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A VIEW
OF THE
PRESENT STATE
OF THE
Political and Religious
WORLD.

DRAWN FROM THE GENERAL ASPECT OF THE
PROVIDENCES OF GOD, IN CONNECTION WITH
THE PREDICTIONS OF HIS HOLY WORD.

In a DISCOURSE, delivered January 1, 1802,

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A VIEW
OF THE
P R E S E N T STATE
OF THE
Political and Religious
W O R L D.

ISAIAH XXI. 11. 12.

Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? the Watchman said, the morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come.

OUR Saviour severely reprov'd the Scribes and Pharisees, because, that from natural causes, they could infer natural events; and from the appearances of the sky, in the morning, or evening, predict the kind of weather which was likely to ensue: but that they did not discern the signs of the times in a political, and moral, or religious point of view. In both cases, the connection between cause and effect, is the same. From their subjection, however, to sense, from inattention, from depravity of heart and perverseness of disposition, and

from their prepossessions and prejudices, mankind do not manifest the same shrewdness and sagacity in the one case that they do in the other. The providences of God, whilst they accomplish, they tend, at the same time, to unfold the predictions contained in his word; and these, whilst, from their very nature, they are necessarily involved in such a degree of obscurity, as to prevent their being known or fully understood until their accomplishment; they, at the same time, carry in them such a degree of light and information, as to afford, to the judicious and diligent inquirer, a general knowledge and expectation of the event. This might be exemplified in a great variety of instances. Some of them will naturally fall in our way, in the prosecution of the subject now before us. Let the two following suffice at present. Daniel, we are informed, understood from books, the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. And at the coming of Christ there was a general rumour spread abroad, and a general expectation excited, no doubt from the prophecies respecting him contained in the sacred writings, that about that time there would be a great personage born in Judea, who should rule over all nations. Yet it appears that, from the causes which have been already assigned, the Jews, who were the depositories of those very oracles in which the predictions, from whence this rumour and this expectation originated, were contained, mistook his person, when he appeared, and rejected him.

It becomes us, my Brethren, to be attentive observers of the providences of God, and carefully to examine the predictions of his holy word, that in the expectation of the great events which are to take place, we may be prepared for them: that, foreseeing the evil, we may be excited to make the best provision which may be in our power against it, and not be taken by surprise; and that, anticipating the good, we may hope and rejoice in the prospect.

The prophecy, contained in these two verses, and of which my text is the substance, is both short and obscure. Some have supposed that Dumah; the country to which it refers, was part of Arabia, whose inhabitants were the descendants of Duma, the sixth son of Ishmael. Others, because mount Sier is mentioned, suppose that by Dumah is meant Idumea, the country of the Edomites.

The words consist of two parts: a question, which is repeated, supposed to be put by an inhabitant of that country, to the prophet, under the character of a watchman, and referring to the prospects concerning it, "Watchman, what of the night?" "Watchman, what of the night?" The answer to this question consists of two parts also: the first containing a direct reply to the question proposed, and the other a prescription of duty. The reply is in these words, "The morning cometh, and also the night." It is well known that in the language of prophecy, and indeed in scripture language in general, day and night are often put for the opposite states of prosperity and adversity, of affliction and

comfort. The import of the answer then is, that there would be a vicissitude of these with respect to Dumah—The duty prescribed is thus expressed, “if ye will inquire, inquire ye : return, come.” The meaning of which may be, if ye be disposed to obtain more particular and satisfactory information, return and inquire again.

My design is, to consider the question here asked as proposed, with respect to the present times, and to endeavour to answer it from the general aspect of the providences of God, taken in connection with the predictions of his holy word ; and then to point out some of the duties to which, in present circumstances, you may be particularly called.

We shall consider the subject both in a political and religious point of view : or as it respects the state of civil society, and as it respects the Church of Christ. The close and intimate connection subsisting between them, renders this view of the subject proper, or rather, indeed, necessary. Civil and religious liberty, though distinct, in themselves, will generally be enjoyed or lost together. The same enlarged views, and the same liberal sentiments, which tend to secure the one, will equally tend to the promotion and establishment of the other. And the same spirit of domination and lust of power, which aims at enslaving the bodies, will equally aim at enslaving the minds and consciences of men. Communities, or bodies politic, will always be prosperous and happy, in proportion to the religion and virtue which they possess.

All that can be proposed, in the short time to which I must restrict myself, is, a few gleanings from that extensive and fruitful field which lies before us. And as I have always heretofore carefully avoided introducing, on the sabbath, or in the course of my stated ministrations, any sentiments of a political nature, I shall indulge the hope that though, on this extra occasion, I should in some measure deviate from my general practice, it will not be thought censurable: and that I shall be heard with patience and candour, on this critical subject. More especially, as I have it not in view to advance any thing upon it which I think can be just cause of offence to any, and to which I am not necessarily led by the subject.

The first question then to which I am to endeavour to give an answer is, what is the present state of the political world?

Permit me then to call your attention to a few matters of fact, as the best premises from which to draw a conclusion.

Magna Charta, in a manner forcibly obtained from king John, after much war and bloodshed, near the beginning of the thirteenth century, was the glory and boast of the British nation, and laid the foundation of British liberty. But to what, let me ask, did this celebrated instrument amount? It contained, indeed, the renewal and confirmation of those immunities and privileges, which the Barons and their followers had enjoyed under the Saxon

princes; and which they claimed under the characters of Henry the I. and Henry the II. But this amounted to no more than a security of *some* of their rights, to a *part* of the people. Evidently, the greatest benefit resulting from it was, that the commons of England hereby obtained a representation in Parliament, or the great Council of the nation. Defective and imperfect, however, as this instrument was, the rest of the world could shew nothing, in their forms of government, that was comparable to it. Upon the basis of this charter, at different subsequent periods, several grants were obtained from the crown, and several parliamentary acts passed, tending to extend and secure the rights and privileges of the great body of the nation. Various writers also arose, from time to time, especially in Great Britain, who distinguished themselves as advocates for civil and religious liberty, and who are intitled to high praise for their many just sentiments on these important subjects.

The contest which arose between Great Britain and her then American colonies called up the attention of mankind, especially of those who were more immediately interested in it, and afforded an occasion for the more full and free discussion of the principles of government. The views of men were enlarged, and increased light thrown on the origin, the nature, and the design of government; and the rights and privileges of the people. For America, (I speak it, my Brethren, with a degree of exultation, and with adoring gratitude to the Sovereign Disposer of all things,) for America, in the course

of Divine Providence, was it reserved to exhibit to the world the new and astonishing spectacle of a great and growing people, though a people of but yesterday, meeting by delegates, chosen by themselves, to organize and establish a government for them. In the American constitution, we first see the rights of the subject defined and guarded, and the power and duties of the ruler prescribed and limited, with any degree of clearness and precision. In this happy land, we first behold the men of their own free choice, vested, by the people, with authority to enact, and power to execute laws for the good of the whole; and these supported and submitted to, from the rational persuasion of their necessity and use. Here also we first see the heterogeneous and incestuous connection between the kingdoms of this world, and the kingdom of Christ; which, from the reign of Constantine, down to the present day, has been the source of incalculable mischief, both to the interests of true religion, and the civil and religious rights of man; renounced: each resting on their own proper foundation, and exercising, respectively, their particular and appropriate rights and prerogatives. And you will permit me, my Brethren, on this occasion, to congratulate you on the rational prospects which we enjoy, of having our constitution preserved inviolate, and our liberties, civil and religious, rendered secure and permanent. Our government carries in its very bosom, what no other government ever possessed, the principles requisite to its correction and amelioration: nor can the people be ever enslaved but through the grossest inat-

tion, or until they become enslaved by their vices.

With respect to the other kingdoms and nations of the world, it is well known, that at the declaration of American independence, whilst many of them groaned under the most intolerable despotism, but few of them enjoyed much that could be called liberty, either of a civil or religious kind.

There can, I think, be but little reason to doubt, that the revolution in France took its rise from the independence of America, and its concomitant circumstances. Whilst we deplore the distractions and distresses which have taken place in that mighty nation, the occasions of which we may have an opportunity to notice hereafter, we impute them not to their cause, but to its mismanagement. In endeavouring to emancipate themselves from that slavery under which they groaned, and to obtain their liberty, they had to contend with much powerful opposition, both from within and from without. It is not to be presumed, that Providence has brought them thus far to suffer them to be finally disappointed in the great object of their pursuit. Having drank so deeply of the cup of adversity, imbibed by the unhappy ingredients of anarchy and confusion, we would express it as the wish of humanity, that they may soon enjoy all the benefits and comforts of rational liberty and good government.

Grateful, my brethren, to all the sentiments

and feelings of the benevolent heart, are the present prospects of peace being established, among the nations of Europe, who have been so long involved in all the calamities and distresses of war. May we not hope, that having seen the madness and folly, as well as so severely felt the smart of those scenes of devastation and slaughter, in which they have been engaged, they will now sit down with the mutual disposition to cultivate and enjoy the blessings of peace. What matter of rejoicing would it be, to have reason to believe that this was the commencement of the period, when the inhabitants of the earth should learn war no more; when nation should no more rise up against nation, or kingdom against kingdom: but, beating the instruments of war into the implements of husbandry, every one should sit under his own vine, and under his own fig-tree, and enjoy the good of the land, whilst there should be none to molest or make him afraid! When, oh when shall nation cease to be the enemy of nation, and man of man? when will mankind admit, and be governed by the practical influence of those important truths, that they are brethren of one great family; that they are partakers of the same common nature; that they are descendants from the same original stock; that they are destined for the same immortality; and that the interest of the whole is the interest of each constituent part, and the interest of every part that of the whole.

If then, the facts which have been briefly brought into view, have been fairly stated, there

is, I think, just ground to conclude, that the origin, nature, and design of civil government, the powers of the ruler, and the rights of the subject have been more thoroughly investigated, and are more fully and generally known at the present, than at any former period; and that the principles and sentiments respecting them, are likely to be progressive, and to obtain more sure footing in the world. And we would fondly hope, that both rulers and ruled, becoming wiser by the awful examples which have been exhibited before them, such reformatations in the kingdoms and governments of the world as are still necessary to the liberty and happiness of mankind, will, in the good providence of God, be effected, not by violent convulsions, and the effusion of human blood, but by the increasing influence of truth and reason.

It was proposed, in the Second place, to endeavour to answer the question, "Watchman, what of the night?" in a religious point of view; or as referring to the interests of the church of Christ. And here the answer may be confidently given, "the morning cometh;" if the day has not already dawned. The morning of a long, a bright, and a glorious day, infinitely surpassing any thing the church has yet seen or enjoyed. Of this, the sacred oracles afford us the most ample assurance. The original promise, and which, indeed, comprehended in it all the subsequent promises of the gospel, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, has, as it refers to the actual

state of the church, as yet, had but a very partial accomplishment: Let us attend a little to its import and extent, as it was gradually unfolded by subsequent promises. It was first promised to Abraham, that in him, and afterwards, more explicitly, that in him and in his seed; that is, in Isaac primarily, but ultimately and principally in Christ, who should descend from him, should all the families of the earth be blessed. Passing over the various renewals of this promise to different persons in different forms, and at different periods; David, in the spirit of prophecy, represents the Father as addressing his son Jesus Christ, whom he had set as king upon his holy hill of Zion, in the following language: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Again he says, "All the ends of the earth shall remember, and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him. The kings of Tarshish, and of the Isles, shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba, shall offer gifts. Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God. The heathen shall fear thy name, O Lord; and all the kings of the earth; thy glory. It shall come to pass," says the evangelical prophet, "in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it." And he speaks of Egypt and Assyria as

inheriting the blessing of the Lord of hosts, together with Israel his inheritance. But the time would fail me in attempting to mention all the predictions and promises given by this prophet, of the extension and glory of the kingdom of Christ. I shall therefore mention but one more, which is short and very comprehensive. "It shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues, and they shall see my glory." The prophet Daniel tells us, that in the days of those kings; that is, under the Roman government, the God of heaven should set up a kingdom that should not be left to other people; that it should break in pieces and consume all other kingdoms, and should stand for ever; and that the stone, representing this kingdom, became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." In reference to the same subject, it is elsewhere said by the same prophet, "And there was given him," that is, Christ, "dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." There is one other prophecy which is so full and explicit on this subject, that I cannot think of passing it over in silence. I mean that by Malachi, the last of the Jewish prophets. "And the Lord shall be king

“ over all the earth: and in that day there shall be
 “ one Lord, and his name one. From the rising of
 “ the sun even to the going down of the same, my
 “ name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in
 “ every place incense shall be offered unto my
 “ name, and a pure offering: for my name shall
 “ be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of
 “ hosts.”

From the general tenor of these prophecies and promises, and of innumerable others which might have been added to them, it must be evident, that as yet they have had but a very partial and limited accomplishment. At no period of the church has her extension, her prosperity, or her glory, corresponded in any considerable measure with them.

I have only farther to add here, in regard to this glorious period of the church, so frequently represented in scripture; in which the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea, that it is spoken of frequently under a specified time. In the book of the Revelation, we are told, that Satan shall be bound a thousand years, and shall deceive the nations no more until the thousand years shall be fulfilled; and that the saints shall reign with Christ a thousand years; or, as it is expressed by the prophet Daniel, that the saints of the Most High shall take, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever. Now if we understand this expression, “ a thousand years,” literally, O what a long, glorious, and happy period will it be! But if, according to the

general language of prophecy, we consider each day of these thousand years, as representing a year; or as amounting on the whole, to the term of 365,000 years, how is imagination swallowed up and lost in the prospect!

Having thus shewn you the sure and ample ground of confidence and hope in this case, I shall now endeavour to give a more direct answer to the question before us.

The church of Christ, agreeably to various predictions concerning it; particularly by the prophet Daniel, 600 years before the commencement of the Christian era; by our Lord himself, and by his apostles Paul and John, was involved in a long night of popish darkness, superstition, idolatry, and tyranny. The rise of this antichristian power was gradual. The apostle Paul tells us, that the spirit of it discovered itself even in his day. This, I think, affords just ground to conclude that its fall will also be gradual: that is, by various events at different times, tending, in the course of Divine Providence, to undermine its power, and to weaken its influence, until it be finally destroyed. Such was the case with respect to the captivity of the Jews in Babylon. They were carried away at several different periods; and their return was also at several different times, each corresponding with the 70 years, to which it had been predicted that their captivity should extend.

- At the Reformation, this man of sin received a

deep wound which has never since been healed. Since that period, the light of divine truth and liberty has been maintaining an unequal combat, except as they have been aided and supported by power from on high, against that spirit of domination, darkness and delusion, which has so much prevailed in the world. It is, however, I think, evident that the advances which they have made, and the ground which they have obtained since that time, have, upon the whole, been very considerable. This power, so inimical to all the interests of man, has lately received a still more deep and mortal wound, and from which his recovery is still less probable. "Whom," says the apostle, speaking of this power, "the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy with the brightness of his coming." Whilst, then, the nations shall hate her, and, performing the part assigned to them in providence, shall make her desolate; why may we not suppose that the light of divine truth, accompanied by divine power, shall co-operate to complete her destruction?

I cannot propose entering far into the wide field of prophecy, even as it refers to, or is connected with the subject before us; nor, perhaps, is this absolutely necessary. You will permit me to direct your attention, for a few moments, to two particular predictions, which evidently stand closely connected in their accomplishment, and both which appear to have had their accomplishment in our own day. You will find them recorded in the xi. chapter of the Revelation. I shall begin

with the last of them. It is in these words: "The same hour there was a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men," or, as it is in the original, of the names of men, "seven thousand."

The generally concurring opinion of those who have undertaken to expound this prediction, for a century and an half back, and when there was not the least human probability of its taking place, has united in understanding it of a great commotion and revolution in France. That such a commotion and revolution, justly represented by an earthquake, both for its suddenness, and the effects which it has produced, has taken place in France; that it was the tenth kingdom which, in the order of time, arose out of the fourth great kingdom, or Roman empire; that it has so fallen as not to be a constituent part of the papal hierarchy; that thousands of men of high rank have been slain; and that the names or titles of men have been totally abolished in it; is, I presume, well known, and will be readily admitted.

This, you will observe, is said to have happened "in the same hour," or to have taken place in the same period of time with the resurrection of the two witnesses.

Of these witnesses it is said, that the beast should make war against them, and kill them; that their dead bodies should lie in the streets of the great city, which is spiritually called Sodom

and Egypt, three days and an half; and that, after three days and an half, the spirit of life from God should enter into them; that they should stand upon their feet, and ascend up into heaven; or be greatly promoted and exalted in the world.

Here, my Brethren, a number of important queries present themselves. Who, it may be asked, are designed by these witnesses? and why are they said to be two? What is to be understood by their being slain, and raised again? And what time is intended by the three days and an half, in which their dead bodies are said to lie in the streets of the great city?

In endeavouring to solve these queries, and in that to give you what I apprehend to be the true meaning of the prediction, I have to observe, that I shall only give you the collected opinion of some of the most distinguished writers on the subject.

In the 4th verse of the chapter, we are told that these two witnesses are the two olive-trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. Now, if you will consult the iv. chapter of the prophecies of the prophet Zechariah, with some other passages referring to the same subject, I think you will find, that the two olive-trees, and the two candlesticks were evidently designed to represent Moses and Aaron, Zerubbabel and Joshua, or the heads of the civil and religious departments among the Jews, in the two different situations of the nation; namely, their deliverance from Egypt.

tian bondage, and their restoration from their captivity in Babylon. This being admitted, we are naturally led to infer, that the two witnesses here spoken of, are designed to represent the friends and supporters of true religion, and the rights and liberties of men. These are spoken of as two, not only on the ground of the allusion just now mentioned, but also to denote the validity of their testimony.

That their death and resurrection are figurative, and to be understood in a political and moral point of view, is too evident to need proof.

With regard to the time here specified, and its application, it has been observed, that though there is a general uniformity in the language of scripture prophecy, yet this is sometimes varied, and is to be regulated by the connection, and other concomitant circumstances. Now, though it be readily admitted that days, in the language of prophecy, generally represent years; yet it is contended that this is not always the case, but that they sometimes represent months. It is observed farther here, that there is a consistency and propriety always maintained in scripture language; and that these would be grossly violated; had these dead bodies been represented as lying in the streets of the city three months and an half. The three days and an half here appear designed to represent the same period spoken of by Daniel, by a time, times, and half a time. If then we understand them as lunar days, or months, for which the ori-

ginal word *ἡμετέρα*, here used, affords also considerable countenance, then allowing thirty days to a month, it amounts to 105 years.

If it be asked to what period, in France, (for it is to her, you will observe, these predictions are supposed immediately to refer,) is this representation applicable? I answer. By the recall of the edict of Nantes, which excited the attention of all Europe, the rights and privileges of the nation, both civil and religious, were completely prostrated. This was done in the year 1685. If then to this number you add 105, it will bring it down to the year 1790, the very year in which the French revolution took place.

Immediately preceding the account of the great earthquake, it is said, that the witnesses "heard a great voice from heaven, saying, Come up hither. And they ascended up into heaven in a cloud, and their enemies beheld them." On this passage I shall quote to you the words of a celebrated writer, more than a century back. I mean Doctor Peter Jurieu. "*Heaven,*" he says, "is the throne, it is the sovereign dignity, which in a state is exactly the same that heaven is to the earth, in light, in lustre, in good or bad influences, in situation, and in elevation. *From heaven;* that is from authority, and the prince who reigns; they *heard* a voice; they received an order; not a small, clandestine, silent voice; but a *great voice*; that is a public command, a solemn edict; and this voice said unto them,

“*Come up hither.*” Let us now apply this to what is well known actually to have taken place.—On the 24th of January 1789, Lewis the XVI. the then king of France, being urged to it by an unforeseen pressure of circumstances, and imperious necessity, issued a decree convoking the States General, and inviting the three estates to assume a share in the legislature, in order to accomplish a reform. This was the more immediate cause of the revolution in France; and in this was the foundation of civil and religious liberty, in that country, laid.

I am well aware that objections may arise in the minds of some against fixing on the revolution in France as the era of her recovering her civil and religious liberties. What, may it be said, have we not heard their blasphemy, and seen usurpation, anarchy, and all the concomitant evils following each other in quick succession?—Yes, my Brethren; and permit me to ask, What else, in the very nature of things, had you reason to expect? So great were the corruptions of the Romish church which was established among them; so abominable were her superstitions and idolatries; and so intolerable her usurpations and tyranny over the judgments and consciences of men, that the great body of the nation were sunk to the lowest state of ignorance and vice. From such a view of religion, men of sense and reflection turned away with abhorrence; and instead of having recourse to the sacred oracles, those pure and genuine sources of true religion, for just no-

tions of it, they renounced it altogether. In the mean time the minds of a great proportion of those who moved in the higher grades of life, and whose education and opportunities led them to read and to reflect, were prejudiced and corrupted by the deistical writings of several distinguished writers among them. And, which made this poison the more insinuating and dangerous, these writers were, at the same time, advocates for civil and religious liberty. Accordingly, the restraints which they had been under being removed by the revolution, this corruption in principle and morals burst forth in all the hideous and destructive forms of atheism, deism, usurpation, anarchy, and distraction.

Providence, my Brethren, seldom brings about the great and important events which take place in the world, in ways altogether conformable to the expectations and views of men. He makes darkness his pavilion. By terrible things, in righteousness, will he answer the prayers; especially of his persecuted saints. The awfulness of his dispensations surprises and astonishes us. But is it not expressly and repeatedly declared, that the downfall of antichrist will be with awful judgments upon her, and upon the nations which have drank of the wine of her fornication.

Immediately following the two predictions which we have been considering, we are told that the seventh angel sounded; and that there were great voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms

“ of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.” Agreeably to the prediction by the prophet Haggai, God shook the nations before the manifestation of his Son in flesh. And when he has now arisen to shake them terribly; it is for the accomplishment of the most important purposes. The pestilential vapour of infidelity appears, in a considerable degree, to have spent its force in France. Religious toleration has prevailed and still prevails in it. Whilst this continues to be the case, it is a promising symptom, and affords ground to hope. And they are now, evidently, in a favourable situation for establishing their liberties on a sure and permanent basis.

In the midst of all the calamities and distresses of war, a missionary spirit has been poured out; in a remarkable degree, especially in Great-Britain. The hearts of the pious of different denominations have been united in it. A number of missionaries have been sent out; particularly to the Islands in the South Sea, to Sierra Leone in Africa, and to the East-Indies. The vigorous exertions which have been made in sending the glad tidings of peace and salvation, through a crucified Redeemer, to the perishing heathen abroad, have also been accompanied with strenuous endeavours to promote the interests of religion at home by the establishment of schools and by itinerant preachers. The number of friends to the great doctrines of grace, both among the laity and clergy, in the

episcopal church of England, has, of late years, greatly increased. The measures which have been adopted for promoting the interests of religion, in that kingdom, have been crowned with very considerable success. A Missionary Society sprang up at Rotterdam in Holland, in the midst of the war in which they were engaged. In a letter from that society to the one in this place, they informed us, that they were taking measures for having the Scriptures, in the French language, diffused among the people of that nation. By a letter from the missionaries of the particular Baptists in England, in the East-Indies, we are also informed, that they had a translation of the four Evangelists into the Bengalee language nearly completed from a press of their own; and sent us a copy of this translation of the gospel by Matthew. This language being generally known, promises its extensive circulation and great usefulness throughout that vast country. Several Missionary Societies have also been formed in America, which are using endeavours to send the gospel among the Indians in our own country. All the attempts which have been hitherto made have been promising, and some of them remarkably so. A disposition favourable to the reception of the gospel prevails more generally among them at present than at any former period. The society of New-York have at present in their employ, an Indian minister who labours among the remains of several tribes on the east end of Long-Island; a missionary among the Chickasaw Indians in the western part of the State of Georgia; and a missionary among the six nations bordering on the

lakes. Among these last mentioned they have also two schools established. The higher judicatures of several churches in this country have been in the practice, for some time past, of sending missionaries to preach the gospel in our new settlements. From the reports of the members of the General Association of the State of Connecticut, in June last, it appeared, that in several of their churches there were favourable appearances of religion. From the reports made by the delegates to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church, comprehending all the States in the Union south of Connecticut, in May last, it appeared that infidelity was considerably on the decline; that several avowed infidels, in different places, had openly renounced their infidelity, been hopefully converted, and had joined themselves to the church. We were informed of the revival of religion in different parts, and of a more general attention to, and seriousness under, the institutions of religion, in most places, than formerly. Our Missionaries met with a favourable reception at the Natches, a place formerly grossly ignorant and corrupt. The prospects of usefulness there are considerable. Above all, we had a long and circumstantial narrative read to us, of a very extraordinary revival of religion in the adjacent borders of the States of Kentucky and Tennessee. It stated, that upon some occasions, people had assembled to the amount of between four and seven thousand, to hear the word and to attend upon the ordinances of religion. By letters since that time we learn that the work had been progressive, and had extended particularly

into the interior parts of the State of Kentucky ; that upon one sacramental occasion in particular, there were upwards of twenty ministers present, and between twelve and seventeen thousand people assembled ; and that the displays of the divine power and grace were astonishing.

But, my Brethren, notwithstanding these promising appearances, from which some of you, perhaps, may be disposed to think, with me, that the day approaches, if it has not, in some measure, already dawned ; yet if you expect that it will progress with uniformly increasing light, and without any intervening clouds and darkness, I doubt you are mistaken. You are to remember that the papal hierarchy was constituted of nine other kingdoms, besides that of France. A number of these are still involved in the darkness of popish ignorance, superstition, idolatry, and tyranny ; and of all of them we may say, that they have corrupted the pure and undefiled religion of Jesus Christ, and trampled on the civil and religious rights and privileges of men. It is to be expected then, both from the dictates of reason and the declarations of Scripture, that as they have been partakers in the sin, they shall also be sharers in the punishment.

It is the opinion of a number of the most judicious expositors, that the pouring out of the vials, of which we have an account in the xvi. chapter of the Revelation, is emblematical of the events comprehended under the seventh trumpet. And

as the sixth trumpet appears to have ended with the earthquake, and the circumstances immediately connected with it; and between this and the sounding of the seventh trumpet, it is said, "The second woe is past; and behold the third woe cometh *quickly*;" they have supposed that these events will follow each other in rapid succession. This, they alledge, is farther countenanced by the angel, in the preceding chapter, swearing by him that liveth for ever and ever, that time shall be no longer; or that there should be no delay in the accomplishment of the things which were to follow. And by what our Lord declares between the pouring out of the sixth and seventh vials, "Behold I come *quickly*."

In the close of the xiv. chapter, we are informed of the gathering of the vintage of the earth, and of the treading of the great wine-press of the wrath of God; where it is said, that blood came out of the wine-press, even unto the horses bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs. And under the pouring out of the sixth vial, in the following chapter, we are told that three unclean spirits like frogs came out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, which are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty.

Whether this collection of kings, and great effusion of human blood has been fulfilled in the com-

bination of Pelnitz, upon the principles and for the avowed purpose of restoring monarchy and the popish religion in France, and the dreadful destruction of human lives of which it was the occasion; or not, I shall not undertake to determine.

You will, however, please to observe here, that these predictions stand immediately connected with the pouring out of the vials; the fourth of which is said to be poured out on the sun, and the fifth on the seat of the beast. Now all interpreters agree, that by the sun we are to understand some distinguished potentate; and many of them have united in understanding it expressly of a king of France, whose emblem was that of the sun, and their motto, "Ne pluribus impar," that is, not unequal to, or a match for many. And as it is generally agreed, that by the beast here we are to understand the popish hierarchy; so it is as generally agreed that by his seat we are to understand Rome, the place of papal residence. And have we not seen the sun of monarchy not only obscured, but become extinct in France, and the pope driven from his seat, and out of his dominions.

Be this, however, as it may, sure I am that as the objects of this combination were wicked, so they have utterly failed in their accomplishment; that since the beginning of the world, down to the present day, in no equal period, does history inform us, of an equal effusion of blood, and destruction of human lives; by the sword of war: and that if this is but a prelude to a more formidable

combination, and a still more dreadful slaughter, it will be terrible indeed.

Whether then, my Brethren, this glorious day of gospel light and liberty, of which we have been speaking has yet dawned or not ; much, evidently remains yet to be accomplished, before it can be said to be far advanced. There is much corruption and tyranny in the church and in the kingdoms of the world to be yet destroyed. The Jews are yet to be brought to the knowledge, and the acknowledgment of the truth as it is in Jesus ; if not to be restored also to their own land. With them is likewise to be brought in the fulness of the Gentiles. And the Euphrates to be dried up ; whatever may be the import of the expression, that the way of the kings of the earth may be prepared. These things, however, and whatever else remains to be done, will the Lord hasten in his own good time.

An important branch of the subject remains yet to be considered : namely, To point out some of the duties to which, in present circumstances, you may be particularly called.

It will, I presume, be readily admitted, by those who have been acquainted with the state of society among us, from the commencement of the American revolution, that the morals of our people have, in several respects, strongly militating against the interests of both civil and religious society, been greatly corrupted since that period.

Now a skilful physician will, in a case to which he is called, direct his attention and inquiries particularly to the following subjects ; the nature and symptoms of the complaint ; the causes which have contributed to produce it ; the state and constitution of the patient ; together with the remedies which are proper to be applied.

As then there is, in several important respects, a great analogy between the natural body, and the body politic ; sin, or moral depravity, in the one, being what sickness and disease are in the other ; and a similar mode of procedure is proper in both : I shall, in prosecuting this branch of the subject, endeavour to answer the following questions. Wherein doth this degeneracy and corruption, in religion and morals, which is supposed to have taken place, consist ? What particular causes have contributed to produce them ? What is our present situation ? And what the measures proper to be pursued, in order to effect a reformation.

To prevent any mistakes which might arise from the misapplication of what may be said, it is proper to observe ; that the subject of the present investigation is, not so much, what is the case in these respects, in any particular place, or places ; as what is the general state of our country. The

First question, to which I am to endeavour to give an answer is, Wherein doth this degeneracy and corruption in religion and morals, which is supposed to have taken place, consist ? This, then,

I apprehend, will be found to have taken place both in principle and practice. This, indeed, is what might reasonably be expected. These will invariably be found mutually to produce and to be produced by each other. Bad principles will, as naturally, lead to vicious practices, as an evil tree will bring forth fruit corresponding with its nature ; and such as are become corrupt in practice, generally resort to bad principles as a vindication of their conduct in the view of the world, as well as to quiet the clamours of their own consciences.

With respect to corruption in principle, Socinian, Arian, Armenian, and some other heterodox notions, are, I presume, well known to be more prevalent, particularly, in some of the eastern States ; formerly famous for their purity in these respects, than they then were. An open and avowed infidel was once a phenomenon among us. He was considered as a monster in human shape, and beheld with horror. But, of late, have we not seen many such, without any great degree of infamy or disgrace annexed to the character ? A profligate and debauchee were then generally despised and avoided as a contagion and pest in society. Has not the number of such increased ? And are they equally despised and shunned ? Is there the same respect generally paid to the institutions and ordinances of religion there formerly was ? Is there the same diligence and faithfulness in family instruction and family government ? Is the same honest industry in procuring a support, generally practised ; the same punctuality in paying just

debts ; the same integrity and fairness in dealing ; the same kindness and friendship ; and even a proportionate degree of temperance and moderation in the modes of living prevalent now, that were formerly ? Those of you, my Brethren, whose personal knowledge qualifies you to answer these questions, will, I am persuaded, with respect to most, if not all of them, reply, the case is not now, as it formerly was.

Second. We proposed to enquire, what particular causes have contributed to produce this degeneracy and corruption. These are numerous. Permit me to direct your attention to the following, which are supposed to have had a special influence.

The controversy which took place between Great Britain and America excited, and in a great degree engrossed the attention of all ranks and descriptions of men among us. As then any one interest or concern, occupying the mind, tends, in the very nature of things, proportionably to exclude all others ; so this had an unhappy effect in diverting the attention of many from the most interesting and important of all concerns : those of their souls and eternity.

War is always unfavourable to religion and morals. The war in which we became engaged on the ground of this controversy, called out, in its different stages, a great number of our industrious and orderly citizens, from the retreats of piety and virtue, into the field. This, whilst, on the one hand;

it removed them from under the regular administration of the word and ordinances, (those happy means of instruction and wholesome restraint) exposed them, on the other, to all the seductions attendant on the dissoluteness of a camp, and to all the temptations connected with a military life. The effect was peculiarly unhappy on our youth; many of whom, removed from under parental instruction and restraint, fell a prey to vice.

The depreciation of the paper currency, from the opportunity which it afforded to some, for speculation, and to others for paying their just debts with a comparative trifle, gave a deep wound, especially to the moral honesty of our country.

The funding system, established after the war, tended to diffuse a spirit of speculation far and wide. This is well known to have had a most unhappy effect, upon the community at large, as well as to have produced the ruin of a number of individuals. This spirit afterwards extended itself to articles of commerce and property of almost every description.

The great influx of wealth, occasioned by the demand for our abundant produce, among the powers at war in Europe, tended greatly to increase the insatiable desire of acquiring wealth.

The introduction and dispersion of deistical writings, where the soil was so prepared for such corrupted seed, had a powerful tendency to increase

the corruption, and threatened, for a time, the profanation both of religion and morals.

Among the various things which tend to corrupt the morals of a people, there is no one that has a more powerful and pernicious influence than that of the theatre. This in its very nature, and in every possible modification of it, is directly opposed to the genius and spirit of Christianity, and invariably proves a source of corruption, especially to youth, who are the hope both of the Church and of the State.*

You will permit me, my Brethren, to mention one other cause of continuing and promoting this degeneracy. I mean that unhappy violent spirit of party politics, which has so much prevailed among us. In mentioning this, it is not my design to throw any particular blame upon one party more than the other ; but barely to point out the pernicious effects which it has had on religion and morals. Say then, has it not evidently tended to sour the minds of even good men towards each other, and to produce coolness and alienation of affection ? Whilst they have engaged so much of your time and attention, has it not been, sensibly, to the prejudice of the life and power of religion in your own souls ? And have not many obtained a support, and acquired an influence, to which, from their general character, they were not intitled, because they were supposed to be necessary or useful to a party ? My

* See Doctor Witherspoon's Serious Enquiry into the nature and effects of the Stage, Vol. III. of his Works.

Brethren, your civil rights and privileges are of importance, and I may not condemn a due attention to them. But your spiritual and eternal interests are of infinitely greater importance, and have a proportionate claim on your time and attention. Nor should the interests of religion and virtue ever be sacrificed to political and party purposes.

The third question, What is our present situation? comes now to be considered.

Physicians speak of a crisis, or of particular stages and periods in diseases of the body, which either produce the favourable prospect of a recovery; or, by increasing the symptoms of danger, threaten the death of the patient. The attention and care of the practitioner is, at such periods, peculiarly important and necessary; and his skill will be particularly manifested in laying hold of, and making a proper use and improvement of so critical a juncture.

Such periods are there in the moral and religious, as well as in the political state of society: periods when there is encouragement to attempt a reform, from the probable prospect of success; but which, if neglected or misimproved, render the case more deplorable and hopeless. Such, my Brethren, appears to me to be the case with respect to ourselves. The present is, in my view, a favourable opportunity for attempting and effecting a reformation. Peace promises to be happily restored among the contending nations abroad; and we

continue to enjoy the blessings of peace at home. Some of the sources of speculation will, necessarily, be dried up; and the temptations to it, in general, fewer than they have been. Infidelity is, evidently, in some measure abated, and less impudent and outrageous than formerly. Many, who had been, in some measure, tinctured with it, have become sensible of its madness and folly, as well as of its pernicious and destructive tendency. The real grounds of political contention will, I trust, be suspended, at least for a time. Commerce promises to flow in a more regular and uniform channel; and our citizens to return to their former habits of industry and economy. The revival of religion in different parts of our country is a token for good; and affords some ground to hope that the effusion of the divine influences may become general. These, and, perhaps, some other things which might be mentioned, afford encouragement, and call upon us to make the attempt.

This brings me to the fourth and last question, to which I proposed to give an answer; which is, What are the measures proper to be pursued, in order to effect a reformation? This part of the subject would admit of much useful enlargement: but I must confine myself to a few general observations.

It concerns all then, who are the friends of religion and morality, and I will add, of the civil and religious rights and privileges of our country, and of its interests and prosperity in any point of

view, to exert themselves, in their respective stations and relations, to discountenance and suppress every species of vice and immorality, and to promote the interests of piety and virtue; and especially, to promote the interests of the pure and undefiled religion of Jesus Christ, which is most friendly to the welfare and happiness of man, both in an individual and collective capacity.

More particularly, in a few words, Let each individual begin with his own personal reformation. And let me caution you here against expecting to effect this to any good purpose, but by the power of the cross, through the regenerating and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. Let heads of families be strict and faithful in family instruction and family government. Cautiously avoid yourselves, and industriously discountenance in others, indulgence in such practices, and the frequenting of such places of public amusement and diversion, as are either sinful in themselves, or from the circumstances attending them, necessarily lead into temptation and the commission of sin. By your influence and example, labour to promote the due observance of the Lord's day, and a regular attendance upon the worship and ordinances of the sanctuary. And, finally, let all unite in fervent supplications to the God of all mercy and grace, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift, that he would be graciously pleased to pour out of his blessed Spirit upon our city and upon our land, upon his church universal, and upon all flesh.

Could you, my Brethren, be prevailed upon to comply with these recommendations, and to enter sincerely and heartily into the spirit of them, you would, I am persuaded, soon see the good effects, and reap the happy fruits resulting from them.

I shall conclude the whole, in the words of God, by the prophet Malachi. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house;" that is, be not deficient in the duties incumbent on you; "and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

F I N I S.

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