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*Wish* THE *Thing*  
**SEVEN LAST PLAGUES;**

OR THE

**VIALS OF THE WRATH OF GOD;**

A TREATISE ON THE PROPHECIES,

IN TWO PARTS.

CONSISTING OF

DISSERTATIONS ON VARIOUS PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE;

PARTICULARLY ON THE VII. VIII. IX. AND XII. CHAPTERS  
OF DANIEL, AND ON THE XI. XII. XIII. XIV. XV. AND  
XVI. CHAPTERS OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

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BY ROBERT REID, A. M.

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL IN ERIZ.

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"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written  
for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the  
Scriptures might have hope." Rom. xv. 4.

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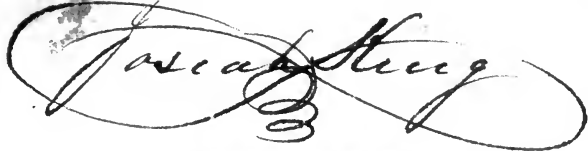
*WESTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA, to wit.*

BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the twenty-first day of January, in the fifty-second year of the Independence of the United States of America, A. D. 1828, ROBERT REID, of the said District, hath deposited in this Office, the Title of a Book, the right whereof he claims as author and proprietor, in the words following, to wit:

“The Seven last Plagues, or the Vials of the Wrath of God: a Treatise on the Prophecies, in two parts: consisting of Dissertations on various passages of Scripture; particularly on the vii. viii. ix. and xii. chapters of Daniel, and on the xi. xii. xiii. xiv. xv. and xvi. chapters of the book of Revelation. By Robert Reid, A. M., Minister of the Gospel in Erie.—“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”—Rom. xv. 4.”

In conformity to the Act of Congress of the United States, entitled, “An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned;”—and also the Act, entitled, “An Act supplementary to an Act, entitled, “An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned,” and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching, historical and other Prints.”

E. J. ROBERTS,  
*Cl'k West. Dist. of Penn'a.*



## PREFACE.



THE Author of the following work has been for many years in the habit of studying the Prophecies, and expounding them to his congregation in his morning lectures. He found the exercise exceedingly beneficial to his own mind, and, he trusts, not altogether without fruits in the minds of those who attended on his ministry.— These considerations induced him to continue his labors. They were undertaken and persevered in, from year to year, without any design of laying them in this manner before the public. He followed the track of Pool, Newton, Hurd, and other approved expositors, because he found, after mature deliberation, that they had adopted the only true method by which the mystery of God is to be developed. But he afterwards found, that those eminent men did not rise above the common error of protestant expositors, who all agree in pointing out the church of Rome as the great Antichrist, but never seem to suspect that their own churches were in the least degree tainted with the same principles and practices which have produced this monster of iniquity. They have all reasoned on the supposition, that there is but one Antichrist, and that he has his seat exclusively in the city of Rome. So generally have protestant commentators been blinded

By this common delusion, that the late Doctor Scott observes, that "during the period of the very low state of christianity in which the witnesses shall be slain, there will probably be very flourishing churches in America, in Africa, and in the East Indies, and other parts of Asia."—They all, in fact, suppose, that the prophecy relates to no part of the christian world but the Western Roman Empire.

The Author's mind was long kept in bondage by the authority of those eminent commentators, and it was even long after he had discovered the error, that he dared to give publicity to his thoughts. He now believes, that this "private interpretation," (for it can be called by no better name,) is the chief cause of the general neglect with which these important and interesting subjects have been treated for many years, both by ministers of the gospel and private christians.—While the protestants were disseminating the principles of the Reformation, and exposing the errors of the church of Rome, there was much attention paid to the prophecies concerning Antichrist; and "the mother of harlots" was exposed and pointed out to every protestant congregation: but ever since the period of universal charity commenced, it has been thought a great breach of decorum to enter into the investigation of these subjects, as they are supposed to relate exclusively to a falling religious establishment, and to a class of people who are altogether beyond the reach of conviction by argument.

In this period of fatal indifference, Antichrist has insinuated himself into the protestant churches generally. It is when men are asleep that

The enemy sows his tares. In this case there was not only a want of vigilance but of suspicion. We can hardly suppose ourselves to be guilty of the same offence which we censure in others: but it happens too frequently, that many, who declaim against the vices of their neighbors, are afterwards guilty of the same offences against which they had so loudly declaimed. There has been much said by the protestants against the usurpations of the Roman church, against "the changing of times and laws," and "making war against the saints:" but there is every reason to believe, that if any of the sects, who have risen to power and popular influence in the christian world, were placed in the circumstances of the church of Rome, we should see the very counterpart of the great Antichrist. This inference is fairly drawn from the innovations they have made in the worship of God,—in the doctrines they preach, and the forms and ceremonies which they introduce, evidently for the purpose of increasing their number and influence among certain classes of mankind. We do not mean to cast an indiscriminate censure on the protestant churches: we speak only of those who have introduced human inventions into the worship of God: and we think proper here to inform our readers, as this phrase will frequently recur in the following work, that we mean by it, every doctrine, every mode of worship, and every church regulation, for which there is no authority in the word of God. We do not ask them to show us an express command for every part of worship, as this would be both unfair and unreasonable; but we ask them to show a founda-

tion in the scriptures of truth for every doctrine which they believe, and every practice which they adopt; and every thing for which this foundation cannot be shown, we call a human invention, and say that it stands in the will of man, and not in the wisdom of God. But we say more: Jesus Christ is the king and head of the church, and he alone has a right to make laws for its government,—to show us what doctrines we are to teach and believe, and what kind of worship we are to offer to our Maker. Therefore, every human invention is an infringement on his prerogative. It takes his glory, and gives it to another. This, we say, is the great anti-christian principle, which operates generally through the christian churches.

The Author does not feel disposed to make any apology for intruding his production amidst the multitude of works with which the world is at present inundated. He has the same right to publish his opinions, which others have to publish theirs. Every author indulges the hope that his work will find readers, and that the common stock of useful knowledge will be increased by it. There is no kind of knowledge more beneficial than that of the prophecies,—no kind of study which has greater power of enlarging the christian intellect, and of unfolding to our view the wisdom and majesty of God. But the author has other motives for this publication, which are, if possible, still stronger. Believing, as he does, that antichristian principles and practices have pervaded the churches, and that the kingdom of Antichrist is soon to be destroyed by terrible judgments, he could not reconcile it with



a sense of duty to keep back from the christian world his opinions, and the foundation on which they stand. Whether his sentiments are well founded or not, he trusts they will receive a candid examination: and as there are no doubt many of his brethren in the ministry, and also of other christians, who have made the subject their study, and are well qualified to judge, he fondly hopes that whatever errors may be found in the work will be pointed out with candor. He has studied the prophecies with all the care and diligence which his circumstances would admit of, and can find no flaw in the train of reasoning, which has led to the conclusion he has adopted: still, others may be sharper sighted, may have deeper penetration, and a clearer and more enlarged view of the great mystery of God, and may therefore be able to discover errors by which he may have been led from the truth. He lays no claim to infallibility; but he is conscious that he writes for no sectarian purpose. In this sense he has taken "no bribe to blind his eyes therewith." His object is not to build up one section of the church with the ruins of another. If he knows any thing concerning his own heart, his chief design is to contribute his mite for the "cleansing of the sanctuary." This is not a subject calculated to excite the angry passions. Every one must know that the sanctuary of God is horribly polluted. The pollution may be attributed, in some degree, to the errors of our fathers; but none of us will dare to say that we are not guilty of a part of the sin. We ought, therefore, to be deeply humbled, when we consider the state of the churches, and the evils

which are threatened in the just judgments of an offended God. But to assist in removing the defilement is a common duty. We know that the sanctuary must be cleansed. God will cleanse it by his judgments. But he requires the instrumentality of his servants; and we shall all find it our interest to be active and diligent in the duty. The time is short, the work is great, and we have all great need to be "up and doing."

In the "proposals" for this publication, the author promised to exhibit, in the conclusion, the scenes which will probably be realized at the introduction of the Millennium. Here the reader will find a deficiency; and to account for it, the author can only state, that the work swelled under his hands, so that he found it impossible to comprise such a conclusion within the limits he had prescribed. Indeed it became necessary for him to contract and abridge the latter part, so that he fears the subject will not be brought so fully before the mind of the reader, nor make such an impression as was intended. To make amends for this, he has in contemplation to publish another volume, containing dissertations on the remaining chapters of the book of Revelation, with expositions of other passages of Scripture, which may be brought for illustration. Whether this contemplated work shall be undertaken or not, will, however, depend on the manner in which this present publication is received. The author is not much under the influence of that *cacoethes scribendi*, by which some writers are governed. He has no longing desire to see his thoughts in print. Writing is, to him, a work of labor; and if his labors should not be useful

in this way, they may easily be turned into another channel: besides he has many other avocations which must be neglected while he confines himself in his study. This work is intended as a kind of trial or test for the public mind, from which the author will be able to judge whether his labors in this way, may, or may not, be prosecuted with success.

As this work is written in the form of dissertations on certain parts of the Prophecies which relate to the same subject, the writer has frequently found it impossible to vary his phraseology, and his train of thought, so as to prevent, in all cases, the appearance of tautology. The descriptions of the same subject, given by Daniel and John, bear a striking resemblance to each other; and again, the same subjects are frequently presented by both these writers in different points of view, while the difference is so small that a superficial reader, whose mind is not sufficiently humble, might even accuse the sacred writers themselves with tautological representations. It is not, therefore, to be expected, that illustrations of these subjects, and applications of them to the present state of the world, should not, in many cases, bear such a resemblance to each other, as might appear to some readers to be merely a repetition of the same ideas. The author can only say, that he has endeavored to avoid this as much as was in his power.

This book is sent into the world with no very favorable auspices. It is directly in contradiction to the prevailing current of religious opinions; and it will no doubt be opposed by two classes of mankind, who are entirely opposed to

each other. There is a large class of professing christians, who belong to different sects, but all unite for the propagation of the gospel, and appear to be perfectly satisfied, if they can bring the world to believe and profess any kind of christianity. From these the author does not expect to receive any encouragement. Again, there is another class, of entirely different characters, who perceive, and endeavor to expose the folly and dishonesty of the former class; but whose plans, if they were carried into effect, would soon destroy christianity itself from the face of the earth. Together with some well meaning, but ill informed persons, this class embraces the infidel, the sceptic, and in fact, all the open enemies of the truth. With them, the author has no common feeling—no common interest. His soul, he trusts, shall not come into their secret, nor his honor be united to them. But between these two extremes there is a middle class, on whom the author hopes his work will have some influence. They see and lament over the iniquity which has crept into the churches, under the semblance of christian zeal:—they see and lament over the human inventions and various kinds of idolatry, which disgrace and degrade the worship of God, in almost all the christian churches:—they groan under the iron yoke, which religious despotism has put round the necks of the christian world, and laid them under the necessity of making war with the Saints, with God, and the Lamb. In a word, they are “the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that are done in the midst of Jerusalem.” With them the author makes a

common cause. He hopes to be associated with them in life, in death, and in the state beyond the grave. He hopes his book will express some of their feelings and sentiments, and be the means of opening more clearly to their view, that glorious light which they have already begun to perceive. He trusts that the day has begun to dawn, and the day-star to rise in the hearts of many of them; and that all the witnesses of truth will soon arrive at that honor and influence which God has promised in his word, and by which they shall be enabled to promote more effectually the cause of their common Lord.

Finally, the author asks a candid and diligent perusal of the following pages. There can be no benefit obtained by a slight degree of attention. The bible must be consulted, the prophecies must be studied, the heart must be intent on the subject, and anxiously desirous to know the truth; or else poison may be administered instead of spiritual food. If this request should be attended to, he has hopes, that, under the blessing of God, some good may result from his labors.

*Erie, (Pa.) A. D. 1828.*



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## PART II. DISSERTATION II.

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## PART II. DISSERTATION III.

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## PART II. DISSERTATION IV.

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## PART II. DISSERTATION VIII.

### ON THE XVI. OF REVELATION.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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PROPHECY is an important and interesting part of Divine Revelation. It is the development of facts which, when the prophecy was given, were still covered in the darkness of futurity. The great God of Heaven, who alone knows with certainty every thing which shall come to pass, has thought proper to make some communications of these things to his servants the Prophets. These communications are delivered in such a manner as to enlighten the understandings of all who attend to them, and enable them to make some preparation to meet the events. Therefore we are all exhorted, "to take heed to the sure word of prophecy, as to a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in our hearts." There is something in the nature of prophecy, which makes it a firmer ground of dependence than even miracles, because false miracles have so often deluded the unthinking multitude. There have been so many deceivers, who have pretended to perform miraculous works, that even true miracles do not receive the attention which they deserve. But the prophecies give a continual demonstration of their truth, by their continual accomplishment. Those, therefore, who take heed to the sure word of prophecy, will always have their hearts fixed, and their faith confirmed. They will not frequently be obliged to walk in darkness, for the day will dawn, and the day-star will rise in their hearts. The light that shines in a dark place, will, to their minds, become lighter, and the obscurity will be gradually diminished. The objects and events, which they have been taught to expect, will come into view; other and more remote objects and events, will again appear through the gloom, and brighten into reality; and thus the true church of God will be gradually illuminated, until the sun of righteousness shall rise, and the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord.

The study of the prophecies is therefore not a vain thing. It is full of life and blessedness, for them who engage in it

with true and honest hearts. There is little force in the objection, even allowing it all the weight to which some think it entitled, that many have mistaken the meaning of the prophecies, and have not only themselves wandered out of the way, but have also led others into error. This objection strikes deep into the very root of christianity and the study of the bible. How many have adopted the most pernicious errors, and have even extracted poison instead of life out of the book of God! Does this prove that no benefit need be expected from our attention to christian duties? Is it any reason why we should be discouraged from running the christian race, because many others have failed and lost the prize. No! we should rather be induced to attend the more diligently to the exhortation, "Let us lay aside every weight, &c. and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." But there is the highest encouragement held out to the student of the prophecies. God connects his blessing with the study. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand. If this, therefore, is the happy condition of those who attend with all their heart to learn and understand the prophecies, contained in the book of Revelation, there will, of course, be a degree of the same blessedness connected with the diligent study of prophecy in the word of God. This promise ought, therefore, to exercise the faith of the church, and animate every christian heart with a holy ambition. The knowledge which is here put within our reach, is certainly a treasure, much more valuable than the wealth of this world, after which so many are toiling and exercising their thoughts, day and night. When we are engaged in this exercise, we are laying up "treasures which the moth and rust cannot corrupt, and which thieves cannot break through and steal."

By a kind of religious feeling, which many in this age indulge, the study of the prophecies appears to be less favorable to advancement in holiness than many other religious exercises. It is thought to be too dry and uninteresting, and to afford more employment for the head than for the heart. Those who spend much of their time in these studies, are thought to be rather speculative, than practical christians. Ministers of the gospel, who preach frequently on these subjects, are said to be dull and uninteresting preachers, who do not feed their flocks with the heavenly food of evangelical doctrines, nor lead them to the green

pastures and the still waters of refined and lively devotion. But if these opinions are traced to their source, they will be found to originate in the enthusiasm of popular feeling, and not at all to spring from that chastened and enlightened devotion which is taught in the word of God. One essential ingredient in true devotion is admiration of the divine excellence. The character and the works of God are to be studied and admired. The heart ought to be filled with rapture by the discovery of truth. We must learn to tremble at the judgments of God, while we behold and admire the rectitude of all his dealings, both with ourselves and with the world. In a word, we must become such characters as the 144,000, whom the Apostle saw standing with the Lamb, on Mount Zion; or those who stood on the sea of glass, having the harps of God, singing his praises, and admiring his works. But nothing can be imagined nor conceived, that is better adapted for this purpose than the diligent study of the prophecies. We are put on our guard against the reigning delusions of the world, we are taught to revere the Divine Majesty, and to rejoice with trembling. Above all, we learn from the prophecies, the mournful but salutary truth, that the christian world is at this moment a mass of corruption—that what is called the church of God, is no other than the “great city, which is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified,”—that in the streets of this great city, the witnesses are slain, and their bodies trampled under foot, and that they who dwell on the earth have rejoiced over them, and made merry, and sent gifts one to another; because these prophets tormented them by declaring the truth. Finally, we are taught, that some terrible judgments are ready to be executed, and we are warned to prepare for meeting with our God.

The practical use which we ought to make of the prophecies, is to learn the actual condition of the world in the times in which we live; and the scenes and dispensations of Providence, which are predicted, and to be fulfilled in the present and succeeding ages. In the prophecies, God has given the general outlines of his plan. We have clear evidence in his word, that truth shall finally prevail over error,—that Jesus Christ shall establish his kingdom in every part of the world—that truth and righteousness shall not always be cast down and trampled under foot; but shall have the ascendancy for a thousand years,—that the Saints shall possess the kingdom and inherit the earth. But we

are also plainly informed, that this happy dispensation shall be introduced by terrible and tremendous judgments. These are the outlines of prophecy, which he that runs may read. Still, there is a more particular and accurate understanding to be obtained concerning the prophecies that are now in actual accomplishment, and those that are soon to be accomplished. The scenes that are most interesting to us, are those which take place in our own times, and in the times of our children or immediate descendants; and God has put it in our power to know these things with more accuracy,—to get a more intimate acquaintance with them, than with those that are more remote. Hence it is a fact, which can be clearly proved from history, that the church, in the ancient ages of christianity, was much better acquainted with the prophecies that related to their times, than we are. They saw the accomplishment in their own days, and knew the prophecies which related to themselves; while they had very confused and erroneous views of many prophecies which are well understood by us, because they have since been fulfilled. We see this truth in the commencement of the book of Revelation. It is said that God gave this Revelation “to Jesus Christ, that he might shew to his servants *things which must shortly come to pass.*” He has, therefore, authority from his father to show his servants the things that are immediately before them. Prophecy is still a light shining in a dark place; but when it is near, and still approaching, it will of course appear less obscure, than when it was at a great distance, and twinkling in the verge of the horizon. We shall also be enabled to discover many of the objects around it. This is the way in which he shows his servants things which are shortly to come to pass.

The watchmen on the walls of Zion, as, by the nature of their situation, they are raised on an eminence, and have a wider range for their observation than other members of the church, are therefore bound to improve the advantages they possess. They are in fact placed on the watchtower for this very purpose, that they may see when the sword is coming, and give warning to those below them. It is true the ministers of the gospel have also many other duties. They must preach the doctrines, and exhibit the practical duties of christianity; but they never can fulfil the duty of watchmen, unless they are conversant with the prophecies. The scriptures present us with the great chain of events



which take place in the world, in all ages, and among all christian nations, or in all countries where there is any light of christianity: Of this chain (if one may be allowed the expression) every age has its own link, and thus the important events which take place in Christendom in any given age, may always be known to be the accomplishments of prophecy. Hence it is a well known fact, that in all ages, when any great and interesting event was about to come to pass, the world had a general premonition of it. This was always given by the prophets, or the watchmen placed on the walls of Zion. They foresaw, for instance, the coming of the Saviour, and pointed him out to mankind when he did come. We find it was the general belief, not only through Judea, but the whole Roman empire, that some great personage was about that time to rise and to have the dominion of the world. All christians now believe that the age in which we live is near the period when the Saviour shall not only possess, but exercise this dominion to the very ends of the earth. They have learned, from the prophets, and from the watchmen, who have faithfully interpreted the words of the prophet, that the coming of the Redeemer cannot be far distant. But we must not consider ourselves as mere spectators of these important scenes. We are actors, and shall be actors, either for or against the Redeemer. We may be certain that those who are ignorant of the kingdom he is about to establish, will act against him. We know that this was the conduct of the Jews at his first coming. "Because they knew not the scriptures, nor the voices of the prophets which were read in their synagogues every Sabbath day, they fulfilled them in condemning him." We have now every reason to believe that the kingdom of the Redeemer, which he is about to establish in the world, is as little understood, and will be as much opposed by the mass of the christian world. The great reason is, that the words of the prophets, which are read in the churches every Sabbath, are not understood. Men are not generally instructed in the nature of these important things, nor are they possessed of that accuracy of observation necessary to enable them to see the sword of the Lord, to discern its point, or to understand the particular kind of judgments that are to be inflicted.

The great duty of watchmen is to observe and give notice of the sword, when it comes, that the people may take warning: and as this is every watchman's duty, so he has

abundant facilities for the performance of it. The prophecies which have a particular relation to any age of the world, will show him what kind of judgments ought to be expected in that age. In the Revelation, the judgments signified by the opening of the seals, are different from those signified by the trumpets, and again, the judgments signified by the trumpets, are exceedingly different from those signified by the vials. They are all prepared for particular ages and states of society. The vials are the last plagues, and the most terrible and astonishing of all. They begin to operate very soon after the sounding of the seventh trumpet: for, as has been well observed by many respectable commentators, as the opening of the last seal exhibited the seven angels to whom the seven trumpets were given; so the last trumpet contains the seven vials "in which is filled up the wrath of God."

These last plagues are described by the apostle, as mysterious and wonderful, not because such judgments had never been executed before, for the truth is, that God has poured out the vials of his wrath, in all ages, on wicked men, but because the world has never experienced a curse of this nature, so great and so extensive. These judgments are chiefly spiritual. They operate chiefly on the mind. The plagues of Egypt produced similar effects on the hearts of the Egyptians. It is that process in the righteous judgments of God, by which the heart of the sinner is hardened, his conscience is seared, his understanding darkened; iniquity is added to his iniquity, and he becomes more stubborn and rebellious by every new dispensation of the wrath of God. These plagues were substantially inflicted on the Jews before Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. They commenced with the effects produced on their hearts by the preaching of the Redeemer and his apostles. Then God said, "Go and tell this people, hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes: lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert, and be healed." This same terrible and astonishing process of spiritual judgments will go on in the hearts of sinners, in these latter days, and render them utterly miserable, even before they shall be cast into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.

The very symbol denotes something of this nature. There is a meaning in vials, as well as in trumpets. The

latter are intended to exhibit some striking and alarming dispensations of Providence, and the former, of course, point to some silent and secret operation, which, when it becomes visible, strikes the mind with horror. They are said to be full of the wrath of God; and when they are poured out, an effect is immediately produced, which implies a secret and mysterious influence. They all operate during the period denoted by the seventh trumpet, and continue until the wicked are utterly destroyed from the earth. They are called vials of wrath, in the same sense in which Babylon is said to be "a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunken." That process by which the heart is led into idolatry, is frequently represented in the scripture by the effects of wine or spirituous liquors. There is a secret influence in this vice, which not only intoxicates, and makes its votaries mad, or leads them to act most unreasonably; but they form a strong attachment to false worship, or whatever they have set their minds upon, and hence they are said to be mad upon their idols. They pursue the course of error, contrary to all reason and truth, and even to the secret convictions of their own conscience. Admonition and reproof only irritate their minds, and render them still more determined to continue in the course they have chosen. The vials of the wrath of God, are the ultimate effect of this judgment on the spirit, and in this latter age may be expected to be the more powerful, as their sins have been increasing from one generation to another. It is very certain, that men are punished for the sins of their youth, and that the sins of parents are frequently visited on their children. God leaves them to their own vain imaginations, and then they soon fall into errors and corrupt practices. This is the evident cause of the immense flood of corruption, which covers the religious world at the present time. Family religion, and family instruction, have gradually worn into disuse. Children grow up without religious knowledge or discipline. Their minds are of course filled with the fashionable follies of the world, and not being firmly established in the true principles of the gospel, they are easily carried away by every fashionable delusion which is set afloat on the sea of religious opinions. This is really a judgment of God for the sins of their parents. They drink of the wine of Babylon from a golden cup in the hand of the Lord, and they become intoxicated and mad. But the last results of this infatuation, like the last effects of drunkenness, will be intolerable anguish, misery, and des-

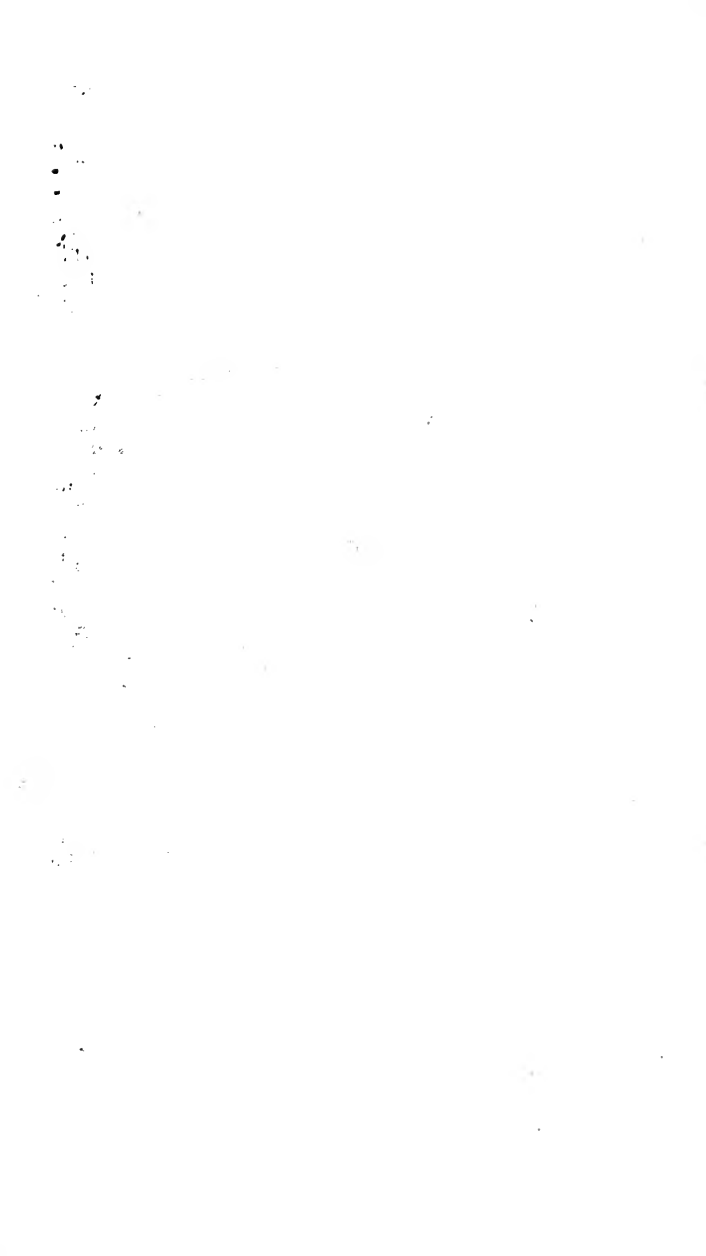
pair. There is no repentance to be expected for those who have drunk to intoxication of the wine of Babylon, for they have become habituated to the practice of a false religion, and hostile to the truth. As the Jews, who had rejected and crucified the Lord of life, and who persevered in their wickedness and rebellion until the spirit of God forsook them, never thought of repentance amidst all their horrible sufferings: so those of the present generation, who still persevere in their errors, and their hatred of the truth, will become more and more hardened and infatuated by all the judgments of God. Hence they are represented as *gnawing their tongues for pain, and not repenting of their deeds.*

The church and the city of Rome, are no doubt intended by Babylon, in the same emblematic sense, in which the true church of God is called Zion, or Jerusalem, but we are not to suppose that the professed members of the Roman church, are the only characters who have drunk of the wine of Babylon. The fact is very different. Protestant commentators have done great injustice to the prophecies, and a great injury to mankind, by limiting the vials of the wrath of God to those nations who acknowledge the sovereignty of the Pope. They did not consider their own departure from the true worship of God, nor did they foresee the general defection of these latter days; in which almost all the Protestant churches have drunk of the wine of Babylon. We see the same deceit and dishonesty in their morals, the same self-sufficiency in their religious feelings, the same disregard of the authority of God in their worship; and their preference of human inventions to his institutions. Truly, although they do not worship saints and angels, yet in respect of human inventions, brought into the church for the purpose of pleasing the world, and increasing their numbers, there are many of the Protestant churches that are really more corrupt than the church of Rome. The kingdom of the beast is in fact much wider, and more extensive than is generally supposed; and it ought to be a subject of careful and anxious inquiry to all churches, and all individual christians, whether they have indeed obeyed the command of God, "come out of her my people," &c.

The spirit of this command, like every other command in the word of God, must be the object of our attention. It is all vanity to attempt to comfort ourselves with the name or denomination we have adopted. It is of very little consequence, whether we call ourselves Papists or Protestants. The great question to be answered at the bar of God, is, are

we "the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh?" Do we belong to the 144,000, who stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion? Have we learned to sing the new song? Do we follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth? Is there no guile in our mouth? This book is therefore addressed to all denominations of professing christians, and especially to the fathers and brethren in the christian ministry. The author is sorry that he cannot address them all as watchmen on Zion's walls; for however good may be their intentions, they cannot perform the duty of watchmen, without having given a portion of their time to the study of the prophecies. But he fondly hopes that this little work may be an excitement to some of them, to apply their time and talents to this important subject, and that they may be able to see and to point out the sword of the Lord, which is now suspended over the churches, and over the world. "The sword is sharpened and also furbished. It is sharpened, to make a sore slaughter. It is furbished that it may glitter," and be seen, and wo to that minister of the gospel who does not see it, and point it out to his people. Many of them shall be taken away in their iniquity; but their blood will be required at his hand.

In order to give a full and comprehensive view of the subject we propose to discuss, it would be necessary to examine, particularly, the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel; for the subject is copiously treated in each of them. But this would require more labor and time than the author can well afford. We cannot, however, have any correct and proper views of the book of Revelation, without a particular acquaintance with the prophecies of Daniel. The latter is the foundation, and the former the superstructure. We therefore anxiously request our readers to accompany us, with patient and diligent attention, through a few dissertations, in which we shall endeavor to explain that part of Daniel's prophecy, which gives an outline of the judgments of the latter days, shows the period in which they are to be executed, and the concomitant circumstances by which they may be known.



## PART I. DISSERTATION I.

### ON THE VII. OF DANIEL.

THIS vision was revealed to Daniel, in the first year of Belshazzar, the son of Evilmerodach, and grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. In his days Babylon was taken by the Medes and Persians, and the Chaldean dynasty came to its termination. Daniel saw the great sea all in agitation, by the four winds blowing upon it, and four great beasts rose out of it, different the one from the other. By a well known scriptural emblem, water in agitation, denotes peoples and nations, or the multitude, when their minds are thrown into perturbation. The savage monsters, which Daniel saw, denote the governments which rose in those scenes of agitation and tumult. "The first beast was like a lion, and had eagle's wings." This represents the Chaldean power. In the commencement of its dominion, it was bold, magnanimous, rapid in its movements, and terrible to all nations. As the lion is the monarch of the forest; and when he wars, the other beasts tremble, and silently slink to their dens, that they may not provoke his wrath; so this government spread its terror among mankind, and by the rapidity of its conquests, soon brought the world into subjection. But after the death of Nebuchadnezzar, its character was altered. It sunk into sloth and effeminacy. Its wings were plucked. It became timid in proportion to its loss of power, and at length it was limited by the walls of Babylon. Thus this beast was effectually tamed. It suffered itself to be lifted up from the earth, and made to stand upright like a human being, and it had the heart of a frail and feeble man.

The next beast that rose out of the agitation of the waters, was like a bear, an animal inferior in all respects to the lion, but possessing all its ferocity. While the prophet beheld, it raised up itself on the one side, and he discerned three ribs of some animal, which it had almost devoured, in its mouth between its teeth; and he heard the bystanders exclaim, "arise, devour much flesh." This beast evidently denotes the united kingdoms of Media and Persia. The former was an ancient kingdom; but the latter had no eminence, and was scarcely known as a nation until Cyrus the

great came to the throne. He raised it to power and respectability among the nations of the earth, and when the two kingdoms were united, the bear raised itself on the one side. The Persian soldiers, having been well trained and practised in war under their great commander, soon raised the character and glory of the united kingdom. Lydia, Egypt, and Babylon fell before the conqueror, and these kingdoms are generally supposed to be the three ribs which were seen in the mouth of the bear.

This power continued to bear rule, from the time that Cyrus became king of Media and Persia, about 230 years: and during that period more human blood was shed, and more devastation and misery carried through the world, than in any period of the same length recorded in history. It was in those times that Xerxes invaded the Grecian states, with an army and a retinue of more than five millions, who were generally cut off and destroyed. Many similar scenes of destruction took place in those days: so it was well said to this monster, *arise, devour much flesh.*

The next beast had the appearance of a leopard. There seemed to be four wings on its back, and it had also four heads. This is a striking emblem of the power that rose in Macedonia, under the government of Philip and Alexander. It is well represented by a leopard with wings. Beasts of this kind are rapid in their movements, and take their prey by surprise; but to show the rapidity of Alexander's conquests, wings are added to the leopard. After having brought the states of Greece under his government, he advanced against the Persian power, defeated it entirely, and took possession of Babylon, the metropolis of the world. But he soon terminated his career, and then four of his chief commanders took possession of the empire, and each of them assumed the title of king. Thus the beast had at length four heads, and under this character claimed and exercised the dominion of the world.

Afterwards the Roman empire rose:—a power altogether different from any that had risen before it. It is described by the prophet as “dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly: and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.” No government that ever existed possessed so much power, and its power always increased in proportion to its conquests. The conquered nations were completely devoured, so as to become constituent parts



of the empire of Rome; and those that refused the terms were always, in the end, dashed to pieces and destroyed. There were some nations that waged implacable war against Rome; but they were generally crushed at length. Such was the fate of Carthage and of Pontus; and such was the fate of the Jews. They were broken in pieces, and trampled under foot: but in general, all nations received the Romans as their masters, and were proud of their chains. To be a Roman citizen, was an honor which kings desired, and sometimes purchased at the price of their own sovereignty. Rome thus became the empress of the world, and continued to exercise a boundless sway for many ages.

But as the Grecian government was divided into four kingdoms, after the death of Alexander, so Rome was at length divided into ten kingdoms, or separate governments, all united, when it suited their purpose, but claiming distinct sovereignty in their own territories. These kingdoms did not rise, so as to assume the sovereignty, until after christianity was established in the empire, and not until after the empire was divided, and the West separated from the East. In those fluctuating times, it is agreed by all historians, that there were ten independent sovereignties, within the limits of the western empire.

But while the prophet was fixing his attention on the ten horns, he saw another little horn spring up among them, and in order to make room for it there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots. This horn "had eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things." The same power is described in the xiii. chapter of Revelation, and includes both the second beast that sprang up out of the earth, and the image of the first beast. It is chiefly that spiritual power which is now in existence in the Roman empire, and which, in fact, is the great bond of union in the Roman Catholic church. When the image of the beast was formed, and the Pope became the visible head of the ten kingdoms, three of those sovereignties were rooted out to make room for him, namely, the governments of Rome, Lombardy, and Ravenna: and in consequence of this, he still wears what is called *the triple crown*.

This last beast appeared to the prophet to be the most important of the four, and the most worthy of observation; he therefore desired to know the truth especially concerning it, or to have the emblems interpreted. He wished to be informed what was the meaning "of the ten horns that were in his head, and particularly of the horn that came up

last, before which three fell, the horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows." While he was intent on this subject, he saw that horn making war with the saints, and prevailing against them all that period, until the coming of the Ancient of days. Then indeed the scene was changed, "and judgment was given to the saints of the most High, and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom." In further information, he was told, "that the fourth beast should be the fourth kingdom on the earth, should be different from all kingdoms, and should devour the whole earth, and tread it down, and break it in pieces. That the ten horns out of this kingdom, were ten kings that should arise, and that another should rise after them, and should be different from the first, and should subdue three kings.—That he should speak great words against the most High, and should wear out the saints of the most High, and think (or meditate, or devise) to change times and laws: and they should be given into his hand until a time, and times, and the dividing of a time." Here it may be observed, that the phrase, "against the most High," in the first clause of the twenty-fifth verse, does not fairly present the sense of the original. We are not told that this little horn should say one word *against* the Almighty; but on the contrary, that he should speak for him; as if he were at his side, and employed by him to speak the words. There is something in the word rendered "against," which implies insidiousness; but it signifies his boasted power, which he pretends to have from God. It is true, that all such boasting may be said, in a certain sense, to be against the most High: but our translation conveys the idea, that this power should openly speak against God; and this is by no means intended in the prophecy. It is, literally, "he shall speak words by the side of the most High," or speak without his authority, while he pretended to derive all his authority from him; setting himself up in the room of God, to prescribe laws and ordinances for his church. Now the chief and prominent trait in the character of the "saints of the most High," is their obedience to him alone. They acknowledge no authority but God's authority, and no laws and ordinances but those contained in his word. Hence, it is plain, that from the time in which the man of sin seated himself in the temple of God, and began to make changes and innovations in his laws and ordinances, there must have been a perpetual collision between him and the saints.

They would not submit to his laws, and he was determined to enforce them: thus he and they were perpetually at war. It is also a truth, that in all countries, and in all ages, where men have dared to depart from the ordinances of divine institution, and to make laws and ordinances of their own, either for the government or worship of the church, they have acted on the very same principle with this little horn.

It is manifest, that whatever power the Roman antichrist once possessed, his authority at this moment is very small among many of the nations of Europe, and in the United States of America. But do these nations worship God according to the laws and ordinances prescribed in his word? Is this the conduct of the professed worshipers of God in this part of christendom? Do they not generally "follow their own ways, and choose their own delusions," and is not this the chief reason why there are so many divisions among them, and so many different sects and denominations? In fact the "little horn" has generally increased its influence by every new sect, and we find, that in almost all the Protestant churches, as well as in the Roman church, there is a power that speaks "by the side of the most High," professing to derive its authority from him, while it changes his laws and ordinances. By such a multiplied, if not a combined opposition, it is not wonderful that the saints of the most High should at length be worn out, or should faint and fail, and give up the contest in a kind of despondency: As Zion is said to exclaim, "the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." It is clearly foretold, that this "wearing out of the saints," is to be accomplished in the latter days.—The times and laws to be changed.—The inventions of men to take the place of the institutions of God. The witnesses to be slain and their bodies cast into the streets. Thus, through the whole of this period, which is designated by the words, "a time, and times, and the dividing of a time," the beast is to prevail in every part of the christian world; and in the end of it, he is to be entirely successful, to cast down the truth to the ground, and to practise and prosper.

This is the first place where the period of the reign of the beast is mentioned in the scripture. The words are used afterwards in the last chapter of Daniel, and they are clearly explained in the Revelation. The meaning is, that from the time of the commencement of the reign of this power, until the end of it, will be 1260 years. Then "the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to

consume and to destroy it unto the end." This judgment is certainly the same which Daniel saw in the vision, and which is recorded from the 9th to the 13th verse of this chapter. "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool; his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the judgment was set, and the books were opened. I beheld then, because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake; I beheld, even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time." The sublimity of the language here used, and the images which are presented to the mind, in order to give a just representation of the grandeur and terrible majesty of the scenes, have occasioned a general mistake among all classes of readers. The mind seems to be involuntarily carried away to the contemplation of the last general judgment; while the immediate subjects which are intended to be brought particularly into view, are not taken into consideration. But still, a moment's reflection may teach any one, that this is a description of the scenes which shall take place about the end of the 1260 years, or the termination of the reign of this little horn.

There are more thrones to be cast down than that of the great antichrist who sits in the metropolis of the Roman empire. This spiritual power, which arrogates to itself the making of laws and ordinances in the church of God, has his throne, at this moment, in all parts of the christian world. This is matter of fact, as well as matter of prophecy. But in the latter days, the first interposition of the divine power, will be to cast down the thrones that are established in disregard of his authority. The accurate observer of the works of Providence, cannot fail to notice something of this kind at this present time. In the political world, the thrones of the despots are evidently tottering. Their authority is supported only by the strong arm of power, and their subjects are every day becoming better and better acquainted with the weakness of their claims, and the unjust and oppressive exercise of their power. The spirit of emancipation, which refuses to submit to any kind of bondage, is evidently grow-

ing stronger through the civilized world; and the power of every despot, from the mighty monarch who wields the force of a great nation, to the petty oppressor, who *sits in the lurking places of the villages, and slays the innocent*, shall finally be overturned. In the religious world, we see that the influence of forms and ceremonies on the human mind, is gradually decreasing. It is indeed true, that the mass of the christian world have not discernment enough to distinguish between the ordinances which are appointed of God, and those which are merely of human contrivance; and therefore his institutions must, for a time, undergo the same fate with the *times and laws* which the man of sin has established: but God has determined to support his authority by his judgments; and, therefore, we see, that when the thrones are cast down, the Ancient of days takes his seat.

In this wonderful representation, the person of the Father is brought into view as the judge; and this is another proof that it is not a representation of the final judgment; for in that day, not the Father, but Jesus Christ, shall be the judge. We must all stand, at the last day, before the judgment seat of Christ; but in this judgment, the world must stand before the Father. He comes to accomplish the promise to his only begotten Son, "to give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession; that he may break them with a rod of iron, and dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel." His throne appears to be fixed in a chariot, to show the rapidity of his judgments. "His garment is white as snow," to show the purity and rectitude of all his dispensations. "The hair of his head is like the pure wool," to give an exhibition of his wisdom, and to show that he is entitled to the highest reverence and veneration. "His throne was like the fiery flame," literally, the flame which proceeds from a furnace. The exact rendering of the words can scarcely be given in a translation; but the meaning is, that flames, like lightnings, darted forth from the throne in all directions; while the wheels of his chariot, as they rolled rapidly along, seemed to glow, and to kindle a new flame by every revolution. To add to this tremendous appearance, a fiery stream issued forth and ran before his chariot. Like the melted lava, which rolls with terrible rapidity from the burning volcano, so a tremendous torrent of liquid fire seemed to roll along before the chariot of the Almighty.

In the midst of this dreadful display of the divine majesty, the prophet could perceive an immense number of minis-

ters and attendants. The holy angels are his ministers, who wait upon him in all his visits to the earth, and to every part of his immense dominions. But his attendants were but a small number, compared with those who were brought before him to be judged. They appeared to be about ten thousand times ten thousand, or one hundred millions; something like the number of those who are called christians at this time on the face of the globe. He will call them before him, and examine their pretensions. They are to be examined by fire,—by passing through the furnace of affliction. This fire will proceed from the throne and chariot of the Almighty. In former ages, the course which he pursued in cleansing his church from corruption, was to give her into the hand of her enemies, and raise against her bitter and bloody persecution. Christians have been brought to the torture, the gibbet, and the stake, and every severe and cruel method has been tried, to induce them to choose the pleasures of sin rather than affliction. In this manner God has purified his church, and separated the chaff from the wheat. But in these latter times, a new course will be pursued. The afflictions will spring more immediately from the hand of God. “It shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third part shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, it is my people; and they shall say, the Lord is my God.”—This is the purpose for which “the judgment is to be set, and the books to be opened.” In a few years, the christian world will realize the truth of this tremendous representation: “There shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation unto that same time.” “Behold,” says the prophet Isaiah, speaking of the scenes of the latter days, “behold, the name of the Lord cometh from far, burning with his anger, and the burden thereof is heavy: his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire: and his breath, as an overflowing stream, shall reach even to the midst of the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity; and there shall be a bridle in the jaws of the people causing them to err.” But it is needless to multiply quotations; as the diligent student of the Bible will find proofs for the terrible and extensive judgments of the latter days, in almost every chapter of the prophets.

The result of these judgments will not only be the casting down of this “little horn,” which has for so long a time

“made war with the saints,” but the entire destruction of the beast on whose head he stands. “I beheld then,” says Daniel, “because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.” It is an important trait in the character of the Almighty, that he debases the proud and exalts the humble: and it is an obvious trait in the character of the prevailing religion of the present day, that it gives encouragement to the pride of the human heart. It is the very system of self-righteousness for which the church of Rome has set the example. Every plan and method which the invention of man can suggest, is carried into effect for the propagation of religion, while little attention is paid to the plan and method laid down and followed by our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles. He taught humility, by insisting upon the sovereignty of God, by giving a prominent place, in his preaching, to the doctrines of election and grace, and by setting his face against all the traditions and inventions of men. The consequence was, that he had few converts to his doctrines in that sinful generation: but in this generation, which is no less sinful and degenerate, the convert-makers are exceedingly successful. It has, in fact, become a mere mechanical business,—a work of art: but while they trumpet forth their own praises, and exhibit the evidences of their victory over the kingdom of Satan, there is too much reason to fear, that like the converts of the Pharisees, they are made twofold more the children of hell. Instead of learning heavenly principles, and advancing in the knowledge of Christ, “they feed on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned them aside, that they cannot deliver their souls, nor say, is there not a lie in my right hand?” The numerous proclamations concerning religious revivals, the immense success of missionary labors, the great good which has been and is doing by tract societies, &c., &c., are the great words which the horn speaks in this part of the christian world. It speaks always in such a manner as to gratify the natural pride of the heart, and by this it may be always known and distinguished from the still small voice of the gospel. But its great words are working its own ruin, and the ruin of all the present plans for the propagation of christianity. These are not new inventions. The protestant world has followed the footsteps of the church of Rome: their plans and their works are of the same nature with her corruptions, and when Babylon shall fall, they must all fall together.

It must be acknowledged, that in all ages since the days of the apostles, the spirit of Antichrist has had much influence among mankind. The doctrines, the institutions, and all the ordinances of religion, have been used in a manner contrary to their nature, and the intention for which they were given. The history of every age furnishes mournful testimonies on this subject; and hence it is difficult for us to believe that our age is more corrupt than the ages that are past. It is hard for individuals to discover their own faults; and there is a similar difficulty in discovering the faults of the time, and the society, in which we live. It is indeed a subject which few take the trouble to examine. Men are generally inclined to pursue the beaten track, without ever suspecting any deviation has been made from the path of truth. When they look around them, and find so much apparent harmony, and so much charity among the different religious sects, which were formerly hostile to each other; when they see them all uniting, and combining their exertions for the circulation of the Scriptures, and for many other laudable and benevolent objects; and hear them reporting how God has blessed their endeavors beyond their most sanguine expectations;—to say that these are the voice of the great words which the horn spake, and for which the beast shall be slain, &c., seems to argue, not only a total want of charity, but a degree of prejudice and perverseness, which render a man totally unfit for society. Often has the writer of these remarks had his heart tortured by such reflections. It gives him pain at the present moment, to say that these splendid appearances have little reality in them,—that the charity of this age is founded on a want of regard for truth,—that the present exertions for the promotion of the gospel, when traced to their source, will generally be found to proceed from the selfish desire of promoting the influence of their particular sects,—and, in fact, that every work they engage in, however laudable and benevolent it may be in its nature, is soon contaminated and corrupted by passing through their hands.

It will no doubt be objected, that such observations are calculated to injure the cause of religion,—to weaken the efforts of the charitable and zealous, and to unnerve the arms of benevolent exertion. What will become of our bible institutions, of our missionary and tract societies, and of all the plans which have been formed for the propagation of the gospel, if the world should suspect that their charity has been abused, and their gifts, which they have so liberally



bestowed for the support of the Redeemer's kingdom, transferred to the kingdom of the beast? We answer, it is time that the truth should be generally known; and that the attention of mankind should be called to the motives, the means, and the objects, of their benevolence. It is long since "pious frauds" were invented. These contrivances were practised, and even defended by many of those characters who are called the fathers of the church. They thought it no harm, but a duty, to use means for the propagation of the gospel, which they would have condemned as mean and dishonest, if they had found others using them for other purposes. Those who read and study the history of the third, fourth, and fifth centuries, which are generally supposed to be the purest stages of the church, will be at no loss to understand how "the man of sin" had the way opened for him to enter the temple of God; and to place his throne hard by the throne of the most High. It was by means of the same pious frauds, which are now practised so extensively in the churches, that hundreds of petty antichrists arose; and when their ambitious claims to pre-eminence came into collision, the church was thrown into a flame, and it was thought to be better to have one infallible judge, than an hundred judges, who all pretended to infallibility, and whose decisions frequently ran in direct contradiction the one to the other. Thus the little horn, whose looks were more stout than his fellows, became the supreme arbiter, and his voice was the law.

There is something of a similar nature, and which has similar practical results, in the charity of the present age. Although there are ten thousand discordant opinions and practices, among christians, they have made a kind of truce; and seem to admit that all may be right, or at least that all may possibly arrive at the same end; although their means may be different. Hence it is considered a breach of charity even to speak of what is wrong in the modern means used for the propagation of the gospel. Mankind appear to have a strong desire for peace, and they would rather suffer errors to continue and multiply, than say or do any thing which would have a tendency to throw the world again into collision and tumult. But the eyes of this spiritual power, called the little horn, are exceedingly watchful, and he observes and lays hold of every thing, which can be made a means to promote his interest. This is the way in which he now makes war with the saints, and prevails against them. Men do not consider, that the peace which is built

on a false foundation, is like a house built on the sand. It is in fact no peace. It is the calm that precedes the storm. There can be no permanent peace on the earth, until men give diligence to learn, receive into their hearts, and reduce into practice in their lives and conversation, the truths of the word of God. Therefore, true charity will lead us to expose error, and to develop and propagate the truth. For truth in religion, in morals, and in politics, is the only foundation of social happiness. Temporary purposes may indeed be promoted by concealing the truth; and the designs of the crafty may succeed for a time: but nothing can be permanent except what is built on this foundation; nothing else will be able to stand amidst the tremendous judgments that are about to come on the christian world. The torrent of fire that rolls before the chariot of the Almighty, will utterly consume,—will not leave even a vestige of all those inventions and contrivances, which men have framed for the advancement of their own particular views of religion, of their own sects, and their own aggrandizement, and which they have imposed on the world, as proper means for promoting the gospel.

It is evident, that as long as any government exists and possesses authority, the spirit of that government will operate to the very extremity of its dominion. All the officers of government, and the subjects generally, will be actuated by one spirit. But this power, which is here represented by the fourth beast, is said to be “diverse from all the beasts that were before it:” and one part of this diversity consists, no doubt, in the fact, that the spirit of the Roman church operates, not only among all who belong to her communion, but among many who disclaim all communion and co-operation with her. Our fathers of the Reformation renounced the government, and the errors of antichristian Rome. Still it is very plain that many of the churches of the Reformation continued to practise some of the errors of popery; and perhaps a little of the leaven of it was left in every one of them. This leaven, instead of being weakened by the lapse of years, has in fact grown stronger in every sect of christians, just in proportion to the increase of their numbers and power. No religion can ever become fashionable in the world, without embracing some of the errors of popery. Thus the spirit that actuated the little horn at the beginning, and by which he was induced to act from his own authority,—to make regulations and ordinances of his own, and to change times and laws, does in fact, actuate every

powerful and numerous sect of christians on the face of the earth. Hence the origin of the war with the saints, which must continue until the horn, or the power, shall not only be broken, but “the beast shall be slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.”

This is a representation of the scenes which are more fully developed in the xix. chapter of Revelation. The apostle declares: “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 the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These were both cast alive, into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.” This is not a literal battle; but the last efforts of error against truth. The triumph of the word of God over all superstition and idolatry. In this last contest, the beast shall be overpowered and compelled to yield himself a captive, and the false prophet shall be placed in the same condition: and after they are taken, they are cast into the lake of fire. Although this beast is a spiritual power, yet he is embodied in a large number of mankind. As the government of Rome is a combination of men united for the support of a false religion; and as there is also a large number of men, under the character of ministers of the gospel, who devote themselves exclusively to the support of that establishment, and are combined under one head: so these different combinations are called the beast and the false prophet, with respect to that particular church: but the same thing exists in substance in many other churches, and they are here represented as one combination. In the end they shall be cut off by some sudden judgments, coming immediately from God. They shall die in the midst of false hopes; and while they think of nothing but success in this world, and of happiness in the next, they shall find themselves at once precipitated into the flames of Tophet.

The other governments, the Chaldean, the Persian, and the Grecian, which are still in existence, and still possess something of the same spirit which they manifested in ancient times, shall, at the time when the fourth beast is slain, lose all power over the minds of men. The prophet saw that the three former beasts were not destroyed with the fourth. They lost their power, but did not then lose their existence. From this we infer, that after the antichristian

power shall have been put down, the other governments of the world shall continue; but none of them shall be able to impede the progress of the gospel. They shall have no power to act as ferocious beasts in destroying the saints. But as their lives are said to be merely prolonged for a season and time, we may believe they shall finally be overturned, and reorganized according to the principles of the gospel.

In the vision contained in the thirteenth and fourteenth verses, and in the subsequent explanation, given in the eighteenth and twenty-seventh, we have a most interesting view of the establishment and dominion of the gospel, when the saints of the most High shall have the government of the earth. During the dominion of these four great powers, the saints have been always despised and persecuted; at least, they have had no share in the government of the world; and more especially, in the reign of the fourth power, war has been almost continually made against them; and they bear the character of witnesses who prophesy in sackcloth. Whoever is exalted, they must be depressed, and wear always the garments of humiliation. Whatever peace and social enjoyment exist among mankind, the world will be always hostile to them, because, like their master, they bear testimony that the deeds of it are evil. But we are here presented with the view of their happy condition, after the opposing power shall have been put down. Daniel beholds the Redeemer coming with the clouds of heaven, to receive this dominion from his Father, that he may give it to his people. There is a sublimity in this representation, which does not appear in our English bibles. It is literally, "I saw in the visions of the night, and behold, with the clouds of heaven, as a son of man, HE came; and he inclined his course towards the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him," &c. It is indeed a nameless personage; one who appeared like a son of man: but it is HE whom all understood to be the promised Messiah. Then to him was immediately given, dominion, and glory, and *the* kingdom, &c. Therefore it is said in the explanation, "that 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."

The Redeemer received this authority when he rose from the dead and ascended to his Father: but here the Father

is represented as coming to put him into the actual possession of it. In the first place, he executes judgments on his enemies, puts them down, and then gives the dominion to his only begotten Son. It is by no means difficult to conceive of the change which shall take place in the minds of men, and in the outward condition of the world, at this blessed period. It will chiefly consist in the establishment of the authority of Jesus Christ over the hearts and consciences of men. At this time, there are many who profess to have their hearts actuated by a sense of his authority, while in fact they deny him. In this sense, he has a nominal kingdom, while the beast possesses the power: but in that blessed period, the power shall also be his. If our hearts were fully under the authority of the Redeemer, we should not dare to neglect any moral duty. We should all be diligent in attending on the worship of God according to his appointment. There would be no human inventions introduced into his worship. Men would not dare "to add to his words, lest he should reprove them, and they should be found liars." They would bear in mind continually the great truth, that "the eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the whole earth, beholding the evil and the good." Knowing the terrors of the Lord, and the blessings of obedience, they would fear to offend him, and be solicitous to obey every command in the spirit. In a word, they would always have the fear of God before their eyes.

If the minds of men were thus enlightened in the knowledge of God, his laws written on their hearts, and their lives corresponding to this change of principles, there can be no doubt but God would pour out his blessing upon them in their temporal circumstances. The heavens would give rain in due season. The earth would yield her increase. Peace and plenty would be the portion of all. The exercise of temperance would insure contentment and health. The pains and tortures of disease would be seldom or never felt. Old age would indeed still, in some degree, enfeeble every constitution. The fire of youth would gradually be extinguished. But the aged would still enjoy peace and comfort, and come to the grave in a full age, "like as a shock of corn cometh in, in his season."

This shall be the happy condition of the world when the saints shall possess the kingdom. Then the excellence of christian principles will appear, when they shall have their full operation on the minds of men. This blessed condition

shall continue, without any interruption, for a thousand years. At the end of this period, Satan shall be loosed from his prison, and shall again commence his work of deception. His delusions shall again operate on the minds of men generally. "The heathen shall again rage, and the people shall again imagine vain things." They shall not only plot and combine, to break asunder the bands of truth and righteousness; but they shall attempt to destroy true christianity from the earth. In this attempt, they will show the wicked principle by which all the enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ are actuated, and then God will destroy them by some sudden judgment, which is represented by fire coming down from heaven and devouring them. Hence the saints shall never lose the kingdom, after they shall have obtained it in these latter days. The war in which they are now engaged shall terminate in victory, and shall never need to be renewed. In any future attempt of the enemy to destroy them, they shall have no need to fight; but only stand still, and behold the salvation of God. But finally, the Lord Jesus Christ shall come, with ten thousands of his saints, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not his gospel. Then the last trumpet shall sound, the dead shall be raised, and all stand at the bar of Jesus Christ for judgment.

How awful, how exalted and majestic, how consistent, and how full of wisdom and love, is the plan of God's providence and redemption, as it is developed in his word! It has never yet been fully developed; but, *from the beginning of the world, has been hid in God.* The most enlightened mind, even in this last age, can see comparatively but little of its glory. Still, that little which we can see, is sufficient to convince us, that there is a boundless ocean of grandeur and glory, ready to come into view. The darkness is just beginning to disperse. The day star has already risen in the hearts of some of the true witnesses, and will yet rise in the hearts of many; and at length, all those whose minds are thus illuminated by the light of prophecy, shall be enabled to see the sun of righteousness, when he shall come to enlighten, to cheer, and to bless the earth.

## PART I. DISSERTATION II.

### ON THE VIII. OF DANIEL.

THE importance and excellence of the prophecy contained in this chapter, will appear in the clear and full description of that power, which, for so many ages, has held the dominion of the christian world, but especially in showing the period of its fall. The knowledge of the time when certain great and interesting events shall come to pass, is very important to those whose lot is cast in that age of the world. The prophecies concerning the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for the destruction of Jerusalem, were of great importance to his disciples in those trying times. When they saw the accomplishment of his words;—when the scenes which he had taught them to expect, were opening and unfolding themselves to their view, their hearts were not only more and more established in the faith, but they had every inducement to order their lives and conversation, and even their outward circumstances, so as to be prepared for the scenes of trouble which they knew to be at hand. This prophecy, as will be seen in the sequel, not only proves, but proves to a demonstration, that *the last end of the indignation* is fast approaching, and so near at hand, that the man of middle age may live to see it; and that before this generation shall pass away, *the sanctuary shall be cleansed*.

This vision appeared to Daniel near the end of the reign of Belshazzar, and consequently, near the expiration of the Chaldean dynasty, of which Belshazzar was the last king. The lion had entirely lost his boldness and ferocity, his wings were clipped, and his heart was changed. He had neither the ability nor the courage to roam the forests as usual for his prey, and, by his roaring, to strike the other animals with terror. He himself became timid as the feeble fawn. He had not even the power of self-preservation. Hence in this vision the Chaldean power does not appear.

At this time, Daniel still dwelt in Babylon, and was employed in some public business: but in the vision, he seemed to have been transported to the city Shushan, or Suza, in the province of Elam; which was afterwards, for many years, the winter residence of the kings of Persia. He found himself on the bank of the river Ulai, a stream not far from the city. He beheld, in vision, a ram standing on the

margin of the river, having two horns, which rose to a great height from his head. One of them, the prophet discerned, was higher than the other. The horns grew on the head of the ram while Daniel was observing it, and the higher horn came up the last. This ram is afterwards explained to represent the united kings or dynasties of Media and Persia. These two powers were just about that time united, under Cyrus the Great, who was a Persian by birth, and Darius the Mede, who was the uncle of Cyrus, his mother's brother. It is generally agreed, by all historians and chronologers who have written on this subject, that this mighty conqueror, and wonderful man, began his reign over Persia in the first year of the fifty-fifth Olympiad, which answers to the year 559 before the christian era; and nine years afterwards, or in the year 550 before the commencement of the same era, the kingdoms of Media and Persia were united and consolidated, under his government. In the year 538, or eighteen years after this union, Babylon was taken, and the Chaldean empire terminated. The government of Babylon was first put into the hands of Darius, who was then sixty-two years of age; and nine years afterwards the government of the whole united empire devolved on Cyrus. This event, therefore, took place twenty-seven years after Cyrus became king of Media and Persia. Hence the decree for the restoration of the Jews, which is recorded in the last chapter of II. Chronicles, and the first chapter of Ezra, is said to have been published in the first year of Cyrus:—not the first of his reign over Persia, or over Media and Persia united; but in the first year after God had raised him to the throne of Babylon, and given into his hand all the kingdoms of the earth.

The kingdom of Persia was small and inconsiderable before the days of Cyrus, while that of Media had a long standing in the world; but this mighty conqueror soon raised his native country to power and renown; and all this appears in the vision. "The two horns of the ram were high, one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last." The prophet beheld "this ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beast might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great." The foregoing historical facts will show us plainly how all this was fulfilled.

But while Daniel was revolving the vision in his mind, and endeavoring to understand the meaning of it, he saw a



he-goat come from the west; and he seemed to cover the face of the earth. He came with such amazing rapidity, that he appeared not to touch the ground, and the prophet discerned that he had a remarkable horn between his eyes. "I saw him," says he, "come close to the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him; and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand." This "rough goat" is afterwards explained to mean the Grecian dynasty; and the horn, to represent the first government, which was commenced by Philip of Macedon, and afterwards became exceedingly great under his son Alexander. The kings of Persia had ruled the world for more than two hundred years, and they had proved to be the greatest destroyers of the human family that ever existed: but they also, at length, became weak and effeminate, and fell an easy prey to the prowess and skill of Alexander. At the battle of Granicus, with 30,000 men, he defeated the immense army of Darius. Afterwards, at Issus and at Arbela, he destroyed completely the remnant of his power, and took possession of his kingdom. Thus, *there was no power in the ram to stand before him: and thus, the he-goat waxed very great.* He destroyed the ancient and powerful city of Tyre. He took possession of Egypt. He passed the mountains of Caucasus, and carried his conquests into India. Even the whole world appeared too small for his boundless ambition. But, in the flower of his age, he was cut off by death, and the empire was divided among the four chief commanders of his army, who took each of them the title of king. Thus, "when the he-goat was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven."

In each of the prophecies, contained in the seventh, eighth, and eleventh chapters, we find a remarkable transition from the early to the last times of the Roman empire. In the vision recorded in the seventh chapter, the prophet discovered, that the fourth beast had ten horns, and these horns immediately engaged his attention: but the ten kingdoms which these horns represented, were not in existence until after Rome became christian. Here a thousand years are passed over, that the prophet might fix his attention on the scenes of the latter days. Here we find a similar transition. A little horn is said to have sprung up out of one of those kingdoms, and which "became exceeding great, to

wards the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. And it waxed great," &c. This little horn evidently signifies the Roman power; but not so much the heathen as the antichristian power of Rome. When the successors of Alexander divided his empire among them, the Romans were no contemptible power. It is true that in comparison with many other governments they might well be called a little horn; and be said to have waxed great: for, from that period, they advanced with great rapidity, southward, and westward, and eastward. They may be said to have cast down to the earth many of the host of heaven, and to have magnified themselves to the prince of the host; for under their government the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified. It may be said, that by them the daily sacrifice was taken away; for it was they that destroyed the temple and the city of Jerusalem; so that no sacrifices could any longer be offered according to the law of Moses. There are many things, in this account of the works of this little horn, which are accomplished in the first sense of the prophecy by Rome pagan; but we must look to Rome christian for the full accomplishment: and, while we fix our attention on the great antichrist, we must not forget that there are to be many antichrists in the last times. The prophet is told that in the latter time of their kingdom, or rather, as it ought to have been rendered, in the end of their kingdoms; that is, after all those governments shall have been overturned, "and when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences shall stand up, and his power shall be mighty," &c. This is evidently spoken concerning the empire of Rome under the last head. The little horn of the seventh chapter, the little horn of the eighth, the power which is described from the thirty-first verse of the eleventh, and which is still more particularly described in the thirteenth chapter of Revelation; the beast which rose out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and the second beast which rose out of the earth, having two horns like a lamb, but speaking as a dragon, are all intended to exhibit the antichristian power which has risen and reigned for nearly 1260 years. In order to have a clear view of this power, in its enormous stature and full dimensions, we must look at the church of Rome. There we shall see the great antichrist standing like the enormous oak among the trees of smaller stature; but there are hundreds of the same species every where through the christian world. All indeed, have not grown to the same enormous size. All are not

able to practise and to prosper to the same extent, in destroying the mighty and the holy people: but in proportion to their power, they all make war with the saints. All endeavor to prosper by their policy and craft, and all magnify themselves in their heart. But there is no part of the prophecy which is more clearly fulfilled in the present time, than this clause, "by peace he shall destroy many." The false charity, which has so long been inculcated and practised by the mass of the christian churches, has produced a false peace, which is now the destruction of multitudes. When those who are walking in the paths of error and false worship, are never reprov'd; when the errors are never looked on with disapprobation, but rather encouraged; when one sect is afraid to expose the errors of another for fear of violating the law of charity; is it not to be expected that they will all run into some errors, and that if all continue in this course, no pure church will at length be found on the earth? This evil is now working its pernicious effects. In this sense, the daily sacrifice is as really taken away, and the sanctuary is as really defiled, though not to the same extent, in almost all the other churches, as in the church of Rome.

It is evident that no man, nor any body of men, has a right, by its own authority, to prescribe laws for the church of God; or to introduce any ordinance or regulation, for which they cannot show authority from his word. When therefore, any individual, or any public body, attempts in this sense "to change times and laws," they do in fact stand up against the prince of princes. Here again we may clearly perceive, that the great antichrist is only a monster of iniquity, grown to a larger size than some others, who resemble him, and who copy his example.

But our chief object in this dissertation, is to show, that the time is at hand, when God will cleanse his sanctuary by the torrent of his judgments. That he will thus cleanse his church from every kind of pollution, and that the work of cleansing shall commence in no very distant period from the time in which we live, we think is abundantly plain from the last chapter. We now call the attention of our readers to the proofs, that the period is fast approaching and is already at the doors. It appears to have been a great desideratum with Daniel, to know the times when these things should come to pass; and it certainly ought to be a powerful object of desire with us, whose lot is cast so near the times of the end. Daniel heard one saint speaking with

another saint on this subject. The question was asked, "how long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot?" Then the person who was asked, turned to Daniel and said, "unto 2300 days," or literally, "to the evening and morning of 2300, and the sanctuary shall be cleansed." From this we may see the meaning of the first clause of the twenty-sixth verse. "The vision of the *evening* and *morning*, which was told, is true." Daniel was informed, "that the vision should be for many days, that it should be fulfilled at the last end of the indignation; and that at the time *appointed* the end should be." Hence the conclusion is obvious, that the end of the days, the last end of the indignation, and the time appointed, is the period spoken of in the foregoing chapter, when the thrones are said to be cast down, and the Ancient of days sat on the throne of judgment. It is also no less obvious, that the commencement of the days is the time of the rise of the ram, or the Medo-Persian power. But this is known to have commenced in the year 550 before the christian era; and as each of these prophetic days, stands for a year; if we deduct 550 from 2300, we shall come to the year 1750, as the end of the days, or the last end of the indignation. According to this calculation the time is past, and no judgments have yet been executed to correspond with the prophecy.

The error consists in a mistake of transcribers, which might very readily occur; and we know that such errors have occurred in other places as well as in this. In the second verse of the twenty-second chapter of II. Chronicles, we find an error precisely of the same kind. It is there said, that Ahaziah was forty and two years old when he began to reign. But his father Jehoram was not more than forty years old when he died; and as Ahaziah began to reign immediately on the demise of his father, it is impossible this should be true. In the viii. chapter of II. Kings, and twenty-sixth verse, it is said that "Ahaziah was two and twenty years old when he began to reign," and we have reason to suspect an error here also: for Ahaziah was the youngest son of Jehoram, and he had a number of other sons, who were slain by a band of the Arabians, who broke into his encampment. If Ahaziah was twenty and two years old at the death of his father, and his father was only forty years old when he died, he must have been born when his father was eighteen years of age. When, there-

fore it is considered that he had other sons older than Ahaziah, there is manifest ground of suspicion that he was not even two and twenty years old when he began to reign. But in the Greek version of the Chronicles, commonly called the Septuagint, this error does not exist. We are there told that Ahaziah was twenty years old when he began to reign. Then his father was twenty years old when he was born, and as he was married young, and had more wives than one, he might have had sons older than Ahaziah. This fact is mentioned here, to show, that although the Providence of God, has always watched over the bible, and kept it free from any fatal mistake, or such corruption as could not be discovered and rectified; yet some errors have occasionally crept in by the ignorance or negligence of transcribers. There is no doubt, an error of the same kind, in the number 2300. In the Greek version, to which we have referred, the fourteenth verse is thus rendered. And he said unto him: "until the evening and morning, days two thousand and four hundred; and the sanctuary shall be cleansed." This is no doubt the number which was expressed by the heavenly messenger. We are informed by Jerome, as quoted by Newton, that some of the ancient manuscripts had 2200. But it is now rendered sufficiently plain, that neither 2200 nor 2300 is the proper number; because the vision must be dated from the rise of the ram: and therefore, we are obliged to follow the Septuagint, as the last resource. It is the oldest translation of the scriptures, and was made not more than 400 years after the days of Daniel. It is the more likely to be correct; because the prophecies of Daniel were much studied in those days. But the signs of the times afford a strong proof that the last end of the indignation is not far distant; and as 2400 years will bring us down to these times, we need seek no farther evidence of the correctness of this number. As the Medo-Persian empire, signified by the ram, rose in the year 550 before the christian era; and as 1827 years have now elapsed since that era, it is now 2377 years since the rise of the ram, or the commencement of the vision; and therefore 23 years after this-time, "the sanctuary will be cleansed"!

By "the cleansing of the sanctuary" we are not to understand the commencement of the Millennium. It is the removing of antichristian defilement. After that period the sanctuary and the host shall no longer be trodden under foot. Men who are christians by profession, but gentiles in their heart, shall not dare to trample on the outer court

of the temple, or on the holy city. God shall then encourage and animate his people by his word and spirit, saying to them, "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean." The church shall then be cleansed from false doctrines, and from all worship which God has not authorized. It is by no means difficult for us to see how this work will be accomplished; because God is now laying a foundation for it. In this age all errors and delusions that ever operated on the minds of men have had their full influence, and are now beginning to decline. We can at this moment see some of their pernicious effects: but in the course of twenty years more these effects will be still more obvious, and the world will at length be generally convinced "that the corrupted tree will not produce good fruit," that false principles and false worship, instead of producing holiness of heart and life, will only generate bad habits, and increase unto more ungodliness. There will be no longer any new lure to catch the unwary; for human contrivances are even now almost exhausted, and men will be taught by the experience of the past age, that nothing will be permanent but truth; and that nothing will purify the heart, but the true christian principles, and the pure worship of God, according to his own ordinances. The spirit of antichrist will by that time have lost much of its power. The tremendous judgments of God, will teach men, not any longer to intrude their inventions into his church. The preachers of the gospel will not dare any longer "to prophesy smooth things, to walk in craftiness, or to handle the word of God deceitfully;" for all these things will, in a few years, be punished most severely. The little antichrists which have raised themselves by policy and craft, which they have "made to prosper in their hand," will all be put down; and finally the great antichrist of Rome shall be judged, and Rome itself shall become like Tyre, and like ancient Babylon, a scene of desolation; and finally a heap of ruins. At the cleansing the sanctuary the prophesy shall be fulfilled which is recorded in the beginning of the xix. of Revelation: "And after these things, I heard a great voice of much people in Heaven, saying, Alleluia, salvation, and glory, and honor, 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."

These are tremendous considerations. When we compare the things contained in this chapter, with those in the foregoing, and understand that all these events will be brought about by terrible judgments; and that these judgments are so soon to be executed; it should lead us to consider our ways, and to search and try our hearts; that we may turn again unto the Lord. What church or what individual now existing has entirely escaped the wide spread contamination, which in every place, has defiled the sanctuary of God? Although some are less defiled than others; it is very certain that every church, and every sect in the whole church, has its errors and defilements. Although it is true, "the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear;" it is no less true, "that our iniquities have separated between us and our God, and our sins have hid his face from us that he will not hear." We are not therefore to expect any blessing from him,—any attention to our worship, or to our exertions in propagating the gospel, until we give diligence to discover our sins, and remove them by repentance and amendment. Those churches, and those individuals, who refuse to put away the idols, and abominable things which they have among them, will find themselves in a few years to be nothing but a mass of corruption, and shall at last be utterly destroyed, by the torrent of devouring fire, which will burn around the chariot of the "Ancient of days," when he comes to execute the judgments of his wrath.

But there is hope for all, who have sufficient humility to retrace their steps, and turn from their iniquities. There are few indeed of this description at the present time. Whatever course men have chosen, they seem determined to persevere in it. Hence many of the errors into which they have fallen from ignorance or negligence, will become fatal; because they have too much pride to confess and forsake them. But still it is a glorious time for those whom God has raised to authority in the churches to endeavor to effect a reformation. There are many images to be broken,—many altars to be demolished,—many groves to be cut down and burnt, and the vestiges of idolatry to be removed. This must chiefly be the work of the ministers of the gospel. It must be performed by their instrumentality and not by force and violence. Oh, that God would raise up a number of Josiahs, for this important purpose, who would go through the land, and at least begin the work of purging it from its defilement. But we know that he will raise up and send

them forth in their proper time; and therefore we may rest in hope.

But every member of the household of faith is called to exert himself for the purification of the church. If there were not such a thirst after novelty; if there were not such an immense multitude who have itching ears, who turn away from the truth, and are turned unto fables; there would not be such a strong temptation on the minds of preachers, to speak smooth things, and prophesy deceits; nor would they have such a strong inducement to invent false doctrines or false worship. If those few characters, who are the support and stability of every particular church, would set their faces against every human invention, and against those ministers who defile the house of God, for the purpose of pleasing the ignorant and thoughtless, because they are fashionable characters; they might be instruments of much good in the great work of purifying the sanctuary. But if they are determined still to remain "settled on their lees;" and too indolent to engage in this important work; we can only declare to them, that the work will be performed without their instrumentality; and that they shall be awaked from their slumber, by the cry, "behold the bridegroom cometh;" when perhaps they shall find their lamps totally extinguished, and not a drop of oil to rekindle the flame. Then, with the foolish virgins, they shall say, "Lord, Lord, open to us; but he shall answer them; verily I say unto you, I know you not; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity."



## PART I. DISSERTATION III.

### ON THE IX. OF DANIEL.

WE may well conclude, from the prayers and fastings, and the deep humiliation of Daniel; from his steadfast and persevering resolution in seeking this revelation, as well as from the manner in which it was communicated, that it is of much more importance than appears to the eye of superficial observation. It contains the most irrefragable proof that Messiah the prince is, and can be no other, than Jesus of Nazareth. Even the stubborn Jews, who are determined not to be convinced of the truth, let the evidence be as strong as it may, have tacitly admitted that this prophecy relates to him, and can relate to no other: for while the ancient Jewish writers have agreed that Daniel should be ranked among the greatest of the prophets, because he not only foretold the events themselves, but also the time when they should come to pass; the more modern Jews, who have seen the use which has been made of the writings of Daniel in favor of christianity, will scarcely allow him to have been possessed of the prophetic spirit. But this prophecy is the only one in the whole book which could tempt them to undervalue his character. This is, therefore, a plain proof of their conviction, that if the plenary inspiration of Daniel were admitted, they must also be obliged to admit that Jesus is the Christ. It may therefore be presumed, that as soon as the minds of the Jews shall be opened for the reception of the truth, this very prophecy will shine into their hearts, with a conviction which shall dispel every doubt, and remove every objection to the reception of the Redeemer.

But there are many other considerations which render this prophecy of immense importance to all mankind. If it were only admitted to have its proper influence on the minds of men generally, it would effectually silence the cavils of infidelity, and be one of the strongest grounds of confirmation to the faith of the christian. Messiah, the prince, was indeed expected by all the Israelites. They all believed that he should come and establish his kingdom in the world, and reign forever: but those that had a more particular and accurate understanding of the prophecies, believed also that he should first suffer death. This truth was

presented every day before their eyes, in the sacrifices, as well as in the writings of the prophets. But here is a prophecy, which points out and designates the very year in which Christ suffered death, and which was revealed to Daniel 570 years before it came to pass.

It has pleased the great God of heaven, who works all things according to the counsel of his own will, and gives no account of his matters, to throw a certain degree of obscurity over the prophecies; so that they are not fully understood until the time of their accomplishment: and therefore the prophecies that have not yet been fully accomplished, although they give exercise to the faith of the christian, and while he takes heed to them, as to a light that shineth in a dark place, the day begins to dawn, and the day star to arise in his heart; yet, until they are accomplished, they have little power to dispel the clouds of ignorance and unbelief which darken the minds of men. But this prophecy, having received its accomplishment in every minute particular, is well calculated to impress the minds of all men with a full conviction of the truth of the whole scripture, and especially of the truth of the prophecies which are yet to be fulfilled. We shall show the force of this observation as we proceed.

It is evident that the great object which Daniel had in view was the return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon. He had carefully studied the prophecies of Jeremiah, and he found that the captivity was to be of seventy years' duration. This period was then drawing towards its close, and Daniel earnestly desired that God would fulfil the deliverance he had promised. He declares, "I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek, by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes," &c. This appears to have been the course to which he had always accustomed himself, when he desired any particular favor. His object was not to merit a reward by his good works, but, on the contrary, to humble his heart, that he might be able to offer up acceptable worship. This prayer of Daniel breathes the deepest humility, the strongest feelings of devotion, and the highest sense of the majesty of God, which are to be found any where in the scriptures, the prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ excepted, which is recorded in the xvii. of John: but the most striking feature in it, is the sense of guilt derived from his national connexion. Daniel himself appears to have been faultless in his moral character. His enemies could bring no accusation against him, except that he made

it his constant practice to pray and give thanks before his God three times every day. But here he confesses himself a sinner, and guilty of the sins for which Jerusalem was destroyed, and the nation carried into captivity. He justifies God in all his judgments, and asks only from his mercy, that his anger might be turned away from the city of Jerusalem, and the holy mountain of his God. We cannot suppose that the only object of solicitude was the restoration of his countrymen to their own land. No doubt this desire was in his heart; but his chief object was the restoration of true religion, and the accomplishment of the promises made to the fathers of the church. In order that these things might be brought to pass, it was necessary that the Jews should return to their own land, that Jerusalem should be rebuilt, and that the worship of God should be established and conducted according to the former manner, until the coming of the Messiah, who should make atonement for sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness. This was Daniel's desire, and without this desire he cannot be said to have received an answer to his prayer.

But he was so much beloved, that God sent the angel Gabriel from heaven, as soon as he commenced his supplication. "It shall come to pass," says God, "that before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear." This promise was fulfilled to Daniel, and shall be fulfilled to the whole church in the ages to come. "Gabriel," whom Daniel had seen in the foregoing vision, "being caused to fly swiftly, touched him about the time of the evening oblation." From this declaration concerning the swiftness or velocity of the angel Gabriel, we may infer that the third heaven, or the throne of God, is at an immense distance from the earth; that angels are sometimes sent; and that they fly with the velocity of light, to answer the petitions of those whom God loves.

But let us consider the communication, which we shall first render literally from the Hebrew text. "Seventy weeks are determined on thy people, and on thy holy city, to shut up the transgression, and to seal up sins, and to cover iniquity by an atonement, and to bring in the righteousness of eternal ages, and to seal vision and prophecy, and to anoint the holy of holies. And do thou know, and learn instruction, that from the going forth of the decree to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto Messiah the ruler, shall be seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks: the streets shall be restored, and the ruins, even in the distress of the times.

And after the sixty and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off; but not for himself. But the city and the sanctuary, the people of the ruler who shall come shall destroy, and the end of it shall be with an inundation; and until the end of the war, desolations are determined. And for one week, he shall establish the covenant with many, and in the midst of the week, he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease; and on account of the rapid spreading of abomination, he shall make it desolate, even until the consummated and determined wrath shall be poured out on the desolate."

Here we have a multitude of objects set before us, but the most prominent of all is the death of the Messiah, and the time when it should be accomplished. It is predicted that it should take place sixty-nine weeks after the going forth of a certain decree, to restore and to build Jerusalem. It is scarcely necessary to inform our readers that these are weeks of years, and that the sixty-nine weeks must be reduced to days, and each day put for a year. Does any one ask why God has chosen to make the communication in this manner, rather than to state the years explicitly. We answer we cannot tell, but the fact is certain; for it is confirmed by the event taking place at the end of 483 years, from the going forth of the decree to restore and to build Jerusalem.

We must not confound this decree with the decree of Cyrus, which is recorded in the first chapter of Ezra, for this decree only gave the privilege to the Jews to go to Jerusalem, and build the temple. It was merely a grant, that as many of the Jews as were so disposed, might return to their own country, and rebuild the temple of their God, that the golden and silver vessels which had been carried away by Nebuchadnezzar should be restored, and that they should offer sacrifices and keep the solemn feasts as their fathers had done in ancient times.

Nor is this the decree of Darius Hysdaspes, which is recorded in the vi. of Ezra, and which is merely a revival of the decree of Cyrus. The Samaritans, their enemies, had made them cease from building the house of God, and it was not finished until the sixth year of the reign of Darius, which was seventeen years after the decree was issued by Cyrus.

But the decree to restore and to build Jerusalem, was granted to Ezra by Artaxerxes Longimanus, seventy-three years after the decree of Cyrus. Ezra had full powers granted him, not only to establish the worship of God; but also to appoint magistrates and other officers, and to inflict

punishment for crimes against the law of God. Under this decree, the rubbish was removed, and the wall of the city was built by Nehemiah, whom Artaxerxes afterwards appointed governor; and all the laws and ordinances, were finally carried into effect. But all these things were done amidst *the distress of the times*. They had enemies without, and enemies within. Some account of these distresses is given in the writings of Ezra and Nehemiah, and it was no doubt seven weeks or 49 years from the time in which the decree was issued, until Jerusalem was restored, and the ancient laws and ordinances carried into full execution. The reason why there is a distinction made between the 7 weeks and the 62 weeks, was probably that some encouragement might be given to Ezra and Nehemiah, and their coadjutors and successors in the work. It was foretold that those times, should be times of trouble; but notwithstanding the streets should be built, and the ruined places should be restored to their former condition, and that all should be finished in 49 years. Thus they were enabled to advance in their work, being assured of help from God.

But it is still more important to inquire how the other parts of the prophecy have been fulfilled. From the chronology of the Persian kings, we know the time in which this decree was given, and it is pleasing to find that there are no essential differences of opinion on this subject among chronologers generally. We stated before, that Cyrus began his reign over the Persians in the first year of the fifty-fifth Olympiad, or in the year 559 before the christian era; and that in the year 550 he assumed the government of the united kingdoms of Media and Persia. This latter period is rendered remarkable by the vision contained in the foregoing chapter; and therefore ought to be kept in remembrance; as these two prophecies will be found mutually to confirm the truth of each other. Cyrus did not enter on the government of Babylon until twenty-seven years after this period, and then lived but three years. He reigned forty years in all; ten years in Persia his native country, twenty-seven years over Media and Persia united, and three years over Babylon, the metropolis of the whole empire. Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, reigned but a little more than seven years, and Smudis, who usurped the government, under the pretence of being the son of Cyrus, was put to death by the nobles of Persia, after he had reigned six months: so Cambyses and Smudis reigned eight years. Then Darius Hysdaspes reigned thirty-four years. Xerxes, the son of

Darius, was assassinated by his uncle Artabanus in the twenty-first year of his reign; but he also soon shared the same fate: so Xerxes and Artabanus reigned twenty-one years. Then Artaxerxes, who issued this decree, succeeded to the throne, and the decree was given in the beginning of the seventh year of his reign, or after he had reigned six years. This fully appears from the viii. of Ezra. We are told in the 31st verse, that Ezra and his company encamped at the river Ahava, which was their place of rendezvous, and they were detained for a number of days, waiting for their brethren, whom they expected, and after this, they departed from the river Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go to Jerusalem. The decree of Artaxerxes was probably issued on the first day of the new year. We are therefore to add these numbers together, and subtract their sum from 550, in which Cyrus united the Median and Persian empires under his government, and the result will be the number of years which elapsed, between the *going forth* of this decree, and the first year of the christian era. The result is 451. But the Messiah was cut off at the Jewish passover, early in the year thirty-three. Hence we are to add thirty-two years to the former number; for it is said that this event should take place after the expiration of sixty-nine weeks, or 483 years. The prophecy, therefore, is exactly accomplished: for the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified in the 484th year, from the time in which the decree was issued. That the reader may see the whole calculation at one glance, we shall present it in the following form.

Cyrus reigned over Media and Persia	-	27	years.
over Babylon	- -	3	“
Cambyzes and Smudis reigned	- -	8	“
Darius Hysdaspes	- - - -	34	“
Xerxes and Artabanus,	- - - -	21	“
Artaxerxes Longimanus, before the } decrece was issued, }	- -	6	“
Deduct	- - - -	99	
From the year of the rise of the ram	-	550	
		<hr/>	
		451	
Elapsed before Christ was crucified		32	
		<hr/>	
		483	

The degree of exactness is in fact most astonishing: for there is generally some difficulty in settling chronological

accounts, when they are kept in this imperfect manner by the years of a king's reign. A king might commence his reign near the end of a certain year, and it might terminate early in the next. If therefore the chronologer is not very accurate in his calculations, he might say that this king reigned two years, whereas he might not have reigned one. But here the calculation is very short. It is a well authenticated fact, that Cyrus collected the scattered hordes of the Persians and became their chief, made war against his grandfather, Astyages, and conquered him in the year 559 before the christian era. It is also well authenticated, that the Median and Persian kingdoms were united and consolidated under his government in the year 550,—that in the year 523, he entered on the government of Babylon, over which he reigned three years, and was succeeded by his son, Cambyses, &c. If we dispute these things, then, on the same grounds, we ought to dispute the credibility of all ancient history. But the truth of these facts is confirmed by the prophecy, the exact accomplishment of which must fill our minds with admiration, silence every sceptical thought, and show the hand of God, as clearly, as the handwriting on the wall appeared to Belshazzar and his guests.

It is said, and perhaps on good authority, that the christian era commences four years after the time in which Christ was born. But whether this be true or false, it will make no difference in the result of the calculation. It matters not where the era is fixed, we know that 32 years elapsed after it, before Christ was crucified; and that the first year of the fifty-fifth Olympiad corresponds to the year of this era, 559. All these numbers as they stand in ancient chronology, are reduced to their corresponding numbers, according to the present era; and hence every one must see, that wherever it is fixed, the result will be the same.

The Lord Jesus Christ was crucified in the first year of the seventieth week from the time in which the decree went forth. Then iniquity was covered with an actual atonement. This was indeed the chief object for which the Redeemer came into the world. It was represented in the Mosaic dispensation by the mercy seat, which covered the ark of the testimony; and the atonement is called the covering for iniquity. Those who take their protection under the shadow of his wings, shall be covered from the wrath of God. But this covering is not like the robe of the hypocrite, which conceals, under its fair appearance, a mass of deformity and corruption. All who receive it, become re-

ally righteous, and shall be accounted righteous through eternity. It not only justifies us in the sight of God, but sanctifies our hearts; and therefore it is called everlasting righteousness, or the righteousness of eternal ages.

But as there was atonement made for iniquity, and eternal righteousness brought in; so there was also at that time a shutting up or imprisonment of iniquity, and a sealing of sins. By these phrases, the shutting up of iniquity, and the sealing of sin, we are to understand principally the horrible effects which were then produced on the hearts of the Jews. As the prophet Jeremiah declares, "the sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and the point of a diamond," &c. They were sealed up or confirmed in their sins. There were two remarkable and contrary effects produced by the preaching of the apostles. Those who gladly received the word, had their sins forgiven, and received the everlasting righteousness: while the others were hardened and confirmed in their iniquity. They had, indeed, committed the most enormous crime of which it is possible to conceive. No sin could be so great as that of crucifying the Son of God; and in this sense, transgression may then be said to have been finished, or brought to its perfection. But the former sense is the most consistent, and agrees best with the context. It is said, also, that he should confirm the covenant with many for one week. Here again there are two classes of the Jews brought into view. The one has the covenant confirmed with them. They are established in the faith of christianity, in which they were formerly unestablished and fluctuating. We know that this was the condition of the apostles themselves. Even they were not confirmed in the faith of the gospel until after the resurrection of Christ; and the same thing may be said concerning multitudes at that period. But with regard to the rest of the Jewish nation, they were shut up and sealed or confirmed in their iniquity: and in the middle of that week, the sacrifices and all the Mosaic rites and ceremonies lost their virtue. A short period was allowed in the forbearance of God, that ignorance might be enlightened and prejudice removed; and therefore the sacrifices did possess some virtue, and were offered with some acceptance, for a few years after Christ's resurrection: but they who still continued perverse, and refused to receive instruction after that period, no longer derived any spiritual benefit from their worship. Then all abominations spread rapidly among them, until they became fit for nothing, but the consuming fire of the



vengeance of God. Hence the city and the sanctuary were soon afterwards destroyed. This terrible destruction, the most terrible that ever was inflicted on any nation, is here clearly foretold. The wrath of God is represented as a flood, or inundation, not of water, but of fire: and this is said to be poured forth on the desolate ruins of the city, that every thing might be utterly consumed.

The last of the seventy weeks, or the first seven years after the resurrection of Christ, made a complete separation between the believing and the unbelieving Jews. The christians were confirmed in the faith of the gospel, while the hearts of the others were hardened. Hence it became useless to send among them any longer the word of life; for they hated the truth, and would not hear it: and therefore about seven years after the death of Christ, the apostle Peter was sent to Cornelius, the Roman centurion, and the Gentiles began to be favored with the word of God. From that period the Jews were cut off, and the Gentiles were called to enjoy the privileges of the church. When any one is utterly cut off from the divine influence,—when the spirit of God ceases entirely to operate on his heart,—that man rushes rapidly into iniquity. Hence we may form some conception of the horrible rapidity with which wickedness overspread the Jewish nation, after they were cut off from all communion with God. Their hearts were hardened in iniquity, and they gloried in their crimes. When they suffered the most horrible calamities, their hearts were never softened. We see nothing like repentance or humiliation, in the history of that period of the nation. Every succeeding calamity hardened them more and more. They would listen to no terms of accommodation with their conquerors; until the city and the temple were utterly destroyed, their houses and lands sold to strangers, and the miserable remnant who escaped the sword, scattered into all the nations of the earth.

But there is always a striking similarity between the judgments which God executes in different ages, when the subjects have a similarity of character. There are many things very similar, in the calamities brought on the Jews by the Chaldeans, and those which they suffered from the Romans. In both cases, the land was desolated, the chief city and the temple destroyed; multitudes perished by the sword, by the famine, and the pestilence; and the remnant was either carried into captivity, or scattered over the face of the earth. It is this similarity in God's judgments, which makes the same scripture applicable to the Jewish and the

christian church; and the same prophecies which have been fulfilled in the ages past, are again to be fulfilled in the ages to come. The prophecies of the Lord Jesus Christ, concerning the calamities which fell on the Jews, the spreading of his gospel among the Gentiles, and the spiritual kingdom which he then established, are, in a short period, to be realized once more throughout the world. This prophecy which we have been considering, contains many great principles, which shall be brought once more into operation. Nay, some of it has already begun to be realized, although it is not generally understood. The analogy between the "cutting off" of the Messiah, and the "slaying of the witnesses," is striking and manifest. About the time of the death of Christ, there was scarcely a man to be found that knew the truth, or was endowed with moral courage to bear testimony to it: and at the present time, there is scarcely one who dares to lift up his voice against the errors and corruptions by which the christian church is now disfigured and disgraced. Some, indeed, are beginning to open their eyes, and see these abominations; and some are beginning to point them out to others. This shows the rise of the witnesses, and that God "will confirm his covenant" with many, for a short period, before he comes to visit the world with terrible calamities; or, as it is more clearly expressed in the xii. chapter of this book, "many shall be purified, and made white, and tried." So, on the other hand, the time is fast approaching, when "he will cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease," by divesting every kind of ceremony, and every kind of religious worship, which he has not appointed, of all virtue, and all power to produce any spiritual benefit in the hearts of those by whom they are practised. There has truly been corruption in the church in all former ages; but those corruptions were not so great as to provoke the Almighty to withdraw his holy spirit entirely; and hence there have been, and there may be found, at this day, true christians in churches that have departed far from the simplicity of the gospel: but the time is coming, when all such worship shall cease to be accepted of God, and shall have no power to purify the heart, or produce any righteous and holy dispositions. Then every church that has any corruption in it, and refuses to be cleansed, will soon become a mass of moral putrefaction. Thus, "the wicked shall still do wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand." "Babylon shall fall, and shall become the habitation of devils, the hold of every foul spirit, and the cage of every unclean and hateful bird."

Hence it is easy to see, that there will be, as there is at present, a rapid spreading of abominations. Murders, thefts, and adulteries, and all those crimes that dissolve the bands of society, will increase, and become more common, every where through the christian world; until, at length, God shall come in his judgments, and pour forth the torrents of his wrath, like devouring fire. We have seen how this prophecy was fulfilled in the times that are past; and we have seen how the records and the calculations made by imperfect and uninspired men, have been kept from error, and preserved by the hand of God, to bear testimony to the accomplishment of prophecy. Profane or uninspired history, where the authors of it had no such design, confirms the truth of the word of God,—shows “that he has declared from ancient times the things that are coming and shall come,”—“that his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure.” We have seen that this prophecy has been most accurately fulfilled, both with respect to the time of the events, and the events themselves. All of them took place, in the providence of God, just as he had said; and yet the actors in those scenes were not the less wicked. “Jesus Christ, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, was by wicked hands crucified and slain.” We have at this time the same reason to believe, that similar wickedness is, and will be, committed, on a larger scale, every where through the christian world,—that similar abominations will spread rapidly, and that for these things God will spread ruin and desolation. We have the very same reason to believe, that before this generation shall pass, all these things shall be fulfilled, that the Jews had to believe the words of the Lord Jesus Christ on this subject, when they were related by the apostles. They were enabled to confirm their testimony by miracles: Daniel has confirmed his testimony by a more sure word of prophecy, which has been in fact accomplished. He has told us that the Messiah should be cut off sixty-nine weeks of years after a certain event, which was also foretold. We know that the decree was issued, and that the event has taken place, exactly at the time mentioned. He has told us, by the same authority, that God will bring tremendous judgments on the world, and cleanse his sanctuary from abominations, about the year 1850. Each of these prophecies, therefore, rests on the same foundation: as the one has been accomplished, so, no doubt, the other will be accomplished at the time appointed.

The Jewish sanctuary was, in the first place, polluted by the inventions or traditions of men, which they introduced in the room of the word of God. They provoked him to anger with these works of their hands; and at length he not only ceased to pay any attention to worship which was mingled with human inventions, but even the ordinances of his own appointment, the sacrifice and the oblation, ceased to be accepted,—to have any power to purify the heart, or to excite any holy affections; and they who still adhered to these things, not only ceased to be acceptable to God, but their worship became an abomination, and they were visited with terrible judgments, until they were destroyed. It is obvious, that, at the present day, there is a multitude of similar abominations, not only in the church of Rome, but in many protestant churches: and there is no church, that has any great degree of influence in the world, that is entirely free from them: for the fashions of the world are always at variance with the simplicity of the gospel. But we may rest assured, that where any human inventions are engrafted into the worship of God, in such a way that they cannot be laid aside, or where men are determined to adhere to them, and risk all the consequences, there God will cleanse his sanctuary by desolating judgments. This is a solemn and serious call to all that worship God, to examine their worship, their principles, and their moral practices: for when God comes to destroy every kind of corruption out of his church, and out of the world, he will certainly destroy those who defile the temple of God.

There are some diseases which affect the vital parts of the corporeal system, and which, in defiance of all medical skill, will at last bring gangrene and death; but there are others which may be removed by proper remedies: so, in churches and individuals, there are fatal errors, and errors which may be rectified. If we have the life-blood of christianity flowing uncorrupted in our hearts, our minds will of course be open to conviction: and when we come to the knowledge of our errors, we shall immediately forsake them. Hence the importance of self-examination, and of speaking every man the truth to his neighbor. Hence, also, the necessity for the diligent study of the word of God. It is thus that our hearts may be purified, the corruption removed out of our churches; and the judgments of God averted from our persons, our families, our congregations, and the land in which we dwell.

## PART I. DISSERTATION IV.

### ON THE XII. OF DANIEL.

There is something in the appearance and the words of this glorious personage, whose appearance is described in the 5th and 6th verses of the x. chapter, which bears a striking resemblance to the vision of John, recorded in the x. of Revelation. Daniel was walking on the bank of the great river Hiddekel, which is now better known by the name of Tigris, and which unites with the Euphrates, not very far from the site of ancient Babylon. "Then," says he, "I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz. His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in color to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude." It does not appear that this glorious personage made these communications to Daniel with his own mouth, but by an angel: and when the angel had finished, Daniel looked, and behold, there stood two persons, one on each side of the river; and one of them asked the man clothed in linen, who was on the waters of the river, how long shall it be to the end of these wonders? This personage "then held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that liveth forever, that it should be for a time, times, and an half: and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished." In the x. of Revelation, the angel swears "that time should be no longer: but that, at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, the mystery of God should be finished, as he had declared to his servants the prophets." The finishing, or accomplishment, therefore, of these wonders, shall be immediately after the sounding of the seventh trumpet, or at the end of the time, times, and an half, when the power of the holy people shall be scattered.

The power destined to perform this work of scattering or dispersing the power of the holy people, is described in the xi. chapter of Daniel. "They shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate." This is the power which is said to reign for a time, and times, and

half a time, and which is particularly described in the vii. and viii. chapters of Daniel, and the xiii. of Revelation. By the holy people, we are therefore to understand, the two witnesses described in the xi. chapter of Revelation. They are said to prophesy in sackcloth for 1260 years; and at the end of this period to be slain, and their bodies cast into the streets. It is by no means difficult to see how the power of these holy people is to be scattered. The accomplishment is before our eyes at this moment. It is no other than the dispersion of the power of the true church of God, by splitting and dividing it, into sections and parties, which are at war among themselves. It is very certain, that the witnesses can be found only in the protestant churches. There are none of them in the church of Rome: for no man can continue in the communion of that church, who opposes her corruptions. But the religion of protestants is also, at this time, so much corrupted, and the inventions of men have so much influence on the minds of almost all of them, that if any one shows his disapprobation of these things, and bears testimony against them, he is soon excluded from their communion, and his testimony is lost. The ministers of one sect will, indeed, frequently be found declaiming against the errors of other sects; but whatever may be their true motives, they are generally supposed to have no other object in view, but the increase of their own party. In such a state of affairs, the truth can have little force, by whomsoever it may be delivered: for whenever it is suspected that a minister of the gospel has some selfish end in view, when he speaks against the errors of other churches, the effect of his preaching will be weakened in proportion to the strength of the suspicions. But in the present state of the churches, no minister can escape this suspicion. We are obliged to appear under the banners of some sect, or else we can have no opportunity of bearing our public testimony to the truth; and it only remains with us, when we enter on the ministry, to choose that sect which appears to us to have the fewest corruptions in it, or is the least removed from the apostolic standard. It is very probable, that no church is at this time entirely free from corruption: but still they are so much biassed and prejudiced in favor of that particular party to which they have attached themselves, that the corruption is concealed from their own eyes, and they cannot bear to see it brought to light by those of another party.

For this dreadful disease, no effectual remedy has ever been discovered. It seems to be perfectly beyond the

power and skill of all our spiritual physicians. Many, indeed, have attempted to heal the breaches of Zion; but the medicine has proved ineffectual, and they have proved to be physicians of no value. Many have healed the wound slightly, and cried peace, peace, when there was no peace. This is palpably the fact with respect to the charity which is so much applauded and extolled in these latter years. It is the most pernicious of all the pretended remedies, because it gives a manifest advantage to those who corrupt the worship of God. Our Lord Jesus commanded his disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees: and what was this leaven, but false doctrines and human inventions in worship? But this modern charity leads all who are under its influence, to place themselves in circumstances in which they cannot guard against corruption. The apostle is very precise, and exceedingly minute, in directing the churches of Rome and Corinth how they ought to conduct themselves, with respect to their heathen neighbors, who might invite them to their feasts. He exhorts them to be exceedingly careful, lest any thing in their appearance or behavior might be construed into an approbation of false worship. But in this age, christians have no difficulty in joining themselves to churches, where the worship is known to be corrupted. This is the effect of modern charity. Thus the pretended remedy has proved to be much worse than the disease; and there is hardly a ray of hope that any cure will be effected, until God comes in his tremendous judgments, and the hail shall sweep away every refuge of lies.

These facts, which we have all seen, are "the slaying of the witnesses," and "the scattering of the power of the holy people." We have seen, in our dissertations on the former chapters, that there is only a short period left for the "cleansing of the sanctuary." If the abominations are to be removed out of the churches about the year 1850, or even before the end of the present century, it will require such an operation of divine power, as has not yet been manifested to the eyes of men. But even now, amidst the "wide spread desolations of Zion," and the "dispersion of the power of the holy people," we may see evident symptoms, that God has already begun to work a remedy, and that the cure will be performed in no very distant period, as it respects the union of "the power of the holy people." The very spirit of sect, by splitting, and dividing, and subdividing the churches, into so many minute parts, has exceedingly weakened its own power. That fascinating

energy, by which large and powerful combinations of men have been enabled to attract the common mass, the ostentatious display, and the pomp and splendor of religion, have even now, in some measure, lost their influence. Men are now beginning to open their eyes, if not to discern the truth, yet to see the errors into which they have been led. We may therefore hope, that where error is developed, truth will soon make its appearance, and not be long without its influence, at least on the hearts of the true disciples of the Redeemer.

There is a seeming discrepancy between the two declarations of this personage, who stood on the waters of the river: but it will immediately vanish by a little investigation. He declares, in the first place, that this iniquitous power should continue to reign for 1260 years, and then should accomplish his design, of "scattering the power of the holy people:" and secondly, he declares, that from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, would be 1290 years. The meaning is, that at the end of the 1260 years, the witnesses should be slain, or the power of the holy people scattered; and in 30 years afterwards, the sanctuary should be cleansed. The bodies of the witnesses are said to lie in the streets for three days and a half, and afterwards to rise and ascend to heaven. We cannot, therefore, expect, that in a shorter period than thirty years, all these things could be accomplished. The scattered power of the holy people must be brought together, and operate with effect in cleansing the sanctuary. This blessed work, although, like all the other works of Providence, it will be effected by the divine power, yet it will be performed by the hands of men. Asa, Jehoshaphat, Josiah, and even Jehu, were instruments, in the hand of God, for the performance of this work in their times. But the work, in our times, will not be performed by the civil governors of the world. They have so long corrupted the church, that the honor of cleansing it will not be conferred on them. It will be purified by the holy people, or the witnesses, after they shall have risen. They alone shall have the honor of it. This is represented by their ascending up to heaven in a cloud, in the presence of their enemies. Heaven is the emblem of God's sanctuary on the earth, after it is cleansed and made honorable. This work will be accomplished, to a certain extent, in 1290 years after the first origin of the witnesses: at the end of 1260 years from this period, they are slain, and then they rise and enter on



their proper work, and enjoy their honors in the house of God.

From this view of the subject, we shall be able to see the force and truth of the declaration, "blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days." This plainly refers to the Millennium, which shall take place 45 years after "the cleansing of the sanctuary." When the images are broken, the groves cut down, the altars for idolatry removed, and defilement of every kind cast out of the temple, the work of reformation has only commenced. It will be a work of time, to bring the world to the true worship of God. Even after this period, there will be powerful opposition to the truth. Forty-five years, after the cleansing of the sanctuary, will be spent in warfare between the church and her adversaries. But on her part, it will no longer be a struggle for existence. It will be a contest for victory.—Not the war of the beast against the witnesses, but the war of Christ against the beast; and it will issue in his final ruin, and the ruin of all who support his cause. Then Satan shall be bound a thousand years, and the saints will receive the kingdom, and possess it forever. Thus the man will indeed be blessed, who waits and comes at length to the end of this period; for afterwards there will be universal and permanent peace. "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together; and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock; and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord."

This last period, when the power of the holy people is scattered, is the time when Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands up for the children of the people of Daniel. It is astonishing, that any one should ever have supposed Michael to be merely the guardian angel of the Jews. There is not the smallest foundation in scripture for this doctrine of particular guardian angels; and the belief of it naturally leads to idolatry. God gives his angels charge over his people; but we have no authority for supposing that any individual, or any nation, has a particular guardian angel. We are also to bear in mind, that this is not Michael the archangel, but Michael the great prince; and is no other than the Son of God. The "standing up" of Michael is intended to convey the same truth, which is presented in the xi. of Revelation, where the elders are represented as falling on their faces before the throne, and saying,

“We thank thee, Oh Lord God Almighty, who art, and wast, and art to come, because thou hast taken unto thee thy great power, and hast reigned.” It is the period immediately after the rise of the witnesses; and Michael stands up, not in behalf of the Jews only, but of all the true servants of God.

There is here, no doubt, an allusion to the final judgment, as there is in many other prophecies, where temporal judgments are the objects immediately set before the mind. Such is the description in the vii. chapter, to which the attention of the reader has already been called. In this description, we may see the doctrine of the final judgment, although the immediate subject is the terrible scenes which shall be realized before “the beast shall be slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.” In this chapter, we may also see the doctrine of the last judgment, although it relates immediately to the scenes which shall soon be realized. There is to be “a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time.” He refers to this time, when he declares by the prophet Isaiah, “the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury; and I will bring down their strength to the earth.” Thus he also declares in the “song of Moses:” “The Lord shall judge his people, and shall repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left.” Some idea of this time of trouble may be obtained, from considering the sufferings of the Jews, from the time in which they rejected and crucified the Lord Jesus Christ, until Jerusalem was destroyed. The Redeemer declared, that in those days there should be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation until that time, nor ever should be afterwards. But those judgments affected but a small portion of mankind. The Jews were the only, or at least, the chief sufferers. But these shall be times of trouble over the whole christian world. The sufferings will not, perhaps, be so intense, nor so horrible; but they will be much more extensive. In this sense, no times of trouble that are past, will compare with these future scenes of wo.

But the true servants of God have the promise of deliverance. “At that time, thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.” Christians **must not expect to escape this tribulation entirely. They**

shall all have their portion of it. But a way of escape shall be opened to every one of them. Such was the case at the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. When the war commenced, there were many myriads of them in the land of Judea; and no doubt there were many thousands in the city of Jerusalem, when it was first encompassed by the besieging army: but they all escaped, because the Lord had commanded them to flee for their lives; and he opened for every one of them a way of escape. So, in the troubles which are coming on the world, all shall be delivered whose names are written in the book of life.

But there will be some signal judgment, or series of judgments, by which God will bring the world to the knowledge of their real condition. If any one will carefully review the scenes of his life, he will generally find, that before he fell into any severe affliction, he had been for some time in a state of carnal security. There is a kind of comfortable stupor, that spreads itself over the mind. We are apt to neglect the duties which we owe to God; or, if we do not neglect them entirely, to perform them in a formal, thoughtless manner; not giving ourselves much trouble about futurity, but enjoying the present, and making the world our chief source of pleasure, until we are awakened from this torpid state by some afflictive dispensation, which calls us to consider our ways. This is not only the case with individuals, but with churches and with nations. Hence, when God comes to execute his judgments, he finds us sleeping. To show us this truth, the Redeemer uttered the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, who took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. This will be the condition of all classes of mankind, in this latter dispensation. He shows us, every where in his word, that his coming will be sudden and unexpected. "As it was in the days of Noah, and the days of Lot, so shall it be when the son of man is revealed." This suddenness of his coming, will not arise so much from the rapidity with which the judgments shall come, as from the dormancy of the minds of men at that period. They have every reason to expect some tremendous judgments, but they will not turn their attention to the subject. They are engaged in the pursuits of the world, and the warnings have no influence on their minds. They pass away like an idle tale, and are forgotten. Such, in fact, is the moral condition of the world at this present period. Almost every intelligent man will confess that some terrible scenes are at hand. The statesman, reasoning from

the moral aspect of the world, and the things that have come to pass in similar circumstances, agrees in opinion with those who reason from the prophecies. But who is there, that is wide awake to the true knowledge and feeling of his condition? The churches, at this moment, are generally like the virgins in the parable, sleeping while the bridegroom tarries; or, as it is here expressed by the prophet, "sleeping in the dust of the earth."

But they shall soon be awakened by some tremendous explosion. Some terrible display of the divine indignation will break their slumbers, and strike terror into their hearts. Then, like the virgins, they shall begin to trim their lamps; but many will find their lamps entirely extinguished, and no oil to rekindle the flame. Others that have had a large supply of the "oil of gladness," will find their light and comfort revived and invigorated, and shall enter with the bridegroom to the marriage feast. Then the moral condition of mankind, after this signal judgment shall have taken place, will be a true indication of their eternal condition. This can easily be conceived, without resorting to miracles. When Abraham and Isaac lived among the Philistines, it was plainly seen by all, that God blessed them. When the ark of God had remained but three months in the house of Obed-Edom, it was plain to be seen that God had blessed his house. So, amidst these latter judgments, one part of mankind shall evidently enjoy the blessing of God, on their basket, their field, and their store, &c., while the other shall as evidently suffer under his curse. This blessing and this curse shall continue forever. After this period, there shall be no repentance for the wicked. They shall indeed "blaspheme God on account of their pains and their sores, and gnaw their tongues for pain; but they shall not repent of their deeds." But the true servants of God shall reap a harvest of joy, in the room of their sorrows; for God will honor them in this world, as well as through eternity. Thus many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

But the greatest share of blessedness and honor shall fall to the lot of those, who have had so much wisdom as to study and understand the word of God, so that they can use it, not only for their own instruction, but for the benefit of others. "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars, for ever and ever. Wisdom is knowledge

brought into action. A wise man is one who thinks and acts wisely. But there is certainly no wisdom in the general conduct of mankind, in these eventful times. When great and dreadful judgments are hovering over them, and the furious storm ready to burst upon their heads, they still continue in their accustomed course, and never take the trouble to examine whether their condition be dangerous or not. True wisdom would consist in laying the subject to heart, and making preparation to meet the judgments of God. "Oh, that they were wise, that they understood this; that they would consider their latter end."

Still there are some, scattered here and there over the surface of society, whose hearts are actuated by true wisdom. God never leaves the world entirely destitute of such characters; and there are no doubt many, at this period, who will see the coming danger, and warn their fellow men. There are indeed many of these characters asleep at this present moment; and there are none who are so watchful as they ought to be: but when this terrible explosion shall take place, they who are wise will bestir themselves, and enter diligently on their duty. God has provided for them the highest encouragement. Their condition in this world, during the coming calamities, and their condition through eternity, is represented by the brightness which appears in the heavens when the sun is about to rise, and by the stars when no clouds are to be seen. This is the same truth which was presented to John in the Revelation, where the witnesses are said to ascend to heaven in a cloud, in the presence of their enemies.

We may learn, from this subject, an important and comfortable truth, that in these latter days, many shall be turned to righteousness by the labors of the wise: and this truth is further evident from the numerous false conversions which have taken place in the times just past. We scruple not to call them false conversions, because they were merely a change from one error to another, and their fruits, in some time afterwards, are generally a sufficient evidence of their want of truth. But these things are always to be expected, previous to a real and genuine revival of religion. In this way, the grand deceiver always endeavors to obstruct the progress of the true gospel. The time, therefore, is not far distant, when many shall be turned from the error of their ways; and they who shall be the instruments of their conversion, shall save many souls from hell, and shall hide a multitude of sins. They shall therefore be honored as the

instruments of much good to mankind, and shall shine in the churches, like the stars in the expanse of the heavens.

Daniel was commanded to shut up the words, and seal the book, until the time of the end. It was not to be understood in his days; for the understanding of it would then have been of little benefit. But now the seal is loosed, and the book is open for the instruction of all. There has been a wide spreading of knowledge, since the days of Daniel. The Messiah came and was cut off, according to his prediction. The gospel was sent through the world; and as the light was diffused, the human mind gradually opened and expanded, the moral and natural sciences were cultivated, and commercial intercourse was carried to greater and greater extent, age after age. Thus "many have run to and fro, and knowledge has increased." We have a proof, from this fact, that the time in which we live, is the time of the end: for the meaning is, that the facilities for the attainment of knowledge, should be multiplied by means of commerce: and we have now the amplest means of obtaining every kind of information. Such, indeed, is the immense number and diversity of interesting subjects, which crowd themselves on the minds of men, that they have not time to pay sufficient attention to them all. Thus a light and superficial habit of thinking has been introduced every where through the civilized world. They are not accustomed to enter deeply into any kind of study; and above all, they are not willing to endure the intense and protracted labor, which is necessary for the right understanding of the scriptures. This superficial habit of thinking is one of the great obstacles which at present impede the progress of christianity. There is always great difficulty experienced in changing habits which have become inveterate, and therefore a powerful excitement is required. There is, in fact, a necessity for some terrible judgments, in the first place, to call the christian world to a sense of their duty. Then "many shall be purified, and made white, and tried." Those that are deeply contaminated by sin are never purified, except in the furnace of affliction. We seldom see any one truly and resolutely determining to forsake the error of his ways, until he is brought to it by the afflictive dispensations of Providence. It is only "when the judgments of God are abroad in the earth, that the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." The word which is here rendered *tried*, signifies the process by which gold and silver are refined. The metal must be melted in the furnace,

and the dross separated from it; and the process must be frequently repeated before it becomes thoroughly pure. Thus it will require a series of awful judgments to purify the hearts of many, who have still some of the precious metal of true christianity. God has promised, that in these latter days, he will pour on the house of David, and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications; and they shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn for it, as one mourneth for an only child. They shall mourn apart, or separately, the one from the other. They shall mourn in silence and in secret, and shall pour the complaints, with godly sorrow and contrition, into the bosom of their heavenly father. Then God will open a fountain for sin and for uncleanness. This is the method he will pursue with his people, when he comes to establish his kingdom in these latter days.

But these judgments will operate, with no good influence, on the minds of those who are destitute of christian principle. "The wicked shall do wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand." The description which God gives of the wicked, and which answers to every one of them, is, "that they hate instruction, and cast the words of God behind their back." Every righteous man has a strong desire after the knowledge of God, and he hates "the instruction that causeth to err." So far from casting the word of God behind his back, he sets it continually before his eyes, and endeavors to understand it. He says with the Psalmist,

Thy word is to my feet a lamp,  
And to my path a light.

It is, in truth, a proof of great wickedness, to despise and cast aside, from its proper use, any part of the word of God; and many will be charged with this kind of conduct, who have no knowledge nor suspicion of their guilt. But this is the great reason of that ignorance of some parts of the word of God, which, amidst abundant facilities of knowledge, is so lamentably conspicuous among mankind. The prophetic parts are not understood, because they are cast aside and neglected, under the impression that they are not sufficiently intelligible to weak minds, and the knowledge of them not necessary to salvation. The Psalms of David, which contain the very substance and marrow of the gospel, are cast out of the churches, under the false notion, that they are not properly fitted for gospel worship. There are, in fact, not a few who undervalue, and cast behind their backs, the

whole of the Old Testament, because they think the religion it inculcates is not so pure as that of the New Testament. To these numerous classes of professing christians, who cast some parts of the word of God behind their back, we may add all who reject any of the fundamental doctrines of the gospel: such as the doctrine of salvation through the free and sovereign grace of God, according to his eternal purpose; the doctrine of the atonement; of the trinity in unity, &c. Again, we may add to these, the vast number who are entirely negligent of the word of God and the ordinances of the gospel; who love the world, and the things of the world, with supreme affection. How horribly large, then, is the number who will not understand, when God comes to execute his judgments.

Truly every penitent sinner shall understand, although he may have gone far in the course of iniquity. No such character shall be classed among the wicked. But we cannot hope, that those who do not love the instruction which comes immediately from God, but cast the bible, or some part of it, or some doctrine contained in it, behind their backs, will pay any attention to the warnings of their fellow men. They have already refused to drink at the fountain, and it is not very probable they will choose to drink from the stream below; unless, indeed, it should be rendered more palatable by some ingredient of human invention. But if there were such a spirit in the christian church, as has frequently been found in the church of old, by which they were led to attend to the words of the prophets, and to humble themselves under the hand of God: if there were even such a spirit as that which actuated the hearts of the Ninevites at the preaching of Jonah, when every one covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in the ashes, while he poured forth his humble supplication to God, entreating him to save the city from the judgment which had been threatened,—then, indeed, we might hope for a reversal, or at least an alleviation, of the terrible judgments which are denounced against the christian world.

Surely it must be the height of folly, as well as wickedness, to treat the word of God, or any part of it, with neglect. When our words are treated in this manner, we feel the indignity. A father will not suffer his children to neglect his words with impunity: much less can we suppose that the great Father of creation will suffer himself thus to be insulted by any of his creatures, and not show any evidence of disapprobation. But as a wise child will attend to the words



of his father, so all who are possessed of true wisdom, will carefully and diligently attend to the words of God. The prophecies give the most ample evidence of the eternal power and Godhead. No man ever studied and understood the prophecies, and still continued to be an infidel or sceptic. This is as impossible, as for a man not to be convinced of the truth of an event, which passed under his own observation. The student of the prophecies has the strongest evidence possible, of the truth of God's revelation. Hence it is said, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein: for the time is at hand." This therefore characterizes the wise man in this age. From the light afforded to him, in the prophecies, he will see what is coming; and will not only make preparation for himself: but enlighten the minds of others who are willing to hear his words. This is the way in which the wise shall be enabled to turn many to righteousness.

With these observations we conclude the first part of our work. The second part will contain a more particular development of the things contained in the prophecies of Daniel. Concerning the time of the events, we cannot be more particular than we have been: but we shall see that the prophecies of John are only a fuller and more lucid exhibition of the things we have already considered.

END OF THE FIRST PART.



## PART II. DISSERTATION I.

### EXPOSITION OF THE SYMBOLS.

THE reader will be apprized, before he enters on the perusal of this part of the work, that our intention at present, is not to explain the whole book of Revelation: but only to elucidate some of those subjects contained in that book, which have a particular reference to the present and future times, until the commencement of the Millennium. We shall always keep in view “the seven last plagues, or the vials of the wrath of God.” But still, it is necessary, in order to have a consistent and clear view of this subject, to pay some attention to the grand machinery, (if one may so express it,) of this wonderful and astonishing system of revelation. God has here chosen a method of conveying the knowledge of truth, which embraces all the facilities and all the excellence, both of the ancient hieroglyphics, and of the no less ancient, but more improved method, of communicating by words. It is very possible, although it might be somewhat difficult, to exhibit a correct view of an important and striking event, without the use of any words whatever: and it is well known, that the aborigines of America have entirely used this method of circulating, among their different tribes, the knowledge of their battles, and warlike exploits. They had no written language to express the words of their different dialects; and they carved or painted on trees, or some lasting materials, certain figures or representations, the meaning of which was perfectly intelligible. This method of writing, or engraving, was much used by the Egyptians, (at one period the most learned nation in the world,) to communicate knowledge on the subject of religion; and therefore those figures were called hieroglyphics, or sacred sculpture. The principle of the ancient hieroglyphics runs through the whole of the book of Revelation; and we may see it particularly in the book with seven seals. Certain figures, or representations, were painted on the different rolls of parchment, and when the seals were broken, they were exhibited to the eyes of the apostle; and he describes merely what he saw. But there are many other emblems used besides those which were painted on parch-

ment. The heavens and the earth and sea, angels and men and beasts, the throne of God, the worship at the temple and the tabernacle, the various instruments used in that worship, the trumpets, the harps, the golden vials, the golden censers, the altar, the brazen sea, &c., are all brought forward and exhibited as emblematic representations; and such an explanation given of them in words, as is necessary to point out the truths intended to be communicated.

The language of symbols, like all other languages may be reduced within rules. We might form a grammar of this language as well as of any other: but it is very probable that the labor of forming such a grammar, would scarcely be compensated by the benefit. The best method of understanding the meaning of the symbols used in the book of Revelation, is the diligent study of that book in connexion with the whole word of God. Therefore, in our exposition of the symbols, we shall rather consult common sense, and the general meaning attached to the same things, in the other parts of scripture, than any fixed grammatical rules of exposition. Heaven, for instance, when used as a symbol, generally signifies some conspicuous part of the moral world: but it is also used to signify a class of mankind, whose affections are in heaven, and who are confirmed and established in the true worship of God. A star generally signifies a minister of religion, or a body of ministers and other church governors, united in a presbytery: but the sun, moon, and stars, are frequently used to represent the civil government, including the ruling power on the throne, and all the subordinate officers, from the highest to the lowest. There is always some important and prominent feature in every symbol; and this feature considered in connexion with other things and circumstances, will always give the symbol such a particular aspect, that we may ascertain the object or event to which it looks. Thus in the symbols which we use in the sacrament of the supper, we discern the body and the blood of our lord Jesus Christ; and our minds, when they are fixed on these subjects, immediately enter into the great plan of salvation, and are carried through the whole system of redeeming grace. So when we are enabled to discern the principal object set before us, in any of those prophetic symbols, the mind enters the great system of prophecy, and is carried through a long train of circumstances and events until it comes to the millennium, the judgment day, and the future state of heaven and hell. The view of one object always leads the mind to another and another; like a ray of light

proceeding from the sun, which continues its course, and illuminates every object in its path, to the utmost verge of the system.

The book of Revelation is not essentially different from the other prophecies contained in the word of God. The things which are represented by John, are also represented by the other prophets. In this we may see the wisdom and goodness of God. When two authors happen to write on the same subject, or two ministers to preach on the same text, each of them will take his own particular view of the subject, and explain it in his own way; but still the subject, although handled in a different manner by each, is the same subject, and will be much better understood by those who have read both authors, or heard both preachers, than if they had read or heard but one of them: so the prophets of the Old Testament, and the prophets of the New, bring forward the same subjects, and present them to our minds in different points of view, that we may the better understand them. The things which John saw and heard, were seen and heard by Daniel, and many of the other prophets. But what is still more important, and demands our particular attention, is, that the things which shall come to pass in these latter days, have already taken place in the times that are past. There is nothing entirely new under the sun. Every thing that is, or shall be, has been before; and the right understanding of the truth is of great importance in the exposition of prophecy: for we are taught by it, never to look for the accomplishment of any prophecy, beyond the range of events that have already taken place. To illustrate this truth, let us turn our attention, for a moment, to that remarkable prophecy of our Lord Jesus Christ, recorded in the xxiv. of Matthew: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heaven to the other." This prophecy was accomplished in that generation, or before those who were then actors on the stage of life had passed to another state: and the history of those times shows us the kind of accomplishment it received. In

the first place, there was great distress and trouble all over the Jewish nation, and indeed over all the Roman empire. There were great changes and revolutions in the moral world; and in the Jewish nation, especially, there was one of the most terrible convulsions that ever took place on the earth. Their government was entirely overturned; the civil and ecclesiastical polity altogether destroyed; the rulers were generally put to death, or carried into captivity; and the people scattered into all nations. It was thus the sun was darkened, and the moon ceased to give her light, &c. But these remarkable and terrible judgments, which were generally known to have taken place as the accomplishment of prophecy, had a powerful influence in recommending the gospel to mankind. They appeared as a sign or omen of the approaching ruin of all who opposed or rejected the gospel. Thus the sign of the Son of man appeared in heaven. Earthly minded men, or those who had their affections placed on the world, beheld, with disappointment and pain, the destruction of their hopes. They saw that the gospel which they hated, must finally prosper and triumph, and that no weapon which was used against it should prosper: and thus the tribes of the earth mourned when they saw the Son of man coming, &c. The apostles, and other ministers of the gospel, had then great encouragement to go forth, and preach the glad tidings of life and salvation to all the nations of the earth; and by their instrumentality, God gathered his chosen people out of all tribes, and nations, and languages; formed them into christian churches, and gave them the spiritual blessings of his gospel. Thus he sent forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, &c. In addition to the ministrations of the apostles, and other ministers, no doubt God did actually send forth his angels to gather his elect. The angels are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation; and therefore we may believe there was a large number of them sent into the world at that period, and that God made use of them to bring his chosen people into the bond of his covenant. They often appeared to the apostles in dreams and visions, revealing the counsel of God, directing them in the path of duty, and giving them encouragement. This is one sense in which this prophecy has been fulfilled. There will be another remarkable accomplishment of it at the commencement of the millennium. In the first place, we are to expect days of tribulation and darkness. False prophets, and various seductive influences, are to operate on

the minds of men, until the mass of the christian churches are led into errors, and blindfolded by deception. There are to be wars, and rumors of wars, nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: the civil and ecclesiastical governments, signified by the sun, moon, and stars, and the powers of the heavens, shall then be shaken and dissolved. Then, again, the sign of the Son of man shall appear, and again the tribes of the earth shall mourn, when they shall see the true gospel, which they have been opposing, and endeavoring to obstruct the influence of it, for the sake of honoring their own inventions, growing and increasing, and rising into influence and power; human plans and devices all rendered abortive, and nothing prospering, but what is stamped with the authority of God. This will be the cause of mourning and melancholy to multitudes, who are boasting of their success in the propagation of the gospel. But God will then send his true and faithful witnesses, whom he shall previously raise and qualify for this purpose, and they shall gather his elect, who are now scattered over the world. They shall all stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion, and sing the new song of praise, which no man can learn but themselves. Again, at the end of the world, the same scenes shall be reacted, and the prophecy shall be literally, and more gloriously fulfilled, than ever it was before.

This is the sense in which we wish to be understood, when we say that the things described in the Revelation are not new, but have all, in some degree, been realized in other times. The forms in which they appear, may indeed be said to be new, because the circumstances of the world are very different from what they have been; and the same principles are to be applied in a different manner. But there is such a similarity in God's providential dispensations, from age to age, that the same language can be used with propriety to describe the different events. Hence, when we know that any prophecy has been once fulfilled, we have also some knowledge of the way in which it will again be fulfilled. By every new accomplishment, there is a clearer light thrown on the future accomplishment; and thus, at the end of time, when the whole system shall come to a close, and the prophecies shall have been illuminated, from time to time, by repeated accomplishments, and shall have poured their increasing light on the closing scenes of the world, there will then be an astonishing display of the glory of God in the plan of redemption.

The Revelation, considered a whole, has two great subjects contained in it. The first subject of which it treats, is the state of the church in the days of the apostle. The condition of the seven churches of Asia, shows us the condition of the christian world in those days; and from the representation here given, we may learn how to form a correct estimate of the state of religion in this or any other age. By these epistles, the spirit speaks to the churches at the present time, as well as to the churches of Asia; and he that has an ear to hear will hear it.

But the second part gives us a view of the christian world, and the various dispensations of Providence with regard to the church, from the times of the apostle, until after the judgment day. The Lord Jesus commanded the apostle to write the things which were revealed to him; both the state of the churches in that time, and the things which should take place afterwards. "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter." Or rather, as it ought to be rendered, "even the things which are, and the things which shall be after these things." So, in the fourth chapter, he tells us, that after he had seen those things which then existed in the church, a door was opened in heaven, and the first voice which he heard was like the voice of a trumpet, talking with him, and saying, "come up hither, and I will show thee the things which shall be after these things. And immediately I was in the spirit." We have no evidence that his body was removed from the isle of Patmos; but the eyes of his mind were opened, and, like the prophet Ezekiel, by the river Chebar, he "saw visions of God." To be in the spirit, does not mean merely a spiritual or devotional frame; but it represents the condition of the prophets, in which their natural faculties were all rendered unactive, like a person in a deep sleep, while their minds were spiritually illuminated, and they saw and heard somewhat similar to persons in a dream. The only difference between visions and dreams is, that in the one case, the natural faculties are locked up in sleep, and in the other, they are suspended, for the time, by a special operation of the spirit of God: while, in both cases, certain things are presented to the mind, and certain words are heard, of which there is afterwards a distinct recollection.

The apostle beheld a throne set in the heaven; and he saw one sitting on the throne, who appeared transparent like the jasper, and red like the sardine or cornelian: and



the throne was encircled with a rainbow of green, like the emerald. Around this highest and most remarkable throne, there were twenty-four thrones placed, and twenty-four elders, persons of mature years, who appeared to be officers of the church, were seated on them, clothed with white robes, and crowns of gold on their heads. Lightnings, and thunders, and voices, proceeded from the highest and most glorious throne; and there were seven lamps of fire burning before it, which represented the seven spirits, or the whole and perfect influences of the spirit of God. He beheld before the throne, a sea of glass, like the molten sea which was used in the temple for the priests to wash in; but it was solid and clear like crystal: while in the midst of the throne, and round about it, he saw four living creatures, who were full of eyes before and behind. The first of these living creatures had the appearance of a lion; the second was like a calf, or young ox; the face of the third was similar to that of a man; and the fourth was like a flying eagle. Every one of these living creatures had six wings, and even in the inner side of their wings they were full of eyes; and they were engaged, day and night, praising God, without any cessation. The apostle observed, that while these living creatures were ascribing glory, and honor, and thanks, to him who sat on the throne, the twenty-four elders fell down and worshipped him, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, "thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created."

The apostle beheld, in the right hand of him that sat on the throne, a book, or rather a roll of parchment, consisting of seven pieces, each of which was sealed. The form of ancient books was very different from the books of modern times. The parchment, or whatever was used for writing on, was covered on both sides with the writing, and then rolled up and sealed: then another written piece was rolled on the former, and sealed. Hence we may have some tolerable idea of the appearance of this book. It seemed to be written within, and on the back side, or that side which was farther from his view: and he saw the seals hanging out at the end of every roll. Then he saw and heard a mighty angel, crying with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seven seals of it?" No one could be found, who was worthy to do this; and the apostle was so much affected by this circumstance, that he burst into tears, and wept much. But one of the

elders relieved his anxiety, and told him not to weep; for, said he, "the lion, who is of the tribe of Judah, the root of Jesse, hath prevailed, that he should open the book, and loose its seals." Then the apostle looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, and the elders, a lamb was standing, and appeared as if it had been slain. It had seven heads and seven eyes, which signify the same things as the seven lamps, namely, the seven spirits, or the influences of the spirit of God, sent forth into all the earth.

The lamb went and took the book out of the hand of him that sat on the throne; and then the four living creatures, and the elders, fell down before the lamb, and worshipped him. The apostle observed, that every one of them had a harp, and a golden vial full of odors, which represent the prayers and praises of the saints; and that they sang a new song, saying, "worthy art thou to open the book," &c. Thousands and tens of thousands of angels then appeared, all around the throne, and united in their song of praise, saying, "worthy is the lamb that was slain," &c. Then all the inferior animals, the birds of the heaven, the beasts of the earth, and those that reside in the bowels of the earth, and also the fishes of the sea, every one in their own way, appeared to ascribe blessing, and honor, and glory, and strength, to him who sat on the throne, and to the lamb for ever and ever. The four living creatures said Amen! and the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped, &c.

Heaven is the symbol or emblem of the highest and most conspicuous part of the moral world. By this lofty throne, placed in the heaven, and the Almighty sitting on it, he is represented as the moral governor of the universe. The transparency of the jasper, and the redness of the sardine stone, represent the nature of these dispensations. They are formed so as to be looked into and examined; but there is something terrible in them all. The rainbow of green, like the emerald, encompassing the whole, shows that God's covenanted mercies shall always encircle his people; and that amidst all the terrible dispensations of his providence, they shall be in safety. The twenty-four elders, who were seated on thrones placed around the throne of the Almighty, signify the whole church of God, grown to maturity, perfect in holiness, having entered on their glorious office, and become kings and priests unto God. The white robes show the righteousness of their character, and the crowns of gold

denote their exaltation. The thunders and lightnings and voices, which proceeded from the throne, signify the dreadful exhibition of the power and wrath of the Governor of the universe, and the proofs which he gives of his majesty and glory, but especially those which he will give in the latter days. The seven lamps which were burning before the throne, are designed to represent the Holy Spirit in his manifold influences, as seven is the number of perfection. It is of some importance to observe the sense of unity which is always attached to it. The seven dispensations of Providence, represented by the seven seals, put an end to the power of pagan superstition, which had so long domineered over the world. The seven dispensations, represented by the seven trumpets, extend to the destruction of the anti-christian power, which came in its room, and exercised the same influence over the minds of men, to lead them away from the true worship of God. The seven vials represent the last dispensations of Providence, by which wickedness will be punished in this world. In every instance in which this number is used as an emblem, it carries with it the sense of perfection and of unity. So God the Father, the moral Governor of the universe, has seven lamps of fire burning before his throne, and the lamb has seven eyes. Here we are also taught, that the Holy Spirit proceeds, and is sent forth, from the Father and the Son.

To understand the meaning of the sea of glass, we must recur to the molten sea, which was placed in the court of the temple. It was a large round vessel, five cubits deep, and thirty cubits in circumference, containing ten thousand baths, or about four hundred and fifty hogsheads of water. The use of it was chiefly for the priests to wash in, before they approached to God in the duties of their office. As a type, it was intended to represent the sufferings of Christ, the great high priest of the church, who washes his people in his own blood, and makes them kings and priests unto God. They are constantly washed in this sea, when they are purified from sin by the trials and troubles of life: but when they shall have been made perfect, and have taken their seats around the throne of God, they will still have something to keep them in remembrance of their former trials, and the way by which they were delivered from sin. The matter of which this sea is composed, is clear and transparent, to show, that a clear view of the efficacy of the Redeemer's blood, in purifying the heart, will finally be given to the church: and it is hardened and consolidated,

to show, that after they become perfectly holy, they shall have no longer need to be washed.

In the symbol of the four living creatures, there is something dark and mysterious. From various representations in the Old Testament, we might be led to think, that by these living creatures is meant a certain order or class of the heavenly host; while in this place, they appear to join with the elders in ascribing their redemption to the blood of Christ. This is entirely inconsistent with the holy nature and character of angels; for those who have no sin, need no atonement. But perhaps the difficulty might be removed, or at least lessened, by attending to the fact, of the truth of which we have full evidence, that the holy angels are associated and conjoined with the gospel ministry, in the great work of bringing God's people to himself. They operate in a secret and invisible, but effectual manner, in forwarding the designs of God, in the salvation of his children. "Their angels always behold the face of God in heaven."—Matt. xviii. 10. But the ministers of the gospel are also called the angels of the churches. Why, then, may we not suppose, that these living creatures are an emblem of the combined ministry of angels and men in this great work. It may indeed be said, that this supposition will help us but little, as the angels of God would still be represented as ascribing their salvation to the blood of Christ: but the phraseology, in the original language, seems to be constructed so as to set aside this difficulty; for it may mean, that the elders only had the harps, and the golden vials full of odors, and sang the new song; or it may mean, that the living creatures joined with the elders. This ambiguity is not the effect of chance, but design, and seems intended to suit the mixed character of these four living creatures; as if in one sense they could unite with the elders in this new song, and in another they could not. Still there is enough of evidence to satisfy us, that by this symbol, angels are not exclusively meant. The earthen vessels in which God puts the gospel treasure, are also included in the representation, and they participate in the character and employment of angels, when they are sent to gather together the elect of God.

There is something, also, in the faces of these living creatures, which seems to have a strong resemblance to the ministry of the gospel, in different periods of the New Testament dispensation. The first had the face of a lion, indicating boldness, magnanimity, and courage. These were the

most conspicuous virtues of the apostles, and their successors in the ministry, until the fall of pagan superstition. But after this, it assumed the character represented by a calf, or young ox. It was then more remarkable for patience in suffering, than for boldness and magnanimity, or intelligence and wisdom: Afterwards, men began to reason more accurately, and the scriptures were expounded in a much more rational and intelligent manner than they had been before; and thus the gospel ministry began to have the face of a man. Now it is beginning to assume the qualities of a flying eagle, by carrying the glad tidings of salvation over the world. The whole emblem unites in it, and exhibits, all the essential characteristics of angels and men, who are constantly employed in the praises of God, waiting for his orders, and carrying his commands into effect with alacrity and cheerfulness. Thus the two opinions may be reconciled, in perfect accordance with the word of God, and the way in which he carries on the work of redemption.

When all these preparations were made,—when the throne of God was set in the heavens, and his servants and attendants had all taken their proper places around him, an angel went forth, and with a loud voice, made proclamation, to all the inhabitants of the heaven, that if there was any one worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals, he should then come forward. We see here a manifest allusion to certain customs which have existed in the world, and especially among the eastern nations, from the highest antiquity. There is some very important, and perhaps difficult and dangerous, work to be achieved;—one which requires a great degree of skill and courage, and martial prowess. A day is appointed for all the nobles and worthy characters in the nation to assemble. The sovereign takes his seat on the throne, his ministers and courtiers assemble around him; and when all preparations are made, a herald goes forth, and proclaims, that if any such character is present, who will undertake the work, and is qualified for the performance of it, let him come forward, that his qualifications may be put to the trial. In this case, the great God of heaven and earth intends to make a revelation to mankind, and to the universe, of certain important events, which he has determined should come to pass in the latter days; and it was necessary that some illustrious personage should be selected, by whose agency the work should be performed. God the Father, intending to honor his only begotten Son, calls together the inhabitants of heaven, the

holy angels of all ranks and orders, the church in heaven, and the ministry of the gospel. He holds in his right hand the mysterious roll, in which these secrets are written, and asks, who is worthy to open the book, and develop the mysteries contained in it? A solemn pause ensues, and all are silent. A conscious sense of insufficiency pervades every heart. The highest and most glorious of the angels of God, shrink from the undertaking, and the heart of the apostle is filled with anxiety and fear, lest a suitable person should not be found to unravel the mystery. But the church in heaven has none of the anxieties and fears that operate with pain on the hearts of mortals. One of the elders immediately relieved his distress, by pointing out the Redeemer, who just then appeared, under the emblem of a lamb that had been slain. This lamb had seven horns, to show the plenitude and perfection of his power; and he had seven eyes, to show that he possessed the same Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father, and that he also sends this Spirit through the earth, to enlighten the understandings of men, and to execute all the purposes of his grace. He showed, also, in his appearance, that he had passed through death for his people; and therefore it might be expected that he would have their benefit in view, whatever work he might be called to perform.

Conscious of his worthiness, he went forth, and took the roll out of the hand of him that sat on the throne. This plainly appears to have been an awful and tremendous action, at which an angel would have shuddered. When Esther the queen dared to go into the presence of king Ahasuerus, at a time when another person would for such an action have been put to death for his presumption, the king perceived some worthiness in her, and her person was accepted. So, if it had been possible that any of the angels of God could have so much overrated his worth, as to think himself entitled to such an honor, he would no doubt have been punished for his temerity. But the Father discerned and knew the excellent qualifications of his Son, and willingly delivered the roll into his hand. At that moment, the court of heaven seems to have been filled with joy, and rapturous gratulation. All eyes were turned towards the Lamb of God, and all hearts beat high with grateful acknowledgments of his worthiness. The four living creatures, and the four and twenty elders, as they were nearest to the throne, and had the greatest interest in the transaction, immediately fell down before the throne of God, and presented to him the

united thanks of the whole church on earth and in heaven. This is what is represented by the harps, and the vials full of odors, or more properly of incense. He had undertaken to communicate the will of God, and to open up the scenes of futurity to his church, that she might be prepared to meet the events as they come to pass; and therefore they offer to him their grateful prayers and praises. The worship of the church on the earth is always connected with, and of the same kind with that of the church in the heavens. Our departure from this world, and our entrance on the scenes of blessedness, make no essential alteration in our praises. The church of God in the mansions of blessedness, sings the same substantial praises which the church sings on the earth. If we sing the praises of God according to his ordinances, and with the spirit and the understanding, we do unite with the church in heaven in the worship of God. If we make advances in christian knowledge, according to the means which God affords to us, we shall be able to sing a new song every time we offer up our praises at his throne. God has provided for us the words and matter of our praises, and constructed them in such a manner, that the subjects open themselves more clearly to the mind from time to time; and especially when some new dispensation of Providence casts a new lustre on his word, our minds are then enlightened, our hearts are made joyful, and the new song of praise bursts from our lips with rapturous exultation. We have one of those joyful scenes here presented, which actually took place in the church in heaven, and was no doubt, in some degree, realized on the earth, as far as it was understood, when the book of Revelation was published to mankind; and from age to age, just in proportion as the things contained in this book, and in the other books of divine revelation, are unfolded to the church, they lift up their voices in a new song. But here the knowledge of the fact, that the Lamb was about to make a new revelation, filled the hearts of the inhabitants of heaven with thankfulness, and their lips with praise.

The worthiness of the Lamb appears to have been the burden of their song. All moral worth, and all excellence, reside in the Lord Jesus Christ. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." But that which chiefly renders him worthy to reveal the secret counsel of God with respect to his church, is because he has given himself a sacrifice for her, and has redeemed her with his blood. This fact gives him worth and estimation in the eyes of the

universe, but especially, in the eyes of those whom he has redeemed. They know his worth better than others, because they have experienced the blessings of his salvation. Hence says the Psalmist, "they shall utter abundantly the memory of thy great goodness, and sing of thy righteousness." Here they all declare, with united voice, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God, by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth." This last sentiment loses nothing of its force, when uttered by the church in heaven. It does not mean that the saints shall come down from heaven, and reign personally on the earth. It is used in the same sense with the declaration of Paul to the church of Corinth: "Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." The apostle did not mean that he himself should be personally changed; for he is among those who sleep in the Lord: but he speaks of himself as united with the whole church: and so when the church already in heaven declare, "we shall reign upon the earth," they allude to the time when the saints shall possess the kingdom. If we are the true servants of God, we shall then reign in the same sense in which the apostle declares "we shall be changed."

Afterwards, immense multitudes of angels are seen surrounding the throne, and the four living creatures, and the elders. They proclaim, with united voice, the worthiness of the Lamb that was slain: and then all creation, or all the creatures who dwell on the earth, every one according to its nature, joins in the anthem of praise to God and the Lamb. This is the same truth which is presented by the apostle, in the viii. of the epistle to the Romans: "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." All creation seems to look forward with hope to that period when the saints shall reign. Then the condition of every thing that is capable of enjoyment or suffering, shall be much ameliorated; and even the earth itself shall bloom with a much greater degree of verdure and beauty than at present. All things shall then proclaim the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by his sufferings and his works of righteousness, shall be known to have produced this blessed change.



## PART II. DISSERTATION II.

### THE SEALS AND THE TRUMPETS.

By the opening of the book, and the loosing of the seals, we are not to understand merely that part of the Revelation which is brought to view by the breaking open of the seals; for this part only extends to the revolution which was made in the time of Constantine the Great. This is but a small part of the book. The last seal contains the seven trumpets, and again, the last trumpet may be said to contain the seven vials: and so this book, in fact, contains the whole of the Revelation. When we consider the subject in this point of view, we shall be better able to see the importance of the work of the Lamb, in taking the book and opening the seals. It signifies the development of all the secrets which John was instructed to communicate to the church and to mankind.

We shall not enter into a minute examination of the things contained in the seals, and the five foregoing trumpets; as this would swell the work far beyond the limits we have prescribed for it. Still it will be necessary to consider the chain of providential dispensations, so far as to show the connexion with the chain of prophecy. It is a truth, that the same diligence, and the same accuracy of discernment, are required, to enable us to see the accomplishment of prophecy in the affairs of the world, that are required to enable us to see the meaning of prophecy in the word of God. We must be able to see the meaning of prophecy, before we can see the accomplishment of it. The prophecies have been fulfilled, in a certain degree, in all ages; but the mass of the world are ignorant of the accomplishment of them, because they are not acquainted with their bibles. They do not understand the meaning of the prophecies, because they do not study them sufficiently; and hence, although they should be fulfilled before their eyes, they can neither understand nor perceive it.

The chief channel of our knowledge of the accomplishment of the prophecies, contained in the seals and the first trumpets, is from history; the authors of which neither knew nor thought any thing about the matter. Hence they were just as likely to leave out as to insert those events which might have shown the accomplishment: for no historian ever

gives, or can give, a full account of all the events which take place in the times of which he writes. If the historians of those times had paid particular attention to the prophecies, and compared them with the events as they came to pass, they would have had no difficulty in discerning the agreement between the description given in the prophecy, and the real scenes, as they were transacted in the world. But for want of this attention in those who have gone before us, we can only gather up some facts which are scattered over the pages of history; and these show, indeed, the accomplishment of prophecy, so as to put the infidel and the sceptic to silence, but not so as to give a full and lucid view of the wonderful works of God.

We know, however, that the gospel had great and rapid success among mankind, immediately after the days of the apostles; and therefore the first seal, which exhibited the white horse, and one sitting on him, having a bow and a crown, and going forth conquering and to conquer, is no doubt intended to show the progress of gospel truth on the minds of men in those early days. The second seal exhibited "a red horse, and one sitting on him, to whom it was given to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another," &c. It is probable this was intended to represent the wars and terrible massacres which took place in the reign of the emperor Trajan, and of Adrian, his successor. In that period, the Jews revolted, and slew, of the Greeks and Romans, 220,000 men, with horrible barbarity. They also put to death, in Egypt and Cyprus, 240,000. Afterwards, they were conquered and destroyed, with terrible slaughter. Many other horrible scenes of war and blood, and persecutions of the christians, took place in this period; so that it might very properly be said, peace was then taken from the earth.

After a time of wars and desolation, famine generally succeeds; and so the next seal presented a black horse, "and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand." A voice was then heard, proclaiming, a measure of wheat for a penny, &c. The word which is here rendered measure, signifies a man's daily allowance of food,—just so much as would be necessary for his own subsistence; and a penny, or denarius, was the price of a man's daily labor; so that when the labor of a man was all necessary to procure his own support, his family must be in a state of suffering. Such was the actual condition of the Roman empire in those days, that with all the attention and care of the emperors,

Septimus and Alexander Severus, there was such a scarcity of food, through the whole empire, that many perished for hunger, and few could procure a sufficient supply of the necessaries of life.

But these were days of declension in all the virtues which had formerly distinguished the Roman people. They did not repent of their iniquities, and the evils continued and increased. These evils are represented by "a pale horse, and his name that sat on him, was Death," &c. Terrible wars and famines and pestilences, distinguished the reign of the barbarous Maximin and his successors, until the time of Diocletian, a period of about 50 years. It was a time of murders and mutinies, rebellions and invasions; so that not one nation, which was subject to the empire, remained in peace. The frequent incursions of the barbarous nations, with famines and pestilences succeeding one another, rendered that one of the most mournful periods in the history of the world. Then death stalked over the earth and hell followed his footsteps; because mankind were incurable in vice, and in every kind of wickedness; but especially in the persecution of the true servants of God.

The fifth seal exhibits the blood of the saints crying for vengeance. "And when he had opened the fifth seal I 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," &c. The tenth and last general persecution of the christians, which was begun in the reign of Diocletian, and owed its origin to the intrigues of Galerius, was the most violent, and bitter, and bloody, of all the persecutions, which stain the annals of the Roman empire. Large accounts have been written of it, by those who were eye witnesses, of the horrid scenes of burnings, ravages, and murders of the innocent: and it is said by some respectable historians, that "almost the whole world was stained with the blood of the martyrs." These are the characters, whose souls appear under the altar, as crying for vengeance on their murderers. It was thus that the blood of righteous Abel cried for vengeance on his murderer Cain. The popular meaning of the word vengeance, which in this age signifies bitter and vindictive retaliation, certainly contributes much to obscure the sense of this, and many other parts of the word of God. But the scriptural meaning of the word, is justice to the injured. Hence in this sense, every injured man has

a right to pray to God for vengeance on those who have injured him. He is not to avenge himself, or to retaliate on his enemies, the same evils which they have made him suffer. On the contrary he ought to desire and pray, that they may be brought to repentance. This would be a sufficient satisfaction to every good man: but as long as they persevere in their wicked conduct, he should also persevere in supplicating for justice. This desire for justice in the execution of vengeance, does not forsake the soul, when separated from the body. Hence the souls of those who suffered in that bitter and bloody persecution, are here represented, as still under the altar where they were sacrificed; and they asked how long would God tolerate such scenes of iniquity, without bringing deserved vengeance on their murderers. But every one of them received white robes, and they entered into their rest. They are told to wait a little while, until their fellow servants should have also passed through the same scenes, and then they should see the justice of God, in terrible vengeance on their enemies.

This came to pass after the opening of the sixth seal. Then there was a great earthquake, or a moral shaking and overturning of the empire. "The sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the heavens departed as a scroll," &c. This revolution took place a little more than 200 years after the times of the apostles. It eventuated in the overturning of the whole system of pagan superstition. But this was so intimately connected with the government; and all the officers of government were so much attached to it, that it could not fall without shaking the whole establishment. Hence it may be said, God then shook the heavens and the earth. Although the sun was not removed, for the empire still continued under Constantine, as it was under his predecessors; yet there was a terrible eclipse of all the ancient pagan splendor. The stars, or the officers of government and the ministers of the heathen gods, all fell to the earth: and the old Roman heaven, which had stood for so many hundreds of years, departed as a scroll when it is rolled together, &c. The mountains and the islands, or the established authorities in the different parts of the empire, were moved out of their places. This terrible revolution struck a panic, into the hearts of all who had supported, or were supported by the ancient system of superstition. They all confessed that this judgment was brought on them by the God of the christians: and while this terror operated on their hearts, they may be said

to have acknowledged his government. But the confession was extorted by fear, and had nothing in it of genuine repentance. They called to the mountains and the rocks to hide them from his vengeance. This is always the end of the hopes of the enemies of God. They fly to false principles and false worship, rather than submit to the truth. They go from object to object, still hoping to quiet their conscience, and bring their minds into a state of tranquillity; but at the last day, the great day of the wrath of the Lamb, they shall act as absurdly, as the miserable slaves of superstition, among the ancient Romans. Their false hopes will all be as vain, as seeking protection in the dens and caves of the mountains, and calling on the rocks to fall upon them and hide them from the wrath of God.

The condition of the church during this period is next brought forward. The seventh chapter commences with the representation of a state of quietness and peace. But it was produced by the restraining power of God, who had determined to give rest to his church for a short period; that they who had suffered for the truth might have a little respite, and a time of comfort. The earth appeared to the apostle as a large and extended plain; and he saw four angels standing at the four corners of it, holding the winds, that there might be perfect tranquillity over the whole surface; that the face of the waters should not be ruffled, nor even a leaf of the trees moved. But these angels were holding the winds only for a time, and they had power to let them loose, to the injury of every thing on the face of the earth. It would seem, from this representation, that the season of peace was to be very precarious, and of short duration. The winds were merely withheld for a time, and, when freed from restraint, would blow with greater violence than before. But it shows a period of the world, in which many should be added to the church, and confirmed in the faith of the gospel: for the apostle beheld "another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God," &c. The custom of sealing, or marking servants or soldiers, which was common at that period, is here used symbolically, to show that God was preparing his church for another conflict with the powers of darkness. A period of peace and tranquillity is the best time for instruction, and for establishing the mind in the truth. This sealing, therefore, does not refer to baptism, nor to the ceremony called "confirmation," nor even to the sign of the cross. It refers to something more substantial than

any ceremony, either ordained of God, or invented by man. It was the happy effect of that peaceful period, that not only immense multitudes, of all nations, made a profession of christianity, but that many were instructed in the word of God, and confirmed in the faith of Christ. The apostle heard the number of those who were thus confirmed, and it amounted to 144,000, out of all the tribes of Israel. Israel here means the whole church, or all who professed christianity; and the twelve tribes of Israel represent the different nations of the world who then received the gospel. Of these nations, a large and respectable number were enlightened, intelligent, and established christians, who were capable of enduring the storms of adversity which were coming on the church. It is generally supposed, that this period of happy tranquillity extended from the time in which the empire was established in the hands of Constantine, to the death of Theodosius, or nearly to the end of the fourth century.

Although there is strong reason to doubt the christianity of Constantine, and even of the greater part of his successors in the government; yet we have the strongest evidence that the boundaries of the christian church were much enlarged in that period. Perhaps there never was a time, when the gospel was placed in such favorable circumstances, or when the truth had so great power on the human mind. The church was then clothed with authority; but it was rather the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, than that of the man of sin. It is true, the mystery of iniquity was then working, and had become much more powerful than in the days of the apostles: there were also many heresies, many false professors, and much corruption: but the church was far from the corrupted state in which it exists at the present day. Men had not then learned, and consequently, were not practised in the arts of hypocrisy. Christianity was not then taught to bend itself to the false opinions and prejudices, the humors and caprices, of the men in power. The church was not then split up into sections and subdivisions, as at the present time. She then possessed undivided power, and the rulers generally felt themselves bound by the authority of the Redeemer, to perform their several duties in the fear of God. Hence many were trained up in the doctrines and the practice of godliness. The apostle beheld "a great multitude, whom no man could number, of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palms in their hands."

In the exhibition of this flourishing state of the church, we have a representation of the millennium, and also of the church in heaven. If we were particularly acquainted with the history of the first three hundred years which elapsed after the death of the apostles, we might learn a great deal of the process of God's providence in every succeeding period of the world, as it respects the advancement of his kingdom. The church must always pass through great tribulation, before she arrives at a state of honor and prosperity. There are allotted periods, both for depression and exaltation. Perhaps the true church of God was never in more depressed circumstances, than at the time when Christ was crucified: but she soon began to rise; and before the last of the apostles was called from the earth, the gospel was preached in all nations. But soon after that period, the church fell into depressed circumstances; for the whole power of the Roman government was exerted for her destruction. These were times of tribulation, and she did not recover from them until the days of Constantine. There was then a period of peace and prosperity. But soon after this period, Antichrist arose, and the man of sin seated himself in the temple of God. From that time, we may date the period of general depression for 1260 years: but when this shall have terminated, she shall rise from the dust, and her exaltation shall continue, not only through the ages of time, but through eternity.

Hence the church, during a part of the fourth century, presents us with a kind of type, or resemblance of the millennial state, in the same sense as the kingdom of Israel, under Solomon, was a type of the millennium. But in this last age, we may expect a much greater degree of moral excellence in the character of christians, than they have ever exhibited. The degree of christian knowledge shall also be far beyond any thing which has ever been known on the earth. "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days: in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound." Yet still there will be imperfection, and even sin, among mankind, in every condition of the church, previous to the judgment day. This vision of the apostle is, therefore, intended to lead our minds beyond those comparatively pure and happy periods of the church, to the state of perfect purity and blessedness in the heavens. The peaceful and prosperous reign of Solomon, exhibited a happy condition of the church,

compared with the time when the judges ruled, and the Israelites were frequently in bondage, under the power of cruel oppressors: the fourth century of the christian church was a happy period, compared with the times which went before it: the millennium will exhibit a happy and prosperous condition of christianity, compared with the times in which we live: but the heavenly state will surpass all imagination and all hope.

Still it must be said, of all those who stand with the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and having palms of victory in their hands, that they have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. In those days of happy tranquillity, to which the vision immediately refers, the church had come out of great tribulation. She had undergone numerous bitter and bloody persecutions. She was often proscribed by the ruling powers, and all who were known to be christians were put to death, many of them in tortures. But she was afterwards honored by the same powers who had formerly endeavored to destroy her. "Kings became her nursing fathers, and their queens her nursing mothers." This prophecy was not, indeed, fulfilled in the fullest and most perfect sense: but from the manner in which it has been fulfilled, we may form some conception of its accomplishment in the latter days. But as she arrived at a state of prosperity, in those days, by passing through great tribulation, so we conclude that she shall come to her prosperous state, in these latter days, by passing through a fiery trial. It will not, indeed, be of the same kind with the former. We need not fear the flames of persecution, the rack, and the gibbet, and the stake; but we may expect some process, in the providence of God, which will effectually separate the chaff from the wheat. "He will wash away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purge the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning."

Although this is a prophecy of times that are past, yet the diligent student of the word of God may derive great benefit from it, for the illustration of the remaining prophecies of this book. There is a striking analogy between the dispensations of God's providence in past and in future times; and the histories of those times, imperfect as they are, being compared with the prophecy, will enable us to see, as through a glass, the scenes which shall be realized in the time to come. It may now be said, in a certain



sense, that the four angels are standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds from hurting the earth, that the servants of God may have an opportunity of receiving his seal in their foreheads. The storm of terrible vengeance has not begun to rage, and all as yet is tranquil. Now, therefore, is the period when we should seek to be confirmed in the faith, and to have habits of holy action established. A large number shall no doubt be sealed, out of all the tribes of Israel: none, however shall receive the the impression, who do not make application. In the end of this dispensation, a great multitude, whom no man can number, shall be found before the throne of God, clothed in white robes, and palms in their hands: but we shall not be among the number, unless we have courage to bear our testimony for the truth, suffer great tribulation, and thus have our robes washed and made white, in the blood of the Lamb.

We shall say but little on the viii. chapter. Those who desire to see a striking and lucid exposition of it, may consult Bishop Newton. He has placed the subjects contained in it, in such a clear light, that while the eyes of every candid inquirer must be illuminated, his assent to the truth of his remarks, can scarcely be withheld. The series of providential events, contained under the seventh seal, extends from the latter part of the fourth century, until the times in which the saints shall begin to possess the kingdom. When the Lamb had opened this seal, all heaven appeared, for the space of half an hour, to sit in silent expectation. The apostle then saw the seven angels, who had been standing in the presence of God, and to them were given seven trumpets. He saw also that another angel went, and stood by the altar, and he had a golden censer in his hand. There was then given to him a large quantity of incense, that he might offer it with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar which stood before the throne. The smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, then ascended before God from the hands of the angel. All this is plainly taken from the worship of the temple. When the sacrifices were about to be offered, the singers, the players on instruments, and the trumpeters, were all engaged in the praises of God: but when the priest went into the temple to burn incense, all was still; and all were engaged in the silent ejaculations of prayer. When this seal was opened, all heaven appeared for a short time in that solemn stillness, as when the incense was burning before God in the temple: and

in fact the incense which the angel offered, and the prayers of the saints, did then ascend before God, during this period of silence. It respects the state of the church in the end of the fourth century, when the storm of God's indignation was about to burst forth on the world. True christians could do nothing but pour forth their supplications to God, and be still: for they saw that his vengeance was about to burst forth on the empire. But after the incense was offered, the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar, and cast it on the earth, and there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings, and an earthquake—the signs and evidences of great calamities and commotions. Then the seven angels prepared themselves to sound. The first angel sounded, and there was hail and fire, mingled with blood, &c. This is interpreted to mean the Huns and Goths; but particularly the famous Alaric, a king of the Goths, who began his incursions in the end of the fourth century: and who is said by some of the historians of those times, to come like a storm of hail, suddenly and unexpectedly; and marching quicker than report, they spared nothing in their course. Greece was ravaged, Italy was wasted, Rome was besieged, and finally taken and a part of it burnt. “The second angel sounded, and a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea,” &c. This judgment was executed about the year 432. The Roman empire was then in a very unsettled condition, and might have well been represented by the sea, when the Huns, under the conduct of Attila, came upon the empire, and wasted Thrace and the Grecian provinces, putting all to the sword, and burning and ravaging the countries. He also entered Italy, and burnt and destroyed all the countries between the Alps and the Appenines; and then Rome became one of his tributaries. “The third angel sounded, and there fell from heaven a large star, burning as a lamp; and it fell on the third part of the rivers, and on the fountains of waters,” &c. This relates to the incursions of the Vandals and Moors, under their leader, Genseric, who had all received christianity, but were violently attached to the heresy of Arius. Hence they are represented by a star falling from heaven. They came suddenly, when there was no expectation of such an enemy. They ravaged the country, and took, and plundered the city of Rome. Neither age nor sex was spared. A multitude of captives were carried away, and obliged to submit to the religion of the conquerors. By them the truth of the gospel was poisoned, as with wormwood. The streams and

fountains became bitter, and many who drank of them died a spiritual death. "The fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was darkened," &c. This relates to the ruin of the Western empire, which took place about the year 556. The judgments executed under the third trumpet, had left that part of the empire in a weak and languishing condition. The Heruli, a horde of barbarians, from the northern parts of Europe, under the conduct of their king, Odoacer, took possession of Italy. Soon after this, the Heruli were defeated by Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths, who took the country, and proclaimed himself king. But afterwards, this kingdom was destroyed by the Eastern emperor, who sent his lieutenant to govern Italy, with the title of Exarch of Ravenna; and thus Rome lost her authority, in a temporal point of view, and became a tributary province. The whole form of the government was changed. The senate and consuls were not permitted to continue. Every city or district, of any note or importance, was put under the government of some powerful chieftain, who had the title of duke; and thus Rome was degraded from her high rank among the nations, and stood only on a level with the other cities of Italy.

But still, in a religious point of view, she retained her authority. A spiritual power was then rising in the church, which was destined to bring all nations into subjection; and when Rome lost the temporal sovereignty of the world, she only lost the third part of her power. A large part of her temporal power was gone. Her senate and consuls, and the various officers of government, fell into darkness and obscurity: but in the midst of those scenes of tumult and disorder, a spiritual power arose, which brought back all her temporal glory, and Rome again became the mistress of the world.

This spiritual power was no other than "the man of sin," who, about the latter part of the sixth century, took his seat in the temple of God. This spirit of iniquity was working, silently and secretly, even in those times of tumult and blood; and all the calamities which were then inflicted on mankind, only served to increase their wickedness and rebellion against God. Hence he was preparing for them still greater calamities than they had ever experienced before. "I beheld," says the apostle, "and heard a certain angel, flying in the midst of heaven, saying with a great voice, wo, wo, wo, to the inhabitants of the earth, from the remaining voices of the trumpet of the three angels

who are yet to sound." Here three terrible scenes of calamities are announced. They are called *woes*, because they exceed the former judgments in severity, and are longer in continuance. The last of them, although it is the shortest, is the most terrible of all.

When the fifth angel sounded, the apostle saw "a star which had fallen from heaven to the earth; and there was given to him the key of the abyss, or bottomless pit, and he opened the pit of the abyss, and smoke ascended from the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened from the smoke of the pit: and there came locusts out of the smoke," &c. Here we may remark, that this phrase, the bottomless pit, although it is the literal rendering of the word abyss, and perhaps as proper as any words which could be found in the English language, yet it does not express the full meaning of the original. The ancients believed that Hades, or the invisible world, where the spirits of the wicked are confined in torments, existed in the bowels of the earth; and that there was an opening made in the surface, to go down into it. Thus Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, with all the company that conspired against Moses and Aaron, when the earth clave asunder and swallowed them, are said to have gone down living into Hades. The same thing is expressed in the lv. Psalm: "See death seize upon them, and let them go down living into Hades." Whether, therefore, this ancient opinion be correct or not, it was certainly the opinion of the apostles, and it seems to be sanctioned by the word of God. The entrance into this place is called the pit of the abyss, or the pit of Hades. This entrance was opened by a star, which had fallen from heaven. The smoke then immediately ascended from the abyss below, and darkened the air. "Then locusts came out of the smoke on the earth, and power was given to them," &c. The symbol of a star, which represents a minister of religion, or some officer of the civil government, almost evidently points out the impostor Mohammed, or, as he is commonly called, Mahomet. He was a man of superior talents, and well fitted for governing mankind. Although we know but little of his career, in the former part of his eventful life; yet it cannot be doubted, that for many years before the publication of his visions, he stood as a star of no inconsiderable magnitude, in the country to which he belonged. But he fell from heaven, when he thought of becoming a deceiver; and he opened the abyss, when he published his imposture to the world. The locusts

signify the Saracens, his countrymen, who imbibed the opinions which he published, and went forth, according to his directions, to propagate them through the world. The common locusts do not hurt mankind. They only hurt the grass, and the trees, and the fruits of the earth: but these locusts were like scorpions, a most dangerous and poisonous insect, whose sting inflicts the most dreadful pain, and frequently occasions death. But they had power to hurt only a certain class of mankind. They had no power over those that had the seal of God impressed on their foreheads. The doctrines of Mahomet were so absurd, and so palpably an imposture, that if men had been properly instructed in the knowledge of the scriptures, and, by the practice of righteousness, had learned to distinguish good from evil, and truth from error, they could not have been hurt by the doctrines of Mahomet. But in those days, the christian church had sunk into gross idolatry. The inventions of men had usurped the place of the ordinances of the Redeemer; and hence their minds were blinded, so that they could not discern the imposture. As they had already suffered themselves to be deceived, and to believe in lies; so, in receiving the koran, instead of the bible, they only went a step further into delusion.

But although these locusts had power to inflict a great degree of torment on the corrupted part of the church, they were not authorized entirely to destroy it. It was not given to them to kill; but only to torment men, for five months: which is the general period of the continuance of locusts. Although the Saracens advanced with great success, and rapidity in their conquests, and the propagation of their false doctrines, for the period of five prophetic months, or 150 years; their doctrines then ceased to spread over the world and their political power was restrained. There are certain false doctrines and religious practices, which possess a fascinating and infatuating power, where they are brought to operate on the mind, and men are carried away with the delusion for a time: but it has not sufficient power in itself to hold the mind in perpetual bondage. This may be clearly understood, by considering some of the popular errors of the present time. There are some doctrines of the word of God, which the untutored mind will by no means relish, and which it finds very difficult to understand. It may be said concerning the scriptures generally, as well as the epistles of Paul, that "there are some things in them hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest to their own

destruction." Of these things advantage is taken, by those who find it their interest to deceive mankind, by the propagation of false doctrines. They pretend to open up a way in which those difficulties are removed, and to bring down the sublime mysteries of the gospel, to the level of the meanest understanding. But such attempts are like all popular follies. Their falsehood is discovered and they lose their influence. Such was the doctrine of Mahomet. He laid hold on the sacred mystery of the trinity in unity, and represented it as the foundation of all the idolatry which was then practised among christians. He then set himself forth as the great prophet, sent from God, to teach men his true nature and character. The prominent doctrine of the koran is, "There is one God, and Mahomet is his prophet." But there were many things in this new religion, which were calculated for temporary purposes, and fascinated the mind only for a short period. Afterwards the folly and wickedness of them, were seen by every one, who had any regard for truth. This appears to be the chief reason, why the locusts had not power to kill; but only to torment men for a short period. The whole period of their reign was but 150 years; and the influence of their doctrines but temporary. They would give a great degree of mental pain, to those who were only babes in the knowledge of the gospel; but the wound was not mortal, and they might finally recover without spiritual death: while they could not at all wound the conscience of the established christian.

It is quite evident, that in those days, and indeed in all ancient times, men had a much stronger sense of religion, than they have in this present period. Whether their religion were true or false, they were devoted to it; and the conviction of error, was accompanied with a great degree of mental agony. Hardened as is the human heart, and fickle and fluctuating as is the human mind in this age, we may have seen some instances, in which, in the agonies of a guilty conscience, death was preferred to life. It is not at all uncommon for men, when under the conviction of some very painful doctrine, to wish they had never been born. But such instances were no doubt very numerous, under the influence of Mahometan delusions. "In those days," says the apostle, "shall men seek death rather than life, and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them." This is, in fact, the only way in which this declaration can be at all consistently explained. It is true, we may imagine certain circumstances, in which a country

may be placed, when a savage enemy is wasting it by fire and sword, where some might be so harassed, and driven about, from one retreat to another, that in the moment of despondency, they might exclaim, "it is better for us to die than to live." But the apostle speaks of the agony of mind produced by the influence of religion. The pain of having the faith overturned by the power of new doctrines. If we have no religious feelings, nor scruples of conscience, we may find death at any time. But the state of mind here described, is produced by religious doctrines which throw the mind into a state of tumult and agitation. Those who are not attached to any kind of religion, and who think it of little importance what doctrines they believe, or what kind of worship they practise, may not, indeed, find it painful to change their faith, or their forms and ceremonies; but when a conscientious man becomes unsettled in his religious opinions, and is driven from his hopes by some new religious doctrines, a grievous wound is inflicted on his conscience, and it is easy to conceive, that in many instances, the torment might be so great, as to induce him to prefer death to life, or to wish he had never been born. This was no doubt the effect of the religion of Mahomet, on the minds of many who had received the gospel, but who were not fully established in the truth.

The apostle, in the next place, describes the appearance of the locusts. They were like horses prepared for war, and on their heads were as crowns of gold, &c. This is an obvious description of the Arabians, and their method of war: but as it is not our intention to dwell on this part of the Revelation, and as the subject has been fully explained by Newton, and other commentators, we shall pass over it with one observation. It is said, "one wo is past, and behold, there come two woes more hereafter." We are not to understand, from this annunciation, that no degree of that wo should ever again be realized. It is true that the torment of Mahometan delusion has passed away from the christian church; but still it is a fact, that from that time to the present, some other delusion, of the same nature, has sprung up in the church, from age to age. These locusts still continue to come, at certain periods, and torment the minds of those who are not established in the true faith of the gospel, by giving them wrong views of its doctrines. They have not, indeed, power to destroy the true church of God, nor even to blindfold the mind of any one, so that he may not see the error, after the fascination has spent its force, and is gone; yet they always leave a poison behind

them, which, if not cleansed from the heart by the sanctifying truths of the gospel, will at length become incurable. This is always the result, when men become teachers or promoters of error: when they are not content with having their own minds poisoned, but endeavor to poison the minds of others. They then become locusts themselves. Many a star has fallen from heaven since the days of Mahomet,—has opened the bottomless pit, and poured forth clouds of smoke over the world, so that the sun and the air have been darkened. Therefore, it is of great importance for every one to have the seal of the living God impressed on his forehead, that he may be established in the faith, and be able to stand in the time of trial.

The first wo commenced in the beginning of the seventh century, and the second did not commence until the beginning of the fourteenth: and hence we see the reason why this intimation is given at the close of the first wo, that there should come two woes more hereafter. If God delays his judgments, men ought not to hope for impunity. They are not only certain, and will most assuredly be executed in due season; but they will be the more terrible, the longer they are delayed. The two following woes are much more dreadful than any that preceded them. The former relates chiefly to the downfall of the eastern or Greek church, which comprehended a large part of the Roman empire; and the latter shows the final overthrow and universal ruin of all antichristian power, in every part of the world. “And the sixth angel sounded,” says the apostle, “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, who are bound by the great river Euphrates: and the four angels were loosed; who were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, to slay the third part of men.” The sins of men must indeed be very great, when the four horns of the altar are endowed with a voice to order their punishment. It shows a degree of advancement in wickedness, which is incurable. It is the state which the prophet describes, when he says, “the sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond: it is engraven on the table of their heart, and on the horns of their altars.” This judgment was executed by the Turks, who inhabited those countries bordering on the river Euphrates, and who are here represented as the ministers of God’s vengeance. It is well known that there were four sultanies, or kingdoms, established in that



part of the world in the eleventh century. They had a great thirst for conquest, and for the extension of their dominions; but they were, for many years, restrained by the united power of the christian world. They were afterwards loosed, and began their conquests in christendom, in the year 1281. After this period, they pursued a course of unparalleled victories, scarcely ever meeting with a defeat, until the year 1672; which is 391 years, and answers to the prophetic hour, and day, and month, and year, during which they were to slay the third part of men. As a year, in the language of prophecy, means 360 days, and each of the days being put for a year, is 360 years, a month is 30 years; and by the same method of computation, a day is one year, and an hour the twenty-fourth part of a year: so the period of the advancement of the Turkish empire is more accurately stated in the prophecy, than by the historians of the times. But God gave them their appointments, and fixed a certain limitation to their conquests; and from that period they began to decline. At this time, their power has become so feeble, that the Greeks, whom they have held in slavery for many centuries, have risen against their tyrants, and there is good reason to hope, they will at length prevail.

But the Turks are here described in the days of their power and their splendor. They delighted in horsemanship, and the strength of their armies consisted in cavalry. This was presented to the apostle. He heard the number of the horsemen computed at two myriads of myriads, or 200,000,000. It is very possible, that in the long course of their conquests, for nearly 400 years, they may have brought that immense number upon the field of battle. They had breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone, as they appeared to John in the vision; that is, scarlet, and blue, and yellow. This is well known to have been the military uniform of the Turks, from the time they made their first appearance in the world. They are said to have vomited out of their mouths, fire, and smoke, and brimstone; and it is well known that gunpowder was invented in those times, and that the Turks made great use of it in their wars with the christians. By these immense armies, and this newly invented mode of warfare, great multitudes were destroyed; and they no doubt fulfilled their commission, which was to slay the third part of men.

But the Turks, like the Saracens who preceded them, had an inveterate hatred to the truths of the gospel, and

endeavored, as they do still endeavor, with all their powers, to instil their own religious opinions into the minds of all who fall under their power. Hence, in all the countries which they conquered, they brought the christian religion into contempt and reproach. They who professed christianity, were subjected to many pains and penalties, and were liable continually to be insulted and trodden under foot. In this sense, they "do hurt" as much with their stings in their tails, as with the fire, and smoke, and brimstone, from their mouths.

But still it is a truth, which is too well known to be denied, that amidst all the pains, and troubles, and desolation, which have been brought on the christian world, by the various judgments, and the woes that are past, no permanent or efficacious change has been effected in their religion or their morals. "And the rest of the men who were not killed by these plagues, yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood, which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk. Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts." We ought to apply these things to ourselves; for we are among the number of men who have not been destroyed by those plagues. If we have not been eye witnesses of those ruins and desolations, we have heard of them, and we hear of them day by day, when the judgments of God are abroad in the earth. While we consider the Turks as the most prominent of those whom God has appointed to be the executioners of his vengeance on guilty christian nations, we are not to forget, that one christian nation is frequently made the instrument of executing vengeance on another christian nation; and that civil wars and internal commotions, as well as all the evil which we suffer from other sources, are so many premonitions, to show us our sins, and our danger from the wrath to come. It is truly remarkable, and has not failed to be remarked by some who never thought of the accomplishment of the prophecy, that wars, and famines, and pestilences, the judgments with which God has commonly afflicted nations for their sins, have not the effects which they seem formerly to have had, in softening the human heart, and inducing men to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. We need only instance, as a proof of this position, the little scourge which lately passed over the land in which we live. Have not immorality and irreligion prevailed much more

among us since that period? Instead of repenting and humbling ourselves for sin, we have grown in iniquity, under the very scourge which was calculated for our amendment. So the same expostulation is properly used with us, which was used with the Israelites of old: "Why should you be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." The two prominent sins of the christian world, are idolatry in religion, and immorality in the intercourse of man with man. If we do not bow down to stocks and stones, as the heathen who know not God, are not all our churches, with very few exceptions, corrupted with doctrines, and modes, and forms of worship, for which God has given no authority? Are murders, fornication, and dishonesty in dealing, less prevalent in the world, than before these woes were denounced? It is certain, that neither the Greek nor the Roman church has derived the least benefit, in a moral point of view, by these judgments; and it is no less certain, that the protestant churches, generally, are much more corrupt than they were in the days of the Reformation. Therefore, let us not suppose that these declarations have no relation to us; for the truth is, we are implicated just as much as others.

The vision contained in the x. chapter, is more august than any of the scenes which the apostle had witnessed on the earth. He had seen the throne of God in heaven, surrounded with majesty, and there was a rainbow about the throne: but here he beholds "a mighty angel descending from heaven to earth, clothed with a cloud; he had a rainbow about his head, his countenance was like the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire." The glory in which this angel appears, and the authority which he assumes, can scarcely be thought to agree with any created angel. "They are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation:" but this angel seems to have divine authority inherent in himself. His very appearance shows him to be above the rank of angels, and to be no less a personage than the Redeemer, descending from heaven to earth, to announce the last dispensation of his providence, previous to the millennium. His garment was a cloud, to signify that his coming at this time should be seen darkly. He had a rainbow about his head, to show that he still remembered his covenant. His countenance had the appearance of the sun, to show his governing and enlightening power over the human mind; and his legs were like

pillars of fire, to denote the purity and stability of his government. He had in his hand a little book, or a small roll of parchment, open, and without a seal; because the contents of it were just about to be revealed to the apostle, and by him to be communicated to the world. He then placed his right foot on the sea, and his left on the earth, and he cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth; and when he cried, seven thunders uttered their voices, &c. It seems that these thunders uttered something which was quite intelligible to the apostle, and he was about to write it, as he had written the other communications; but he was forbidden by the angel. It was, no doubt, some terrible things which the thunders uttered; but as they are not revealed to us, it is our duty to be silent, and not even dare to conjecture what they were. While the angel was standing on the sea, and on the earth, as having all nature under his feet, "he lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by him that liveth forever, &c. that there should be time no longer." Swearing is an act of allegiance in a creature, but it is an act of sovereignty in God. "If I lift up my hand to heaven, says God, and say, I live forever." So this act of swearing by the Creator of all things, is no proof that this was a created angel, but rather the contrary. It is very similar to the oath contained in the xlvi. of Isaiah: "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." These words are given us by the prophet, and quoted by the apostle Paul, as the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. The meaning of that oath is, that all shall stand before him in the last judgment, and be obliged to bow to his authority: so, in this place, he declares, with the solemnity of an oath, that the period announced by the seventh angel, should be the last period; in which should be accomplished the whole mystery of God, as he had declared it to his servants the prophets. It is very evident, that this last wo trumpet is not intended to announce the end of the world. It seems truly astonishing, that it should be viewed in this light, by any who ever attempted to expound the scriptures. The meaning of the proposition, "time shall be no longer," is explained in the verse immediately following, and will be seen in a moment, by those who know the meaning of the Greek word, which is here rendered time. It never signifies a particular point in duration, as the time of the day, or the period of beginning or ending any work; but always

expresses some length of time, some period, which consists of days, or years, or perhaps ages. The duration of the world is divided into times, or periods, or dispensations; some of them longer, and some shorter. Every one of the trumpets calls the attention to a certain time or period, and the last trumpet signifies the last of these periods before the millennium. Some writers have rendered it, "the time shall not be yet:" but this is a forced and unnatural construction of the Greek language; and there is no necessity for it, if we only understand the word time in its proper sense, as not signifying a point, but some considerable length in duration. This glorious personage, therefore, announces, with all the solemnity of an oath, that the time or period of the seventh trumpet shall fill up the mystery of God, that all the revelations which he has made to his prophets shall be accomplished in that period, and then the reign of Christ shall commence.

Considering the subject in this point of view, we see its importance. It is worthy of the Lord Jesus Christ to descend from heaven to earth, in order to make this communication. To unravel the secret mysteries of God, which have been concealed from the eyes of men, or faintly and obscurely revealed, is not only worthy of the Redeemer, but it is his proper work in the plan of redemption. It is not improbable, that the apostle might have supposed, from the appearance, and the words of this august personage, that he was come to announce the last judgment: but if such were his thoughts, he was immediately undeceived by a voice from heaven, which commanded him to go and take the little roll, which was open in the angel's hand. The apostle immediately obeyed, and went to the angel, saying, "Give me the little roll." He said to him, "Take it and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter; but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey." In the first reception of some important and interesting communication, there is always a degree of satisfaction and delight; but it frequently happens afterwards according to the proverb: "In much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." This communication, when it was first given to the apostle, was pleasant and delightful, as delicious food is agreeable to the palate; but when he came to digest it, and to understand the nature of the communication, it was painful and afflicting. "I took the little book," says the apostle, "out of the angel's hand, and ate it up," &c. Then he said unto me: "Thou must prophesy before

peoples, and nations, and tongues, and many kings." The substance of this little book, is no doubt contained in the following chapter. It is a necessary appendage, to enable us to understand what goes before, and to shed light on what comes afterwards. Without it the whole book would still be dark and mysterious; and it would be impossible for us to have any correct knowledge of the prophecy contained in it: but still it is certain, that a clear understanding and realizing of the truths which are here brought into view, will be a source of sorrow and of painful reflections, to the mind of every true servant of God.

We have now come to the main body of our work. We thought it necessary to take a brief view of the subjects contained in the seven foregoing chapters, that the patient reader might be the better prepared to enter on the consideration of the important scenes which follow, and which relate more immediately to the times of the end. We shall see that the whole is a consistent, a truly divine, and glorious plan; and that every link of the great chain of prophecy, must come into view, in order to connect the whole. The scenes which we are now about to consider, are intended chiefly to illustrate the works of God in these latter days; and we are carried back to past ages, as it were for a moment, that we may have a better and more expanded view of the latter times.

## PART II. DISSERTATION III.

### ON THE XI. OF THE REVELATION.

“AND there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. 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.” This was the same angel who was still standing with his one foot on the sea, and the other on the earth. He had told the apostle, that he must again prophesy, and make many new discoveries to mankind; and therefore he ought not to think that the revelation had come to an end. There were yet many things to be opened up and made known to mankind. A reed like a rod, or a small walking cane, was given to him; and the angel commanded him “to rise, and measure the temple of God,” &c. The meaning of this symbolical action of measuring, is appropriation. We are accustomed to measure land or other property, when we are resolved to hold it in possession. By the act of measuring, we declare the property to be ours. But the fact of measuring would not, of itself, make known whether we intended to retain the property in our own hands, or dispose of it to another. There is therefore an explanation given. The temple, the altar, and the worshippers, are to be retained: while the court and the holy city, are to be given into the hands of the gentiles. It is well known that there was a number of courts without the temple, and one of them especially, was called the court of the gentiles. All classes of men, whether Jews or Gentiles, had access to the outer court; but the Jews only were suffered to enter the inner courts. That court which contained the altar of sacrifice, was called the court of the priests, and was next to the temple. It was separated only by a small railing, from the court in which all the Israelites assembled. Hence the inner courts, where the worshippers met, are all included in this measurement. But the whole city of Jerusalem and the whole outer court of the temple, are left out of the measurement, to be given into the hands of the gentiles, to be profaned by them, for forty and two months, or 1260 years. This is the same period,

which, in the book of Daniel, is designated by a time, times and an half, or three years and an half, forty-two months, or 1260 days.

By the temple, the altar, and the worshippers, which are measured, we are to understand the true christian church, who worship God according to his own ordinances. We are taught, also, by the use of these symbols, that the church of God under the New Testament, is the same church which existed under the former dispensation; and that, although the ordinances are not entirely the same; yet they are regulated and prescribed with as much accuracy as in any former period. There is perhaps more intellectual wisdom, and more exercise of mind required, to enable us to discern them; but it is as great a sin to add to, or diminish from, the prescribed ordinances of worship in this dispensation, as in the times of Moses and Aaron. The temple, the altar, and the worshippers, are all within the limits of God's measurement; and are preserved by him within the boundaries which he himself has prescribed. We are also taught by this representation, that during this period, the number of true worshippers should be very few, in comparison with those who profane the sanctuary. The true worshippers are those only "who come to God with true hearts, in full assurance of faith, having their hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience; and who enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. The number of these worshippers is said to be so small, during this period of 1260 years, that they might be measured with a reed like a rod. By the gentiles, who profane the outer court of the temple, and the holy city, we are to understand the great mass of mankind, who are called by the christian name; but do not worship God according to his commandments. Men may attend to all the outward forms of worship, which God has prescribed, and yet they may not come to him with their hearts: and if they have wrong views of the nature and attributes of God, or of the plan of salvation; or if they worship in a way which he has not appointed in his word, it is of little consequence how sincere and zealous they are, their worship is profane, and they are not admitted into the sanctuary above. They are gentiles in their hearts, their lives, and conversation; although they outwardly bear the name of christians. These gentiles compose by far the largest number of professing christians, in every part of the world. They profane the holy city, and the outer court of the temple, while they alter and change the worship after their own inventions, to suit



their taste or their interest. By their policy they have been able to engross to themselves, generally, through the world, all the outward honors and emoluments of the church. In fact, the christian churches every where, are generally under the control of such characters; and they raise themselves to power, and influence, and wealth, by making the gospel a means, or instrument, to promote their own selfish purposes.

This is the view which the word of God gives us of the state of christianity in our age, as well as in the ages past. It is the subject of prophecy, both in the Old and New Testament. When Micah declared that Zion should be ploughed like a field, and Jerusalem should become heaps, and the mountain of the Lord's house should be like the high places of the forest," he did not merely exhibit the present condition of the city of Jerusalem. The chief subject is the spiritual condition of the church in the latter days. When the Lord Jesus Christ declared, that Jerusalem should be trodden under foot of the gentiles, he did not merely point out its destruction by the Romans, but the spiritual condition of the church during the long period of antichristian usurpation. It is as true in a spiritual, as it is true in a literal sense, that Jerusalem is trodden under foot of the gentiles. Thus the holy city is to be profaned for 1260 years; and at the end of this time, the holy people are to be scattered. If we had a correct knowledge of the doctrines and duties of true godliness, of the holiness of the Divine Being, and his hatred of idolatry; and, above all, if our minds were not blinded by a spurious charity, which puts darkness for light, and light for darkness, evil for good, and good for evil, we should be able to see that this is the very condition of the church at this time. The holy city is trodden under foot by the gentiles, and the power of the holy people is scattered.

But as God has never left himself without a witness, in any period of the world, or in any country, whether christian or heathen; so, in this age of profanation, and of treading the sanctuary under foot, he has provided a few characters among mankind, who choose to forego all worldly advantages; and while they mourn over the follies and vices of men, they stand forward, and proclaim the truth of God; bearing testimony against all errors and wickedness, both in principle and practice. "I will give power," says this divine angel, "unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy 1260 days, clothed in sackcloth." Here we see plainly, that this angel is no other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

He himself was the true and faithful witness, and he gives power to his witnesses. "Behold, I have given him," says God, "to be a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people." Thus he appeared in the world as a witness, and before Pontius Pilate he witnessed the good confession; and thus he is also the leader and commander of the witnesses. They are under his authority, go at his bidding, and speak whatever he commands them.

The witnesses are men of like passions with others, and a race of men who follow in succession for the period of 1260 years. They are generally ministers of the gospel, for they are here called prophets: but they are not exclusively ministers of the gospel; for any christian may be a witness of the truth, who, with intelligence and wisdom, and a consistent character, is able and willing "to contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints." But the witnesses are not babes in Christ. They are not ignorant of the truths of the gospel, so that they cannot give a reason for the hope that is in them. They are not such men as Naaman the Syrian, who, although he resolved to be a worshipper of the true God, yet wished to be permitted to bow occasionally in the house of Rimmon, that he might not offend his master, by appearing to despise his god. A witness is an intelligent christian, sound in the faith: one who not only knows the truth, but is able to bring it forward, in such a way as to command the attention of those to whom he speaks: one whose moral character stands unimpeachable: finally, one who is ready, at all times, to bear every inconvenience, and all opposition, with patience, and, like Moses, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season: esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than all human treasure, because he has "respect unto the recompense of the reward." Such characters are well represented by mourners, and clothed in sackcloth. This was frequently the dress in which the ancient prophets appeared, especially in times of religious declension, and when the Israelites were provoking the vengeance of heaven. Elijah wore a garment made of hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins. Such was the costume of John the Baptist. The prophet Isaiah, although he was often at the court of the kings of Judah, was accustomed to wear sackcloth. Hence, although there is no particular command given, concerning the clothing of those who bear testimony for the truth, yet there is always something in their character and habits, which is

a tacit reproof of the follies and vices of mankind. But in their conversation, and intercourse in the world, they are not backward to speak against all immorality, and especially against all religious errors. They attend to the command given to the prophet: "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet; show my people their transgressions, and the house of Israel their sins."

It is easy to see that men who are possessed of such a spirit of martyrdom, will never be very numerous in any age of the world, or any state of society. Almost all men would become christians, were it not for the cross which is always attached to the christian profession; and many are willing to bear a small degree of sorrow and humiliation on account of the gospel: but there are few christians, in any age, who can properly be called martyrs, or witnesses. There is generally something wanting in the multitude or common mass even of true christians, to entitle them to the character. Some have not enough of knowledge. Others want wisdom. Others fortitude, or firmness, &c. But God has determined that during this period of 1260 years, while the gentiles shall profane the outer sanctuary, and the holy city, there shall be so many of them in the world, as shall bear sufficient evidence for the truth of the gospel. According to the law of Moses, two witnesses, bearing testimony to the same fact, were sufficient to convict one who was accused before a court of justice. No man was punished on the mere testimony of one witness, without some other corroborating evidence. Such, indeed, is the general practice of all courts of justice, throughout the world. There must always be something more than the testimony of one individual, to satisfy the court that the accused is guilty, or else they will find difficulty in passing the sentence of condemnation. Therefore during this whole period of the reign of error, there is always a sufficient number of such characters, scattered through every christian community, to whom the Redeemer has given power, to testify against the errors and vices of mankind: so that the world stands convicted by the testimony of the witnesses. During all this period there has scarcely been any part of Christendom left in the same condition of the inhabitants of Laish, who were quiet and secure, and lived carelessly, there being no one among them who showed his disapprobation of their sins. It would be easy to bring abundance of evidence on this subject, from the history of the church, even in the most trying times of persecution: but enough of this has

been done, by older and better writers than the author of this little work. Every martyrology is a proof on this subject, as to the times of which it treats, and it is well known that hundreds and thousands have suffered martyrdom during the reign of Antichrist. But still new witnesses succeeded, to fill their place. The true church has generally been like the Israelites in the bondage of Egypt; the more they afflicted them, the more they grew: so that it became a proverb: "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." In some places the witnesses have been numerous, and in others few; but in every part of the christian world, there has been a sufficient number to confirm the truth by their testimony, and if necessary, to seal it with their blood.

But the principal trait in the character of the witnesses, is, that they hold up the light of the true gospel to the eyes of mankind. They are not only the salt of the earth, by which the world is preserved from entire corruption, but they are the light of the world, without which it would be covered with moral darkness. The truth of God has, in itself, a power, which renders it superior to all error and falsehood. When it is brought forward in its own proper colors, without any false gloss, it will generally bring conviction. It is a crime of deep dye, to mingle falsehood with truth, in order to render it more palatable to the corrupted and vitiated taste of the world: and it is a sin which God will not fail to punish in the ministers of his gospel, when, under the pretence of preaching his word, they preach their own thoughts and imaginations. In this way they prophesy lies in the name of God. He commands his ministers to speak the truth, without varnish or decoration. No book ever published to the world is so full of sublime sentiments as the word of God; and no other book has so little ornament. In this respect, every minister of the gospel ought to imitate the penmen of the sacred scriptures. "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord." That part of mankind who are pleased and delighted with the ornaments of language, is here represented as chaff; while those who love the plain, unvarnished truth, are the wheat. The particles of chaff are indeed more numerous than the grains of solid wheat; but they bear no comparison with them in real value. One great evil in the preaching of modern times, is, that it prefers the chaff to the wheat; and the discourses are better adapted to please than to edify. They are calculated to

amuse and entertain, but not to enlighten the understanding in the truths of the word of God.

A witness is one who illumines the mind by his preaching; who opens up and explains the word of God, and sets it in a clear light before the minds of his audience. His great object is to speak the word of God faithfully; for he knows that the chaff is nothing, when compared with the wheat, and must, in fact, be separated from it, before the latter is brought into the granary of God. The witnesses are represented as standing up, and exhibiting the truth. "They are the two olive trees, and the two golden candlesticks, standing before the God of the earth." In order to see the force of this representation, we must have recourse to the seventh chapter of the prophecy of Zechariah. The prophet, in vision, beheld a candlestick, all of gold; such as those used in the temple. It had seven lamps, one on each of the six branches, and one in the centre. On this central lamp, there was a bowl, which served as a reservoir for the oil, and from this it was communicated, through the seven golden pipes, to each of the seven lamps. He saw, also, two olive trees, one on each side of the candlestick; and these trees emptied the oil out of themselves, by golden pipes, into the bowl of the candlestick. Here are two distinct representations; the olive trees, and the candlesticks. The one represents the true church of God, and the other the true ministers of the gospel. As the olive trees supply the lamps with oil, and the lamps, when lighted, illuminate the place where they stand; so the true ministers supply the churches with the light of the gospel, and the light is thus exhibited to the world. Here there is mention made of two golden candlesticks, instead of the one which was seen in the vision by the prophet. This is, perhaps, intended to teach us, that the witnesses are more numerous in the New Testament dispensation, than in ancient times; and that, as there is a plurality of individual witnesses, so there is also a plurality of churches, that bear testimony to the truth. We are not to suppose, that the truth is only to be found in one denomination of christians. There are some churches that differ in their views of some of the more obscure parts of the revelation of God, and yet bear their testimony to the truth. The unity of the church is entirely consistent with perfect freedom of sentiment; and with difference in opinion concerning things that are not clearly revealed. It is antichristian tyranny alone, which attempts to put fetters on the human mind,—to restrain freedom of thought, and

exchange of sentiment, that a combination of tyrants might bring the world into subjection to themselves. Although Paul and Barnabas loved each other as brethren, yet they differed in opinion concerning the course they should pursue in the propagation of the gospel; and the contention was so sharp between them, that they separated the one from the other. But we are not to suppose that these witnesses ceased to bear their testimony to the truth, because they were separated. The seven churches of Asia appear to have been independent of each other, and each of them to have pursued their own course, according to their views of the truth: there seems also to have been some errors in most of them; but still their candlesticks were not removed, until they had fallen into greater errors than those for which they were admonished. The reformers of the sixteenth century had differences of opinion; but still many of them were true witnesses. The churches are not to expect to be able to see eye to eye, until that glorious period shall come, when the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord.

But it is a prominent trait in the character of the witnesses, that they always stand as candlesticks in the presence of God. Their principles and their practice are always set before him, for his inspection. They have no hidden motives, no secret views, no hidden designs of promoting their own interest and aggrandizement in the world, no intrigues or combinations for raising themselves to eminence, or for keeping themselves in power: they merely stand in the presence of God, and exhibit the light of his truth, with the hopes that his spirit will make it effectual, in his own way and time, for the illumination of the hearts of men. The witnesses will not condescend to the little base contrivances and inventions, by which some temporary religious excitements are produced. Although they possess the true humility of the gospel, yet they have a dignity and elevation of character, by which they are raised above every little artifice and mean contrivance. They know that they are set for the defence and propagation, and for the final establishment of the gospel throughout the world, and they go about the work in simple dependence on God, and in obedience to his commandments; and they do nothing for which he has not given them authority. In this respect, there is a marked and striking difference between them and the false teachers. They always resort to every means in their power, for the purpose of making converts. Like the Pharisees of old, they compass sea and land to make one

proselyte. They use every bait, and every allurements which their own ingenuity can devise, to catch the unwary and the ignorant, and bring them under their power. But the witnesses are perfectly satisfied with the means of God's appointment; and while they hold out the light of truth, that it may shine into the hearts of men, they trust in God to give the enlightening influence of his spirit, and make the means effectual for the salvation of those whom he has ordained to everlasting life. They catch no man with guile. They do not, in that false sense which some are pleased to give to the words of Paul, "become all things to all men." They indeed exert themselves to the utmost of their power for the promulgation of the gospel; and for this purpose, they give up all their own prejudices, particular views, interests, and gratifications; but they always keep within the limits of honesty and candor.

From this description of the witnesses, a description which is fully authorized by the representation, it is easy to see, that the world and they can never live in perfect friendship. Those who conform themselves, in some degree, to the ways of the world, can alone expect to gain its favor. Men will bear to be admonished and reprov'd, if their favorite vices are kept out of view. There are many who will make no objection to have the moral duties fully set before them, and highly commended, and even to have the contrary vices held up to public reprobation; but they cannot bear to hear the exposure of errors in religion. There are so many different views of religious doctrines, and modes of worship, while all profess to take the scriptures for their standard, that many really suppose there is little harm in religious errors; and it gives them pain to hear those errors brought forward and reprobated, in the same manner as if they were vices, or errors in morality. Most men, also, have some favorite opinions, as well as some favorite sins, for which they have formed a strong attachment, and therefore they have a proportional dislike to those who expose the fallacy of their opinions. But the witnesses do not hesitate to expose the falsehood of every religious doctrine and sentiment, which are contradicted by the passage of scripture they are explaining; and their views and explanations come in constant collision with the favorite opinions and prepossessions of multitudes; and therefore it is not at all wonderful, that they should be considered as public enemies.

Viewing them in this light, it is very natural they should endeavor to hurt or injure them: Although all men will applaud that divine precept of morality, given by our Lord, "Love your enemies. Bless them that curse you. Do good to them that hate you," &c.—yet very few understand it, and still fewer endeavor to carry it into practice. Men have frequently the power of hurting the witnesses, and they seldom fail to improve it, although the days of violent and bloody persecution have generally passed away. There are now no racks, and gibbets, and stakes, no faggots and fires, publicly prepared for torturing the bodies of the witnesses; yet there are many other ways of inflicting pain, than by torturing the body. Every man that bears a consistent and decided testimony for the whole truth of God; who does not shun to declare his whole counsel, but, like the apostle, keeps himself pure from the blood of all men, will find, through the whole course of his life, that the weapons of the enemy are not at all blunted by the professed charity of the world. They will always find some means of hurting him. If they cannot inflict corporeal pains, or if they cannot incarcerate his body, they can render his life bitter, by a constant and persevering opposition. They will conceal themselves, and shoot their poisoned arrows, which, although they cannot kill, will render his life a constant scene of troubles and vexation. But, says the angel, "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." This fire is designed to represent the reproofs, admonitions, and warnings of the witnesses. Any man who has ever been guilty of sin, and has been sharply and faithfully reproved, will know, by a little reflection, the meaning of the symbol. Every faithful reproof brings compunction to the heart, and frequently occasions such pain as few are willing to bear, although it might be the means of saving them from eternal pain. We must, however, understand this declaration, in perfect consistency with the exercise of love to the person reproved. The witnesses have no desire to revenge themselves on those who wish to injure them: on the contrary, it is their intention to do them good, and to save them from the wrath to come. But the sins of their enemies are aggravated by their good disposition. It is not so great a sin to return evil for evil, as to return evil for good: and men, therefore, by rejecting the testimony of the witnesses,



hating their persons, and doing what they can to hurt them, do bring a dreadful curse on themselves, even the fire of the wrath of God, which shall burn forever. This fire is said to proceed out of the mouths of the witnesses, because the tortures of the heart, and the compunctions of a guilty conscience, for the rejection of a preached gospel, and for their hatred of those who endeavored to save them from the vengeance of heaven, will constitute the chief ingredient of misery, in that place where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched. This will inevitably be the end of every one who hurts, or even wishes to hurt, any of the witnesses. Many have these wishes or desires in their hearts, while they are not conscious of their existence. There are frequently unreasonable prejudices, or dislikes, which rise in the minds of the hearers of the gospel, against those who tell them the truth. These finally grow into hatred, and rancorous enmity, and, in many ways, they return evil for good, and hatred for love, while they have no knowledge nor suspicion of the evil that works within them.

But these witnesses, although they are held in little estimation among men, are, in fact the most important characters in the world. "These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not, in the days of their prophecy; and have power over waters, to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will." We are here taught, in the first place, that the witnesses are men of prayer, and, like Jacob, have a great degree of faith, so that they can prevail with God. This shutting up of heaven, is a manifest allusion to the prophecy of Elijah, in which he declared to Ahab, "As the Lord liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." He had received power to shut heaven for a certain period, and he here makes the fact known to Ahab. The apostle James, speaking of the efficacy of prayer, says: "Elias was a man, subject to like passions as we are; and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the land, by the space of three years and six months. The period of the prophesying of the witnesses is symbolically three years and six months, or 1260 days; and therefore Elias himself was a symbol of the witnesses. They also have power to shut heaven, in a spiritual or symbolic sense. As, in the days of Ahab, the bounties of heaven were abused and prostituted for the purposes of idolatry, and therefore God was pleased to afflict the idolaters, by depriving them of the rain from heaven;

so when men abuse and prostitute the spiritual blessings of the gospel for similar purposes, and will not hear nor attend to the truth, as it is proclaimed by the witnesses; when they cannot endure sound doctrine, but, after their own lusts, heap to themselves teachers, &c., they shall not be favored with the influences of the Holy Spirit. It is right and proper for every minister of the gospel, when men will not endure the doctrines of truth, which he proclaims, to pray earnestly, that they may not be encouraged, by success in their wayward courses, and that they may not have the out-pouring of that Holy Spirit, whose truth they have despised. In all such cases there is no doubt that their prayers shall be answered, like the prayer of Elias.

But it is said, also, that they have power over waters, to turn them to blood. This is spoken in allusion to the plagues which were brought on the land of Egypt. In those days, Moses and Aaron were the witnesses, who stood before God, and exhibited his truth before Pharaoh and the Egyptians. They, like Elijah were symbols of the witnesses in these latter times. The waters, or the rivers and fountains in the land of Egypt, as they were necessary for the temporal life and comfort of the inhabitants, so they are symbolical of the rivers and streams of everlasting life, which flow through the ordinances of the gospel. These are the streams which the witnesses have the power to turn into blood. When men will not drink of the pure streams of gospel truth, dispensed by their ministry, but turn away from them, and reject and hate them, then these waters of life, as respects these characters, shall be turned into blood. In this spiritual sense, they shall have "blood to drink, for they are worthy."

The same observations may be made, with respect to every other plague, with which the witnesses are said to have power to smite the earth. They are the cause why the spiritual plagues, or the vials of the wrath of God, shall be poured on the earth in the latter days. Their prayers and complaints shall all be answered by terrible things, in righteousness, on those who have despised their ministry, hated their persons, and inflicted on them all the pain in their power.

But it is declared, that, "when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them; 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 pe-

riod in which the witnesses are said to bear testimony in sackcloth, is 1260 years; and at the close of this period, a fatal and exterminating war shall rage against them. They are to be slain, their dead bodies cast out, and treated with every mark of indignity. The power by which this work is accomplished, is called the beast, and is particularly described in the xiii. and xvii. chapters. This beast is a spiritual power, which has its residence, or the chief seat of its authority, in the metropolis of the Roman empire. In a future dissertation, we shall show what is meant by this beast. At present, we shall not dwell on this part of the subject, any further than to state, that this power is not to be limited to any particular part of the earth. He is seated in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Hence his power, like the power of the Almighty, operates where it is not seen, and produces effects where men have no knowledge of its influence. The error of protestant commentators generally, is, that they have limited this spiritual power to the church and city of Rome, and have thus given the prophecy a mere private interpretation, and rendered it of little use, generally, to mankind. By this mistake, the churches have been, in a great measure, deprived of the benefit of this book of Revelation. If all the scenes of this prophecy are to be transacted in the Roman church, they are truly of very little importance to us, and the knowledge of them will not repay the labor of acquiring it. But when we understand that this beast is intended, not only to represent the church of Rome, but all other churches which have followed her example; and that her example has been followed, in many respects, by all other churches that have risen to any degree of power and popular influence; and that the beast makes war with the witnesses, in this land, as well as in every other part of the christian world; we can then apply the prophecy to our own times, and our own circumstances, and can realize the import of the promise, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy," &c. We shall assume it as a fact, for the present, until we come to the proper place for illustration, that the beast has power in every part of christendom; and not merely in the Roman Catholic, but in the protestant churches. It will surely not be denied, by any who know the arts and devices by which the Roman church established her power in the world, when they see the same arts and devices resorted to by other churches, for the establishment of their power. Rome is indeed said to be "the mother of harlots;"

but it may be said, with the same propriety, of many of the protestant churches in the present time, "as is the mother, so are the daughters."

Since, therefore, christianity is corrupted in every part of the earth, as well as in the city of Rome, or in the ten kingdoms which compose the Roman empire, the witnesses must be found every where through christendom, and especially through the protestant churches. In any other view of the subject, we shall be obliged to give the prophecy a private interpretation. Hence this is a spiritual war—not a series of pitched battles, garments rolled in blood, and fields covered with carnage; but a contest between truth and error in religion, or between the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the authority of men. In this war, the Redeemer fights by means of his witnesses; but the world is against them, and they are overpowered, cast down, and put out of influence. It is impossible to give this prophecy any other interpretation, without the most glaring absurdity, and even the impossibility that it should ever be accomplished. Shall we say that the witnesses must literally be put to death in the city of Rome, or in the ten kingdoms? This is absolutely impossible, in the present progressive state of religious toleration. This kind of persecution would not be tolerated even in the city of Rome itself. They would not suffer the bodies of the vilest malefactors to lie in the streets of that city for three days, without giving them a sepulchre. This state of feeling, instead of suffering a check, is growing in the world, and there is not the smallest probability, that mankind will ever again return to that savage state, in which this prophecy could be literally fulfilled. But when we view it as a spiritual war, there are in the way no difficulties whatever. It is very easy to conceive of a state of religion, throughout the world, such as is frequently described by the ancient prophets, as existing in the land of Israel. "O, that I had in the wilderness," says the prophet Jeremiah, "a lodge of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people, and go from them; for they are all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men," &c. And the prophet Micah exclaims: "The good man is perished from the earth, and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood, and they hunt every man his brother with a net. The best of them is a briar, and the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge," &c. We are to bear in mind, that the prophets describe, not only the moral condition of the Israelites in their own times, but the moral condition of the christian

world in the latter days, previous to the fall of Antichrist, and the introduction of the reign of the saints, or in the time of the last wo trumpet. Truly, if we compare these descriptions of human character, with the times in which we live, we shall not find them very unsuitable. The Jews were commanded, in the law of Moses, when they gathered in the vintage, to leave some of the grapes to be gathered afterwards, by the poor, the widow, and the fatherless: but it was not to be expected, in such cases, that the best of the grapes would be left for this purpose. The first ripe grapes, especially, would not be suffered to remain until the vineyards were gleaned; and if any one were to go into the vineyard at such a time, and hope to find a cluster of the first ripe grapes, he would be miserably disappointed. "There would be no cluster for him to eat." By this figure, it is intended to describe the moral condition of the world in these latter days. Instead of finding the best fruits of christianity, which ought to be expected from the privileges we enjoy, the accurate observer of the religious world must exclaim, with the prophet, "the good man is perished from the earth," &c. An upright man is seldom to be found. There are more murders committed, and a greater degree of the horrible thirst for revenge, than there have been in any previous age, since the times of barbarism have passed away. Men seek to entangle one another in their wiles and snares, as if they were sent into the world for this purpose. Justice is very frequently denied to the poor and the oppressed, and every thing is carried by combinations of the rich and powerful; so that an honest man has little to hope for, by entering into a contest for his rights. It may well be said, that "the best of them is as a briar, and the most upright sharper than a thorn hedge." It is true, there are some exceptions to this general description. There were some exceptions in the days of Micah. But as it was then generally true of the Israelites, so it is also generally true of mankind in the times in which we live.

Men usually pay but little attention to descriptions of human character, which represent their own age as worse than the ages past; because it is common for those who have not succeeded in their worldly affairs, and have suffered much from the dishonesty and want of integrity of others, to exclaim against the morals of the age. Those who are advanced in years, are very apt to censure the manners of the young, whether they are deserving of it or not: but still it is a manifest truth, that societies, like individuals, are

always progressing in virtue or in vice; and that the world, from one age to another, is always changing its moral character. It is well known, that in the tenth and eleventh centuries, the darkness of ignorance and superstition covered the face of the christian world, and there was scarcely a ray of moral or religious light, to dispel the midnight gloom from the mind of any individual. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the christian world altered its character entirely, and light sprung up to them out of the darkness. Mankind began to understand their civil and religious rights, and tyranny, both spiritual and temporal, from that time to the present, has been losing influence. Still the discerning mind will find something in the moral feelings of mankind, in the present age, which is, perhaps, as unfavorable to the influence of christianity, as any thing in the dark ages. While they refuse to bow to the despots of the earth, and break in pieces the trammels of bigotry and superstition, the Lord Jesus Christ, the rightful sovereign of the heavens and the earth, has also, in a great degree, lost his authority over their hearts. His worship is neglected by multitudes, and the mass of those who render to him any kind of worship, are, in a great degree, regardless of his authority. They pay little attention to his commandments. He has not only commanded us to worship him, but he has prescribed the form, and the kind of worship with which alone he will be pleased; and those who worship him after their own thoughts, are said to provoke him to anger to his face. The witnesses have always contended for the supremacy of the Redeemer; and this is the object against which the enemy has directed his artillery in all ages. But in this age, the witnesses have been defeated and put down, by the multiplicity of human forms, and the inventions of men, which they have brought into the worship of God. It was comparatively easy for them to contend for the faith of the gospel, and the purity of worship, against the palpable errors and impurities of the Roman church; but they could not contend successfully against ten thousand innovations, introduced by almost every religious sect, and some of them so very much resembling the truth, that few could discern the difference. There are in the world so many imitations of true religion, and these imitations are so like the reality, that a man must be more than a babe in Christ, and have his conscience well exercised to discern between good and evil, or else he will most inevitably be led into error. But there are very few christians in this age, who have advanced far

beyond the infancy of christianity. They are generally unable, in this respect, to discern between good and evil; and thus the adversary has gained the victory over the witnesses.

It may indeed be thought incredible, that these things should take place, at a period when the most powerful and successful exertions are making for the propagation of the gospel;—when the bible is translated into almost all languages, and sent into almost all nations; and when the christian churches are making such great and laudable exertions to send the preached gospel into all the world. But the wonder will cease, if we only consider the manner in which these exertions are directed. In the missionary operations of the present day, there is a near resemblance to the operations of powerful kingdoms, when they desire to form colonies in other parts of the world. The great object is to add to their territory and power, and if not to increase the number of their subjects, at least to strengthen their own power by new alliances. Again, it is impossible that these sectaries should establish a purer religion in any heathen country, than they have among themselves. While they propagate the gospel, they, of course, propagate their own corruptions of it; and thus the charity of mankind, and their most laudable endeavors, are turned from their proper channel, and a corrupted gospel is generally circulated through the world, instead of the true gospel of Christ. The general distribution of the sacred scriptures is, indeed, a great and important benefit, and will, in the course of a few generations, produce glorious results. But an illiterate heathen needs not only the bible, but also an exposition of its doctrines, and of the duties which it inculcates, to enable him to derive any immediate benefit from its contents. We acknowledge the necessity of this among ourselves, not only by the preaching of the gospel, in which the scriptures are read and explained every Sabbath, but by the numerous expositions of the scriptures which we have among us; and shall we say that these things are not wanted among the heathen? But the great reason why the bible is circulated without note or commentary, is confessedly, that one sect might not have the advantage of another, in circulating its particular views of gospel truth. But if we carefully examine this fact, we shall see in it a strong proof that the witnesses are slain, or at least, that they have not their proper influence among mankind. We send the bible to the heathen, without any particular testimony to the truths

it reveals,—a plain evidence that we cannot agree among ourselves as to the meaning of the bible, and that we have none among us, on whom we can rely for an exposition of its truths. It is by many thought to be a doctrine, founded on the errors of the church of Rome, that the scriptures are of little benefit, unless they are accompanied with the testimony of the church; and it is a doctrine which has been greatly abused, for the propagation of error: but it contains an important truth. I ask, what great benefit could we derive from the bible, at this moment, if we were in the circumstances of the ignorant heathen? We should at once find the necessity for some one to teach us the use of the bible, and the way in which we ought to worship the God whom it reveals. We should still find our need for the two olive trees, and the two golden candlesticks, to stand with us, when we come into the presence of God. These observations are not made with the intention of casting any reflections on bible societies. They have probably done the best they could in their circumstances: but our design is, to show that there is something wanting in these institutions, which cannot be supplied, until the witnesses shall have risen, and ascended to heaven.

It is therefore not at all incredible, that the witnesses should be slain, and their bodies lying in the street, in the very time in which we live. It is in fact the most natural occurrence which can take place in the present circumstances of the religious world:—that amidst the multiplicity of religious sentiments, and modes of worship, and of the conflicting opinions of mankind, the truth should fall in the streets; and those who endeavor to support it, should be trampled under foot. Even the charity which is so much applauded and cultivated among professors of religion, has no tendency to support the truth. It is precisely of the same kind with the charity, which the heathen nations had for each other, in the worship of their gods. They could all unite occasionally in worship, and one nation would frequently honor the gods of another nation; and thus they promoted and encouraged what they supposed to be good feelings in religion: but they found no such charity among christians in those early ages, and therefore they hated them. The witnesses have none of this charity. Although they love their fellow men, and endeavor to promote the best interests of all; yet they never show any approbation of error, that they may gain the good will of them that uphold it. This is, in fact, the great reason why they lost their influ-



ence. The charity of the world demanded a sacrifice of principle: their consciences would not suffer them to make the sacrifice; and therefore they were hated and despised by all parties in the christian church. This is now the case with every man of steady and unbending integrity in both church and state,—in politics and in religion: and therefore it is most natural that in such times as the present, the witnesses of truth should fall.

Their dead bodies are said to lie in the *street*, or as it ought to be rendered, “in the *breadth* of the great city, which spiritually, is called Sodom and Egypt,” &c. It is plain that this great city cannot mean, literally, either the city of Jerusalem, or the city of Rome. As the witnesses are scattered over the christian world; so this city must have the same dimensions. It is not a literal city, consisting of houses, and walls, and a certain kind of police: but a combination, or a number of combinations of men, for the support of a certain kind of government. In this sense, the city of Rome still possesses a direct or an indirect influence over all christendom. She has a direct influence over all the members of her own communion, in whatever part of the world they reside: and she has an indirect influence over many other churches, because they follow her example, in setting aside the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, and “changing the times and laws,” after their own will. This is the city which is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt. As Sodom was proverbial for every kind of lewdness, and Egypt was the seat of the grossest and most abominable idolatry: so these two enormous sins do, at this moment, characterize the christian world. It is full of those characters who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness. It is full of human inventions introduced into the worship of God; and this is the essence and first principle of idolatry. The Lord Jesus was literally crucified under the Roman government, and therefore within the breadth of this great city, and he has many times been spiritually crucified within its walls, and through the extent of its dominion. The dead bodies of the witnesses are therefore said to lie in the breadth of this great city; because religious truth is cast down, and trampled under foot in every part of christendom, and those who would support it, are deprived of their proper influence among mankind.

This interpretation might be corroborated if necessary by many passages of scripture. We shall at present only select two of them. The first is Isaiah, v. and 25. “There-

fore is the anger of the Lord kindled against his people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them: and the hills did tremble, and their carcasses were torn," or rather, as it ought to be rendered, "their bodies were treated like the mire of the streets." The whole of this v. chapter relates to the latter days, and especially to the period, in which God will pour out the vials of his wrath on the earth. It was fulfilled to a certain extent, in the days of Isaiah, and also in the days of the Redeemer; when it pleased the Lord to bruise him, &c. and when all the friends of truth were obliged to hide themselves from the overwhelming power of those, "who cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel." At that period the bodies of the witnesses were treated as the mire of the streets. Hence from this passage, we see the manner in which the witnesses are to be slain.

The other passage is found in Zechariah xiii, and 7. "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered; and I will turn my hand upon the little ones." This was also fulfilled in the death of Christ. Then the shepherd was smitten, the sheep were scattered; and God spread his hands over the little ones, or the lambs of his flock, and protected them during the time of desertion. But this prophecy has another accomplishment, and relates to the slaying of the witnesses in the latter days. It relates to a time when it can be said in the sense of the prophet Micah: "The good man is perished from the earth," &c. It expresses the very condition of the churches in our own times. A faithful and intelligent pastor is rarely to be found; and where there are any such characters, they are without their proper influence in the world, and generally hated, because they speak the truth. In this sense God smites the shepherd in these latter days; and the sheep are scattered. Let us look around us, and see if there are not sufficient evidences of this state of things in the present period. It generally happens, in the providence of God, that in every community and neighborhood, where as many people can be collected as will form a worshipping society, that there are as many men of honesty and integrity, of knowledge, wisdom, and experience, as shall be able to regulate the concerns of that society. God, in his wisdom and goodness, has scattered over the world, as many of such characters as necessity

requires. But there are times, and certain states of society, in which such men are cast out of influence, and bad or unsuitable characters are raised into power. So God says, "I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them. And the people shall be oppressed, every one by his neighbor. The child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honorable." This is manifestly the condition of the world, and especially the condition of the church, in the present time. Men of corrupted principles have the direction of its affairs. The young, and thoughtless, and ignorant, follow in their train, and the worship of God is corrupted with every invention which has a tendency to please and gratify the natural propensities of the heart. Thus the shepherd is smitten, and the sheep are scattered; or, in other words, the witnesses are slain, and their bodies treated as the mire in the streets.

Another proof that this prophecy is to be understood in a spiritual, and not in a literal sense, is the very unbecoming and cruel behavior of men, when they see the dead bodies of the witnesses, lying unburied. "And they of the peoples, and kindreds, and tongues, and nations, shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves." Here we see plainly that this prophecy does not relate exclusively to any particular city or nation. Peoples, and nations, and languages, are concerned in it. They all look on the dead bodies of the witnesses with a kind of triumph, and such is their animosity and hatred, that they will not suffer them to be buried. We can easily see how this may be true, in a spiritual sense, in the age in which we live; but it is obvious that it cannot literally be fulfilled in modern times, nor in any civilized nation. There are always some men to be found, who are sufficiently cruel and vindictive to perpetrate any act of wickedness, and even to find their delight in it: but the state of civilization, and refinement of manners, to which the world has advanced, would not permit that such scenes should be publicly transacted in any civilized nation. We are therefore obliged to understand the prophecy in a spiritual sense. When a good man finds himself cast out of influence, and has no longer any power of doing good among his fellow men, he would gladly seek the silent shades of retirement and obscurity, and no longer obtrude himself on those by whom he is despised and hated. But in this desire the witnesses cannot be indulged. The faithful ministers of the gospel, finding themselves no longer

useful, would wish to resign their charge. The faithful among the church officers, would wish to give up their offices, because they find no good results from their labors. Good and upright men are every where reduced to despondency. But although the men of the world are determined not to be reclaimed, they still act in such a manner as to prevent the witnesses from going entirely out of their sight. They keep them in their view, and will not suffer their bodies to be buried. Of the truth of all this, the author has had personal experience; and he believes that every faithful minister of the gospel has realized something of the same kind, in the course of his ministrations.

To the man who lives under the influence of sin, there is always something painful, and even tormenting, in the faithful disclosure of the truth. The true ministers of the gospel are, in this sense, a source of torment to multitudes. A consciousness of guilt, when the soul is deeply afflicted by it, will lead men to attend the ministrations of the gospel. But when they have deliberately chosen a course of error, and are determined not to forsake it, to have this error pointed out to them, and reprobated, is a source of torment which they cannot endure. They will, therefore, contrive some method to relieve themselves from this continual vexation; and if their conscience will not suffer them to abstain entirely from the public worship of God, they will exert themselves to obtain some preacher who will not torment them by the discovery of their sins. Such men succeed to the utmost of their wishes, when the witnesses are lying prostrate in the streets; and they testify their joy by the usual method. "They who dwell on the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwell on the earth." This phrase, "they who dwell on the earth," evidently signifies men of the world, earthly minded men of every religious persuasion. But it signifies, also, that in these latter times, this class shall be so numerous, as to compose the mass of every community. That this is true, generally, at this time, no intelligent and experienced christian can doubt for a moment. The symbol of sending gifts one to another, and making merry, is intended to exhibit the general feelings of such characters, when they have contrived to relieve themselves from the torment of hearing their errors continually exposed. It shows a state of society, where error is triumphant, and where there is none to oppose it with any prospect of success.

But this state of things continues only for a short period. The witnesses do not always lie in a dormant state. "After three days and a half, the spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood on their feet," &c. As the putting down of the witnesses is a gradual work, and requires some length of time to bring it into effect, so the rise of the witnesses must also be slow and gradual. Three years and a half, according to the usual computation of prophecy, is the time of the triumph of the enemies of truth, and then the witnesses begin to show some symptoms of returning life. Finally they rise, and stand on their feet; and then, as is very natural, their insulting enemies are filled with fear. All this must be interpreted according to the common and natural course of human affairs. The truth may be put down for a time, and the supporters of truth must fall with it: they may lie, as it were, in a dormant state, for a short period, during the reign of some error or infatuation, by which the human mind is occasionally deluded: but it is impossible they should be left in this condition for a long period. The Spirit of life, or the Holy Spirit of God, will not suffer his truth to be trampled always under foot, but will enter into his witnesses, and raise them from the dust. They will then enter on their duty with new life and vigor; and just in proportion as this is perceived by the enemies of truth, their joy will fade, they will feel the pangs of disappointment, their hearts will be discouraged and filled with fear.

But in this case, they must experience a painful and severe mortification; for God will show his approbation of the witnesses, in a manner which will not be easily mistaken. It is said, "they heard a great voice from heaven, saying unto them, come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies beheld them." We must not forget that this is a symbolical representation. Heaven is intended to represent a conspicuous and honorable station in the moral world. As they were formerly cast down, and trodden under foot, in a moral point of view, so they shall finally rise to honor and distinction among mankind. It is not said that their enemies heard this great voice from heaven. They indeed saw them rise, but they were enveloped in a cloud. They alone heard the voice, and were conscious of all the circumstances by which they ascended. There are certain indications in Providence, by which the intelligent and observing mind may easily satisfy itself, that certain events are about to come to pass. There are at this moment, in the providence of God, such indications as may convince us, and

such as really do convince the intelligent and observing part of mankind, that the time is not far distant, when all errors will be exploded, and truth and righteousness will universally prevail; and that consequently the friends of truth and righteousness will be exalted. This change, however, is not to be expected in one generation. One race of witnesses will not be sufficient to effect this moral revolution: but the triumphant march of truth, will continue from one generation to another, until the world shall be brought into subjection, and the earth filled with the knowledge of the Lord.

In this view of the subject, all things are natural and consistent. The only circumstances that can cast a shade of doubt on this explanation, is the outward appearance, or the moral aspect of the world. There is so much of the appearance of love for the gospel, and so much zeal for the propagation of it, that it is hard to believe the world is in a worse moral condition, than it was some centuries before this period. We cannot easily be brought to think, that there is now less of the influence of true religion, than there was in the dark ages of the tenth and eleventh centuries. But this difficulty will entirely vanish, when we consider that the scriptural account of the slaying of the witnesses, does not oblige us to believe the world to be in a worse moral condition than at many other periods. It is only the last result of the great system of the policy of Satan, by which he has contrived to put down a class of men, that have always been the most obnoxious to him, in the establishment of his kingdom. In former ages, when darkness covered the world, and false religion prevailed, he endeavored to put down the witnesses by raising persecution against them. He supposed that the best policy was to torment their bodies, and put them to death in the most cruel manner possible. But it was found that this kind of policy would not answer his purpose. The witnesses increased by the means he used to destroy them, and therefore in these latter days, he has merely pursued a different system of policy. It is not therefore necessary to suppose, that the world is in a worse moral condition than it has been; but that there is now less regard among mankind, for the distinguishing doctrines of christianity, than there has been at any former period. The regard for sound christian principle, and the sense of God's authority, have diminished, in their influence on the human mind; while a desire for proselyting the world to christianity, has increased. False

Charity has blinded the minds of men. They are so very desirous of having all the world converted to christianity, and so little solicitous about guarding against error, that they mistake the ostentation of religion, the cant of hypocrisy, and the ravings of fanaticism, for the still small voice of gospel truth. Those ministers, therefore, who know the scriptures, distinguish truth from error, and preach the gospel, not in the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power, must necessarily have lost their influence. Their voice, for many years, has been but little regarded. This is the way in which the arch enemy has contrived to put down the witnesses. But we see the signs of a great and important change for the better. Men of knowledge, talents, and integrity are beginning even now, to resume their proper situation. The eyes of the most intelligent class of mankind are beginning to open, and to perceive the lamentable condition of the christian church. They see that God has fulfilled his word, in taking away from Jerusalem the stay and the staff, &c.—“that children are their oppressors, and women rule over them: that they who lead them cause them to err, and destroy the way of their paths.” Hence we may confidently hope, that in no long time, there will be a great and important change, over the whole christian world: and this is the *ascension* of the witnesses to heaven.

While God conducts the affairs of the world, in his good providence he brings to pass certain events, which mark particular eras in his dispensations. These events are sometimes not very important in the eyes of men, and are therefore overlooked. The issuing of a certain decree, by Artaxerxes Longimanus to Ezra, by which he was authorized and empowered, to restore and to build Jerusalem, marks the commencement of Daniel's seventy weeks of years. Christ was crucified in the first year of the last week: and about the end of the last year, or seven years after the death of the Redeemer, Cornelius and his family were baptised. These events were no doubt esteemed of small importance, yet they mark particular eras in the providence of God, which are the subjects of prophecy, and this gives them a just claim on our attention. In this prophecy also, an event is exhibited which marks the period, when the witnesses begin to rise, from their low and degraded condition. “And the same hour, there was a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand; and the remnant were affrighted, and

gave glory to the God of heaven." The author had been for years, waiting and looking out for some dispensation of Providence, which should elucidate this prophecy, and he found it, or at least thinks he has found it, in the late revolution, which has taken place in the kingdom of Spain. It appears to answer the description, in every particular, except in the last clause of the verse, where it is said, "the remnant were affrighted," &c. But this is a circumstance, which we cannot know, unless we had been actually present when the scenes were transacted. And even in that case it would have been very difficult, unless we could have known the feelings, and witnessed the exclamations of the great body of the Spanish nation, on the sudden disappointment of their fondest and most sanguine hopes. If ever men think of their maker, and give glory to him, it is in the view of such alarming dispensations.

But let us proceed and compare the event with the prophecy. Strictly, and properly speaking, a city is a combination of men, associated for political purposes. The very words, policy and politics, are derived from a Greek word which we always render a city. It does not mean a town with walls, and a large number of houses; but the inhabitants compacted together under a certain form of government: and the centre or focus from which the laws emanate, is properly the city; while in a larger sense, it includes all who are under that particular government. It is in this sense that Rome is called "the great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth;" and is also represented by "a woman sitting on a scarlet colored beast, having seven heads and ten horns." These ten horns are ten kingdoms, or governments, which were united in the fourth century for the support of the Roman empire. "These," it is said, "have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast." Hence the city frequently means the ten kingdoms: because they form that great combination, which, for so many ages, has protected the beast and supported him in power. Spain is one of these kingdoms, and is evidently a tenth part of the city.

An earthquake is, in the language of prophecy, a moral revolution. As in the natural world, cities are frequently overturned and destroyed by earthquakes, so political revolutions, by which the established order of government is shaken and overturned, and nations thrown into confusion and consternation, are well represented by these awful phenomena. The revolution in Spain, which was effected by



an army of 100,000 men, who marched into the country from France, overturned the government, and destroyed the hopes of freedom, may well be called a great earthquake, in which the tenth part of the city fell.

By the fall of a kingdom or nation, we are not to understand the total destruction or extinction of it; but a change in its government, the destruction of its hopes, and the degradation of its character. There have been many revolutions in these latter days, many moral earthquakes; but in most of them, the nations or kingdoms who were the subjects, so far from falling, have actually risen to a greater degree of eminence than before. Even France has obtained a much higher and more illustrious standing among the nations of the earth, than she occupied before the terrible and bloody revolution, which overturned the monarchy, and erected a republic on its ruins. By the late changes which have taken place in that nation, although her character is somewhat lowered, yet she cannot be said to have fallen. But Spain has fallen, in every sense of the word. She has fallen in the estimation of the world, and she has fallen under the yoke of tyranny, both civil and religious. Not many years since, and within the recollection of the present generation, this kingdom excited the sympathy, the best wishes, and the fondest hopes, of the friends of civil and religious freedom, throughout the civilized world. The Spanish patriots were hailed as brethren, engaged in the sacred cause of liberty and the rights of man. The Spanish nation had begun to rise, in the estimation of all. They had established a free government, on the best foundation which this corrupted world can afford, the voluntary choice of the citizens. The lamentations and bitter wailings of bigotry and superstition, for the loss of their power, were drowned in the exclamations of freemen, rejoicing in the happiness and honor of their country.—But Spain deserved not to be free. She has been, for many ages, and still continues to be, the rancorous and bitter enemy of the “witnesses.” She has watered her plains with their blood. It has flowed in torrents from the guilty hands of her kings, her haughty commanders, and her bigoted populace. It cried from the ground for vengeance, and its voice was heard. Therefore the cup of joy was snatched from her hand, and blood was given her to drink. Her high and brightening prospects were covered with the midnight gloom. She stumbled and fell, and the iron hand of political and religious bigotry still holds her to the earth. There is not a gleam of hope for

this ill-fated country, until another mighty earthquake shall lay, not the tenth part only, but the whole city, in ruins. Then, "when great Babylon shall come in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath; when every island shall have fled away, and the mountains shall not be found," Spain shall be regenerated like the other kingdoms of the earth.

Another proof, which shows still more particularly, that this event was intended by the prophecy, is the destruction of all the characters, who, by their virtues, were entitled to honor and estimation. The literal translation of the middle clause of the 13th verse is: "And in the earthquake were slain, names of men, seven thousand." The phrase, names of men, means men of name,—men of character and reputation. It would be easy to quote other places in scripture, to show that this is the meaning of the phrase; but we presume it is unnecessary. As this country has attained an inglorious celebrity, by shedding the best and noblest blood that ever flowed through the veins of men, the blood of the martyrs; so her best and noblest blood has been poured out, in this moral earthquake: her patriots are gone, "her honorable men are famished" and destroyed; and she has none left, but a base and corrupted herd of slaves, that are fit only for dragging the chariot of the despot.

In order to see the full force of the truth which is here presented, we must keep our minds fixed on the emblem. A large and populous city was present to the mind of the apostle. Then, a great earthquake shook the tenth part of it, with a terrible concussion; the houses tumbled down; and in their fall crushed to death seven thousand of the most respectable and honorable of the inhabitants. Hence we see, that the number seven thousand, is not to be literally interpreted, any more than the other parts of the vision. By the tenth part of the city, a kingdom is meant; and by the fall of the houses, and the destruction of a large number of the best of the citizens, we are to understand such a fall as is consistent with the nature of a kingdom: namely, a terrible revolution, and an overturning of its government: by which a very large number of the best and most honorable characters, are killed and overthrown, dispersed and put down. As the houses are thus left in ruins, and the owners of them destroyed, there is no ground of hope that this part of the city will soon be rebuilt, and recover its ancient splendor. Every one must see how exactly this description suits the present condition of the kingdom of Spain. It is

precisely in the condition of a city, the houses of which have crumbled down, by the violent concussion of an earthquake; the men on whom any dependence could be placed for repairing the ruins, are all gone; scarcely one of them is left; and therefore this part of the city must continue for a long time in the same ruinous condition.

If the inhabitants of this ill-fated land are not besotted in ignorance beyond all example, they must feel that they are cast into their present degraded condition by the righteous judgments of God. The best men of the nation have labored, for many years, to build up a free government. They have made frequent efforts for this purpose formerly, and every effort met with some disappointment; this last exertion had every prospect of being crowned with success: but the fond and sanguine hope has been suddenly crushed, as by an earthquake. This last terrible disappointment must have been viewed by all reflecting men, with astonishment and consternation. The "red right hand" of the divine vengeance must have appeared as plain as the streams of lightning in the heavens; they must have been affrighted, and for a moment at least, they must have given glory to God. There is nothing in this declaration which ought to suggest the unwarrantable, and most improbable conjecture, that the remainder of the inhabitants of this tenth part of the city, who did not perish in the earthquake, should immediately become true christians, and give glory to God, by living according to the gospel. There is no such idea as this, either expressed or implied in the prophecy. It is merely the consternation which would naturally seize on the mind, at the view of such a terrible calamity, by the evident hand of God. In such a situation, the most hardened in wickedness, would be compelled to give glory to the God of heaven.

It is chiefly by the exact agreement of the event with the description given in the prophecy, that the truth of the interpretation is to be tested. It is not denied, that a small degree of ingenuity, united with a fertile imagination, a weak head, and a strong bias of the mind in favor of its own offspring, may lead, and frequently has led expositors of prophecy to give a false coloring to events; and they have appeared to them to agree exactly with some particular prophecy, while at the same time, other events, which take place in another part of the world, and at a different period entirely, are the real subjects described in the prophecy. But although many have erred in this way, we ought not to

conclude that all expositions of prophecy are erroneous. This event must take place, in some one of the ten kingdoms, which have given their power and strength to the beast; and therefore this kingdom must be found in the western division of the ancient Roman empire: but none of those kingdoms have, as yet, fallen by a great earthquake; so as to answer the description given in the prophecy, unless it can be applied to the late terrible disaster which has befallen the Spanish nation. The prophecy must be applied to this event, or it must be confessed, that it has not yet been accomplished. Hence it becomes necessary for us to inquire whether, or not, this is the time in which the accomplishment ought to be expected. On this part of the subject, it is possible we may not be able, in this place, to give full satisfaction; but our arguments will be corroborated in every succeeding dissertation, to the end of the book.

The period of the reign of antichrist, and that in which the witnesses prophesy in sackcloth, are each of them, 1260 years; but we are not told that these periods exactly coincide either in their commencement or their termination. On the contrary, we may infer from the prophecy, that the reign of the beast is extended beyond that period, in which the witnesses prophesy in sackcloth; for it is said that when they shall have finished, or concluded, or terminated their prophecy, or their period of prophesying in sackcloth, the beast shall make war against them, and overcome them, and kill them. The beast, therefore, continues in great power, at the time when the witnesses are slain. Hence the period of his reign must extend beyond the period of the witnesses' prophesying in sackcloth. But as the two periods are of the same length, and as the one extends beyond the other, therefore the witnesses must have begun to prophesy in sackcloth, some time before the beast received the dominion. It is impossible for us to know, from any particular era marked in the prophecies, or in the history of the times, the precise period when Antichrist arose, or when the witnesses began to prophesy. Most commentators have, indeed, dated the former in the year 606, when Phocas, the Roman emperor, is said to have issued a decree declaring the Pope of Rome the supreme arbiter, the superintendent and universal bishop of the christian churches. There is strong presumption that such a decree was really issued by this emperor; but still this fact, however well it may be authenticated, will not prove that this was the commencement of the reign of the beast. We know from the character of Phocas,—one of

the most worthless and abandoned profligates and tyrants, that ever disgraced the Roman sceptre, and who obtained it by usurpation, that his object in issuing this decree, was to make the Pope his friend; and by this means to establish himself in power. There was, at that time, a violent contest between the Pope of Rome and the Bishop of Constantinople, which of them should be the universal governor of the church: it is very certain that Phocas would decide in favor of the one who was the most powerful, and the most likely to promote his interests; and therefore from this, and many other circumstances in the history of that period, we may infer that Antichrist did actually and virtually reign, at the time when this decree was issued. The Pope then, had much more power than he possesses at the present time. His rising into power, was a gradual and almost imperceptible work, and the exact period of his rise is not to be learned, from any particular event which took place in those days. But we have seen in the prophecy, that the power of the beast is to be overturned, and the sanctuary cleansed, at the end of 2400 years from the rise of the Medo-Persian empire. We have seen, also, that this empire arose in the year 550 before the christian era; and that consequently, we may expect the fall of the beast, or the antichristian power, which pollutes the sanctuary, about the year 1850; as at that time the 2400 years will be accomplished: then deducting 1260 years, it will take us back to the year 590, for the commencement of his reign. This is only 16 years prior to the decree of Phocas. If, indeed, we had an impartial history of those times, we should be able to form some judgment from the facts; but it would probably be found, even from these, that the beast came into power about the year 590, and that in the reign of Phocas, men agreed to form an image of the beast, and give life to that image; so that he might inflict punishment on those that would not worship him.

Here, indeed, we are met by a specious objection; for this year 590, was the time, when Gregory first entered on the popedom. Can it be thought, that the pious Gregory, whose whole life was one continued series of mortification of all the passions which corrupt the heart, and of the practice of the virtues which adorn the human character; that such a man could stand at the head of the church, which then became the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth? We are not disposed to contradict what has been spoken in praise of the piety and zeal of Gregory. We believe he

had a large portion of charity. He used his utmost efforts in behalf of the poor, many of whom at that time were perishing for want of the necessaries of life. He had a great degree of love for the souls of men, and he used his utmost efforts to send the gospel over the world: and yet none of all the bishops of Rome ever made more rapid strides towards unlimited power than Gregory. We cannot tell whether ambition was his ruling passion or not; but we have every reason to believe that he acted as if his judgment was infallible, and as if God had made him the supreme arbiter in the church. He burdened the church with a thousand rites and ceremonies, altogether of his own invention. He taught the worship of the saints, and of the dead bodies and relics of the martyrs. In short, Gregory made more innovations in the worship of God, and usurped more of the prerogatives of the Lord Jesus Christ, than any of the Popes that were before him. The reign of Gregory may be said to be the period, when the sovereign pontiff claimed and exercised arbitrary power, in the church of God. We do not say, nor even insinuate, that Gregory gave wrong decisions, or that in any respect he acted the tyrant; but he laid the foundation for tyranny and superstition, to reign with unbounded sway throughout the christian world. But we shall not now dwell on this subject, as it will come more properly before us, in our observations on the xiii. chapter. We think it is abundantly plain, even from such histories as we have, that the sixth century exhibits both the spirit, and the power of antichristian domination in the church of Rome.

But as the witnesses are prophets, and of course men of discernment, who are able to form a right estimation of principles and practices;—men who are well acquainted with the prophecies of scripture, and who, by standing on this lofty eminence, are well qualified to be watchmen on the walls of Zion, it is not to be supposed, that their eyes could be shut, or their tongues sealed up in silence, when an inundation of errors and wickedness was likely to overwhelm the church of God. They no doubt saw, and testified against, the man of sin, long before he entered and took his seat in the temple. In this way we account for the rising of the witnesses, when they began to prophesy in sackcloth. They saw the beast rising into power, and testified against him. But as each of these opposing parties, the witnesses and the beast, has power to remain in their station for 1260 years; so we see how the beast can be said to retain his power after the witnesses are slain, and the dead bodies

lying in the streets. Hence we shall determine the period of the rise of the witnesses, in the same manner as we have determined the rise of the beast. In the summer or autumn of the year 1823, the French army marched into Spain, and then the earthquake commenced, in which the tenth part of the city fell. The witnesses had then been lying in the streets for three years and a half; and therefore they were slain in the beginning of the year 1820: let 1260 be deducted from this, and 560 remains, for the time when the witnesses began to prophesy in sackcloth, and when the beast began to rise and make his appearance among mankind: 30 years after this, or in the year 590, he came into power; and of course, the witnesses had then been prophesying against him for 30 years, and their testimony is finished 30 years before his fall. In this way, the difficulty in the xii. of Daniel is entirely removed, and we see how it can be true, that the beast reigns for 1260, and how the sanctuary can be defiled for 1290 years. The witnesses, therefore, have begun to rise, and stand on their feet, since the year 1824. It is not, indeed, to be expected, that their rise could be actually perceived, in the short period which has yet elapsed; but the time is fast approaching, when they shall arrive at their proper degree of influence; and then the beast shall cease to reign, and the sanctuary shall be cleansed.

The candid reader will observe, that in this exposition, the mind has no room to expatiate in the regions of fancy. It is all matter of calculation, and this from data, which are fixed by the best authenticated chronology. It is assumed, that in the latter days, we ought to expect the fall and the rise of the witnesses; and for this assumption no proof is needed, because it is plainly asserted in the word of God. We have seen, that an event has happened in our own times, which answers exactly to the description given in the prophecy; and this marks the period of their fall and of their rise. It shows us, also, when they began to prophesy in sackcloth; and all this is corroborated by the prophecies of Daniel. These calculations arise from two sources, which are entirely independent of each other; and yet both of them agree to the utmost exactness.

The fall of the tenth part of the city, marks the termination of the sixth trumpet. This wo, which began with the first incursions of the Turks into christendom, has continued more than 450 years. But the Turks are now a falling power. They shall never more torment the christian world

with their conquests, and the propagation of a false religion; but another wo is sounded, still more dreadful than any that have preceded it; and it shall also be quicker in its execution. "The second wo is past: behold the third wo cometh quickly." There are many terrible scenes to be realized, many great and tremendous judgments to be executed; but the things contained in it shall rapidly succeed one another, and the whole shall soon come to a close. From the commencement of this wo, to the commencement of the millenium, is not quite eighty years: but there are more wonderful works to be transacted within this short period, than have come to pass for many ages before. We are to look for the rapid advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom, and a horrible series of temporal and spiritual curses on his enemies, which shall gradually deprive them of all comfort in this world, and eventuate in their eternal misery. We have merely a sketch or intimation of these things, in the latter part of this chapter, but they are circumstantially described in the remaining part of the book. When the seventh angel sounded, the apostle heard 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 forever and ever." Then the four and twenty elders fell on their faces and worshipped God, saying, "we give thee thanks, &c. because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned." This trumpet is sounded immediately after the falling of the tenth part of the city, when the witnesses are beginning to rise. The other circumstances, of their standing on their feet, and ascending to heaven, are brought in for the sake of the connexion; but they are not realized for many years afterwards. The resurrection and ascension of the witnesses are, from their nature, plainly a gradual work, and cannot come to pass, but in a series of years or ages after the sounding of the seventh angel: but in the vision, all appeared to be the transactions of a few minutes. The earthquake, and the sounding of the seventh angel, are, therefore, connected immediately with the spirit of life entering into the witnesses. Hence the church in heaven must here be meant by the four and twenty elders; for we see by the circumstances, that the church on the earth is to be at that time in ignorance and darkness. It was known to the church in heaven, that when the seventh angel should sound, the Lord Jesus Christ would begin to bring the world into subjection to him; and therefore, no sooner had the angel sounded, than all heaven burst forth into a joyful exclamation, saying,



“the kingdoms of this world,” &c. It ought not to have been rendered the kingdoms of *this* world; as the word *this* is not in the original, and the speakers are in heaven; but the kingdoms of *the* world, as it is designed to show us the intense interest which the inhabitants of heaven take in the affairs of this earth.

There is here a kind of antithesis, which ought not to escape observation. The kingdoms, or the governments established in the different nations, have been, for 1260 years, subjected to the beast, and subservient to his will. The ten kings who govern the Roman empire, and have combined their powers for the support of Antichrist, are not very different, in this respect, from the other governments. Whatever professions they make, or whatever forms of government they establish, their power is exerted in opposition to the true interests of the gospel. The lust of power has taken such deep root in the human heart, that, in general, when men are placed in authority, either in church or state, it is used for the promotion of their own selfish designs. Hence, in every government, where religion is established by law, it is made an engine for the support of the civil power, in its tyranny and oppression. In vain have the witnesses, in all these times, contended for the rights and prerogatives of the Lord Jesus Christ, against the abuses of the civil power, in every government under which they lived: in no country have they been able to effect any essential or permanent change. Wherever religion has acquired any authority or influence, it has always been in some way corrupted, and the leaven of Antichrist has destroyed its purity. But these abuses have been tolerated, in the righteous government of God, for the promotion of his high and holy purposes. It is said, concerning the ten kingdoms of the Roman empire, “that God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.” The same things are true, to a certain extent, among all the governments of the world. They are all actuated by the same spirit. There is certainly a smaller degree of it in the land in which it has pleased God to cast our lot, than in many other nations: but still every one who has eyes to see, and ears to hear, must know that, in general, the officers of our government, from the highest to the lowest, are actuated by selfish motives, and whenever it is convenient, they make no scruple to use religion as an engine, to raise them into power, and to promote whatever

designs they may have in view. But in the governments of Europe, and especially in the ten kingdoms of the Roman empire, the religious establishments are utterly opposed to the spirit of the gospel; and although some of them have separated themselves from the communion of the church of Rome, they have nevertheless established an antichristian system among themselves; so that they may still be said to agree, and to give their kingdom to the beast.

In the reign of the Redeemer, a gradual, but important and permanent change, will be effected, in all the governments of the world. Those that are established in opposition to his kingdom, will be overturned from the foundation; and those which are not radically defective, will be purified from corruption, in principle and in practice. Then "the lofty mountains shall bring forth peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness."

The sounding of the seventh trumpet is, therefore, a most interesting period in the providence of God. Christ then emphatically receives the kingdom, and restores it to Israel. When he first rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven, all power was given to him in the heavens and the earth. With this warrant in his hand, he commissioned the apostles, and the ministers of his gospel, and sent them forth to make disciples of all nations: but it was necessary, in order to accomplish the high and holy purposes of God, that a power, in opposition to the true gospel, should be suffered to reign in the world for 1260 years; and that, during this period, an antichristian system should be established among all nations. This is the mystery of iniquity which had begun to work, even in the days of Paul, and which, in the course of a few centuries after those days, acquired a permanent establishment in the Roman empire: then it continued to extend its roots and its branches over the world; so that, like the great tree which represented the mighty monarch of the Chaldeans, the top of it reached to heaven, and the sight thereof to the ends of the earth. All the beasts of the field had their shelter under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof. But at the sounding of this trumpet, it was ordered that the tree should be cut down, the branches severed from the trunk, the leaves shaken off, and the fruit scattered; that the beasts might get away from under it, and the fowls from its branches: or, by another illustration, and one still more applicable, that the stone which was cut out of the mountain without hands, should smite the image upon his feet, which were of iron and clay, and break them

to pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, shall be broken in pieces together, and become like the chaff of the summer threshing floor, and the wind shall carry them away; so that no place shall be found for them: and the stone that smote the image shall become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth.

The first subject to which the attention is called, in this latter dispensation, is the terrible works of righteousness, by which God will answer the prayers of his people. This subject seems to have engrossed the attention of the elders, so soon as they had realized the truth, that the Almighty had taken to himself his great power, for the establishment of his kingdom. "The nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged; and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants, the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, both small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth." The anger of the nations is contrasted with the wrath of God. It is evident, that the chief of the calamities which have afflicted the human family for many ages, have originated from themselves. The pains and troubles which they endure, are not so much the penalty annexed to their crimes, as the natural consequences of their sins. "Whence arise wars and fightings among you? Come they not of your lusts, which war in your members?" The calamities of war are naturally succeeded by the famine and the pestilence. A bad course of policy in a government, arising from the pride and ambition of the ruling powers, frequently involves nations in terrible calamities. The selfish disposition of men frequently leads them to make aggressions on the rights of others. Wrath is engendered in the hearts of both parties. They come into collision and strife; and thus quarrels and wars are generated, and misery created, in every department of life. But there is a great difference between the natural miseries, which, in the common course of Providence, are generally connected with crime, and the pains and penalties which are attached to it by the law. There is a difference between a judicial punishment, and the natural evils which result from the indulgence of lust. The anger of the nations has indeed brought many evils on the world; but the judgments of the latter days shall more resemble the final judgment, which shall seal up the wicked in eternal wo. It is therefore called the time of the dead that they should be judged. The last judgment does not take place at the sounding of the seventh trumpet. The

subjects of this judgment are not those who are naturally, but spiritually dead,—dead in trespasses and sins; but never to be quickened by the spirit of God,—never to have any christian life implanted in their hearts. On the contrary, they are to suffer the terrible judgments of God in this world, and afterwards be the subjects of his wrath forever. They are vessels of wrath fitted for destruction; for they are the characters who destroy the earth. God will therefore destroy them from the earth, by a series of spiritual and temporal judgments. This truth is every where presented to us in the word of God. In the latter days, when the Redeemer comes to establish his kingdom, “fire shall rage before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among the heathen. He shall fill the places with dead bodies. He shall wound the head over many countries,” &c., &c.

But in the mean time, his faithful servants shall receive their reward. He will give a reward unto his servants the prophets, &c. By the prophets are meant the faithful ministers of the gospel: but the least, as well as the greatest of the saints, shall be acknowledged, and shall enjoy the manifestations of his favor, while these terrible judgments shall be abroad in the earth. It is recorded in authentic history, that when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, no christian lost his life; for they attended to the words of their Lord, and a way of escape was opened for them. In this book of Revelation, and in other places of scripture, the people of God are warned to come out of Babylon. These warnings shall operate on the minds of all true christians, and they shall separate themselves from the errors and defilements of the churches around them; and God will provide for them a way of escape from his judgments. Then, as from a place of perfect safety, they shall contemplate and admire his wonderful works.

After the representatives of the church had offered up this effusion of praise and thanksgiving to God, for mercy and for judgment, “the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testimony; and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.” By the temple of God in heaven, is meant the church of God, in a state of honor and influence, in the world. The judgments which God shall execute after the sounding of the seventh trumpet, will exalt the witnesses, will cleanse the sanctuary, and prepare it

for the reception of all who desire to worship God in spirit and in truth. The circumstance of the ark of God's testimony being seen in his temple, shows us, that during the reign of the beast, the testimony of God, in the churches, has generally been kept out of view. This is indeed a fact, sufficiently obvious to all who are in the habit of bearing testimony to the truth. But when God begins to cleanse his sanctuary,—when the images and altars of human invention shall be broken to pieces, and taken out of the way, then the ark of God's testimony shall appear; and, like the book of the law, which was found in the house of God, in the days of Josiah, it shall be viewed with astonishment and terror. The christian world shall then begin to have some correct views of the holy nature and majesty of God. It is an important, and, in the end, it will appear to be a tremendous truth, that the book of God's law, and even the ark of his testimony, which contains that law, have been lost, or cast out of sight, amidst the idolatrous lumber which the inventions of ages have brought into the sanctuary of God. The church of Rome first set the example, and she has been sedulously followed, by all churches that have wished to rise to honor and popular favor. But they will not see nor attend to this truth, until the wrath of God shall come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged;—until a series of terrible judgments shall be inflicted on the destroyers of the earth. Then they shall be alarmed, as in the days of Josiah, and shall begin to cleanse the sanctuary from pollution; and then the ark of God's testimony shall appear. But this shall be only the beginning of sorrows, to the corrupted and idolatrous world. There are many judgments to follow the cleansing of the sanctuary. They shall not cease for nearly half a century afterwards. Hence, when the ark was seen, there were “voices, and lightnings, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail.”

These tokens of God's displeasure are all explained in the latter part of the Revelation. As this chapter contains what was written in the little book which was open in the angel's hand, and we here find them condensed, and within a small compass; so they are opened and expanded in the chapters which follow, that every thing may be clear to the eyes of him that has understanding. Hence we may see the meaning of the declaration of the angel to the apostle: “Thou must prophesy again, before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.”

## PART II. DISSERTATION IV.

### ON THE XII. OF THE REVELATION.

THE obscurity which is supposed to rest on this chapter, arises, partly, from an expectation that this book is like other histories, which generally exhibit a continued series of events, in the order of time; and partly from not knowing what period to fix on, as the time when the events here described ought to take place. In this method of communicating knowledge, by symbols or emblematic representations, it is not intended, that every thing should be fully understood, until most of the events have come to pass. Prophecy must still be like a light shining in a dark place, until the whole of it is accomplished. But when it is partly accomplished, and we are able to see some of the truths contained in it, and know some of the events, by comparing the representation given in the prophecy, with the facts which have become matter of history, we advance in the attainment of the knowledge, which makes wise unto salvation, and are enabled to see more and more clearly, the things that belong to our peace. In this way of communicating knowledge, it is neither necessary nor possible, to present a continued chain of description, in the same manner as facts are recorded in history. If we have read and studied the history of the world; and especially, if we have paid particular attention to the condition of the church of God, through the ages past, we shall be able to see many events represented in the prophecy, the history of which we have read: and from the knowledge of these events, and of the place which they occupy in the great chain of scripture history, the mystery of God will be developed to our minds, and we shall see how the affairs of the world are conducted, so as to accomplish his purposes. This chapter gives us a concise, but conspicuous, view of the condition of the true church of God in the world, from the days of the apostle, until the fall of pagan superstition. It describes the sufferings which the christians endured from the ruling power, before protection was afforded to them, and christianity established by law. It shows the prosperity, which the church enjoyed, for a short period; and then her precipitate retreat into the wilderness, where she is obliged to remain in obscurity for 1260 years.

This prophecy limits itself to the early ages of the church. The very mention of the retreat of the woman into the wilderness, to the place provided for her, in which she is nourished, for a time, times, and half a time, from the fall of the serpent, is quite sufficient to prove, that the prophecy relates to times prior to the rise of Antichrist; and therefore must be intended to represent the condition of the church in those times. We see how the church conquered, and triumphed over this persecuting power, how the serpent fell, by the very means he had devised to destroy the church, his various attempts after his fall, to prevent the influence of christianity among mankind; all of which were rendered abortive, when the true servants of God relinquished all desires after the honors of the world, and descended to the obscure and unfashionable retreats of life.

“There appeared,” says the apostle, “a great wonder, or sign in the heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon was under her feet, and on her head there was a crown of twelve stars.” The visible heaven, or the firmament, where the sun, moon, and stars appear, is the place where these things were transacted. We must observe, that the ancients had very different ideas of astronomy, from the moderns. In the days of the apostle the philosophy of Aristotle was generally received. This system represents the earth as a plain, extending in all directions, and the heavens, or what is called the sky, as a solid substance like glass or chrysal. It supposed the sun, moon, and stars, to be placed in the firmament, and carried round the earth. The scriptures are not intended to teach us philosophy or astronomy; and therefore when any reference is made to these things, the language which was best understood in that time, is always used as the medium of the communication. Thus Joshua addressed the sun and moon, and commanded them to stand still, the former over Gibeon, and the latter over the valley of Aijalon. It is said, indeed, that Joshua spake to the Lord in the first place. He obtained permission to give the command; but he addressed the sun and moon, as if they had in themselves the power of motion, and consequently of stopping that motion. They were objects of worship by the heathen; because they thought them to be endowed with life and power. They supposed also that the heavens and the earth, are at such a small distance from each other, that one might fall from heaven to earth, and life not be destroyed by the fall. The conceptions of mankind on this subject, and especially the concep-

tions of John himself, seem to have been consulted in the formation of the symbols: and therefore, these things ought always to be kept in mind, in every exposition of the prophecy. It is not very important whether we suppose the apostle to have been caught up to heaven, or standing on the earth, and looking up to heaven. We know he was placed in some situation, where he had a full view of the transactions: and the first object which struck his attention, was a woman, arrayed in all the brightness and splendor of the sun, the moon was beneath her feet, while twelve of the stars appeared to encircle her head, in the form of a crown or garland. Heaven is intended to represent a conspicuous situation in the moral world. It supposes a high degree of honor and moral elevation. By this woman is meant the church of God, in the times, or soon after the times, of the apostles; and as she was raised to this exaltation by their instrumentality, so they are represented as stars in her crown. She is adorned with the sun as with a garment, and has the moon beneath her feet; to show the superior excellence of the present dispensation, above the borrowed excellence of the former: for as the moon receives her light from the sun, and reflects it on the earth; so the former dispensation of the gospel, received all its lustre and glory from the heavenly things, which have since appeared in their true nature and character. Hence when the church is adorned with these things, the former things are of course put under her feet. Although they were glorious in their time, as the moon in the night, when she appears walking in brightness, is a glorious object; but when the sun appears, she has no glory by reason of the glory that excelleth; so the former dispensation has lost its glory, by reason of the glorious exhibitions of divine truth, which now shed their lustre on the church of God.

By the labors and diligent superintendence of the apostles, and the succeeding ministers who followed their example, she rose to a high degree of respectability and honor. Christianity was not then degraded by the ungodly lives of its professors. It appeared in every thing to be a heavenly religion; and as much superior to all the heathen superstitions, as heaven is above the earth. The well-meaning and well-disposed part of mankind, in every place where christianity was planted, saw and admired its holy and heavenly fruits: and the gospel was rapidly spread over the world. Hence the woman is represented as pregnant, and ready to bring forth a child. She appeared to the apostle, as in la-



bor, cried out in her pains, and was in torment to be delivered. The propagation of the gospel is in itself a pleasing work; but still there is great labor and pain to be endured by the church, while she is bringing forth her children. When christianity was new in the world, it was treated by the men of the world like every other novelty. It excited their attention for the moment, and they no doubt supposed that like other novel doctrines, it would at length fall into neglect and be forgotten. But when they saw the effects it produced, and was likely to produce among mankind, it encouraged or suffered to grow; that their temples would be deserted, the sacrifices neglected, and the altars fall to ruins; they soon began to "set themselves, and to combine" against it: and the followers of Christ were hated and persecuted generally by the heathen world. Thus the church of God in those times, brought forth her offspring with great labor and pains.

At length the powers that ruled the Roman empire, began to be alarmed. The heathen magistrates, from the highest to the lowest, exerted themselves to prevent the spreading, of what was thought to be "a nefarious superstition." Edict after edict was published against the christians by the Roman emperors; and their whole authority was exerted to put down the rising church of Christ. This was represented to the apostle, by a great red dragon appearing also in the heavens. The dragon is a large kind of serpent, and derives its name from the acuteness of its sight. We know, from the information of the most intelligent travellers, that serpents of this kind frequently grow to an enormous size in the sultry climates of the east; and that the symbol is admirably calculated to express the skill, and cunning, and enormous power, which were exerted by the persecutors of the church in those days. But it is especially intended to represent the great adversary of God and man, who is called the Old Serpent, the Devil, and Satan, and by whom every persecutor has always been actuated. This great red dragon, had seven heads and ten horns. The object of this representation is to designate the part of the world, where this persecuting power had its chief residence. The seven heads are designed to represent the seven hills, which are well known to exist in the site of the city of Rome; and also the seven forms of government which, from time to time, have existed in the Roman empire. In the commencement, or origin, of this empire, it was governed like other nations, by chiefs, possessing arbitrary power,

to whom they gave the title of *kings*: but for the abuse of this power, the kingly government was at length overturned, and a republic was instituted, with two persons at the head of it, who were called *consuls*. But in times of emergency, when it became necessary to bring the whole power of the nation immediately into action, they were obliged to resort to the despotic principle, and create a *dictator*, who was, for the time, possessed of absolute authority. At one period, through the influence of power and corruption, ten men raised themselves to the head of the empire, and continued to rule for a short period:—This is called the reign of the *decemviri*. Afterwards there was another form of government erected, by the tribunes or chiefs of the army. This is called the government of the *military tribunes*. Then the *emperors* succeeded, and finally the *Pope*, or the spiritual power which now exists in that city, and still governs a large portion of the christian world.

This remarkable nation cannot be celebrated for its high antiquity. Rome is said to have been built, and the empire founded by Romulus the first king, about 753 years before the christian era. The Romans are a mixture of many nations, and not like the Chaldeans, the Medes and Persians, or the Grecians, descended from one original stock. Therefore they are represented in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, by the feet and toes of the image, which are said to be “part of iron and part of clay.” It is said also that they should mingle themselves with the seed of men, and hence the Romans admitted many other nations, besides their own people, to the privileges of Roman citizens: The Roman empire is therefore not one nation, but a number of nations combined for the support of one establishment; and the seeds of this combination were in it from its earliest origin. This dragon had therefore ten horns, which are designed to represent a multiplicity of powers, combined for the support of the empire, and particularly the ten kingdoms, which in latter ages united in support of the beast. These appeared in the heads of the dragon; but the crowns were on his heads, and not on the horns; and hence we see plainly, that the dragon represents pagan, and not papal Rome.

The apostle observed that “his tail drew the third part of the stars of the heaven, and cast them to the earth.” The power of the Roman government in those days of persecution, is well known to have been exerted, chiefly against the ministers of the gospel, and all who held any kind of authority, or stood in any manner conspicuous in the church.

Their great object was to put down the rising sect, which was spreading itself every where through the empire; and they pursued that kind of policy which was best calculated to effect their purpose. As an army without officers and commanders can be easily dispersed; so the church, without her spiritual guides, could never attain to any honor or influence among mankind. Hence in every period of persecution, those who occupied any conspicuous station in the church, were the first objects of vengeance. Every kind of temptation was tried in the first place to seduce them from their duty; and if this did not succeed they were either banished, or put to a cruel death. Thus the dragon drew with his tail the third part of the stars, and cast them down on the earth.

The Romans in those ages, were the best and wisest of politicians; and they foresaw from the rising influence of christianity, what did actually take place afterwards; that, if this new religion was suffered to grow, and spread itself over the empire, not only the worship of the gods must cease: but the whole machinery of the government must be stopped. Religion and politics, or the civil and ecclesiastical power, were so intimately connected in the ancient Roman empire, that one could not stand without the other. The great object therefore, was to prevent the increase of christianity; and as Pharaoh, king of Egypt, dreading the future power of the Hebrews, gave orders that the male children, as soon as they were born, should be cast into the river; so the dragon stood before the woman, who was about to be delivered, that he might devour her child as soon as it was born.

But the wisest policy of man turns out to be mere folly, when it comes in competition with the designs of God. Notwithstanding all his watching and careful attention, the woman "brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron." The offspring of the church, in that age, instead of being prevented from coming into the world, or of being weak and debilitated, like puny and unhealthy children, whose mothers have been sickly during their pregnancy, was strong, and vigorous, and healthy; and therefore it is represented by a man child. It was not an effeminate, pusillanimous kind of christianity, such as we have in our times, which existed in the world in those early ages. The offspring of the churches which were planted by the apostles, continued, for some ages, to bear the character of those by whom the churches were planted.

The ministers were men of apostolic character. They refused no sufferings. They regarded no hardships or pains. Like Paul, they counted not their lives of any great value, that they might finish their course with joy, and the ministry which was committed to their trust. Hence the ministry of those times is represented by the first of the living creatures, whom the apostle beheld near the throne of God, and who had the face of a lion. It is represented, also, in the first seal, by "one sitting on a white horse, armed with a bow; and a sword was given to him, and he went forth, conquering and to conquer." The churches of those days had much of the same spirit which their teachers possessed. They were not discouraged from the performance of their duty, by the fear of persecution. They would not be seduced by flattery, nor the prospect of honors and advantages in the world. They endured every evil with patience and fortitude. They despised the arts and allurements of the enemy; and thus they showed themselves worthy to be advanced to honor.

This man child does not signify any particular individual among the christians of those times. Some respectable commentators have indeed supposed, that by this man child, Constantine the great is particularly pointed out, and that, by the same rule of interpretation, the dragon means Galerius, one of the emperors, who most bitterly persecuted the christians. But symbolical representations seldom, if ever, relate exclusively to individuals. The Lord Jesus Christ, and, indeed, each of the persons in the Godhead, are frequently represented by symbols; but a human being is not considered as of so much importance and dignity, as to be made the exclusive subject of such a representation. When Daniel says to Nebuchadnezzar, in the interpretation of his dream concerning the golden image, "thou art this head of gold," he does not mean that this monarch was personally and exclusively represented by that symbol; but the government or dynasty, which commenced before his time, and continued after him. This truth, that symbols are used in the prophecies, not to represent individuals, but public bodies of men, associated and combined for certain purposes, ought constantly to be kept in view, by every expositor of prophecy. The private life of Constantine, and particularly his murderous policy in the latter part of it, together with his refusal to receive the ordinance of baptism until he lay on his death bed, show, in no very dubious manner, that although he was an instrument, in the

hand of God, for effecting a great work in favor of his church, yet he had little knowledge of the gospel, and what he did know of it produced no saving effects on his heart. But there was a large body of true christians, who, in those ages, supported the christian name, by their actions and sufferings in the cause; and therefore, they are well represented by a man child, who should rule the nations, and who was finally caught up to God and to his throne.

Such christian characters as those who lived from the days of the apostles to the days of Constantine, are the same class of characters whom God shall raise up in these latter days, to support his cause, and raise it to honor and exaltation. What we are to understand, by ruling the nations, &c., was faintly represented in the days of Constantine. The christians had truly a great degree of power in the affairs of the empire. The child, in this sense, may be said have been caught up to God and to his throne, and to have ruled all nations with a rod of iron. But this part of the prophecy has been only figuratively and typically fulfilled. It is to be accomplished in the highest and most glorious sense in the latter days. The Redeemer now says to us, for our encouragement, as he said to the church in Thyatira, "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, I will give him authority over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, and as a potter's vessel they shall be broken to shivers; even as I have received of my father."

The times of Constantine, and of the emperors who succeeded him, were, perhaps, more unfavorable to the growth of vital christianity, than the times of bitter and bloody persecution. The church is generally more corrupted by prosperity than adversity. In the former condition, there are always great numbers brought into it, while in the latter, the corrupted members are cut off. But the time has not yet arrived, when vital christianity can flourish in the sunshine of worldly splendor. No sooner did the church arrive at this condition, than she began to be corrupted; and it became necessary for the faithful followers of the Redeemer, who are properly the true church, to descend from that high station in the world, and retreat into the wilderness. The circumstances of the church in those times, are described in the second chapter of Hosea, where the church is represented by a woman who had been unfaithful to the marriage vow, but who was afterwards deserted by her lovers, and left in want and wretchedness. Amidst all outward splendor, and the show of prosperity, true chris-

tianity was then in a state of starvation. Hence God says, "Behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her: and I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope; and she shall sing there as in the days of her youth," &c. In the days of Constantine and his successors, the mass of professing christians departed from the simplicity of the gospel, and true christians found it necessary to retire into obscurity, that they might enjoy the pure and spiritual worship of God.

Another representation here calls us to consider, more particularly, the state of the church in that interesting age. The apostle beheld two armies in the heavens: one of them under the conduct of Michael, the great prince, who is spoken of in the xii. of Daniel, and the other under the conduct of the dragon. Each of them appeared to be followed by a numerous army of angels. "There was war in heaven. Michael and his angels warred against the dragon, and the dragon warred and his angels." This symbol is here used to describe the long and protracted contest, which continued from the days of the apostle until the days of Constantine, between the saints and the persecuting power of pagan Rome. It may, perhaps, be true, as has been conjectured, that this representation is taken from a real fact, which once did take place in heaven, when Satan and his angels were expelled.

There are some traditionary revelations, which were known to the church in the very ancient ages, which are not embodied in the scriptures, and therefore have not come down to us entire. Such is the fact of Michael, the archangel, disputing with the devil about the body of Moses. This fact appears to have been known to the church in the days of the apostles; but we have no particular account of it in the scriptures. It may therefore be a fact, that there was such a war in heaven, and that the same things were presented to the apostle, as symbolical of the spiritual contest, which took place in the Roman empire, when the church struggled for existence against the power which threatened to destroy her. But whether this be true or not, it is plain that Michael and his angels, are a symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ, the true ministers of his gospel, and all his servants: and that the dragon and his angels, are the head of the Roman empire, with all the ministers of a false religion; all of whom stood in array against the armies of the living God. It was not such a war, as we are generally accustomed to

see in this world. The victory was not gained by superior prowess and skill, as victories are generally gained by contending powers on the earth. It was such a war as was carried on by the Lord Jesus Christ, single handed, against the united legions of darkness, and the power of the Jewish nation. In that war, "he conquered principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross." If the sufferings which the Redeemer endured, or the prospect of sufferings, had induced him to deviate from the path of duty: if Satan had succeeded, in any of his temptations to lead him into sin, then he, and not the Redeemer, would have gained the victory. But as he still adhered to his integrity, and his mind could not be conquered, either by the allurements held out to him, or the sufferings inflicted on him, so he gained the contest, arose, and ascended, with the trophies of victory, to his Father's throne. This, therefore, was the way in which he and his church conquered the dragon and his angels, when the power of pagan Rome was put down. The christians then gained the victory, by their inflexibility in defending the cause of truth. They could not be influenced by bribery or corruption. They could not be bought by any worldly advantages, and they could not be frightened into compliance with a false religion, by the gibbet or the stake, or any kind of torture which might be invented, either by human or satanic ingenuity. Thus the dragon and his angels prevailed not.

But as the Jews comforted themselves with vain hopes, when they had crucified the Redeemer, that their power was established, and that they had no reason to fear the resurrection of Christ, or his cause; so the Romans thought to exterminate christianity; and they had great and sanguine hopes of success, by the last persecution in the reign of Galerius. It was planned and concerted with a great degree of skill, and carried into effect with the most bitter and persevering cruelty; and would probably have been successful, had not He that controls the raging waves of the ocean, issued his mandate, and said, "hitherto shalt thou come, but no further." At that period Constantine succeeded to the power; the Roman world flocked to his standard, victory crowned his arms; and not only did persecution cease, but the persecutors lost the power, and were driven from the head of the government. Thus the serpent was cast out of heaven. The powers of heathenism never regained their influence. They made many attempts to rise, but a Supreme power defeated them all: and the old serpent was obliged to de-

also a new plan of policy, that he might continue to deceive mankind.

The triumphs of christianity, and the hostility and hatred of the dragon, increasing in proportion to the declension of his power, and his want of success, are detailed in the remaining part of this chapter. When the dragon and his angels were cast out of heaven, the apostle heard a voice proclaiming: "Now is come the salvation and might, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; because the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accused them, before our God, day and night. And they conquered him through the blood of the Lamb, and through the word of their testimony," &c. It is evident that something greater, and more grand and glorious, than all the victories which were gained by the church in those days, or in any preceding age, is here presented to our view. We are to look through the symbols, and contemplate a much greater victory, than that of Constantine, or any of his successors, or any success, which in those days was gained for the christian cause. This prophecy is to be viewed in the same light, as the prophecy of our Lord, in which he shewed the destruction of Jerusalem, and the triumphs of the gospel, in the times which immediately succeeded his death and resurrection: while under the same similitudes, he predicted the future judgments which should be executed on the wicked, and the future triumphs of the gospel, until the judgment day. This emblem of victory over the dragon, is intended to prefigure, all future victories, which shall be obtained by truth over error, and especially the time, which is not far distant, when the accuser of the brethren shall be cast down, shut up in darkness, and confined a thousand years. Bearing those things in our minds, we shall be the better enabled to understand the symbol, and to make a right application of it to the times that are past.

It was a real victory which the church gained, by adhering to the truth in opposition to error. Satan did then fall like lightning from heaven. The agents and abettors of false religion, were then truly covered with confusion. They saw their cause sinking, and to raise it was far beyond their power. Some attempts were made by the emperor Julian, who succeeded the sons of Constantine in the government, to renovate and bring into power, the ancient and decayed superstitions: but the efforts ceased with his life, in the Persian war; and he is said to have exclaimed in anguish and despair, when he received his mortal wound, "O



Galilean, thou hast conquered." It was, in fact, an important conquest of the Lord Jesus Christ, over a power, which, as long as it continued in the world, would have formed an impassable barrier in the way of the gospel. Therefore he took the great dragon, and cast him down from heaven to earth. Heaven and earth are both used as symbols. The former as the place of honor and power, and the latter as the place of the dragon's dishonor and degradation. The dragon and his angels were driven out from honor and power in the moral world, and obliged to take up their residence in low stations, among the uncivilized and barbarous people, who had no heavenly views and no spiritual desires; but whose minds were altogether fixed on earthly things. These were the only characters, on whom they could have any influence; or with whom they could be suffered to dwell. This is the earth to which the dragon and his angels were cast down. The same things take place with all impostors, from the highest to the lowest, after their powers of deception have come to an end. The great dragon exerted his power over the whole world for many ages, and was exalted to heaven, or assumed the highest station in the moral world. There he exerted all his power, to prevent the influence of true christianity: but he was finally overcome, and cast down from his lofty seat. Thus every little deceiver has his time of success and triumph: but he finally falls by the force of truth, and his influence, immediately after his fall, is confined to the ignorant and degraded class of mankind, who are very properly represented by the earth: and even among those, his influence will last only for a short period. Hence we see the reason of this joy in heaven. It is always reiterated when error falls, and truth gains the victory.

There is joy in heaven, because the accuser of the brethren is cast down, &c. It is evident that something more is meant here, than the accusations which were brought against the christians before the Roman magistrates. The edicts which were issued by the emperors, from time to time, brought indeed a host of accusers; and the judges were busied almost day and night, in receiving accusations and passing sentence on the accused. The christians, who were accused, could not possibly escape punishment without denying the cause of Christ; for as soon as an accusation was brought against any one, he was taken to the pagan altars, commanded to sacrifice to the gods, and to blaspheme, by cursing Christ. If he would not agree to the demand, his guilt was inferred from his disobedience, and he was led

immediately to punishment. But the Roman power was only the instrument in the infliction of those sufferings, which the christians endured. The great agent was the devil, who did in fact accuse them before God. We are not so well acquainted with the spiritual world, as to know how the old serpent, who is called the devil and satan, gains admittance into the divine presence, and dares to bring accusations against the servants of God: but that such a privilege is sometimes granted to him, will not be denied by any who believe the holy scriptures. It is related as a fact, in the book of Job, and the fact, no doubt, did actually take place. that on a certain time, when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, Satan came also among them; and that God did actually say to Satan, "hast thou considered my servant Job," &c. Then Satan brought his accusations, by insinuating, that Job had cause sufficient, even from worldly considerations, to live in the practice of duty to God. "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast thou not put an hedge about him, and about all that he hath?" &c. This accusation was soon proved to be false and groundless; for when all his property was destroyed, and he was deprived, in one day, of his servants and his sons, by a sudden and terrible visitation of the enemy, so far from cursing his Maker, he only blessed him. But still, after all this, Satan was permitted to enter the divine presence, and bring another accusation against this faithful servant of God. "Again, there was a time when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them, to present himself before the Lord." Immediately his attention was turned to Job. "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in all the earth, &c.: and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause." But Satan again insinuated his accusations, by presuming, that although Job did not curse his Maker for the destruction of his property and the loss of his children, yet he was prevented only by the fear of personal suffering. "Put forth now thine hand, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face." Then Satan was permitted to exert all his powers, in torturing both the body and the spirit of Job, and to go to every extremity in gratifying his malevolence, except that of depriving Job of his life. The same truth is proved from the words of our Lord to Peter, on that evening before he was given into the hands of his enemies. "Simon, Simon," said the Redeemer,

“Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee,” &c.—Luke xxii. 31, 32. The word which is here rendered desired, properly signifies asked, and asked with a great degree of earnestness. It ought therefore to have been rendered, “Satan hath asked earnestly to have you,” &c. It was, in fact, a particular request of the accuser, that he might be permitted to shake the faith of the disciples. This request extended, not to Peter alone, but to them all. Satan requested to have the privilege of sifting them all as wheat, and his request was granted. In the garden of Gethsemane, all his disciples forsook him and fled; and although Peter followed him into the hall of the high priest, yet he denied that he knew him. It was then, the hour and the power of darkness, when the god of this world was permitted to triumph. From these facts, we may learn that the Old Serpent, who is called the Devil, and Satan, does actually bring accusations before God, against his true servants. In that period of the church which is the particular subject of our consideration, he had no doubt insinuated, that the christians did not follow Christ for nought; and he obtained permission to try their faith by a severe and cruel persecution.

But the faith of the christians remained firm and unmoved by the trial. They still persevered in the path of obedience, and thus gained a victory, not only over their accusers and tormentors, but over Satan himself. They overcame, in the first place, by proving themselves to be possessed of the true spirit of obedience to God, and that they had the love of Christ in their hearts; but they overcame afterwards, when their opponents were put down. As Haman was overcome by Mordecai, who finally obtained all the honors and advantages which were lavished on his enemy; so the christians of those days triumphed over their bitter and inveterate foes, and were advanced to the same honors in the empire from which they had fallen.

This victory is said to have been gained “by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony.” There is an efficacy in the blood of Christ, in cleansing the heart from sin, and communicating holiness, which is unknown and imperceptible, even to those who are the subjects of its influence: but there is also in it a power, which strengthens the heart in a perceptible manner, for the endurance of temptation. Christians are enabled, and they know that they are enabled, to follow the example of that true and faithful witness, who loved them, and washed them from

their sins in his own blood. The sufferings of Christ are always present to their view, in the exercise of faith; and by this view, a spiritual power is generated within them, by which they are enabled to bear testimony to him, through every kind of trial. Thus they overcome by his blood, and by the word of their testimony; and in the last agonies of torture, life is not so dear to them, that, for the sake of living in this world, they would deviate, in the smallest degree, from any known duty.

This great voice, which the apostle heard in the heavens, expresses the sentiments and feelings of the church, in those times of joy and triumph. "Rejoice, O ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them! Wo to those who inhabit the earth and the sea; for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath; for he knoweth that he hath but a short time." These acclamations of joy did, in that period, actually resound through the church of God. They were realized, in some degree, in that period; although they are intended also to express the joy of the church at the fall of the beast, as well as at the fall of pagan superstition. The highest part of the moral world was then occupied by the church of God; and therefore the heavens, and they who dwell in them, are especially called to rejoice: but those parts of the empire where the gospel had not been received, and where the inhabitants still adhered to the ancient superstition, are represented by the earth; because they were still established in earthly principles and practices. There was nothing in the religion of the heathen, to raise the mind to heaven,—nothing to exalt and purify the heart. All who were still established in that earthly religion, are designated by the "inhabitants of the earth;" and for the same reason we are to understand, by "the inhabitants of the sea," that class of mankind, who had some knowledge of the gospel, but had not fully received it, so as to have their hearts established in the truth. Their minds were still in an unsettled, fluctuating condition. They had not fully resolved, whether to espouse the cause of Christ, or that of his enemies. As the man whose mind is thus fluctuating, like the waves of the sea, driven with the wind, and tossed, has no right to hope that he shall receive any thing from the Lord; so those characters, as well as "the inhabitants of the earth," were still left under the dominion of Satan. He fell among them when he was cast out of heaven. It was not, indeed, to be expected, that the pagan superstition, by which he had so long deceived the world, would continue always to deceive, even

the most ignorant: but as he saw that his power was to be of short duration, so he was determined to effect the spiritual destruction of as many of them as he could. The wrath of the devil does not rage particularly against any class of mankind, more than another. He hates the whole human family, and desires, if possible, to destroy them all. He is as really the enemy of those who do, as of those who do not listen to his deceptions; and he was determined to make the most of the power which was still left to him, as he knew it must be of short duration. He foresaw that it would soon be necessary for him to assume another form of deception; but he was resolved to use his power, in that form, to the utmost of its extent. Thus every deceiver, when he finds that his evil designs are discovered, will be filled with wrath, and will exert himself to the uttermost, to keep those in darkness who have not discovered the truth.

But although the dragon was, in this sense, cast out of heaven to the earth, he did not entirely lose either the power or the will to injure the church. "When the dragon saw that he was cast to the earth, he persecuted, (or rather followed,) the woman who brought forth the man child." In this representation, the apostle saw the dragon on the earth, and being stunned and hurt by his fall, it required some time for him to recover himself; but when he saw his condition, and the woman preparing for her flight to the wilderness, he immediately pursued her, in hopes of effecting her destruction. We see here the malignity of that persecuting spirit among the heathen, which did not desist for many years after the empire became christian. The spirit of intolerant hatred to christianity was not put to rest by the fall of the great system of superstition. The true church of God was hated and opposed by all those characters who pretended to receive the gospel, while the spirit of the world still had possession of their hearts. The woman, we must remember, represents the true church, and the man child represents that particular race of christians whom the church brought forth in the days of persecution, while the serpent stood ready to devour her offspring. But this man child was soon taken to heaven, and the woman remained on the earth; and therefore, when the serpent was cast down, she soon perceived that much was to be feared from his wrath. The transition from heaven to earth, and from earth to heaven, is what ought to be expected in a vision. The woman, when in labor, appears in heaven; and afterwards, she is seen on the earth, flying before the serpent. "And

there was given to the woman two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly to her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent." Some suppose that these wings signify the protection which was given, by the government, from persecution: but the object in giving her the wings, was to save her, by adding celerity to her speed. The serpent was unable to rise from the surface of the ground; but still he could follow her, and her safety consisted in the quickness of her flight. In fact, the spirit of heathenism, under the outward appearance of christianity, made, at that time, as strong opposition to the true church of God, as in the times when Jupiter and Juno ruled the world. False doctrines were invented. Religious parties were formed in the empire, and the party in power persecuted the others, with all the bitterness which had formerly raged in the times of heathen domination. A multitude of idle ceremonies and absurd superstitions were introduced into the church, and those who would not conform to them were branded with the name of heretics. There was little peace for those who would not adopt the religion of the men in power. The governors of the church became lords over God's heritage; and it soon became necessary for those who determined to keep their consciences pure, and to worship God in the way he had appointed, to shun the places of fashionable worship, and to go into obscurity. This is what we are to understand, by the emblem of the woman retreating into the wilderness from the face of the serpent. We may see it exemplified in our own times, as plainly as in the history of the times which are the particular subject of the description; for the church was to remain and be nourished in the wilderness for 1260 years. This period has not yet expired; and therefore we have no need to go back to ancient ages, to learn the meaning of this representation. We see that when any sect of christians becomes popular and fashionable, it becomes corrupted. No church can rise to honor and influence, in the present state of the world, without conforming to the fashions, and either winking at or encouraging the popular errors and vices of the times. This is, in truth, the real cause why some of the christian sects become numerous and powerful, and why others are cast into the shade, and their existence almost forgotten. The one determines to keep a clear conscience, adheres to the truth of the gospel, preserves the worship pure from the inventions of men, and testifies against all the errors and delusions which float on the surface of the

religious world, and is therefore driven into obscurity: the other conforms to the ways of the world, and rises to honor and influence. In the ancient ages, when this spirit was growing, and gaining influence in the religious world, true christians needed wings, to enable them to escape with rapidity from the fashionable evils; and ever since that time, the true church has settled down in the obscure retreats of life; and she has never come out of them, without the loss, both of her honor and her purity.

But the dragon was so wrathful against the woman, that he could not allow her any resting place on the face of the earth. "And the dragon cast out of his mouth, after the woman, water as a flood, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood." This is generally supposed to mean, the Huns, Goths, Vandals, and other barbarous nations, who, in those days, made terrible incursions into the best, and most populous and civilized parts of the empire. They came like an overwhelming inundation; and it seemed as if every thing valuable, especially every moral and religious institution, should be swept away, and that the Roman world must return to the same state of ignorance and barbarism from which they had escaped by receiving the gospel. This was the highest gratification to the enemies of christianity; for they hoped that the church would be carried away, and all the institutions of the gospel destroyed, by this flood of barbarians. But, contrary to all expectation, these depredators settled down among them, and obeyed the religion and laws of the empire. "The earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth."

But although this attempt failed, the wrath of the dragon was by no means abated. On the contrary, his rage was increased by every repeated disappointment. "The dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." He ceased from following the woman, because her flight was too rapid, and the place of her destination beyond his reach: but she had children, whom he was determined, if possible, to destroy. She had not only brought forth the man child, who had continued for a time in the world, and then was caught up to God and to his throne; but she had other children, who were still in the world, who kept the commandments of God, and had the testimony of Jesus Christ. We may learn, from this representation, that the great body of true chris-

tians, who lived in that period, hastened away, as fast as possible, from the corrupted churches, and formed small societies, in which the ordinances of the gospel were kept pure; and that many of them removed into other parts of the empire, where religion was not so much corrupted, as in the populous cities. If this is not particularly noticed by historians, it is because the facts were not much attended to, or because they thought them unimportant. It is as certain that they did exist, as that there were then true christians in the world. It is impossible they should all be deceived, and equally impossible that they should comply with, or show approbation to the errors and vices of the times. This has, in fact, always been their conduct in times of corruption; and almost all the historians testify that those were times of corruption, beyond any former precedent. Christianity had become almost entirely obscured and lost, by a cloud of errors, and absurd ceremonies and superstitions; and it cannot be supposed, that the body of true christians would countenance or approve of them. It is, therefore, perfectly natural to suppose they would make their escape, in these ways, from the reigning corruptions. But as christians had not, in those times, that prurency, or itching desire, which they have in the present time, for breaking and splitting the church into sections and subdivisions, there were still numbers of the true servants of God, who kept his commandments and his testimonies, and yet continued in the popular and corrupted churches; still bearing testimony against their errors, and endeavoring to lead them back to the simplicity of the gospel. This is matter of history. Even Augustine, who lived in the fourth century, a very conspicuous character in those times, complains that the church was burdened with useless rites and ceremonies, and loudly inveighs against the errors and corruptions into which his brethren had fallen. He, and others of the same class, were the woman's seed, who still remained after she had retreated to the wilderness, but who still kept the commandments of God, and carried the testimony of Jesus Christ along with them, while they remained in the midst of error and corruption. It was against them that the dragon, in his rage, went away to make war, when the woman had escaped beyond his power. He contrived to render their lives a scene of labor and sufferings; and his opposition did not cease until they also were driven into the wilderness.



This chapter contains a prophetic history of the scenes of trouble and persecution, of violence and blood, through which the church of God was obliged to pass, in her ascent to the honors and power of the Roman empire; and also of the quick and precipitate retreat which she was obliged to make, so soon as her offspring was taken to heaven. The succeeding race of christians was feeble, enervated by prosperity, and unable to contend with the adversary, even after he was cast to the earth. The dragon did not cease to exist after christianity had obtained the ascendancy in the empire, nor even after the worship of the heathen gods was discontinued, and their altars and temples had crumbled to ruins. He exists even at this moment, and has the power of deceiving a large number of mankind. He then changed his form, but not his nature. He adopted the modern form of philosophic infidelity, and continues, under this form, to oppose the progress of the truth of the gospel, until this very day. The next chapter will show us the rise and progress of another power, which, under the form of christianity, and of great professions, and zeal for the propagation of the gospel, has the same nature, and acts in perfect congeniality and friendship with the dragon; has, in fact, received his authority from him; has made havoc of the church, put down the witnesses, and left christianity a mass of ruins.

## PART II. DISSERTATION V.

### ON THE XIII. OF THE REVELATION.

THE fifth century was remarkable, on account of the incursions of the barbarous nations into the Roman empire. There was then an incipient accomplishment of that prophecy, which is recorded in the 50th and 51st chapters of Jeremiah; and which is yet to be more terribly fulfilled, on the spiritual Babylon. "Set ye up a standard in the land, blow the trumpet among the nations, prepare the nations against her, call together against her the kingdoms of Ararat, Miinni, and Ashchenaz; appoint a captain against her; cause the horses to come up as the rough caterpillars." The northren nations, who, in the last end of the indignation, shall be the instruments, in the hand of God, for overturning and rooting up the Roman empire, from its very foundations, did in that age, give a pledge of what shall be done by their hand, in the latter days. The Goths and Vandals, the Sueves and Alani, and various other hordes of barbarians, rolled their mighty waves successively on Italy, Spain and Gaul; they covered the most fertile provinces of the Western empire, and threw all things into confusion. They were in the first instance, invited by those who still adhered to the ancient pagan religion, in the hope of destroying the christian church; but having observed the superior fertility and salubrity of those delightful climates, and the luxury and sloth of the inhabitants, they continued their incursions and settlements from generation to generation, until that part of the world became a mixt multitude of peoples, nations, and tongues. This was the sea, on the margin of which the apostle stood, when the beast arose. "I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and on his heads the name of blasphemy." It is agreed by all Protestant commentators, that this beast is the emblem of an idolatrous and tyrannical power; that this power rose in the Roman empire, after Rome became christian; and has continued in existence until this day. But if we look for a moment to the condition of the Roman world in those times; and remember that we must select some period of instability and fluctuation, for the rise of the beast; we shall find

that it cannot, with any degree of propriety, be dated later than the latter part of the sixth century. After that time the Western empire was comparatively in a settled condition. Some have supposed that this beast rose in the eighth century, when Charlemagne spread abroad the fame and terrors of his arms; reduced the Saxons; extirpated the Huns; terminated the kingdom of the Lombards; and confirmed the Pope in his authority both temporal and spiritual. It is very true, that the kingdom of the Lombards was one of the horns of the beast, as it is described by Daniel. While Daniel was considering the horns with fixed attention, he observed a little horn, which had sprung up in the midst of them; and before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. The meaning is, plainly, that this little horn first sprung up, and afterwards three horns fell before it. This little horn is intended especially to represent, that spiritual power, of which the Pope is the head, and the visible image. It was small at the beginning, and made no pretensions to any thing but spiritual authority; yet afterwards, as his ambition grew with the increase of his power, he also assumed the temporal sovereignty. Then the three sovereignties of Rome, Lombardy, and Ravenna, fell successively under his dominion. These things took place in the settled state of the empire, and many years after the beast rose out of its fluctuating state.

The commencement of his rise, was immediately after the ten kingdoms became independent sovereignties. It will be recollected, that the dragon had seven heads and ten horns; but the crowns were on his heads. This beast has also seven heads and ten horns, but the crowns are on his horns. If then, we could determine the time, when these ten kingdoms had all become independent sovereignties, we may be certain that the beast arose very soon afterwards. Mr. Mede, as quoted by Bishop Newton, reckons up the ten kingdoms, as they stood in the middle of the fifth century, and soon after Rome was pillaged by Genseric, king of the Vandals. 1. The Brittons. 2. The Saxons. 3. The Franks. 4. The Burgundians. 5. The Wisigoths. 6. The Sueves and Alans in Galicia and Portugal. 7. The Vandals in Africa. 8. The Alemanni in Germany. 9. The Ostrogoths whom the Longobards succeeded in Pannonia, and afterwards in Italy. 10. The Greeks in the residue of the empire. Bishop Lloyd, as quoted by the same writer, exhibits the following list, together with the time of their rise. 1. The Huns, about A. D. 356. 2. Os-

tro-goths, 577. 3. Wisi-goths, 378. 4. Franks, 407. 5. Vandals, 407. 6. Sueves and Alans, 407. 7. Burgundians, 407. 8. Herules and Rugians, 476. 9. Saxons, 476. 10. The Longobards, who began to reign in Hungary, 526.

Other authors have enumerated these ten kingdoms in a manner somewhat different: for the times were so very confused, and the empire in such a state of fluctuation, that even the historians of those times, do not exactly agree, as to the internal boundaries, by which these kingdoms were divided: but all agree, both Roman Catholic and Protestant writers, that ten independent sovereignties were combined for the support of the Western empire of Rome, and that these sovereignties were all in existence in the year 526. These, therefore, are the times in which we are to look for the rise of the beast. The emblem of the beast ascending out of the sea, supposes a state of much greater fluctuation than existed in the days of Charlemagne. The very fact of the unsettled condition of the empire in these times, and the uncertainty of historians as to the boundaries of these kingdoms; while all agree in the enumeration of ten; when at no other period, either before or after this, the empire was in such a state of fluctuation, amount to evidence almost conclusive, that this was the period in which the beast rose out of the sea.

This beast, when the apostle first saw it, had some name of blasphemy written on every one of its heads; and when he saw it afterwards carrying the woman, as recorded in the seventeenth chapter, it was full of names of blasphemy. This shows the increase of blasphemous titles, which have been assumed by that power from age to age. Rome has often been called, the goddess of the earth, the heavenly city, the eternal city, &c. In the beginning of the sixth century the Pope was proclaimed universal bishop, the judge in the place of God, the vicegerent of the most High, the infallible arbiter of all doubtful questions; with many other titles equally blasphemous, and even at this time, he assumes the blasphemous title of HIS HOLINESS. But it will not be difficult to see the same characters, written on the head of many other denominations of christians; and perhaps a discerning eye might discover something of it in all. We shall not, however, dwell on this subject at the present time.

The various symbols used in this chapter, are designed to give us a full view of the Roman power, under this last

form; as it rose to maturity, and attained its full dimensions, and all its appendages. It was like no other government on the earth. Some have been represented by a lion; others by a bear; and others by a leopard; but this government had the leopard, the bear, and the lion united. Like the lion, it was ambitious and tyrannical: like the bear, it was cruel and perfidious: and like the leopard, it was artful, malicious, and quick in the execution of its purposes. We must bear in mind, that this beast is not the emblem of any particular individual; but of a combination of men, who governed the Roman empire; and continued to be supported in their power, by the ten kingdoms. It was also a religious combination; professing to the world that its views were all directed to the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, while in reality the promotion of its own power was the chief object.

The dragon, who was still on the earth, making war with the remnant of the woman's seed, no sooner saw this great beast rise out of the sea, than he voluntarily resigned to him his power, and his throne; and thus he was endowed at once with a great degree of authority. The heathen generally hated the true gospel, and very few of them comparatively, could be brought even to profess christianity, so long as the church continued pure, and free from the corrupting inventions of men: but as soon as the beast was invested with the powers of the dragon, christianity spread rapidly over the world; and whole nations were converted at one time. But these conversions were generally effected by power, and not by any real illumination of the understanding, or renewal of the heart. The king, or chief of the nation, was induced to profess christianity, and perhaps to receive baptism from some of the emissaries of the beast; and then his subjects generally followed his example. Christianity became indeed the fashionable religion of the world; but it was generally little more than a change of names, and religious ceremonies; while the substance was the same as before. The dragon lost nothing of his power by giving his throne to the beast. He was really an agent of Satan while he professed to be the vicegerent of the most High.

The apostle saw that one of the heads of this beast, had received a mortal wound: but the wound had been healed in a manner that appeared to be miraculous. There were many events which concurred in those ages, to depress and even to destroy for a time, the supreme power of imperial Rome. When Constantine became the lord of the world, he

thought proper to transfer the seat of his government to Byzantium, on the banks of the Bosphorus; being the most central situation in the empire, and affording the best facilities for commerce. There he built a city, which he called Constantinople, and which, for many ages, rivalled and even surpassed the city of Rome in splendor and power. Thus the government was transferred from the west to the east, and Rome was at length divided into the eastern and western empires. By the incursions of the northern barbarians, who erected independent sovereignties in various parts of the western empire, and burned and sacked the city of Rome, that government was entirely overturned; and thus one of the heads of the beast was wounded to death. But by the union of the ten kingdoms under the spiritual power, which resided at Rome, the beast was reinstated in all his authority, and soon became an object of wonder and admiration to the world. "The deadly wound was healed, and all the world wondered after the beast."

As many circumstances had before combined, to depress the power of Rome, so afterwards, when she began to rise, there were many circumstances, which contributed to her exaltation. The bishops of Rome, from the days of Constantine, seem to have thought themselves entitled to pre-eminence, among the churches throughout the world: and no doubt, if the seat of the government had not been removed, and Rome had still preserved its pre-eminent standing, the church of Rome would have maintained the superiority without a struggle. But by the removal of the government to Constantinople, another church rose in that city, of equal, if not superior splendor and dignity, and the bishops of Constantinople thought proper to dispute the title to pre-eminence with the Roman pontiff; and he was frequently obliged to yield to superior power. The government of the church in those days, was what is commonly called episcopal. Very soon after the days of the apostles, the churches departed from the scriptural plan of government; which plainly declares the governors to be all of equal authority. When the apostles, actuated by the same desire of pre-eminence, disputed among themselves who should be the greatest, the Redeemer commanded that he who indulged this disposition, should be depressed to the rank of a servant. "He that will be greatest among you, let him be the least of all, and servant of all." It is also sufficiently obvious to every unbiassed mind, that the scriptural bishop and presbyter, mean the very same kind of officer in the church of God. The bishops are frequently called presbyters, and the

presbyters bishops. But degrees of rank and dignity are so common in the other departments of life; and the desire so congenial to the minds of men, that it need not at all appear strange or wonderful, that episcopacy was so soon introduced. As there were some among the apostles, who aspired to pre-eminence, so it is natural to suppose there would be a degree of that same feeling in every presbytery; and as they either did not understand, or did not regard the directions of the Redeemer, to discourage and depress every one who aspired to pre-eminence, they of course found it necessary to exalt some one member of their presbyteries above the others, and to invest him with authority not only to preside in their meetings, but to superintend the whole concerns of the churches within certain boundaries. This was, no doubt, the origin of our modern bishops.

But the introduction of grades among the clergy, laid the foundation for the supremacy of the church and bishop of Rome. When the principle was admitted, that one of the ministers of the gospel might rise above another in authority, different titles, expressing superior power, were soon invented; and the officers of the church rose one above another, like ranks in an army. There were deacons, and archdeacons, presbyters and archpresbyters, bishops, archbishops, metropolitans, and patriarchs; with a whole tribe of inferior officers, such as acolytes, readers, catechists, &c. &c.; and thus every superior officer was a kind of sovereign in his own dominions; with a large number of officers under him, who were ready to obey all his commands. Some of the bishops and patriarchs had many provinces, and kingdoms, under their ghostly jurisdiction; and they were almost always infringing on the prerogatives of each other. Thus it was at length found necessary to have some supreme arbiter, before whom the causes should be tried, and decided with effect. In the fifth century there rose no less than five of these superior rulers in the church, who claimed the supremacy. The bishop of Rome, of Constantinople, of Alexandria, of Antioch, and of Jerusalem. These lordly prelates could not be contented with ruling over a number of provinces or of kingdoms; they wished to have the world at their feet. But it was obvious, that one of them only could succeed; and a train of occurrences, seemingly fortuitous, finally enabled the Roman pontiff to succeed in his ambitious designs. It is true the other bishops refused obedience; but they gradually sunk into insignificance, and Rome grew into power. Thus at length "the world worshipped the

beast, saying, who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?"

In religion as in politics, a large majority of mankind, will follow that leader, who is the most successful, and whose party is the most numerous and powerful. By a long series of fortunate circumstances Rome recovered her ancient splendor; and established a government much stronger and better able to ensure success to all her designs, than any other that had ever been established in the empire. She had the conscience of her subjects completely in her power. She taught them that the keys of heaven were in her hand, that she had power to open and to shut the gates of paradise, that out of her pale there was no communion with the Lord Jesus Christ, and consequently no salvation. She arrogated to herself supreme authority. Whatever interpretation she was pleased to give to the scripture, was received as the truth; because it was believed that the church could not err. She made the scriptures first prove her infallibility, and then made the world believe that all her decisions must be right. Hence it is not at all surprising, that the ignorant world should hold her in the highest admiration, and view her with awe and reverence: for in their opinion, she was invested with authority, which made her equal to the most High. Thus "the man of sin exalted himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped," &c. This kind of honor was really rendered to the Roman church, as far as her dominion extended; and this was over all the earth, or over all earthly minded men within her empire, for the phrase, "all the world," is literally all the earth, and means all men whose hearts were not enlightened and purified by heavenly wisdom. They were astonished and fell down and worshipped both the dragon and the beast. The ancient idolatry, which had formerly been the object of great abhorrence among christians, was no longer looked upon with the same feelings of aversion. Christianity and paganism began to resemble each other in a great many particulars. The heathen Gods and Goddesses were merely exchanged for the Holy Virgin, and the Saints and Martyrs. The place of the heathen images was supplied by crucifixes, pictures, and other representations, which they either used as objects of worship, or to excite in their minds the feelings of devotion. The wood of the cross, the relics and bones of martyrs and confessors of former times, together with a multitude of amulets, and charms, and exorcisms, fully supplied the room of the tutelary gods; altars,



masses, and a hundred empty ceremonies, were invented to supply the place of the heathen sacrifices; so that the dragon was really worshipped as much as before. He had given his power to the beast, and the beast used it for his interest; and thus both received the homage and adoration of a vain and deluded world.

In the ancient Jewish dispensation, there were many rites and ceremonies instituted by Jehovah himself; and they were all calculated to display his majesty and glory. "In his temple every thing declared his glory;" and when his worshippers contemplated the grand and sublime spectacle, they naturally exclaimed, "O Jehovah, who is like unto thee." But the inventions of men are not calculated to declare the glory of God. However well they may be intended, they can only show the thoughts that men have had concerning him. We can see his glory, only in his own ordinances. But the votaries of the church of Rome, transferred that honor to the beast, by whose contrivances a certain outward splendor and dignity had been thrown over the worship. Whatever devotional feelings may be produced in the hearts of worshippers by any human inventions, the inventors receive the honor, and not the Almighty. Men in all ages have been fertile in inventions, contriving new ways of honoring their Maker, and introducing them into the churches; but there is always so much glory taken from their Maker, and given to themselves, as corresponds with the invention. Those that worship according to the inventions of men, and not according to the authority of God, always take his glory and give it to another. In this sense, they all cry out, "who is like unto the beast?"—and while the invention is viewed with admiration, and multitudes are deceived by it:—while opposition to it is discouraged, and the witnesses of the truth are not heard, the beast is successful by their means; and they also cry out, "who is able to make war with him?"

When deceivers and impostors are thus successful in their plans, and works of deception, they always become vain and inflated; "and there is given unto them a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies." Sometimes indeed, men who have good intentions, as far as they know their own hearts, but not sufficiently considering the greatness and majesty of God, are induced to make changes and alterations in the appointed ordinances of worship, because they think an improvement can be made with propriety, and the glory of God, and the spiritual benefit of the wor-

shippers, better promoted by the new invention: but in all such cases, whatever apparent benefits may be enjoyed, and however their devotional feelings may seem to be revived and strengthened, the ultimate effect of such inventions will be that of "speaking great things and blasphemies." This beast has power to make war with the saints, forty and two months, or 1260 years. Therefore as this period is not yet expired; so he actually does make war at this moment, in all parts of the christian world, by creating and cherishing in the hearts of the worshippers, an attachment to human inventions; and consequently a proportional disregard to the ordinances appointed and given by Jehovah. Although the local seat of this monster of iniquity is in the city of Rome, and the ten kingdoms; yet the spirit of innovation operates every where and prevails. The reformation of the sixteenth century was deservedly hailed, as an auspicious and happy change, in the minds of men; by which the light of truth shone into their hearts for a time, and their minds were in some degree enlightened in religious and political knowledge; while the fetters with which civil and religious tyranny had bound them, were loosened: yet it has afforded only a temporary and partial relief. Those parts of the christian world, who renounced the authority, and forsook the communion of the church of Rome, did not entirely forsake her errors. The tree was cut down; but the roots remained in the soil. A thousand shoots have grown from the stock, and instead of a large and overgrown monster, there is a little beast, of the same species, every where to be seen in the christian world.

But "evil men and seducers always grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." It seems almost incredible, and did not the other parts of this description, apply so exactly to the church of Rome, as to leave no doubt on the mind, as to the subject presented, we could not believe that any christian church could arrive at such a degree of impiety, as to "open its mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven." But let us recollect that this description is symbolical. The apostle saw the beast sitting on his throne, and the world falling prostrate before him in worship; and then he became so greatly inflated with vanity, as to speak blasphemous things against God, against the worship which he had appointed, and against those who worshipped according to his ordinances. Viewed in this light, it is a striking emblem, not only of the conduct of the Ro-

man church; but of many other churches, who would not wish to have any affinity with the papal see. Blasphemy is, properly and strictly, the uttering of hurtful or injurious expressions, either against God or man. This is the scriptural and literal meaning of the word. In the common use of it, something horrid and disgusting is supposed to be uttered, immediately against our Maker. Hence common readers do not immediately recognize the true import of the apostle's meaning. But the truth is, that men blaspheme their Maker when they preach false doctrines, or when they utter false sentiments, either in prayer or praise. They are guilty of blasphemy against his tabernacle, when they speak or write against the ordinances of worship which he has appointed. They are guilty of blasphemy against those who dwell in heaven, when they utter injurious expressions against any of the true servants of God. But this kind of conduct which we see daily practised, was carried to an enormous extent, when Rome was in the zenith of her power. We may see it in the forms of her Bulls and Anathemas, which are sometimes issued from the Vatican, even in the present time. But her blasphemous language need not here be repeated. Let us look at home and we shall see enough of the same kind of blasphemy all around us, and even in the conduct of those whose fathers have been conspicuous in the ranks of the defenders of truth.

The worship of our Maker, according to the dictates of our own conscience, is one of the most important and precious of human rights. In this respect, no man ought to use even the smallest degree of compulsion with his neighbor. He ought not even to use motives of self interest, in order to persuade him to adopt any religious opinion, or any mode of worship. No worldly favors, nor any worldly inconvenience, ought to be held out, to induce him to accept the gospel, or to be a member of any particular church. We find no encouragement for this practice in any part of the word of God. The Lord Jesus Christ preached the truth to those who voluntarily attended on his ministry; the apostles travelled through the world, preaching the gospel to those who were disposed to hear it; but there is not the smallest reason to believe, that the Redeemer or his apostles ever used any kind of compulsion, or held out any worldly motives, to induce mankind to receive the gospel. They never committed even the smallest evil, although the greatest good might have been accomplished by it. But such is not the general method, by which the gospel is attempted to be

propagated in the present time. There is such a strong desire for making proselytes, or of bringing others over to their opinions, that they generally resort to every means within their power. But while they are thus endeavoring to increase the number of their sect; while they flatter one man, and threaten another, appeal to the vanity of a third, and the self interest of all, they do not see that they are acting on the very principle of the Roman church, and are, in fact, "making war against the saints." This is taking an undue advantage of our neighbor, and is the very principle which produces the private animosities, the resentments and quarrels, which take place in families and neighborhoods; and when operating in a more extensive manner, produces national and civil wars, by which the most extensive miseries are inflicted, and the face of the earth covered with blood and desolation. The man who takes any advantage of his neighbor, even although he may intend to do him good, is, in fact, making war on society and the rights of man. This principle was acted on, to its full extent, by the Roman harlot, when she drank the blood of the saints, and of the martyrs of Jesus. Encouraged and supported by the beast, she sent forth her emissaries every where through the world, ostensibly to propagate the gospel, while they carried on a system of warfare against righteousness and truth. But it is very obvious to every one, whose mind is at all exercised in discerning between good and evil, that the same dishonesty, intrigue, and cunning, are now as generally practised by almost all the sectaries in the christian church, while they attempt to propagate the gospel. The only difference is, that the harlot of Rome had the power of the sword, and could inflict civil pains and penalties on those who would not submit to her authority: but her daughters have not this power, and therefore they are obliged to multiply the arts of intrigue and deception. This is the way in which the beast now makes war with the saints, and is able to overcome them. The true servants of God are also endeavoring to propagate the gospel. There are two great parties in the church; the party of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that of the beast. Both of them have the same ostensible object in view. But the party of the beast brings mankind into bondage to human inventions, in doctrines and worship; and they are not at all scrupulous in the use of means for the accomplishment of their purposes; while the party of the Redeemer endeavors to bring mankind under his authority; and they use, for this purpose, the means only which he himself has appointed.

In the present moral condition of mankind, where there is so little correct knowledge of the scriptures, and so little regard for the authority of God, it is easy to see that the party of the beast will generally prevail. It is, in fact, given to him that he should prevail, and that he should have power, for 1260 years, over every tribe, and tongue; and nation; and that "all who dwell on the earth should worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life, of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." It is impossible to exhibit, more plainly than is here done by the sacred writer, the universal prevalence of error and deception in religion, throughout the christian world, and through the whole of this period. If the Roman power was exclusively meant, the description would not be correct, for in many of the nations of Europe, and in the United States of America, the Roman catholics not only make few or no converts to their faith, but are scarcely able to keep their churches in existence. Therefore, since it is given to the beast to continue in power for 1260 years, and during the whole of that period, to make war with the saints, and prevail against them, we must conclude, that the beast makes use of other sects as his instruments; and when any sect has risen to great power, and has become very numerous and influential among mankind, it may be fairly presumed that they have been actuated by other principles, and have used other means, than the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ will justify.

If this doctrine is true, and it is the plain meaning of the scripture, that all those whose names are not written in the book of life, should worship the beast for 1260 years, then it must follow, either that all, except Roman catholics, have their names written in the book of life, or that the beast is found among other sects and denominations, as well as in the church of Rome. But truly it is obvious, from the moral condition of mankind, and the spirit that reigns in the world, that no church can prosper and advance to honor and influence, or escape opposition and persecution, unless they have a portion of the same spirit, and use some of the same means, by which the church of Rome acquired influence, and rose to eminence. It ought, therefore, to give pain, rather than pleasure, to hear and to read the pompous and boastful accounts of the prevalence and the triumphs of the gospel, of revivals in religion, and of multitudes of converts flocking to the standard of the cross, when we know, from the word of God, that nothing but error can prevail and

triumph, during this unhappy period, and especially during the part of it in which the witnesses are slain, and their bodies lying in the streets. God himself has branded these high colored and glowing descriptions with the mark of falsehood and blasphemy. Instead of the voice of triumph from the lips of the saints, it is the beast opening his mouth in blasphemy, against God, against his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

These are subjects which ought to be well considered and weighed by those who have understanding, and are possessed of influence in the church of God. All this description of the beast partakes of the nature of a parable. It is obvious that such a monster of iniquity has established himself in the christian world,—that he has his chief residence in the city of Rome, and that he prevails over all opposition which can be made by the witnesses in that part of the world: but it is not so obvious that he prevails also over the witnesses in other places; especially where his authority is publicly renounced, and where men have professedly obeyed the divine command, “come out of her, my people.” But God teaches us also this truth, no less truly and certainly than the former, when he tells us that all shall worship the beast, whose names are not written in the book of life. Hence the mark of importance, and of the interesting nature and character of this description, is here presented to us. “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. He that leadeth into captivity, shall go into captivity. He that killeth with the sword, shall be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.”

This declaration is obviously not intended to be literally understood. It is not true, that every one who leads another into captivity, is himself made a slave in the literal sense: and we know that many have put thousands to death with the sword, who themselves have died apparently in peace. But, like all aphorisms, it is designed to teach a great and important truth, connected with the operation and progress of religion among mankind. The operation of true religion on the hearts of men, brings them into obedience to God alone. They are truly servants, but they enjoy the only rational kind of liberty, which can be possessed by any being, whose existence is derived, and not in himself. True religious liberty exists and flourishes only in the hearts of those who receive the Lord Jesus Christ, are regulated in their faith, and in their worship, by the divine authority, and refuse all subjection to the commandments or inven-

tions of men. But all deceivers, of every description, introduce something of man's contrivance into their worship; and under the pretence of honoring their Maker, they acquire influence over those who follow them in their way of worship. Thus they become fascinated by error and delusion, and much more strongly attached to false principles and false worship, than they are to the truth; so that they are really brought into bondage or captivity. We see this truth most clearly presented, in the strong and powerful influence which the church of Rome possesses over the members of that communion. All the absurd dogmas of that church, and all the rites and ceremonies she has invented, have the most unlimited power over the hearts and affections of her votaries. The inventions of other churches have also a proportional influence on those who use them; and thus every man is brought into captivity, who is led by any human invention. But the leaders are no less in bondage to some sinful lust, than those whom they lead. There are, indeed, many of them, who wilfully and knowingly deceive, and who are not themselves attached to any kind of religion; but they are in bondage to the lusts of the flesh. Their god is their belly, their glory is in their shame, while their end is destruction. But we are here chiefly informed, that the church of Rome, and all other churches that lead mankind into bondage, shall, in the end, be brought to ruin and desolation, by those very deceptions which they have practised on others. They shall finally be caught in their own snare. In the net which they have laid for others, shall their own feet be taken.

The truth contained in this aphorism, has exercised the patience and the faith of the true servants of God in every age. It would truly be a doleful prospect for the true church of God, if she could see no end to her sufferings: if there was no period in this world in which the church militant should become the church triumphant: if the war should always be successful on the part of the beast, and the true servants of God should be oppressed and cast down in every succeeding age, to the end of the world. Such a dark and dismal prospect would cause a kind of despondency in their hearts, and in some degree hinder the exercise of patience: for this virtue cannot exist where there is no hope. But we have the promise, that in the latter days, the saints shall possess the kingdom; and it is also promised that they shall acquire this kingdom by conquest. They shall overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimo-

ny. The witnesses, after being slain shall rise from the dead, and ascend to heaven; and the Lord Jesus Christ shall come forth in his tremendous judgments, to avenge their cause and cast down those by whom they were oppressed. This is the object of their faith and patience; the chief motive which keeps up their spirits, incites them to diligence in action, and teaches them not to refuse suffering in the cause of their Lord.

But a full description of this spiritual power, which enslaves and finally destroys the souls of men, could not be given by one representation. While these reflections were passing through the mind of the apostle, his attention was arrested by another beast rising out of the earth; and that which appeared most remarkable in this beast, was, that he had two horns like a lamb; and yet he spake as the dragon. His first appearance indicated mildness and gentleness; but he showed afterwards the same spirit of his predecessors. The first beast ascended out of the sea, or from the unsettled and fluctuating condition of the Roman empire, when it was covered by the inundations of barbarians. All things were at first thrown into confusion; but in a few generations, they began to assume a settled order; and after the government was established and consolidated, the second beast came into power. It is evident that these representations are intended, to give us a clear and comprehensive view of that spiritual power, which has its seat in the city of Rome. The first beast is intended chiefly to represent the civil power, as connected with, and supporting the religious establishment; and the second beast represents the spiritual or clerical power, engaged in teaching mankind to respect and honor the government, which had already been established. It is well known that there are two kinds of clergy in this church, the *regular* and the *secular*. Indeed, every church that has any desire of extending its influence among mankind, must also have two classes of ministers: one class to be stationary in particular local situations; and having some part of the church in their charge: the other not fixed and settled; but to itinerate and continue for a short period, wherever their labors may be required. These classes are found in the very first organization of the church, and in the scriptures are denominated *pastors*, and *evangelists*. The one is sent to preach the gospel through the world; the other to be fixed in particular congregations. In the church of Rome, these two classes of the clergy, are so organized and established, as to possess and exert a great degree of power, for the



support of the whole establishment; and therefore they are represented by a beast with two horns. The monks and friars are of various orders; such as the Dominicans, Franciscans, Jesuits, &c. who are subject to the command of superior officers, and thus their power is concentrated: while the local clergy are also combined under the bishops, archbishops, &c. so as to act with concentrated power, when any important object is to be accomplished. Although this beast had somewhat of the appearance of a lamb; yet it was also a ferocious monster, and when it began to speak, the apostle discerned its real character. It had the nature of the dragon, and was altogether as hostile to the true interests of the gospel, as infidel or pagan Rome. The Roman clergy have always been the most violent, and bitter persecutors of the true servants of God. It is true, that their power went no farther in appearance than their speech. They did not profess to have the power of inflicting any other punishment than that of excommunication: but the sufferer was then delivered over to the civil power, and frequently did not end his sufferings but with his life. Thus, this beast spake as a dragon, and "all the power of the first beast he exercised before him." The great object of the Roman clergy is to promote the influence of the establishment, and therefore this second beast, is said "to cause the earth, and them that dwell therein, to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed." The Roman clergy have always exerted themselves, with all their powers, for this purpose. With them the establishment of Roman Catholicism is every thing; and this is not at all to be wondered at; for they believe that a union with their church is essential to salvation: and therefore it is very natural, they should exert all their powers to bring the world into it. But after all, they only teach them that dwell on the earth, the worship of the beast whose mortal wound was healed.

Their influence over the men of the earth, was chiefly gained, by miraculous works, real or pretended. We know that the clergy of the Roman church, have always professed to work miracles: and we know that there are some of those works, which have all the marks of real miracles; so that if we deny the reality of them, and act on the same principles in every other part of our conduct, we must throw aside the evidence of testimony altogether. We know also, that many of their miracles have been proved to be mere deceptions, practised on the credulity of the ignorant. But whether these miracles are real or pretended,

they agree entirely with the description here given of the beast; and therefore none of their works can have the approbation of God. We know not how far the Almighty may suffer the powers of darkness to aid them, in their deception. The magicians of Egypt performed miracles, as well as Moses: but this fact did not prove that they, like Moses, had their commission from God. They were suffered, in that way, to deceive a wicked man to his ruin. The miracles of the Roman clergy are only another proof, in addition to many, that they belong to that establishment, here designated by the second beast. The powers of darkness are permitted to assist them in their works of deception, that they who have turned away their ears from the truth, may be led still further into error, and bring themselves to final destruction. The prophet Elijah commanded fire to come down from heaven, and those soldiers were destroyed, who had come to execute the unjust commands of an idolatrous and wicked king: but this beast is said to bring down fire from heaven in the sight of men, to persuade them, by the evidence of their senses, that he had the divine commission for all his works. We do not read in history, that any miracle of this description was ever publicly performed by the Roman hierarchy; but we know, that in all their public works, they have uniformly acted on the principle of showing forth their own glory; and that their great object was to induce mankind to worship the first beast. As, therefore, the fire which Elijah brought down from heaven, was intended to prove him to be a man of God; so the fire which the apostle saw the beast bringing down from heaven, is intended as an emblem of all his public works, by which he convinces the men of the earth that he has his authority from God.

But the glory of the beast was not completed, until he had a visible representation of himself, to be placed always before the eyes of his worshippers. As the heathen idolators could not be satisfied with an invisible god, and therefore they made images of wood and stone, to represent the objects of their worship; so, also, the worshippers of the beast required a visible object; and they found this object among the Roman hierarchy. The miracles they performed gave them so much power over the minds of men generally, that they were completely deceived, and had no doubt that the power of the clergy was from God; and therefore they received and obeyed all their mandates without hesitation. It is said, concerning this second beast, that he deceiveth

them that dwell on the earth, by means of those miracles, which he had power to do in the sight of the beast, "saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword and lived." The making of this image was a work of time, and the beast was long in existence and power, before the image was made. The western empire acquired its power by degrees, after it had almost sunk into ruins, by the separation of the east from the west, and by the inundation of the barbarians. It received its power and splendor by the union of the ten kingdoms. Then the clergy grew into power, and became a constituent part of the government; and afterwards the bishop of Rome became the visible head of the empire: and all these things took place when the mortal wound, which the empire had received, was fresh in the memory of all. The recovery of the beast from his wound, is here adduced, as a reason why so much honor should be paid to him. The healing of this wound appeared, in the eyes of all, to be miraculous; and this, combined with the miraculous works of the clergy, enabled them to persuade the world, that the bishop of Rome was appointed by heaven to be the visible head of the church. Thus he appeared to be clothed with divine authority, and became, by the voice of the people, and not by any decree of the Roman emperor, the infallible judge of controversies, and the vicegerent of the most High. It is, indeed, very probable, that the decree of the emperor Phocas might have increased his authority. It was not Phocas, however, that made the image to the beast, but those that dwell on the earth. His power was admitted by Phocas in the year 606, when he declared him the universal bishop; and it was afterwards still more generally admitted, in the eighth century, when he became a temporal prince, and three of the ten kingdoms were put under his control.

Thus the great antichristian system was completed, and the man of sin was seated in the temple of God. But still it must be kept in mind, that the 1260 years of the reign of the beast is not to be reckoned from the time in which the image was made, nor from the time in which the second beast rose out of the earth. It commenced immediately, when the first beast rose out of the sea. Under the reign of the first beast, the fluctuating and perturbed condition of the empire was composed; the waters assuaged, and the dry land appeared. Then the second beast arose, and afterwards the image was made by his influence: and hence

it appears plainly, that the year 590 is not at all too early for the date of the rise of the beast. Gregory the first, who assumed the pontifical robes in that year, may perhaps have been too humble and too good a man, to suffer himself to be formed into an image for the beast; but his immediate successors were not so scrupulous. They were generally ambitious enough to grasp at any thing which would increase their power; and the honor of being the head of a government that ruled the world, was a bait too precious not to be caught at with avidity.

Every one who is at all conversant in the history of those times, must be struck with astonishment, at the agreement between the facts and the description given in the prophecy. The Roman clergy did make the most strenuous and persevering exertions, to put life or spirit into this image of the beast. They labored to give him influence and authority among mankind. They carried his bulls and decretals over the world, and proclaimed their divine authority every where in their preaching; and if any one refused to reverence them as divine, their whole power was exerted to destroy him. He must either lose his life, or his influence among mankind. He must die, either literally or politically. Thus "it was given to the two horned beast to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed."

This two horned monster, with the living and speaking image, proceeded to impress their mark on all who were under their authority. "He causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads; and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name." Those that would not receive the mark in some way, either in their foreheads or in their hands, were deprived of the common privileges enjoyed by the civil community. They were not only cut off from the church, but they were placed under temporal disabilities, by which they were deprived of many of the comforts of life. If at any time we find obscurity in this prophecy, and do not clearly see the meaning, we should always recur to the emblem, as a perspective glass, through which the object may be viewed; and there is no doubt that we shall find it, and see it plainly after a few trials. This is a description of things which the apostle saw in the vision. He beheld the two horned beast, and

the living image of the beast with seven heads and ten horns, sitting on the throne of the dragon. He saw all classes and denominations of men, gazing, with wonder, astonishment, and delight, at the new authorities which were placed over them. When, therefore, they saw the second beast performing so many wonderful works, and especially when they saw him bring down fire from heaven, in the presence of all, they immediately recognized him as the commissioned messenger of God, and set about the execution of his orders with the greatest alacrity and cheerfulness. They soon made an image of the first beast, and he immediately put life or spirit into it; so that the image could speak and act, as if it were the beast himself. Then he proceeded to impress a mark on all the multitude, that they might be known to be his subjects. There appeared to be some who were not willing to receive this mark, and they were immediately disfranchised, and not suffered to buy or sell. This is the scene which the apostle beheld in his vision, and we also may see it by the description he has given.

The first beast is that combination of temporal and spiritual power, which formed the government of Rome, after the ten kingdoms were united. The second beast is the body of the clergy, who united for the support of the former power: the image is the pope, or the visible head of the clergy and of the government; and the mark is the outward profession of attachment and obedience to the reigning religion. It appears to have been customary, in those times, for slaves to be branded with the name of their master, for soldiers to be marked with the name of their commander, and even for different trades and professions to have some mark, by which they might be known; and the symbol is therefore taken from the common custom of the times. But the meaning is, plainly, the profession of attachment; and it is of little importance how or where the mark appeared, whether on the forehead or the right hand. Every one must show his attachment to the reigning power, or else forfeit his claim to the rights and privileges of the other members of the community.

We can readily conceive of the operation of this principle, from what we see in the world at the present time, and from the feelings which operate in our hearts, when we are tempted to forsake our duty, by the prospect, on the one hand, of honor, profit, or pleasure, and on the other, of shame and persecution. Although none of the religious sects of the present time have risen to the same degree of

power to which the church of Rome formerly attained, and therefore are not able to bestow on their votaries so many worldly advantages, or to cause those who refuse to unite with them to suffer so many inconveniences and troubles; yet we see the same spirit operating, to a certain extent, among almost all classes of christians, and especially among the numerous and powerful sects; and thus, in proportion to their power, they also cause all men to receive their mark. Such a mark is frequently a passport to office in the state; and therefore the wise politicians, who have no real regard for any religious sect, but only desire popular favor, that they may be the better able to accomplish their purposes, will frequently take the mark of some numerous and powerful sect; and by this means they are sure of the suffrages of a large number of the community. This lure is as often held out, under various forms, by the different sects of christians, as ever it was in any age; and the mark of the beast is as certainly received, in this way, by immense multitudes, as it was received in Rome, when she ruled the world. Some wear the mark on their foreheads, and thus openly and boldly avow their attachment to the reigning fashionable religion of the times; and others have it on their right hands, that they may bring it forward when they judge it proper or convenient: but the fact is evident, that the mass of those who profess an attachment to any kind of christianity, have nothing more than the mark of the beast.

The beast is not to be considered merely as an emblem of the Roman church; but also of other churches, who act from the same spirit, and follow the same corrupt practices. It is true, there are not many of these beasts, that have grown to such enormous dimensions, and have their powers so well organized for deceiving the world, and leading them into captivity: yet it is a fact, that some of them have the second beast with two horns, and others have gone so far as to make a visible image; while most of them endeavor, by the same methods practised in the Roman church, to impress their mark on all classes of mankind.

The apostle, having described this spiritual and mystical power, by these various symbolical representations, gives us a kind of enigma, in the last verse of this chapter, in order to exercise the ingenuity of those who have understanding, and love to develop the mysteries of prophecy. "Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: and his number is six hundred three score and six." In the

days of the apostle, the ten Arabic characters, by which numbers are now generally expressed, had not come into universal use among the Greeks and Romans. It was the universal practice in the ancient ages, to express numbers by the letters of the alphabet. Hence every letter had the idea of some particular number attached to it; and thus, when figures or cyphers came into use, the names of persons and things were sometimes expressed by them also. As every letter corresponded to a certain number, when those numbers were added together, the sum was said to be the number of the name. The beast is therefore described, not only by symbols, but the numbers corresponding to the letters of his name are added, and the sum is 666. This is the amount, when the letters in the Greek alphabet have the numbers corresponding to them added together. The wisdom or ingenuity is therefore discovered, by finding a name, the letters of which, when added, will amount to the number 666. The discovery appears to have been made soon after the days of the apostle. Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, who flourished in the second century, tells us, that the Greek word *Lateinos*, answering to the Latin name *Latinus*, which, in English, we call *Latin*, will, when the numbers corresponding to the letters are added, exactly make 666. The same is the fact with respect to the Hebrew word *Romiith*, which has the same signification. It has, indeed, been objected to this way of solving the enigma, that the word *Lateinos* ought to be written *Latinos*. But this, every one who is conversant with the Greek and Latin languages, knows to be erroneous; for the long *i*, in the *Latin*, is always, by the ancient Greek writers, expressed by the diphthong *ei*: therefore, the word is properly written *Lateinos*. But Doctor Adam Clarke, a late expositor of scripture, wishing to remove every ground of objection, has shown us, that the Greek phrase, *he Basilcia Latine*, (the Latin kingdom,) will also make the number 666. But as this is said to be the number of a man; and as the word *Lateinos* designates every individual of that kingdom, the ancient interpretation ought to be preferred. The meaning will appear plainly from the following form:

L A T E I N O S.

$$30+1+300+5+10+50+70+200=666.$$

R U M I I T H.

$$200+6+40+10+10+400=666.$$

But although there can be no doubt nor hesitation in any unbiassed mind, with respect to the chief and prominent

subject of this description; it must also be seen, that every other church, which follows the example of the Roman harlot, by introducing man's inventions into God's worship; thus "devising to change times and laws," and taking into her own hands the authority which belongs only to the Lord Jesus Christ, is also implicated in this description. The very name, "Babylon the great," shows, that there are smaller Babylons scattered over the world; and the phrase, "mother of harlots," shows that she has many daughters, who follow the same evil practices. As the church of Rome is called the Antichrist, by way of eminence; so there are also many other Antichrists: and where shall we expect to find them, if not in the large popular churches, who take every means in their power to induce the world to join their communion; and for this purpose corrupt the worship of God, that it may please the popular taste. There are, it is true, and there always have been, also some singular characters, who interpret the scriptures differently from the rest of the world, and lay hold on some doubtful passage, which seems to suit their views; and thus endeavor to form parties in religion, and become the leaders of different sects. In all times there have been heresies, and these always increase as the larger bodies become corrupted. But there is a certain stage in corruption, in which it may be said, "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint; when from the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores, that have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." According to the tenor of prophecy, this last stage of moral corruption is to be expected in the latter days, or in the period just preceding the millennium. This time, therefore, in which we live, is that very period. The exertions which have been making to circulate the scriptures, to propagate the gospel, and to convert the heathen to christianity, is no proof to the contrary. When we give all these exertions their full weight, and their full degree of praise, they amount to very little. Perhaps there never was a time when greater exertions were made to convert the world to christianity, than in that period when the beast first was rising into power. They were then much more successful in making converts than they are at this time. But the gospel, which they preached, was mingled with the wine of Babylon, and this rendered it palatable; and the nations drank of it, with avidity. Had not those ingredients been mingled with it, they would have cast it aside in dis-



gust. This is precisely the case with the world in the present days. The worship of God, and the doctrines of religion, which are propagated, are all mingled with the wine of Babylon: hence the propagators appear to be successful, and are much applauded for their zeal and their labors; but if the truth were fully known, it would appear that they have extended the kingdom of the beast, more than that of the Lord Jesus Christ.

From the facts which are constantly exhibited before us, there can be drawn but one of two conclusions: either, that many truths of God's word are of no great importance, and that he has given the churches full latitude, to offer any kind of worship they please to him; or else the christian church is, at this moment, a mass of error and corruption: and there are almost as many beasts as there are sects and denominations. No honest and intelligent mind will be at a loss which of these conclusions to adopt. What then, can we expect in these latter days, but a series of terrible judgments, which shall purify the church, by cutting off the corrupted parts of it. It is altogether vain to hope for any radical change, by pointing out the errors of mankind. Every thing of this nature is supposed to proceed from disappointed ambition. Every thing that savors of religious controversy is offensive to the public mind; and when men fall into error, and become attached to a false religion, there is scarcely a possibility of conviction ever reaching their hearts. In fact, the only ground of hope for the regeneration of the world, is in the last plagues, or the vials of the wrath of God. When these are poured out, and multitudes swept away in their wickedness, after being made a terror to themselves, and to all around them; and all others who shall see their plagues, the inhabitants of the world will begin to learn righteousness, and know that there is a God who judgeth in the earth.

In the following chapters, we shall see the means which God has appointed for the renovation of the world, by the destruction of the wicked.

## PART II. DISSERTATION VI.

### ON THE XIV. OF THE REVELATION.

AND I saw, and behold, a Lamb was standing on the mount Zion, and with him 144,000, having the name of his Father written on their foreheads: and I heard a sound from the heaven, as a sound of many waters, and as a sound of great thunder; and I heard a sound of harpers harping with their harps: and they sang, as it were a new song, before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one was able to learn the song; but the 144,000, who were redeemed from the earth. These are they who were not defiled, &c.

The xi. and xiii. chapters may, according to the technical language of some commentators, be called synchronous; for they point out the condition of the world during the period of 1260 years. In the former chapter we see the true servants of God opposed and persecuted; and at the end of this period, or 1260 years from the time in which the witnesses began to prophesy, we see them put down, and driven out of power. In the latter, we see the triumph of error and falsehood, during the same period. We have seen that the witnesses began to prophesy, when the beast began to rise, and that they were prophesying about 30 years before he came into full power; and that therefore, as the witnesses are said to be slain at the end of 1260 years, after they began to prophesy, and that the beast continues in power for 1260 years: so the whole period of his influence among mankind is 1290 years. "After this, he shall be slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame." But it will be seen, according to this calculation, that, during the latter 30 years, the witnesses are to be slain, to rise, and to ascend to heaven. In the first part of this period, they are to lie in the streets, for three years and a half. During this short time, truth is trampled under foot: but for the remaining part, or twenty-six years and a half, it will rise into influence and respect, and the true church of God shall be a large and respectable number of all christian nations. This is the period to which this chapter particularly relates.

Most commentators indeed, suppose, that this first vision in this chapter, is intended to exhibit the condition of the

true church during the whole reign of the beast; the second vision to the times of the reformation; and the last to times that are still future: but there is strong reason to believe, that if these respectable commentators were all now living in the world, they would see cause to change their opinion. In the year 1758, when Bishop Newton published his dissertations, the benefits of the reformation were still seen and felt, in the religious world. There was not so much corruption in the protestant churches, as there is in the present time. The current of fashionable charity did not then run over the world, like an overwhelming torrent, and sweep away the landmarks between truth and error. It was then generally believed, that true religion would still have a large number to support it, in the very worst of times; and that the reformation was such an important event as to deserve a particular notice in the prophecy. But although the era of the reformation is deservedly hailed, as the time when truth burst the bars of the prison, in which she had been confined during the dark ages; yet, like all persons who have been kept for many years in the dark, she could not see the objects with that degree of distinctness and accuracy, which is always necessary to produce a correct and permanent impression. Some of the prominent doctrines of christianity were indeed clearly seen and understood by Luther and Calvin, and the other fathers of the reformation: but on many important subjects, their views were dark and obscure, and their opinions erroneous. As they themselves differed in many things, and pursued different courses, so their followers continued in the same paths of error, and proceeded from bad to worse, until at the present time, there is but little difference between catholics and many protestants. Religion is every where corrupted with human inventions, and, as to morality, we are but little superior to the members of the Roman church. The reformation contained in itself the seeds of its declension. The fruit has now come to maturity, and we know the kind of seed which produced it. It would have scarcely been possible for all the power of satan, to have put down the witnesses, had it not been for the divisions which took place among them in the time of the reformation. That same sectarian zeal, which now operates among large bodies, did then work in the hearts of the leaders; and as their views on certain subjects were different, they soon began to oppose one another; and their opposition was frequently carried on with much rancor and bitterness. They knew that they were bound

“to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints:” but their own selfish passions were frequently mingled in the contention, and they too frequently contended for victory rather than for the faith. We have seen the faults of our fathers, and have discovered, that nothing can be gained, either for ourselves, or the cause of truth, by biting and devouring one another: but like the pendulum in its vibrations, we have not continued for a moment, in the safe and happy medium; but have moved to the extreme of charity: and this has occasioned the slaying of the witnesses.

But still the efforts of the reformers were an important preparation, in the providence of God, for the scenes which are soon to be realized in the christian world. It was like the dawning of the morning, in which the verge of the horizon is tinged with light; but afterwards all becomes obscure, by the collecting and thickening clouds, which are too gross and dense to be dispelled in a moment. Thus the darkness becomes greater than before, until at length the sun rises, and all obscurity is driven away. In this view the reformation may be considered as a preparative to the accomplishment of this prophecy. There werê then a large number comparatively, who may have been seen standing with the Lamb on mount Zion; and then also the angels were seen flying in the midst of heaven, proclaiming their different messages to mankind. It was the dawning of the great work, which shall appear, and spread rapidly over the world, in the latter days.

The accomplishment of this prophecy is yet future, but it is fast hastening on; and we may see so much of the commencement of it, as may serve to show us its true nature. The apostle beheld a lamb, no doubt the same which he had seen near the throne of God, and the same who opened the seven seals. This lamb was standing on Mount Zion; and there were with him 144,000 persons, who were marked in their foreheads with his Father’s name. The Son of God is here represented in his character of Redeemer; and the large company who were with him represent the true servants of God, some short period after the witnesses shall have risen from the dead. There has still been, in the worst of times, and there is at present, a respectable number of such characters in the world, who have not joined in the corruptions of the church: for the witnesses, who prophesy in sackcloth, are not the whole church of God; but a certain class of christians, whom he prepares and endows with gifts for this par-

ticular purpose. In one sense, they may be said to comprehend the whole church, as the apostles were, for a certain time, the church: but still, at the same time, there were many thousands of the true servants of God scattered over the land of Judea. So, also, at the time when the witnesses were slain, there were many true christians besides them; and when they rise from the dead, there are, of course, many besides them, who have not arrived to the same degree of light, and of knowledge of the scriptures, as to be able to stand up and exhibit the truth in the face of all opposition. These 144,000 represent those christians, who, in the times of corruption, and the declension of christianity, have not suffered themselves to be led away, by the vices and follies of the christian world. In this latter age, as soon as the witnesses shall have risen, and be ascending to heaven, there will be seen a large and respectable number of this kind of christians. In the present state of degeneracy, every true witness is apt to complain, with Elijah, "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away." But even in this age of degeneracy, God says, "I have reserved for myself 144,000 in Israel; all the knees which have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." There is still a number, out of all sects and denominations, who have not fully consented to, and approved of, the errors and corruptions which have been introduced into the worship of God; and when the witnesses shall stand up, and vindicate the truth, they shall find many more of the friends of truth than they had anticipated. God has marked his people for himself; and although they may not appear when the churches are scattered, yet, like an army which has been defeated and dispersed, there are many who still continue faithful to their commander; and when the standard is again raised, and the banners unfurled, there will still be found a large number to rally round it. Thus, when the Redeemer was taken, condemned, and crucified, there was not one of his disciples who could stand up to support his cause. They were dispirited and dejected, but they were far from consenting to the wicked works of the high priests and the Jews; and we find that when the standard of the Redeemer was afterwards raised, and the truth proclaimed, by the apostles, many thousands came forth, and avouched the cause, which,

a few weeks before, was laid prostrate in the dust. Such things will appear, on a still larger scale, in these latter times. Whenever the truth shall find witnesses and defenders, God will find a large number of christians, who have not really departed from his true worship, nor have been corrupted in their faith by the errors of the times.

Mount Zion does not signify any particular part of the earth. It was the place where the Israelites met for worship. The temple, and the city of David were both built on it. It was therefore considered as holy ground. But in this dispensation of the gospel, no part of the earth is more sacred than another. "The hour cometh," said the Redeemer to the woman of Samaria, "when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." Mount Zion is therefore the emblem of the true church of Christ, and of all the parts of the earth where they assemble. The dispersed of Israel shall again be collected, the worship shall be restored to its ancient purity, the inventions of men shall be discarded, and God shall be worshipped by his people, in spirit and truth, according to his own ordinances. We may infer, from the mentioning of a certain number, that there will be some such proportion between the true worshippers and nominal christians, as between 144,000 and the whole number of the Israelites, at the end of certain periods of declension, and when the truth was beginning to prevail. As, in the times of Elijah, there were 7000 who were not seduced into idolatry, by the errors which prevailed in the reign of Ahab and Jezebel, and it is very natural to suppose that when Baal's prophets were destroyed, the number would greatly increase; so in this period, which is just at hand, the number of true worshippers will be greatly multiplied. God writes his name on the foreheads of his people, in the same sense in which the beast puts his mark on his followers, only the mark of God's people is always on their foreheads. He not only marks them for his own, but shows them to the world as his true servants; and he sends forth the spirit of his Son into their hearts, whereby they cry Abba, Father! There is a powerful effect produced on the heart and habits, and even on the outward appearance, by faithful and diligent attendance on the true worship of God. Meekness and simplicity, the practice of the christian virtues, the constant exercise of true devotion, and the study of the word of God, will at length form such a character,

and even give such a visible aspect to the countenance, that it might be said the name of God is written on the foreheads of those who live in such practices. It was thus that the primitive christians were distinguished; and we are here informed that many such characters shall spring up in the world in these latter days.

After the apostle had seen this multitude of true worshippers, standing with the Lamb on mount Zion, his attention was drawn to the heavens, where the throne of God was erected, and the four and twenty elders and the four living creatures were assembled. The worshippers of God in the heavens, and the 144,000 on the earth, seemed to unite in the praises of God, and in the most lively and animated devotion. It seemed, in the first place, like the noise of the ocean, or the rushing of some mighty cataract; and again a thundering noise was heard, from the loud hosannas and the swelling notes of praise. The harps of David were there, and many were engaged in playing on those instruments. The whole seemed like one of the great annual festivals at the temple. The apostle remarked, that they all joined in a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and the elders. God and his church in the heavens, are represented as listening with attention to this performance, and even sitting as judges; for it seems there were other persons besides the 144,000, who attempted to join in this new song; but they were not able to learn it. It is very important for us to consider and understand the meaning of this representation; for it certainly relates to the praises of the church in these latter days. It relates to the substance of the worship, and not to the artful tuning of the voice, the harmony of sounds, or the melody which pleases the ear. It is the internal melody of christian devotion in the praises of God. By learning this song, we are not to understand the learning of the words, or the manner of singing; but the sentiments contained in it, and the tuning of the heart to offer up spiritual melody. It is learning to sing to the true glory of God.

In the performance of this delightful exercise of devotion, the chief regard must be paid to the sentiments which we sing, and the agreement of our hearts with those sentiments. In this song the sentiments are said to be new, and of such a nature, that they cannot be learned by any but those who stand with the Lamb on mount Zion; that is, with those who are in the habit of worshipping according to God's own ordinances. As there is no authority given in any part

of the word of God, for the making of a new song to be sung in his worship, and as this song must have been made and learned before it could be sung; so it may be fairly inferred that they did not make it themselves; but that it is to be found in the devotional songs of the scriptures. It certainly does not mean any devotional songs of human contrivance; for none of them, in the sense of the scripture, could be called a new song. We have indeed many compositions, every where in the churches, which profess to be new; but the novelty with which they recommend themselves, is certainly very different from the scriptural sense of the word in this place. They are much more suitable for those worshippers who have itching ears; who turn away from the truth and are turned into fables, than for those who love the word of God, and desire to worship him in spirit and in truth. The composition may be new, it may have a certain smoothness of language, and something which charms the ear and the fancy, which is not to be found in the songs of inspiration; but they do not continue to be new. They soon become like a garment that has been worn, and is not only faded, but threadbare. But this new song is one, that continues to be new. This is a representation of the worship of the true church of God, not for a day or for a short period; but for years and ages; and their song is always new and always the same. It is not a series of hymns made for one particular occasion and circumstance of the church, but a series of inspired songs, which shall be the subject matter of the praises of the church, both in this world and through eternity. In a word, this new song is the old song, which God made for the church, as he made the commandments: in one sense it is old, and in another it is always new. "Brethren," says this same apostle, "I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment, which ye had from the beginning.—Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you; because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." This is the sense in which christians in these latter times, will sing a new song, while they sing the same song, which was sung by the apostles and prophets, and the true church of God, in all the ages that are past. In fact, the darkness which has covered those divine songs is even now passing away, and the true light is already beginning to shine into the understanding and the hearts of the true worshippers of God. There is a beauty and glory, as well as an adaptation in them, for christian worship, which has not generally been seen in



the ages that are past. In this respect, as well as in many others, darkness has covered the earth and gross darkness the nations. It is more than a century, since this darkness began to cover the minds of christians, with regard to these sacred songs. It has long since been observed by one, who was very capable of making correct observations on christian worship; although he unhappily made a bad use of his powers; that, "to see the dull indifference, the negligent and the thoughtless air, that sits upon the faces of a whole assembly, while the psalm is on their lips, might tempt even a charitable observer, to suspect the fervency of inward religion; and it is much to be feared, that the minds of most of the worshippers are absent or unconcerned." These observations were made before human inventions in the praises of God, were brought into the churches generally; and the psalms of scripture supplanted. Men of observation saw and deplored the darkness, which in this respect, was then spreading itself over the minds of the worshippers: but the means they took to remedy the evil, increased it beyond measure, and rendered it incurable. Instead of explaining the psalms, and calling the attention to their spiritual meaning, they cast them out of the churches, as if they were not fit for christian devotions, and adopted the composesures of darkened and blinded mortals like themselves; and thus while they thought they were learning to sing this new song, they were only indulging a vain and enthusiastic dream.

There is, perhaps, no part of worship, which so powerfully affects the heart, as the sentiments we sing in the praises of God. In this part of worship, we must always have the sentiments reduced to some form, and addressed to the eye as well as to the ear. They must not only be received into the heart, and thus made our own; but they should be used with a certain fervor of feeling, by which a deep impression will be made on our minds. Therefore, it is a most important consideration, to have such sentiments to offer to God in our devotional songs, as are agreeable and pleasing in his sight. The man who understands this subject, and knows the danger of error, will not take the sentiments he sings in God's worship, from any human being. He will never dare to use any songs in God's worship, but those which he knows to have proceeded from God, and to have been given by him for this very purpose.

The latitudinarian principles which have prevailed, for so many years, on this subject, have produced the most fatal

effects on the christian world. The very feelings which lead men to think, there is no danger in laying aside the book, which we know was given by divine inspiration, and preferring other books, all of which have erroneous sentiments in them, manifest a kind of pride and self-sufficiency, which prove that the heart has already begun to be corrupted. But the corruption proceeds, with powerful and fatal influence, from generation to generation; and by these novel inventions, a new religion is finally produced, which is essentially different from that of the ancient saints of God. The Psalms of scripture are truly not suited to express the feelings of modern devotion: but this very fact, so far from proving the correctness of the present popular devotional feelings, proves that christians generally have not learned the new song of the 144,000. This new religion, which has crept, unawares, into the churches, does not proceed from more enlarged and luminous views of the scriptures than our forefathers had attained, but rather from ignorance of the scriptures, and a false illumination, which affords a temporary brightness, but leaves the mind in thicker and blacker darkness than that in which it was formerly involved. The Lord Jesus Christ exhorts his disciples to strive to enter in at the strait gate; for, says he, I say unto you, many shall seek to enter, and shall not be able. From the very same cause, men are not able to learn this new song. Their understandings and their hearts, their feelings and their habits, all have acquired such a bias, such a fatal tendency, that without some more powerful operations of the Holy Spirit than God has usually given, they cannot be changed, and brought back to the scriptural standard of devotion. Their minds are so greatly darkened, that they cannot see the spirit and meaning of the Psalms of scripture; and as they have not labored, in this sense, to enter in at the strait gate, so they become, at length, entirely incapacitated for that kind of labor. It is one thing to repeat the words of the Psalms, and another thing to enter into their spirit. In this sense, there are, even now, many who cannot, and many who will not, learn the new song of the 144,000.

Errors in religion are very frequently the fatal consequences of errors in morality. Men of impure minds, and immoral habits, when they turn their attention to religion, are always ready to fall in with the prevailing errors of the times; and they are suffered to deceive themselves, in their religious feelings and sentiments, as a just punishment for the iniquities of the former part of their lives: but on the

other hand, those who study to keep their consciences pure, and void of offence, both towards God and man, are never suffered to fall into any fatal religious error. In the present state of the world, there is, perhaps, no greater barrier in the way of pure and undefiled religion, than those impure and lascivious desires, which are generated in the minds of youth, and which have a powerful influence in their hearts, through the remaining part of their lives. In this respect, the youth of the present age are corrupted beyond all preceding example. The unlawful intercourse of the sexes, and the impure desires which are indulged by many, who are, perhaps, not guilty of the actual sin, contribute more to defile the heart, and unfit it for the reception of the pure gospel, than perhaps any other vice. But those who stand with the Lamb are persons, who either have not been guilty of this sin, or have been purified from its corrupting influence. "These are they who were not defiled with women; for they are virgins." The word rendered virgins, is of both genders. It signifies that those persons are of both sexes, and are really uncentaminated by the abounding and prevailing vice of incontinence: and as fornication is frequently used to signify the corruption of the worship of God, so we are also taught, that in all their religious principles and practices, they are pure and uncorrupted.

"These are they who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." By this emblem, we see their character as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. The representation of this large number following the Lamb, is designed to show us the life of true christians in their public capacity. Like all large bodies of mankind, they must be divided into smaller companies, and be under the conduct of different leaders; but they still keep their eyes fixed on the Lamb, and follow their leaders, only as they follow him. They will not suffer any spiritual guide to have an undue influence over their principles or their practice. They will be directed, in their worship, only by the authority of Jesus Christ, and will not be seduced by the inventions of men.

"These were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and the Lamb." The word redemption, as used in the scriptures, is nearly of the same import with the word salvation. The latter, in its full extent, signifies deliverance from all and every kind of evil, but has respect chiefly to the divine power, which operates on the heart of the saved sinner, and by which he is enabled to overcome the whole power of the adversary: the former has reference

to the price which was paid for our deliverance. Those who are redeemed are purchased by the blood of Christ, and delivered or saved by the power of God. These characters are said to have been redeemed from the earth, or ransomed, and brought out from the power of earthly, carnal principles, and all the influences of the corrupted christian world. God has determined, that in the latter days, the whole world shall bring forth the fruits of righteousness to his glory: so these characters are the first fruits of this blessed and glorious dispensation. As the Israelites always presented the first fruits to God, before the harvest was ripe, so these are the first fruits preceding the last joyful harvest of the gospel, when the whole world shall be consecrated to God and the Lamb.

“And in their mouth was found no guile; for they are without fault before the throne of God.” It is an important and consolatory truth, although it was pronounced by a wicked prophet, that “God has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither has he seen perverseness in Israel.” He looks on his people in the face of their Redeemer, and their sins are imputed to him; and therefore, in this sense, they are faultless before the throne of God. But this is a description of moral character. We are not told that they had no sin; for there is no man that sinneth not. The most perfect of the family of Adam must confess, with the apostle, “I know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.” “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” But still it is a truth, that no guile is found in the mouth of those who stand with the Lamb on mount Zion. Guile, or craft, or fraud, is not found in them. Their profession exhibits a just view of the state of their hearts. They profess to be the followers of the Lamb, and they have really determined to follow him. Every man has guile in his mouth, who indulges any kind of iniquity, or rolls any sin, as a sweet morsel, under his tongue. Such a man can never be spotless before God, because his heart is defiled. He cannot say, with truth, “I delight in the law of God after the inward man;” for he loves sin, and his prayer is impure. But these are the characters of whom the Psalmist describes the blessedness, when he says, “Blessed is the man, to whom the Lord will not impute iniquity, and in whose heart there is no guile.”

This prophecy shall be fully accomplished, when the witnesses shall have risen and ascended to heaven. We may see a little of the accomplishment of it at this moment.

The first step towards purifying the church, is to give christians a full view of the corrupting influences which operate on their minds. This is to be done, in the first place, by the witnesses, whom God will raise up and qualify for this purpose, and send them through the whole church, commanding them to cry aloud and spare not; to show his people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins. Something of this kind is now beginning to operate, and the iniquities of men are coming to light. As this work continues and grows, some will forsake their sins, and turn to the Redeemer with perfect hearts: and thus the number who stand with the Lamb will always increase, until they shall become a great multitude, that no man can number.

From this view of the subject, it is not difficult to see the truth presented in the second vision contained in this chapter. "I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people; saying, with a loud voice, fear God, and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of water." It is plain, that if the first prophecy be still future, the second must also present things that are at greater distance in futurity. But if we look, with any kind of accuracy, at the condition of the world, and not suffer ourselves to be blinded by that spurious charity, which mistakes error for truth, and puts darkness for light, and light for darkness, we must be convinced that the present worshipping assemblies of professed christians are not generally composed of such characters as those who stand with the Lamb. But this is a description of christian assemblies, who keep the worship pure, who discountenance all error, and yet have brilliant prospects before them, and are increasing in number continually. It will evidently require many years, before the true church of God shall arrive at such a degree of purity, respectability, and honor, as is here represented; and not until that change be effected, shall the angel be seen flying through the midst of heaven. But still, as there is an obvious preparation now making, in the providence of God, for the accomplishment of the first prophecy, so the preparation for the second is no less obvious.

In the present unhappy condition of the world, the truth is so much mingled with error, light with darkness, and religion with enthusiasm, that it is impossible for any one to

tell, how far the religious excitements, and the exertions which are now making, for the propagation of the gospel, are calculated to promote the kingdom of God; and how far they have a tendency to destroy it. We know that in all these things there is a mixture of good and evil; and there is great reason to fear that the evil predominates. The various and numerous excitements, which are called revivals in religion, are well known to exist only where the gospel is in some degree corrupted, by the inventions of men; and that it is chiefly by such inventions they are excited. They continue for a short period, then pass away, and leave the district, where they have operated, in a worse moral condition than before. Some indeed may think they have received a great degree of spiritual benefit from them, but the community is always a sufferer. The missionaries, who are sent through the world, to propagate the gospel, are very few of them witnesses for the truth. Errors are mingled, in no very small portions, with the doctrines they preach; and human inventions with their worship. Even the bible itself, unaccompanied with a system of psalmody, fitted for true worship; although it may enlighten the minds of individuals, will not enable them, for many years to come, to conduct public worship according to God's commandments. It is true, that where the bible is received and studied, truth will finally prevail; error must at length fall, and the churches be purified: and although all these works are mingled with corruption; yet there is some preparation making for the final success and triumph of truth.

But the full accomplishment of this prophecy, is evidently subsequent to every thing, which has yet been done for the promotion of the gospel. The profession of christianity must first be made honorable, by a corresponding practice among christians; and a uniformity of worship must be established, according to the authority of God, before any permanent good effects can be produced. We have already proved that where an angel is used as the symbol of any being less dignified than the Son of God, we must always understand a plurality, or a combination of individuals. This angel signifies a number of ministers of the gospel, who shall go forth, like John the baptist, to prepare the minds of men for the reception of truth, and to show the judgments, which are coming on the world. John is indeed called a messenger, or an angel; but this is not an emblematic representation. This angel is plainly an emblem;

and the ministers whom he represents, shall go forth in the spirit and power of Elias, teaching men to fear God and give glory to him; because the hour of his judgment is at hand. As he is represented flying in the midst of heaven; so those ministers shall be exalted to a high degree of excellence in the moral world, and they shall make rapid progress in their work. There is something peculiar in the original words, which are here rendered, "having the everlasting gospel to preach," &c. It seems to mean the preaching of the gospel, with power and effect. They shall not be like the witnesses before they rose from the dead, the objects of hatred and contempt among mankind. A certain power shall accompany their preaching, which shall show, that they are not barely giving their testimony in favor of the truth; but carrying on an aggressive war against error and iniquity. They shall not be defenders of their own territories merely, but shall advance into the territory of the enemy, and lead the captives out of his dominions; while there shall be no power capable of making any effectual resistance. They shall march with power through the nations, and every where the truth shall be triumphant.

Their message has something in it more powerful and alarming, than the usual method of preaching the gospel. It is not the rant of enthusiasm, which carries the mind through the imaginary scenes of terror, and paints horrors that have no existence; nor is it the whining cant of hypocrisy, which prophesies smooth things, and leads men to hope for salvation by a constant routine of ceremonies and forms: but it consists in calling the attention of mankind to duties which have been long neglected, and to real causes of alarm and terror. The call to mankind "to fear God and give glory to him," supposes that they have in a great degree lost the fear of God, and that they do not give glory to him as they ought. The call is addressed chiefly and especially to the christian world. It is true that all peoples, kindreds, and tongues, are included; but the address is made chiefly to them that dwell on the earth; that is, to earthly men, who are nominally christians, or who live in christian countries. This will be abundantly evident, when we come to consider the messages of the two following angels. It destroys the whole force of the message, and distorts and dislocates every joint of the prophecy, to suppose that this angel means missionary exertions or attempts to convert the heathen exclusively. This indeed is a part of the message, and ought not to escape our notice; but it is

chiefly and especially addressed to the christian world. It is supposed, they have gone into such errors, as have in a great degree obliterated the fear of God from their minds; and that they do not give glory to him in their worship. It is a fact that the present prevailing opinions in the religious world, do lead to the doctrine of universal salvation, by which men cast off the fear of God entirely; and it is no loss true, that every system of religion, which leads men to rely on their own works; or to use in their worship any forms which God has not appointed, gives the glory to the creature, and not to the Creator. But there is nothing which will effectually teach men to fear God, and give him glory, but his judgments. When the important truth is proclaimed, and full proof brought forward to convince the world, that the terrible judgments of God are at hand; then some effect will be produced by the preaching of the gospel. Those ministers who stand on the watch-tower of prophecy, and are thus elevated above the rest of the world; will be enabled to see the judgments before they are executed, and will sound the alarm. Then the sinners in Zion, who have cast off the fear of God, will be afraid; fearfulness shall seize on the hypocrites. They shall ask with trembling and consternation, "who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"

This message also supposes, that the christian world have forsaken the true worship of their Maker: for they are commanded to "worship him, who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." Worship ought always to be rendered to God as the Creator of all things. Although it may appear strange, yet it is nevertheless true, that a very small number of worshippers, comparatively, do render to God, in their worship, the glory which is due to him, as the Creator of all things. Most men, when they think or speak of creation, mean nothing more than the six days' work, or the formation of the heavens and the earth. But creation, in its full sense, comprehends the formation of all creatures, and the ordering, directing, and bringing to pass, of all events. It comprehends even more than the ideas which are generally attached to creation and providence. "I create," says God, "the fruit of the lips." "This people have I formed for myself: they shall show forth my praise." "The Lord hath made all things for himself; even the wicked for the day of evil." So the four and twenty elders proclaim, in their worship, "Thou art



worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created." Hence, when the world is commanded to worship him that made the heaven, &c., it is added, and the fountains of waters, or the fountain of the great deep; the springs at the bottom of the ocean; the reservoirs by which the sea is supplied. He not only created the natural fountains or springs of the ocean, but the moral springs, from which all events proceed. We should always endeavor to realize the great and fundamental truth, that all creatures, and all events that take place in the course of providence, derive their existence from God, and that his glory shall be promoted by his judgments, as well as by his mercy. The great system of creation and providence, comprehending all good and all evil, proceeds originally from him; and while he is in no sense the author or approver of any evil work, in any of his creatures, yet all works, and all events, come into existence precisely as he had appointed them. We are here commanded to take this subject into serious consideration, in every act of worship; and thus to live in the constant practice of rendering to God the glory which is due to him.

The worship of God is the most important of all the works in which men can be engaged; for it shall be the employment, through eternity, of all who are saved. Our condition and circumstances, in this world, are so ordered, that we have the opportunity of learning the true method of worship, and of habituating ourselves to the service of our Maker, while we live on the earth: and thus the true servants of God, when they pass from the sanctuary below, enter immediately into the sanctuary above, where they shall be forever engaged in the same delightful and glorious work. But the grand adversary, who delights in destroying the works of God, and who has been suffered to reign in this world, for nearly six thousand years, has always succeeded to lead the mass of mankind away from the true worship of God. This he has accomplished by various methods, in different ages. In these latter days, he has gained his object by corrupting christianity. He began this work of corruption even in the days of the apostles; and as christianity increased, and grew into power, the corruption also increased, until the outward visible church became, like ancient Babylon, the corrupter of the world. Instead of sending forth the streams of the waters of life among mankind, she has opened the fountains of death. There is deadly poison

mingled in the worship of most of the churches, which first intoxicates, and then destroys, every good principle out of the heart. But in these latter days, God has determined to destroy these works of wickedness, and to teach the world to worship him in truth and holiness. He will perform this work, in the first place, by showing mankind their errors, and exhibiting the true nature and method of worship: in the second place, he will lessen and destroy the influence of those who corrupt his worship, and lead the world into errors and delusions: and in the third place, all those who still continue and persevere in these works of evil, notwithstanding all the admonitions and warnings of his word, and the dispensations of his providence, shall be wasted and destroyed from the earth, by a series of judgments, and finally cast into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched.

The second messenger, therefore, announces the fall of Babylon. "And there followed another angel, 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 is the first place where Babylon is mentioned in the Revelation. In the xi. chapter, the corrupted church is denominated the great city, which spiritually is called, Sodom and Egypt, &c. In the language of symbols, as in alphabetical language, there are various words which have nearly the same ideas attached to them; and although they are not used indiscriminately; for the writer has always some design, in using one word rather than another; yet with some little variation, they convey the same ideas to the mind. The symbol of the city of Babylon, shows us the subject somewhat more clearly than the former similitude; especially as a full description is given in the xvii. and xviii. chapters. The same subject is there represented, by a woman on whose forehead was written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. The church of Rome is presented to the mind, under the similitude of a harlot, who has succeeded in corrupting the whole world; and who has many daughters engaged in the same abominable practices. It is true, that the protestant churches have professedly separated themselves from this mother of abominations; but if they still follow the same practices of the Roman church, and seduce mankind into errors, their professed separation is nothing; they are still the daughters of the Roman harlot. Hence,

when Babylon falls, all her daughters shall fall with her. The emblem of a city, as it presents the idea of a combination of men, associated for political purposes; and especially, when this city extends its power over a great number of kingdoms, shows us still more plainly, that the design of the spirit of God, in this annunciation of the fall of Babylon, is to show us the ruin of a great antichristian system, which has extended itself over the christian world. The fall of Babylon, is the fall of error and deception in all parts of the earth. This fall will probably commence in those parts of the world, where the church is the least corrupted; or where the mystery of iniquity has the least influence: and perhaps it may not be improper for us, to indulge the hope, that as the land in which we live, was the birth place and the nurse of civil liberty; so also in America, true religion shall first begin to flourish, and this spiritual and mysterious Babylon, shall first begin to lose her power. But wherever it may commence, and however it may operate, one thing is plain, that the fall of Babylon is the fall of false doctrines, and human inventions, in the worship of God. It is the putting down of every thing which has not the sanction of God's authority.

This fall of error commences with the discovery of truth. The time in which we live has been very properly called the age of discovery. Natural science has undergone almost a total revolution. A thousand important truths, that have been hid for ages, are now brought into light. The same process is going on, with respect to political science. The old systems, which have held the world in bondage, and riveted the chains of oppression on the poor and the ignorant, are now become old and feeble, and their power fast hastening to decay. The false systems of religion, which have every where been established, have also begun to appear in their true colors; and have already lost a considerable portion of their power. But the discovery of error is the first step to the discovery of truth. These discoveries may indeed be said generally, to go hand in hand, in their march over the world: but in religion, men generally come to the knowledge of their errors, while the true path is still covered with darkness. The intelligent and thinking part of the religious world, generally see that the churches are in bondage under antichristian systems; but they know neither the remedy, nor how it is to be applied. These discoveries are yet to be made, or rather the truth on these subjects is yet to be revealed. But still we may see, that preparation

is making in the providence of God, for the accomplishment of this prophecy, as well as those which preceded it. It is only a short period since the witnesses began to rise; but the effects are beginning to become visible, to all those who have kept their eyes fixed on the light, that shineth in a dark place. The progress of these latter ages, in the discovery of religious truth, will be more rapid, than any thing of the same kind, which has ever been seen in the world. It is now not quite seventy years, until Babylon shall be brought to utter desolation,—until the beast shall be slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. So, with becoming reverence, we may use the words of our Lord, “Verily, I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, until all these things shall be fulfilled.”

Babylon shall fall as a just punishment for her sins; because she corrupted the world. We are not to suppose that this spiritual power which has ruled the world, for so many ages, is a mere abstract principle; and that mankind shall be delivered from errors in religion, in the same manner as discoveries in natural science are generally introduced, and old systems exploded and abolished. In this sense, the fall of Babylon would mean only her loss of influence over the minds of men; and the world would be rescued from spiritual bondage, without the destruction of them that destroy the earth. But this is by no means, the meaning of this judgment, which is here announced by the fall of Babylon. It is not merely the fall of a spiritual power; but of a power that is embodied in the hearts and lives, of a large number of the most powerful and influential among mankind. The kings of the earth have committed fornication with this spiritual harlot; and the merchants of the earth are grown rich through the abundance of her delicacies; and all nations are made drunk with the wine of her fornication. All those who have given her their support, and have lived, and still continue to live, under the influence of her intoxicating principles, and idolatrous inventions, must fall with her. They shall fall in the first place into a greater and greater degree of moral evil, then into temporal calamities, and finally, into eternal destruction. This truth is presented to us still more plainly, in the xviii. chapter; where it is said, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, the hold of every foul spirit, and the cage of every unclean and hateful bird.” All who voluntarily put themselves under the influence of human inventions in their worship, who receive false doctrines, or countenance and

encourage any kind of false religion, shall be left under the power of iniquity, without the restraining grace of God: and thus they shall become exceedingly corrupted, in their hearts and lives. Every church of this description, shall become a synagogue of satan. God's holy spirit will forsake them, and they shall be left under the influence of the spirits of darkness.

This being the nature of the fall of Babylon, it is of great importance to the world, to be warned of her fatal influence, and contagious example. Her fall is deep and dreadful, and she will drag down multitudes with her, to everlasting ruin. But when the punishment is just, and men are warned of the danger, if they should still continue in the same course, they will have no excuse whatever. The third angel is therefore seen in the heavens, declaring with a loud voice, that all may hear, and no one have the excuse of ignorance: "If any man worship the beast, or his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand; the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation: and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day nor night," &c. The worship of the beast in former times, when the Roman church had power over the world, consisted in subjection and attachment to that spiritual authority, which usurped the place of the Lord Jesus Christ. When the man of sin took his seat in the temple of God, he imposed new laws on the church, by his own authority; and those who would not obey these laws, nor recognise the authority from which they proceeded, were not admitted to the common privileges of citizens. Hence every man who loved this world so much, as to sacrifice the sense of duty to his regard for temporal things, always received the mark of the beast. But the very same principle operates at this time, through the whole christian world, and under every form of civil government. The man, who regards the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, will always show his disapprobation, of every thing contrary to the truth; and will take a determined stand against every kind of error and corruption of the worship of God. But such a character, in this age, as well as in former times, will always find a torrent of troubles, rolling its waves in opposition to him. Almost every day of his life, he will be obliged to make some sacrifice of his tem-

poral interest or comfort, in order to keep his conscience pure: and therefore the temptation to forsake the authority of the Redeemer, and receive the mark of the beast, is now as powerful as in any preceding age. The weak minded and unsteady, who have a great regard for the fashionable and prevailing religious opinions and practices, are in great danger of being led into error; while those, who stand at the head of society, are almost always actuated by a supreme regard for their own interest and standing in the world. They, of course, pursue those plans which have a tendency to promote their own views; and they always carry along with them, the mass of the ignorant and unreflecting: and thus the laws of the Redeemer are set aside, while the authority of man prevails.

The churches are filled with human devices and contrivances, and such is the force of the popular current that very few in any community, are possessed of so much moral courage as will enable them to resist it. Some are so infatuated by those false doctrines, and vain inventions in worship, that they openly boast of their attachment; and others express their feelings, only where they know they will be well received: thus some have the mark on their foreheads, and others on their right hands. Indeed, if we consider the principles by which the minds of men are generally actuated in their religious feelings, and compare them with the principles of those who first received the mark of the beast, it must appear evident that this beast, under the various and multiplied forms, which he now assumes, has more worshippers, than he had in any former age. The worldly interests of men, their own personal gratifications, their social enjoyments, their prospect of worldly honors, or some such carnal motives; and not submission to the Redeemer, and a conscientious sense of duty, seem to direct them in their choice and in their practice of religion; and whatever will not agree with these is cast aside and discarded for ever.

In the long-suffering and forbearance of God, the world has gone on in this sinful course from generation to generation. He has so long been silent, that they have begun to think him altogether such an one as themselves; and that he approves of, or winks at their sins. They have charity one for another, and cannot believe that such a vast number of the human family are in the road to destruction. The scriptures are so little studied, and when they are studied, they are generally so tortured, as to be made to speak in

such a manner, as to suit every opinion; and thus the plainest declarations of the word of God pass unregarded, when they seem to contradict any popular sentiment. We may now see plainly the force of that truth: "because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the sons of men, are fully set in them to do evil." But although the vengeance of God, may slumber for a time, it will finally awake in dreadful terrors, to them who continue in the practice of iniquity; and the time is at hand, when he will cause his stroke to fall on the hinder parts of his enemies, and cover them with everlasting shame. By the loud voice of these three angels, he proclaims the terrible doom which awaits them. In the first place, they shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, &c. We must not for a moment harbor the thought, that this warning is given only to the deluded votaries of the church of Rome. There are in fact many of them much better characters, than many others, who call themselves Protestants. The distinction between Protestant and Catholic, is, in this age, more nominal than real. The question is not, whether a man worships the great beast, and his image, who has his seat in the metropolis of the ten kingdoms: but whether he acts on the same principles with those who worship him. It is very certain that those who imbibe erroneous principles, and fall into errors and vices in this part of the world, would do the same things, if they lived under the inspection of the see of Rome; and that their deliverance from the dominion of the Pope, has not in the least altered their nature, or their character. These degenerate Protestants, are in fact greater sinners than the Papists; because, in the good providence of God, they have been delivered from that yoke of bondage, but have voluntarily gone back into errors of a similar nature. It has therefore happened unto them, according to the true proverb; the dog has returned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire.

This punishment is denounced against all classes of mankind in the christian world, those excepted, who are the true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ: for it is very plain that all men, except those who are actuated by a paramount sense of their duty to God, will, under the influence of temptation, act on the same principles of those who receive the mark of the beast. The man who does not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, will not suffer for his sake. He who does not so much as profess to keep his commandments,

will not, of course, feel the obligation of his authority. All men, who are destitute of christian principle, will act from a regard to their own interest, and therefore they will all receive the mark of the beast, under some form of religion, rather than yield to the truth. The scriptures do not speak so much of the outward forms of actions, as the principles from which they flow; and there can scarcely be a doubt, that every worldly minded man, every ambitious man, every man of pleasure, and, in fact, all men who have not taken up the cross of Christ, to bear it after him, are in principle, if not in the outward form, either worshippers of the beast or his image, or receive his mark in their forehead, or their right hand. The commandments of God are all spiritual, and all respect the principles of actions. Hence every man worships the beast, who suffers any other power to rule in his heart, besides the God that made him. There are degrees in the actings of this sinful principle. As the sin of murder is committed in principle, by every man who indulges a malevolent and spiteful disposition against his neighbor, so a man may be said, in this sense, to worship the beast, who indulges any dislike or hatred against the true worship of God. But this part of the scripture chiefly respects the habits which are already formed. It means, that if any man shall have formed such habits of disregard to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, and embraced any false principles, by which he has been led into some idolatrous practices, giving the creature the place in his heart, which is due to the Creator, and shall continue in these practices, until that period in which God shall begin to execute these tremendous judgments, then there is no longer any hope for him: he is cut off forever from the favor of God, and devoted both to temporal and eternal destruction.

The first part of the punishment will be executed in this world, when God shall pour out the vials of his wrath. Then every character of this description shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, &c. It was customary for the ancients to mingle their wine with some strong ingredients, to give it an intoxicating power, and then to mix it with water. This phrase, which is here rendered, "poured out without mixture," signifies the strongest wine, unmixed with water; and the punishment, as far as it is temporal, is the confirmation of the sinful habits which any one has formed. We frequently see such judgments executed, to a certain extent, on those who have lived for a long time in the practice of vice



Even the love of the world continues to grow stronger, as life draws nearer to its close. The drunkard cannot resist the powerful influence of habit, nor divest himself of the love of intoxicating liquors; although he knows that his own ruin, and the ruin of his family, must be the consequence of his fatal indulgence. The man who, from long habit, has become attached to any vice, continues to indulge his vicious propensities, although, at the same time, he has the fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation. This is drinking of the wine of the wrath of God. It was thus that God hardened the heart of Pharaoh, by suffering the sin which he had already indulged, to have such power over his heart, that he followed the Israelites into the Red Sea; although the least degree of reflection must have taught him, that by this step his ruin was inevitable. Such is also the effect of every false practice in religion. Men fall into errors from ignorance or deception; but they afterwards become so much enamored and intoxicated with their own ways, that when the error is discovered, and clearly pointed out to their minds, so as to produce conviction, they will still persevere in the course they have chosen. God says, concerning all such characters, "they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. I will also choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them," &c. Such was the conduct of the Jews, previous to the destruction of Jerusalem. The prophets had foretold the divine judgments. There were signs in the heavens and in the earth, all evidently portentous of the ruin which was coming on the nation. Their hearts were failing them for fear, and they saw and heard the swelling and raging waves of God's indignation: but amidst all their troubles, they continued to indulge, more and more, in every kind of wickedness; and thus they drank of the wine of the wrath of God. We have nothing to expect, but similar judgments, all over the world, in these latter days; and thus the wicked shall be wasted and destroyed gradually from the earth. Thus "Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness: and the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together; and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed." But if in this sense only, the man that worships the beast should drink of the wine of God's indignation, and then be struck out of existence, it would be a small punishment, compared with that which he must afterwards endure. "He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone," &c. It is very certain, that no pain corres-

ponding to this description has ever been endured in this world. The torment of fire and brimstone, or that pain which must be inflicted, by taking a human being, and casting him into a vessel filled with liquid fire, from which a sulphureous stench is always rising, in volumes of smoke, is the most horrible and dreadful of which the human mind can conceive. If we imagine to ourselves a number of wretches, cast into the crater of a burning volcano, and still to remain living, amidst smoke, and flame, and liquid fire, where there is no cessation from torture, we have then some adequate ideas of the meaning of this terrible representation. To suppose that any one ever endured, or ever can endure, such tortures in this life, is contrary to all experience and all credibility. Let it be granted, that the description is figurative and emblematic, it still supposes a condition, in which there is the most horrible torture, where there is no comfort, and no alleviation of misery. There is not a drop of water to cool the tongue. But in this world, pleasure and pain, rest and labor, are always mingled in some proportion. There is no man so miserable, that he does not enjoy some comfort, or some cessation from his tortures; and no man so happy, that he does not endure some sorrow or tribulation. It is only in a future world, that happiness and misery shall be completely and eternally separated. There will, indeed, be many degrees of both: some will be more miserable, and some more happy than others: but as there is no pain in heaven, so there is no comfort in the regions of despair. It is pain without ceasing, and forever. If the declaration of this angel is not intended to give us a description of the torments of hell, it is vain for us to think of attaching any definite meaning to any part of the word of God; for there cannot possibly be a clearer and more definite description. It is the highest degree of torment,—torment without ceasing, and forever. The latter phrase is, indeed, sometimes used to signify an indefinite period, or a state without change; as the earth is said to continue forever, amidst all the changes and revolutions which take place among its inhabitants: but it is evidently the word which is generally used to signify eternity; and it always does signify eternity, when there is nothing in the subject to limit or restrict it. Thus God is said to reign forever. Jesus Christ is said to be the same, to-day, yesterday, and forever. The seven vials are said to be full of the wrath of God, who liveth forever and ever: and thus it is said, the smoke of their torments ascendeth up forever and ever. Here there is

plainly no limitation,—nothing to lead us to suppose any shorter duration than eternity. Shall it be said, that fire, and brimstone, and smoke, are among the elements of nature, and therefore must come to an end, so soon as the combustibles are destroyed? Or shall it be said, that no human being could continue a moment living amidst such tortures? There is the very reason why the phrase, forever, is here used. It is intended to show the nature of the fire of the wrath of God, in a future world, and the nature of the human body after the resurrection. It is a fire which shall burn forever, and a body which shall not be dissolved by everlasting burnings. Shall it be said, that all this is inconsistent with the goodness and mercy of God? It is that very God of goodness and mercy, who has sent his angel to make this declaration. Men practise a palpable deception on themselves, when they take their ideas of God from their own imagination, and then bring forward those imaginary ideas, in opposition to the declarations of his word. They first make a God of their own, and invest him with such attributes as are pleasing to their own minds, and then assert that such and such doctrines are inconsistent with the nature and attributes of God. But the God who endited the scriptures has declared, that the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God: that every one whose name is not found written in the book of life, shall be cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death: that every worshipper of the beast shall be tormented with fire and brimstone; and that the smoke of their torments shall ascend forever. These are the declarations of the God of mercy; and let it be remembered that he is also the God of truth.

We have every reason to believe, that the punishments in the eternal world are more horrible and excruciating, than we can possibly conceive of in this world. We know that they are just, because God inflicts them: but we do not know the magnitude of the evil of sin. Our first parents, instead of knowing good and evil, as they were told by the tempter would be the effect of eating the forbidden fruit, did, from that moment, lose the power of discriminating between good and evil: and although this loss is in some degree restored to all, who, by receiving the gospel, and living under the influence of the laws of Christ, have their perceptions exercised to discern between good and evil; yet the most perfect and holy man on the face of the earth, has no adequate views of the evil of sin. We become acquainted with its

nature, just in proportion as we advance in the practical knowledge of christianity; but neither man nor angel, is able to see the full extent of the evil. None but he who is infinitely holy can fully see the nature of this malignant principle: but all holy creatures are every day learning the nature of sin, and the nature of holiness. This is a kind of knowledge in which they shall be advancing through eternity; and the everlasting punishment of the wicked, is one of the means of their instruction. As it is said, that "when the judgments of God are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness;" so by the judgments of God on the wicked, through eternity, all creation, the Son of God not excepted, as to his human nature, will learn righteousness. All will see more and more of the evil of sin, and of the righteousness of God in its punishment. Therefore it is here declared, that the worshippers of the beast, "shall be tormented in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." The holy angels could not be gratified, nor could any holy being receive pleasure from such an exhibition, in any other way than as a means of learning the evil of sin, and the justice of God in its punishment. This is one reason, why the doctrine of the eternal torments of the wicked ought to be believed, and brought frequently before our minds, in our religious meditations; as it will always be a help to us, in understanding the nature of sin, and of holiness. But as we cannot fully understand the evil of sin, so we cannot have an adequate view of the torments of the wicked, even by all the terrible descriptions, which are given in the word of God. We ought, therefore, to beware of indulging the thought that there will be no punishment in a future world, that it will not be eternal, or that it will not be so horribly excruciating, as we are led to believe from these representations. The very thought, that sin will not be punished with great severity, leads to the opinion, that it is not a great evil; and when men do not think sin to be a very great evil, they will not be very solicitous to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and man. It will, no doubt, be objected by some, that this sentiment is contradicted by facts, and that there are many universalists as regular in their habits of religion, and as moral in their practices, as other christians; but if this were even a fact, it ought not to be inferred from it, that their good habits are the fruits of their present principles. Although nothing is more true, than that men shall be known by their fruits; yet we ought to consider,

that moral as well as natural fruits, require some time before they come to maturity. If it is a truth that because sentence against an evil work, is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil: what will be the consequence, if the sentence is never executed? Let any man examine what effect such opinions would naturally produce on his own heart, and he may be assured, that they do produce those very effects, on the hearts of those by whom they are adopted. Let the sanctions be taken from the civil law,—let criminals escape with impunity; and what horrible effects would be produced in a few years in the moral world. So, let the sanctions of God's law be taken away, so far as they relate to a future world, and the sense of moral obligation soon becomes weakened, sin is divested of more than half its horrors; the mind settles down into a kind of carnal security; a false peace is generated, and the internal practice of religion is gradually laid aside. In the first place, all painful duties are neglected. There is no self-denial,—no cross-bearing in this kind of religion: for why should they suffer gratuitous pain. If they can escape suffering, and enjoy the comforts of this world, while there is nothing to be feared in the next, it would be the height of folly to put themselves in a situation in which they must bear the cross. According to these principles, the confessors and martyrs of ancient times, were not men of enlightened understandings: for it is certainly much wiser to fear them who kill the body, than to fear Him, who is indeed able, but will not, cast either soul or body into hell.

Nothing is gained on this subject, by admitting that the wicked shall endure some punishment in a future world; but at the same time, denying that this punishment shall be eternal. When men have a strong desire after any object, they will seldom be deterred from pursuing it, by the fear of punishment, which they think will come to an end. In this view of the subject, the present enjoyments, although they should be only momentary, would counterbalance ages of torments, which are at such a great distance, and perhaps might never be inflicted. Nothing but the idea of eternal misery, in a future world, can operate with any permanent effect, on the sinner's heart, to deter him from the indulgence of his lusts. Let this idea be stricken out of the word of God, or, which is the same thing, let it be explained away, by the sophistical reasonings of misguided, and probably evil designing men, and all true religion,

and even morality itself, will soon sink into oblivion, and be forgotten.

But the truth is, that the punishments of the future world, are not only eternal, and not only excruciating beyond conception; but a far greater number shall be the subjects of them, than modern charity will allow us to suppose. If every man who is habituated to act on the same principles of those who received the mark of the beast, rather than be deprived of the privilege of buying and selling, shall thus be tormented for ever and ever; how horrible is the prospect of the world in the present age! Truly we may now see the force of that declaration: "Broad is the way, and wide is the gate, that leadeth to destruction; and many there be that go in thereat." But if this has always been the case, what great benefit has been produced by the gospel? and what means that great multitude, which no man can number, who are said to stand before the throne of God, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands? To the latter question, we may answer; they are not such characters as the mass of the present generation, who will give up the truth for the sake of some worldly consideration: for they have passed through great tribulation on account of the truth; they have fought and conquered, and have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb: and to the first question we answer, that we live in an age the most unfavorable to the growth of christian principle. The time when the witnesses are slain, and their bodies cast out into the streets, is not a period, when many firm and established christians will be found; but still there are certainly many babes in Christ; and we may confidently hope, that, although the mass of the world will continue under the influence of error and delusion, and go down to the grave with a lie in their right hand; yet a goodly number shall be brought to the knowledge of the truth, even in this degenerate age; and in a few ages the saints shall inherit the earth, and it shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. We may comfort one another with such words as these.

In an age like the present, when errors are multiplied, and the friends of truth are so few, it is not to be expected, that they shall be able to perform their duty, without a great degree of labor and difficulty. The witnesses of truth, so soon as the spirit of life enters into them, and they rise from the dead, immediately become actively engaged in their proper work; and their labors increase. It is the voice of the witnesses, which is here represented by these three

angels, flying through the midst of heaven, proclaiming these important messages to mankind. Hence it is said, "here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." In the xiii. chapter, where the man of sin is particularly described, in the commencement, and in the most flourishing period of his reign, the patience of the saints was exercised, in the hope that he who led so many into bondage, should himself, at length, go into bondage;—that he who destroyed so many with the sword, should at last be slain with the sword. This hope enabled them to endure their sufferings with patience: but in this age, they have not only the prospect of the destruction of that spiritual power, but the certainty of success in their opposition to it, and in all their labors in the cause of truth. There is a much brighter prospect, for the faithful laborers in the vineyard of the Redeemer, than there has been in any former period. But still their labors and sufferings must be great; for the doctrines which are here proclaimed by these three angels, are altogether different from the prevailing opinions of the christian world. Therefore the witnesses must carry on a continual warfare; and as this warfare consists in suffering, as well as in action, they will have great need of patience. This christian virtue is very different from that which philosophy inculcates; for it consists in the endurance of suffering, according to the commandments of God. Philosophic patience consists in bearing the evils which we can neither avert nor avoid; and it leaves room to shun even many of them, by a departure from the path of duty. It would be easy for the witnesses to escape the hostility of the world, by ceasing to oppose and to discountenance their errors and follies: they need only use a little craft and deception, handle the word of God a little dishonestly, and not declare his whole counsel: thus they might diminish their labors and sufferings, and of course have little need of patience: but it is the diligent and vigilant attendance on their duty, in obedience to God's commandments, by which alone they can be of any real benefit to mankind; and by which they can have any ground of hope, that their labors will be acceptable in the eyes of God.

But they have the highest encouragement for persevering in the work. "I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, write: blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them." This has

always been considered, by commentators, a passage very difficult to understand and explain. Bishop Newton refers it to the preaching of Luther, and the other reformers, by whom the doctrine of purgatory was exploded: but his solution, although followed by Scott, and many others, is rather ingenious than satisfactory. It does not, in fact, give any thing like the true meaning of the passage; which shows, not only, that the dead who die in the Lord are blessed immediately on their departure from this world, but also an increase of blessedness from a certain period; and also in what this blessedness consists; namely, in rest from their labors, and in the prosperity of their works. But when we consider it in relation to the success of the true gospel, in these latter days, and in the superior degree of blessedness which shall rest on the persons and the labors of the witnesses, we can see the force and the importance of the truth which it contains; and that it is altogether worthy of being proclaimed by a voice from heaven. The dead, who die in the Lord, are always blessed from the moment of their departure from the world; and they always rest from their labors: but their works do not always follow them. In the foregoing period of 1260 years, "they were laboring in vain, and spending their strength for nought." They had little encouragement from success; for they were always obliged to encounter a superior and powerful current of popular errors. The world was against them, because they testified against it, that its deeds were evil. Here and there, in various places, they found a few, who loved and followed the truth, but in general, they were despised, and hated, and persecuted; and their labors were not successful. But in these latter days, although their labors shall not be diminished; for they shall still have many difficulties to encounter; and it will require more than one generation of them, to accomplish the great work; yet those who die in the midst of their labors, shall be abundantly blessed, with the ample prospect of success. Perhaps there is no condition, in which a man enjoys more real pleasure and satisfaction, than after a long course of laborious exertion, when he sits down to rest, and knows that his labors have prospered. Hence it is one of the blessings promised to the Redeemer, that he should see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied:—that he should see his seed, should prolong his days, and that the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hand. When these laborers shall have entered into rest, they shall have the satisfaction to know, that they were not only faithful, but successful la-



borers: and thus day after day, and year after year, they shall see the joyful fruits of their labors, in those happy spirits of the righteous, who shall also be admitted into paradise. They shall be hailed by many a happy being, whom their labors have rescued from error and iniquity; and the seed which they have sown, shall grow up into an abundant harvest all over the earth. This is the plain meaning of this voice, and this response of the spirit of God. It relates to a period which is still future, but not far distant. It means the happy death of those, and of their successors, who are now bearing testimony to the truth. All who, in this and the following ages, labor for the success of the gospel, shall enjoy this superior blessedness.

We have here a striking example of the wonderful adaptation of the prophecies to all periods of the world, and all conditions of mankind. While some remarkable period, and striking event, is particularly pointed out, the promise is true and faithful in all ages, and has been the ground of faith and hope to multitudes of christians, who knew nothing of the time to which it particularly relates. The dead who die in the Lord, are those who have lived to him, and have endeavored, in their lives, to promote his glory, and the influence of his gospel. They have still had some success in their labors, and have done some good among mankind. They are therefore blessed with the consciousness of having lived to his glory; and the delight arising from this knowledge of past experience, will continue with them forever. In this general sense, their works may be said always to follow them. But the truth shall be realized, in a much more glorious manner, in this age, and even to the end of the world, when every true servant of God shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. He shall wish that his labors and sufferings had still been greater, since they produce such a harvest of joy. The proper view of this subject is calculated to silence every murmur, under the little troubles and disappointments we meet with, in the course of our duty. If we could keep it always in our minds, it would be a delightful solace in all the trials of life; and especially, in the labors and sorrows through which we must pass, for the benefit of our fellow men.

The last representation contained in this chapter, treats of scenes, somewhat later, but still intimately connected with those we have been considering. They show us the judgments by which the beast shall be dethroned. 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, &c. In order to prepare our minds for a right understanding of this subject, a recurrence to the old testament prophecies will be necessary. There are various passages of scripture, from which the rays of light converge and concentrate on this vision of John; but the limits we have prescribed to ourselves will not permit that all should be brought forward. We shall call the attention of the reader to the lxiii. chapter of Isaiah's prophecy, in which the Lord Jesus Christ is described, as he presented himself to the prophet in vision, when he was returning from the slaughter of his enemies. We shall render these declarations of the Redeemer in the past tense, rather than in the future, as it is so expressed in the original; and our translators, by rendering some of it in the past, and some in the future, without any reason for the change, have thrown some obscurity over it. "Who is this that cometh from Edom,—from Bozrah, with garments deeply dyed?—This, that is glorious in his apparel,—marching on, in the greatness of his strength? I, that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine press? I have trodden the wine press alone, and of the people there was none with me: yea, I have trodden them in mine anger, and trampled them in my fury; and their life blood was sprinkled on my garments, and I have stained all my raiment" This is the same glorious personage who presented himself to John, as recorded in the xix. chapter; where it is said, "he was clothed with a vesture dipped (or rather dyed, or stained, or besmeared,) in blood: and his name is called the Word of God." These two visions, in which the Redeemer appears in the execution of his judgments; in the former, as coming from the slaughter of enemies, who are described under the symbol of Edom and Bozrah; and in the latter, by the symbol of the great whore, or the idolatrous city that reigneth over the kings of the earth, have an evident reference to the judgments of the latter days. Edom, or the descendants of Esau, who despised his birthright, and Bozrah, the capital city of that kingdom, were presented to the prophet, as emblems of that same class of mankind in these latter times. Every part of the earth, to which the gospel is sent, and every individual who hears the gospel call, are entitled to the privileges of the church of God. Esau was entitled to the birthright, because he was the first born; but we are entitled to

all the benefits of the gospel, not from any merit in ourselves, but because God sends them among us, and graciously offers them to us all. Men generally profess to have a regard for these things, and take the name of christians; but still, like Esau, they too generally despise the spiritual blessings which the name represents. These are the characters who shall suffer in the days of vengeance. For the long period of 1260 years, they have trodden the court of the sanctuary, and the holy city, under their feet: they have despised the true principles and the spiritual practice of christianity; and now they are to bear the judgment of their iniquities. The vengeance of the Redeemer was plainly executed on Edom, in ancient times, for the same sin. Their country was utterly destroyed by Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, in the days of the prophet Isaiah; and thus God hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste, for the dragons of the wilderness. They afterwards attempted to build their cities, and to inhabit the waste places; but God always demolished their works, until the nation was utterly destroyed. God will act in the same manner with regard to all those, in every part of the earth, who act on the principle of Esau and his descendants. They have now prospered remarkably, for a long period, in their sins: but their fall shall soon be as remarkable as their prosperity. Every kind of false or formal religion, and all those who follow it, shall be utterly wasted and destroyed from the earth, by the terrible vengeance of God.

The Redeemer appears to the prophet, immediately after the destruction of the power of that class of mankind who are represented by Edom and Bozrah. His appearance seemed to be most glorious; but his garment or robe was stained and dyed with blood; and this was the reason of the question, "Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel?" &c. Then he answers: "I have trodden the wine press alone," &c. It is astonishing that this prophecy should ever have been applied to the sufferings of Christ; when it is plain that scenes of judgment on his enemies are the subjects presented. His garments are not dyed with his own blood, but with the blood of his foes. This exclamation, "I looked, and there was none to help, and I wondered that there was none to uphold," &c., relates not to his sufferings on the cross, but to the state of the christian world, when he takes to himself his great power and reigns. It is the period when the witnesses are slain. In this sense, he

found none to help,—none to support the cause of truth. This has often been the state of nations, for a short period; and was no doubt the state of the land of Edom, in the days of Isaiah. In that place, truth had no defenders; and it had very few in the land of Judea. But this prophecy chiefly refers to the times in which truth has lost its influence all over the world. It is truly astonishing, that there should be such a period in this last age; when, amidst so much christian profession, the real friends of the Redeemer and his cause, are “like dead men, out of mind, and like a broken vessel.” Hence the mark of astonishment is here inserted: “I wondered that there was none to uphold.” But it is such a time, as we may expect him to come forth, and vindicate his own cause. When judgment is turned away backward,—when justice standeth afar off,—when truth is fallen in the streets, and equity cannot enter; then is the time for God to come forth out of his place, to punish the inhabitants of the world for their iniquity; that the earth may disclose her blood, and no longer cover her slain. This is the way in which he accounts to the prophet for the blood with which his garments were dyed. He was treading the winepress of judgment, after the grapes had become fully ripe.

We shall also call the attention of the reader to the xviii. chapter of this same prophet; in which we shall see, still more clearly, what is meant by the harvest and the vintage. The almost impenetrable obscurity, in which the subjects contained in this chapter have been involved, is now in a great measure dispelled, by the labors of some late expositors. The land of the overshadowing wings, is most probably intended to represent the country in which we live; as it lies directly beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, when we take our observation from the city of Jerusalem, where the prophet lived, and where he saw the vision. It has, on the map, the appearance of a bird with wide spreading wings; it has the same on its national standards; and it holds out an asylum to the oppressed of all nations. It is not a wo which is denounced against this land; but rather a command given to the christian teachers, to go to a nation scattered and peeled, to a people terrible from their beginning, &c. The object, no doubt, is to bring those people to the knowledge of the gospel; and the promise is, that after a certain terrible judgment has been executed, this people shall be brought “to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts,—to mount Zion.” The meaning of the whole most probably is, that after the

judgments shall have been executed on christendom, the aborigines of America shall be brought to the knowledge of the truth, by the instrumentality of the christian teachers of the same land.—But our business is particularly with the subjects contained in the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth verses of this chapter; and we shall insert a correct and literal translation of them, which has been given by the late John M'Donald, of Albany, in an interesting little work, entitled, "Isaiah's message to the American nation."

"All ye inhabitants of the world, and all ye that dwell on earth, when the standard is lifted upon the mountains, look ye! and when the trumpet is sounded, listen ye! Then thus did JEHOVAH say to me: I will sit still now, and I will look intently from my habitation, like serene heat after bright sunshine, and like a dewy cloud in the heat of harvest. But while the harvest was passing away, when the bud had become perfect, and the blossom had changed into the juicy grape: he cut down the luxuriant branches with pruning hooks: he removed the standard vine: he cut in pieces. They abandon them promiscuously to the eagle of the mountains, and to the beasts of the field. On HIM the eagle of the mountains is gluttoned: even on HIM all the beasts of the field insultingly riot."

As this prophecy plainly relates to these latter days, and particularly to the judgments which are expressed by the harvest and the vintage in the Revelation, we ought to see the commencement of its accomplishment in the times in which we live. The ensign has been lifted upon the mountains, and the trumpet has been blown, by the various revolutions and the shakings of the nations, which have lately taken place throughout the world. The present generation has seen and heard sufficient, to bring conviction to every mind, that a new era will soon commence, in the moral world; and that God is about to introduce that kingdom, which shall never be destroyed. Every one that believes the scriptures, and has paid any attention to these late dispensations of Providence, must have seen the standard raised, and heard the sound of the trumpet. But immediately after this solemn warning, we are to expect a kind of tranquillity and calmness on the face of the moral world. A state in which God appears to sit still, and look from his habitation at the moral fruits, which are coming to perfection. Thus the husbandman, or the vine dresser, after he has been employed constantly for some months, in labor, sits down for a time in his house, and takes his rest; until the harvest is ready for

reaping, and the grapes fit to be gathered. There has been, for a number of years, a kind of calm and tranquillity, over most of the nations of Europe, where the harvest and the vintage are chiefly to be gathered; and the providence of God does at this time, operate like serene heat after bright sunshine; and like a dewy cloud, in the heat of harvest. He operates every where through the world; but in such a secret and silent manner, that his works are scarcely seen; and by the prosperity of iniquity, and the little attention which seems to be paid to those who live in the practice of duty, the world seems generally to have forgotten, that God takes any knowledge of their ways. But the first remarkable judgment, by which he will convince the world, that he sees all their wicked works, will be the *reaping of the earth*: and soon after this, another remarkable judgment will follow, which is expressed by the *gathering of the vintage*, and casting the ripe clusters into the great wine-press of the wrath of God. The harvest will first appear in some terrible and desolating judgments; and before, or in the presence of the harvest, or while it is still fresh in the minds of men, the vintage shall come in the most horrible results.

These judgments were brought in detail, before the mind of the apostle. He beheld, in the first place, one of those white bright clouds, which are frequently seen in the heavens, in the morning, before the sun appears. The dark and dense matter of which they are composed, is illuminated and brightened by the solar light. This white cloud points out to us, the nature of this latter dispensation. It is not altogether like the dark clouds of vengeance, which lower, and thicken, and blacken, over a guilty nation; when it is about to be utterly destroyed, and when no ray of hope can be seen. The clouds of vengeance, in these latter days, are illuminated and brightened by the sun of righteousness. The judgments which God is about to execute, are intended to open the way for the general diffusion of gospel light. After these judgments shall be executed, the darkness of error and delusion will constantly retreat, and will finally be dispelled for ever.

On this white cloud he saw one sitting, who was similar in his appearance to one of the sons of men. This is the same personage, who was seen by Daniel, coming with the clouds of heaven; and the same whom the apostle had before seen, walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. The golden crown signifies his authority and kingly power, while the sharp sickle shows the nature of the judgments he

is about to execute, and the characters who are to be the subjects of them. He is about to cut off entirely from the earth, all characters, in whom certain fruits of iniquity have become ripe. Many sinners will still be left in the world, after the earth shall have been reaped; but a certain class of them will be utterly destroyed.

The apostle then saw another angel coming out of the temple, and crying with a loud voice, to him that sat on the cloud, "Thrust in thy sickle and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud, thrust in his sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped." As the temple is the emblem of the church of God, so this angel coming out of the temple, and crying with a loud voice, to him that sat on the cloud, to thrust in his sickle, or to execute the judgments which he had determined, is a representation of the true worshippers of God, calling on him in their prayers, to accomplish the work of judgment, for which he had given them the right to hope. This is not the language of authority; nor in any respect improper for a servant to use to his master, who had told him he would perform a certain work, at a certain time. God has given the privilege to his servants, to speak to him in this manner; and, as it were, to put him in mind of his promises. 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. Is. xlv. 11. It is the duty and the privilege of all the true servants of God, to make inquiry concerning all future things, relating to his children: and with respect to whatever work he has promised to do, they are to wait till the proper period arrives, and then to call on him with earnestness, for the accomplishment of his promise. This judgment of the harvest is not far distant; but the church is not yet in a proper condition, for the angel to come out of it, and call on the Redeemer to accomplish his work. The emblem of the temple, supposes the church in a very different condition from what it is at present. It supposes that the true worship of God has gained some kind of permanent establishment, in the different parts of the earth. When this call shall be made with effect, the church shall be no longer in the wilderness, in a moveable habitation like a tabernacle; but in a permanent residence like the temple. But this period must arrive, as soon as the witnesses of truth shall have attained to a certain degree of influence in the world. The standard has already been raised on the mountains, the trumpet has sounded, and God is now sitting and looking intently from

his habitation; he is operating in the world like serene heat after bright sunshine, and like a dewy cloud in the heat of harvest; and therefore as soon as the truth shall have acquired a permanent influence on the minds of a sufficient number, and the true worship of God shall be established in a permanent manner; so that the church can be called the temple of God, his servants shall call on him with united voice, to thrust in his sickle. He will then attend to their cry, and the earth shall be reaped. This judgment is probably the same which is called in the xvi. chapter, the battle of the great day of God Almighty, and will be considered in the dissertation on that chapter.

But no sooner was this judgment executed, than the attention of the apostle was called to another scene of vengeance, which appeared far more terrible than the reaping of the earth. The gathering of the vintage, and the treading of the grapes, exhibit a consummation in the judgments of God, which destroys forever certain fruits of iniquity. It is proper to observe, that in the land of Judea and the countries contiguous, where the grape is successfully cultivated, the harvest generally commences in the latter part of the month of April, and is completed in May; while the vintage is not gathered till the month of July. Hence there is generally six or seven weeks between harvest and vintage. The former continues for a number of weeks, while the latter lasts but a few days. This last but most tremendous judgment, signified by the vintage, is presented to us in the remaining part of this chapter. The apostle beheld "another angel coming out of the temple in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle." There seems here to be a distinction between the temple on the earth and the temple in heaven, and the latter probably signifies a more exalted state of the church than the former. In this book there are no words of course. Every word and every phrase has some meaning in itself. We may learn from this representation, that amidst all the scenes of calamity, the true church of God will still be rising in influence and honor. The emblem of the temple in heaven signifies an elevation in the circumstances of true christianity; and the angel coming out of this temple with a sharp sickle in his hand, to cut down and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, shows that at this period, God will give so much power to his church, that she shall be enabled to collect the fruits from which the wine of Babylon is made, and cast them into the great wine-press of the wrath of God. This is the accomplishment of the prophecy contained in the fiftieth and fifty-first chapters of Jeremiah. Any one, who



has been in the habit of looking into the spiritual meaning of the prophecies of the Old Testament, will require no commentary, except those chapters, to enable him to come to a right understanding of this vision of John. Those that have fled and escaped, out of the land of Babylon, will "then declare in Zion the vengeance of the Lord,—the vengeance of his temple." The archers are called together against Babylon,—all that bend the bow are commanded to shoot at her, and not spare any arrows; "but to do to her as she hath done: because she hath been proud against the Lord,—against the Holy One of Israel." It is the voice of the witnesses of truth, who shall then be enabled to show clearly and plainly, the errors and iniquities of the prevailing religion: and when these things shall have been fully pointed out to the world, the fruits shall be gathered and expressed, by a series of terrible judgments. Here the minister of the divine vengeance comes out of the temple, with a sharp sickle in his hand; and another immediately appears coming out from the altar. This angel is said to have authority over the sacred fire, which was kept continually burning on the altar, for the purpose of consuming the sacrifices. So the cry from this angel denotes the consummation of God's judgments, on the corrupted christian church. Not indeed the entire destruction of the beast and his adherents, but the destruction of their fruits. It is the cleansing of the sanctuary, at the end of the 1260 years of the beast's reign. It is such a defeat given to the power of antichristian delusions, that this principle of iniquity shall not any longer extend itself over the world. The harvest, or the reaping of the earth, is the first signal judgment, which shall destroy a great portion of those antichristian fruits, and relieve the world, to a certain extent, from the delusive influence of antichristian principles; but the treading of the wine press will be such a tremendous judgment, as will forever prevent the world from drinking of the wine of Babylon. God, in his forbearance, will suffer this vine to grow until the grapes are fully ripe; but he will finally gather all the clusters, and cast them into the great wine press of his wrath. This will produce extensive desolation. When the apostle saw the vision, there seems to have been a city presented to his mind, and near this city there was a wine press, which extended 1600 furlongs, or 200 miles. The grapes were trodden with horses; and he saw the juice or blood of the grape, which appeared to him like the blood of men, rising as high as the horse bridles, for this enormous space. As 200 miles are said to be the dimensions of the Pope's domi-

nions in Italy, extending from the walls of Rome, to the mouths of the river Po, and the marshes of Verona; so many of the most respectable commentators have supposed, that this judgment will be executed in that part of the dominions of Antichrist. Time alone can reveal the truth on this subject. It is by no means improbable, that the great wine press will be trodden near the walls of Rome; but there will no doubt be many others, of smaller dimensions, in every country where the vineyard has brought its fruits to maturity; or, in other words, some terrible judgments, of the same nature, will be executed in every part of the christian world, where the same, or similar principles of iniquity, have prevailed, and brought forth their fruits. Let all churches, therefore, beware of antichristian doctrines and practices; for we may rest assured, that when the grapes are fully ripe, the Redeemer will tread them in his anger, and trample them in his fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled upon his garments, &c. The nations shall drink of their own wine, which they themselves have mingled, and they shall be drunken, and spew, and fall, and rise no more; because of the sword of the Lord, which shall be sent among them.

We ought to pay particular attention to these phrases, the harvest of the earth, and the vintage of the earth. They are such a harvest and vintage as ought to be expected from the men of the earth, or earthly minded men, who have long prospered and been successful in their works of iniquity. This has been remarkably the case, with such characters, in these latter days. Enormous wickedness seldom prospers long, in any period of the world; because the government of God will not suffer any particular individual to violate his laws, in an open and flagrant manner, without setting some mark of his displeasure on the culprit. In this respect, his government is like other governments. They all find it necessary to punish, openly and severely, every atrocious offender; but still, in the best regulated governments on earth, a man may commit small offences, from time to time, until he becomes a great offender, and worthy of severe punishment. It requires a longer period for such a character to fill up the measure of his guilt, and therefore his punishment is delayed. Such is the situation in which the world stands at this moment, with respect to the government of God. There is, indeed, enough of flagrant offenders, whom he punishes every day; because it is necessary to make public examples of those who are enormously wicked. But the moral and christianized part of every

community, have been departing, every year, and every age, a little, and a little further, from the true path of christian rectitude. These deviations have grown imperceptibly, and few have looked on the state of christendom with an accurate and impartial eye, or have compared the christianity of the present age, with that which is exhibited in the New Testament. Hence, when the evil fruits were in full bloom, they had so much the appearance of christian fruits, that almost all have been deceived. The charitable allowances which men are accustomed to make for the sins of others, in hopes that the same allowances will be made for their own, have turned the christian world into a scene of traffic and exchange. A man flatters his neighbor, in hopes of being himself flattered and complimented in return. Thus truth has fallen in the streets, and equity cannot enter. But the evil fruits are fast coming to perfection, and the judgments of God will fall upon them before they are aware. The prosperous sinner, who has generally conducted himself in such a way, that his sins are hidden from the world, and, in some measure, from himself, and has been enabled to retain both his riches and his honors, until he believes they are his own forever, will find himself at once deprived of all that raised him in his own estimation; and shall sink, despised by all, into the gulph of degradation and despair. Those churches that have grown in number and popular influence, by accommodating their doctrines and worship to the prevailing fashion and taste of the world, and have seduced many from the paths of wisdom, will find their folly, not only by their loss of influence, and continual disappointments in their plans of policy; but they shall be suffered to fall into still greater errors, until they shall become habitations of devils, the holds of every foul spirit, and cages of every unclean and hateful bird. They shall drink of the bitter cup of their own iniquity, and stumble and fall into eternal darkness. The world shall then be able to discriminate between the fruits of the earth, and the heavenly fruits of that pure and undefiled religion, which is according to the ordinances of God. They shall fear to follow after any kind of error, or deceptive influence, for they shall see the horrible results, in the lives and deaths of such as have gone astray. Thus, by a gradual, but terrible process of judgments, the earth shall at length be regenerated, and brought back to the knowledge and practice of truth and righteousness. But we shall find these truths expanded, and more clearly presented to our minds, in the following chapters.

## PART II. DISSERTATION VII.

### ON THE XV. OF THE REVELATION.

“AND I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues: for in them is filled up the wrath of God.” It is observed by the Psalmist, that the judgments of God are a great deep. They are like the fathomless abyss, that is contained in the bowels of the earth. They are enveloped in darkness until they are executed. They are never fully understood until they are felt. The judgments described in this and the following chapter, are the last signal and remarkable exhibitions of the vengeance of God, which shall be made in the common course of Providence, until the wicked shall be called to his bar at the judgment day. By these they shall be wasted, and swept away from the earth; and all obstructions taken out of the way of the Redeemer’s kingdom. Then the saints shall live and reign with Christ a thousand years. Satan shall be bound, and confined in his prison for that period. The great dragon who, in all ages, has been permitted to go abroad through the earth, and exert his power in deceiving the nations, shall be restrained from all this mischief; and then the truth shall not be obstructed in its progress; but the word of God shall have free course and be glorified. At the end of this period, Satan shall again be loosed, and suffered to go abroad as usual through the nations to deceive them; shall again succeed in an astonishing manner: so that in a very short time, the mass of the world shall again be the enemies of the gospel. But they shall all be destroyed by some sudden judgment from God, before they shall have time to do any essential injury to his church. Then the last and final judgment shall immediately take place; the dead, small and great, shall stand before God; and receive the sentence, which shall seal their condition for ever. Hence we see the reason why these judgments are called the last plagues, or the accomplishment of the wrath of God: for after them there shall no more judgments be inflicted on mankind, until God shall call them to his bar. The righteous, who shall then be found living in the world, shall not die, but shall undergo, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the change which is

equivalent to death; but the wicked shall be cut off in a moment, by fire from heaven. These therefore are properly the last plagues, and they are truly great and marvellous. We shall see in them the spiritual accomplishment of the whole curses contained in the law of Moses. God has declared to his church in this age, as really as he declared to the church of the Israelites; "If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law, that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, **THE LORD THY GOD**; then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed; even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses and of long continuance," &c. These curses shall come on the christian world, and shall pursue them and overtake them, until the sinners shall be consumed; because they would not hearken to the voice of the Lord their God, to keep his commandments and his statutes. They shall overtake them in the common course of the providence of God, while they are pursuing their customary and daily avocations, and seeking the profits, the pleasures, and the honors of life. Many of them will never once suspect that they are the subjects of the divine vengeance; because they are constantly engaged in the pursuits of the world, and although God's hand is lifted they will not see, until the thickening and blackening clouds, are ready to burst over their heads, in the thunders of devouring wrath.

Although these plagues are silent and secret in their operations, yet they are the most terrible judgments that have been executed; for they are the last of that series which commenced soon after the days of the apostles, and has been gradually growing more severe and horrible, from age to age, as it approaches towards the last end of the indignation. The series commenced with the judgments contained in the six seals. These were executed on the Roman empire, until the Pagan religion was overturned: but under the seventh seal a train of judgments still more terrible than the former was exhibited; and the last of them were the most terrible of all. "An angel was seen flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, **Wo! Wo! Wo!** to the inhabitants of the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound." Two of these woes are now past, and the third contains these seven last plagues, or the vials of the wrath of God. The alarm is sounded; and then it is declared, that the wrath of God is come. All former woes were

merely the natural effects of sin. They are not to be viewed so much in the light of a judicial sentence, as they are the pain and misery which God, in the common course of his providence, has attached to crimes. These last curses are emphatically the vengeance of God. He commands to bring those his enemies, who would not that he should reign over them, and slay them before him. Thus his wrath is said to come, and the time of the dead that they should be judged, and that he should destroy them that destroy the earth.

The sign or symbol by which these judgments were presented to the mind of the apostle, appeared to him great and wonderful. There must have been something in the appearance of those angels, and with the various representations which were then made visible to his mind, by which he was struck with wonder and astonishment. We find the apostle frequently affected in this manner, by the things which he heard and saw. He tells us in the xviii. chapter, that when he saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus, he wondered with great admiration. It was indeed an astonishing sight, to see the christian church, not only persecuting the saints, but becoming intoxicated, and rioting like bacchanals in their triumph over them. The things contained in these symbols are not less astonishing. The feelings manifested by the apostle, ought to be a guide to our feelings, when we study the things which he saw and heard; for we may be certain they were not excited in his mind without sufficient reason. He had cause for wonder; and if we do not also find cause for the same, it is certain that we have not the views and feelings which correspond with the subject.

But it was necessary, in order that the apostle might have a correct view of these judgments, and be able to see their nature and operation, to have his mind directed in the first place to another subject, which shows the safety, and the exalted condition of the true worshippers of God, during these visitations of the divine vengeance. "I saw," says he, "as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire, and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God: and they sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb," &c. In order to know what is signified by this sea of glass mingled with fire, we must turn our attention to the molten sea, which Solomon

made, and placed in the temple. Bishop Newton, not advert- ing to this circumstance of the molten sea in the tem- ple, nor that of the sea of glass which the apostle at first saw before the throne, supposes that this emblem is taken from the passage of the Israelites across the Red Sea, and that these characters who stand on the sea of glass, repre- sent the whole church of God, who having passed through a scene of trials and afflictions, and having seen their enemies perish, are singing the song of Moses, and rejoicing before God, for the victory they had obtained. But although this interpretation may appear at first sight somewhat plausible and striking, it will not, for a moment, bear the test of crit- ical inspection. If the emblem had been taken from the passage through the Red Sea, they would not have been represented standing on the sea, but on the shore. We ought however to remember, that all these things were transacted in, and about the temple. The seven angels, having the seven vials, came out of the temple; and we know there was in the temple a vessel, which was called the molten or brazen sea, and that the apostle saw a sea of glass of the same description, standing before the throne of God; there is therefore no reason whatever, why the mind should be carried away to the Red Sea, and the passage of the Israelites from the land of Egypt. The apostle no doubt saw these victors standing on a sea of glass, similar to that in the temple, and to that which he had formerly seen before the throne of God. This sea in the temple was a large vessel, thirty cubits, or about forty five feet in circum- ference, and hence the area, or superficial content of it was somewhat more than 160 feet. This sea would not admit more than fifty or sixty persons to stand on its surface. Probably however the sea which the apostle saw, was much larger than the sea in the temple: but the symbol is design- ed to convey the idea of a small number, compared with the worshippers who might be supposed to frequent the temple on all ordinary occasions. Those, therefore, whom the apostle saw standing on the sea of glass, are not intended to represent the whole number of true christians, who shall be in the world at that period; but a particular class of true christians. They are not the same as the 144,000 who stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion, but a number of in- dividuals, who have been reclaimed from the dominion of the beast. Here our translation does not present the exact meaning of the original. It is not properly those who had gained the victory over the beast, over his image, &c. but

those, who had gained the victory, out of or from the beast, &c. that is, those who, by the knowledge of the truth, and the various dispensations of God's mercy, have been enabled to see their errors, and have come out from under the dominion of false principles and false practices in religion. At that period, in which the witnesses are slain, the beast has such an ascendancy over the minds of the world, that although there is still a large number of the friends of truth in it; yet they are so scattered and dispersed, and their views of truth so dark and bewildered, that they can make no effectual opposition against the immense number of the friends of error. But afterwards, when the witnesses rise, and raise the standard of truth, all that have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal, will of course rally round it; and then, a large and respectable number will be found standing with the Lamb. But still there are others of the true servants of God, who may have been led into errors; and some time will be required for them to know the evils into which they have fallen; and even after they shall have a glimpse of the truth, it will be some time, before they shall be established in the true faith, and determine to come out of Babylon. All this is perfectly natural, and entirely within the common course of God's providence. When the disciples raised the standard of truth, on the day of pentecost, there were found about three thousand who were prepared to stand with the Lamb; and their numbers continually increased: but still many years were required, before all the true servants of God, in the Jewish nation, were confirmed in the faith. Hence it is said, "he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week." It is such characters as those, who shall take their station on the sea of glass mingled with fire. Men do not all see their errors at the same time, or in the same manner. Some also are slow and reluctant to part with those things, that have acquired an influence over their minds. It will therefore be a work of time, to bring all the true servants of God, out of the errors in which they are tangled. But when they shall see the corrupted churches becoming still more corrupt, and many of them habitations of devils, and holds of every foul spirit, &c. they shall hear and attend to the voice of God; "come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." Here then we see plainly the characters, that shall stand on the sea of glass; and in hearing their praises, we hear "the voice of them that flee and escape out of the land of Babylon, to



declare in Zion the vengeance of the Lord our God, the vengeance of his temple."

But this escape will not be made, nor the victory be obtained over the adversary, without passing through the waters and fires of affliction. The sea in the temple, like the other instruments, had a symbolical, or typical meaning. It represented the sufferings of the Redeemer, and the fountain which is opened, through his sufferings, for sin and uncleanness. The death or suffering of Christ is the efficient cause of cleansing our hearts from sin; and our own sufferings are generally the instrumental cause: therefore the sea, being mingled with fire, and afterwards consolidated, and becoming firm like the glass, shows that these characters, who thus gain the victory, and come out from the dominion of the beast, will have a hard contest, much struggling, and many sorrows to endure. They shall be purified by water and by fire, and afterwards they shall rise superior to all trouble and temptation. They shall forsake all false doctrines and false worship, and join themselves to the Lord, in a perpetual covenant, that shall not be forgotten. Then they shall publish the word of the Lord in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem.

The evil principle over which this victory is to be obtained, holds the world at this day in bondage. It is that power, which the wealth, the honors, or the pleasures of life, have gained over the hearts of men. The love of these things insinuates itself into their choice of religion, when they form their attachment to any sect or denomination, it leads them to believe certain religious doctrines, and to adopt a certain kind of religious practice. Unseen and silent, it works every where, and many who are under its influence, are by no means conscious of its operations. But until the heart is purified from this principle, men will be always the followers of the beast. The old serpent puts on various forms in the religious world. The beast at Rome is no longer popular in a large part of christendom; and therefore he assumes the name of every Protestant denomination. There are worshippers of the beast among them all. But in general, such characters are most numerous in those churches, where erroneous doctrines are preached, or where the worship is corrupted by human inventions. They cannot bear the truth, and they do not love the ordinances which God has appointed. This is the great reason why those churches flourish in numbers and popular influence, where some false doctrines are preached, and

where the worship is corrupted by human inventions; for there is a tendency in every heart towards the worship of the beast. When this corrupting principle is not resisted, but suffered to grow, it will always obtain more power over the hearts of men, and they will go still farther into delusion; and not only worship the beast, but also his image, and receive his mark. It is necessary therefore, in order to gain the victory over the beast, to gain in the first place the victory over ourselves;—to pull down the strong holds which Satan has erected in our hearts;—to let God's authority prevail, and have power over us in every thought, and word, and action; and especially in the doctrines we believe, and in the worship which we offer to him. Those who give diligence to bring their hearts into this kind of subjection, will be among the number who stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.

We ought not to pass over this expression without notice. It certainly is not intended to teach the necessity, or even the propriety, of using musical instruments in our worship. They were used in the temple in ancient times, but they were never used in the synagogues; nor is there the smallest intimation that they were ever used in the days of the apostles, nor until the christian churches began to exhibit pomp and pageantry, in order to attract the attention, and please the taste of carnal men. The temple worship was all symbolical, and typified spiritual things. The harps of God are intended to represent the kind of praises which shall be offered, in the worship of those who shall have gained the victory over the beast. Now there are but two kinds of praises, which can be offered to God in worship; namely, the praises which are of human contrivance and workmanship, invented and constructed by the art of man, and those which are framed and constructed by the wisdom and the spirit of God: the songs of human invention, and the songs of divine inspiration. For making the former kind of harps, there is not the shadow of authority in any part of the word of God; nor even the slightest intimation that any such harps were used in the churches, until they began to corrupt themselves, by choosing their own ways: the latter, God has made for the churches: he has carefully framed and adapted them to the worship of the New Testament, as well as the Old: they are quite sufficient for all the circumstances of the church, and for all the circumstances of every private christian, in every part of his life; both for the exercise of his understanding, the purifying of his heart, and for exciting and creating the

most exalted devotion: and therefore there cannot be the least reason for laying aside these harps of God, and using those which are the mere workmanship and contrivance of uninspired, and of course, ignorant men. The divine architect of the spiritual temple, has made us our harps, and all who have gotten the victory over the beast will use them alone, and not the harps of man. That this is the true meaning, and the intention of the spirit of God, in the use of this symbol, is almost obvious. Let any man torture his ingenuity to find out the meaning of this expression, and why it is here used, and his labor will be in vain, if he is not disposed to adopt this explanation. The great God, who sees the present and the future, no doubt intended, by using it in this place, to call our attention to the abuses which have crept into his praises; and to show, that if we would preserve ourselves and our worship from corruption, we must use the harps of God, or the songs of divine inspiration.

There is something in this whole representation, which seems to show a kind of earnestness and solicitude, that the subject of the praises of the church might be fully and clearly understood. In the symbol of the 144,000, there is mention made of their singing a new song; and lest that should be misunderstood, as we know it has been, and supposed to relate to the numerous and multiplied psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, of human contrivance, not only the kind of praises, as being the workmanship of God; but the very song itself is here pointed out to us. "They sing the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb." Here, it is likely, some may be disposed to say, that we are jumbling two similitudes together, the harps and the song, and making them represent the same thing. But this is not the fact. The mention of the harps of God is intended to show us, that the outward forms, and all the instruments of their worship, are of divine workmanship: but the mention of the song shows, more particularly, the substance of their worship. It is made thus plain, that there may be no ground for mistake. There are two songs in the scripture, attributed to Moses, besides the xc. psalm, which is entitled, "a prayer of Moses, the man of God." But the song which is particularly meant, is no doubt that contained in the xxxii. chapter of Deuteronomy; because it is exactly applicable to the circumstances of those who are standing on the sea of glass. It is the testimony of the uncorrupted and faithful members of the church, against the sinful conduct of those "who corrupted themselves,—whose spot is not the spot of the chil-

dren of God,—who are a perverse and crooked generation.” It may be presumed that the psalm and hymn makers of the present age have supposed, that this song of Moses, like many of the psalms of David, is not proper to be sung in the worship of God in these latter days; or else they would have given a version or an imitation of it: but so far as the author is acquainted with these human productions, he has never seen this song of Moses embodied in any system of devotional songs. But the substance of this song, and, indeed, of all the songs of inspiration, both in the Old and New Testament, is to be found in the book of Psalms. This book contains every thing suitable for christian worship; and when the mind has become, in some degree, culightened and spiritualized, so as to see the true meaning, it must fill every true worshipper with admiration and astonishment, to see how accurately the condition of the christian world, at the present time, is here described. This is evidently the song of the Lamb. As the song of Moses is found in the scriptures, so the song of the Lamb must be found there also; for the Lord Jesus Christ has authorized no other songs to be sung in his church, but those found in his word. The hymn which was sung by the Redeemer and his disciples, after the last passover, and before they went up to the mount of Olives, was the great Hallel, or that part of the psalms contained between the cxii. and the cxviii. This is well known to have been always sung by the Jews, after the passover; and the Redeemer did not depart from the ancient custom. This book contains all the psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, which were sung by the churches, in the days of the apostles. At least, there is not the shadow of proof to the contrary. The example of any of the primitive churches, who may have departed from this rule, ought to have no weight whatever; for we know, that like the Israelitish church of old, they began early to corrupt themselves with their own inventions, and thus to provoke the wrath of God, who on account of such vanities, finally gave them up to antichristian domination, and even now makes us all drink the bitter cup of our fathers’ folly. It is, in fact, something worse than folly. It is at least bordering on blasphemy, when a man, without any authority from God, and merely from his own heart, composes a religious song, calls it the song of the Lamb, and gives it to the churches, to sing in the praises of God. In this respect, the modern psalm and hymn makers are guilty of both falsehood and presumption;—of falsehood, because the truth is,

their productions are not the song of the Lamb; and of presumption, because they arrogate to themselves a work, for which they have no authority. Jesus Christ has sent his ministers to preach the gospel; but he has sent none of them to make songs to be sung in his church: he has given her his own song, in his own word, and this is to be sung continually in his praises. If men do not see that this is the fact, but blindly follow these innovators, and sing their compositions, under the impression that they are the song of the Lamb, their conduct can be accounted for, only from the dark clouds of ignorance and infatuation, which now cover the face of the christian world. When this folly and presumption once comes to be seen in its proper light, and the sin to be felt, it will be a source of anguish and remorse, to every one who has engaged in it, or given it encouragement.

But we have positive proof, from the psalms themselves, that they are the song of the Lord, which is the same as the song of the Lamb. When the Jews were carried into captivity, and hung their harps on the willows, by the rivers of Babylon, they were required, by the haughty captors, to sing for them one of the songs of Zion. At this demand, they exclaimed, in all the agonies of grief, "Oh, how shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land!" The meaning of this appellation, the Lord's song, is not any song which may be composed for the praise of the Lord; but a song which he has himself given, to be sung in his praise. He has given, for this purpose, the songs of Zion, which are found in the book of Psalms, and these are called, by way of eminence, to the exclusion of all others, the Lord's song. If any of the captives, by the rivers of Babylon, had presumed, of themselves, and without authority, to make a system of praises, and dared to call it the Lord's song, every one must see that this conduct would, in the highest degree, have been daring and presumptuous. It is equally presumptuous and daring at the present time; for these songs of Zion are now called the song of the Lamb. This name is given to the Lord Jesus Christ, generally through the Revelation; and the Lord's song, and the Lamb's song, mean precisely the same thing. We may, therefore, confidently hope, from this emblem of the company of worshippers, standing on the sea of glass, and singing the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb, that all the true church of God will soon lay aside the inventions of men, in this part of their worship, and be found singing these compositions, and

these alone. As it is wrong and sinful to take any thing from its proper use, and apply it to a use for which it was not intended; so it is even sinful to versify other portions of scripture, to be sung in the churches; because they were not intended for this use. The psalms were evidently given for this purpose, and they ought not to be supplanted, even by other portions of scripture, much less by the compositions of vain and presumptuous men. Why is it, that the christian world are, at this moment, so ignorant of the spiritual meaning of this portion of the word of God? Is it not because their attention has been turned away from it, to other things, when they ought to have been engaged in teaching and admonishing one another, and, with grace in their hearts, singing these divine psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, in the praises of the Lamb?

But we ought to learn from the errors of others, and even from our own errors, to fix our attention more close on this part of God's holy word. By laying it aside, and using the compositions of men in our worship, two pernicious effects are always produced. The relish, or taste, for these divine songs, is lost, and a false or corrupted taste is acquired: and secondly, from not having these songs constantly before us in our worship, we become ignorant of their scriptural meaning. These are obviously the reasons, why no man could learn the new song, but the 144,000, who were redeemed from the earth. In this age, God is about to cast a new lustre and glory on his word, and especially on this part of it; and therefore those who in this way, lose their relish for the study of it, and give their attention to the thoughts of men, do become altogether incapacitated for understanding and realizing the spiritual meaning of the songs of inspiration. When it is said, that no man could learn this song, but the 144,000, there is plainly supposed an endeavor to learn it by some others; and although they could not learn it at that period, to which the vision refers; yet by repeated trials they might learn it afterwards. The persons who are seen standing on the sea of glass, seem to be of this description. They made the attempt repeatedly and were successful. They forsook the worship of the beast, and received the harps of God; and thus they were enabled to sing the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb: while with wonder and admiration they exclaimed; "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou king of saints. Who shall not fear thee," &c. It is a great mistake to suppose that

these exclamations, which the apostle occasionally heard, were the songs they were singing. It is true, that something like these expressions may be found in the Psalms, and in many other places in scripture, where the feelings of the true worshippers of God are expressed; but if the apostle had heard nothing, but these exclamations, he could not have known what song they were singing. We must bear in mind, that this is the representation of a fact, which will be realized in the churches, and which is even at this moment, in some degree, realized. When we study and understand the truths contained in the Revelation and see the accomplishment of those truths, in the providence of God; and then when we are engaged in the praises of God; and see the very same things, in the songs which we are singing, it is impossible for us to avoid exclaiming at least with our hearts, great and marvellous are thy works, &c. Every enlightened and intelligent christian may see enough, in the providence of God at this moment, which is in such admirable agreement with the songs of inspiration, that he will naturally break forth into ejaculations of wonder and astonishment. But in the course of a few years, when the light shall increase, when the day shall dawn, and the day star of prophecy shall rise in the hearts of the true worshippers, these things will all be so clear and obvious, that these exclamations will be elicited from them all. This was, no doubt, the intention of the Lord Jesus Christ, in making this communication to the apostle; and when we consider it in this light, all is consistent and natural. These very exclamations will naturally be made, when with the knowledge of the prophecies we sing the Psalms of David; because we see in these Psalms the very same things, which are pointed out to us in the prophecies, and which are now taking place in the world. Who, that has any knowledge of the prophecies recorded in the Psalms, and sees the state of the world, can avoid exclaiming, "who shall not fear thee, and glorify thy name; for thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are manifest?"

These things will always become clearer and plainer, to the minds of those by whom they are studied, and carefully kept in view; and this will make the difference between the two great classes of mankind. The one will continue in the practice of singing this new song, and of worshipping God according to his ordinances. They will, therefore, see his judgments, be prepared to meet them, and to glorify

his name, amidst all the dispensations of his wrath. The other class, who turn away their attention from these things, will always become more ignorant and blind,—will be more and more incapable of learning the new song, and will thus become vessels of wrath fitted for destruction.

The apostle, having seen this representation, and understood the things contained in it, was, in some degree, prepared for understanding the awful scenes which follow. “After that,” says he, “I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: and the seven angels came out of the temple,” &c. We must carefully look into the import of every word and phrase which is here used; for in no other way can we expect to have a clear and consistent view of the important truths, presented for our contemplation. It is nothing but want of observation and careful attention, which renders men ignorant of the word of God, and for this sin, they make themselves liable to the judgment of those, “who regard not the work of the Lord, nor the operation of his hand. He shall destroy them, and not build them up.”

We may observe, in the first place, a wonderful preparation for these last judgments; and this was, no doubt, what astonished the apostle, and made him call it a sign, great and marvellous. He seems to have had, at first, a transient view of these ministers of wrath, and to have been informed, that the subject to be presented was the seven last plagues, which fill up the wrath of God. But he was then immediately called to contemplate those characters who were standing on the sea of glass, and to examine their devotions, that he might have some knowledge of the actual condition of the true church of God, when these judgments should commence. The doors of the temple then flew open, and the angels again made their appearance. It is called the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven. The words temple and tabernacle are sometimes used in a general sense, and point out no particular condition of the church; but they are here used symbolically, and, of course, have a particular meaning. The tabernacle was erected by Moses, in the wilderness of Sinai; and in the most holy place, in this tabernacle, the ark was deposited, which contained the law, or the testimony of God. This tabernacle was a moveable habitation, and was thus suited to the circumstances of the Israelites, in their frequent removals, and encampments in different parts of the wilderness, till they came to the land of Canaan. But it was many years after



they were settled in that land, before the temple was erected by Solomon, and the ark brought into it. After this was done, the worship of God may be said to have been established on a permanent foundation, and no longer liable to be shifted from place to place.

But all this is intended to show us the condition of the christian church, from the period in which she was driven into the wilderness, by the persecution of the dragon, and kept in this condition by the usurpation of the man of sin, until the millennium, when the true worship of God will be established, and the true church will have a permanent residence in every part of the world. In the vision recorded in the xii. chapter, the church was exalted to heaven, that she might be seen by the world, and then she was obliged to escape into the wilderness, and there to continue, removing from one place to another, for 1260 years. The worship of the tabernacle continues all this period, and the ark of the testimony is carried along, in all the shiftings and removings of the church. This prophecy will be accomplished soon after the rising of the witnesses, or soon after the expiration of the 1260 years, in which the witnesses are said to prophesy in sackcloth. At the commencement of the millennium, the temple shall be built, and the true worship of God shall be permanently established. Hence we may see the reason why it is called the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony. It is not precisely in the moveable condition of the tabernacle, nor in the permanent situation of the temple, but shows a state of progressive exaltation, and the possession of the testimony of God.

From this temple of the tabernacle, the executioners of God's vengeance came forth. They are said to have been in possession of the seven last plagues, before they had received the vials; because they were the commissioned ministers of wrath. They were clothed in pure and white linen. By this emblem, the righteousness of these last judgments is exhibited. Before these curses shall be brought on the world, God will show the justice of them to his servants; and consequently, they shall know something of their nature. They were girded about the breasts with golden girdles, in order to show their dignity. A girdle round the loins would have signified that they were to be engaged in some arduous and difficult work; but the girdle about the breast, which was worn by kings and emperors, shows the authority and dignity which God will display, through his ministers, in this last dispensation.

It must be evident, that these judgments are to be inflicted on account of the unworthy and injurious manner in which the true gospel has been treated by mankind. The ministers of wrath proceed from the temple, and the curses are put into their hands by one of the four living creatures, which represent the ministry of the gospel. These curses are represented by seven golden vials, full of the wrath of God, who liveth forever and ever. There is no small degree of obscurity thrown over this subject, by the idea which is now attached to the word vial, and which is certainly very different from the meaning it has in the original language. The word vial is Greek, and our translators have just given us the original word; and from this it has probably been adopted into our language: but there is enough of evidence on this subject, in the Greek writers, to show, that so far from signifying a very small glass vessel, with a narrow neck, it meant a vessel with a wide mouth, in the form of a cup of the largest size, and approaching to the dimensions of a bowl. It would have given a much better idea of the meaning, if the word bowl had been used for vial; because the *cup* of God's indignation is frequently used, in other places, to signify the same kind of curse; but here the vessel is enlarged and increased, beyond the size of a cup, to show that the judgment is the greatest of this kind, which was ever executed on the world: and there are seven of these large cups, or bowls, filled with God's wrath, to show that the curses shall be executed to full perfection. If, therefore, we desire to understand the prophecy, we must displace the idea of vial from our minds, and put in its stead that of a large cup or bowl. When we carry this idea with us, in our meditations on other parts of scripture, where the same subjects are presented, we shall have the less difficulty in understanding the nature of these judgments.

These bowls are filled to the brim, with the wrath of the ever living God. There cannot be a more dreadful idea communicated. It is impossible fully to develop its meaning; because it far surpasses human comprehension. If a large cup were filled with the strongest of the spirituous liquors, or with the venom of asps, and we were obliged to drink it to the dregs, it would, indeed, be a horrid subject of consideration: but it comes far short of the idea of a bowl filled with the wrath of the God who lives forever and ever.

When these bowls were filled, and given into the hands of the executioners, then were seen the indications of God's displeasure against those who had despised his truth. "The

temple was filled with smoke, from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled." This smoke is an emblem of some spiritual blindness, or moral darkness, which shall fall upon the minds of those who have not fully appreciated the light of truth, and would not enter the true church of God, when opportunities were offered. In the ix. chapter, a star is seen falling from heaven to the earth; and this star immediately assumes the appearance of a man, to whom was given the key of the bottomless pit; and when he had opened the pit, there immediately ascended volumes of smoke, by which the sun and the air were darkened. This has been interpreted to mean the ignorance and moral blindness which fell on the christian world, in the beginning of the seventh century, when the delusion of Mahomet prevailed. Then the temple of God was filled with smoke, so that men could not find the way into it; and ever since that period, the bottomless pit has been occasionally opened, by the prevalence of some other imposture, and the moral world has been darkened, so that the way into the true temple of God has been hid from the eyes of multitudes. But all the smoke which has darkened the light of truth, and concealed it from the eyes of men in former times, has been their own work. Some of them always opened the pit, and brought forth the darkness; and men were bewildered and infatuated, because they had despised the light when it shone around them. This smoke is of the same kind; but it is a judgment from God himself, and therefore will be more terrible than any thing of the same kind, which has ever been experienced. It comes as a punishment for the very same kind of iniquity, namely, for the general neglect and contempt which have been shown towards the truth, and towards the witnesses of the truth.

It is more than probable, that this judgment has even now fallen, in some degree, upon the world; for although we cannot say that the temple is filled with smoke, so that no one is able to enter into it, yet the present condition of the christian world shows, very plainly, that men are generally walking in darkness. In the light of day, when any number of persons are in pursuit of some object, which all can see, and to which the path is plain, they will generally pursue one course, and will walk nearly in a body: but let the object be obscured from the sight, and let the whole course be covered with smoke, or thick darkness, and they will all

take different directions; few of them will be found walking together, and many of them will wander away from the object entirely. This is a fair representation of the religious world at this moment; and this kind of difficulty increases with every new sect which rises, amidst the darkness, to point out a new and better course than the others were pursuing. There are many persons who appear to be well disposed towards christianity, but who find this very fact an insurmountable obstruction. They cannot proceed one step further in the pursuit of truth, because they cannot see the way themselves, and their friends, on every side, are calling out, "here is the way; we have found it;" while, at the same time, they are walking in directions exactly opposite, the one to the other. The truth is, that God has begun to execute this judgment. Hence, those who are disposed to flee out of the midst of Babylon, and to deliver themselves from the power of the beast, ought to take their stand on the sea of glass; and thus more of their brethren will be added in due time, in the dispensations of God's providence; but, in the mean time, the bowls of the wrath of God are put into the hands of the executioners, and the smoke begins to roll in volumes around the temple of God. The way into the temple will be more difficult to find, every day, and every year; and finally, every avenue and every entrance will be so greatly obscured and darkened, that no one shall be able to enter, until these last judgments shall be poured out on the world.

This evil in which the world is now involved, proceeded, in the first place, from themselves. It cannot be possible, that there is so much darkness and obscurity in the word of God, that those who make a proper use of it should be obliged to walk in darkness, and not be able to find the truth. On the contrary, the word of God is a lamp for the feet, and a light to illuminate the path of his true servants; and they do not separate very far from each other in the pursuit of truth. It is the bold and presumptuous, those who do not treat the scriptures as the word of God, but as if they were the words of man, who, by their plausible reasonings and crafty insinuations, have obtained influence among mankind, and introduced their different and contrary opinions; and thus the world has become blinded and bewildered by their own folly. The truth is still plain and obvious, but the eyes that look for it are evil; and therefore the whole body is full of darkness. Hence many different and contrary doctrines are drawn from the same text of scripture; and all of them

have adherents, because men are walking in darkness, and know not whither they are going, because that darkness hath blinded their eyes.

But this is also a judgment from God, as really as the darkness which covered the land of Egypt, while the Israelites had light in all their dwellings: or, as the apostle observes concerning the Jews, Rom. xi. 7 and 8: "Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded; (according as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day." It was for the wickedness of the Egyptians, that God brought the natural darkness on their land. It was for the wickedness of the Jews, that God blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, that they should not see with their eyes, nor hear with their ears, &c.; and it is for the wickedness of the christian world, that God has covered it, at this time, with moral darkness. But it proceeds, also, from his glory, which will afterwards appear in the judgments of his wrath. He conceals himself, as it were, behind a thick and black cloud; but his presence will afterwards be seen, in the lightning and the storm of his judgments; and this display of his glory will finally open the eyes of those who shall be left, when he shall have swept the corrupted churches, and the whole christian world, with the besom of destruction. But there is still a possibility of escape, until the ministers of wrath shall have begun their work; and therefore we should all be diligent in our endeavors to find out the truth. It is still true, and will always be true, that those who come to the Redeemer, he will in no wise cast out. But if we come to him in truth, we must lay aside our self-sufficiency, and the natural pride of our hearts; and, in our worship, we must be directed entirely by his authority, and not by the inventions of men. We must seek him earnestly and diligently, and in his own way: then we shall find his word to be "a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path."

## PART II. DISSERTATION VIII.

### ON THE XVI. OF THE REVELATION.

WHEN all necessary preparations had been made, and all things so arranged, that the world might have knowledge of these terrible judgments, before the execution of them; or at least, that no one should have the excuse of involuntary ignorance, the orders are issued by “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.” The earth, when used as a symbol, has the same latitude of meaning, as when used literally. In its largest and most extensive sense, it signifies the whole globe which we inhabit; and in another sense, it means the land as distinguished from the water. It is therefore used as a symbol to represent all worldly minded men, or all whose hearts are not actuated by heavenly principles, and holy affections. It is also used as the symbol of men, whose earthly principles are established and confirmed, by the power of habit; when they are to be distinguished from those, whose principles are unsteady and fluctuating, like the waves of the sea. Various examples might be brought to prove that the earth, when used as an emblem, has generally, one or the other of these senses; but the thing is so plain, that we presume examples are unnecessary. In the former sense, it is used in the first verse. The whole seven vials or bowls, full of the wrath of God, are to be poured on all men throughout the world, whose principles and dispositions are earthly,—those who do not obey the command of the Redeemer, to seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness. It is of little importance what profession they make, or by what name they are called. The great question is, whether they are earthly, or heavenly, carnally or spiritually, minded. If earthly minded men are called christians, they have merely a name that they live, while they are dead; and are the worshippers of the beast. If they are not called christians, they have the spirit of the dragon; and like him, they will give their power and influence to the beast, whenever their worldly purposes can be promoted by it. All such characters must be utterly destroyed from the earth; and this is the command for, and the commencement of their destruction.

We should observe that these judgments, although they shall take place in the common course of God's providence, are not like the judgments contained in the seals, or like those proclaimed by the trumpets. They are not, chiefly and principally, common national calamities, such as wars, famines, and pestilences; although these shall no doubt be mingled in them. In common national judgments, God generally makes but little discrimination between the righteous and the wicked. When they are brought on the world, a good man is as likely to suffer as a wicked man. The innocent and the guilty are alike involved in the same temporal calamities; although the righteous has peace in his death, and all his sufferings are tempered with mercy: but the wicked, whether he escapes or suffers, is still the object of God's vengeance. In the execution of these last plagues, God will distinguish between the righteous and the wicked; therefore they shall be poured, and shall chiefly operate, on the minds of men. We frequently see judgments of the same kind executed on men who have prospered and got success in their sins; whose prosperity has continued so long, that they entertain no fears of a reverse in their circumstances. They say in their hearts, "God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see it." There are many such characters at this time in the christian church. They are careful not to be guilty of such great and enormous crimes as would destroy their christian character; but their whole lives are nevertheless a scene of dishonesty and of fraud: "guile is always found in their lips." This was the general character of the Pharisees, in the days of the Lord Jesus Christ; yet they prospered in their iniquities, and would not believe that any evil should befall them. Thus the corrupted church is represented as saying in her heart, "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow." Therefore, it is said, "that her plagues shall come in one day,—death, and mourning, and famine," or an utter failure in all her hopes,—a destitution of every comfort: "and she shall be utterly burnt with fire; for strong is the Lord who judgeth her." Although these judgments are denounced against the great body of corrupted christians, yet they are rather individual than national. They will, no doubt, operate more grievously in some nations than in others, in proportion as christianity is corrupted among them, and as the true gospel is despised and hated; and therefore they will have their most terrible operation in the church of Rome, in the Roman empire, and especially in that country, and

in that city, where all this corruption originated: but as those churches, and those individual christians, whose worship and whose principles are not corrupted, shall escape them; so they must operate on individuals, so as to afflict the corrupted portion of every community, in mind, body, and outward circumstances. In this way, every part of christendom shall suffer, where there are any antichristian principles and practices.

These curses shall come suddenly, and shall be all in operation at the same time. There is, indeed, a regular succession, in the pouring out of the vials. One angel goes after another, and empties the contents of his bowl on some particular object, and certain effects are produced immediately: but the succeeding angel does not wait until the effects of the former vial have ceased. We may, therefore, consider these judgments as coming in rapid succession, and that the last vial will be poured out, before the first has ceased to operate. They shall come suddenly, not because of any thing in the judgments themselves, which could not be anticipated; for their nature and operation are by no means obscurely pointed out; but because of the unbelief, the blindness, and infatuation of mankind. The words of the prophet Habakkuk, as quoted by the apostle, will then be fully realized. "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you."

"The first angel went and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them who worshipped his image." Here the earth is used as the emblem of those characters, over whose hearts and habits, earthly or carnal principles and desires have obtained a confirmed and permanent influence. This vial was poured out on the land, as it is distinguished from the water; and the persons chiefly affected by it, have lived for a long time under the influence of error, and in the indulgence of their lusts. Their habits are formed. They are, as it were, settled and grounded in sin. When men are advanced in years, their habits are generally fixed, and their character is formed. They have also acquired a certain degree of influence in the community where they reside. Such men will always throw their weight into the scale of error, in preference to that of truth and rectitude. We shall always find this to be the case, when the temptation becomes strong enough, and when such a bait is held out, as is agreeable to



their prejudices and their interests. Nothing but true religion will induce a man to act uprightly, and in all respects consistently. Hence those who are destitute of this principle may be led aside from the path of rectitude, by a certain kind of temptation. The tempter has his lures adapted to the natural propensities, and the weaknesses of all men; and if they have not formed correct habits, both in thinking and acting, they will most certainly be led into the snare. Hence it is a truth, that all men, real christians excepted, will receive the mark of the beast in some form, whenever the temptation is strong enough, and of a suitable kind: for they have not the principle, which operated in the heart of the apostle, when he exclaimed, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, &c., that I may win Christ, and be found in him," &c. The want of this principle makes them fit subjects for temptation; and they are always overcome by it in the end. They may indeed hold out for a time against the arts of the adversary, but at last they will always yield.

On these characters, from the highest to the lowest, the curses contained in the first vial shall fall. It shall not only be poured on those who have gone so far into iniquity, as to become the seducers of others; but on every one, over whom any sinful lust has obtained a permanent influence. It is in fact, the lust of gain, of power, or pleasure, or some such selfish desire; when not counteracted by a sense of duty, which leads men into religious errors, and induces them to follow the multitude in departing further and further from the truth. There are truly many of such characters who are not conscious of the operation of this evil principle. They are perfectly sincere as far as they know their own hearts. But there are few comparatively, who exercise themselves sufficiently to know good and evil, so as to be able in all cases to distinguish truth from error, especially in matters of religion. Not that there is any more difficulty in knowing what we ought to believe concerning God, and what are the duties he requires of us, than in knowing our duties to our fellow men: but men generally are more indifferent on the former than on the latter subject; and thus many receive the mark of the beast before they are aware. They place themselves in circumstances, in which it becomes necessary for them, either to suffer or sin; and having chosen the latter, they will plead this very necessity, to excuse or palliate their guilt. Small errors open the way for greater and greater deviations, until their habits become fixed, and their minds darkened; and then they prefer evil to good,

and go on blindfolded to ruin. There are multitudes of such characters at this time in the christian world, and every one of them must receive a portion of the curse contained in this first vial.

It is called "a noisome and grievous sore." The emblem is taken from the swelling and spreading ulcers which brake out on the bodies of the Egyptians, when God sent his plagues on Pharaoh and his people. In this case, it is a spiritual sore: it operates not on the body, but the mind. It consists in disappointment in their dearest and most sanguine expectations, accompanied with strong irritation, and all those fretful and rebellious feelings which worked in the hearts of Pharaoh and his servants; when, notwithstanding their pains, and the various and repeated calamities which fell upon them, they still refused to humble themselves before God. It is one of the curses denounced against the Israelites, and against the corrupted and rebellious christian churches, and which are particularly described in the xxviii. chapter of Deuteronomy. "The Lord shall smite thee with the botch of Egypt, and with the emerods, and with the scab, and with the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed. The Lord shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart; and thou shalt grope at noonday, as the blind gropeth in the darkness; and thou shalt not prosper in thy ways; and thou shalt be only oppressed and spoiled evermore, and no man shall save thee." Not the outward form, but the spirit and substance of the curses, which were denounced against the Israelites, are now to fall on the corrupted christian churches. They shall have the same sufferings, although they shall not come in the very same manner. "Wo unto them," says the prophet Isaiah, "that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place; that they may be placed alone in the earth. In mine ears, said the Lord of hosts: of a truth, many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitant. Yea, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and the seed of an homer shall yield an ephah." If we consider the disappointment of a worldly minded man, when the fruits of his labors are blasted, and every new attempt to gain his object meets a new disappointment; while his proud heart still refuses submission, and the ulcer in his mind is more and more irritated and inflamed, day by day, we shall find no difficulty in understanding what is meant by this noisome and grievous sore. In fact, there are many at this moment groaning under its influence. For although the curse is not

yet inflicted, in its most extensive and full meaning, but a preparation is only making for it; yet there is enough of it in the world, to show us its nature, and the horrible effects it will produce, when once it becomes universal. It is plain that the haughty despots of the earth must even now feel their thrones tottering, and see the fabric of their power continually crumbling down. They cannot avoid looking forward, and anticipating future evils, and the final prostration of every hope. We know how such men must feel, when their grandeur and their glory are daily more and more eclipsed, and sinking into utter darkness. The same observations may be made, concerning the fabrics of superstition which have been reared, from generation to generation, and have frowned defiance on the feeble efforts of the witnesses in the times that are past. The forms and other inventions which men have introduced into the worship of God, and by which the adversary contrived to build up his kingdom, in opposition to the kingdom of the Redeemer, are evidently beginning to lose their influence. All these works of iniquity have already begun to moulder and fall, and the hopes of thousands and millions shall be covered and lost amidst their ruins.

This sore shall fall, in some way, on every individual who has adopted wrong principles, and indulges false hopes. It is obvious, that whatever principles men have adopted, whatever habits they have formed, or whatever worship they practise, or whether they attend to any worship whatever, they have hopes of happiness in a future world. There are certainly less fears on this subject, and stronger false hopes, than there have been in the ages past. The doctrine of universal salvation has immense influence on the minds of men generally; and if they do not rest entirely on this delusion, they have still some other wall built up, with the same kind of untempered mortar; and in these things they trust. But when this vial shall be fully poured out, all these refuges of lies shall fail; and then, in this respect, as well as in respect of the things of the world, there will be horrible disappointment and despair. Hence the prophet Isaiah exclaims, when he beheld these things in vision: "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with the everlasting burnings?" Thus they shall conceive chaff, and bring forth stubble; their breath as fire shall devour them, and the people shall be as the burnings of lime." All their vain

hopes shall crumble into small pieces, and moulder into dust.

It is particularly mentioned, that these sores are of such a nature that they cannot be healed. They will continue, therefore, to be more and more painful, and to be more and more irritated and inflamed, by every new dispensation of God's wrath, from generation to generation, until the subjects of them shall be utterly destroyed from the earth. They are, therefore, particularly described, as in full operation, when the kings of the earth, and the merchants of the earth, and the great men, and the shipmasters, and sailors, &c. are weeping and wailing, and pouring forth their lamentations over the fall of Babylon. We should still keep the truth in our minds, which, we trust, has been proved to the satisfaction of most of our readers, but which will always become plainer and plainer, by every new development of prophecy, that Babylon has extended her influence over the christian world,—“that the nations have drunk of her wine, therefore the nations are mad.” The same worldly gains, wealth, honor, and power, and the same false hopes of future blessedness, which were generated and cherished within the walls of Rome, and extended through the ten kingdoms, are now held out to their votaries, by almost every party in the christian church. It is still something of this nature, by which they operate on the minds of men, and endeavor to attach them to their different doctrines and forms of worship: but when this curse shall have produced its ultimate effects, they shall all be overwhelmed in disappointment and despair.

It is plain that these feelings, as they operate in the hearts of worldly men, or men of the earth, will weaken their attachments to every kind of religion, and the world will be cast into a state of confusion and fluctuation. When men have lived under the influence of certain principles, until their habits are formed and established; and when, by some dispensation of Providence, their hopes are disappointed, and their minds revolutionized, there is, in the first place, a great fermentation excited in the passions; and this tumultuous condition of their feelings continues for a time, and they finally settle down into a state of indifference. We see this exemplified continually in the religious world. It appears to be the great object of the various religious sects, to gain a multitude of converts to their particular doctrines and modes of worship; and for this purpose, they use every art and contrivance of which their minds are capable: and thus multitudes are daily converted to some kind of religion.

Certain principles are adopted, and certain habits formed: But we frequently find them to be of very short continuance, and the subjects are much more indifferent to religion than they were before. When they have passed through two or three of these conversions, all their religious feelings are gone, and they settle down into a kind of apathy, from which they cannot be aroused, by any thing but some tremendous judgment from the Almighty. This is the second vial of the wrath of God. We may see how this curse will operate, from the things that are now passing before our eyes. "The second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man, and every living soul died in the sea." There is at present a general relaxation of those prejudices, which, in past ages, have rendered mankind fixed and stationary in their political and religious opinions. That attachment to certain systems of policy and of religion, which used formerly to bind them together, has certainly lost much of its power in every part of the world. But the immediate results are not such as the philanthropist would desire. When men are freed from the fetters and manacles of tyranny and superstition, they are not immediately to be brought under the restraints of good government, either in temporal or spiritual things. There is generally a period of tumult and anarchy, and when their passions subside, they become cold and careless, both with respect to politics and religion, but especially the latter. Such will be the case all over the world, before the full effects of this curse shall have been produced. The apostle beheld the troubled ocean, and the waves raging and foaming with their accustomed fury; but no sooner had this angel emptied the contents of his bowl into it, than the fluctuation immediately ceased, and the sea appeared like a mass of congealed or coagulated blood, such as the blood of a man or any animal, after it has been shed for some time, and suffered to cool, and thicken, and congeal. Then every thing that had life immediately died.—Let this representation be applied to the condition of the moral world, and no one will be at a loss for the true meaning. We see, at this moment, that the fluctuation of religious opinions almost always terminates in religious indifference. What, then, must be the results, when all those who worship the beast, and bear his mark, shall break loose from their spiritual bondage? They will fluctuate and rage for a time, like the troubled ocean, and afterwards settle down into a cold hearted formality, in which there is no spiritual animation; and thus all

their religious feelings will die. In fact, after all our revivals, and all that religious animation, which, in the past years, seemed to spread itself over the whole christian world, the greater part of our churches, at present, bears a striking resemblance to some of the ancient churches of Asia;—they are neither cold nor hot;—they have a name that they live, while they are dead. But this is the manner in which we may expect this vial to operate. Occasional fermentations will be continually excited through the religious world, and at length all will settle down into a stagnant state of religious apathy.

But the pouring out of this vial is immediately followed by another, of still more fatal tendency. If the sea were turned into blood, and thereby unfitted for the support of animal life, still there are thousands of rivers and springs, which, if they were kept pure, would preserve some from perishing. The fish are not generally found in the midst of the ocean, but around the shores, and especially at the mouths of creeks and rivers. Thus many a living thing might still be preserved alive, and even the sea itself might at length be renovated, and brought back to its primitive condition. But “the third angel poured out his vial on the rivers and fountains of water, and they became blood.” By the rivers and fountains of water, we are to understand the ordinances of the gospel. They are called the river of the water of life, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. The foregoing curse operates on the moral condition of a large number of mankind, and destroys all religious vitality; but this curse destroys the means by which spiritual life might be generated and supported. As the fainting soul has often been restored by a draft of pure water, so access to the streams of the waters of life has restored many, who have morally fainted, and been ready to fall into errors or transgressions. But with respect to that class of mankind on whom this vial is poured, the streams of the water of life are also turned into blood. It may be thought somewhat incongruous, to interpret the symbol of the sea, as if it meant a certain class of mankind, while that of the rivers and fountains is supposed to mean the preaching of the gospel, and the means of salvation: but the word of God attaches these significations to these symbols, in various places; and there is, in fact, the same relation between the rivers and the sea, as between the principles and the characters of men. As the fountains and streams, when their waters are gathered together, form seas, so certain religious

principles form certain kinds of character among men. Hence the meaning attached to both these symbols is perfectly natural. There are two ways in which the effect is produced. In the first place, by false doctrines and wrong modes of worship. There are at present but few ministers, comparatively, who at all times preach the pure, unadulterated doctrines of gospel truth, and few churches in which human inventions do not absorb the attention and the affections of the worshippers. This corruption is gradually increasing, and the time is not far distant, when every church which is now but partially corrupted, and which still retains some of the vital principles of the gospel, will lose them entirely, and become a mass of corruption: and in this sense, the rivers and fountains of water will be turned into blood. But in the second place, the same effects will be produced by a dislike of the true doctrines, and the modes of worship prescribed in the word of God. In this sense, the preaching of the true gospel, and the ordinances of God's own appointment, are often the means of corrupting the hearts of men, that are already corrupted. "They are the savour of death unto death," unto those who do not love the truth. In these two senses, the fountains and the streams of life are at this moment fast turning into blood; and the results are now, in some degree, produced, which were foretold by the apostle. "The time," says he, "will come, when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lust, shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." This declaration of the apostle gives such an accurate and striking description of the christian world at the present day, as must astonish every one who has enough of discernment to be able to see the correctness of it. In fact, if men had sat for their portrait, it could not have been better drawn. This prurient desire after novelty and entertainment, in the worship of God, renders the old and established modes of worship, and the sound doctrines which delighted the ears and the hearts of the true worshippers of God in former times, so old fashioned, so stale, and dull, and dry, that they can scarcely be endured. There is also an inveterate dislike to some of the essential truths of the gospel; such as the doctrine of absolute, unconditional election, and the sovereign grace of God. These, and other essential truths, which are the vital springs of christianity, multitudes cannot bear, but turn away their ears from them; and, therefore, the teachers which they heap to themselves,

must invent some fables to supply their place. Some vain contrivances must be formed, to gratify their itching ears, and lull them into security. Hence it is a fact, that whether they are hearing the truth, or hearing errors and falsehoods, they are still drinking blood. They dislike the truth, and love error, and therefore "they shall be filled with their own ways."

They think it proper to attend, or at least they will not be restrained from attending, all kinds of worship, and all doctrines, whether true or false, under the pretence of "proving all things, and holding fast that which is good;" but they are too generally like the insect, that extracts the poison, when honey might have been obtained from the same flower. False doctrines are congenial with their taste and inclination; and having this relish for what is wrong, and a dislike to the truth, they receive nothing but evil from all their attendance on the ministrations of the gospel. No doubt there are many, who are in some degree convinced of the false taste and relish in religious things, which is now so prevalent in the christian world, who at the same time, will not believe it to be so great an evil, as to come up to this representation. They cannot, believe that hearing and countenancing errors and false worship, are as fatal to the soul, as drinking blood would be fatal to human life. They suppose it to be a trivial error, which cannot possibly produce such horrible effects. But those who indulge this opinion, know not the dangerous tendency of error, nor the importance of sound doctrine. This false taste in religion, which is so obvious in the age in which we live, is one of the greatest curses which God ever inflicted on the world; for when it has come to its full growth in the minds of men, they will be satisfied with nothing but poison instead of spiritual food; and this they will always find, as long as they heap to themselves teachers after their own lust. If this prophecy were fulfilled in the sense in which some would understand it, that every country where the blood of the saints has been literally shed, will be deluged with the blood of its inhabitants, even this would be but a small curse, in comparison with this spiritual drinking of blood. The former may consist with the eternal salvation of many, who are thus cut off from the earth, but this spiritual drinking of blood, always terminates in spiritual death.

But this judgment is perfectly consistent with the righteous government of God. It is a punishment for the pain they have inflicted on his witnesses. Those who persecuted



the saints of God, and literally shed their blood in the times that are past, did not see what terrible judgments they were heaping up, to fall on the heads of their posterity in the latter days; and those who have been guilty, in a spiritual sense, of slaying the witnesses, did not foresee the horrible judgments which awaited them and their descendents. Some of the ancient persecutors discovered their guilt before they departed from this world, and were afflicted with all the pains of remorse, and all the fearful forebodings of future misery; while others of them lived and died in ignorance of their guilt, and were only waked from their lethargy by the flames of tophet: and therefore we may expect that the same results will take place in the present time. But the sin of spiritually slaying the witnesses, and the spiritual drinking of blood in the ordinances of the gospel, are not very easily discovered. These are works of iniquity, of which those who are guilty, may live and die in ignorance, and therefore the same evil dispositions will continue and work undiscovered, until the curse shall be exhausted. "They shall wring out the bitter dregs of the cup of God's wrath, and shall drink them."

The righteousness of this dispensation is best understood, and can best be explained, by those whom God has sent to supply the world with the waters of life, but whom they have despised and hated. Hence, says the apostle, "I heard the angel of the waters say, 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." It is well known, that the ancient mythologists attributed the guardianship of certain fountains, and celebrated streams of water, to their inferior divinities: but we cannot suppose that this emblem is taken from any of these fabulous narratives. The word angel, as used in the scripture, carries with it a much more extensive signification than the sense, in which we commonly use it. In the Old Testament times, every messenger was called an angel. Hence it is said concerning John the Baptist, Behold, I will send my angel (or messenger) before my face. So also we know from the Jewish writers, that the person who had the charge of the holy books, and other affairs of the synagogue, which were necessary for the right conducting of the worship of God, was called the angel of the synagogue. It is also in the highest degree probable, that the title of angel of the waters, was given particularly to the person who had the charge, or

the chief care of the waters of the temple. A large supply of water was constantly needed for the sacrifices, and the various ablutions of the priests, and for other purposes. There must therefore have been a certain officer among the priests or Levites, who had the charge of these waters, and whose duty it was to see that the temple was regularly supplied. This was the angel of the waters, and is intended to represent the ministers of the gospel, who have the charge of the waters of life, by which the church, or the New Testament temple, is supplied. The ministers of the gospel, who distribute these living waters, know best the manner in which they have been treated by mankind. It is an unquestionable fact, which has existed in the world in all ages, and to which testimony is borne by our Lord Jesus Christ himself, that those prophets, and ministers of God, who have proclaimed his word in the most upright manner, preached the purest gospel truths, and were the most diligent in their duty, have always been the greatest sufferers, from the evil dispositions, and the malignant opposition of those to whom they were sent. Thus the Jews builded the tombs of the prophets, and garnished the sepulchres of those righteous men, whom their fathers had persecuted and put to death; and at the same time, they were doing the very works of their fathers, in hating and opposing the Redeemer, and all who had the spirit of the prophets. This same evil disposition is by no means changed. This self same spirit still operates every where through the christian world, as it operated among the Jews. Although the sword of persecution has for some years been sheathed, at least in protestant countries, and the true witnesses are not literally put to death. The faggots and the flames, the rack and the gibbet, are not held up in terror before them; yet there are many other ways of shedding their blood, than that of taking away their lives by the hand of the public executioner. The world still continues to give them all the pain in their power. Even at this very period of universal charity, the man who preaches the truth, and, like the prophet, lifts up his voice like a trumpet, and shows the house of Israel their sins, must suffer many martyrdoms in the course of a short life. None knows this truth so well as those that have the experience of it, and they are always prepared to justify the ways of God in his terrible judgments; because they know and feel the poisoned arrows of persecution. They know that this same judgment, of giving men blood to drink is not more than they deserve; because they have shed, and are

still engaged in shedding, the blood of the saints and prophets of God.

This declaration, of the angel of the waters, was answered, and the truth of it avouched, by another voice, speaking from the altar. "And I heard another out of altar, say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments." We shall see the meaning of this latter exclamation, by recurring to the sixth chapter, where the apostle tells us, that "when the Lamb had opened the fifth seal, he 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?" This is the voice of those, who have formerly suffered for the truth, uniting with the true ministers of the gospel, who are now living on the earth. The testimony of the saints and prophets, whose blood has been shed, is here given from the altar in confirmation of the truth, proclaimed by the angel of the waters. It is true, from the testimony of the faithful ministers of the gospel in the present time, and from the testimony of those, who have suffered for the truth in ancient times, that those characters, to whom the streams of the waters of life are turned into blood, have really and truly, though perhaps not literally, shed the blood of the saints and prophets of God. It is indeed very probable, that they themselves have no knowledge of the fact, and do not believe that they are guilty of it. So the Jews did not know nor believe, that when they were crucifying Jesus of Nazareth, they were shedding the blood of the Son of God. The persecutors in ancient times, did not know nor believe, that they were shedding the blood of saints and prophets. Hence in the present time, it is not to be supposed, that they understand or realize the truth, that the dislike and hatred, which they indulge and manifest against many of the true servants of God, the injurious manner in which they treat them, and the mental pain which they inflict on them day by day, is the very same as the shedding of their blood. They who are thus treated, know the fact from experience, and that the word of God is confirmed in their sufferings; but their persecutors say, we offend not. They do not know nor consider the evil of their doings; and many of them will, no doubt, continue ignorant of their guilt, until they shall be arraigned, at the bar of God, and their sentence announced, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and

his angels: for I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink, &c. For inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye did it not to me."

But although the truth and righteousness of the judgments of God, may now fully appear to all mankind; yet the minds of all his true servants will be gradually enlightened, and enabled to understand them. The true nature of this curse, which is at this time very imperfectly understood by any, will be made clear to our minds in the dispensations of Providence, and by the light which, in these dispensations, will be cast on his word. In this exposition, imperfect as it is, there is an opening made for the further discovery of the truth; and thus, in proportion as we are enabled to understand the nature of this judgment, and the causes and means of it, we shall be the better enabled to fulfil the prophecy, by expounding the truth, that men have shed, and are now shedding, the blood of saints and prophets; that God is giving them blood to drink; and that all his judgments are true and righteous.

In the next curse, or plague, we are called to behold a scene of political contentions, heats and animosities, arising from those who hold the reins of government. The fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire; and men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues; and they repented not to give him glory." The sun is here used as the emblem of every government in the christian world; for it is enlightened, and its movements are directed around one great moral centre. Although, in respect of politics, there are different kinds of governments in Europe and America, and in respect of religion, they have different views of its doctrines, different kinds of worship, and different kinds of governments established in their churches; yet they are all the parts of one great moral system. The same moral sun rules and enlightens them all. Both the continents of America are now peopled, chiefly, with the descendants of those who persecuted the true servants of God, or of those who suffered persecution in the cause of truth. Since, therefore, we are descended from them, and still partake of their spirit, we shall also partake in the curses and the blessings which shall be poured on the christian world. The contents of this vial seem to have acted on the sun, like oil, or ardent spirits, or some inflammatory liquid, when poured into a

flaming fire. The flames are immediately increased; a scorching heat is thrown out on all sides; and all who are near it are pained and tormented with the burning irradiations. Different systems of government act in different ways, and produce different effects on the feelings and moral habits of the nations under their influence. If we lived in any of the countries of Europe, we should be able to see clearly, at this moment, the train laid for some political conflagration, and to know something about the kind of heat which will scorch and torment the inhabitants. In the land in which we live, these things may also be very easily seen. Political fermentations are frequent among us. They operate occasionally in every government, where there is any latitude allowed to the thoughts and sentiments of the inhabitants: and hence they are inseparable from the nature of our government, and cannot be avoided, unless we possessed a much greater share of intelligence and virtue, than has ever been found among large political bodies. These fermentations, which have sometimes risen to a dangerous height, have as yet been happily quashed, by the good sense and virtue of the nation. But we have no reason to hope that this state of things will always continue. On the contrary, we see corruption growing and increasing, in every part of the land, and in every department of the government. It is all in vain to hope, even if there were no prophecies on this subject, that this corruption should continue to grow, and the nation still enjoy the blessings of peace. If our minds are not blinded by some fatal delusion, we cannot avoid foreseeing, and that at no very distant period, a state of political contentions, and scorching heats of this nature; which, if it does not terminate in a civil war, and the overturning of the government, will at least make the lives of many a scene of bitterness and wo.

The troubles and calamities with which we are exercised in this world, are calculated to humble us, and produce a spirit of submission to the righteous government of God. We must all know, if we only reflect for a moment, that in the most painful of our troubles, God afflicts us less than our iniquities deserve: but those who are not acquainted with the evil and provoking nature of their sins, and the perfect righteousness of the divine character, are apt to indulge, in their afflictions, a rebellious disposition against the government of the Almighty. They think themselves hardly treated; they feel bitter resentments; and sometimes their evil dispositions are manifested in blasphemous expressions against

the author of their miseries. We may see this spirit, which is natural to man, fully developed in the history of the Israelites, while they were travelling through the wilderness of Sinai. In their passage through that state of trial, which was necessary to prepare them for the enjoyment of the land of Canaan, we behold an almost constant scene of murmuring and provocation. They spake against Moses, and against God, whenever they fell into any kind of trouble. Hence we are here informed, that under the operation of this plague, when men shall be scorched with great heat, and shall feel their pains with the same acuteness as one who is placed near a burning furnace, and has no way of escaping, their hearts shall burn with rage against the Almighty. They shall not consider their sins as the cause of their torment; and of course, they shall not mourn over them with the sorrows of repentance; but, like Pharaoh, they shall harden their hearts, and refuse to humble themselves under the hand of God. Thus the Jews, before Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, were inflamed with rage against one another, and were so scorched with contentions and animosities, that they became their own worst tormentors. The clashing of interests among ambitious leaders, and the hatred of one party against another, which showed itself by acts of the most malignant cruelty, rendered the condition of the nation almost as miserable as it was after they had fallen under the Roman power. These same evils must pass over the christian world, and every nation must receive its portion of the bitter cup, according to the previous operation of the principle of iniquity among them. This plague will inflame, and scorch, and burn them, in proportion to the nature and aggravation of their national sins, and especially according to the prevalence of antichristian principles.

But the worst evils which appear in this representation, are the want of repentance, and the positive crime of blasphemy. The apostle beheld the men of the earth, scorched and burning under the heat of the sun, as if they were surrounded by a flaming fire; and yet no penitential cries are heard,—no tears of godly sorrow are seen to flow; but the ears are stunned,—every sense is annoyed, and the scene rendered doubly horrid and disgusting, by the voice of blasphemy against Him who alone has power to lessen or to increase those terrible plagues. Is this picture unnatural? Is it impossible, that in this enlightened and christianized age, the mass of the world should be tainted with this horrible depravity, and that it should afterwards appear in these

disgusting scenes? It is, in fact, perfectly natural, and perfectly consistent with the providence of God, that such scenes should be reacted, in these latter days, over the whole christian world. Some judgments of this nature must be inflicted, before the inhabitants of the earth will learn righteousness. But let us remember that the picture was drawn by the pencil of Jehovah; that it was set, by him, before the eyes of the apostle, and that he presents it to us, as it appeared to himself. We are not, indeed, warranted to assert, that every city and every nation in christendom will exhibit such a scene of misery and depravity, as the city of Jerusalem, and the nation of the Jews, at that period, when they were about to be destroyed, and their country to become a desolation. We are told by the Redeemer, that those scenes of tribulation should never again be equalled, in any part of the world, as they never had been equalled before: but something of the same kind shall be realized generally over the christian world, before the antichristian power, which is every where established, shall be brought to desolation.

The fifth curse brings a condition of mental blindness, and deep depravity, at which the heart is appalled, and the frame shudders. We may observe, that each of these plagues becomes more terrible and alarming, as they pass before us in succession. What, then, must be the condition of the world, when they shall be all operating together? When they shall all be fully realized, they will no doubt present a lively representation of the horrors of the damned. After these scenes shall be fully realized, there will be no need to seek arguments against the doctrine of universal salvation. They are intended to show what the wicked are to expect in a future world. This subject will then be made so plain, that no man shall doubt of the eternal punishment of all the enemies of God: but at this period, men will be so far gone in wickedness, and their hearts so grievously hardened, that even the fears of hell will not induce them to repent. "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, and blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and of their sores, and repented not of their deeds." We may observe, that the word which is rendered the *seat* of the beast, has no reference to any particular local situation. It is properly the *throne* of the beast, and refers more particularly to that part of the moral world, where he has the greatest degree of

authority. The throne<sup>s</sup> is a symbol of government, and signifies the chief seat of the beast's power. He has his throne in the church of Rome, and in every other church, where antichristian worship is practised. His government is not bounded by the limits of states or territories, of islands or continents; but by the influence which he extends over the human heart. In this respect, as well as in many others, he has imitated the Lord Jesus Christ; for he has set up his kingdom in the hearts of his subjects. He has established his throne, where any kind of false worship, or human invention, has obtained any establishment among any class of worshippers. The kingdom of the beast is, therefore co-extensive with his authority: "for he sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." He is not content with the dominion of one portion of the earth, but has established his authority in every country where christianity is known. But in this symbolic representation, the apostle beheld the throne, and the kingdom of the beast, spread out before him, as the different countries on the face of the earth would appear to one who was elevated far above them, in the clouds, or in the heavens. He saw the subjects of the beast assembled around his throne; and immediately when this vial was poured out, the throne was covered with darkness, which expanded itself in all directions, until all the dominions of the beast, as well as his throne, were covered with a dense and dark cloud. He could perceive, through the thick gloom, that the subjects of the beast were miserable beyond description, and were gnawing their tongues from the pain which they felt. They had various pains and sores, besides the torment of the thick and black darkness, by which they were surrounded. The noisome and grievous ulcer, which was occasioned by the pouring out of the first vial, still continued, with increasing pain; they were scorched and burnt by the inflammatory sun; they had every thing to annoy and torment them, while they had no light to enable them to change their condition.—One might suppose, that if misery had any power in itself to change the heart, and to give an humble disposition to the sufferers, they might be humbled by a complication of miseries: but instead of humility, we behold an increase of pride, rebellion, and hardness of heart. While they are gnawing their tongues for pain, they blaspheme the God of heaven, and do not repent of their deeds.

As we have seen that there is a preparation made for the other plagues, and that we can have some knowledge of their



nature and operation, from the present condition of the world; so amidst all the light of moral and natural science, which, in these latter days, has been diffused among mankind, we may discern the symptoms of this religious darkness. It commences with an incapacity for spiritual discernment. God has given us the faculty of conscience, or the moral sense, by which we are enabled to discern between good and evil. By the cultivation and improvement of this faculty, we might be able to discern the slightest shade of moral darkness, which the god of this world might attempt to bring over our minds. We should know the spiritual meaning of God's holy law, and be able to perceive the least degree of any evil disposition, as soon as it was introduced to our minds. If, for instance, we were tempted to give any unjust or unnecessary pain to our neighbor, we should perceive at once, that this is a violation of the sixth precept of the law. Every wanton or lascivious thought would at once appear to be adultery. We should know and feel the commencement of idolatry, in every kind of worship, for which God has not given us authority. Thus we should be enabled to guard our hearts effectually, from those fleshly lusts which war against the soul. The diligent cultivation of the same principle, in our study of the scriptures, would guard us against false doctrines. We should have that unction of the Holy One, by which we should know all things, or be able to discriminate, in every thing, between truth and error; so that no man would be able to lead us into any kind of evil. The apostle might then say to us, as he said to the primitive churches: "I have not written unto you, because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth." We might also see the nature of the kingdom of Christ, the rules he has given for its government, the kind of worship he has prescribed, and all the doctrines of his truth, as they are presented in his word. But it is very plain, that in all these things, and many more which might be mentioned, the christian world is at present very much in the dark, and the darkness is daily increasing. There is now, in fact, less knowledge of the spiritual meaning of the scriptures, among christians, than there was in the time of the Reformation. There seems, at that period, to have been a blaze of heavenly light, shed forth upon the church, by which she was illuminated for a time; but this light was gradually obscured in the moral clouds, which continued to increase, and to thicken and blacken around it, from generation to generation. It is as astonishing as it is

lamentable, to see men, in every department of life, constantly deviating from the path of rectitude, and yet appearing to be altogether unconscious of their errors. But the most glaring deficiency appears in their dark and contracted views of scripture truth. The multitude of religious characters can see nothing in the scriptures but the outward literal sense; and when they attempt to enter into the spiritual or substantial meaning of any passage, their observations are so wild, and so far distant from the truth, that they seem like persons walking in the dark recesses of a forest. When no track has been made before them, they wander from one labyrinth of perplexity to another, and never find the way to the truth. It may also be observed, that in those churches where the inventions of men are mingled with the ordinances of God, in his worship, there the understanding is darkened more and more; the mind is attracted to the outward form, and the spiritual knowledge of the word of God is always diminished.

But these evils may always be traced to some errors in the hearts of men. "This people," says God, "errs in their heart, and they have not known my ways." "When they knew God, they did not glorify him as God, &c., and therefore they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." We are not, for a moment, to indulge the thought, that the word of God has any darkness in itself, or that there is any truth in it, which may not, in some degree, be known. It is, indeed, like the world in which we live, full of mysteries; and therefore, diligence and patient investigation are always required, in order to discover the truth: but every honest and intelligent mind will be enabled to see a little way into every mystery in the word of God. Whenever men deviate from the true path, the error arises, not so much from a defect in their understandings, as from some wrong bias in their hearts. This is the source to which we may trace the almost endless diversities, in the opinions of men, with respect to the word of God. These different and contradictory sentiments have increased so greatly, in these latter days, that there are many who do not believe the scriptures have any definite meaning; but that every man can find authority in them, for whatever religious opinions he may choose to adopt. Such a thought is an insult to the God of truth, who has given us his word, "to be a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path." Still we shall be obliged to adopt this blasphemous sentiment, or confess that the religious world is already much darkened, and that

the darkness proceeds from an unusual degree of depravity. The truth is, that the errors of former times, and new errors which have sprung up, from generation to generation, have all descended, like an overwhelming torrent, on our unhappy age; and the stream of the waters of life is mingled with the flood, so that it cannot easily be discovered. The ultimate or full effect of these moral and natural evils, is precisely the curse contained in this vial of the wrath of God. It is not the same as our present moral darkness, which gives no pain to any, but the man who observes and weeps over the errors and vices of his fellow men. The only characters who now suffer, are those who sigh and cry for all the abominations that are done in the midst of Jerusalem. Those who can laugh at the follies of mankind, find in this moral darkness a source of amusement and gratification; and those who are deeply involved in it, experience no great degree of pain. But the time is coming, when this curse, like the Egyptian darkness, shall be felt. Whenever they shall begin to understand and realize their condition, their horror and torment shall commence. They shall then begin to be convinced, and the conviction shall increase by every new dispensation of Providence, that this judgment has fallen upon them, because they have hated the light; and that nothing remains, but the fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.

This is no imaginary representation. These are not the wanton vagaries of the fancy, which sometimes paints horrors which never have existed, and never shall exist. This horrible condition of the human mind has often been experienced, in this world, by those who have rejected the truth, Hence the exhortation of the Redeemer: "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you." It is addressed to the whole christian world at this moment, in relation to the painful and horrible darkness which is coming upon them. We have the light of the gospel shining brilliantly around us; and the gospel will not cease to shine, but will increase in splendor and glory, until the end of time. But when men will not come to the light, nor suffer it to shine into their hearts, they must still walk in darkness, and stumble and fall. Men do not now perceive their real condition, on account of the multitude of false lights which are held up before them, by the god of this world; and therefore they continue to enjoy comfort, and are confident that God is among them, and that no evil shall come upon them: but these false lights will all finally

be extinguished, and then they shall feel their miserable condition.

This condition of moral darkness is described in many places in the scriptures; but for an explanation of it, at present, we shall only call the attention of the reader to the lix. of Isaiah. The prophet commences this chapter by declaring a fact, which is invariably and permanently true, that the power of God is still sufficient, and still ready to save us; and that his ear is always attentive to those who call on him in truth. "Every one who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." But when men keep their sins in their hearts, and cherish and indulge them, it is all in vain for them to ask salvation. They do not, in fact, ask for the salvation of the gospel, which substantially consists in deliverance from sin. All such prayers are hypocritical; for they do not desire with their hearts, the things which they ask with their lips. These iniquities, which they still love and cherish in their hearts, always interpose an effectual barrier between them and their Maker; so that he cannot look on them with any kind of approbation, nor attend to their petitions. When their hands are defiled with blood, and even with the blood of the saints and prophets,—when they keep the same disposition, and pursue the same course, from generation to generation,—when their fingers are still stained with iniquity, their lips with falsehood, and their tongues with perverseness,—when they do not call on God in righteousness, nor give their judgment in truth,—when they trust in vanity, and speak lies,—when their feet run to evil, and hasten to shed innocent blood,—when their very plans and devices are full of iniquity,—they cannot know the way of peace. This was, no doubt, a true representation of the moral condition of the Israelites in the days of the prophet, and it is by no means an exaggerated picture of the moral condition of the christian world in the times in which we live. The results, therefore, must be such a miserable condition as is afterwards described. "Judgment," says the prophet, "is far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness. We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noonday as in the night, and are in desolate places as dead men. We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far from us."

This horrible condition is perfectly consistent with the enjoyment of christian privileges, and with a kind of comfort, and even delight, in the worship of God. In the foregoing chapter of this prophecy, it is said, concerning those very characters who are here represented in this horrible condition: "They seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God." We should still bear in mind, that these descriptions are not intended merely for the Jews, in the days of the prophet, nor in the days of the Redeemer; but they are also intended as an accurate description of the christian world, in that period when God pours out the vials of his wrath. It will not, indeed, require very close observation, to perceive that this is an accurate description of the christian church in our own times. They appear, in their worship, and in all their devotions, as if they had not forsaken the ordinances of God. They seem to ask his direction in all their ways; but at the same time, it is no less obvious, that "their heart is going after their covetousness."

But the period is not far distant, when all who worship the beast, and receive his mark, or who, in any way, are actuated by the principle which leads men to sell the truth for worldly gain, shall be covered with the same horrible darkness which is here described by the prophet. Their condition will be worse than that of the Israelites in the days of Isaiah, because they sin against a greater degree of light. Hence, while they grope for the wall like the blind, and when they stumble at noonday as in the night, their groping and stumbling, their disappointments, their pains and sores, so far from humbling their hearts, will only lead them into greater degrees of rebellion; even to blaspheme the name of God, and not to repent of their deeds.

The sixth cup of the divine indignation, and the last of which the effects are particularly described, is perhaps the most interesting of all; for it brings into view one of the most terrible judgments which have ever been inflicted on mankind, and shows us the means by which God will bring it to pass. "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." In the consideration of this subject, we would exhort our readers to give up all their prejudices, in favor of local or private interpretations, and to divest their minds of all

thoughts, that the countries bordering on the Euphrates, are the parts of the earth, where this judgment is to be executed. Such opinions, although held forth under respectable names, are plainly destitute of all foundation in truth. They are at best but improbable conjectures, and only serve to bewilder and perplex the mind; and therefore ought in the first place to be cast aside, as yielding no satisfaction. The whole book of the Revelation is symbolical. The vials are evidently symbolical representations of judgments, which shall fall on the dominions of the beast, in the latter days; and there is not the smallest reason to suppose, that this judgment, or any part of it, ought to be literally interpreted. Like the other vials, and all the other emblems contained in this book, it is neither more nor less than a parable, or an exhibition of things, which present important truths to the mind that has understanding. It is a striking illustration of the prophecy concerning the Lord Jesus Christ: "I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world." The reader therefore need not wonder, that the interpretation of this parable has, until this time, been involved in obscurity. This is nothing but what ought to have been expected; and the time is at hand when we have a right to hope for a satisfactory solution. The prophecies which have been hid in darkness since the beginning, must all be brought to light in these latter days. It is the time when that great volume of mysteries shall be unrolled, and the things contained in it shall be unfolded to public view, as God has declared it to his servants the prophets.

The Euphrates is a well known and much celebrated river of Asia, which rises in the mountains of Armenia, and after pursuing a southern direction, for more than 1500 miles, empties into the Persian Gulph. In ancient times it was considered of such importance, that in the Old Testament, it is generally called the river; as if no other stream but itself, was entitled to this appellation. It waters some of the finest and most fertile countries in the world; but their fertility is much increased and perhaps chiefly derived, from artificial canals cut through its banks, and numerous reservoirs, by which its waters are retained, and conveyed through the different countries in its vicinity. On this river stood the ancient city of Babylon, which is said to have been divided into two equal parts, by the stream. The Euphrates was the channel, by which wealth, population, and power, constantly flowed into this celebrated metropolis. The

river was navigable, the country was fertilized by its waters, and the city of Babylon was the concentration of all its productions. This city was surrounded, and rendered almost impregnable, by an immense wall of 350 feet in height, and 87 in breadth. It is supposed therefore, that Babylon could never have been taken by an enemy, had it not been for the entrance, which was made by the stream of the Euphrates. Cyrus, king of Persia, and Darius the Mede, the uncle of Cyrus, combined with other kings or potentates who came from the east; after having besieged the city for two years, found the means of entrance through the channel of the river. A canal was dug at some distance from, and at both ends of the city; the water of the river was thus drained from its proper bed, and the two divisions of the army, who were posted at each end, marched along the channel, and met in the centre of the city. That was the night in which the hand writing on the wall, warned Belshazzar of his approaching fate: but inattentive to the divine admonition, and the faithful interpretation, and warnings of Daniel; the whole city, buried in drunkenness and debauchery, became an easy prey to the invading foe. After this period, Babylon never recovered her ancient splendor; her high walls at length mouldered into ruins; her population gradually diminished, until at length, she became a habitation for the birds of prey, and the wild beasts of the desert.

The ancient Babylon is intended to represent the modern and spiritual Babylon, the city of Rome, the church of Rome, and all other churches who follow her example, in setting aside the authority of God, and introducing their own inventions into his worship. The church of Rome is still to be considered as the metropolis of the christian churches. She still stands proudly eminent, as the centre of influence; and her example is in some degree, followed by all the other churches. It is all in vain for them to say, they have separated from her, while they still pursue the same evil practices, of seducing the world into error. They may indeed have renounced many of the errors of the Roman church; but they have retained many others, which are as provoking in the eyes of God, as those which they have renounced. It is a most palpable deception, which the Protestant churches practise on themselves, when they suppose they have dissented from the errors of the church of Rome, merely because they are not visible in her communion; while at the same time, they teach false doctrines, practise

false worship, and use all the arts of the mother of harlots, to seduce the world into spiritual fornication. It is in fact, a glaring truth, standing horribly conspicuous, like a ghastly spectre amidst the gloom; by which the churches are surrounded; that almost all of them are cities built on the stream of the Euphrates; and that they grow wealthy, and powerful, and increase in numbers, by the very same means which distinguished their ancient progenitor. They all have such a strong desire to make proselytes, and are so very little solicitous about the means, which they use for this purpose, so as the end may be gained; that they generally run into the same arts of policy, and practise on the same principles of the Roman church. If they have cast aside some of her inventions, they have supplied their place, by inventions of their own; or rather they have taken her inventions, and changed their form, calling them by different names, and, therefore, their separation from her is merely a name, without any reality.

The Euphrates is the prominent figure in this representation. The city of Babylon is not named: but there is no necessity for it; for the idea of the city is immediately connected with the name of the river, in the mind of every one who is conversant with these subjects. The meaning, therefore, of the symbolic Euphrates, will be learned from its connexion with the symbolic Babylon. As the true church of God is frequently represented under the emblem of a city, which is said to have a river running through the midst of it,—the river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb; so this city of Babylon has also her river, large and deep, extending its waters in all directions: but they are muddied waters, and proceed from the throne of the beast. All the true doctrines of the gospel, and all worship which is acceptable to God, are sanctioned by his authority, and found in the scriptures of truth. In this sense, they flow from the throne of God and of the Lamb; and shall flow to the church, from the same source, in the eternal world. But this symbolical Euphrates flows from men, who have risen into power and influence in the churches, and whose inventions are received and followed, as if they had the authority of God. The human mind is the source of all that is erroneous in the principles of religion, and the practice of worship; and where the authority of God is disregarded, and men form their principles and their practice from their own thoughts, or the thoughts of other men, they belong to this symbolical



Babylon, and live by the stream of the symbolical Euphrates. Thus there are two sources of religious life. On the one hand, there is the river that flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb, and on the other, this Euphrates, which runs through this symbolical Babylon. We trust, this will not be considered an illusion of the fancy, by any who know what is meant by the pure river of the water of life; because all such characters must also know, that there is a false river, which appears to many to possess all the life-giving qualities of the other, but which brings spiritual death in all its streams. They know, that as the pure river of the water of life consists in those doctrines of religion, and in that kind of worship which God has authorized; so the river whose streams are poisoned, consists in doctrines and worship invented by man. In the application of this similitude, to the present state of the christian church, it will appear most striking and appropriate. We may discern ten thousand streams of false doctrines and false worship, all proceeding from the same source. Like the artificial canals, and various channels, which are used to convey the waters of the Euphrates to the countries in its vicinity; so the minds of men, fertile in inventions, have improved, one on the invention of another; and all are adopted by different classes of professing christians: all tend to enrich the mystical Babylon, but not to honor the throne of God and of the Lamb.

It is not our intention, nor is it possible, within the narrow limits of this little work, to particularize and point out even a small number of the human inventions, which swell this mighty stream, by which this mystical city is enriched and adorned, with all that is fascinating to the natural taste and carnal mind of man: but we are persuaded, that this interpretation of the symbol will not lose its force by attention and diligent investigation. We know that we are all prone to indulge a foolish fondness for the offspring of our own brain, and that the interpretations of scripture, given by others, are sometimes passed over with a small degree of attention, and their weight and importance not duly appreciated, that we may contemplate and admire our own productions: but when we apply this symbol to false doctrines and false worship, and the various systems of false religion, every where through the christian church; and especially when we consider it as connected with this mystical Babylon, we cannot help thinking, that the force of it will appear stronger and stronger, to every one who gives it a due share of attention. Every false doctrine is as much an invention

of man, as the forms of worship which God has not authorized. There are inventions in doctrine, inventions in worship, and inventions in the government of the church. In all these things, the great body of professing christians have departed from the river of the water of life, and have chosen a stream which is more pleasing to their natural taste and carnal appetite. If these things are not intended by the river Euphrates, it will be hard to find the true meaning of the symbol.

But when this vial was poured on the river Euphrates, the water of it was dried, that a way might be prepared for the kings of the east. This symbol is evidently taken from the capture of Babylon, by Cyrus and Darius, who were literally the kings of the east, before whom the literal Euphrates was dried up, that they might enter and destroy the literal Babylon. Hence this symbol represents a dispensation of Providence, by which these symbolical streams will be dried. This is an effect, similar to that which was produced on the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish church, after our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified. These streams shall be dried, in a sense similar to that in which the sacrifice and oblation ceased at that period. They did not then cease to offer the sacrifices. They attended to all the forms of their worship, as they had done before. In these respects, the cutting off of the Messiah made no apparent difference. But in the course of a few years, a sensible change was produced. The ancient rites and ceremonies gradually lost their influence. This is manifest from the fact of their being discontinued: for if they had found the same beneficial effects from them, and if the same desires after them had continued in their hearts, they would not have been prevented entirely from offering sacrifices, by the destruction of the temple. They would have attended to them, in the best manner in their power, in hopes of obtaining the divine blessing. They had a great degree of confidence in that form of worship; and their sacrifices and oblations were a strong hold, to which they retired for protection against every evil. They believed that as long as these ordinances were regularly performed, there was little danger to be apprehended from an invading enemy. If, indeed, they had attended to those institutions according to God's commandments, and in the spirit of obedience, they should have had no reason to repent of their confidence, as long as those ordinances were valid; but after Christ was crucified, they ceased to be a divine institution; they had no longer any validity; they ceased

to be a means of protection from evil, or to have any beneficial influence. The human inventions which are now practised in the worship of God, never had any divine warrant; and therefore they cannot cease in this sense: but they have, notwithstanding, a powerful influence, in keeping the sense of religion on the mind. Perhaps there is no class of worshippers, so much devoted to religion, and so attentive to every rite and ceremony of their worship, as the zealous votaries of the church of Rome; and, in fact, all other sects, who have departed from the plain and simple forms of worship which God has appointed, seem to be the more zealously attached to their own ways, in proportion as they are removed from the truth. It is a most discouraging consideration, to every minister of the gospel, who preaches the truth with simplicity and godly sincerity, to find, that some empty and trifling form, or something that operates on the feelings and prejudices of mankind, without having the smallest influence on their understanding, has more power over the human mind generally, than the strongest and most conclusive arguments. Hence the deceivers of mankind have laid hold of this principle, to lead the world into error; and human inventions have been multiplied, in proportion as they found them effectual for the promotion of their purposes. But as every thing of this nature may be overdone, and the power of it destroyed, by too frequent use; so these methods have, in fact, begun to lose their power. They have spent their force, and are even now beginning to decline. Invention itself has been exhausted, in contriving new doctrines and new forms; and as the religion of the world consists chiefly in the feelings produced by those artificial means, so those religious fervors are not only more difficult to be produced than formerly, but they sooner become cold and languid, for want of appropriate fuel. Hence the attachment to them gradually weakens and dies. This is the way in which the sixth vial will operate, to dry up the water of the Euphrates. Every one that makes any observations on the religious world, must see that these effects will ultimately take place, and that there will soon be as much coldness and indifference towards all the forms of religion, and all the different doctrines which distinguish one sect from another, as there have been heat and exertion for the propagation of those forms and sentiments. A preparation is therefore now making for the sixth vial, as well as for the others. In this sense, the sacrifice and the oblation have

already begun to cease; and, for the overspreading of abomination, desolations are determined.

The kings of the east are the emblem of a power, or a number of operating powers, that now exist in the world, and are preparing their forces to overturn this mystical Babylon. Darius and Cyrus were the servants of God, because they were sent by him to execute judgment on the literal Babylon; although they did not know the true God, nor worship him. They were like many characters in the present time, who have a great respect for religion, and an abhorrence of hypocrisy, and the arts of dissimulation, by which religion is attempted to be propagated. They therefore exert themselves to destroy the influence of what they know to be false, and injurious to the best interests of society. There are many such characters now rising up in the world. Men of sense and discernment, whether they are religious characters or not, have generally begun to see, that the present reigning system is not calculated to be of any real benefit to mankind. They know that it is full of fraud and hypocrisy, and therefore cannot be the course which God has chosen to propagate the truth, and to establish the kingdom of his Son. These are the kings of the east, and they are now combining their power, and arranging their forces, for entering the city. In this sense, Babylon has already begun to be besieged; and in no very long period, the obstruction to their entrance will be removed, by the drying up of the water of this symbolical Euphrates. It is true, there are many characters engaged in this work, who have no real love for true religion, and who, while they profess to make war against superstition and hypocrisy, do, in fact, direct their efforts against christianity itself: but this is what ought to be expected, and is in full accordance with the symbol. The literal kings of the east, who destroyed the literal Babylon, had very little knowledge of true religion, and the greater part of their armies had no knowledge of the subject whatever. It is very probable, they could not even distinguish the captive Israelites in Babylon, from the other inhabitants, but would have destroyed them all, had they not been prevented: so we are not to expect that all these symbolical kings of the east, nor their armies, are real friends of the gospel, or of the true church of God. There are many of them that have no love for true christianity, and would destroy it from the earth, if their counsels and plans were followed: but God will make use of them to

fulfil his purposes, and afterwards will punish them for their iniquities. "Ho, Assyrian," says God, "the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand, is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire in the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so, &c. Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work, &c., I will punish the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks." The same principle that operated in the heart of the Assyrian king, is no doubt the ruling principle of many of these kings of the east; their great object is to promote their own glory, and not the glory of God: but by means of them, he will execute judgment on Babylon, and then they must suffer for their own transgressions. There are, however, many of the real friends of truth, and of the best interest of mankind, who are either already engaged, or are about to engage in this warfare against Babylon;—men of knowledge and of principle, who have long felt and groaned under the influence of despotic power and religious intolerance;—men who have witnessed a good confession, have borne testimony for the truth, who have been slain in the sense of the prophecy, and are now risen from the dead. In truth, all good men on the face of the earth, will sooner or later exert themselves, to put down and destroy this present system of iniquity, which, under the pretence of propagating christianity, exalts the authority of man above the authority of God. These characters shall then receive their reward. They shall ascend to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies shall behold them.

But we are not to expect, that this victory will be gained, and this idolatrous city taken and destroyed, without a powerful struggle, on the part of the enemies of God. There will be every kind of opposition which can possibly be made, by the powers of darkness, with the exertions of all the friends of error and iniquity, throughout the christian world. "I saw," says the apostle, "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 spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty." The phrase, "working miracles,"

ought to have been rendered, "doing wonders." Our translators seem to have fixed their eyes too steadfastly on the church of Rome, and to have contracted their views to the miraculous works of that church, while they did not foresee, and of course paid no attention to, the wonder-working powers, which almost every other church professes to have received. Those who have grown old in the practice of iniquity, who have often rejected the gospel of Christ, and are wilfully ignorant of the very first principles of christianity, are now frequently converted in a few weeks, a few days, or perhaps in a few moments, and are pronounced hopeful christians, by these wonder-workers, compared with whom, even the apostles must sink into obscurity. In this sense, the age in which we live is really an age of miracles. There never was a time in which there were more wonderful works performed, for the propagation of error, than there are in our own times. We are not, therefore, to limit our views to the little miracles which the church of Rome has once performed, and is still endeavoring to perform, for the support of her declining power; but to look around us at all the churches, and even at men who are enemies to every kind of christianity, and we shall see that they are all "doing wonders" in support of their various tenets.

The dragon is the emblem of the ancient idolatrous Roman power, which set itself in open opposition to the gospel; and therefore the spirit of the dragon is that principle, which we find every where working in the hearts of multitudes, and especially in the rising generation, indisposing them for learning the doctrines of true religion, and for attending the true worship of God. There is such a spirit of liberty in young and old, that very few of them will bow their necks to receive the yoke of the Redeemer. It is truly a wonderful and astonishing fact, that amidst all the exertions made for propagating the gospel, and all the contrivances for the religious instruction of the rising generation, that the spirit of infidelity is still increasing in its influence. Hundreds and thousands of our youth are continually seduced and ruined by the delusions which are every where circulated through the world. They see plainly, that the generality of religious professors have nothing of religion, more than the outward form; they become disgusted with the appearance of religion under the garb of hypocrisy, and they transfer their dislike to christianity under every form. Some are entangled for a time, by the religious enthusiasm which sometimes prevails in the place of their residence;

and are carried from one extreme to another, from heat to cold, and from cold to heat, until at last they become cool, deliberate infidels. Thus, in ten thousand ways, the spirit of infidelity, or the spirit of the dragon, is working wonders among mankind, even in this christianized age.

But the spirit of the beast is not less successful in his exertions to gain partisans to his cause. In this respect, the Roman church is the least successful of all. Under the astonishment excited by some miracle, real or fictitious, a number may be induced to enter within her pale: but it is an indisputable fact, that the protestant churches are by far the most successful, as well as the most ingenious in gaining converts. If we limit the spirit of the beast to the church of Rome, we cannot see how this prophecy shall ever be fulfilled; for it is utterly impossible for that intolerant religion ever to become popular among mankind. The church of Rome can never give up her claims, to be the only true church on the earth, and the only one within whose pale salvation can be found; and the contrary sentiment is manifestly growing, and becoming more popular, from generation to generation. The rites and ceremonies of the Roman church are of such a nature, that they must gradually lose their influence, in proportion to the growth of the spirit of freedom. The world can never revert back to that state of moral and religious ignorance, in which that system of religion can regain its influence: consequently, if the spirit of the beast should be successful in making converts, he must assume another form than that of the papacy. This fact alone might be sufficient to prove that the beast is the emblem, not of the Roman church only, but of many of the protestant churches, and even of those that are now the most successful in gaining converts to their party. In this age of the world, very few are converted to true christianity. If men have received the mark of the beast, and have lived for a length of time under the influence of false principles, it is not to be expected that many of them will ever return to the true path of godliness. The true converts can all stand upon a sea of glass, about 30 cubits in circumference, while the false worshippers cover the outer court of the temple. Still there are said to be multitudes of converts brought out from the world every day. If all the accounts of religious revivals, and of the spreading of the gospel, were real facts, we might be astonished that there are so many infidels around us, and be induced to think that

the place where we live is worse than any other part of the world.

The false prophet is the two horned beast, which the apostle saw rising out of the earth. He exercises all the power of the first beast in his presence. It is he that teaches mankind to worship the first beast, and to receive his mark. The spirit of the false prophet is therefore working wonders in the world, by covering falsehood with the robes of truth, and thus seducing men into error. He actuates many of the teachers of religion, at this moment, by inducing them to use unjustifiable methods of gaining converts to their cause, and of increasing the number of their particular sects. In this age of conversions, it is a disgrace to a minister of the gospel, not to be able to make many converts. It is full evidence that he is a bungler in his profession, and too dull to learn the arts necessary to render him useful in the church. In fact, the art of making converts has become a mere mechanical business; and although they profess to depend on the operation of the spirit of God, they act generally in a way which that spirit has never sanctioned, and will never approve. We may set it down as an undoubted fact, that the spirit of the false prophet has much to do in almost all the religious excitements of the present age, and makes immensely more converts than the spirit of truth.

These three spirits are now running to and fro, among the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, to gather them, &c. In the amplitude of scripture meaning, a king is used to signify, not only the monarch, who sits on the throne; but all who are possessed of influence or authority in any community. The kings of the earth are those, who rule the minds of the men of the earth. They are the leading characters in the nations, in the cities, in the villages, and in the country. God, in his wisdom, has not been very profuse of those talents, or gifts, which qualify men for government. He has scattered over the world, just as many of such characters, as are necessary to regulate and conduct the affairs of every community; and whether these men use their talents in doing good or evil, they will still be leaders in whatever place they may reside. It is therefore of great importance to the prince of darkness, that those characters should be induced to support his cause: for the mass of the community will always follow them into good or evil. He has, therefore, obtained permission in these latter days, to seduce them generally from their allegiance to the King of



kings, that they may exert their influence in behalf of error. For this purpose he has sent among them these seducing spirits. These are not the characters, who are most likely to be deceived by the fictitious miracles of the church of Rome; and this is not the kind of miracles by which they are induced to exert their influence against the true gospel, or to throw their weight into the scale of error. These miracles, or rather wonders, consist in the amazing influence, which these seducing spirits exercise over their minds. It is a wonderful and astonishing fact, that scarcely any man rises to eminence and power in the world, without being seduced from the true principles and practice of godliness. This is the chief curse contained in this vial. By the seduction of the leaders in society, or the men of influence and power, the true gospel always meets with powerful opposition, and can obtain little influence in the world.

But there is a day coming, and that day is near, in which God will vindicate his injured honor, by some terrible judgments on those who yield to these seducing spirits, and become hostile to his truth. Although "the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying: Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us; yet he that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak to them in wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure." This work of judgment is to be executed, at that period, when the heathen shall be given to the Redeemer for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. Then he will scourge those kings with a rod of iron, and as a potter's vessel he will dash them to pieces. This great day will therefore be terribly fatal to those who have prospered in iniquity, and especially in their opposition to the truth.

But before that day, he will generally expose their wickedness to the eyes of the world. When the apostle beheld those three unclean spirits, going through among the kings of the earth, and doing wonders, inciting them to gather their armies to battle, against God and his anointed; he heard the voice of the Almighty, proclaiming: "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments; lest he walk naked, and they see his shame." The meaning of this interjection is determined from the place in which it stands. It is addressed to mankind in that particular period, in which these three unclean spirits are collecting their armies, and about to march to battle. But

this battle is spiritual. It is truly and substantially a battle; but it has not the outward form of two armies coming into collision in the field. It is not the clashing of arms, with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but a contest between light and darkness, between the great God of heaven, and those who endeavor to blot out his truth from the earth. Many are engaged in this warfare against heaven, who are altogether unconscious of any hostile feelings towards the God that made them; and, in fact, there are many, who, in that day, will be considered the enemies of God, who now think themselves, and are thought by others, to be very diligent and successful in the propagation of the gospel. Although there are the greatest exertions, apparently, made for this purpose, yet the greater part of those exertions are calculated to prevent the influence of the true gospel, and to set up another kingdom in the room of the kingdom of Christ. In vain do men attempt to spread the gospel, while they believe doctrines inconsistent with the truth of that gospel, and while their worship is according to the commandments of men. Their works are worse than in vain; for they are really opposing the truth, and, under the garb of hypocrisy, are marching to battle against the Almighty. But he here declares that he will come suddenly, that he will strip them of their borrowed garments, and expose them naked to the eyes of all, in their shameful principles and practices. This figure is probably taken from a well known custom among the priests, who kept the watch of the temple. At every gate there was a sentinel, who stood on guard during the different watches. In every watch, the president, or commanding officer, went round to every post; and if he found any of the guards asleep, he tore or burnt off his garments, and left him naked. A similar fate awaits every one whom God has placed as a sentinel at the gates of his temple, and who is found sleeping at his post. In this respect, every christian has his duty prescribed. The armies of the spirits of darkness are now on their march against the temple, and the holy city of God; and this admonition is addressed generally to mankind, to put them on their guard against the fatal influence of these seducing spirits. But it ought to have peculiar force on the minds of the ministers of the gospel, who professedly stand as sentinels around the temple of God. They are appointed as watchmen on the walls of the city, and especially to watch over the truth, that it may not be contaminated, or mingled with error; and that evil principles may not be suffered to

corrupt the minds of men. But the address is made in such a manner, as to be applicable to every individual, to every professing christian, and every man: for the time of these last plagues is emphatically the hour, and the power of darkness. Those who support the truth, walk uprightly before God, and watchfully keep themselves from iniquity, must pass through a long scene of trouble and perplexity: while those who are not strictly and scrupulously conscientious; but indulge in little sins, and deviate a little way from the path of duty, will be suffered to rest in peace, and to slumber at their post, until God comes to awaken them by some sudden judgment, and expose them in their shame to angels and men. This is not one of those public and conspicuous calamities, by which nations are sometimes afflicted; and of which the approach may be clearly seen: but it is a kind of calamity, of which the approach is silent and secret, and will not be observed by any, who blindfold their minds by the indulgence of any lust. Evil men and seducers will grow worse and worse; they shall first be exposed in their iniquity, and then this calamity shall seize on them as a wild beast on his prey, and they shall not escape. The train is already laid for this terrible catastrophe, and may be seen by all who diligently observe the hand of God, in the dispensations of his providence. He has already begun, in some degree, to expose the iniquities of mankind. The mantle of hypocrisy, by which many characters were able to conceal their vices, has already become so threadbare and thin, that it will no longer answer the purpose. Many works of darkness have been brought to light in this age, which have escaped the scrutiny of past ages; and every succeeding year exhibits new scenes of wickedness, which have been carefully concealed from public view. It is obvious, that God has begun to bring to light the hidden works of darkness; and this process will continue, until hypocrisy shall be generally exposed, and mankind shall appear in their true colors to the eyes of one another. God gives us this intimation in this place, to prepare our minds for the terrible event which is to follow. "He gathered them together into a place, which is called in the Hebrew tongue, Armageddon."

Here we are presented with the emblem of a vast army, under the conduct of many leaders, even the kings of the earth, and of the whole world. Hence it must be obvious, that this is no literal battle, no literal army, nor local situation. But these kings, and their armies, are all under the influence of these three seducing spirits, and Armageddon is here

used as a symbol, to signify the end of their course of iniquity. This word has been rendered from the Hebrew, in different ways; but it is generally believed to be derived from the ancient Megiddo. This appears to have been the name of a district of country, in the land of Canaan, watered by the river Kishon; as well as the name of a city in that district. It was celebrated for battles, for great destruction of the human family, and for great mourning and woful lamentations. Here Josiah, the last of the wise and pious kings of Judah, was slain; the last hope of the nation was cut off, and the land covered with a dark cloud of wo, which was not removed until the nation was almost wasted and destroyed, and the unhappy remnant carried captives into Babylon. The prophet Zechariah, speaking of the scenes of judgment in these latter days, and especially of this judgment, which comes, in the first place, as an introduction to the others, declares: In that day, there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem; as the mourning of Hadadrimmon, in the valley of Megiddon. And the land shall mourn, every family apart, &c. By Jerusalem, we are to understand the christian church, and especially that part of it which is not totally corrupted. There is a kind of mourning peculiar to true christians, when they are afflicted by the hand of God. It is not that ostentatious display of repentance, of which we have seen and heard so much in these times. It is private mourning before God, on account of some heavy calamities, with which they shall be afflicted; probably for the loss of friends and relatives, as well as for their own troubles and sins. When king Josiah was slain, together with a multitude of the Israelites, in the battle at Megiddo, there was a grievous mourning all over the land, and especially among those who saw the hand of God in the infliction of that calamity. Hence this mourning after the battle of Armageddon, will cover the whole christian world with weeping, lamentation, and wo. But the silence and secrecy of it, show that it will be, at least to many, the godly sorrow that worketh repentance unto salvation.

The battle of Armageddon is not, therefore, what has been generally supposed among expositors of scripture. It is a series of calamities, probably of different kinds, which shall come on the world, evidently from the hand of God; and shall cut off multitudes of his enemies. The judgment shall fall chiefly on the wicked; but no man ought to indulge himself in security, trusting that he shall escape because he is righteous: for we are all commanded to watch, and be-

ware of having our hearts overcharged with the vices or the cares of the world, and that day should come upon us unawares. It is not improbable that some of the true servants of God may fall in it, as Josiah, and no doubt, many of the best characters in his army fell at Megiddo.

But the seventh vial will show us more clearly the nature of this judgment. "The seventh angel poured his vial into the air: and there came a great voice from the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done." Some have supposed, that the pouring of this vial into the air, is the emblem of some judgment on the kingdom of Satan; because he is called the prince of the power of the air. But we are to bear in mind, that all these vials denote plagues, or curses, which shall fall on mankind. If they should fall on the kingdom of Satan, they would be blessings, and not curses to man. Hence this interpretation cannot be correct. But the air is the means by which life is supported. The atmosphere which surrounds the earth is inhaled by all living creatures, by man, and all other animals. A pure and healthful atmosphere gives life and animation to all that breathe; while every kind of noxious effluvia produces disease and death. It is plain, therefore, that this plague, or curse, which is here represented as poured into the air, from the vial of the angel, can mean nothing but the pestilence. This meaning is indeed so obvious, that one would suppose it could scarcely escape the eye of common observation. It is the natural, and almost necessary consequence of the judgments signified by the six foregoing vials, and might be anticipated, had it not been mentioned; for such wickedness as has been described, and as has been shown to be growing and increasing among mankind, can have no other result, than some sudden and exterminating judgment. In the early ages, when mankind had become incurable in wickedness, they were swept from the earth by a flood of water; but God has determined that this curse shall never again be executed. We must, however, expect some terrible and exterminating judgment, after all this wickedness; and the pestilence is the only one of that kind which will answer to the description. There are also many intimations in the Old Testament prophets, which point to something of this nature. We are told, that in all the land, or, as it might be rendered, in all the earth, two parts therein shall be cut off and die:\* and that many houses shall be desolate, even great

\*Zech. xiii. 8.

and fair without inhabitant.\* The pouring of this seventh vial into the air, may therefore be considered as an explanation of those prophecies. God has chosen to make the subject so plain, that it will not be misunderstood by any, whose minds are enlightened in the knowledge of his word. Something of this nature might, indeed, be anticipated: therefore, the effect is not described as in the other vials; but only a great voice is heard out of the temple from the throne, saying, it is done. This expression shows some such judgment. It cannot mean a flood of water; for God has said that he will no more curse the earth with this plague: it cannot mean destruction by fire from heaven; for this is the curse by which he will cut off the wicked, previously to the last judgment: it must, therefore, mean some plague which is occasioned by the infection of the air. This voice out of the temple, from the throne, is the voice of God out of his church, proclaiming to the whole world, that the curses are executed, and that the vials of his wrath are in full operation. It is not meant by this voice, that all the effects of the vials are accomplished, when the seventh is poured out; for, as they are the last plagues, they will continue in operation until all the wicked shall be destroyed: but the meaning is, that the whole curses signified by the seven vials, have then been inflicted, and are going on to the full accomplishment. Not one drop of the cup of God's indignation shall remain; but the very dregs shall be wrung out, and drunk by all the wicked.

This battle of the great day of God Almighty, is the same judgment which, in the xiv. chapter, is called the *reaping* of the earth. The ripe harvest will first be cut down, and afterwards the vintage will be gathered, and cast into the great winepress of the wrath of God. We may expect that this first judgment will turn the scale of public opinion in favor of the truth. Those who are then in the path of error, and determined to remain in it, will be obliged to continue their wayward course in silence. They will not be able to vindicate their conduct to their own consciences, and consequently not to the world around them.

But immediately after the pouring out of this seventh vial, a new series of temporal calamities may be expected. "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."

\*Isai. v. 2.

During the time in which the seven angels were pouring out the vials, all heaven appears to have been engaged in contemplating the effects produced by them in the world; but immediately afterwards, the indications of war and desolating judgments were seen and heard. All the vials, excepting the last, operate chiefly on the minds of men, and produce a kind of spiritual intoxication; and therefore they still go on in the course of iniquity, notwithstanding the indications of the wrath of God. It will be found, that this terrible pestilence which is coming on the world, will have little influence on the moral condition of mankind generally; for it will be attributed to natural causes, and their hearts will be hardened. Like the Egyptians of old, the more they are plagued, they will become the more obstinate in their rebellion. Hence judgment after judgment will be brought on them, until they shall be utterly destroyed. This mighty earthquake must take place before the gathering of the vintage, and consequently before the fall of the mystical Babylon. It is a terrible war, in which most of the nations of Europe, the Russian and the Turkish empires, will come into collision. These potsherds of the earth will be dashed one against the other, and the shock will be most tremendous. It will shake the governments of the earth to their centres. The indications of this moral earthquake are even now very conspicuous. But it will not be altogether a collision between different kingdoms. The most terrible effects will be produced by two opposing spirits, which are now preparing and embodying their force in every nation. Until this present time, and from ages immemorial, the world has generally been governed and oppressed, by a class of mankind who seem to think themselves entitled, from nature, to the rank of governors, and esteem the rest of mankind as little better than beasts of burden. The difference which was made in ancient Rome, between patricians and plebeians, will explain this fact to all who are acquainted with ancient history. The same distinction runs through the world, and is more or less conspicuous in every nation. But in these latter ages, mankind have been approaching more and more to a level, and the spirit of emancipation is continually gaining strength. Tyranny and despotism, in the end, must fall; but a long and powerful struggle must be expected. This will, no doubt, be one of the causes of this mighty earthquake, during the period of which, the whole earth will tremble.

The apostle saw, that during this violent concussion, the great city was divided into three parts; and that the other cities of the nations fell, and crumbled to ruins;—that every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. This great city is evidently the grand political combination of the sovereigns of Europe, which exists at the present time, and which has existed, under different forms, ever since the time when the western empire of Rome was composed of ten different sovereignties. There has always been either an express or tacit combination among those sovereigns, to keep the balance of power in equilibrio; and especially to enable them to domineer over their subjects, and keep both their minds and their bodies in bondage. In these last ages, the immense and powerful empire of Russia, which may be said to have commenced with Peter the Great, in a manner not very dissimilar to the commencement of the Persian empire under Cyrus, has become a powerful auxiliary to the ten kingdoms. But this accession of strength, as it divides their interests, will most probably be the means of their fall. It is evident that this combination cannot last for many years. But by its division, the great city will finally be split and broken into three fragments. We shall not hazard a conjecture as to the nature of this division, nor pretend to foresee of what nations these fragments will be composed. We leave this to politicians and statesmen. But we are persuaded, that men of discernment might, at this moment, trace the lines of this division, and exhibit the fragments even before they are broken. But they too will soon fall to pieces; for all the cities of the nations shall fall. There must be a revolution in every government, at least of the old world; and, most likely, in all the governments on the face of the earth; for all of them have the seeds of dissolution in their very frame. They are not founded on true christianity. They have not the principles of true religion interwoven in their nature; and therefore God says: “I will overturn, overturn, overturn; and it shall be no more, until he come, whose right it is; and I will give it him.”

But in the time of these revolutions, it is said, “Great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give to her the cup of the wine of the indignation of his wrath.” Babylon here means the religious but idolatrous combinations, which, amidst political revolutions, will still continue to exist among mankind; and especially that combination which



supports the papal see. This city is fully and minutely described in the xvii. chapter; and in the xviii. the fall of this city is described with the same minuteness. We may safely conclude, that the political revolutions, which are first to take place, will open the way for the overthrow and destruction of all false religion; and that after great Babylon shall have fallen, the true gospel shall advance with rapidity over the whole world. The present attempts to propagate the gospel can have no efficacious nor permanent results, because they are all intermingled with the principles of the great harlot, who has made all nations drunk with the wine of her fornication, and who is represented as having the cup in her hand, even after the vials have been poured out. All effectual and permanent good to the church, must commence by overturning these evil principles and practices from the foundation. Hence the apostle declares, that "every island fled away, and the mountains were not found." By the islands and mountains are meant, the foundations of the civil and religious institutions which now exist in the world. The great city is not only represented as split and broken into fragments, and the other cities falling and crumbling to pieces; but their very foundations sink into the abyss, and totally disappear.

But immediately after this dreadful scene of confusion and desolation, another judgment from heaven, and one still more galling and provoking than any that preceded it, is inflicted. "There fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God on account of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great." According to the common calculation concerning the weight of a talent, it would appear that every hailstone must weigh one hundred pounds. But this is evidently an error, and one of the errors by which learned men have done much to destroy the credibility of the scriptures. By this absurd computation, the expenses of building Solomon's temple, would probably exceed all the coin that ever was in circulation, at one time, on the face of the earth. A talent, in the common and usual sense of the word, signifies such a weight of gold or silver, as one could conveniently carry in his hand. Did our limits permit, we could produce enough of examples, both from sacred and profane history, to show that this position is correct. This, however, is a much larger kind of hail than ordinarily falls. Hail stones a pound weight, would do

immense damage, if they were to fall all over the world. This symbol is of such a nature, that the precise meaning of it is not easily perceived, and perhaps it will not be fully known, until the event takes place. It will be some sudden judgment, by which the labor, and the acquisitions of worldly minded men, will be all cast down to the ground, and dashed to pieces. As it follows the rooting up and destroying of all civil and religious institutions from the foundation,—comes when the moral world is cast into unutterable confusion and consternation, and is evidently from the hand of God; it represents one of those calamities which sometimes fall on men, when they have begun to think that the stores of the divine vengeance are exhausted, and that no greater evils need be feared, than those they have already sustained. But it will show the horrible hardness of the hearts of men at that period. The very greatness of the plague incites them to blaspheme the God that sent it. There are some plagues so terribly great, that they overwhelm and stupify the mind, and thus entirely prevent that reaction, which produces irritation, resentment, and blasphemy: but this plague, although exceeding great, will still leave men the power of their tongues; and their evil passions will be still more excited by it, against the author of their calamities.

In all these judgments, there is such an exhibition of wretchedness and wickedness, that we might be tempted to think the accomplishment of these prophecies utterly impossible, in the present state of the world; or at least, that the judgments must be local, and cannot be executed on every christian nation. But if we cast aside that false charity, which men have invented as a covering for their sins, and if we do not suffer their professions to deceive us, we shall find that these are the very things which ought to be expected, as the natural production of that great antichristian system of religion, which has prevailed over the world through so many generations. If we leave our gardens or our fields to be overgrown with rank weeds, they may, indeed, be well manured, and planted with the best and most useful vegetables; but the weeds only will thrive, while the useful plants will entirely decay and perish. Such is the condition of the world at this moment, notwithstanding all the attempts which are made to propagate the gospel. Nothing good can be expected, until false doctrines and human inventions are rooted out of the church; or, in the

words of scripture, "until the sanctuary be cleansed." But such a process of purification seems not so much as thought of by those who are engaged in disseminating religion. They disseminate a mixture of religious errors, as well as religious truth. They do not teach their converts to worship God according to his commandments, but in such a way as man has invented; and the horrible fruits of this corrupted seed, will appear in the times of trial which are now coming on the world. Zion must, therefore, be redeemed in judgment, and her converts in righteousness; and the destruction of the transgressors, and of the sinners, must be together; and they that hate the Lord must be consumed.

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#### ERRATA.

- Page 20, line 25, insert *every*, before prophecy.  
 " 29, " 16, for *wars*, read *roars*.  
 " 59, " 2 & 5 from bottom, for *Smudis*, read *Smerdis*.  
 " 63, " 26, for *the*, read *this*.  
 " 86, " 30, for *Chebaz*, read *Chebar*.  
 " 88, " 7, for *heads*, read *horns*.  
 " 106, " 25, for *see*, read *let*.  
 " 116, " 13, for *is*, read *it*.  
 " 157, " 4, for *fall*, read *face*.













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