

A
SERMON,

PREACHED SEPTEMBER 20th, 1793;

A DAY SET APART,

IN THE

CITY OF NEW-YORK,

FOR

PUBLIC FASTING, HUMILIATION

AND

P R A Y E R,

ON ACCOUNT OF A

MALIGNANT AND MORTAL FEVER

PREVAILING IN THE

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA.

By JOHN MITCHEL MASON,

MINISTER of the SCOTCH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH in the
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How is it that ye do not discern this time? Luke XII, 56.
I have sent among you the pestilence; your young
men have I slain by the sword; and have taken away
your horses; yet have ye not returned unto me, saith
the Lord. Amos IV, 10.

NEW-YORK:

PRINTED BY SAMUEL LOUDON & SON.

MDCCXCIII.

BERMONT

PUBLISHED BY JOHN WOODLEY

NEW YORK

CITY OF NEW YORK

FOR

PUBLIC PRINTING, HUNTSVILLE

AND

P. R. N. E. R.

ON ACCOUNT OF A

MALIGNANT AND MORTAL DISEASE

PREVALENT IN THE

CITY OF NEW YORK

312719

By JOHN WOODLEY

Printer of the State of New York



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A SERMON, &c.

O LORD—IN WRATH REMEMBER MERCY.

HAB. 2. III.

AT the time when our Prophet directed to the throne of grace, that sublime and affecting petition of which our text is a part, the circumstances of his country were calamitous, and her prospects alarming. The most high God, provoked at her unfaithfulness, had withdrawn the smiles of his countenance, and the protection of his arm*. To make her know, by sad experience, that it is indeed an evil thing and bitter to depart from God, he commissioned his servant Habakkuk to foretel the speedy invasion of the Chaldeans, and to declare that he would yield

* Chap. 1. 2.

her a helpless prey to this fierce and unpitied foe*. The posterity of Abraham, like all other sinners, were the authors of all the woes which they felt or expected. Regardless of this first principle of sound policy, that "*righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people*†, the generality of the Jews had abandoned the God of their fathers, and *turned aside like a deceitful bow*§. Not only were they blind to the typical nature of their œconomy, and the spiritual sense of their peculiar observances; but they threw off the restraint of moral principle, and indulged, with unblushing impudence, their criminal passions. To such an awful height had impiety and profligacy risen, that they were chargeable with *transgressing and lying against the Lord, and departing from their God; speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving, and uttering from the heart, words of falsehood. Yea judgment was turned away backward, and justice stood afar off; for truth was fallen in the street, and equity could not enter; yea truth failed, and he that departed from evil, made himself a prey*||. In vain did God warn by his providence; in vain remonstrate by

* Chap. i. 5—10. † Prov. xiv. 34. § Ps. lxxviii. 57.
 || If. lix. 13—15.

his prophets : these sons of rebellion and obstinacy persisted in their crimes, till “ *the sin of Judah,*” no longer tolerable, was “ *written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond**. Abused patience aggravated, and hastened, the doom of this guilty people. Since they hardened their hearts against mild expostulation, and gentle correction, the Lord God thundered his threatenings, and in terrible indignation said, “ *Shall I not visit for these things? And shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this†?* Pious Habakkuk, who clearly saw the impending ruin, wept, in secret, over the infatuation of his countrymen ; acknowledged the justice of Jehovah’s controversy ; and wrestled, in fervent prayer, for devoted Israel. “ *O LORD, I have heard thy speech,*” the sentence which thou hast denounced against my people, “ *and was afraid: O LORD,*” we indeed deserve all the evils to which it condemns us : yet cast us not, I pray thee, out of thy sight, but “ *revive thy work in the midst of the years,*” these years of trouble which are coming upon us ; “ *in the midst even of these years, make known*” thyself, and thy tender com-

* Jer. xvii. 1.

† Ch. v. 9.

passions: “*in wrath,*” merited wrath, “*remember,*” and testify, unmerited “*mercy.*”

THE words *wrath*, *mercy*, *remember*, which occur in the text, must be understood, and explained in a sense which will not militate against the purity, and simplicity of the divine nature. It would be both ignorant and impious to ascribe to Jehovah those emotions which agitate the bosom of a mortal. In the uncreated mind, there is, properly speaking, neither passion, nor affection, but all is pure *act*. The *wrath* of God, then, as it respects himself, is his *holy determination to punish sin*; and, as it respects his creatures, is the *execution* of that determination. *Mercy*, in Him, is that perfection which is ever ready to relieve the miserable; and when it regards misery connected with *guilt*, it is termed *grace*.

As every thing is invariably present to the infinite mind, God cannot be strictly said to *forget*: and therefore to *remember mercy*, is the same as to *show mercy*: And the prayer of the prophet is briefly this, that the Lord would graciously remove from the Israelites the punish-

ment of their sin, or would soften, with kindness, the rigor of his chastisements.

LET US not imagine, my brethren, that *we* have no concern in a petition which refers immediately to an occasion that existed many centuries past. To all who "*discern the signs of the times**," the judgments of God, which are abroad in the land, furnish an ample proof, that this is a day of rebuke, and of the Lord's anger. And, therefore, every one who is under the power of godliness, will immediately see, that the enquiries, and the exercises suggested by the prayer of the prophet, are peculiarly adapted to the serious purpose for which we have this morning assembled. "*O LORD, in wrath remember mercy.*"

IN applying these words to the service of the day, we are naturally led to contemplate our *situation*, and our *duty*. By adverting to the former, we will find, that *wrath* is upon us from the Lord; and therefore our duty is to plead with him for *mercy*.—

* Matt. xvi. 3.

FIRST, With respect to our *situation*: The Lord is dealing with us in wrath.

HERE lend me your attention, whilst I briefly prove the fact; and vindicate the divine procedure, by shewing the righteous reasons on which it is founded.—

1. THE Lord is dealing with us in wrath.

LET the careless, if they please, contemn the assertion as of no importance; or the profane deride it as the child of superstition; it is a solemn truth, that Jehovah *has* a controversy with America. Very suitable to her condition is the spirit of the prophetic exclamation, “*Hear ye, O mountains; and ye strong foundations of the earth! for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel*.*” For the confirmation of what has now been advanced, it is not necessary to recur to scenes which time has almost buried in oblivion, and which are nowhere preserved but in the records of the historian. Those symptoms of the divine displea-

* Micah, vi. 2.

sure on which I insist, are such as have recently occurred, and must be fresh in the memories of all who have arrived at the age of manhood.

IT is not long since war desolated our country. We saw her invaded by a numerous and disciplined army, trained to be the tool of oppression, and hired to commit deeds of blood, in order to insure success to schemes of iniquity—We saw our suffering citizens driven from their homes by these sons of plunder, and obliged to seek, among strangers, an asylum from the wintry blast, and relief from the miseries of poverty and exile—We saw the temples of the living God wrested from the peaceful worshipper; ravaged and wrapt in flames, by wretches whose senselessness could be equalled only by their impiety—We saw a part, at least, of the States overrun by banditti, whose conduct was marked with perfidy and violence—We saw the sword of slaughter drawn, and the fields of America drenched with the blood of her children. For more than seven years did woe stream her bitterness into our daily cup. At length the Lord was pleased to remove from us the rod of his

anger; to respite us from affliction, and to give peace in our borders. The happy effects of a change so desirable, were immediately and sensibly felt. As soon as the pressure of external calamity was taken off, languishing Commerce recovered her vigor.—Agriculture was prosecuted with safety and success; Science resumed her wonted seats; and all the arts of peace were cultivated and flourished. He who should compare our unpromising condition with our miraculous preservation, would be ready to conclude, that Americans, above all others, would most affectionately remember a favor so great and unexpected. Yet, to our shame be it spoken, when our enemies were gone, we neglected the God of our deliverance. But he soon made it evident, by another alarming providence, that he had not forgotten our past transgressions, and that he did not overlook our present unthankfulness. The enviable blessings which his bounty bestowed, we had reason to fear would again be torn from us. The storm once more thickened, and lowered, and threatened. Four years, from the restoration of peace, had not elapsed, when the reflecting patriot foresaw the rapid approach

of danger more formidable than that which we had escaped. The bond of general union proved too feeble for the important purposes for which it was formed. Clashing interests and turbulent spirits foreboded the introduction of Anarchy, with all the curses that follow in his train. But the Lord long suffering did not pour out upon us the fury of his anger. He shook the rod over us that we might observe it; and laid it aside without chastising. Loth to make us the monuments of his wrath, and willing to reclaim us from our guilty indifference, he tried the arguments of mercy. He dissipated the blackening clouds, and gave us a constitution which secures, to all ranks of citizens, every species of right; which combines wisdom with energy; and connects the dignity of the government, with the safety and happiness of the individual. The prospect of evil had awakened the sensibility of the public mind, and the prompt salvation obliged even politicians to acknowledge "*the finger of God.*" But when the panic subsided, the devotion subsided with it: and America quickly relapsed into her former lethargy.

To chastise the hypocrisy, and cure the indifference, which all orders of men had betrayed, Jehovah commissioned his army, against which valor and skill are no defence, to avenge his quarrel. A host of destructive insects, sporting with the puny efforts of human exertion, traversed the country, and mowed down, in their march, the staff of life. "*The land was as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness*.*" Had they continued their devastations, we could have expected little but "*cleanness of teeth in all our dwellings†.*" Startled at the alarming progress of this minute, yet invincible foe, our citizens, who were not wholly dead to religious principle, were constrained to remark the judgment of the Most High, and to implore the aid of him whom they had offended. But the pang of penitence was no longer felt when the affliction ceased, and the return of prosperity was accompanied with a return of transgression.

To remind us of our sin and of our duty, the

* Joel ii. 3. † Amos iv. 6. See the history of the *Hessian Fly* in the American Museum, vol. 1, page 291—293. p. 456—458. vol. 2, p. 298—300. vol. 4, p. 244—247. vol. 11, p. 301, 302.

monitions of Providence were *again* employed. In just indignation, God sent upon our frontiers the Indian tribes. War lighted, once more, his hostile torch, and Death unfurled his banners. Our Western brethren were exposed to the indescribable horrors of a savage warfare: a warfare, of which the unvarying maxim is, an indiscriminate murder of every age and sex. Elated with the persuasion, that their power was irresistible by the hords of the wilderness, the States resolved to crush, at a blow, the troublesome combination which was formed against them. But they trusted in an arm of flesh: the God of battles fought for their enemies, and what was the issue? Let the banks of St. Mary, and the adjacent grounds which now whiten with the bones of our youth, tell the tale of woe!* From that

* The affecting catastrophe here alluded to, happened on the 4th of November, 1791. On that inauspicious day, the American army, which Gen. St. Clair led against the Western Indians was entirely defeated. The battle was fought at the River St. Mary, about 15 miles from the Miami Village. The army consisted of about 1400 effective men. No less than 38 officers, and above 1100 men were killed; and it was with difficulty that the miserable remnant made good their retreat. See Gen. St. Clair's official letter, American Museum vol. 10, appendix. Quarter-Master Hodgdon's return of the officers killed

disastrous period to this, the vengeful barbarian has more or less committed depredations on our borders; pillaging the property, and destroying the lives of our citizens. What shall we say to the *present* aspect of Providence? You all know the deplorable condition of our neighboring city. A few weeks ago she was a city of prosperity and joy—Commerce crowded her harbor, and thronged her streets—Mechanic industry boasted her useful, though humbler toil—Literature saw, with delight, her growing honors. Amusement led up her sportive train: Jollity assembled the sons of mirth: All was life—all was ardor. But, how sad the change! The hurry of business has ceased: The hands of industry are idle: Gaiety is fled. All faces gather blackness; and the theatre of pleasure is converted into one great house of mourning. “*The mirth of tabrets ceaseth: the noise of them that rejoice endeth: the joy of the harp ceaseth: They shall not drink wine with a song: strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it:—every house is shut up, that no man may*

and wounded, p. 28. The “report of a committee of Congress respecting the failure of the expedition under Gen. St. Clair,” *ib.* vol. 9, appen. 2d, p. 79—82; and also appendix 3d, p. 2.

come in. In the city is left desolation ; and the gate is smitten with destruction.*" Death has erected, in the midst of her, his gloomy throne. With fury uncontrolled, he rages through all descriptions of men. In all directions fly the shafts of this unerring archer. Every day he multiplies his triumphs. The young, the old, the honorable, and the vile, fall the undistinguished prey of this remorseless tyrant. Vain, as yet, have been all human expedients to arrest his progress, and baffle his power. He mocks opposition—he strews the earth with slain—He numbers among his victims even the "masters of the healing art."

LET none consider this dire calamity as an event in which only the immediate sufferers are concerned. To punish *their* iniquities it has, doubtless, been sent. But are they *single* in transgression? Have *we* escaped because we are better than they? No, in no wise. A sovereign God has made them an example of his righteous vengeance. The evil under which they languish, is one of those awful dispensations by

* II. XXIV. 8—12.

which Jehovah speaks, in thunder, to a guilty people.—The destroying Angel, who is now executing upon our fellow citizens and fellow sinners the awards of Heaven, looks terribly on *us*, looks terribly on *all*.—Whether he will bend his course hither, God only knows.

Now, my brethren, lay all these things together, and ask your own consciences, whether the Lord has not been, and is not, at this moment, dealing with us in wrath? Affuredly, "*for all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still*.*"

PHILOSOPHERS may speculate and argue as they please. They may pretend to assign merely natural causes for all these events. But let it be remembered, that GOD ACTUATES NATURE. Nature, without God, is a word either destitute of meaning, or replete with blasphemy. Jehovah accomplishes, by *natural means*, the wise and holy ends of his moral government. By natural means he preserves the righteous: by natural means he punishes the guilty. "*Shall*

there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it ?*” But why accumulate arguments to prove that the affliction which we deplore is not a chance, but a divine appointment ? Your very appearance in the sanctuary this morning, is a public testimony of your deep conviction that *“this also cometh forth from Jehovah, who is terrible in his doing toward the children of men†.”*

SINCE, then, the distresses under which we have formerly smarted, and that which now afflicts some of our citizens, and threatens more, is *“the doing of the Lord‡,* permit me

2. To “vindicate the ways of God to man,” by shewing what righteous reasons he has for dealing with us in wrath.

WE need not go far to look for causes : They are within us, and around us. We will find abundant reason to justify the divine procedure, if we advert to our *ingratitude,* our *insincerity,*

* Amos III. 6.

† Is. XXVIII. 29; Ps. LXVI. 5.

‡ Ps. CXVIII. 23.

our *pride*, our *obstinacy*, and the *prevalence of various kinds of moral evil*.

IT is but too evident to any one who cursorily inspects the conduct of God to us, and our conduct to him, that we have been *very ungrateful*.

THERE is no nation under heaven for which God hath done so much in so short a time, as he hath done for America. In the season of our danger, when our *hope was almost as the giving up of the ghost**, and we felt ourselves unable to work out our own deliverance, we supplicated his aid. Memorable, to distant ages should be the 20th of July, 1775†: when the injured millions of America, prostrate before the throne of the Eternal, poured out their complaint, and sent their cry, to him *that judgeth rightly*‡. Jehovah heard our cry. *He bowed his heavens and came down*§. Our armies, destitute of discipline, of arms, of ammunition, of food, of cloathing, fainting with hunger, and freezing with cold,

* Job xi. 20. † Observed throughout the continent as a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer; and one of the most solemn days the ever saw.

‡ Jer. xi. 20. § 1 Sam. xxii. 10.

he crowned with victory the most signal, and decisive. He restored peace to our borders: He blessed our commerce: He opened the windows of Heaven, and poured plenty into our dwellings: He kept us from the confusion, and tumult, and miseries, of civil feuds: He has preserved us, hitherto, from being involved in the broils and bloodshed of Europe. He has sweetened all these mercies by fixing us in the secure enjoyment of every privilege our hearts can wish: He has given us the everlasting gospel, we trust, in its purity; and has been inviting, by the allurements of his love, to the enjoyment of his rest. But where has been our gratitude? What have we rendered to the Lord for this profusion of benefits? Let us appeal to the most interesting, important, and solemn business in which we have been engaged since our national existence. One would imagine that no occasion of making a pointed and public acknowledgment of the divine benignity, could have presented itself so obviously, as the framing an instrument of government which, in the nature of things, must be closely allied to our happiness or our ruin. And yet, that very constitution which the singular goodness of God enabled us

to establish, does not so much as recognize his *being** ! Yes, my brethren, it is a lamentable truth : a truth, at the mention of which shame should crimson our faces ; that, like Jeshurun of old, we have *waxed fat and kicked*. *Of the rock that begat us we have been unmindful, we have forgotten his works, and the wonders that he hath shewed us*†. Oh my country ! Torn from thy history be the disgraceful page which records thy unthankfulness !

* While many, on various pretences, have criminated the Federal constitution, one objection has urged itself forcibly on the *pious* mind. That no notice whatever should be taken of that God who planteth a nation and plucketh it up at his pleasure, is an omission which no pretext whatever can palliate. Had such a momentous business been transacted by *Mahometans*, they would have begun "*In the name of God*". Even the Savages whom we despise, setting a better example, would have paid some homage to the *Great Spirit*. But, from the constitution of the United States, it is impossible to ascertain *what* God we worship ; or whether we own a God *at all*. It is a very insufficient apology to plead, that the devotion which political institutions offer to the Supreme Being, is, in most cases, a matter of mere form : For the hypocrisy of one man, or set of men, is surely no excuse for the infidelity of another. Should the citizens of America be as irreligious as her constitution, we will have reason to tremble, lest the Governor of the universe, who will not be treated with indignity by a people, any more than by individuals, overturn, from its foundation, the fabric we have been rearing, and crush us to atoms in the wreck.

† Deut. xxxii. 15, 18 ; Ps. lxxviii. 11.

THERE is a connection between crimes, as well as between graces. Never will we find, either in individuals or communities, a solitary sin. In the conduct of America, particularly, there has been a most unworthy combination. Little is necessary to prove, that if we have been ungrateful, we have also been *insincere*.

WHO does not remember the professedly penitential tears which streamed from every eye, and the groans which burst from every heart, when the hand of the Lord lay heavy upon us. Our rulers and public men led the way to acts of solemn devotion, and invited their fellow citizens to join together in *bumbling themselves under the mighty hand of God*? *Who* proscribed, as far as their authority could reach, those guilty amusements and practices which provoke the Most High to pour out his fury upon a people? *Who* reprobated, and exhorted others to discountenance, that seminary of vice, that corrupter of moral principle, that parent of profligacy, the *theatre*? *Who* condemned *games of chance, horse-racing**, and other kinds of immoral behavior?

* To some it may appear strange that games of chance, such as *cards, dice, &c.* were ranked among the sins of

Did not the representatives of the community? *Who*, since the restoration of peace, have been the first to throw off every appearance of res-

the land. The usual pretext that they are harmless pastimes, is very flimsy and altogether inadmissible. Independently on the odious consequences, with which they are generally connected, they are much more criminal than many are inclined to allow. It may safely be affirmed, that they are palpable violations of the third precept of the decalogue. What is a *name*? It is a distinguishing mark. What is the name of God? It is any thing by which he *makes himself known*. Now he makes himself known as the God of *Providence*; and therefore to sport with his Providence, is equivalent to sporting with his divinity. But with this all games of chance are chargeable. If the Providence of God extends to the *fall of a sparrow*, why not to the shuffle of a card, or the cast of the dice? But the former cannot happen without a divine appointment (Mat. xii, 10.) therefore, the latter cannot. We are positively assured that "*the whole disposing of the lot is from the Lord.*" (Prov. xvi, 33.) And all games of chance are lots. On some occasions it may not only be lawful but a duty, to refer certain cases, by religious lot, to the decision of God's tribunal. This is a mode of acknowledging his supremacy which he has honored with his approbation, under the dispensation both of the old Testament and the new; and which, under the former, he expressly commanded. The religious *lot*, then, it is plain, is an act of worship precisely of the same kind with the religious *oath*. Both are solemn and *direct* appeals to Omniscience and Omnipotence. And games of chance bear, in every particular, the same relation to the former, which profane swearing bears to the latter; whence the conclusion, however uncomfortable, is inevitable, that if profane swearing is criminal, so are games of chance; nay, that these games are every jot as wicked as common, customary imprecation. It is foolish to say, "*We mean no evil.*" Every cursing reprobate pleads the same excuse.

pect for the authority of the great God, and to treat his ordinances, and his word with contempt? Have they not too often been those to whom

“This mode of arguing,” it may be said, “draws very deep, and involves in the guilt of sporting with Divine Providence, not only games of chance, but all amusements of skill; and, eventually, all, even the most innocent, actions of our lives; since the issue of them all must be determined by the superintendance of Divine Providence; and, therefore, that either this dreadful consequence must be admitted, or the principle on which games of chance are condemned, given up; and these games, of course, justified.” But the objection proves by far too much. No man will deny murder to be a horrible crime. Now, as it can be, and often has been, demonstrated, that all *spontaneous* motion, to which belongs all *muscular* and *vital* motion, is the effect of the immediate agency of the Deity*, we must either, according to the doctrine of the objection, allow murder to be an innocent action, or throw the blame of it upon God himself. The truth is that the objection confounds two things essentially different. In games of chance, the principle which *makes* them such, and *without* which they would cease to be such, is the *appeal to God*: The decision is *designedly* put out of the reach of human foresight; and should a man use any precaution to determine the chance in his own favor, he would be accused of *unfair* play. This forms the *character* of the games in question, and distinguishes them from trials of skill, and all the common actions of life, the issue of which depends upon the providence of God. In the *former*, an appeal to God constitutes the *nature* of the game. In the *latter*, there are only some *circumstances* which his providence disposes: circumstances which necessarily attend our actions, as the actions of *dependent* beings.

As to *horse-racing*, it is a sin almost too flagrant to require any proof. God gave us his creatures to use for our good, not to torment for our diversion. And if the scripture says true, that “*the righteous man regardeth the life of*

* Baxter's *Matho.* vol. 1. p. 331—339.

the most important interests of the country were committed? Have not men in office, and numbers of our principal citizens, been foremost to observe, in the face of day, that very conduct, which formerly they decried as unlawful in its nature, and destructive in its influence? Is this carriage which becomes those who vowed to live for God, if he would save them from their distress? We may see upon ourselves the black mark of Israel's duplicity and treason. "*When he slew them, then they sought him; and they returned and inquired early after God: and they remembered that God was their rock, and the most high God their Redeemer: Nevertheless, they did flatter him with their mouth, and lied unto him with their tongues; for their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant*.*" "Be not deceived, God is not mocked†: These things we wickedly have done, and he kept

his beast," he who can habitually indulge himself, or countenance others, in a wanton, cruel abuse of one of the most generous animals that alleviate his toil, and promote his comfort, has a wretched claim to the character of a Christian.

* Ps. LXXVIII, 34—37. † Gal. vi, 7.

*silence ; we thought that he is altogether such an one as ourselves, but now, by his providence, he is reprovng us, and setting our iniquities in order before our eyes**.

ONE who reflects upon the majesty of God, and the evil of sin, will see, in such vile ingratitude and hypocrisy, abundant reason to justify him for pleading with us in wrath : and instead of wondering that we are chastised, will wonder that the divine patience permits us to exist ; when he surveys our *unbecoming pride*.

HAVE we not, my brethren, in numberless instances, acted as if we were the sources of our own happiness, and the sovereigns of our own conduct ? As if we were neither subject to the jurisdiction, nor amenable to the tribunal, of “ *the God in whom we live, and move, and have our being†* ?” Has not America, in the fulness of her prosperity, virtually said, “ *Who is the Lord, that I should obey him‡* ?” Has she not said, “ *My power, and the might of my hand, have gotten me*

* Ps. l, 21. † Dan. v, 23. ‡ Ex. v, 2.

this wealth ?*” Has she not said, with imperious Babylon, “*I shall be a lady forever ; I am, and there is none else† ?*” Is it any thing strange then, that “*mischief which she is unable to put off, has fallen upon her‡ ?*” My brethren, God is jealous of his glory. He will not suffer the creature to affect independence on the Creator. He will make us know that “*Jehovah reigns, and, therefore, the people must tremble§.*”

THESE abominations, too notorious to be denied, and too shocking to be palliated, are rendered still more heinous by the *obstinacy* which has uniformly characterised them.

WHAT means have been neglected to shew us our sin, to warn us of our danger, and bring us back to our duty ? Has not God spoken to us both in judgment, and in mercy ? Has he not alternately inflicted his chastisements, and lavished his bounties ? Has he not “*many a time turned his anger away, and refrained from stirring up all his wrath** ?*” And have we not persisted in

* Deut. viii, 17. † Is. xlvii, 7, 8. ‡ Ib. v, 11.
§ Ps. xcix, 1. ** Ps. lxxviii, 38.

walking contrary to him? Have we not made our "*neck an iron sinew, and our brow brass**?" Sins abound, but where are the penitent? Who "*sigh and cry for the abominations done in the land†*?" Who appropriates to himself *his* share of the general guilt? Where is the humbled heart, where the contrite spirit, occasioned by such an appropriation? Shall the abuse of God's amazing patience and lenity, and our unfruitfulness under all the pains he has taken with us, go unpunished? No certainly! We may forget, but the Lord remembers: And if he sweep us not away with *the besom of destruction*, it is because he is the *LORD long-suffering*. But woe to him who argues, from the divine forbearance, that he shall pass with impunity. The longer Justice spares, the higher does she lift her arm, and the heavier will be her stroke at the last. "*He that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy‡.*"

Such has been our behavior, and such behavior has drawn upon us the vengeance of Heaven.

* *Is. XLVIII, 4.* † *Ezek. IX, 4.* ‡ *Prov. XXIX, 1.*

Here, then, our inquiries into the cause of the Lord's displeasure might end ; but we may properly go a step farther, and observe that he is justly angry with us on account of the *prevalence of various kinds of moral evil.*

WHAT respect is paid to those fundamental principles of moral rectitude upon which is founded, not only the prosperity, but the existence, of a commonwealth ? Is not truth between man and man, the basis of mutual confidence, and the life of society, shamefully violated ? Are not unmeaning professions, and gross adulation, too general in the circles of fashion ? Is not the breach of absolute promise, particularly among debtors and tradesmen, become so common, that it is scarcely considered as a fault ? Is not the bond of all civil union, the solemn appeal to Omniscience by oath, fallen almost into contempt, from the irreverent manner in which it is both administered, and taken ? Is not the name of the great and terrible GOD, wantonly and outrageously blasphemed ? Are not even children, who, it is probable, were never taught to put up one prayer to the author of their be-

ing, expert in the infernal science of profane imprecation? Do not our "streets resound with this language of hell?" Is it not heard even from the lips of many who presume to call themselves by the name of Christ? Yes, my brethren, "*Because of SWEARING the land mourneth**."

WHAT regard is shewn to the important duties which are reciprocally incumbent upon the different members of families? Where are the watchful, circumspect, conscientious, praying parents? Where the humble, dutiful, pious children? What is become of family devotion? What, of family discipline? What, of the engagements into which parents, at the baptism of their infants entered to observe both? Is not neglect, in these particulars, a fatal source of youthful dissipation†? And what shall we say of that

* II. xxiii, 10.

† Families supply both church and state: and if genuine religion, and strict morality, be wanting there, society is poisoned at the fountain head. Through disrespect to *family religion*, the young grow up profoundly ignorant of their Creator, and unimpressed with reverence for his law; and surely we cannot expect that they who fear not God, will regard man. *Family discipline* also, is of the utmost moment. Parental vigilance and care form useful members of the community. We have no right to

profligacy of principle and manners, which is every where observable. Who "*rises up before the hoary head, and honors the face of the old man**?" On the contrary, are not the aged often treated with disrespect; the maxims of wisdom ridiculed, and the counsels of experience despised? Are there not multitudes who scarcely behave with common civility to the magistrate whom God has commanded us to revere? Are not intemperence, impurity, and debauchery hardy enough to face even the light? Do we not hear repeatedly of the lawless ramble, and the midnight revel? Are not these deeds of darkness and obscenity deemed, by too many,

flatter ourselves, that disorderly, disobedient, uncontrolled children, will become good citizens. To a criminal, a very criminal inattention in these two particulars, may be ascribed, in a great measure, that trifling character, and that vicious conduct, which mark the scolding and the rake, and of which the pious and the observing so generally, and so justly, complain. Vain are the wisest laws without *virtuous habits*; and these habits must be formed in *early* life. Where the reverse obtains, the energy of law must necessarily be enfeebled, and the arm of Justice unnerved. But although the fear of public ignominy, *should*, in most cases (for sometimes it certainly does *not*) restrain from the commission of enormous outrages; it will be but a slender proof of social probity, that the terrors of penal statutes are barely sufficient to keep men from the gallows.

* Lev. xix, 32.

the marks of a generous spirit? And those who will not “*run to the same excess of riot,*” vilified as contracted bigots or superstitious fools?

IN what manner is the SABBATH observed? “*Remember,*” is the divine injunction, remember “*the Sabbath-day to keep it holy.*” Is it, indeed, kept holy? Do men, indeed, “*call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable?*” Do they “*honor him, not doing their own ways, nor finding their own pleasure, nor speaking their own words**?” Do not many waste the day in idleness? Are not some so indolent or carnal, or both, that they will not wait upon God, that day, in the ordinances of his grace? Or that they too frequently allow their seats to be vacant at least one half of the day? Or esteem any pretext weighty enough to excuse their absence from the sanctuary? Let none hope to palliate their conduct by pretending that they improve themselves at home. It is altogether incredible, that he who will not sanctify the Sabbath in God’s house, will sanctify it in his own. This profanation of the Sabbath is truly deplorable; but

* *Is. LVIII, 13.*

in not a few instances the profanation is still more gross. Do not some make it a day of business? Others a day of feasting? And others a day of visiting and amusement? Have not salutary laws been enacted to protect the Sabbath from this open and shameless indignity*? Do our citizens regard these laws? Do our magistrates find fault with the breach of them? Whatever be the opinions of men, the Lord God will not suffer this iniquity to pass unpunished; for he has sworn “*if ye will not hearken unto me to HALLOW THE SABBATH-DAY,—then will I kindle a fire in your gates, and it shall devour your palaces†.*”

* See, in the laws of the State of New-York, an act passed Feb. 23, 1788. Vol. 2. p. 89—91, of Greenleaf's edition.

† Jerem. xvii, 27. The enforcement of the observance of the Sabbath, by civil authority, cannot be viewed as an unwarranted interference of the magistrate in matters of religion, or an infringement of the rights of conscience. For respect to this divine institution, is a point in which all denominations of Christians are agreed. Apart from Christian principle, the due observance of the Sabbath has the happiest influence upon civil society *as such*; and therefore it merits the most vigilant and unintermitted attention of the civil magistrate. “It has been observed by the wisest men, that were the celebration of this weekly festival totally neglected, Religion would not long survive its disuse.” (*Venn's tracts, p. 170.*) And no society can exist without religion; because the members of it can have no hold upon each other. On proper en-

WHAT reception is given to the everlasting gospel? "*Who hath believed our report, and to*

quiry, it would perhaps appear; it has, in fact, appeared, that a great majority of those unhappy men who are abandoned to infamy, or who terminate their days in a sacrifice to public justice, commenced the career of their crimes with the violation of the Sabbath. "Consider those who help to fill the jails, and furnish the gallows, and it will be found (upon their own confession) they are such as have neglected the observation of the Lord's day, by following their own pleasures." (*Sabbatum redivivum*, p. 660.) To these remarks may be added a short extract from a pamphlet lately published. It is too much in point to be omitted, and too excellent to need an apology. "One Christian institution alone," says the ingenious author, the sanctification of the Christian Sabbath, diffuses a more benign influence on society, and has a greater efficacy on the morals of mankind to purify and refine them, than all the institutions of civil policy, or terrors of civil government, put together. The pauses it creates in human transactions; the interruptions it makes in our worldly cogitations, and earthly cares; its fixing, or keeping alive in the mind, the impressions of a God infinitely great and dreadful, whose we are, and to whom we must be accountable for all our ways; and who will most dreadfully punish the wicked, and plentifully reward the good; its tendency to keep constantly in our view, the immortality of the soul, and a future state of retribution; its being connected with such religious services as reading the holy scriptures, in which the most august, grand, and awfully sublime ideas of the Almighty are exhibited—Its relation to the infinite love of Christ to mankind—and the peremptory and awful injunctions of this Divine Savior, that men love one another—together with our joining in solemn, heart-felt supplications, confessions and thanksgivings at the throne of grace; these things, I believe, have had, and still have, an efficacy on the minds of the great body of the people in Christian nations, I was almost going to say, in-

*whom is the arm of the Lord revealed† ?” Who “fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows § ?” Who glories in the cross of Christ? Who takes refuge from the curse of the law, in his covenant righteousness? Who bends the knee to a sanctifying Savior? Whose holy ambition spurns the dregs of earth, and soars to the kingdom above? Where are those “crowns of glory, the hoery heads found in the way to righteousness** ?”*

finitely great—and I firmly believe, that no man whoever became very vile and profligate, could possibly be so, till he renounced all solemn and serious attention to the Lord’s day. A question has some time employed my thoughts, what in human nature it is that will account in a rational manner, for the generally extreme wickedness of soldiers and sailors?—The true solution of the problem, I believe is this. They do not carefully observe the Lord’s day: they have no opportunity, or very little, of attending the worship of God: consequently the impressions of a God; of the worth of their souls; the evil of sin; and the infinite importance of a future state, are either very faint in their minds, or perhaps in some, scarcely existent. In this respect, the institutions of Christianity have a most benign influence on society; and wise rulers, who wish rather to prevent crimes than to punish them, *will take care, both by precept and example, to promote the sanctification of the Christian Sabbath.*—This is the best security of our life, property, and liberty. This is like the wings of the Almighty spread over us. No man, who conscientiously, and with knowledge, sanctifies the Sabbath, will find a liberty in his mind to injure us through the week.—This is God’s shadow extended over us; it is Heaven’s protection.” (*A concise and faithful narrative, &c.* p. 68—70.)

† II. LIII, 1.

§ LX, 8.

** Prov. XVI, 31.

Where the hopeful youth who dedicate themselves to the Lord God of their fathers: and who are not ashamed of Jesus and his words before a crooked and perverse generation?

ON the contrary, what is the frequent treatment of the bible? This blessed bible which unfolds the counsels of Heaven, and proclaims the glad tidings of salvation? Is it not despised as the parent of enthusiasm, and calumniated as the offspring of fraud? Are not the exercises of that serious godliness which it inspires, which purifies the human mind; and ennobles the human character, reviled as the whine of fanaticism, or the cant of imposture? Is not infidelity the *fashion*? Is not the profession of a Christian thought to degrade the dignity of a *gentleman*? Is not the bold blasphemer of the holy oracles, admired, by many, as a man of genius? Is not the rude and impious jeer, at all which the wise and the good hold sacred, applauded for *wit*? Is not the paltry witticism, if it be but levelled against religion, complimented with the name of invincible argument? Does not every unfledged sciolist; every ignorant retailer of the sophisms of a Hume, or

the quibbles of a Voltaire, set up for a philosopher, and think himself entitled to laugh at the faith of the faint? Is not the progress of principles so pernicious, an awful symptom of deep degeneracy? And is not the fact as notorious as it is distressing? "*If it be not so now, who will make me a liar, and make my speech nothing worth**?"

WHEN we turn our eyes from these miserable mortals who carry the mark of Hell in their foreheads, and survey the generality of professed believers, is there not reason to fear that a large proportion of them have only "*a name to live, while they are dead†*?" How many call themselves *Christians*, while their whole deportment proves that they are, in truth, the enemies of Christ? No subject so tedious and irksome as redeeming love. Speak to them of the ideal scenes of a romance, and they are all attention and activity. But speak of the sweet realities of the gospel; of the height, the depth, the length, the breadth, of the love of Christ, and immediately they are languid and listless. Set before

* Job xxiv, 25. † Rev. iii, 1.

them the fooleries of the stage, and their bosoms will be agitated with alternate and violent emotions. Now they will be softened into pity, or roused into rage: Anon, they will melt in grief, or be transported with joy. But conduct them to Calvary: Shew them that real tragedy which clothed all heaven in sackcloth—Shew them a bleeding Savior—Shew him stretched on the accursed tree; bowing in agony his guiltless head; and pouring out his soul unto death, a victim to divine wrath, a sacrifice for sin; and they will be cold and unfeeling as a stone. Not a pang of remorse will shoot through the flinty heart, nor a tear of contrition steal down the iron cheek.

Do even the disciples of Jesus, who love him in sincerity, walk as he also walked? Do they live, as habitually as they ought, by faith, and not by sight? Do they improve, as they are bound, the precious promises? Do they apply to the fulness which is laid up for them in their new covenant head? Are congregations entirely free from those iniquities for which the Lord is visiting our land? Are there no ministerial transgressions? Yes, my brethren, the humiliating

truth must be told, "*The Lord is righteous, I and my people have sinned.*"

IT is, therefore, undeniable that the Lord is speaking to us in wrath, and that his controversy is holy and just. Let us, then, attend,

SECONDLY, To the duty which our circumstances and our text point out; and that is, to plead with him for mercy.—*O Lord, in wrath remember mercy!*

HERE it is requisite to elucidate some of those principles which the petition implies; and at the temper with which we should employ it.

I. WITH respect to the *principles* of the petition.

IT plainly implies that there *is* mercy, pardoning mercy, which may, consistently with both the divine attributes, and the divine government, be freely communicated to the sinner.

DREARY, my brethren, would be our prospect, and miserable our consolation, were it ab-

folutely necessary for the God whom we have offended to reward us exactly according to our deserts: Then, indeed, might we close our eyes on peace, and lie down in sorrow. “*If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity; O Lord who could stand*?*” Certainly *we* could not stand; *we*, whose conduct has been little else than a series of transgressions; and whose crimes have been attended with every hateful circumstance which can aggravate guilt, or encrease punishment. Unable to answer our Judge “*one of a thousand*” of the accusations he may bring against us, if we attempt to “*Justify ourselves, our own mouths will condemn us†*” But, glory, eternal glory, be to God in the highest! *There is FORGIVENESS with him that he may be feared‡.* There is a Savior for whose righteousness sake the Father is well pleased. Through this Savior we may safely approach that inflexible justice, and unspotted purity, which are otherwise a consuming fire. Our condition, therefore, though sad, is not hopeless. We are guilty, indeed, but not wholly cast off: We are afflicted, ’tis true, but not abandoned to despair. How great, how un-

* Pf. cxxx, 3. † Job ix, 20. ‡ Pf. cxxx, 4—7.

equalled soever our provocations have been, we are encouraged to *hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him there is plenteous redemption**."

BUT, it may be asked, "Is there any reason for us to hope when we are visibly the objects of the divine displeasure?" May we repair to mercy's throne, when slighted mercy has kindled the vengeful flame?" We may, for our text farther implies, *That the present wrath of God, is no obstruction to the exercise of his mercy.*

THIS, the very prayer of Habakkuk, which was penned under the influence of the Holy One, manifestly supposes. This is supposed by all the prayers which, the scripture informs us, were directed to Heaven for deliverance from affliction. This is supposed by the design of all God's wrathful dispensations, which are intended not only to *correct man, with rebukes, for his iniquity*†; but to humble the arrogance of his spirit—to teach him his entire and universal dependence upon the One Supreme—to create in his mind

* Pf. cxxx, 4—7. † Pf. xxxix, 11.

religious sensibility—and bring the thankless prodigal back to the God from whom he has *deeply revolted**. *I will go*, says Jehovah by his prophet, *and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: In their affliction they will seek me early*†. This same principle is supposed by his own positive injunction, recorded in the prophecy of Joel: *Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart; and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great mercy, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth if he will turn and repent, and leave a blessing behind him*‡? “Peradventure I shall live,” is higher encouragement than the best of us merits: Upon this *peradventure* must a sinful man make an experiment of the divine mercy for the salvation of his soul, and a sinful land for her deliverance from trouble—It is enough for us to know, that God *can* be just in pardoning the ungodly—It is enough for us to know that Jesus Christ, the propitiation for sin, hath bro-

* *Is.* xxxi, 6. † *Hof.* v, 15. ‡ *Joel* ii, 12—14.

ken down the barriers which hindered our access to God, and the access of his mercy to us; and hath opened, by the blood of Cavalry, *a new and living way to the Father*. From the invitation to this way of life, none, no not the most worthless and vile, are excluded. Even those who are slaves of corruption, and prisoners of the curse, are exhorted to lay hold of the great salvation. No sins can surpass the merit of our Lord Jesus. The grace of God, that reigns by his cross, is never so gracious; never shines with such glorious splendor, as when she holds back the arm of justice; rushes through the fire of wrath—snatches the criminal as a brand out of the burning; and heaps countless blessings on his head.

THIS doctrine, so rich with instruction and comfort, we should never forget. It is at all times important; at all times needful. Particularly in seasons of wrath, it is the precious doctrine which brightens the gloom of guilt, and revives expiring hope. The prophet, by his own example, has taught us the truth, and how to employ it; for the text implies,

LASTLY, That *when the Lord is dealing with us in wrath, mercy is our ONLY plea.*

As sinners we have no claim of right to any of God's benefits. Fallen, by apostacy, from our state of probation, we cannot acquire, by our own obedience, a title to the blessings which were promised in the covenant of works. It is, therefore, of infinite moment to our most valuable interests, not only to confess with our mouths, but to feel in our hearts, that we lie at mercy. Above all, upon a day of fasting and humiliation, it illy accords with our circumstances and profession, to foster the opinion, that God will forgive our iniquities and receive us into favor, on account of our sincere, though imperfect services. Who is he, that presumes upon the sincerity and goodness of a heart which the spirit of inspiration has pronounced *deceitful above ALL things, and desperately wicked**? Who is he, that would offer to his Creator, a righteousness which has been rejected already *as filthy rags*†? Know, vain man, that every expectation which does not rest upon mercy, mere mercy, undeserved mercy,

* Jer. xviii, 9.

† H. lxiv, 6.

is more perishing than the fleeting cloud. Thou must bow to sovereignty. “*The loftiness of man shall be brought down, and the haughtiness of man shall be made low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted**. Every durable comfort; every solid joy; every hope that will abide the rude shock of death, or the burning trial of the Judgment-day, is built upon this divine assurance, not that with us there is *merit*, but that *with the Lord there is mercy*.

WITH these principles, that are evidently implied in the text, is intimately connected,

2. THE *temper* with which it becomes us to present the prayer of the prophet.—

IF we admit, (and who dares deny?) that the Lord is speaking to us in wrath; and that our only refuge is his mercy; we cannot resist the conviction, that an essential part of the temper which should influence us in suing for mercy, consists in *an ingenuous confession of guilt*.

* *Is. ii, 17.*

To frame excuses for our rebellion against the majesty in the heavens; or to soften down, by partial tenderneſs, our heinous violations of the Divine law, diſcovers an ignorant mind, and an unhumbled heart: It is, in effect, to ſay, *the ways of the Lord are not equal**. We may, indeed, imagine ourſelves hardly treated: But if we compare the beſt of our fancied claims to the indulgence of God, with the tremendous charges he may juſtly bring againſt us, the lips of murmur will be ſilenced; the riſing diſcontent ſuppreſſed; and, overwhelmed with deep confuſion, we will be conſtrained to acknowledge the rectitude of Jehovah's appointments. The *Judge of all the earth*†, who invariably does right, *muſt be juſtified when he ſpeaketh, and be clear when he judgeth*‡. Before his equal bar *every mouth ſhall be ſtopped, and all the world become guilty*§. *Woe, then, to him that ſtriveth with his maker*||. The wiſeſt, the ſafeſt, the moſt honorable conduct, in this hour of peril, is to *humble ourſelves under the mighty hand of God*¶, and to plead guilty to the heavy accuſa-

* Ezek. xviii, 25. † Gen. xviii, 25. — ‡ Pl. li, 4.
§ Rom. iii, 19. || If. xlv, 9. ¶ Pet. v, 6.

tions which are written, in large and luminous characters, on his providential dealings. He virtually addressses us in this piercing language, *Have I not nourished and brought you up as children, and have ye not rebelled against me**? If we act honestly, we must reply, *Truth Lord! Did I not make known unto you my holy Sabbath, and command you precepts, statutes, and laws, and give you my good spirit to instruct you; and have ye not been disobedient, and cast my law behind your backs, and wrought great provocations? Truth Lord! Did I not deliver you, for your sins, into the hand of your enemies who vexed you: and in the time of your trouble, when you cried unto me, did I not hear you from heaven, and, according to my manifold mercies, give you Saviors, who saved you out of the hand of your enemies; and after you had rest, did you not do evil again before me? Truth Lord! Thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly: Neither have our rulers, our magistrates, our priests, nor our citizens, kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments; for they have not served thee in the large and fat land which thou*

* If. 1, 2.

gavest them ; neither turned they from their wicked works.*

BUT let us not suppose, my brethren, that we fulfil our duty by a *general* confession of guilt. We plead not for mercy with a proper temper, unless we individually bring home the charge of guilt to our own consciences. Our national sins are enormous ; their cry ascends up to the very heavens : and we all have had our share in them. Let us every one turn his eyes in upon his own heart, and, willing to know the worst of his character, ask, with solemn impartiality, "*What have I done † ?*" There is no citizen present, who will not find, upon fair enquiry, that he has abundant reason to say, not only as a *man*, but as an *American*, *God be merciful to ME a sinner ‡.* The public iniquity, is, in fact, an accumulation of private transgressions. They are the drops of individual contrition, which constitute the flood of national repentance ; and if we expect ever to see a general reformation, we must pray every one for *himself*, *O Lord, in wrath remember mercy.*

* Neh. throughout. † Jer. viii, 6. ‡ Luke xviii, 13

THESE reflections leads us directly to observe, that a part, a chief part, of the temper which should predominate in our applications to the mercy seat, is a fervent desire, that the Lord would remove from us first of all, the *guilt* for which he is now punishing us.

IF our humiliation, this day, proceeds from a dread of evil, rather than from a cordial hatred of the sin which is the parent of all evil, we mock God; we wound our own souls; we prepare for ourselves a more terrible condemnation. The God of holiness will never deem himself honored by the feigned devotion of those who *roll sin as a sweet morsel under their tongues*. Who grieve, not because *he* is offended and insulted, but because *they* are chastised—Who are deterred from the indulgence of their lusts, only by the fear of vengeance; and who will probably return, when their alarm subsides, to those unhallowed practices which they *now* affect to renounce. Unpardoned sin is a perennial source of sorrow: and it is but a small consolation to be freed from an existing plague, while an angry cloud, charged with ten thousand woes, hovers

over us, and threatens every moment to burst in curses on our heads. *Acquaint thyself NOW with him and be at peace**; haste, for pardon, to the blood of sprinkling, and leave it to the wisdom and sovereignty of God, to remove, in his own good time, the rod of affliction.

FINALLY; In pleading for mercy, we should be anxious that the Lord would *sanctify* his providence: that is, would bless it as an effectual mean of rendering our hearts more tender, and our lives more holy.

CHASTISEMENTS unimproved, swell, in proportion to their severity, the guilt of an individual or a people; and are a prelude to calamities doubly dreadful. If men will not *learn righteousness* when God's *judgments are abroad in the earth*—If they will not *behold the majesty of the Lord*†; and when his hand is lifted up, obstinately refuse to see it; he may say, in righteous indignation, *Let them alone: LET THEM FILL UP THE MEASURE OF THEIR INIQUITIES*: And what the consequence may

* Job xxii, 21.

† Is xxvi, 10.

be, none can tell, but he who knows perfectly the evil of sin, and the limits of his own forbearance. Should we revert to our former sloth and impiety, after this solemn warning from the God of Heaven, our condition will be worse, much worse, than before. He may, indeed, permit us to enjoy tranquility for a while; but, in the mean time, he is storing a magazine of fury. If his unexampled goodness do not *lead us to repentance*, we will *treasure up to ourselves wrath against the day of wrath; and revelation of the righteous Judgment of God**. For ought we can tell, the period may be near, when seven thunders shall utter our doom; and seven vials pour out upon us their united plagues. In the day of our distress, God may stand afar off: *When we spread forth our hands, he may hide his eyes from us; yea, when we make many prayers, he may not hear†*. He may strike into our souls the chill of death, by addressing us in this stile of affronted patience, *Because I called and ye refused, I stretched out my hand and no man regarded: but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your cala-*

* Rom. 11, 4, 5.

† If. 1, 15.

imity; I will mock when your fear cometh: When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish come upon you.*

THE facts and the doctrines on which we have been meditating, suggest, very plainly, the *improvement* we ought to make of them.

IF wrath is upon us from the Lord, every man of reflection will feel that it becomes us to be very *serious*.

MY brethren, God does not trifle with us, and he will not permit us to trifle with him. His government is not a phantom, nor his judgments a farce. Both are awful realities: Sooner or later shall every accountable creature know, that the former cannot be rejected, nor the latter despised, with impunity. The divine law is a serious thing: sin, which is a transgression of the law, is also a serious thing: and *that* death which is the wages of sin, is as serious a thing as either: And now, that we have violated the law; have made ourselves sinners; are obnoxious to the penalty of the law, and

* Prov. 1, 24—27.

have before our eyes a signal proof of the Lord's anger against the very sins with which we are chargeable; surely, surely we ought to be serious. To be careless and indifferent when the cry of anguish pierces our ears, is cruelty: To frolic on the brink of ruin, is madness. The spirit of God has marked it as one of the last stages of human obduracy, when men have *the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and the pipe, and wine, in their feasts; but regard not the doing of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands**. God forbid that we should imitate the folly described by the prophet; "*And in that day,*" a day of wrath, "*did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: and behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine;*" a conduct which proclaimed more loudly than any words, the maxim of the libertine, *Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die*. May the woe denounced against such offenders, penetrate our inmost souls: *Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you, TILL YE DIE, saith the Lord God of hosts†*.

* If. v, 12.

† If. xxii, 12—14.

BUT let none mistake the intention of these remarks, or pervert their use. If we are called from unseasonable inattention and levity, we are not called to the fullness, the gloom, the inaction, of despondence. We must be serious, but not idle. And one of the most profitable purposes for which we can improve the subject we have been considering, is, *a strict examination of our own characters.*

MY brethren, the dispensations of divine providence, proclaim, as with the voice of an Arch-Angel's trump, *Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel**. Are we prepared to meet him in confidence, and with comfort? Pause, ye votaries of pleasure—Interrupt, ye gay, the round of vanity—Suspend, ye men of business, the anxieties of gain; and retreat, for a while, into your own bosoms: Summon your consciences before that tribunal, the decisions of which are all according to truth; and ask, ask solemnly, for ye know not how soon it may be asked at the bar of God, What arrangements have ye made for an eternal world? Amidst all your acquirements, have ye obtained the *one thing needful* †?

* Amos iv, 12.

† Luke x, 42.

Amidst all your pursuits, have ye sought *first the kingdom of God and his righteousness** ? Are ye *in Christ Jesus †* ? Are ye justified by his blood, and sanctified by his spirit ? Have ye devolved the whole weight of your acceptance with the Father, of your perseverance in holiness, and your arrival at glory, on him *who is able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him ‡* ?

To these interrogations very different answers must be given by two classes of hearers. To each of them our subject furnishes a suitable exhortation. To those, who *have a good hope through grace*, it addresses the command of the apostle Peter, *Give all diligence to make your calling, and your election sure §*. In seasons of wrath it is peculiarly needful for believers to have their faith strengthened ; their title to their inheritance fully ascertained, and their way to the possession of it freed from all obstruction : Trim, then, your lamps, ye wise virgins. Gird on your armor, ye soldiers of the living God : *Be sober : Be vigilant***. *Watch and pray, that ye enter*

* Matt. vi, 33. † 1 Cor. i, 30. ‡ Heb. vii, 25.
§ 2 Pet. i, 10. ** 2 Pet. v, 8.

not into temptation*. Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord—Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching†. And when ye supplicate for yourselves, intercede for your fellow-citizens, with whom you profess to sympathize. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much‡. Say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach§. Say, O remember not against us former iniquities: Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us, for we are brought very low. Help us O God, of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake. Let the sighing of the prisoner come up before thee; according to the greatness of thy power, preserve thou those that seem appointed to die||. Intercede for your country: Say, Turn us again, O Lord God of Hosts; cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved¶. Say, Forgive our sin, and heal our land**. Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto

* Matt. xxvi, 41. † Luke xii, 35—37. ‡ James v, 16. § Joel ii, 17. || Pf. lxxix, 8—11
¶ Pf. lxxx, 19. ** 2 Chr. vii, 14.

their children: and let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands; yea the work of our hands establish thou it.* Intercede for the church of Christ: Say, *Do good, in thy good pleasure, unto Zion: Build thou the walls of Jerusalem †.* O Lord, *revive thy work in the midst of the years; in the midst of the years make known: In wrath remember mercy.*

To those who are *aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise ‡,* the dispensations of providence speak in a most alarming stile, and the doctrine of the text offers salutary counsel. *Wherewithall, my brethren, will YE come before the Lord, and bow yourselves before the most high God? Unprovided with that robe of righteousness, and those garments of salvation §, without which none can enter the palace of the King ||, what will ye do in the day of visitation? Are ye able to contend with your Maker? Are ye able to abide the fierceness of his anger? O Put not from you the evil day. Multitudes, of your neighboring city, who were as*

* Pf. xc, 16, 17. † Pf. li, 18. ‡ Eph. ii, 12.
Mic. vi, 6. § If. lxi, 10. || Pf. xlv, 15.

careless and secure as yourselves, have been hurried away, with scarce a warning, to the bar of God. What assurance have ye that this shall not, very shortly, be your own case? Death is now doing his work among our fellow-citizens; and before we are aware he may *come up into our windows**. Perhaps—God grant that the fear be not realized! Perhaps the destroyer has already received his commission to clear these seats of their useless possessors; to cut down the cumberers of the Lord's vineyard; and to cast them into the fire. My brethren, as your souls live, there is but a step between you and death: Critical is your condition; and precious your time. Hasten, then, *flee for your lives; flee from the wrath to come!* "But whither shall we flee?" Whither? To the mercy seat! *To the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. To Jesus the mediator of the new covenant †. Him hath God exalted to be a prince and a Savior to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins ‡.* This, this is the only channel through which the mercy of God can flow to the sinner: *For there is no other name given under heaven among*

* Jer. ix, 21.

† Heb. xii, 24.

‡ Act. v, 31.

men; whereby we can be saved*. The only alternative is, to receive the Savior, or perish. Receive him without delay. *Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation. To DAY if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts †.* He has said that *Them who come to him he will in no wise cast out ‡.* Having such high encouragement fasten your hope on his atoning blood; throw yourselves unreservedly upon his precious merits; and plead, O LORD, in wrath remember mercy. Amen.

* Act. iv, 12. † 2 Cor. vi, 2; Ps. xciv, 7. ‡ John vi, 37.

THE END.

WERE not "*the temples of the living God ravaged and wrapped in flames?*" Every one knows that the British troops betrayed, on almost all occasions, the most implacable virulence against places dedicated to divine worship, and against those servants of the most high God, who there shewed their flocks the way of salvation. "In the course of the war, they utterly destroyed more than FIFTY places of public worship, in these States. Most of them they burnt: others they levelled with the ground, and in some places left not a vestige of their former situation; while they have wantonly defaced, or rather destroyed others, by converting them into barracks, jails, hospitals, riding-schools, &c. Boston, Newport, Philadelphia, and Charleston, all furnished melancholy instances of this prostitution, and abuse of the houses of God. And of the nineteen places of public worship in this city, when the war began, there were but nine fit for use, when the British troops left it*. And were not the men who could be guilty of such conduct, "*wretches?*" Who can tell whether more "*senseless*" or "*impious?*"

OF what kind were the transactions of this same army when they traversed the Jerseys? "*Many thousands of the inhabitants received printed protections, signed by order of the commander in chief. But neither the proclamations of the commissioners, nor protections, saved the people from plunder, any more than from insult. Their property was taken or destroyed without distinction of persons;*" and this with their protections in their hands: The goodly example was set by *officers* and *general officers*. "*The soldiery, both British and foreigners, were shamefully permitted, with unrelenting hand, to pillage friend and foe, in the Jerseys. Neither age nor sex was spared. Infants, old men and women, were left in their shirts, without a blanket to cover them, under the inclemency of winter. Every kind of furniture was destroyed and*

* See the note to p. 26 of the judicious thanksgiving sermons preached by the Rev. Dr. Rodgers, on the 11th of Dec. 1783.

burnt : windows and doors were broken to pieces : in short, the houses were left uninhabitable, and the people without provision, for every horse, cow, ox and fowl, was carried off*." Was not the shameless violation of faith publicly plighted, "*perfidy*?" Were not villainies like these, "*violence*?" And the men who could perpetrate them, in the fullest sense of the word, "*banditti*?" It is plain, then, that the author, while he has spoken truth, has not spoken *half* the truth. Many other feats of a similar kind he might have mentioned ; he might have adverted to the butchery of prisoners in cold blood : he might have touched on the history of sugar-houses and prison-ships, &c. but he delights not to dwell on these scenes of horror : and therefore, as he could not, consistently with his duty, omit noticing the miseries of the war, he expressed himself in *general* terms. It is to no purpose to say, as it may be said, that this is a subject on which the best of men have differed, and will ever differ. Granted ; but let it be remembered, that those good men who were on different sides of the *question*, were also on different sides of the *Atlantic*. Among the pious and the devout in *this* country, there was, generally speaking, but one sentiment. The opinions of the best of men, who were 3000 miles from the scene of action, and whose confidence in their government was abused by a perpetual slander on the principles and conduct of the Americans, can be of no weight at all. Besides, the point before us, is not a matter of opinion, but of *fact* ; and the opinion of no man could either replace the property, or restore the lives, of our citizens.

WITH respect to the *spirit* which the expressions under consideration breathe, it is proper to remark, that they were designed not to provoke bitterness, or to enkindle resentment ; but to awaken recollection. They

* Gordon's American War, vol. 2, p. 179. Ramsay's do. vol. 1, p. 326, 327.

A P P E N D I X.

THE Author has learnt, that some persons, whose partiality to Great-Britain will not permit them to enter into the views and feelings which *ought* to predominate in the breast of every American citizen, have taken umbrage at some sentences in page 9, which allude to the devastation committed by the British army. To make truth and duty the basis of his public discourses, is a maxim to which he would preserve the most rigid adherence: And if any are offended at him for freely declaring the one, or fulfilling the other, it cannot be helped. It never has been, and he hopes never shall be, his practice, to model his discourses upon a previous calculation whom they may please, or whom displease. He has, however, reviewed, with cool deliberation, the obnoxious passages: and cannot find, after the strictest examination, one assertion false, or uncharitable, or unseasonable; and therefore is not at liberty to make the least alteration. But while the consciousness that he has said no more than can be well defended, or was exacted by fidelity to his trust, forbids him to apologise; yet respect for some whose judgment he reveres, and whose friendship he values, induces him to explain. Such he assures, that nothing was farther from his mind, than an intention to wound the feelings of any person whatever—that he throws no *national* reflection; sensible that such reflections are at all times unjust and illiberal; and that among the disinterested, the judicious, and the unprejudiced, those who were *well informed*, were, even in Britain, the friends of America—that what he says even of the army, is meant of the army *in general*. There were, he is happy to acknowledge, some noble exceptions;—and that he does not enter into the merits of a political controversy, but simply states matters of notorious fact. He must detain the reader a little longer, while he vindicates the expressions themselves, as well as the spirit which they breathe: and if he advance

any things which looks like political discussion, it is not his fault ; he is compelled to do it.

THE army destined to subdue America, he stiled, and rightly stiled, *a tool of oppression*. Such, standing armies have always been, and, in the nature of things, always must be*. It is nothing but the tameness of slavery, or the sottishness of prejudice, which can inspire a thinking being with a different sentiment. Their whole history, from their first institution till this hour, is little else than the history of destructive machines in the hands of intrigue and cruelty. And whether the standing army of Britain is *now* guided by better principles, or employed to better purposes, let the occurrences of every day attest. That army, with respect to America, was "*hired to commit deeds of blood, in order to insure success to schemes of iniquity.*" Did they not fight for their *pay*, and because they were *ordered* to fight? Were they not sent for the express purpose of cannonading, and bayonetting, and burning the Americans into *unconditional submission to arbitrary measures*? And was not that scheme itself, independently on any other, sufficiently iniquitous? Was it not iniquitous, to trample under foot every principle of natural right, in refusing the Americans a voice when their *own* property was to be given away? And to tear from their hands the rewards of honest industry, with the imperiousness of masters, and the rapacity of robbers? If this was not iniquity, it will be hard to find a crime.

WERE not multitudes of our citizens, whose only fault was the love of their country, the love of justice, "*driven from their homes*?" Were they not stripped of their all, and reduced from ease and affluence to extreme penury? And were not those by whom they were thrown destitute upon the world, and who seized their possessions, "*sons of plunder*?" In the name of common sense, what were they?

* See "an argument against a standing army," in Moyle's tracts, particularly p. 236—242.

can be fully supported by scripture *principle*, and scripture *precept*, and scripture *example*. The scripture *principle* on which they are advocated, is the wise improvement of God's judgments and mercies. But how can they be improved, if we bury them in oblivion? How can we duly appreciate a mercy, if we do not preserve a lively sense of the evil from which that mercy delivered us? It is impossible. The miseries, therefore, which we suffered during the war *must* be remembered, and mentioned, and *discoursed of*; and the American who forgets or overlooks them, is a traitor to the God who saved his country. For this reason the lawless behavior of the British army, was *purposely* described in forcible language. Since the more horrible were their outrages, the heavier was the judgment upon this land; the more signal her deliverance, and, of course, the more criminal her subsequent ingratitude.

SCRIPTURE *precepts*, by which the author is warranted to speak as he has spoken, may be found in Deut. vi, 12—20—23; Ex. x, 2; Deut. xxxi, 26; &c. and scripture *example*—throughout the bible—And why any *Britons*, above all others, should be offended, is truly mysterious. No people on earth record more carefully, or repeat more frequently and feelingly, their *own* sufferings, than they. Do, reader, take the trouble to look into some of the revolution and fast-day sermons, which have been preached in Britain; & you will see the tyranny, the cruelty, and the multiplied horrors, of Popery, painted in colors blackenough. Hervey himself, in whom were united all those gracious tempers, and all those gentle virtues which adorn, and dignify, the human character; even the mild, the meek James Hervey, speaks very strongly on this subject†. Glance over the speeches of some *Honorables*, and *Right Honorables* in the British Parliament, and some of the fast-day sermons occasioned by "*the rebellion in America*," and you may find not a few hard speeches uttered with-

† See Hervey's fast-day sermon, entitled, "*the way of holiness*." Works, vol. v, p. 72, octavo.

out any just provocation at all. All this is good; this is patriotic, this is glorious. But if an *American* ventures to mention what *his* country endured from the oppressions of a venal court, and the depredations of an unprincipled soldiery; This is mean, this is bigotted; this is intolerable! Kind reader, if your property be pillaged, and your life destroyed, what is the difference, whether the mischief be done by a popish inquisitor, or a British soldier?

THE author feels persuaded, that what has now been said will satisfy the *candid*: for no candid person will attempt to deny facts which are familiar to every child; or undertake the defence of what is wholly indefensible. It is really strange that any, be their attachments to Britain ever so great, should so far make themselves a *party* in the vile proceedings of her agents, as to be offended when these proceedings are mentioned. If, however, they *must* be angry, let their resentment fall where resentment is due. Let them be vexed that the armies of a nation which boasts her humanity and generosity, should stain, by a more than savage barbarity, the pretensions in which she glories; but let them not unjustly quarrel with Americans, for exposing, in the blaze of day, the wickedness which seeks shelter in the dark thickets of oblivion. The author only remarks farther, that there was a period, when America thought her sufferings of sufficient moment to consecrate a day, for the express purpose of publicly thanking the God of heaven for her salvation; and, when *some* persons were happy in the safety they enjoyed. But, *tempora mutantur*: It is *now* become a crime for an American so much as to hint at the misfortunes of his country, under British usurpation, and at the goodness of God in delivering her—a crime in the eyes of men who, during the time of her calamity, were her implacable foes; who were afterwards protected by her clemency; and who have since grown luxurious and wanton upon the fat of the land.

