upon it, and tend to carry on its merciful designs among men. The covenant of grace is absolutely necessary as the foundation upon which these covenants must rest; and as the fountain from which they proceed. In order to an acceptable covenanting with God, either in a public or in a personal respect, faith in him as our God in Christ, is really essential. An individual Christian in a personal, or a body of them in a public capacity, entering into a covenant with God, do it not with a view to obtain an interest in him as their God, to regain his favour, or acquire a title to his salvation; but, having received Christ by faith, and taken hold of the covenant of which he is the mediator for these purposes, they, in their covenanting with God, solemnly devote themselves unto him, and vow or swear, in the strength of his grace, to glorify and serve him with their bodies and spirits which are his. Were it not for the everlasting covenant which God hath made with Christ for our salvation, the curse of the law, and the wrath of God, which we have incurred by sin, could not be removed from us; nor could we have access in any respect into a state of friendship or amicable intercourse with him. While matters betwixt God and us remained in this situation, acceptable and profitable covenanting with him must be impossible. But the Lord Jesus, having fulfilled the condition of the covenant of salvation, by his obedience, sufferings and death, has both redeemed his pro-

ple from the curse of the law, and made peace betwixt God and them, by the blood of his cross. When sinners are enabled in the exercise of a true faith to believe in Christ, and to take hold of the covenant of grace for salvation, God actually becomes their God in Christ, and they are brought into the blessed relation of a reconciled people unto him. It is therefore in these relations, which God and his people bear unto one another, in Christ by the covenant of grace, that they act towards one another in these covenants, into the nature of which we are now enquiring. Our covenants with God, therefore, must rest upon God's covenant of grace as their foundation, and be a mean of carrying on the blessed design of that covenant, betwixt God and his people, while they are in this world.

Christians, in their covenanting with God, whether in a personal or public capacity, have various objects to disclaim and abandon; a solemn renouncing of these must make a part of their covenanting exercise. In this work, Christians have many objects which they are called to embrace and receive; a deliberate and cordial acceptance of them, pertains also to this solemn transaction. When the members of the church draw near unto God in this duty, they have many things to surrender unto him, their persons, their time, their influence, their substance, their service, &c. for this reason a dedication of ourselves, all that we are, have, and can do, is included in our covenanting with God. As Christians, in the performance of this service, are to bind themselves with a bond to be the Lord's people, and to serve him; their coming under solemn vows and engagements, to be for him and not for another, must be an essential branch of this important duty. Though there may be a difference betwixt the objects which a Christian as an individual, and a body of them in their collective capacity are called, in their covenanting with God, to renounce, accept, and devote to the Lord, and also in the duties to the performance of which they do engage; yet the nature and tendency of these solemn transactions are, in both cases, substantially the same.

The truth of this observation, and of what has now been said for its illustration will appear from the repre-

sentations of this duty, with which we are favoured in the word of God. One of these is contained in Deut. xvi. 17, 18, 19. *Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his testimonies, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice. And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments. And to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour, and that thou mayst be an holy people unto the Lord thy God as he hath spoken.* We said, the public covenants which exist betwixt God and the church contain his gracious engagement to be their God and to bless them. Here we are told, that, in these covenants, the Lord avouches the church to be his people; which plainly imports his engagement to be their God, and that he will bless them, by making them high above all nations, who are not in covenant with God; in name, in praise, and in honour; which certainly signifies his engagement to bless them. We likewise said, that, in these transactions, the church's obligations to be the Lord's people, and to serve him, is also comprehended. What else can be the meaning of these words, *Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, &c.* Thou hast solemnly taken hold of the Lord to be thy God, professed thy relation to him as his people, and engaged thine heart to serve him, by keeping his statutes, judgments, and commandments. Another representation of the nature of this duty, from which the truth of this observation may be confirmed, is found in 2 Chron. xv. 12, 15. *And they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers, with all their heart, and with all their soul.—And he was found of them, and the Lord gave them rest round about.* Their covenanting exercise was a solemn engagement on their part, to seek and serve the Lord their God, who had been their fathers God; and, in this manner, to act as a people who belonged unto the Lord. Jehovah, on his part, was found of them, as the Lord God of their fathers, and the Lord their God, and conferred covenant blessings upon them; for he gave them rest, peace and prosperity on every hand.

Thirdly, Public covenanting is a moral duty, incumbent

bent upon the church in every age; during the new, as well as under the old dispensation of grace to the children of men. As this truth is greatly opposed in our day, we shall endeavour to confirm it; and which, we suppose, may be done, to the conviction of the unprejudiced, by the following arguments.

1st, There is nothing in the nature of these covenants, which subsisted betwixt God and Israel, that renders them inapplicable unto the church in new testament times. If the things which are essential unto public covenanting were such, as rendered it peculiar to the former dispensation, and utterly unsuitable to the new testament state of the church, the morality of that duty in gospel days could not be maintained. But no such thing is found to be the case; on the contrary, every thing belonging unto the nature of that exercise, suits the condition of the church since the coming of Christ, as well as before that period. Was it the privilege of the antient church to have the Lord, by a public foederal transaction, engaging himself to be their God, and to bless them? and does not the gospel church stand in need of the same distinguishing favour? Was it the exercise of the Israelites to engage themselves, as in duty bound, to be the Lord's people, and to serve him? and is not this an employment perfectly suitable to the new testament church? There is nothing in the nature of the antient covenanting that was not purely moral, and consequently this exercise belongs to us as well as to them. Many of the ordinances of that dispensation, indeed, to the observation of which the church of old, in their covenanting, did bind themselves, are now abrogated; but there is a system of ordinances under the new dispensation, equally with them of divine authority, which we are commanded to keep as they have been delivered to us, to a due regard unto and improvement of which, we are to bind ourselves in our covenant transactions with God. The change which the Lord hath made in the outward ordinance of his worship, in his sovereign pleasure and according unto the state of the church under the different dispensations, makes not the smallest alteration in the moral obligation, which his people, existing in these different periods, were under, both to observe the ordi-

nances which were divinely authorized in their time; and, by covenanting with God, to promise and vow such an observation of them as the Lord required. Since every thing essential to public covenanting, answers the state of the church now, as well as before the times of the gospel, it must be a duty incumbent upon the new testament church.

2^d, The morality of this duty in our times further appears from scripture precepts requiring it, which are of a standing moral obligation upon the people of God in every age. The first precept in the moral law may justly be considered as a command unto men to avouch the Lord to be their God, and to devote themselves unto his service. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt have me to be thy God. Considering this precept in connection with the preface to the law, *I am the Lord thy God*, it certainly requires the exercise of our faith upon him as our God, an open profession of our relation to him, our dedication of ourselves unto him, and our special design of serving and glorifying him for ever. This precept, therefore, clearly comprehends all the parts of solemn covenanting with God; and this duty is one of the principal ways, whereby the church testifies that she has the Lord to be her God.—Another precept of the divine word which has a respect to this duty is found, 2 Chron. xxx. 8. *Yield yourselves unto the Lord*; The same command is given to the church by an apostle, Rom. vi. 13. *Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead*. In the Christian exercise of yielding themselves unto the Lord, the renouncing of the other lords, which, beside him, have had dominion over them; the embracing of him as their God; the dedication of themselves to him; and their engaging themselves to serve him, must be included. Since these particulars, which are the great substance of covenanting with God, are included in yielding ourselves unto him, this precept must be a command warranting this necessary duty. As this precept is not given in the Old Testament only, but a fo required in the New, the duty of covenanting, which is contained in it, must be an exercise required of us as well as of believers under the former dispensation. The last precept I shall mention is the words of God by Da-

vid, Psalm lxxvi. 11. *Vow, and pay unto the Lord your God.* Two divine precepts are here given to the church; *Vow unto the Lord your God, and pay unto the Lord your God.* The former requires Christians to come under solemn, voluntary obligations unto the Lord, by vowing and swearing unto him, or covenanting with him; and the latter enjoins that, as they have made their vows, they should study to fulfil them every day. The precepts which have now been mentioned, as they plainly comprehend covenanting with God, so they are applicable to Christians acting as a body, as well as in their individual capacity. By the precepts of the divine law then, we are required to exercise ourselves in the duty of personal and public covenanting with God.

3d, The morality of this duty is also evident from scripture examples. If we are called to be followers of them, both in their personal and social conduct, who through faith and patience inherit the promises; and if we find that the church of God, with his approbation, have been employed in this solemn duty; why should we question its being the way of the Lord? When God brought Israel out of Egypt, and carried them forward to mount Sinai, he brought them, in the most solemn manner, into a covenant relation with himself. In the days of Joshua, when the children of Israel were peaceably settled in the land of promise, this solemn covenant with God was publicly renewed, and the people again entered into the bond thereof. When Israel had made great defection from the law of the Lord, by falling into idolatry, and the other evils which usually accompany it, they, in the days of Aza, returned from their evil ways unto the service of God, by entering into a solemn covenant with the Lord their God. In the days of Jehoiada the priest, when he had placed Josiah upon the throne, and had put the king's mother to death for her murder, idolatry and usurpation, the people of Judah, after a period of mournful apostacy from God, returned to him by public covenanting, of which we have the following account. *And Jehoiada made a covenant between the Lord, and the king and the people, that they should be the Lord's people; between the king also and the people.* 2 Kings xi. 17. There is a twofold covenant here. A re-

ligious covenant, the design of which was that they should be the Lord's people, wherein the Lord was one party, and the king and the people the other. And a civil covenant between the king and the people, in which the parties, no doubt, engaged to perform their different duties to each other. The church of God were also employed in this solemn exercise in the days of Josiah. When the book of the law was found, and the message from Huldah received, this pious youth, having convened at Jerusalem the whole inhabitants of the land, engaged in the great work of reforming his kingdom, abolishing idolatry, and setting up the worship of God; and all this he confirmed by entering into a covenant to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes. When Judah returned from Babylon, and were again planted in their own land, they, under the conduct of Ezra the priest, and Nehemiah the tirsathah, did solemnly renew their covenant with God. Shall such glorious and profitable solemnities be the privilege of the church under the former dispensation; and shall nothing of the kind be permitted unto her, or found with her under the gospel? Having such illustrious examples before their eyes, shall any nation be accounted innocent, that has embraced the true religion, if they are found neglecting this solemn mean of glorifying God, and of promoting their own spiritual advantage? How unjust and impious must it be, to condemn the practice of our reforming ancestors, in joining themselves to the Lord in a solemn covenant, when their conduct is supported by such glorious precedents?

4th, Prophecies of the Old Testament respecting the gospel church, which foretel that public covenanting should be their exercise, prove the lawfulness of this duty in gospel times. Three of these shall only be mentioned. The first is found in the words of David, Psalm lxxviii. 31. *Princes shall come out of Egypt, and Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands unto God.* The words are a prophecy concerning the conversion of the Gentiles, in the times of the gospel, to the knowledge of the Lord and of his Christ. Egypt and Ethiopia are mentioned to signify the Gentile nations at large. It is said, princes shall

come out of Egypt, they shall forsake the idolatry of Egypt, and believe in Christ for salvation. Of Ethiopia it is said, they shall stretch out their hand unto the Lord. This expression denotes that the Gentile nations should, in the days of the gospel church, openly take upon themselves the profession of Christianity, declare their subjection unto the law of the Redeemer, send up their supplications unto God in Christ, and vow and swear allegiance to the King of Zion.—Another prophecy which has a respect unto the days of the gospel, and describes the exercise of the new testament church, wherein public covenanting seems to be included, is recorded, Isa. ii. 3. *And many people shall go and say, come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.* The two preceding and the two following verses belong to the same message of grace, which was delivered by the prophet to the church, relating to gospel times. The mountain of the Lord's house, which signifies the new testament church, is to be established by the power of God, in an elevated situation, exalted above her enemies, and all nations shall flow to it. The prophet here foretels that many nations, multitudes of persons in the Gentile nations, and Gentile lands in their national capacity, should go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; let us embrace the Lord, and take hold of the God of Jacob, by a public and solemn avouching him to be our God, and by a careful observation of the ordinances of his holy mountain. To this is added an account of the exercise of their faith on the divine promise, and their solemn resolution, vow or covenant to serve him. *He will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths.* The glorious foundation of all this religious exercise, among the Gentile churches, is also declared; *for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.* The gospel of divine grace, as revealed in the word, as preached by the servants of Jesus, and as savingly manifested by the Spirit, taking possession of the souls of men, induces them as individuals to the exercise of personally

devoting themselves to the Lord; and, when this becomes general, causes them as a nation to engage in this solemn work. In Micah iv. chap. at the beginning, this vision concerning the gospel church is doubled, because the thing is true; from which we may assuredly conclude, that a solemn public taking hold of God as their God, and the devoting themselves to him to walk in his paths, which is the essence of public covenanting, is, and continues to be the duty of the church of God in every period of time.—Another prophecy to the same purpose, still more explicit, you have in Isa. xix. 18, 21. *In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of hosts.* The period when this shall be accomplished is here mentioned, in that day. The prophets frequently speak of the gospel times in this manner, and it must be considered as referring to that period. Five cities of the land of Egypt are the objects of this prophecy. Egypt is here mentioned to signify the Gentile world, a part is put for the whole, and one nation only is mentioned to signify the rest of the Gentile nations. Five cities in the land of Egypt signify many cities in many lands. They shall speak the language of Canaan. They shall become acquainted with divine revelation, know the glorious truths of the gospel, and have the holy law made plain before them. By this work of grace the Lord shall turn to them a pure language. It is also declared, they shall swear to the Lord of hosts. Upon no rational or religious grounds can it ever be denied, that these words are a clear prophecy, that public swearing to God, or covenanting with him, should be the exercise of the church in new testament times. It is not a swearing by the Lord, but a swearing to him, of which the Spirit of prophecy here speaks. In this religious oath, which the Gentile nations should swear, the Lord is not merely the object appealed unto, as the witness and the avenger; but he is the object to whom the oath is made, and to whom it is to be fulfilled. Both these exercises which are mentioned here are explained in verse 21. *And the Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day—Yea, they shall vow a vow unto the Lord, and perform it.* The Egyptians speaking the language of Canaan is the

same with their knowing the Lord, and their swearing unto the Lord is of the same import with their vowing a vow unto him. The exercise of public vowing and swearing to the Lord continues to be a duty incumbent upon Christians in new testament times, since the Spirit of God has expressly foretold, that, during this period, they should be so employed.

5th, The relation which subsists betwixt God and the church seems to render her public covenanting with him a necessary duty. Although this relation is infinitely more glorious than any relation that takes place among men, yet such is the goodness of God, that he condescends to represent it to us by these earthly relations; a few of which may be mentioned, and from each of them the morality and necessity of the church's covenanting with God may be demonstrated. The relation betwixt a king and his subjects is a metaphor, which is used by the holy Spirit, to represent the relation betwixt God and the church. The language which the church holds concerning her God, when viewing him in his gracious relation unto her, is the following; *The Lord is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth; the holy One of Israel is our King; the Lord is our King, he will save us.* To the constituting of a moral relation betwixt an earthly king and his subjects, a public agreement, or solemn covenant is essential. When a person is advanced to this dignity and trust over men, he not only receives the promise of subjection and obedience from the people, but he also gives them security by his solemn oath, to rule them according to the laws. This is the covenant which is necessary to establish the relation betwixt a king and the people among whom he rules. In the same manner, there must be a public and solemn covenant betwixt the God of salvation, and his church; the former as her glorious King, and the latter as his willing and obedient subjects.—The relation between God and the church is also represented to us in scripture, by the relation betwixt husband and wife. The Lord speaks of himself as the church's husband, and of the church as his spouse, in many places of sacred writing. *Thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah, and thy land Beulah, for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married; turn, O back-*

sliding children, saith the Lord, for I am married unto you; for thy Maker is thine husband; I will betroth thee unto me for ever. Betwixt the husband and the wife there subsists a marriage covenant, by which the parties are solemnly engaged to one another, and have vowed and sworn to fulfil mutually all conjugal and relative duties. Betwixt the Lord as the husband of his people, and the church as his blessed spouse, there must necessarily subsist a marriage covenant; and that not merely betwixt him and an individual believer, but betwixt him and the church as a collective body; for unto the latter, not indeed to the exclusion of the former, do the texts here quoted principally relate. To the relation betwixt a master and his servant, is the relation betwixt God and the church likewise compared. *A servant honoureth his master, if I be a Master, where is my fear, saith the Lord of hosts.* This relation among men is constituted by a mutual covenant, either in the way of verbal agreement, or written and subscribed indenture or artieled contract; whereby the master engages to pay the stipulated reward, and the servant to perform the specified work: the relation betwixt God and the church, being compared to this, must necessarily require, that, as he hath covenanted with them, for his glory and their salvation, in Christ to be their Master, they should covenant with him, through the Redeemer, to be his servants for ever. I shall conclude this argument by observing, that the reasoning here advanced is not founded upon a more circumstance in these earthly relations, to which the connection betwixt God and the church is compared. No doubt, there are some circumstances in these relations, from which it would be very unsafe to reason, concerning the nature and tendency of the spiritual relation, of which they are metaphorical representations. But our reasoning here is taken from that which is essential unto these relations among men. We may therefore be certain, that, since the Spirit of God has compared the one to the other, there must be something belonging to the spiritual relation, analagous to that which is essential to these relations among the creatures, by which it is represented to us; and this can be nothing else, at least in its

most formal and explicit shape, than a public and solemn covenant betwixt God and the church.

6th, The perpetual morality of the duty of public covenanting with God is evident, from the acknowledged morality of other duties, which are of the same specific nature. It certainly will not be denied, that it is the duty of the church to form and express holy resolutions, relative unto their serving the Lord, and walking in his ways. Neither will it be refused, that the church is called to make and utter promises, in the strength of grace, to cleave unto the Lord, and to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. The morality of these religious resolutions and promises is evident, from the scriptural account of the spiritual exercise of the church and people of God; because their exercise, as recorded in the sacred page, is full of such resolutions and promises, whereby they engage themselves to be for the Lord, and not for another. Now, if it is the duty of the church to resolve and promise, in the strength of divine grace, to serve the Lord; where is the dictate of right reason, where is the precept in the book of God, that forbids them to make the things which they resolve upon, or promise to perform, the matter of a vow or of an oath unto the most high God? If they may resolve or promise to avoid, and endeavour to suppress any evil, or to perform and maintain any thing that is good; what can hinder them to vow, covenant, or swear to the Lord of hosts, to do the same things? These duties are the same in their general nature, only the latter partakes of a greater degree of solemnity. If it is lawful to do the one, it is impossible that it can be sinful to do the other.

7th, The morality of public covenanting with God appears also, from these ordinances of divine appointment, and duties of his worship, which contain in them a solemn vow or oath unto the Lord. The ordination of the public office-bearers in the church of Christ, is an ordinance which contains a vow or oath unto the Lord. When the teaching and ruling elders of the church are set apart unto their sacred office and work, they, in the presence of the church and with their consent, come under a solemn vow or oath unto the Lord, to perform the duties of that station in which they are placed. If the

ministers and elders of the church do vow and swear unto the Lord, why should it be thought improper and sinful for the church, in all her officers and members, to vow and swear unto the Lord to perform the duties, which, in their different stations, are incumbent on them? The ordinance of baptism also contains a vow or oath unto the Lord. What is it that the members of the church do, when they come unto this ordinance, with their children? Do they not profess to take the Lord, as he is reconciled in Christ, as their God, and the God of their seed; to act faith upon the blood and Spirit of Christ, presented to them in this ordinance, for justification and sanctification, both to themselves and their children; to devote themselves and their little ones unto the Lord, that they may be his; and to engage, by solemn promise, vow and oath unto the Lord, to perform all the duties incumbent upon them, particularly to train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? If an individual, in this ordinance, is permitted to do this, where is the evil of his doing the same things substantially, in company with the rest of his fellow Christians, by joining themselves solemnly unto the Lord; in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten? If we take a view of the Lord's supper, it will appear, that a vow or oath unto the Most High is found in the Christian's exercise, while he is observing that most solemn ordinance. The name that was antiently imposed upon it, and that by which it is still commonly called, a *sacrament*, shews that this was the view which the Christians in the primitive times had, and which Christians still have of the nature of this institution. The word, from which this name sacrament is derived, signifies an oath, a covenant, or sacred obligation, under which persons bring themselves. It was used to signify the oath which the Roman soldiers swore, to be faithful to the rulers of the state, to their military leaders, and to interests of the Roman people. The nature of the ordinance itself, abstract from its ordinary name, shews us, that Christians therein embrace the Lord and his Christ as their God, and Saviour, and portion; and also come under solemn obligations to be the Lord's people. If this is the duty of Christians in this ordinance, by

what law does it become sinful for them to do the same things, by binding their souls with a bond to be his people, in a public covenant with God?

8th, The morality of the duty of personal covenanting proves the morality of the church's covenanting with the Lord, in her collective capacity. Few will be disposed to deny, that personal covenanting with God is one of the sacred duties of religion, which Christians should perform, and in which they sometimes have much spiritual delight. Christians perform this sacred spiritual duty, when they, in the exercise of grace, solemnly renounce all false confidences for salvation, take hold of God's covenant, yield themselves to the Lord, and promise and vow, in his strength, to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world. The person who lives in the neglect of this duty, omits an exercise which is eminently calculated, and often signally blessed to promote the holiness and comfort of believers. If this is an employment which is competent to a believer in a solitary state, must it not be an exercise that is lawful for a company of them to perform in a social capacity? There are a variety of duties incumbent upon the church in her public state, which are, for the substance of them, the same with these exercises which belong unto an individual Christian. Public prayer, public fasting or mourning for sin, and public thanksgiving and praise unto God, correspond unto the exercises of secret prayer, personal fasting and thanksgiving. Since Christians, as individuals, are under a moral obligation to pray, confess or repent and mourn for sin, and praise the Lord for his goodness; we may conclude that they are morally bound to perform these duties in a public capacity. In like manner, since it is the duty of a believer by himself, to covenant with the Lord as his God in Christ; it must be the duty of a multitude of them to perform the same service, in a suitableness to their public character.

9th, The morality of this duty will further appear both from the absurdity and impiety of the contrary opinion; and the weakness of the reasons by which it is supported. Those who oppose that truth, for which we are now arguing, must hold it to be an immoral and unlaw-

ful thing, for a Christian people to avouch the Lord to be their God, and to serve him; that they have no warrant in the word of God to resolve, promise, vow or swear that they shall to the uttermost of their power maintain his gospel; cleave unto his ordinances, obey his laws, support the interests of his glory in the world, and oppose whatever is contrary thereunto; and that it is a criminal and unlawful thing for them to join themselves unto the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten. The mentioning of this sentiment is surely sufficient to expose it to the detestation of all spiritually illuminated and holy minds. As this opinion bears impiety and absurdity in the very face of it, so the arguments by which its friends endeavour to support it are fallacious and vain. One of them is this, That the public covenanting under the former dispensation was typical, and, when Christ the substance appeared, it fled away, with the rest of the shadows of the ceremonial law. This is easily said, but the proving of it has always been found to be impossible. Must the solemn exercise of the church of God, in taking him for their God in Christ, in devoting themselves unto him, and in binding themselves with a bond to serve and glorify him, be ranked among the carnal ordinances which were imposed upon the church till the times of reformation, and make a part of that yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear? The idea is utterly absurd. It is essential unto all typical institutions to have something in the gospel church with which it is connected as a shadow; and which it did prefigure. But what is this? where is its Antitype? There is nothing in the state of the gospel church, nothing among all her duties, or her privileges, with which you can associate public covenanting under the old dispensation, but public covenanting under the new; and how absurd it is, to make a moral duty under the law typical of the same moral duty under the gospel, must be evident to all who know any thing about the truths of God. Besides, it is essential unto every typical ordinance, to appear in the view of an intelligent Christian, to be peculiarly suitable to the state of the church before the coming of Christ, and to be utterly incompatible with her condition after the manifestation of God in-

the flesh. Now, what is there in the nature of the church's covenanting with God, that makes it peculiar to her state prior to Christ's incarnation, and inconsistent with her situation after it? Nothing at all; and therefore let the nature of this duty be what it will, typical it cannot be. Another of these arguments by which this opinion is attempted to be supported, is the following. Public covenanting in Israel was not a moral, but a positive institution, and was abolished at the death of Christ. What! shall the death of Christ abolish the great Christian duty of taking the Lord for our God, of giving ourselves unto him, and of solemnly resolving, vowing and swearing to wait upon the Lord, and keep his way? The death of Christ did indeed abolish the obligation of the Israelitish covenants with God, in so far as they bound that people to support and practise the legal ceremonies; but it did not abolish the obligation of their national oath to the most High, either to perform the duties of the moral law, which were included in it, or to receive and observe that system of more spiritual ordinances instituted by Christ, and which came in the room of the abrogated ceremonies. The death of Christ is the grand foundation of all the duties and privileges of his people. Shall it therefore abolish one of the most solemn duties, and one of the most important privileges of the church of the living God? The death of Christ is the meritorious cause of that new covenant relation that takes place betwixt God and his church, and of all its spiritual and eternal effects. Can it therefore abolish that solemn exercise of covenanting with God, by which the Lord avouches the church to be his people, whereby the church avouches the Lord to be their God, and wherein both parties recognize avow and act towards one another according to that relation? Certainly not. Far be it from us to harbour such a thought. To ascribe this to the death of Christ, is to blaspheme it, and to make it one of the ends thereof, to abolish the law, with a witness.

In defence of this sentiment, it has also been urged, that public covenanting is not expressly enjoined upon Christians in the New Testament, and, therefore, it cannot be a moral duty in the days of the gospel. Were it

not that this argument is still sinfully urged against the morality of public covenanting with God, under the New Testament, with a view to prejudice the inconsiderate against this solemn exercise, even by those who cannot be supposed to be ignorant of the satisfactory answers which have been given to it, we would not have mentioned it at all. Public covenanting, as is very clear from the Old Testament, was once an ordinance of God, and the indispensable duty of his church. It is, therefore, necessary for those, who oppose its morality now, to prove in a clear manner, either from the nature of the thing itself, or from express scripture declaration in the New Testament, that it is abrogated by the authority of God. Till this is done, which will never be accomplished, we are warranted to consider it still as an ordinance of God, and the duty of his church.—This argument takes it for granted, that all moral duties which are incumbent on the church, in gospel times, are expressly enjoined in the New Testament; which is a gross mistake. There are other duties, besides public covenanting, for which there are no express precepts in the New Testament. The baptism of infants, secret prayer on the morning and evening of every day, family fasting, and family worship every morning and evening, are all mentioned in the Old Testament, but none of them are enjoined in the New. Now, if these duties, the obligation of which upon us cannot justly be denied, are not expressly required in the New Testament, how weak and inconclusive must the argument against public covenanting be, which is derived from this source? If our obligation to perform the one is denied on this account; it will be impossible, for the same reason, to defend our obligation to practise the others. The real state of the matter is this; the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, taken together, are a complete revelation of the will of God to the children of men, both with respect to truth and duty. Public covenanting, and the other duties formerly mentioned, are so clearly revealed in the Old Testament, that there is no necessity for their being expressly mentioned in the writings of the New. While there is nothing in the nature of the things themselves inconsistent with the state of the gospel church, nor the

smallest hint in the New Testament of their abrogation, we are to consider the authority of God in the precepts of the Old Testament, which are illustrated and recommended to us by approved examples, as still binding the church of Christ, in these last days, to perform the same solemn services.

In support of this opinion, it has likewise been said, that the Lord Jesus never performed the duty of public covenanting, and, therefore, this exercise cannot be a duty incumbent upon us. In answer to this it may be observed, that this argument plainly supposes that Christ exemplified, in his own practice, all the moral duties which are incumbent on his people; which is not true. A variety of important moral duties, which belong unto Christians, who stand in certain human relations to each other, were never performed by the Lord Christ; because, it was not consistent with his person, dignity, office and work, that he should occupy any of these relations. The necessary duties of repentance for sin, the mortification of it, and the exercises of the mind connected therewith, could not be exemplified by him, because he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Besides, we find him refusing to perform a moral duty, to which he was solicited, because it belonged to the civil magistrate, which was a station he did not fill. If Christ never performed the various duties now mentioned and alluded unto, and yet their morality remains unshaken to the end; what argument can justly be drawn, from Christ's not having publicly covenanted in the days of his flesh, against the morality of that duty? To this argument we further reply. Public covenanting with God is not a stated, but an occasional moral duty, to be performed by the church, when the calls of divine providence point it out to them to be their present duty. As it is sinful to neglect it, when the Lord by his providence is calling thereunto; so it is equally improper to engage in it, when the providence of God clearly manifests, that the performance of this service would not answer the ends for which it is intended. This was exactly the case in the days of the Redeemer's incarnation, and, therefore, he could not possibly have any call to perform the duty of public covenanting with God. A-

mong the many glorious ends of his coming into the world, this was one, to abolish in his death the ceremonial observances, and to set up a more excellent and spiritual system of gospel worship in its stead. If Christ and the church had entered into a public covenant with God, the ceremonial system behoved to have been recognized and sworn unto therein; as it was binding on the church till the death of Christ. To covenant with God for the support of a system which was just about to be destroyed, would have been to contradict the designs, appearances, and calls of his providence. If ever there was a time when public covenanting with God was unseasonable, it was when the fulness of the time was come, when God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law; that we might receive the adoption of sons. Let none say, this renders the obedience and example of Christ imperfect. By no means. The non-performance of occasional moral duties, when there is no call in providence thereunto, but rather providential obstructions in the way of their being done, can never be justly considered as a defect in the obedience or example either of Christ himself, or of his followers; but the performance of them, in these circumstances, would certainly be a blemish in both.

The last argument that shall be mentioned, in support of this opinion, is the following. The apostles and primitive Christians did not enter into public covenants with God, and, therefore, it cannot be a moral duty in New Testament times. Although it were granted, that the apostles and the primitive Christians did not publicly covenant with God, yet no argument can be drawn from this, that is of any weight, against the morality of that duty under the Christian dispensation. If they really did not covenant with God in a public manner, we may be certain that it was because they had not a call in providence to be employed in this duty. The situation and circumstances of the church may be such, as to render it inexpedient or unnecessary to carry forward the work of public covenanting. This is clear from the account we have of the performance of that duty in the times of the Old Testament. In the days of some of the most re-

ligious kings, and some of the most remarkable prophets of the Lord, it does not appear that the church performed this solemn duty. The reason is plain, they had not those calls of providence, arising from the peculiar state of the church, and from the particular dispensations of God towards her, which are necessary to make public covenanting the present duty of any people. Now, if the apostles and primitive Christians did not perform this duty, we may certainly conclude that their circumstances, in the course of divine providence, rendered it either unnecessary or inexpedient for them to be so employed. In a word, let the situation and circumstances of the church in the wilderness, before the death of Joshua, in the time of Aza, in the days of Jehoiada, under the reign of Josiah, and when the Jews returned from Babylon to their own land, be carefully considered, and when the situation and circumstances of the Christian church, at any time or in any place, clearly corresponds with either of these, public covenanting with God is their present duty; but when it is otherwise, this solemn exercise is not required at their hand. To this argument it may also be answered, that it does not appear to be true, that we have no example of public covenanting with God, in the days of the apostles. There is certainly something recorded concerning one of the apostolic churches, which signifies their having publicly vowed unto, or covenanted with God. It is the conduct of the church of Macedonia, mentioned by Paul, 2 Cor. viii. 5. *And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own-selves unto the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.* The meaning of which must be this, the Macedonian churches, having gathered their collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem, and having requested us to take the charge of conveying it to them, before they actually put it into our hand, did first of all, contrary indeed to our expectation, solemnly devote themselves as a church unto the Lord, by a public vow unto, or covenant with him to be his people, and committed themselves unto us, as the ministering servants of Jesus, in which exercises they had a respect unto, and complied with, the will of God. I defy any man to make common sense of the apostle's words, if this is denied. It is unquestionable, that this exercise

of that church behaved to be done by them, in some public and solemn act of religious worship; and it may easily be proved, that this act of worship could be no other than a public vow or oath unto the Lord, or covenant with him. This appears from the similarity of the expression here used unto the words of the Old Testament, by which Israel's covenanting with God is described. They are said to *join themselves to the Lord, in a perpetual covenant*; Jer. i. 5. What else can the exercise of the Macedonian churches mean, when they gave their own-selves to the Lord? Are not our joining ourselves unto the Lord, and our giving our own-selves to the Lord, expressions of the same import? If the former signifies our covenanting with God, the latter can mean nothing less. Israel's covenanting is also described in the following words; *And Jehoiada made a covenant between the Lord, and the king and the people, that they should be the Lord's people*; 2 Kings xi. 17. *And they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers, with all their heart, and with all their soul.* 2 Chron. xv. 12. The nature of the church's covenanting with God, was just a solemn engagement that they should be the Lord's people, and that they would seek him with all their heart, and with all their soul. Is not all this comprehended in the exercise of the churches of Macedonia? It cannot be supposed that they could give their own-selves to the Lord, without engaging to be the Lord's people, and to seek him with all their heart, and with all their soul. As this was the church's covenanting under the old dispensation, and as we have here the whole substance of it in the exercise of a church under the new; we therefore have a clear example of public covenanting under the gospel state of the church.—The truth of this will further appear, if we consider that there is no other religious duty or exercise, by which the Macedonian believers could perform this work, as the apostle here represents it, but by a vow or covenant with God. The enemies of public covenanting have mentioned three ways, by which the Macedonians, on this occasion, might have given themselves to the Lord, without a religious vow or covenant. Let us now see how they will correspond with the apostle's account of the matter. It has been said, that the

Macedonians might give their ownelves to the Lord, by making a public profession of Christianity. We answer, they had made a public profession of Christianity before they had any thought of sending a supply to the poor saints at Jerusalem; they were daily making that profession, by abstaining from their former heathenish worship and religion, and cleaving to the truths and ordinances of Christ; this, therefore, could not be the exercise of that church of which the apostle here speaks. Besides, how could the apostle say, concerning this act of the Macedonians, that it was not as he hoped, if it contained nothing else than their professing Christianity? the apostle could never hope that they would not profess Christianity, when they had, on former occasions, solemnly taken this profession on themselves. In fine, where is the church's profession of Christianity ever represented, in the New Testament, by their giving their ownelves to the Lord? These things show the gross absurdity of this supposition. It has also been said, that they might give themselves to the Lord in the ordinances of baptism. To this we may answer, the members of these churches were certainly baptized before this time. The apostle is here speaking of a solemn act performed by the Macedonians, after they had gathered their collection for the church in Judea, and before they actually sent it away. Can it be supposed, that the believers in these churches had either referred their baptism for this juncture, or that they were all re-baptized on this occasion? could ever the apostle say that he did not hope that they would submit to the ordinance of baptism, if they were yet unbaptized? or where is the administration of baptism represented, in the word of God, by the exercise of a whole church giving their ownelves to the Lord? this supposition is equally absurd as the other. It has further been said, that the Macedonian churches might give their ownelves to the Lord, by receiving the Lord's supper. To this we reply, the apostle speaks of this act of the Macedonians as a thing that was singular, and contrary to his expectation. If it was nothing more than their eating the Lord's supper, it could be no way singular; for this ordinance was common to all the churches of Christ. Nor could it be contrary to his expectation;

how could the apostle imagine that they would allow him to depart, with their collection to the Jewish believers, without dispensing to them the ordinance of the Lord's supper? besides, the receiving of that ordinance is never represented, as is the case here, by different churches publicly giving their ownelves unto the Lord, and committing themselves to the care of the apostles, by the will of God. This deed of these churches, therefore, behoved to be some explicit, public, solemn, and religious act of worship, distinct from any of these which have been mentioned; and it is impossible to conceive of any other divine institution, that can answer the apostle's description, but a public religious vow, oath, or covenant with God.

Fourthly, The church's public covenants with God have an intrinsic and moral obligation to duty of themselves, upon the consciences of the covenanters, distinct from the obligation to the same duties, by the binding force of the moral law. As this truth is grossly misrepresented by some, and flatly denied by others, it is necessary that something should be said, both for explaining the nature of this obligation, and for proving its reality. The moral law is both the fountain, in some respects, from which the obligation of these covenants does proceed, and the rule of direction by which the church's covenanting exercises are to be regulated. The nature of the obligation of religious covenants with God may be understood, in some measure, if the following things are duly considered.

The great Jehovah possesses in himself, and exercises all that authority, by which the children of men are bound to obedience, and has given them his law as the regulating standard of their actions; but, in order more effectually to promote the ends thereof among men, he has instituted in his word, vowing and swearing unto him, and covenanting with him, as his ordinances unto them, and has required in his law these exercises from them, as their indispensable duty. He has given to Christians a power over themselves, or a right of self-government, whereby they, in agreeableness to the prescriptions of his law, dispose of themselves, and voluntarily engage themselves unto his obedience. The

church's covenanting with God, and vowing and swearing unto him, are the principal ways by which they exercise this right, and use this power which God has given them, by disposing of themselves as the law requires, in taking upon themselves the yoke of Christ which is easy, and his burden which is light. When Christians are convinced, by the light of God's word, that these exercises are their duty, and, in consequence thereof, do actually promise, vow and swear unto the Lord, or covenant with him, that they shall, in the strength of his grace, abstain from evil, and practise holiness; they are under obligation to obedience, by their own religious and voluntary promises, vows, oaths and covenants, as well as they are bound thereunto, by the infinite authority of God in his law.

It may tend to cast some light on this matter, to state a few of the differences betwixt the obligation to duty by the moral law, and that of the church's covenants. The obligation of the church's covenants is distinct from the obligation of the law. It is not independent of the law, nor separate from it; but the obligation of the one may be distinguished from that of the other. Christians are under an obligation to perform duties, by the authority of God in his law; and they are, at the same time, under an obligation to perform the same duties, by their own act, whereby they have bound themselves to practise them.—The obligation of the law is primary and supreme; that of the church's covenants is secondary and subordinate thereunto.—The obligation of vows and covenants, both as to the matter and manner thereof, may always be examined by the rule of the law; but that which we know to be the law of God is not, as to its rectitude and obligation, the subject of any such examination.—The obligation of the law is necessary unto the very being of the rational creature; that of our covenants is not so. It is impossible for them to exist, without being under the obligation of the divine law; but the greater part of them are not under the obligation of religious covenants.—An act of the creature is necessary to bring us under the obligation of vows and covenants; but no such act is requisite to subject us to the obligation of the moral law.—The obligation of our covenants with

God reaches to time only; but that of the law of God extends to eternity.—By the former, we bind ourselves to sincere, though but imperfect obedience, but by the latter, we are divinely bound to perfection.—In the law, God, who is its glorious author, binds us to obedience, by his own authority; but, by our promises, vows and covenants, we bind ourselves to be the Lord's people, and to serve him.

The moral law is the directing standard, by which these solemn transactions of the church are to be regulated. The regulations of the law, concerning these acts of the creatures, respect both the matter of them, and the manner of their performance. As the directions of the law respect the matter of our vows and covenants, they indispensably require, that the things we bind ourselves to perform be agreeable to the law, and in nothing contrary to the precepts of the word. If they are otherwise, our vows and covenants are null and void in their obligation; and it is sinful to fulfil them. Of this nature was that oath, which more than forty of the Jews had sworn, that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. The Christian has no right or power to bind himself to do any thing, that is contrary to the infinite obligation under which he is laid, by the authority of God in his law. It is, therefore, necessary in order that our vows, oaths and covenants may have validity in them, and an obligation arising from them to bind our consciences, that the matter of them be lawful, and agreeable to the commandments of God. The directions of the law extend also to the manner in which these solemn transactions are to be performed. The law of God requires that we vow or swear unto the Lord in truth, in righteousness, and in judgment; by faith in him as our God in Christ; expecting acceptance with him in this, as in all other duties, through the Mediator; with holy fear and reverence of his majesty and glory; in obedience to his holy law, which requires these duties of us; with a sincere intention of fulfilling them, in the strength of his grace; with a view to promote his glory; and with a design to advance the spiritual good of ourselves and others. When the church of God, by using his ordinance, and performing their duty, do vow

or swear unto the Lord, and enter into a covenant with him, which is, in the matter of it, agreeable to his law, and, in the manner of performing it, is such as he requires, these acts lay them under a real, formal and moral obligation to perform the duties to which they have engaged, and to eschew the evils from which they have bound themselves to abstain. The proof of this is now to be attempted, and its truth may be confirmed, by the following arguments.

1st, That there is an intrinsic obligation to duty in the church's vows, oaths or covenants, is evident from the words of the text, and other scriptures, wherein the children of men are charged with breaking or transgressing their covenant with God. *The house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant.* See also Jer. xxxiv. 18. Hosea vi. 7. In these scriptures, the church of God are said to break, and to transgress the covenant betwixt God and them. It is impossible that the covenant could be broken, or transgressed, if it did not lay an obligation to duty on the consciences of the covenanters. How could they break a bond, if it had no binding force upon them? or how could they transgress a covenant, if they were not obliged to duty, by that covenant? since the people of God are charged with breaking and transgressing their covenant, they must have been bound to the performance of duty by their covenant; and, if so, religious covenants must have an intrinsic and formal obligation to duty of themselves, by which covenanters are bound.

2^d, The truth of this observation will also appear, if we consider, that the sin of the church of God, as it is a transgression of the divine law, and their sin, as it is a breach of their covenant with God, are distinguished from each other. *Isaiah xxiv. 5. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.* The sin of Judah is here described, both as it is a transgression of the law, and as it is a breach of the everlasting covenant. This plainly imports, that they were under an obligation to duty by the authority of God in his law, and, therefore, their sin was a transgression of his laws; and that they were under another obligation to

duty from their entering into covenant with God, and, on this account, their sin is said to be a breach of the everlasting covenant. It is evident, that the divine law obliged them to obedience, and that they were under the obligation of it, when their sin is declared to be a transgression of that law; it is equally clear, that their covenant with God obliged them to obedience, and that they were under the obligation thereof, as their sin is here stated to be a breach of that covenant. From this text of scripture, we have just as much evidence, for the obligation of religious covenants on the consciences of men, as we have for that of the divine law upon them; for their sin is not a transgression of the law only, but also a breach of the covenant.

3^d, The scriptural account of the nature of religious vows and oaths unto the Lord, fully confirms the truth of this observation. In the xxx. chap. of Numbers, this is represented in the clearest manner; we shall particularly attend to the 2^d verse. *If a man shall vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.* There are three things in this verse. The exercises mentioned, vowing a vow, or swearing an oath unto the Lord.—The nature of the creatures vows and oaths unto the Lord, they are his binding his soul with a bond.—The duty of a person that has vowed or sworn unto the Lord; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth. It is the second of these particulars NOTE which we have in view at this time, wherein the nature of vows and oaths unto the Lord is described; it is said to be the person's binding his soul with a bond. This expression is frequently used in the course of the chapter, as the description, which the Spirit of God uniformly gives of the nature of those religious exercises. If a person, by vowing and swearing unto the Lord, binds his soul with a bond, to do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth, must there not be an obligation laid upon his conscience to fulfil it, by his vow and oath? How is it possible that the soul can be bound with a bond by vowing and swearing to God, and yet there shall be no intrinsic obligation in his vow or oath? Words can-

not be conceived more clearly and strongly to express the inviolable obligation of religious vows and oaths, than those which are here used. By our religious vows, oaths and covenants with God, we bind ourselves with a bond, we bring ourselves under a moral obligation, distinct from that of the divine law, to do according to all that proceedeth out of our mouth. Let none say that these vows and oaths relate to matters of indifferency, to which the soul was not bound, by the divine law; for if our vows and oaths bind our souls with a bond, with respect to things of this nature, much more must they bind our souls with a bond, and lay obligation upon us, when they are interposed, as they ought to be, about matters of superior moral importance.

4th, The intrinsic moral obligation of the church's vows and covenants with God is also evident, from the commands of the divine law, which require the children of men to fulfil them. Some of the precepts of God's word, which require this duty, are the following: Deut. xxiii. 21. *When thou shalt vow a vow unto the Lord thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it; for the Lord thy God will surely require it of thee, and it would be sin in thee;* Psal. lxxvi. 11. *Vow, and pay unto the Lord your God.* Eccl. v. 4. *When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools, pay that which thou hast vowed.* Deut. xxix. 9. *Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do.* Jer. xi. 6. *Hear ye the words of this covenant, and do them.* In these portions of scripture, and in others of a similar nature, the Lord requires the children of men to pay their vows, and to keep their covenant with him. This plainly imports, that our vows contain an obligation in them, whereby we are bound to pay them; and that by our entering into a covenant with God, we are bound to keep it. When the Lord commands us to obey his law, it shews us that the law obliges us to obedience; and when he requires us to fulfil our vows and covenants, it plainly discovers that they possess an intrinsic obligation which binds our consciences. If the law laid no obligation upon us, God could not command us to obey it; and, if our vows and covenants did not bind us, the Lord could not enjoin us to fulfil them. It is not the

command of God, requiring us to pay our vows and keep our covenants, that gives obligation unto them; this command only requires us to act according to that obligation, and warns us of the evil of violating it. The obligation arises intirely from the act of the creatures, using a divine ordinance, by vowing unto God, and covenanting with him, whereby they bind their souls with a bond to serve the Lord. The commands of God, relating to our vows and covenants, plainly suppose their intrinsic obligation upon us. In these divine precepts, the Lord clearly retognizes the moral obligation of these solemn deeds. Every one of these commands is a divine acknowledgment that our vows and covenants, which he requires us to fulfil, have an intrinsic obligation upon us. How could the Lord require his people to pay a vow, which did not at all oblige them to pay it? how could he command them to keep a covenant, which was void of all binding force upon them? The denial of the intrinsic obligation of our religious vows and covenants, renders the commands of God, wherein he requires us to pay the one and keep the other, absurd and senseless. It is as if the Lord should say unto his people; you have vowed a vow unto me, which indeed has no obligation in it, nevertheless you must pay it; you have entered into a covenant with me, which has no binding force upon you, yet you must keep it. Can the Lord interpose his authority in this manner? The supposition is blasphemous. The reverse is unquestionably the truth. These holy precepts of God's word are his declaration unto the children of men, to the following effect. You have vowed a vow unto me, and entered into a covenant with me, by which you have, according to my ordinance, bound your souls with a bond, which morally obliges you to fulfil it; see therefore that you keep your covenant and pay your vow, and beware of breaking your solemn engagements. From these precepts of the Lord's word, it is evident that religious vows and covenants contain in them an intrinsic obligation to duty.

5th, This truth is also confirmed from the scriptural account of the views, which believers had of their religious oaths and vows unto God; a few of these shall be

mentioned. Psalm cxix. 106. *I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.* This text contains the exercise, in which David had been employed, religious swearing unto the Lord; his resolution respecting it, I will perform it; and what was the matter of his oath, not a matter of indifferency, to which he was not previously bound by God in his law, but a thing moral in its nature, that he would keep God's righteous judgments. David, having used the divine ordinance of swearing to the Lord of hosts, resolves to perform it, by keeping God's righteous judgments. His resolving to perform his oath plainly shews, that he believed that he was bound by the oath he had sworn, as well as by the divine law, to keep God's righteous judgments; and that his oath was a bond upon his soul, by which he had brought himself under a solemn and voluntary obligation to serve the Lord. Psalm lvi. 12. *Thy vows are upon me, O God; I will render praises unto thee.* The former part of this verse represents the situation of the holy man, he was under vows unto God; and the latter part of it expresses his fulfilling them, by praising and glorifying God. Thy vows are upon me; I have vowed unto the Lord, and the obligation of these vows constantly binds me. I am not under the obligation of thy law only, but the binding force of religious vows also, is upon my soul. Corresponding to this it is also said, Psalm lxxvi. 13, 14. *I will pay thee my vows, which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble.* These words contain the exercise of the holy man, he had vowed unto the Lord, his lips had uttered and his mouth had spoken them; the time when he had made his vows, it was a season of trouble; and his resolution concerning his vows, I will pay thee my vows. From this resolution it is evident, that the holy man considered his vows as a debt-bond unto the Lord, which he was engaged to pay, and as containing an obligation to duty, which he was bound to fulfil. From these instances, and others which might be mentioned, and probably will be recollected, it appears that the saints of God considered their oaths and vows unto him, as containing an intrinsic obligation to duty; and certainly this is the view which the church should entertain of them, till the end of the world.

6th, The obligation of our covenants with God is also evident, from the binding force of human contracts between man and man. It is a natural dictate of reason, which is confirmed by the word of God, that the promises, oaths and covenants of men with one another, oblige the parties to fulfil them; and that their failing therein, or acting contrary thereto, is a great evil. If our promises, oaths and covenants with our fellow creatures, bring us under a moral obligation, and bind us to fulfil them; must not our promises, oaths and covenants with the most high God, contain in them a moral obligation to perform duty to him? To allow the one and deny the other is certainly absurd and impious. It is absurd. Does not the divine law as expressly require us to fulfil our sacred engagements to God, as it enjoins us to implement our common obligations to men? Does not the word of God promise rewards to them that keep their covenant with God, as well as to them who act according to their agreements with men? Does not the law of God threaten those with judgments who break their covenant with him, as well as it denounces vengeance against those who violate their engagements with their fellow creatures? How absurd therefore must it be to allow an obligation in the one case, and deny it in the other. This opinion is also impious. It is to say, that the law of God guards the rights of men, more than the interests of its glorious author; that, if we open our mouth unto men we are bound, but though we open our mouth unto God, no obligation at all arises from it; and, that our fellow creatures have a claim upon us by our contracting with them, but the great God has no claim upon us by our covenanting with him. The gross impiety of this must be evident to all.

7th, The obligation of religious oaths and covenants may be proved from the nature of our baptism, of the Lord's supper, and of a religious profession. When we are baptized in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, are we not brought under obligations to serve and glorify the three who bear record in heaven? When we sit down at the table of the Lord, and shew forth his death till he come, do we not come

under very particular engagements to be for the Lord, and not for another? When we take upon ourselves a religious profession, are we not bound to walk according to it? If these things are so, how much more must we be under an obligation to perform the duties of holiness, by an explicit and formal vowing or swearing unto the Lord, and covenanting with him.

* The law and prevailing sentiment by which this truth is opposed, is the following. Religious covenants are not formally, but only materially binding. They have no real obligation in themselves, but we are bound to the duties therein, because these duties are required in the moral law. This dangerous opinion appears to be imbibed by many professed witnesses for the covenanted reformation, by the influence of which, they seem to be precipitated into the gulf of public apostacy from these principles, which they formerly espoused. It is impossible for a person to believe it, without entertaining a secret contempt of religious vows, oaths and covenants; and it is impossible for him to act upon it, without being involved in a practical opposition to them. Having already established the contrary truth, it will not be necessary to say much for overthrowing this erroneous sentiment. If this opinion were true, the house of Israel and the house of Judah could not be charged with breaking the covenant: they might be charged with breaking the Lord's law; but he could not have said, they have broken my covenant. If Israel's covenant with God did not bind them, by an intrinsic obligation, their iniquity could not be a breach of the covenant, but only a transgression of the law; nor could it be any way criminal from the relation it had to the covenant, but only from the reference it had to the law. We may easily know what to think of an opinion, which necessarily renders the charges the Lord brings against his backsliding people, absurd and unjust.—Were this opinion true, there could be no such thing among the children of men, as the sins of perfidy, covenant-breaking or perjury. Though we may pledge our veracity, by religious promises and vows unto God, if there is no obligation in them, there can be no perfidy, or breach of faith in our disregarding them. Though we may join ourselves to

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the Lord in a solemn covenant, if that deed brings us under no obligation to fulfil it, the sin of covenant-breaking can have no existence. Though we should enter into an oath to walk in the Lord's law, if this oath is not binding in itself, how can the sin of perjury, or despising the oath of God, be charged upon us? We are certain that these sins are mentioned in the word of God, and that they are committed by men; but this opinion destroys them for ever.—Were this sentiment right, then all the solemn acts of believers as individuals, and of the church as a body, are rendered void and useless to all intents and purposes. Of what use are promises, vows, oaths and covenants, if there is no obligation in them? If obligation to performance is refused to them, their very essence is destroyed. The mind cannot think on any of those transactions without considering an obligation to do as we have said, vowed or sworn as essential to their being. Promises, without an obligation to fulfil them, vows, without an obligation to pay them, oaths, without an obligation to perform them, and covenants, without an obligation to keep them, are monsters both in divinity, and in morals, which are created by this more monstrous opinion.—It is also the native import of this doctrine, that Christians are under no other obligation to duty, after they have promised, vowed and sworn unto the Lord, or covenanted with him, than they were before they engaged in these solemn and holy transactions. The man who can believe this, there is great reason to fear, is actuated by a desire to break the bands of the Lord and his anointed, and to cast away their cords from him. These things both shew the gross error of this sentiment, and serve to confirm the truth of the contrary doctrine.

We shall conclude the illustration of this observation, by mentioning another opinion which has been urged, for overthrowing the obligation of the church's covenants with God. That the Christian's vows and covenants have no obligation, except when they relate to things which are indifferent. When Christians vow or covenant with God, either to abstain from or perform any actions, to which they were not bound by the moral law, their covenants oblige them; but no obligation arises

from them, when they contain articles that are moral in their nature, and to which they are previously bound by the divine law. I shall not take up time in shewing the wild absurdity of an opinion, which allows Christians a power to bind themselves to the performance of things which are indifferent, and denies them a right of coming under a voluntary obligation unto the Lord, relative to duties which are morally binding by his holy law. Upon this it is only necessary to observe, that in all the instances we have of covenanting in scripture, moral duties, to which the church was bound by the law of God, constituted the matter of their vow and oath unto him. In the covenanting that was carried on in the land of Judah, at different periods, the scriptural account of the matter of these transactions is contained in the following expressions. *And Jehoiada made a covenant between the Lord, and the king and the people, that they should be the Lord's people.* 2 Kings xi. 17. *And they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers, with all their heart, and with all their soul.* 2 Chron. xv. 12. *And the people stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all their heart, and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that are written in this book; and all the people stood to the covenant.* 2 Kings xxiii. 3. *They clave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe, and do all the commandments of the Lord our God, and his judgments, and his statutes.* Neh. x. 29. From these scriptures it is undeniable, that duties of a moral nature, such as the church was previously bound unto by the authority of God in his law, and these only, constituted the matter of their oaths unto God, and of their covenants with him. This opinion, therefore, plainly contradicting as it does the dictates of the Spirit of God, must be rejected with abhorrence.

Fifthly, The church's covenants with God bind the consciences of their posterity.

This may be confirmed by the following arguments.

1st, The truth of this observation is evident from the words of the text; *the house of Israel and the house of Judah*

have broken my covenant, which I made with their fathers. They are charged with breaking this covenant, and this covenant was made with their fathers. It is not said that this covenant was made with themselves personally, but with their fathers; and yet they are charged with breaking it. From this it is perfectly evident, that they were under the obligation of God's covenant, which was made with their fathers; that this covenant bound them to the performance of the duties which it contained; and that their sins were as really a breach of this covenant, as the sins of those could have been, who had personally entered into it. What further proof can be required of the binding obligation of religious covenants upon the covenanters posterity, for the matter is clear from the text. However, as the subject of this observation is of considerable importance, and is much controverted among Christians, we shall endeavour to confirm it from some other arguments.

2d, The scriptural account of the covenant, which the Lord made with Israel at Horeb, confirms the truth of this doctrine. We find it in Deut. v. 2, 3. *The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even with us, who are all of us here alive this day.* The covenant, of which Moses is here speaking, was made with the fathers of those, to whom he was now addressing himself. The persons with whom this covenant was made were all dead, or slain in the wilderness. This appears from Num. xxvi. 64. *But among these, there was not a man of them whom Moses and Aaron the priest numbered, when they numbered the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai.* Moses here declares, that the covenant was not made with their fathers, it was not made with them only, the obligation did not ly upon them alone; but it was made likewise with those who were then before the Lord as their posterity, and the obligation of it extended even unto them. The Lord entered into a covenant with Israel at Horeb, soon after he had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and Moses, about forty years afterwards, when all who were above twenty years at the solemn transaction were dead and gone, informs the congregation of Israel, that this covenant was made with them,

not with their fathers, but with them, even with them, who were alive at that day. From this scripture, the obligation of religious covenants upon posterity is established, beyond all possibility of reasonable contradiction; and it is truly astonishing and mournful that any, who profess to believe divine revelation, should deny it.

3d, We have still further evidence concerning this important matter, from the account given us of that covenanting in Israel, which took place a little before the death of Moses, the history of which is contained near the beginning of the xxix. chap. of Deuteronomy. We have a description of the parties of which the assembly was composed, ver. 10, 11. *The captains of their tribes, their elders, and their officers, and all the men of Israel, their little ones, and their wives, the stranger in the camp, from the heaver of their wood, unto the drawer of their water.* Not one of the whole camp was absent from the solemn convocation. We are informed also of the situation in which they stood, and the great end of their meeting, v. 10, 12. *Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God, that thou shouldst enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day.* The design of this transaction is stated, ver. 13. *That he may establish thee to day for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto thee a God.* The parties concerned in this transaction are described, ver. 14, 15. *Neither with you only do I make this covenant, and this oath; But with him that standeth here with us this day before the Lord our God, and also with him that is not here with us this day.* These two verses divide all the parties who were connected with this covenant, and bound by its obligation into three classes; those who were come to mature age, their children who were present, and their posterity who were yet unborn. *Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath, that is, it is not made only with you, who, by reason of age, are capable of entering, in your own persons, into the covenant and oath of God; but with him that standeth here before the Lord.* These are their little ones, who, though they were present, were, by reason of nonage, incapable of entering into the bond of God's covenant.—And also with him that is not with us this day; these signify their posterity

who were yet to be born. The two last classes, as well as the first, are here declared to be under the obligation of the covenant and oath of the Lord their God. From this it is evident, that the obligation of the church's covenants descend unto posterity; as it is impossible to take any rational and consistent view of this portion of scripture, without understanding it in this sense.

4th, That the obligation of religious vows and oaths extends unto posterity is evident also, from the names which the scriptures bestow upon the church's covenants with God. They are called *an everlasting covenant*, Isa. xxiv. 5. and *a perpetual covenant*, Jer. 1. 5. These covenants are called an everlasting covenant, and a perpetual covenant, because their obligation is durable and permanent, and extends to future generations. If the obligation of these covenants perished at the decease of actual covenanters, they would be temporary, fleeting and transient in their nature indeed, and could have no title to these honourable appellations bestowed upon them by the Spirit of God.

5th, The obligation of public covenants with God may also be established from the nature of the ordinance of baptism. In this ordinance, the members of the church do not come under obligations for themselves only, but they bring their children also, under very solemn obligations, which partake of the nature of a covenant with God, or an oath unto him, and which they are bound to fulfil all the days of their life. Now, if an individual Christian may, according to the ordinance and law of God, bring his children, acting as their deputed governor and representative, under moral obligations to all duty, which shall bind them, in the baptismal covenant; may not a generation of Christians, according to the divine ordinance and law, bring the following age, whose deputed governors and representatives they are, under solemn bonds to be the Lord's people, by covenanting with God, which shall be obligatory upon them unto the performance of the duties contained therein? The whole of the rising generation, belonging to the church, are actually brought under solemn obligations unto the Lord, by the deeds of their parents in the ordinance of baptism; and if they may do this in a solitary capacity, may

not a company of them, in a social state, bring their posterity under similar bonds, in the ordinance of public covenanting? It is impossible to acknowledge the lawfulness of the one, without discerning, at the same time, the moral fitness and necessity of the other.

6th, The reasonableness and propriety of the obligation of religious covenants descending to posterity may be argued, from the power which belongs unto men to bind their children, in matters that pertain to the present life. In very many instances, do the children of men bind their posterity, both before and after they are born, by domestic contracts, social engagements, and public treaties, which are obligatory upon them, either for a time, or during the whole of their lives. Shall these civil contracts, whereby they have bound their posterity to their fellow creatures, have an obligation upon their seed; and shall their sacred covenants, whereby they have brought them under obligations to the Lord their God, have no binding force upon the following generation? To suppose this, is certainly exceedingly unreasonable. From the power that is bestowed upon men to bring their posterity under moral and lawful obligations, relative to their temporal concerns and interests, either by public or private contracts, the authority or warrant of Christians, to bring their seed under engagements unto the Lord, by public covenanting with him is unquestionably evident. From the obligation of civil contracts upon posterity, the binding force of religious covenants upon the following generation is equally clear. The truth is, the right of the children of men, in both cases, is allowed and appointed in the law of God; and the precepts of that law, which require the parties concerned to fulfil their engagements, shew that both are obligatory.

It will be utterly vain for any to suggest, that this right of Christians to bind their posterity to duty, by public covenanting with God, and the obligation of these deeds upon the following race are an infringement upon the Christian liberty of their seed, in matters of religion; because no part of true Christian liberty can be mentioned, which is, in the smallest degree, trenched upon thereby. This Christian right, and the obligation under

which posterity is brought by their using it, do not deprive the following generation of their liberty to accomplish a diligent search, by every possible mean of information, to be fully satisfied in their own mind, as their fathers were, of the morality of the duty of public covenanting, of the call their ancestors had to engage in it, of the binding obligation of the sacred deed upon them, and of the agreeableness of the matter of their fathers oath or covenant unto the unerring standard of God's law. It is not true Christian liberty, but the dominion of sin, by whatever name it may be called, which disposes men to break loose from those sacred moral obligations to duty which God has appointed in his word, and under which he, in the course of his favourable providence, has actually brought them.

It will be equally vain for any to object, that because the descendents of covenanters did not consent in their own persons, unto these obligations, they cannot be binding on them; because this principle would invalidate the lawful moral obligations binding posterity in civil things, by the deeds of their fathers, which would turn the world into absolute confusion. It is not necessary unto the transmission of the obligation of religious covenants unto posterity, that every generation of Christians should be, in their own persons, actual covenanters. We are sure this was not the case with the seed of Israel, and yet their national covenant with God was binding upon them, in all their generations. The church may be very culpable in neglecting the duty of public covenanting, whereby they give a formal explicit consent, in their own persons, to these solemn obligations; or there may be seasons passing over the church, in which they may not have a call to engage in this solemn service; yet no neglect of this kind, whether sinful or necessary, can hinder this obligation from descending to posterity. Neither can the communication of this obligation to future generations be obstructed, by the wickedness of a people, in withdrawing their neck from the yoke of God, in acting contrary to their solemn engagements, and in openly denying that this obligation is remaining on them. No doubt, all this was the case with some of the generations of the house of Israel and Judah, nevertheless they were

under the obligation of the covenant which God had made with their fathers, and the obligation of it was even through them transmitted to their posterity.

Another prevailing opinion, that seems to be embraced by many, who wish to be considered as friends to public covenanting, is in direct opposition to what has been said; and which, if I understand it, I may express in the following words. The obligation of public covenants with God upon posterity consists only in aggravating their sin, if they forsake these principles, for maintaining of which, their fathers showed so much zeal, as to enter into a covenant to preserve and defend them. It is easy to see, that this opinion intirely denies and destroys the proper obligation of a people's covenants with God, upon their posterity. The apostacy of a generation from the religious attainments, which have been reached in the days of their fathers, and which they have handed down unto them, will be a most aggravated evil, whether their fathers have covenanted with God or not. All covenants with God, and their obligation, are, by this opinion, rendered useless, as they respect the following age. It is not the design of the church's covenants with God to aggravate the sin of apostacy, either in the actual covenanters, or in their seed; but it is the design of these sacred transactions to render apostacy a sin, both in themselves and in their posterity, from the relation it has to their covenant engagements. Apostacy from attainments in religion is a sin, by the law of God, since the following is one of its precepts; *Hold fast that which thou hast.* Apostacy is also a sin, by the church's covenant, seeing they have bound themselves thereby to cleave unto the Lord, and not to suffer themselves to be drawn away from the profession of his gospel, the obedience of his law, and the observation of all his ordinances. It ought to be bewailed bitterly, that men, from whom we had many reasons to expect better things, should employ themselves to devise and propagate vain schemes of doctrine, to loose themselves and the generation, from moral and sacred obligations, by which they are fast bound unto the service of God. In opposition, however, unto this erroneous and immoral opinion, we must assert, that the obligation of public covenants with

God, is substantially the same, as it now binds the consciences of posterity, and as it formerly bound the actual covenanters; and that as our fathers were bound by their deed of covenanting with God, so we their posterity are equally bound by that deed, to the performance of covenant duties. This truth is clearly confirmed from these scriptures, which represent a generation of professors, who have not personally covenanted with God, but whose fathers had done so, to be chargeable with the sin of covenant-breaking. This is done in the words of our text, and in other portions of sacred writing. What more could be charged upon actual covenanters than this? If the charge, that is brought against non-covenanting posterity, is the same with what the charge against covenanting ancestors could really be, this will clearly demonstrate that both these classes of men are equally under covenant obligations.—The truth of this assertion is also established by these scriptures, which represent the punishment of the posterity of covenanters for the sin of covenant breaking. One of the principal evils, for which the kingdom of the ten tribes was carried into a dismal captivity, by the king of Assyria, was, because *they rejected his statutes, and his covenant he had made with their fathers,* 2 Kings xvii. 15. The great cause why the kingdom of Judah was carried captive unto Babylon, their holy city burnt with fire, their temple destroyed, and their land made desolate for seventy years, is represented in the following words of Jeremiah, chap. xxii. 8, 9. *Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this great city? And they shall answer, because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God, and worshipped other gods, and served them.* It is evident, that neither the generation of Israelites in the kingdom of the ten tribes, nor in the kingdom of Judah, upon whom these calamities came, were in their own persons actual covenanters; yet the punishment of covenant breaking was inflicted upon them, in as remarkable a way, as it could have been brought upon those who had actually covenanted with God. How can we account for this, without believing that they, as well as their covenanting forefathers, were under the same covenant obligation.—This truth, and the fallacy of that opinion by which it is opposed, will

further appear, from the scriptural account of the connection which posterity has with the covenants that are made with their fathers. The scripture represents this connection of non-covenanting posterity with the covenants of their fathers, as we have already seen, that the Lord made this covenant with them, that is with posterity, Deut. v. 2, 3. This is the very way, in which the connection of actual covenanters with the covenant, is represented in the text, and in other scriptures, that the Lord has made the covenant with them. Now, since the Spirit of God describes that connection, which actual covenanters have with the covenant, and the connection which non-covenanting posterity have with it, by the same words, it must undeniably prove that both the one and the other are equally under the obligation thereof. This being the case, there necessarily must be something more, in the obligation of religious covenants upon posterity, than this opinion, we are now opposing, will allow; and that can be nothing other than what we have asserted, that they are bound thereby, in a way, which is essentially the same, with the manner in which their covenanting fathers were thereby bound to the performance of covenant duties.

Sixthly, The church's public religious covenants with God may, and ought to be national. A people's covenanting with God may be said to be national, in the three following respects. When the civil and ecclesiastical rulers or representatives of a nation enter into a covenant with God; when the great body of the people enter themselves into the bond of this covenant; and when an acknowledgement of the obligation thereof, with a resolution to fulfil it, is made a fundamental law of the state, so as no person, who is an enemy thereunto, shall be intrusted with the affairs of the nation in their hands, either of a spiritual or temporal nature. In these senses, we affirm that the church's covenants with God may and ought to be national.

1st, The truth of this observation is evident both from the words of the text, and from the other inspired accounts we have of Israel's covenanting with God. The house of Israel and the house of Judah, in their national capacity, are the party mentioned in the text, who was

in covenant with God. The people without their rulers, the rulers without the people, or a part of the people without the concurrence of the rest could not be called the house of Israel and the house of Judah. The bond of this covenant extended to the whole family of Israel and Judah, and therefore it respected them in their national state. The more particular accounts which we have in the divine word, of the nature of the church's covenants with God, will further confirm this truth. It was Israel as a nation that stood before the Lord in Horeb, when he entered into covenant with them. Near forty years afterwards, and immediately before the death of Moses, Israel again appeared before the Lord in their national capacity, and entered into a covenant with him. *In that solemn assembly, there were present the captains of their tribes, their elders, and their officers, with all the men of Israel, their little ones, their wives, and their stranger that was in their camp, from the hewer of their wood, unto the drawer of their water, who all entered into covenant with God, were thereby established for a people unto him, and he engaged to be their God.* Deut. xxix. 10, 11, 12, 13. The covenanting that took place in the days of Joshua, bears also clear marks of its being a national deed. The persons concerned in it are mentioned in Joshua xxiv. 1, 2. *And Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers, and they presented themselves before God. And Joshua said unto all the people, &c.* Here the people were not without their rulers, nor the rulers without the people; but the whole body of the nation entered into a covenant with the Lord, which is largely declared in the following part of the chapter. When their covenant was renewed in the days of Asa, it was also a national transaction, as will be evident from the following account of it. *And Asa gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and all the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon.— And they gathered themselves together at Jerusalem.— And entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers, with all their heart, and with all their soul.* 2 Chron. xv. 9, 10, 12. The same truth is clearly confirmed from the account of this solemn action in the days of Josiah. The parties

who covenanted with God on that occasion, are mentioned, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 29, 30. *Then the king sent, and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem, and the king went up into the house of the Lord, and all the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people great and small, and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant, that was found in the house of the Lord.* Upon the return of the captives from the land of Babylon, they again entered into a covenant with God, in their national capacity, as is evident from the x. chap. of Nehemiah. In that chap. after expressing by name a considerable number of the priests, Levites, and heads of the people, it is added in the 28 & 29 verses; *And the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the porters, the singers, the Nethinims, and all they that had separated themselves from the people of the lands, into the law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, every one having knowledge, and having understanding; they clave unto their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse and into an oath, to walk in God's law.* These scriptures plainly prove that God's covenant with Israel was made with them, in their public national capacity. It was not made with one of the tribes, or with some individuals in all the tribes; but it was with the whole body of the people that this covenant was made, and to all of them its obligation extended. The covenanting, therefore, that is warranted, in the days of the gospel, to be carried on in Christian lands, may and ought to be transacted by them, in their public national character. It is not lawful for a few persons in a land only, when they come to be enlightened in the knowledge of the gospel, and have been determined to embrace it, to join themselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant; but it is lawful for a people, in their national state, when they are brought to the knowledge or profession of the truth, to do the same thing. Since covenanting with God was a moral duty, incumbent upon his people, under the former dispensation, and was performed by them in their national character; it certainly must be the duty of the Christian church, when the Lord in his goodness brings her in any land unto a national form, to practise this moral duty in their public capacity.

2d, In order farther to confirm the truth of this observation, it shall be proved, that the scriptures represent the Gentile churches serving the Lord in their national capacity. Many scripture prophecies, which speak of the Gentile church, plainly represent that they shall do service to the Lord, and receive blessings from him in their national state; from each of which the reasonableness and necessity of national covenanting among them may be deduced. A few of these, out of many, shall be mentioned. Early did the Lord, by the spirit of prophecy, reveal this truth to the children of men; even as early as the days of Noah, by whom the following declaration was made, Gen. ix. 27. *God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem.* In what capacity did the seed of Abraham, who were the descendents of Shem, dwell in their tents, or enjoy religious and spiritual privileges from God? It certainly was in their national state. When the posterity of Japheth, by whose offspring the islands of the Gentiles were divided in their lands, did succeed to the privileges of Shem, and dwell in their tents, which began in the apostles preaching unto them; must not they also, in order to the full accomplishment of this prophecy, enjoy privileges from God, and perform duties unto him in their national capacity? If the posterity of Shem, when they dwelt in their own tents, had it as their peculiar honour to be, as a nation, in covenant with God; must it not be the distinguishing privilege of the offspring of Japheth, when they dwell in the tents of Shem, to enjoy the same blessedness?—This argument will be corroborated, by the words spoken by the Lord unto Abraham, Gen. xxii. 18. *And in thy seed, shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.* As these words secure the conversion of many in all nations to the faith of Christ, and their enjoying eternal salvation through him; so they also plainly foretel, that the gospel should become a national blessing unto them, and lay them under national obligations unto God in Christ.—Another of these prophecies is recorded; Psal. xxii. 27. *All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.* All the ends of the world, and all the kindreds of the nations certainly relate to people in their large public ca-

capacities; and their turning to the Lord, and their worshipping before him must signify, that public, solemn, and spiritual duties should be performed by them in that character.—That very important piece of prophetic information, which is contained in Isa. lii. 15. must not be omitted; *So shall he sprinkle many nations, the kings shall shut their mouths at him; for that which had not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they consider.* After describing the humiliation and sufferings of Christ for the salvation of men, the prophet mentions the effect of these, in their application unto them by the hand of the Redeemer, so shall he sprinkle many nations. He shall reveal himself to many nations, bringing them to the knowledge of his truth, the profession of his gospel, the obedience of his law, and subjection to his ordinances in their national capacity; as well as justify, sanctify and save multitudes of persons among them. The conduct of the civil rulers of these sprinkled nations is also declared, the kings shall shut their mouths at him. They shall no more oppose the propagation of the kingdom of Christ, no more thunder forth bloody edicts against his followers, nor persecute them on account of the profession of his truth; but should be silent before, and submit unto the Lord of the whole earth. The text also gives the best of all reasons for this change, which should be accomplished upon Gentile nations, and on their governors, *for that which had not been told them shall they see, &c.* Scriptural illumination in the knowledge of Christ, inducing them to a serious consideration, and to an affectionate embracing of him and his religion, shall effectually accomplish it. The Spirit of God assures us here, that Gentile nations, and their rulers shall be sprinkled by Christ, shall be enlightened in the knowledge of him, and shall submit unto him; and must not they, therefore, devote themselves unto and serve him in their national character.—The dictate of inspired prophecy which is recorded in Jer. iv. 2. may be also mentioned. *Thou shalt swear, the Lord liveth, in truth, in righteousness, and in judgment; and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.* In the beginning of this verse, the prophet describes the duty of Israel, *Thou shalt swear, the Lord liveth, thou shalt*

swear unto the Lord, and in thy solemn oath unto him, shalt assert that he is the living God, that he is thy God, that he is the foundation of all thy hope, and is intitled unto thy obedience. The manner in which this religious oath unto the Lord should be made, is here described; in truth, in righteousness, and in judgment. The prophet proceeds to declare, in the end of the verse, what should happen among the Gentile nations; they shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory. The nations shall account it their highest privilege to know, serve and enjoy the living God, shall look unto him for the enjoyment of all blessedness, shall esteem it their chiefest honour to be related and engaged unto him, and shall have it as their exercise to rejoice and triumph in him. The spiritual employment of Israel and of the Gentile nations which is here mentioned, though expressed in different words, is substantially the same; for when Israel swore that the Lord liveth, they also blessed themselves in him, and gloried in him; and when the Gentile nations do this, they must also be considered, as avouching the Lord to be the living God, and their God in Christ, by vowing and swearing unto him. Besides, in the very same capacity in which Israel did swear the Lord liveth, the Gentile nations shall bless themselves in the Lord, and glory in him, and this certainly was in their national state; for, the party mentioned, in the beginning of the verse, is called Israel in the context; and the party spoken of, in the end of the verse, is called the nations; which signifies both their acting in their national character, and that many nations should be thus employed.—The irrefragable confirmation of this truth, with which we are furnished, in the words that were spoken to Daniel, in the visions of God wherewith he was privileged, must not be omitted; Dan. vii. 27. *And the kingdom, and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominion shall serve and obey him.* The words now before us are a part of a most stupendous vision, which Daniel saw, and wherein many of the most astonishing events of divine providence, yet to be accomplished, were clearly unfolded to his view. The

design of this part of the vision is to describe the nature of that dominion, glory and kingdom, which were given unto the one like the Son of man, who came with the clouds of heaven to the Antient of days, in order that all people, nations, and languages should serve him, which is clearly expressed in the 13 and 14 verses of this chapter. The words of this verse represent the exalted state, to which the people of the saints of the Most High should be advanced in this world, under Christ their redeeming Saviour, and ruling King. The kingdom and the dominion shall be given unto them, which signify either the perfection of their power, or the different kinds of instituted authority, civil and ecclesiastic, which are the two anointed ones that stand by the Lord of the whole earth. The greatness of the kingdom imports the glory and prosperity to which civil and ecclesiastic authority should be advanced in their hands. The extent of this is pointed out in the expression, under the whole heaven; not confined unto one nation, as under the old dispensation, but spread over all the earth. This shall be given unto the people of the saints of the Most High, the professors of his religion shall be exalted unto a national state. They shall no more be in a low, oppressed and persecuted state, not being reckoned among the nations; but they shall take and possess the kingdom, and the nations shall be denominated from them. As this kingdom is extensive, it shall also be permanent; for it shall be an everlasting kingdom, continue to the end of the world, and remain in its perfect state through eternity. It is added, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. All divinely instituted authority among men shall acknowledge Jesus as their Lord, shall submit themselves to his gospel, shall regulate their conduct by his law, shall promote the interests of his glory, and shall advance the prosperity of his church. The meaning of this prophecy is so clear, and the proof of the point in hand, which it contains, so conclusive, that nothing further need be said for its illustration.—The prophetic declaration of Zechariah, chap. ii. 14. deserves also our consideration, *And many nations shall be joined unto the Lord in that day, and shall be my people.* The parties spoken of are many nations, the people who were sitting in darkness, and in

the region and shadow of death. The Gentile lands, in their national capacity, are the objects of this prophecy. What is said of them? they shall be joined unto the Lord; they shall forsake the service of idols, and the darkness of their heathenish state; they shall believe in God through Christ, take upon them the profession of his religion, and devote themselves unto him in a solemn covenant. The expression of the prophet seems to point at this public and solemn transaction; because it is the same phrase which is used by Jeremiah, when he is speaking of this important duty; *Come, let us join ourselves unto the Lord in a perpetual covenant, that shall not be forgotten.* The time when this shall be accomplished is also specified, in that day. This is one of the expressions of the antient prophets, by which they usually point at the times of the New Testament church; and we are sure that this must be its meaning in this verse, because this prophecy is only fulfilled during that period. We are likewise informed of the blessed consequence of their being joined unto the Lord, and they shall be my people. This privilege of the Gentile nations must be of the same nature with the blessedness of antient Israel, because it is both expressed in the same words, they shall be my people, and founded upon the same ground. they shall be joined unto the Lord; and therefore it must signify, that these heathen lands should become, in their national capacity, the Lord's professing, privileged and covenant people.—The last prophetic declaration, that shall be mentioned, is recorded in Rev. xi. 15. *And the seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever.* The part of the verse alluded unto is that which records the precious truth, proclaimed by the great voices in heaven, the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever. These words describe the situation of the nations of the earth, after the pouring out of the seven vials, mentioned chap. xvi. which immediately followed the sounding of the seventh trumpet. The heathen, Mahometan, and antichristian nations, who were in many respects

kingdoms of this world, corrupt, carnal and earthly, both in their constitutions and administrations, shall undergo, by the grace, Spirit, word, and providence of God, an holy and spiritual revolution, by which they should, as nations, become the kingdoms of the God of the church, and of his holy anointed One, devote themselves unto him, and submit themselves to his obedience, who should rule them by the sceptre of his grace while they live in this world, and dwell among them as their King in the heavenly glory to eternity. From these declarations of the Spirit of prophecy it is evident; beyond all contradiction, that the Gentile nations should submit unto and serve the Lord, and the blessed Redeemer in their national capacity; that their faith should be a national faith, their profession a national profession, their worship a national worship, their obedience a national obedience, and their covenanting a national covenanting.

3d, The truth of this observation will further appear, if we consider the nature of that service, which we are called to give unto God in Christ, in our different capacities, when we are enlightened in the knowledge of divine truth. When the grace of God comes into the heart of an individual, and instructs him in the knowledge of truth and duty, he is thereby bound, and will be cheerfully determined to serve the Lord, in the performance of all the duties that are incumbent on him, in his personal capacity. When the members of a family are privileged with this illumination, it becomes their duty, and it will be their exercise to serve, to worship, and to promote the glory of God, in their domestic state. The inhabitants of a city, having heard the joyful sound, and embraced it, are thereby obliged to set up all the ordinances of Christ among them, and to serve and glorify God, in this more public capacity. If the light of the glorious gospel shall extend over all those who reside in a province, it is then their immediate and indispensable duty, in their more enlarged and public character, to submit to the faith, the ordinances and service of Christ. If the Sun of righteousness does arise and shine upon a whole nation, it surely becomes the duty of that people, in their national capacity, to make a public profession of the truth of God, to surrender them-

selves unto him, and to observe all his laws. Christianity is not framed for being the religion of an individual only, but it is calculated for societies of men, whether great or small. Such is the nature of some of its blessed institutions; that persons, acting in their personal capacity only, can have no access unto or enjoyment of them at all. It is a religion that may be professed by the children of men, whether they act in their personal, domestic, congregational, or national state; and it lays obligations to moral duties upon them in all their different capacities. In all these capacities in which we are capable of acting, we are bound to perform all duties unto the Lord in that character. Covenanting has been already proved to be the duty of Christians in New Testament times, therefore they are called to perform this solemn service in their national capacity. In whatever character we have a relation unto or interest in God, we ought, in that capacity, to claim and improve this interest in him, and devote ourselves to him as his people. When nations are enlightened with the gospel, they come to have this interest in and relation unto God as a nation; their covenanting therefore, which is a claiming of this relation to him, and a devoting themselves unto him, may and ought to be national.

Before this part of the subject is concluded, it may be necessary to take some notice of a very common and ensnaring objection, which has been urged against the truth for which we are now pleading. The nation of Israel was a theocracy, they were a people under the immediate and gracious government of God, and their covenant with him was their national oath of allegiance unto him; this is not the case with any Christian nation in the world, and, therefore, all arguing for national covenanting among us, from its having been nationally performed among them, must be false and inconclusive. This objection, whether it be valid or not, can militate only against the first argument, that has now been advanced for establishing the truth of this observation, which was taken from the scriptural account of the ancient covenanting, as being national, from which the duty of national covenanting under the New Testament was inferred; but it cannot at all affect what has been

further said in support of this truth, which, if duly considered, might fully overthrow the objection. But let it be more particularly examined.

Our answer to the objection is this. When a nation is enlightened with the gospel, comes to receive the truths of Christ, makes a profession of his religion, and submits to his ordinances and laws, it is as much a theocracy, a people under the immediate and gracious government of God, and are as much bound, by covenanting nationally with him, to swear an oath of national allegiance unto the Lord, as ever the house of Israel and the house of Judah were to perform this service in the land of Canaan. Let us consider all the supposable grounds of Israel's claim to a distinguishing theocracy, and we will find, that if they apply to them, they equally apply, in their substance, to Christian nations. Suppose Israel was a theocracy because they were all brought to the knowledge and profession of the true religion in their national state, and were all the descendants of one man whom the Lord, in a wonderful manner, called to the knowledge of himself. This, in its substance, is exactly the case with every Christian nation. They also, in their national state, are brought to the knowledge and profession of the true religion. As to their not being the offspring of one man, who was called of God as was Abraham, this is a mere circumstance in the case. Various are the ways which the Lord takes to bring nations to the knowledge and profession of the truth; but, whether he causes the gospel to make slow progress in a land till it, like the little leaven, shall leaven the whole lump; or makes a nation to be born at once, or even lays hold of one man till his posterity becomes a nation, and sets up his religion among them; yet, being brought to the knowledge of his religion as a nation, be it in what manner it will, they must equally be, in that capacity, under moral obligations unto the Lord.—It may also be said, that Israel was a theocracy, because they were a peculiar people, and no other nation knew the true God, and his truths and worship but themselves. To this it may be answered, that their national duties and obligations unto God arose from their being nationally a church and people professing the true religion, and not

at all from its being peculiar unto them, or enjoyed by no other nation. Christian nations are, therefore, under the very same obligations to serve the Lord, in their national character as Israel was, because of their national privileges, which are the same in their nature and design with those enjoyed by the antient church, and very far superior unto them in their degree. Though many nations, in the days of the gospel, are, at the same time, privileged, in their national character, with special blessings from the Lord; this cannot relieve them from the obligations they are respectively under to the Lord, nationally to profess his gospel, nationally to observe his ordinances, and nationally to covenant with him. Each of these nations must be as much bound to the performance of national duties, from their enjoyment of national privileges, though these may be possessed by other nations, as they possibly could be, if no other nation were favoured with them but themselves.—Were the Israelites a theocracy, because God was the author of their peculiar laws, whereby their state, in many particulars, was to be governed? Is not the word of God, which is now enjoyed by the church in its perfect state, a light unto the feet, and a lamp unto the path of Christian nations, both in the formation and execution of their laws? on account of which he may be called the Author of their laws, as well as he was the Author of the laws of Israel. The one is as much bound now, as the other formerly was, to regulate their civil and ecclesiastical administrations by the law, and by the testimony of God; and so far as it is otherwise, it evidences that there is no light in them. The substance of the matter, in both cases is, in this particular also, exactly the same.—It may be alledged, that Israel was a theocracy, because they held the possession of the land of Canaan upon the condition of their obedience to the divine laws, and because they were driven from the enjoyment of it for their rebellion. But was Israel the only nation that was, in the providence of God, exterminated from their land, on account of sin? Were not all the surrounding nations visited with the same judgment? Concerning this strange work of God to Israel it cannot be said, he hath not dealt so with any nation. Besides, the word of

God, and the past dispensations of his providence plainly declare, that Christian nations shall be visited with the same judgments in their substance, which were inflicted upon Israel, if they, like them, fall into the sins of apostacy from their religious attainments, of idolatry and error, of cruelty and oppression, of infidelity and impiety, and of breaking the covenant which he had made with their fathers.

Some may say that Israel was a theocracy, because the Messiah was to spring from them. To this it will be sufficient to answer, that after the days of Jacob, this theocracy behoved to be confined to the tribe of Judah, for, at that period, the church was ascertained that he was to spring from them; and after the days of David it should have been restricted to his family, for then it was revealed to the church that Christ should be of the seed of David according to the flesh. If this, therefore, is the ground of their being a theocracy, the nation at large could have no connection with it at all, and it must have been very limited indeed.—But it may still be affirmed that Israel was a theocracy, because they were a typical people, many of their ordinances were of a typical and ceremonial nature, and were abolished when Christ the substance appeared. It may be observed, that the system of ordinances in the Christian church is also for a season, and shall be done away when the church is advanced to her heavenly and perfect state. It was not because they were a typical people, that they were under national obligations to the Lord; but because they were brought to the knowledge and profession of the true religion, in their national character. It was not because many of their ordinances were ceremonial that they were nationally bound by the oath of God to observe them; but because they were of divine appointment. These duties, therefore, belong unto Christian nations, as well as the Jewish state; for the moral grounds of them are common to both. There was indeed, in the wisdom and goodness of God, a change made in the ordinances, which were of divine authority, and suited to the nature of the two dispensations; but this did not make any change in the law, which formerly obliged the Jews, and now binds Christians to hold fast the traditions which have

been delivered to them, to improve them for their own salvation, to transmit them to their posterity, and to resolve and promise, vow and swear unto the Lord, that they will endeavour to perform these necessary and important duties.—If any are disposed to consider the words of God unto Samuel. *They have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.* 1 Sam. viii. 7. As a proof that Israel was a theocracy; it is only necessary to observe, that if this was the case, their theocracy behoved to end at the advancement of Saul to the throne of Israel; and, as there was national covenanting among them after, as well as before that period, it is hereby proved that this duty is not peculiar to a people, who are a privileged theocracy. From what has been said it clearly appears, that this notion of the state of Israel, from which men would conclude, that their national covenanting with God is not imitable by a people under the gospel, who are nationally brought to the faith of Christ, is vain and foolish; and that it remains an established truth, that covenanting, in Christian lands, as well as among the Israelites of old, may and ought to be national.

Seventhly, The church's public covenants with God should contain an engagement to perform all commanded duties. For the illustration of this observation, it is necessary to explain its meaning, to confirm the truth of it, and to overturn that sentiment by which it is opposed.

When it is said, that an engagement to perform all commanded duties, should be contained in the church's public covenants with God, the meaning surely is very plain; but, lest it should be misunderstood, the following things are mentioned. By commanded duties we understand, those things which are enjoined upon the children of men, by the authority of God in his law. If any actions cannot be traced up to the precepts of God's word, or to the approved examples recorded in the scripture, as their warrant, they are reprobate silver, and must nor have a place in the church's bond to obedience; but whatever actions are agreeable to his law, these may and ought to have a place, either in general or in the detail, within the church's covenant engagements. The duties that are enjoined both in the first

and second tables of the law, are equally admissible into a people's public vow unto the Lord. We are not warranted to engage, in our covenant with God, to perform the duties which we owe unto him only, but we ought also to oblige ourselves, in these covenants, to the performance of these duties, which are incumbent upon us, both with respect to ourselves, and to our fellow creatures. Duties which are called civil, as well as those which have been denominated religious, must have a place in the church's oath of obedience to God. All these moral duties which belong unto men, in the different stations in which they are placed, whether as heads and members of the Christian family, as teachers and those who are taught in the Christian church, or as governors and those who are governed in the Christian state, ought to be comprehended in the church's public national covenant with God; and their covenant should contain their voluntary obligation to perform all commanded duties, both with reference to their civil and religious concerns.—The truth of this observation may be confirmed by the following arguments.

1st, Israel's covenant with God contained an engagement unto all commanded duties, and the obligation to duty, in all covenants with God among Christian nations, must be of the same extent. That Israel, in their covenanting with God, engaged themselves to all duties, will be evident from the scriptural account of these transactions, a few of which may be mentioned. In the first public action of this kind, which is recorded in the xix. chap. of Exodus, there are two things in the account of it, which confirm this truth; the words of the Lord by which he lays the covenant obligation upon Israel, and the words of the people whereby they took it upon themselves. The former is expressed in the 5. verse. *If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant.* The voice of God contains all that the Lord spake to Israel for the regulation of their conduct, and includes the duties of the moral law which are recorded in the following chapter, with the great variety of precepts which are detailed at large in the three chapters that follow it, together with all that he had spoken, or might hereafter speak unto them for the same important purpose. The words of

the people, whereby they come under the obligation, confirms the same thing; verse 8. *And all the people answered together, and said, all that the Lord hath spoken we will do.* It is evident that the voice of the Lord must comprehend all commanded duty, and the words of the people are of equal extent.—The inspired record respecting the extent of the duties of the covenant, into which Israel entered in the days of Josiah, contained, 2 Kings xxiii. 3. confirms the same truth. *And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all their heart, and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book; and all the people stood to the covenant.* Israel's walking after the Lord, keeping his commandments, his testimonies, and his statutes, and performing all the words of the covenant that were written in the law of Moses, certainly shew that their covenant with God contained an obligation to perform all commanded duties, both with respect to their civil and religious interests; with which the people practically complied, for it is added, that they stood to the covenant.—The account of the covenant transaction, in the days of Nehemiah, is of the same import. Neh. x. 29. *They entered into a curse and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord their God, and his judgments, and his statutes.* The law of God delivered to Israel by Moses, all the commandments of the Lord their God, and his judgments, and his statutes, comprehend all commanded duties both of a civil and religious nature, that were incumbent upon them in all the different stations and relations in which they stood, both with reference to God and one another. The obligation of public covenants with God, among Christian nations, must also extend unto all commanded duties.

2d, The truth of this observation is also evident, from the extent of the obligation of the divine law upon the consciences of men. By the authority of God in his law, men are bound to the performance of all duties, both civil and religious. There is not a single duty incumbent upon men, or performed by them, in all the variety of

stations which they can occupy, or circumstances in which they can possibly be placed, but it is comprehended and enjoined in the law of God. An impression of this truth upon the mind of the psalmist made him say, *Thy commandment is exceeding broad.* The original divine obligation to duty by the moral law being thus extensive, it is necessary that the church's voluntary obligation to perform duty in their covenant with God, should be of the same extent. All the duties which are comprehended in the law, may and ought to be contained in the church's public vow unto the Lord. It is utterly absurd to suppose, that God should require duties of the children of men, which they shall not be permitted to include in their resolution, promise, vow, or oath of obedience unto him. The law of God is not the rule by which the duties which the church obliges herself to perform, are to be tried as to their nature only, that they be agreeable to it; but it is likewise the standard by which these duties are to be measured as to their extent. In so far as our covenant obligations to God fail in this particular, they will be considered by him as defective. The voluntary and covenant obligations to duty, under which Christians bring themselves, must be equally extensive, as the original divine obligation is by the moral law. As every duty is contained in the one, so we should bind ourselves by the other, to all commanded duties.

3d, This observation may also be confirmed by viewing the extent of the obligation to duty, under which the Christian brings himself unto the Lord, when he personally covenants with him. When the Christian is employed in the spiritual exercise of covenanting with God in his personal capacity, by taking hold of God's covenant, yielding himself unto the Lord, and coming under a voluntary obligation to serve him, it will be found that this engagement of his extends to all the duties that are incumbent upon him. It will not be proper for him, neither will he, in a spiritual frame, be disposed unto it, to promise or vow the performance of religious duties only; but he will include, in his obligation to God, the observation of all those relative and civil duties, which are bound upon him by the divine law. He

will be convinced in his mind, that both the divine glory and the prosperity of his soul are concerned, in his fulfilling the one as well as the other; and therefore he will cheerfully come under an obligation, in the strength of divine grace, to perform them all. As the believer esteems all God's precepts concerning all things to be right, he will vow and swear to have a respect to all his commandments, saying, *I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.* Psalm cxix. 106. If personal covenanting with God includes the believer's obligation to perform all commanded duties; must not the church's public covenant with God be equally extensive, in its obligation? If it is lawful and necessary for the Christian, in his personal capacity, to bind himself to all duty; must it not be equally lawful and necessary for the church to comprehend duties of every class, in their public and solemn engagements to the Lord? since it would be dishonouring to God, for the believer to come under a partial obligation to duty, it must be still more provoking in the eyes of his holiness, to see his professing church partial in the law.

4th, The truth of this proposition may also be evident, if we consider the concern that the glory of God has in our performance of all commanded duties. No Christian will deny, that he is divinely bound to glorify God, with his body and spirit which are his; and that whatsoever he does, to do all to the glory of God. The glorifying of God is the supreme end which his moral creatures, and especially redeemed sinners, should have in their view, in the performance of all commanded duties. It certainly must be the great design of the church, in her covenanting exercise, to bind herself to the observation of whatever shall promote the divine glory. As it tends greatly to advance the glory of God, when a people regulate their civil concerns according to his law, as well as when their religious affairs are directed in agreeableness thereunto; it must unavoidably follow, that, in their voluntary obligation to God, they should bind themselves unto the duties of the former, as well as of the latter class. When the Lord has given a people, in his holy word, an infallible standard of moral actions, both of a civil and religious nature; must it not be high-

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ly improper for them, when they covenant with him, to recognize the one, and pay no attention at all unto the other? The glory of God, in the extent in which it should be promoted by a people, enjoying divine revelation, can never be duely advanced by them, while they act in this manner. The Lord was as really dishonoured and displeased with the injustice, oppression and murder which his ancient people committed, in their civil capacity; as he was with their error, idolatry and profaneness, in their religious state The former, as well as the latter, were charged upon them as a breach of his covenant; and on account of the one, as well as the other, he poured his judgments upon them. As the glory of God is greatly promoted among men, by a spiritually enlightened nation, when their civil affairs, as well as those that are religious, are managed according to the divine law, and as he is greatly dishonoured when it is otherwise; it must be indispensibly incumbent upon them, when they enter into covenant with him, to bind themselves to the duties which relate to their civil, as well as to their religious concerns.

5th, An argument, to confirm this truth, may be taken from the concern which the happiness of the church has with the due performance of civil duties in the land. The proper regulation of civil affairs in a nation contributes greatly to the advantage of the church, and her members. If the civil constitutions of nations are framed according to the word of God, and if their administrations are agreeable to this unerring standard, the prosperity and happiness of the church will thereby be greatly promoted. The stedfast adherence of a land to the rule of the word, in the ordering of their civil concerns, will greatly contribute to their observation of that rule, in their religious transactions. If a people make defection from the divine law, as a civil society; it cannot be supposed, that they, as a church, will long walk according to the commandment. It certainly must be the duty of Christians, in their covenanting with God, to engage themselves to those duties which are intimately connected with their own advantage. As the proper management of their civil matters is so essential to the prosperity of the church, it must be their duty, when they

covenant with God, to engage themselves unto the due performance of civil, as well as religious duties; and therefore the church's public covenants with God must contain an obligation to perform all commanded duties.

6th, The last argument that shall be mentioned, in proof of this point, may be taken from the different stations, in which those persons, whose duty it is to covenant with God, may, in his sovereign providence, be placed. In the honourable list of covenanters, the names of those will be found, who exercise civil rule and authority over men; as well as the names of those, who are public teachers of religion, and preachers of the gospel of Christ. The persons in whose hands the legislative and executive powers of a nation, relative to their civil affairs, are lodged; and the persons who are pastors, teachers, and rulers among them, as a Christian church, will unite in the great and solemn work of public covenanting with God. The body of the people, who are bound together by so many relations civil and religious, and are obliged to the performance of so many duties to God and one another of various kinds, will also be found in the number of those, who will join themselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, that shall not be forgotten. It is essential to all covenanting with God, that the covenanters bind themselves to prosecute the ends of their covenant, according to their different stations. It must therefore be necessary, that the duties relative to civil things make a part of our covenant-obligations. How is it possible that men in civil office can be covenanters, if the important duties of their honourable station are excluded from the oath of God? If the civil rulers, supreme and subordinate, ought to unite with others in a covenant with God, the performance of the duties of their office must be included in the obligation of that covenant. What appearance can these dignified persons make in a public vow unto the Lord, if no place is found, in the obligation thereof, for those duties, which it is their principal employment to perform? The duties of civil rulers, as well as those of the gospel minister, being required in the divine law, being also for his glory and the advantage of men and Christians, must be com-

prehended in a national vow unto and covenant with God.

Having endeavoured to confirm the truth contained in this observation, it is necessary now to shew the impropriety of that sentiment by which it has been opposed, which is the following. "Religious and civil things should not be blended together in the oath of God, or in a covenant with him; when this is done, the proper distinction which should be maintained between the concerns of the kingdom of Christ, and the affairs of the kingdoms of this world is destroyed; and hereby these things are blended together in an absurd manner; between which there is a necessary and eternal difference." Such is the language that is held, not by those only who are the open and avowed enemies of public covenanting, but by those also who pretend to be the most zealous friends of this solemn duty; on account of the latter, more than for the sake of the former, it is necessary that something be said in defence of the opposite truth. The persons, to whom we have now alluded, generally exert their ingenuity, to find out excuses for our reformers, with a view to palliate the gross blunders which they suppose them to have committed, in framing and entering into the national covenant of Scotland, and the solemn league of Scotland, England and Ireland; for in these public vows, no doubt, both the civil and religious interests and duties of the nations are contained. As we do not suppose that the conduct of our reformers stands in need of any excuses, because it was agreeable to the word of God, and the footsteps of the flock, we shall not take any notice of them; but proceed to examine this opinion, and in order to this, shall endeavour fairly to state the question.

With a view to clear the case, it is necessary to observe, that we are not speaking of what is the duty, and should be the exercise of a body of Christians, in covenanting with God, who have been brought to the knowledge and profession of Christianity, in an unenlightened and unreformed land, where the great body of the people and their rulers have never nationally received, and submitted unto the truth as it is in Jesus. No doubt it is impossible for them, in these circumstances,

to carry on the duty of covenanting, in the manner in which it was done by our ancestors, at the times of our reformation. Nor are we speaking of the duty and work of a company of Christians, about covenanting with God, who live in a land that was once nationally engaged to the Lord by covenant, but who are now completely apostatized from their covenanted attainments, and who are nationally disregarding and acting contrary to their covenant obligations unto God. It is evident also that persons, in this situation, cannot perform the work of covenanting, in the particular way in which it prospered in the hands of our forefathers. But we are speaking concerning the duty of the church of God, when she is brought, in his merciful goodness to her, unto a national state; when the great body of the people of all ranks, and their rulers are enlightened in the knowledge of the gospel, and are become willing to take upon them the yoke of Christ: With respect to the duty of a people in this situation, notwithstanding of all the clamour, either of professed friends or open enemies of this solemn duty, it is believed and affirmed, that their covenanting with God should include an obligation to perform all commanded duties, both with respect to their religious and civil concerns. Having thus stated the matter in dispute, we shall now proceed to answer the objection, which may be done in the following particulars.

1st, If it is sinful and absurd to blend civil and religious concerns and duties together, in the church's covenant with God, how came it to pass that these different things were mingled, by the direction and with the approbation of God, in Israel's covenanting with him? Certainly the Lord never commanded or approved of any thing that was sinful, or even absurd in the nature of it. No supposable difference betwixt the situation of the church under the former, and under the present dispensation, can ever make a thing that is sinful and absurd in its nature at present, to have been consistent, beautiful and moral in the foregoing period. If they are now such opposite and contrary things, that cannot lawfully be conjoined, in the church's oath of obedience unto God; it is impossible that they could ever be united, by divine authority,

in a sacred vow unto him. This opinion casts a blasphemous reflection upon the wisdom and holiness of God, in his institutions and administrations with his antient people; and therefore ought to be rejected.

NOTE } 2d. If it is sinful and improper to blend together civil and sacred things in our covenant with God, whence is it that they are thus blended together in the moral law? If these are matters, betwixt which there is such an eternal difference, that they cannot stand together in a people's covenant obligation unto God; it is impossible to see how the Lord would have caused them to stand together in his holy revealed law, which is the rule of duty to the rational creature. What God has joined together in his law, no person or people are warranted to put asunder in this exercise of covenanting with him. Surely the example of God, in joining things together in the moral law, and in the precepts of his word, by which that law is explained, is a better directory to the Christian church, what things to unite with one another, in their bond of obligation to the Lord, than the vain imaginations of erring men.

3d. If it is absurd to blend civil and religious things in a people's covenant with God, whence is it that the members of the church are under an unavoidable necessity of blending them together in their Christian practice? Every day they live, the saints of God have an opportunity of performing duties, not only of a religious, but also of a civil nature. The children of men are concerned necessarily with both tables of the law, in their conversation. They have civil rights, as well as religious privileges which they are daily enjoying, are bound to preserve the one as well the other, and have daily occasion to perform lawful moral actions, about the former as well as the latter. As these different duties are daily mingled in the obedience which they yield unto the divine law; will not this warrant them to comprehend them both in their covenant obligation unto God. Where is the absurdity of their being conjoined in our voluntary obligation to duty, when they are necessarily connected in our daily performance of it?

4th, A civil state, whose constitutions and administrations are regulated according to the word of God, is not

that society, which the scripture calls a kingdom of this world; as is most improperly affirmed in the objection. The words of divine revelation where this name is used, have been considered already, and are found in Rev. xi. 15. *The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ.* This expression, the kingdoms of this world, does not refer to a nation, viewed merely as a civil society, managing their outward, political and civil affairs, but it describes a people who are carnal, earthly and corrupt in the constitution and management both of their civil and religious concerns. It must be in the former of these senses that it is used in the objection, as it is opposed to the kingdom of Christ, and as it is an objection against our solemn covenants; for it was the duties and concerns of the reformed civil state, that had a place therein. This however is not at all the meaning of the words, in this portion of scripture, which were uttered by the great voices in heaven. Let us try which of these senses of this scriptural name, is most agreeable to the meaning of the declaration, with which it is connected. The civil and political societies of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; or, the civil and political states of this world are converted into churches. Is not this to make the great voices in heaven speak absurdity and nonsense? How is it possible that nations, as they are, civil bodies, can be transformed into ecclesiastical societies? But this, absurd and foolish as it is, must be the change predicted in these words, if the name, the kingdoms of this world, describe nations as they are political bodies. Let us now see how this name, in the sense in which we have viewed it, quadrates with the declaration of which it is a part. The nations of the world, which are carnal, earthly and corrupt both in their civil and religious capacities, are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ. Is not this the very alteration which is here foretold, by the Spirit of prophecy? The great voices in heaven proclaim, that the time was fast approaching, when the antichristian, Mahometan, and heathen nations, that were kingdoms of this world, on account of their ignorance, error, superstition, idolatry, tyranny and immorality, should undergo such a change, by the

light of the gospel and the power of the Spirit, as would make them become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ. It is therefore most inconsiderate and improper, to reckon a civil state, constituted and administering their affairs according to the scriptures, a kingdom of this world, the righteous management of whose outward and civil concerns, cannot make a part of that duty, to which a people, enlightened with the gospel, should bind themselves in their covenanting with God.

5th, That civil and religious things are absurdly blended together in the oath of God, constitutes the great charge contained in the objection, against this article of divine truth which it opposes. There is no doubt, civil and religious things may be sinfully blended together, in different respects; but in none of these ways are they so blended, in our solemn national covenants. Civil and religious things are sinfully and absurdly blended together, when they are confounded with each other, and not duly distinguished in their nature, objects and relative importance; when the place which belongs to the one is given to the other; when spiritual and religious services are required from, or usurped by civil rulers, and civil legislation or administrations are grasped by ecclesiastic persons; when civil rulers become subject to churchmen, in things of a civil nature, as was the case in the dominion exercised by antichrist over the kings of the earth; and when the teachers and rulers of the church are made the servants of temporal princes in religious matters, as is the case with all erastian states, where the civil rulers exercise a supremacy over the church. Were civil and religious things blended together in any of these ways, by our forefathers, in their covenanting with God, there would be some ground for the objection; but when it is evident to all, that no such thing is found in them, the objection must be utterly unreasonable. Civil and religious things indeed stand together in these solemn transactions; but they are not, in any of these ways, blended with each other in them. Each of these classes of duties, in our public religious covenants, have their proper place assigned them, the necessary distinction between them is fully maintained, and the performance of them is ascribed to the proper objects, without either

the church-men's scandalous usurpation of the prerogative and administrations of civil rulers, or the magistrate's erastian encroachment upon the duty and jurisdiction of the servants of Christ in his house. This being the case, it is impossible for any man to say with truth, that civil and religious things are sinfully and absurdly blended together, in the church's public covenants with God.

6th, With a short representation of the views of our reformers, by which their conduct, in framing and entering into our solemn covenants, seems to have been directed, which will appear to be reasonable and scriptural, the answer to this objection may be concluded. In the first period of the reformation, when the national covenant was compiled, our ancestors were emerging from popish darkness, idolatry and tyranny; and in the second period, when the solemn league and covenant was sworn, they were extricating themselves from the errors, superstition and oppression of prelacy; by both of which their political and ecclesiastic constitutions and administrations had been grievously corrupted. They were persuaded, that purity, in their religious concerns as a church, could not be maintained for any time, if they did not acquire some suitable degree of conformity to the scriptural standard, in their civil affairs as a nation. They were convinced, that a people, enjoying divine revelation, are bound by the authority of God, to establish civil government among them, in the scriptural purity thereof; as well as to set up all the ordinances of the house of God in the church, according to his word. They were sensible, that both the magistracy in the state, and the ministry in the church were ordinances of God, with the proper establishment of which in the land, the scripture-law, the glory of God, and the good of men were eminently concerned; and that a people who profess to desire and endeavour that the latter be enjoyed by them in purity, while they suffer the former to remain in a corrupt state, act a part which is contrary both to scripture and reason. They were of opinion, that having attained this purity, it was their duty to preserve it intire in their own day, and to use every scriptural mean to transmit the same unto the following generations; and

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that one of the principal means for these ends was, to enter into a solemn national vow unto the Lord, or covenant with him, attended with the instituted solemnity of an oath unto him, whereby they should bind themselves to perform all the duties of their different stations, that the nation might enjoy the benefit of the reformation-purity both in church and state, and that all these attainments might be handed down to posterity. Influenced by views of this nature, our forefathers entered upon the great and necessary work of reforming both the civil throne, and the sanctuary of the Lord. They settled the church of God upon her true foundation, and fixed from his word her pure doctrine, worship, government and discipline. They established civil government among them in its purity, and specified the terms precisely upon which they conveyed, and their rulers received civil authority over them; and made provision, as far as it was in their power, that this constitution should produce corresponding administrations. Having accomplished this great work, they entered into a covenant with God, as a people that were reformed in their civil and religious capacities, both to carry into effect for their present good, and to preserve the fabric of reformation which they had been enabled to build; in which covenant the preservation of their civil and religious privileges, the promoting of their civil and religious interests, and the performance of all the duties belonging to their civil and religious concerns, are the objects to which they did solemnly engage themselves. What is there in all this that is contrary to scripture, or in opposition to reason? Is it, not rather, in every part of it, perfectly proper, highly becoming, and absolutely necessary? Where would have been the propriety, of leaving out of their covenant-obligations unto God, the important duties of their civil concerns and administrations, of which the revealed law is the sacred rule, and to the performance of which they were solemnly bound by the authority of God in that law? How absurd would it have been, for them to have admitted the illustrious band of reformed Christian civil rulers into the oath of God, merely in the character of private Christians, without including in the national oath the important and necessary duties,

with reference to the performance of which, it is their great employment to attend continually upon this very thing? Had the nation, in the days of our covenanting ancestors, acted in this manner, would it not have been considered as a treating with national contempt the authority of God in his law, requiring them to express due gratitude to him for their national civil privileges, and to bind themselves to perform their various civil duties? Since the law of God requires the performance of civil duties, and the right management of civil administrations from men; and since the glory of God and the advantage of men are promoted by these, as well as by the right regulation and observation of those which are of a more spiritual nature, our reformers must have done well, in so framing their public national covenants with God, as to include in their obligation, the performance of all commanded duties, both of a civil and of a religious nature.

Eightly, It is a precious privilege for a people to be in covenant with God. Who are the people that are mentioned in the text? They are the house of Israel and the house of Judah. The posterity of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were highly privileged above all nations on the earth; but they were in covenant with God, and their covenant-relation unto him was the foundation of their enjoying such distinguishing and peculiar privileges. Would we therefore share of these blessings, we must also be in covenant with God. On this account, it must be a great privilege for a person or a people, to be in a covenant-relation unto the Lord their God.

The greatness of this privilege may be evident, from the words of God unto Moses, when the Lord made the covenant with Israel at Horeb: *Exod. xix. 4, 5, 6. Ye have seen what I have done unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.* When a people are brought into covenant with God, they are delivered from the dominion of error, idolatry, will-worship, and corruptions of various kinds; and are blessed with the knowledge of the truth

respecting the doctrine, worship, government and discipline of the church of Christ. This work the Lord performed for the lands of our nativity. He delivered them from popish abominations, and from prelatie corruptions, and caused the light of gospel-truth to shine on them; by which he delivered them from Egypt, bare them on eagle's wings, and brought them to himself. A people in covenant with God are a peculiar treasure unto him. He has a special interest in them, distinct from that interest which he has in other nations, and more excellent than it; for all the earth is his. A covenanted people become a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation unto the Lord. These names clearly import, that those who are in covenant with God are a people, who are freed from the corruptions which are in the world through lust, who are blessed with eminent nearness unto the Lord, by whom he is peculiarly glorified, in whom he takes special delight, and over whom he exercises a particular care. In confirmation of all this, the words of the prophet Isaiah may be mentioned; chap. lxii. 4. *Thou shalt no more be termed forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed desolate; but thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah, and thy land, Beulah; for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.* A people who are not in covenant with God are forsaken and desolate. The spiritual privileges, which are enjoyed by the church, are denied unto them; and the miseries, which pertain unto the nations which know not God, are found in their wretched lot. But the nation, that is in covenant with him, is the object of the Lord's delight, because they are brought into a marriage-relation unto him, as their head and husband. Let none object to what has been said, because it is taken from the words of the Lord, relative to his antient people. For, as there is nothing in the moral nature of the covenant-relation betwixt God and Israel, that is inconsistent with, or unfruitful unto the condition of the church in New Testament times; so there is nothing belonging unto the temporal or spiritual blessings of the antient church, that may not be enjoyed by a covenanting people, under the gospel-dispensation. If these were the privileges of God's covenant-people, under the darker administration

of grace to them; how much more shall they be enjoyed, by a people who have joined themselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, under the clearer dispensation of gospel-grace to the children of men? The only difference that can justly be made, relates unto the extent thereof. It was inconsistent with the former dispensation, to allow any nation but the seed of Israel to enjoy these blessings; but under the gospel, the middle wall of partition having been taken down, there is nothing in the nature of things now to hinder any nation, nay, all nations from participating of this felicity.

The happiness of a nation that is in covenant with God, and is acting agreeable to this relation, may be summed up in the following particulars.—They will have God in Christ to be their friend. In their covenanting with him, they have taken hold of him as their God, and have devoted themselves unto the Lord to be his people. While they are enabled, by the grace that is in Christ Jesus their Lord, to act like his covenant-people; *The Lord their God, who is mighty, will be in the midst of them, he will save, he will rejoice over them with joy, he will rest in his love, he will joy over them with singing.*—A people, in this situation, will have among them a great number of real, and very eminent saints. When the Lord carries on a glorious work of outward reformation, and covenanting in any land; he will, at the same time, accomplish a work of saving grace in the hearts of multitudes, and cause the principles of grace advance to very high degrees in the souls of many. It certainly must be an extraordinary blessing unto any nation, when those who are the pillars of a land, on whose account judgments are either averted or greatly shortned, who are the light of the world, and are the salt thereof who keep it from corruption, are found amongst them in great abundance. If these are found in any land, it must be among a people who are in covenant with God; and if they are to be found at any time more than at another, it will be on solemn covenanting seasons.—A people, that have publicly covenanted with God, will enjoy many precious and Christian privileges from the Lord, among which the following may be mentioned. A church constituted among them according to the rule of the word; the

preaching of the everlasting gospel, and the dispensation of the other ordinances of divine institution, as means both for the conversion of sinners, and for the edification of believers; the scriptural government of the church, and the proper ordering of her affairs, through the instrumentality of office-bearers, who are appointed by the Lord Christ; the faithful administration of the censures of the house of God, for the benefit of all concerned; kings who shall be nursing fathers, and their queens who shall be nursing mothers unto the church; and a multitude of benefits, arising from the holy example, religious advice, and effectual fervent prayers of the godly among them. These are by no means small privileges, they are blessings that are exceeding great.—Upon a nation in covenant with him, the Lord will bestow many temporal benefits. When a nation's ways, in this respect, please the Lord, he causeth even their enemies to be at peace with them, and will remove war far from their borders. He will cause the earth to yield her increase unto them, and will lay no famine upon them. In all their concerns they shall have the blessing of God, and shall enjoy that prosperity in all things, that is for his glory and their real benefit. With respect to the blessedness of a people in this situation, we may say, *Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency?* A view of the privileges of a covenanted land, made David cry out, *Happy is that people whose God is the Lord.*

Ninthly, The Lord will ever remember and acknowledge the covenant, which exists betwixt him and his church. He still kept in memory, and did recognize the covenant, which subsisted betwixt him and his people Israel; and therefore he says concerning it, the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant, which I made with their fathers. The words of the text discover the Lord's remembrance of the covenant, which he had made with Israel. Though they had forgotten this solemn and holy covenant, yet it was not forgotten of God. The text also imports that the Lord owned this covenant, and was ready at all times to acknowledge it. The Lord was not ashamed of this covenant, nor was it ever the object of his disapprobation.

Israel indeed acted as if they had been ashamed of this covenant, and as if they had disapproved of it; but the Lord, in the midst of all that contempt with which his people treated their covenant with him, says of it, it is my covenant which I made with their fathers. The truth of this observation will be further evident, and its importance illustrated from the following considerations.

1st, The Lord remembered and did acknowledge his covenant with his people, by making honourable mention of it, in his addresses unto them. In the text and context the Lord speaks to the seed of Israel concerning it, in the most respectful manner. This also the Lord did, by the ministry of all the prophets. Such is the representations which the Lord gave his people of his covenant with them, on every occasion, as will clearly prove his love and esteem of it, and that he never would either forget or disown it. Though the season of the labours of extraordinary and inspired men in the church of God, is come to an end; yet when the ordinary ambassadors of Christ, speaking to his people in his name, and according to his word, declare the excellency, usefulness, and obligation of these solemn deeds, the Lord is by their instrumentality, speaking of the covenant, which exists betwixt him and his professing people, with honour and respect.

2^d, The Lord testifies his regard unto his people's covenant with him, by calling them to fulfil their obligations unto him. How often does the Lord, in his word and by the ministry of his servants, exhort a people, who have sworn unto him, to keep his covenant, and perform their vows? In the 6th verse preceding the text, the prophet receives a commission from the Lord, to perform this work, in the most solemn manner. He was commanded to travel through all the cities of Judah, and every street of Jerusalem, to publish Jehovah's royal proclamation to the inhabitants thereof, the great and important substance of which was, *Hear ye the words of this covenant, and do them.* The Lord, speaking by David, calls his people not only to vow, but also to pay their vows unto the Lord their God. By the prophet Nahum, the Lord renews the call, in these very affecting words, *O Judah, perform thy vows.* If the Lord did not

always remember, and acknowledge his covenant with his people, he would not, in such an earnest and frequent manner, put them in mind of their covenant-duties, and exhort them to the performance thereof.

3d, The Lord's remembrance and acknowledgement of his covenant with his people will also appear, from his encouraging them to keep his covenant, by promising to bless them in this course; and from his deterring them from breaking it, by threatening to punish them for this sin. He does not only call them to fulfil their covenant by his authority, but allures and encourages them to this by his promise. The sum of his promises to this effect, is contained in these remarkable words of Moses, Exod. xix. 5. *Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine.* It is here promised unto a people who are in covenant with God, that they shall be the happy objects, in whom the Lord hath a peculiar interest, in whom he taketh a peculiar delight, over whom he will exercise a peculiar care, upon whom he puts a peculiar value, and whom he considers as making up his peculiar riches or inheritance. As the Lord testifies his respect unto his covenant, by giving his people abundant assurances of his favour and goodness, in fulfilling their obligations; so the same thing is discovered by the revelation of the threatening against covenant-breakers. The words of Joshua to the tribes of Israel lay this matter before the children of men. When Israel's covenant with God was renewed, he said unto the tribes assembled for this solemn exercise at Shechem, Josh. xxiv. 20. *If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good.* Upon a people who break their covenant with God, the Lord here threatens to bring the evil of punishment, which should waste their comforts, render them miserable, and at last consume them.

4th, He shews his regard unto his covenant, by taking notice of the conduct of a people who have vowed unto him, that he may know whether they are fulfilling or breaking their solemn obligations. Did the Lord pay no regard to the behaviour of his church, by which his

covenant is either kept or broken, it would manifest that the covenant itself was but little the object of his concern; but the reverse of this is the case. We find the church acknowledging this truth, Psal. xlv. 20, 21. *If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god; shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.* Yes, his eyes are upon all the ways of his church, and he observes all their doings, not with respect to his law only; but with reference to their voluntary obligations also, that it may appear whether they are faithful or perfidious in his covenant.

5th, The Lord's bestowing upon a people, who keep his covenant, the blessings contained in the promise; and his inflicting upon them who break it, the misery found written in the threatening, prove his favourable regard unto these solemn transactions. When Israel walked in the ways of God, and kept his covenant, he was not to them a barren wilderness or a land of drought; but freely and abundantly conferred upon them the rich blessings of his grace and mercy. Of this, the spiritual and temporal prosperity of the people of God, in the days of David, Solomon, Aza, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah, are incontestible evidences. As he fulfilled his promise unto those who kept, he also executed his threatenings upon them who brake his covenant. All the calamities which were brought upon Israel, in their different generations, have this evil assigned as one of their procuring causes. Their different captivities out of their own land, which brought upon them accumulated disgrace and ruin, were occasioned by this sin. For the proof of this, it is necessary only to repeat the words of Moses, and of Jeremiah. Deut. xxix. 24, 25. *Even all nations shall say, Wherefore hath the Lord done this unto this land? what meaneth the heat of this great anger? Then men shall say, because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers, which he made with them, when he brought them forth out of the land of Egypt.* Jer. xxii. 8, 9. *And many nations shall pass by this city, and they shall say every man to his neighbour, Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this great city? And they shall answer, because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God, and have worshipped other gods, and served them.*

6th, The Lord's regard unto his covenant with the church, is also evident from the gracious issue which this relation to him shall take, by the exercise of his goodness, in recovering them from a state of apostacy and misery into which they had fallen. He will not finally cast off a covenanted people; but will remember mercy for them, deliver them from their low estate, and restore them to the enjoyment of his special goodness as their covenant God. Although a covenanted people may so far forget and disown their special relation unto God, as neither to be sensible of their voluntary obligation unto him, nor seek or expect covenant-blessings from him; yet the Lord will not in this manner, nor on that account, give up with his interest in, or relation unto them. What the Lord did for his people Israel, he will do, in his own time and way, for every Christian covenanted land; which is recorded, Lev. xxvi. 44, 45. *And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them; for I am the Lord their God. But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt, in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God; I am the Lord.* On all these accounts, it clearly appears, that the Lord neither forgets, nor disowns, but remembers and acknowledges, the covenant, which subsists betwixt him and his people.

Tenthly, It is an important duty, for a people to keep their covenant with God; and a very aggravated sin, to violate their sacred obligations unto him. Although the words of the text, and the nature of the things evince the truth of both parts of this observation; yet, that our minds may be the more affected therewith, a short scriptural illustration of each of them may be necessary. This shall be attempted in the following particulars.

1st, That it is the duty of a people, who are in covenant with God, to fulfil their obligations unto him, will be confirmed from the command of God which requires it. Were this not the case, the Lord would never interpose his authority concerning it, in such a positive manner as he does. Read his royal order relative to this matter, Deut. xxix. 9. *Keep therefore the words of this*

covenant, and do them; and again Jer. xi. 6. Hear ye the words of this covenant, and do them. The sovereign authority of the King eternal, immortal and invisible, the only wise God binds the consciences of the children of men, to the performance of their covenant-obligations; and, therefore, the duty must be of great importance.

2d, This truth will further appear, from the honourable way in which a people's conduct is mentioned in the Lord's word, who have endeavoured to fulfil their obligations unto him. Of the tribe of Levi, Moses says, Deut. xxxiii. 9. *For they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant.* Of the children of Judah, in the days of Aza, it is said, 2 Chron. xv. 15. *And all Judah rejoiced at the oath, for they had sworn with all their heart, and they sought him with their whole desire, and he was found of them; and the Lord gave them rest on every side.* To the honour of the same people, in the days of Josiah, the Spirit of God testifies, 2 Kings xxiii. 3. *And all the people stood to the covenant.* Since such divine commendations are given to a people, for performing their covenant-engagements to the Lord, it must be a duty of great importance.

3d, The excellency of this duty may also be discerned, from the notice that is taken of it in the promise or prophecy of God's word. A very striking instance of this is found, Isa. xix. 21. *Yea, they shall vow a vow unto the Lord, and shall perform it.* These words may be viewed both as prophecy and a promise of God to the church; and, in either of these considerations, the importance of this duty is abundantly evident. As the greatness and excellency of the duty of public covenanting clearly appears, from the Lord's having foretold that it should obtain, in the days of the New Testament, among Gentile nations; so the vast importance of the duty of fulfilling our solemn obligations is evident, from its having been foretold by the Spirit, as it is in these words, that the gospel-church should perform their vows unto the Lord. Considering the words as a promise of God, the greatness of this duty will also be evident from them. Such is the excellency of this duty, that the God and Rock of our salvation has mercifully engaged himself, to communicate such measures of grace unto the New Testament church, as will enable them, not only to vow a vow un-

to him, but also to perform it. The Lord having made the duty of fulfilling covenant-obligations unto him, the subject-matter of scripture-prophecy, and of a gracious promise; from this the importance of the exercise may be safely concluded.

4th, The excellency of this duty is also very great, because the right performance of it is ground of comfort to the church, under adverse dispensations of divine providence. When the church was sorely tried with adversity, the consideration of this was one spring of her consolation: This is expressed in Psal. xlv. 17. *All this is come upon us; yet we have not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant.* In the eight preceding verses, the church represents the various troubles to which, at that time, she was subjected; but it was matter of joy to her, that she had been enabled, by the grace of God, to fulfil her covenant-obligations unto him. It was a comfortable reflection unto the church, that though the Lord had visited her with great adversity, yet she had not dealt falsely in his covenant.

5th, The advantages arising from this duty discover its importance. Three of these shall be mentioned. Those who fulfil their covenant-obligation unto God, he will advance unto the most distinguished honour. Exod. xxx. 5. *If ye—keep my covenant—ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me.* What an inconceivable honour is it, for persons to be a peculiar treasure unto the ever blessed Jehovah, to be made up by him amongst his precious jewels, and to compose a part of his portion, or the lot of his inheritance! Himself assures us that this shall be the blessedness of all who keep his covenant.—Those who do so shall enjoy universal prosperity. Of this we are informed by the Lord's word, Deut. xxix. 9. *Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do.* Whatever they should do, with respect to the concerns of this present life, they shall enjoy in it all necessary and profitable prosperity. And whatever they may perform, with relation to the interests of their souls, the Lord will make them to prosper therein, for his own glory, and for their spiritual and eternal good.—Christians, who keep their covenant with the Lord, have reason to expect a blessing on their off-

spring. This truth is declared unto us in the cxxxii. Ps. ver. 12. *If thy children will keep my covenant, and my testimony that I shall teach them; their children also shall sit upon thy throne for evermore.* A promise is here made unto the seed of David, which the Lord graciously confirms by his oath, that their children should sway the sceptre of regal government over the kingdom of Israel, if they would conscientiously fulfil their covenant-engagements unto him. This promise is not peculiar unto those to whom it was primarily made; but belongs unto all, who, through the covenant of grace, have an interest in the sure mercies of David. The same declaration of grace is renewed, Psal. ciii. 17, 18. *His righteousness is unto children's children, to such as keep his covenant.* Would Christians bequeath the blessing of the Lord, unto their dear and rising posterity, which certainly is their duty and will be their desire, this is the way pointed out unto them, that in their own persons, they be careful to keep the Lord's covenant.

As the duty of keeping covenant with God is highly important, so the sin of violating sacred obligations unto him is of great aggravation. The following scripture-quotations will abundantly confirm this truth.

From the 16th to the 40th verse of the xxvi. chapter of Leviticus, we have a long list of awful and fore judgments which the Lord threatens to bring upon his people Israel. The cause of all these is mentioned in the 15th verse, which is their breaking his covenant. In the 25th verse we have the following most pointed expressions; *And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant; and when ye are gathered together within your cities, I will send the pestilence among you; and ye shall be delivered into the hand of your enemy.*—The greatness of this sin is evident from the Lord's words unto Solomon, which are recorded, 1 Kings xi. 11. *Wherefore the Lord said unto Solomon, forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant.* The sin of covenant-breaking was the cause of the Lord's dividing the chosen tribes into two nations; which was not only a punishment to the house of David, but a source of great af-

fiction unto the whole people.—This mournful truth is also confirmed by the words of Hosea, chap. x. 4. *They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant; thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field.* The sin here mentioned is covenant-breaking. They had indeed made a covenant, but they had broken it, and thereby they manifested that they had sworn falsely in making it. What were the effects of this? Judgments, in their number, like the luxuriant growth of hemlock; in their nature, noxious and destructive, like this poisonous herb, are the genuine fruits of this evil.—The manner in which the Lord speaks of this sin, as charged upon a people, discovers the peculiar criminality of it. In the lxxviii. Psalm 10th verse, the Lord charges the children of Ephraim with this sin in the following words; *They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law.* The whole congregation of Israel are, in the 37th verse, charged with the same evil, in a way that sufficiently expresses the greatness of this sin. *For their hearts were not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant.* From these words it is evident, that covenant-breaking is an obstinate refusing of God's law, and proceeds from an aver-sion of heart at him.—The Lord, by the prophet Hosea, chap. vi. 7. speaks of this evil in words still more remarkable. *But they like men have transgressed my covenant.* Or, as it is read by some, *But they like Adam have transgressed my covenant.* The heinous nature of this sin is manifest, from both these readings of the text. They who are my people, and by profession are an holy race, act like darkened, unrenewed and heathen men in transgressing my covenant. Or, according to the other reading of the words, The sin of my people, in transgressing my covenant, bears a great resemblance unto the first sin of Adam, whereby the covenant of works was broken, the favour and image of God were lost, and the whole human race brought and exposed unto temporal, spiritual and eternal misery.—It may serve to illustrate the same truth to observe, that the sin of covenant-breaking is mentioned by the apostle, Rom. i. 31. and 2 Tim. iii. 3. amongst the most unnatural, abominable and scandalous offences. Thus it appears that keeping covenant

with God is a most necessary and important duty, and that breaking our engagements to him possesses high degrees of criminality.

Having finished the illustration of the doctrinal observations, it is necessary to add some practical improvement of the subject, which shall be done in the following inferences deduced from what has been said.

1st, This subject informs us, that it is the duty of Christians to bring themselves under solemn and voluntary obligations unto the service of the Lord their God. From the principles already laid down and proved, nothing can be a more plain or native inference than this. Besides it appears to be a self-evident proposition. The reverse of it cannot be viewed, without exciting abhorrence in all religious minds. That it is not the duty of Christians to bring themselves under solemn and voluntary obligations to serve their God, will never be believed by those who have their senses duly exercised to discern between good and evil. That comprehensive duty which Christ requires of them, who have come to him, and have found rest in him, *Take my yoke upon you.* Mat. xi. 29. plainly includes this important exercise. All those who have come unto Christ for salvation, and have found rest to their souls in him, will be constrained to take his yoke upon them which is easy, and his burden which is light. This yoke of Christ is the yoke of obedience to his holy commandments, which is not grievous to those who are renewed in the spirit of their minds. The taking Christ's yoke upon us comprehends, not only our external obedience to the law, but also those exercises of the mind concerning that law, which must necessarily go before our fulfilling it. A spiritual knowledge, approbation and esteem of the law; a clear discerning of its moral and perpetual obligation, by the authority of God, upon our consciences; and an holy purpose of heart, and firm resolution, in the strength of Christ, both to keep ourselves from the evils which the law forbids, and to practise the duties which it requires, are all necessary in order to our practical conformity unto it. All conscientious and acceptable obedience to the law of God must follow these exercises of the mind, and cannot go before them, whereby the Christian is brought to a

most cordial resolution, and a voluntary determination, to make the Lord's most holy precepts the rule of his conversation. Now, what is this Christian resolution or determination to obey the law, but the believer's bringing himself under a voluntary obligation, by his own act, to serve the Lord. This voluntary obligation is absolutely necessary unto all acceptable obedience; it is the effect of the mind's perceiving the original obligation, under which the person is to obey the law, by the divine authority of the Lawgiver; it comes between the Christian's discerning the original divine obligation, and his practical compliance therewith; itself is an act of obedience to the law; and it is greatly strengthened, as it is daily renewed by the Christian, through the course of his holy obedience. Whenever a person comes to be savingly enlightened in the knowledge of the law, and of its obligation upon him, he immediately resolves upon obeying it. His obedience to the law commences with that act, whereby he resolves that whatever others do, as for him he will serve the Lord. The Christian cannot thus determine or resolve without bringing himself under a voluntary obligation to obey. It is therefore evident, that both the discovery of the original divine obligation of the law, and the Christian's willing engagement to fulfil it, are absolutely necessary unto all acceptable obedience. If these may be formed in the mind, they may be expressed in words unto the Lord. Of this we have innumerable instances in the scriptures. If they may be expressed in words, they may be uttered in the form of a promise, vow, or oath unto the Lord. If these things may be done by an individual, they may be done by a company, consisting of few or many, even by a whole nation. It is, therefore, an important and necessary duty belonging to Christians, either in their personal or collective capacities, to come under voluntary obligations unto the service of the Lord.

2d, The evil of opposing the duty of public covenanting with God, is evident from this subject. Both the open enemies and the professed friends of this divine ordinance have united their efforts, though not by mutual concert, to bring it into disrepute, and to prejudice the generation against it. This opposition has been managed in various ways. By denying its morality in the times of

the New Testament; by refusing its intrinsic obligation even upon the covenanters themselves; by rejecting the proper obligation thereof on posterity; by denying to the civil duties of a people a place in the oath of God; by maintaining that an acknowledgement of the perpetual obligation of our covenants should not be required as a term of communion, in a church which professes to stand on the footing of a testimony for the covenanted reformation; and by an unnecessary and frivolous objecting to some parts of the matter, and some circumstances in the form of these solemn deeds in the days of our fathers, in these ways this great and important duty has been chiefly opposed. Many, who have been accustomed to speak of our solemn covenants with affection and respect, have their mouths now opened against them; and some from ignorance of their nature, and others from prejudices at them which they have contracted, cease not to pervert the right ways of God. This prevailing opposition to our solemn covenants is lamentable in the instruments by whom it is made, alarming as to the season in which it has appeared, and astonishing in the source from which it seems to have sprung.—It is truly lamentable if we consider the persons who have made it. This opposition to the public vows of the nation unto the Lord has been managed by men in sacred office, who professed to be witnesses for the covenanted reformation, and were solemnly bound, by their ordination-vows, to maintain it to the end; but are now appearing to act as if they were resolved to destroy, in this particular, whatever they or their fathers have built. When this religious party appeared at first, though they never gave a full testimony for the whole of the covenanted reformation, yet they were the means of reviving in the land the knowledge and remembrance of some of the parts thereof; but now, alas! it would appear, that they are likely to be the instruments of bringing that work of God for these isles of the sea, under contempt and reproach.—This opposition to our solemn covenants is alarming, if we consider the season in which it has appeared. It has been made at a time, when the Lord seems to be coming out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, to be sending di-

stres upon nations for their sin, and to be bringing a sword upon us to avenge the quarrel of his covenant. To behold, at such a time as this, a new and formidable opposition made unto these public vows, which is rapidly spreading amongst thousands of the Christian people, must be alarming to the serious mind. It will contribute to the filling up the cup of the nation's sin, and to the hastening forward of our affliction.—This new opposition to our public covenants is astonishing in the source from which it seems to have sprung. Visionary schemes of political reform, founded on deistical principles, and which have yielded such melancholy fruits, have been, with respect to many, the parents by which it has been produced, nursed and reared to maturity. The great evil of this opposition to our covenants consists in its being a fighting against God, a contempt of his ordinance, an injury done unto his church, a striking against pure and undefiled religion, and an endeavour to harden the generation in their sin. Let all the friends of our solemn covenants, and of that reformation of which they were a conspicuous part, say, with respect to all the opposers thereof, *O my soul, come not thou into their secret; into their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united.*

3d, This subject may remind us of the wonderful works which the Lord has wrought, for the land of our nativity. It was visited in the early times of Christianity, with the light of the everlasting gospel, which, in greater or lesser brightness, was long continued in it. When the dark clouds of antichristian abomination covered the nations of the earth, the light of the gospel remained in some remote parts of our land, during the most of that period. When the Lord was pleased to deliver some of the nations of the earth from the idolatry, blasphemy, and cruelty of popery, at the ever memorable protestant reformation, the light of the gospel returned to this land; and the Lord raised up many to appear for his work, to be active in promoting it, and blessed them with extraordinary success. At this first period of reformation, notwithstanding of much opposition, the church attained unto great purity in doctrine, worship, government and discipline, and entered into a solemn vow or oath unto God, called the national cove-

nant of Scotland] wherein they renounced the abominations of popery, and engaged themselves to abide in the profession of the gospel and ordinances of Christ. When the land was again subjected to great corruptions and oppression, by the establishment of prelacy and arbitrary power, the Lord wrought a wonderful deliverance, and brought the nation to higher degrees of reformation. The work which had been begun in the former period was greatly perfected in this. More extensive and complete subordinate standards of doctrine, worship, government and discipline for the Christian church, were compiled, in agreeableness to the word of God, and were solemnly adopted by civil and ecclesiastical authority. The church was established in great purity, and civil government was settled according to the light of the word of God, which shined brightly in the land. To confirm all these blessed attainments, and to render them permanent privileges to following generations, a solemn league and covenant with God was sworn, by all ranks of men in Scotland, England and Ireland, by which they bound themselves with a bond to be the Lord's people, to adhere unto the true religion, and to keep themselves from every thing that was contrary thereunto. Hereby our land became Hephzi-bah, and Beulah, a land married unto the Lord, and the object of his delight. By this solemn exercise, we, as a nation, did ask the way to Zion, with our faces thitherward, saying, *Come, let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, that shall not be forgotten, either by ourselves, or our posterity.* To this day, the professors of religion are under the strongest obligations to bless the Lord, for the attainments of that period; for it is greatly owing to these as a mean, that any religious purity remains among us, in the midst of all our defections, at the present time.

4th, This subject represents to our view the state of the children of men in the land of our nativity, respecting the sacred obligation of public religious covenants with God; they are under that obligation. Our fathers have entered into a solemn covenant with the Lord, as their God in Christ, to be his people, and to walk in all his statutes, ordinances and laws. These covenants are consonant to the word of God, both in their matter and

form. The public religious covenants of the church bind their posterity. We therefore are, and our posterity shall be bound by the sacred obligation of these covenants, to prosecute the ends thereof in our station, all the days of our life. Particularly, we are bound by the oath of God, to embrace and continue in the profession, obedience and defence of the true presbyterian reformed religion of Jesus Christ, which is revealed in the scriptures of truth, and exhibited in the subordinate standards of the church of Scotland, in the doctrine, worship, government and discipline thereof;—to endeavour to promote the knowledge, profession and practice of this holy religion, in the covenanted lands of Britain and Ireland;—to abhor and detest, to resist and extirpate all contrary religion and doctrine, errors and corruptions, as popery, prelacy, superstition, schism, profaneness, and whatsoever is contrary to sound doctrine, and the power of godliness;—to maintain the just rights, privileges and honour of all persons in lawful authority, whether civil or ecclesiastic in the state or church;—to promote the happiness, and to maintain the liberties and privileges, temporal and spiritual, of ourselves and others, and to transmit the enjoyment thereof to posterity;—to study the due performance of all the duties we owe to God and man, abstaining from all sin, and endeavouring real reformation;—to encourage the hearts, and strengthen the hands of one another in the work of the Lord, and not to suffer ourselves to be drawn away from it, or to become indifferent about it, but to continue steadfast therein unto the end;—and to have the glory of God before us as our supreme end, and the grace that is in Christ Jesus as our strength to enable us to perform our vows unto the Lord. These are some of the duties contained in the national covenant of Scotland, and in the solemn league and covenant of the three kingdoms, to which we are bound, both by the authority of God in his law, and by our solemn covenants with him. Ignorance of the nature of these covenants, of their obligation upon us, or of the duties to which we are bound by them, cannot relieve our souls from their binding force. No enmity at these solemn deeds can deliver the consciences of those who hate them from their obligation.

No contempt and reproach, which we may pour upon our national vows, will avail to set loose from the duties thereof, those who have their mouths filled with hard speeches against them. Neither can any practical contradiction of them, or apostacy from them set us free from their obligation. Ignorance or contempt of the moral law, enmity at it, and rebellion against it cannot rescue the consciences of rational creatures from the obligation, under which they are, to love and obey it; neither can these free covenanters or their posterity from the obligation of religious covenants. A very considerable number of the inhabitants of these lands are under personal and solemn vows unto the Lord, from their partaking of the Lord's supper. A still greater number of them are under obligations to duty, by taking upon themselves some kind of religious profession. Almost all of them are under covenant-obligations to the Lord, by their baptism. These obligations are of the same nature, with those of public covenants with God. The Lord, who fixes the bounds of our habitation, has brought us in to being in a land, which was solemnly devoted unto him, and he has caused us, in his merciful providence, to descend from those who entered into a solemn covenant with him to be his people, and he is still furnishing us with the most ample means of information, relative to the solemn deeds of our fathers, and their obligation upon us; we therefore are certainly under the binding force of public covenants with God, and ought to make it our great concern to fulfil them all the days of our life. To the inhabitants of these lands, the words which Jeremiah proclaimed in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, may with great propriety be addressed, *Hear ye the words of this covenant, and do them.*

5th, This subject leads us to consider some of those evils, by which we as a nation have broken the covenant, which the Lord hath made with our fathers. As the house of Israel and the house of Judah had broken the covenant, which God had made with their fathers; so we, the inhabitants of these covenanted lands, have been guilty of the same transgression. All the different steps of public apostacy from the reformation purity are, in their

NOTE: nature, mournful breaches of our covenants with God. The nation began this melancholy course, by adopting, both by civil and ecclesiastical authority, the public resolutions, whereby the known enemies of the work of God were admitted into places of authority and confidence in the land, which has been continued to the present day. All the alterations which have been made, in the constitutions and administrations either of church or state, are breaches of our national vows. The civil magistrate's claiming and exercising, and the nation's giving to him, by public acts, a blasphemous headship over the church, and a supremacy over all persons, and in all causes, ecclesiastical as well as civil, in the realm, which took place soon after the restoration, constituted a most mournful breach of covenant; and, alas! from this erastian yoke, the church has never been fully delivered. In the cruel and bloody persecution of the saints and servants of God, for adhering to their covenant-obligations, and for testifying against the evils which prevailed in their highest degree. The nation's suffering a precious opportunity for returning to their covenanted establishments, which a merciful providence ordered at the revolution, to pass away, without their duty improving it; and their settling themselves upon a foundation, whereby the attainments of the second and purest period of the reformation were overlooked, were certainly both an abuse of the goodness of God, and a breach of our covenant with him. The re-establishment of prelacy in England and Ireland, and the toleration of it in Scotland must be viewed in the same light. The incorporating union of Scotland with England, on terms inconsistent with their former covenanted conjunction, and destructive of it, can be considered in no other view. The boundless and authoritative toleration of all sects and heresies in these lands, whereby the true religion is mournfully corrupted, and whereby the nation becomes a partaker with other men's sins, is also a mournful breach of our covenants with God. The restoration of the antichristian law of patronage, and the rigorous exercise of that law, whereby men are imposed, in the character of ministers of the gospel, upon professed Christian congregations,

without their consent, and in opposition to their warmest remonstrances, is a most wanton and profane violation of the oath of God. The countenance which the nation has given to the blasphemous religion of antichrist, in tolerating it at home, and establishing it abroad, is a most mournful and affecting breach of our public vows unto God. The fond attachment of the minds of many, to deistical or infidel forms of civil government, which have been established in some parts of the world, amounts to the same thing. Our mournful church divisions, which seem to be increasing, are both awful tokens of the Lord's anger against us, and peculiar breaches of our covenant with him. The universal abounding in the land of gross errors and immoralities, of superstition and idolatry, of infidelity and profanity, and of every thing that is contrary to truth and duty, may strike our minds as visible and practical breaches of our public covenants. Besides, the want of these spiritual exercises of the heart, and of these holy endeavours in word and deed, which are necessary both to promote the interests of the true religion, and to fulfil our public vows, must be ranked amongst our breaches of the oath and covenant of God. On account of these and the like things, for the instances of our covenant-breaking cannot be fully enumerated, the Lord may justly say of us, The inhabitants of Britain and Ireland have broken my covenant, which I made with their fathers.

6th, The situation of these lands, with respect to the displeasure and the judgments of God, may be discerned from what has been said; they are the objects of these. Since we as a nation must plead guilty to the charge, which is contained in the text; we are in danger of the execution of the threatening upon us, which is expressed in the verse that follows it; *Behold, I will bring evil upon them which they shall not be able to escape, and though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them.* The evil, which is here threatened, is the evil of punishment, which he brings upon a covenant-breaking people for their sin. It is brought upon them by the mighty hand of God, and they shall not be able, by all their policy and power, to turn it away. It shall be actually inflicted upon them, though they should be constrained, in

an unreasonable and improper manner, to cry to him for deliverance. These isles of the sea have long been under many divine judgments, both of a temporal and spiritual nature. There have been times in which the anger of the Lord has been more visibly manifested against us, but he has turned from the full execution of his judgments, and has given us space to repent, and to return unto him; but, alas! we have the more grievously departed from him. If we persist in our rebellion against him, the Lord will whet his glittering sword, his hand will take hold on judgments, he will render vengeance to his enemies, and will reward them that hate him. In the times which are now passing over us, the Lord seems to be performing, in a very remarkable manner, this strange work upon the nations. The awful declaration which is contained in Isa. xxxiv. 2, 3. appears to have been mournfully accomplished of late, and may still receive a more alarming fulfilment; *For the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies, he hath utterly destroyed them; he hath delivered them to the slaughter; their slain also shall be cast out, and their sink shall come up out of their carcases, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood.* The reason of all these public calamities, which the Lord will bring upon men, is mentioned in the 8th verse. *For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Sion.* In the righteous dispensations of divine providence, judgments of the most awful nature have been inflicted upon many lands, and there is reason to apprehend that these shall be followed with more universal devastation. The character of the times wherein we live, and of those which probably will follow them, is marked in the words of Christ, Luke xxi. 22. *For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.* When the judgments of God are thus abroad in the earth, it is our duty to be learning righteousness; for, on account of our manifold sins, it certainly is the divine call to us as a nation, *Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel; and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.*

7th, The prosperous and blessed state to which the church of Christ shall yet be exalted in this world, may

be learned from what has been said. We have seen that the religion of Jesus shall be the religion of nations, that public covenanting shall prevail among them, and that the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. This period of the church's prosperity is described at the beginning of the 20th chapter of the Revelation, and has been called the glory of the latter day. Many of the Old Testament prophecies, relating to the purity, extent and glory of the church, have never been fully accomplished; but we look for it in that happy period, which shall assuredly come in its season. After the vials of the wrath of God, which contain the seven last plagues, shall be poured out upon their appointed objects, whereby the fall of antichrist, of the false prophet, and of the cities of the nations shall be accomplished, satan shall be bound a thousand years; and the church, during that time, shall have great prosperity. The blessed concerns of the church of God, whereby the divine glory, the Mediator's honour, the welfare of nations, and the salvation of immortal souls are secured, shall be established among men, and spread through the earth; but the interests of the kingdom of satan shall live no more, till the thousand years are fulfilled. Then shall the gospel and its ordinances be enjoyed, by all nations, in purity and with power; and the despised ordinance of public covenanting shall prevail among them; *For they shall vow a vow unto the Lord; and perform it.* Though we may not live to see the introduction of this blessed state of the church into the world, yet we may behold it in the promise by an assured faith, rejoice on the present appearances of its approach, and expect to hear of it; at its taking place, with heavenly delight, when our souls shall be mingled with the spirits of just men made perfect, before the throne of glory.

8th, This subject may inform us with respect to our duty, relative to the covenants, which the Lord hath made with our fathers. The text and doctrine plainly discover, that it is our duty to keep these covenants, and to perform the duties to which their obligation extends.—In order to this, the following exercises seem to be required of us.—It is our duty to obtain a proper knowledge of these solemn deeds. If we are ignorant of these,

we must either be despisers of them, or our attachment to them will not be judicious. In proportion as men are ignorant of the church's covenants with God, they are generally found treating them with contempt; and to them the words of Jude are applicable, ver. 10. *But these speak evil of those things which they know not.* Let Christians, therefore, store their minds with the scripture-doctrine, concerning the ordinance and duty of personal and public covenanting with God. Let them search the scriptures, and receive from them that instruction with which they are furnished, by the precepts and promises of God, and by the example of the saints and of the church, relative to the nature, necessity, usefulness and design of this important duty. It is also necessary, that we take the covenants of our ancestors into our most serious consideration. It is to be feared, that many who condemn them, and perhaps not a few who pretend to approve them, have never so much as read these covenants, with spiritual concern and attention. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. We can never have a proper knowledge of the solemn vows of the nation, unless we are informed as to both periods of the work of reformation, in their beginning and progress, in their nature and tendency, and in their parts and properties. In order unto this, a careful perusal of the faithful histories of these times, and a diligent study of the subordinate standards which were then compiled, are absolutely necessary. It is both surprising and mournful to see the negligence and indifference of professed Christians, about these necessary duties; for if we are not stirred up to enquire into these things, our public covenants with God will never be understood by us.—It is also our duty to make sure of our being personally in covenant with God. If we pretend to be friends to our public covenants, and profess ourselves to be under their obligation; and are, at the same time, destitute of an interest in God, as our God in Christ, our public profession, though never so right, will aggravate our condemnation at the last. Let us therefore be careful about the reality of our personal religion; for, if we want this, no profession can compensate the defect. In order unto our being personally in covenant with God, a knowledge and conviction of the misery and guilt of our natural state, by

the covenant of works; of the way of our recovery thro' Jesus Christ, by the covenant of grace; and a taking hold of him, and of that covenant of which he is the Mediator, in the exercise of a saving faith, are of absolute and indispensable necessity. O, then, let these things be our chief concern. Personal covenanting with God should also be diligently studied. It consists in the Christian's taking hold of God's covenant, as all his salvation and desire, and in devoting himself unto the Lord, to serve and glorify him, in the strength of his grace, all the days of his life. These solemn transactions betwixt God and the soul tend greatly to promote the exercise of true religion in the heart, and contribute much to the Christian's enjoying the comfort of it. It must be exceedingly absurd, for persons to profess a zeal for public covenants with God, who have never, in a religious and spiritual manner, entered into a personal covenant with him. Of all such the Lord will say, *This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.* Let Christians then be careful, while they manifest a becoming zeal for our public vows unto God, that they be personally interested in God, as their covenant-God in Christ.—It is likewise our duty to be sensible that the obligation of our public covenants is upon us, and that we act, in every respect, as persons who are under such solemn vows unto God. Since religious covenants are binding on posterity, and since we, as the offspring of a covenanted people, are under their obligation; it is of great importance to be duly convinced, by the word of God, that this is our situation. We ought not to receive this sentiment, nor any other in religion, upon trust; but should imitate the example of the people of Berea, *Who searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so.* Being convinced, on scriptural grounds, that the vows of God are upon us, it is our duty to walk according to these obligations. By avoiding every thing in our hearts and lives, which are a contradiction to the oath of God, and by carefully performing every duty which it binds us to observe, Christians hear the words of God's covenant, and do them. Our covenant-obligations extend to the frame of our hearts, to our religious profession, to our conduct with respect to

that profession, to the sentiments we either adopt or reject, and to the whole of our moral deportment. Christians must be careful, in all these particulars, to regulate themselves according to their covenant-obligations. A mental or practical approbation of those things which our covenants with God oblige us to abhor and avoid, must be a criminal breach of them; but a stedfast adherence to our covenanted principles, and a conversation consonant thereunto, must be a fulfilling of them. In our abstaining from evil, and performing duties, with which our covenant-obligations have a concern, we ought to have a particular view to the fulfilling of these obligations. As we ought to make the law of God, in a supreme respect, the reason as well as the rule of our obedience; so should we, in a subordinate sense, improve our covenants with God. The person who is inattentive to this, as he overlooks a special inducement to duty, so his obedience, on that account, must be attended with a culpable defect. — It is also incumbent on us to mourn over the breaches of these covenants, whether they are of a personal, or of a public nature. In all the confessions of sin and mourning for it, in which the saints have engaged, their own sins, as well as the sins of others, were deeply impressed on their minds. What person is innocent of the sin of covenant-breaking? Who can wipe his mouth and say, that, in this particular, he has done no iniquity? Let individual persons then mourn before the Lord, and confess unto him their breaches of his covenant; and let them study, in the strength of divine grace, to turn from their transgressions. While Christians are thus exercised about things that are personal, they are not to overlook the public evils, by which God's covenant is broken; but they must imitate the example of those mourners in Sion, who sighed and cried for all the abominations that were done in the land. These courses of apostacy and sin, which have been long abounding, and are still increasing among us, should lead us to the exercise of the holy man who said, *Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law*, Psal. cxix. 136. We cannot free ourselves of the guilt of a covenant-breaking generation, we cannot approve ourselves to God as zealous for holiness, whereby he is glorified, or zealous against sin, by which he is dis-

honoured, unless the exercise of Lot is our study and attainment, of whom it is said, *For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul, from day to day, with their unlawful deeds*, 2 Pet. ii. 8. Let us go and do likewise. — It is also our duty to espouse and support a faithful testimony, against the covenant-breaking courses of the times, and in behalf of the covenanted attainments of our fathers. The necessity of this duty is evident, from the character which the Lord gives unto his people, Isa. xliii. 12. *Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God*. When he describes the character and work of his church, during the reign of anti-christ, it is in the following words. *And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth*, Rev. xi. 3. In the same visions with which John saw for the word of God, martyrs of Jesus are said to be *slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held*, Rev. vi. 9. The word of God is one thing, and the church's testimony for the truths of that word is another thing; and it was for their attachment unto the word of God, and for the faithful witness which they bare unto the truths of it, that they were put to death by their cruel persecutors. The nature or extent of this testimony, which Christians are called to espouse and support, is fixed by the Lord's dispensations to the church, and is not left to the choice of the witness-bearers. The church's testimony must comprehend her public declaration both for the things of God, and against those things which are opposite thereunto. In the church's testimony for the things of God, his whole truths, and all her pure attainments must be witnessed unto, as objects which the church approve and maintain. If any of them are overlooked, her testimony for God must be partial indeed. In the church's testimony against courses of corruption and apostacy, all these must be expressed, or condemned and rejected by her; and, if any of them is passed over in silence, her testimony must be unfaithful. Though the testimony of the church may torment the men that dwell upon the earth, yet it is most friendly in its design, and beneficial in its tendency unto them. It has nothing less for its object than to promote the glory of God among them, to exhib-

bit his truths unto them, to turn them from their sinful and ruinous courses, to bring them to the knowledge and service of God, and to promote their spiritual and eternal salvation. Let Christians, therefore, be careful religiously and cheerfully to espouse, and spiritually and practically to support a faithful testimony for the covenanted interests of religion, and against whatever is contrary thereunto.—It is certainly incumbent on Christians also, to be frequent and fervent in prayer to God, that he may, by his word and Spirit, by his grace and providence, raise his church from her low estate, and restore her to the enjoyment of her covenanted purity. He has promised to remember for a people, though sunk in degeneracy and wretchedness, the covenant of their ancestors, and to deliver them from this condition. On the footing of this promise, and others of a similar nature, let us plead with God to deliver the land from the guilt of covenant-breaking, and to restore us to our former purity and privileges. Let us set our face unto the Lord God, to seek blessings to the church, by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes. Let us cry unto him that the Spirit, as a convincing, quickening, enlightening and sanctifying Spirit, may be poured upon the inhabitants of these lands; that they may remember from whence they have fallen, and repent, and do their first works. With holy fervency of soul, and in the exercise of faith, let us say with the prophet. *O Lord. revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known, in wrath remember mercy.* That so we may be brought into such a condition as a nation before God, as he may not have occasion to bring this charge against us. *The house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant, which I made with their fathers.*

THE END.

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