



4485. b. 35.

9232

MR. STRONG'S
FAST SERMON.



A

FAST SERMON,

DELIVERED

IN THE

NORTH PRESBYTERIAN MEETING HOUSE,

IN

HARTFORD,

JULY 23, 1812,

BY NATHAN STRONG,

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH. *R*

HARTFORD:

PRINTED BY PETER B. GLEASON & CO.

.....

1812.



A FAST SERMON.

REVELATIONS xviii. 4.

And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

ALTHOUGH we are assembled within these walls, by the call of our civil fathers, whom we ought to respect, I do not address you in the character of a politician. Let that be done by those whom God, through the instrumentality of our own personal suffrages, hath appointed to the duty. The oath of the Lord is upon them ; their interests are inseparably mingled with our own ; they are the descendants of those, who have hitherto guided our State safely ; neither, can it be that they want firmness of mind to go before us in the darkest times.

I address you, Brethren, in the more humble character of a servant of the people of the Lord, who should obey the laws of Christ's just and peaceful kingdom, and look to him to be protected, against such violence as is practised by the kingdoms of the earth. Leaving the politician to his duty, let us, as Christians, now look to the spirit, the example, the

word of him by whose blood we hope to be saved ; of him who said, *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you ;* of him who said, *All those who take the sword, shall perish with the sword.*

In the covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son, a kingdom was appointed. It is the kingdom of love and righteousness. It began in the promise, The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of that serpent by whose temptation those lusts of men were introduced, from which come wars and fightings, with every evil work. Of this mediatorial kingdom Christ is the glorious head ; hence, he is called the King whom God will place on his holy hill of Zion. To him the Father hath promised, " I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." God hath said, that the rulers of the earth should be under his government, and that he should break them as with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces as a potter's vessel.

It is the King in Zion we are this day to worship, and to him our prayers are to be offered, that the wrath of man, which we unexpectedly find risen in our own country, may praise him. Nothing will be permitted to take place here on earth, that infinite wisdom cannot make the means of establishing a kingdom of eternal righteousness and peace. This King hath all men in his hand, and those who do not receive the Spirit of his kingdom, he will break with

his terrors, and finally consume by the brightness of his appearance and of his coming.

Considering that the kingdom of Christ is a kingdom of peace, and that he hath in his hand all men, all who thirst for blood, and all nations ; on first attending to this subject, it may appear strange that so many wars and fightings are permitted by him to take place in the earth. But we must remember, that although all men are in his hand, they are not all his people, nor do they all believe the Christian religion, or live in the exercise of that spirit, which was found in him, when he dwelt here to be our example. He permits the violent dispositions of men, that there may be a complete practical exhibition of the spirit of love and the spirit of enmity ; that the nature of sin may appear, and its bitter fruits be tasted, so that there may be the highest evidence of this truth, *He that hateth his brother hath not the love of God in him.*

To Christians, who have any just ideas of the spirit of the gospel, the present state of the nations exhibits a very instructive spectacle. It excites the interesting inquiries, What will be the end of these things ? What is the God of all the earth doing ? What ought our own temper, and our own conduct to be ?

I presume such inquiries have passed in all your minds, my Brethren ; and although you are not

rulers in the State, you have a conscience to satisfy, and your own private duty to perform.

Christians ought to notice the signs of the times, that by the dealings of God's providence, they may learn the truth of his word, and where their confidence should be placed, both for safety and for peace of mind.

That there is a new state of things among the nations, in many respects, such as never existed before, cannot be doubted. That God is doing some great thing in the earth, is very plain. That he is punishing many nations, and doing it by their own wickedness and spirit of violence, is as plain. In this state of things, what ought Christians to do, and for what ought they to pray? How far ought they to enter into the contentious spirit of the world?

The subject is too copious for a large discussion, but it may give us a little assistance to open the volume of God's word and attend,

FIRST, to what is foretold in the word of prophecy concerning the day in which we live.

And then, SECONDLY, consider the direction Christ gave to his people what they should do.

The present period is spoken of as a day of awful judgments from God himself; and the words of the

text are Christ's direction to his people what they should do.

The spirit of prophecy in the mouth of Christ himself, and by the mouths of all his prophets and apostles, who wrote the scriptures, very early foretold that there should an apostacy arise within the church itself. That this apostacy should be headed by the rulers of nations, and those who professedly taught in the name of Christ; that the apostacy should be of long continuance, and overspread the whole of the old Roman empire with the most awful spiritual abominations, and the destruction of civil liberty. That it should be an empire and a church of cruelty, and of blood; make war against all the humble saints of God by persecution; usurp from men all their civil rights, and by impiety and infidelity should assume all the glory, the rights and prerogatives of God himself.

As was predicted, this apostacy hath taken place in the old Romish church, and in the civil states with which it was connected. Its measure of iniquity is now full. This measure of iniquity became full, at the moment when Romish superstition and idolatry passed into infidelity. At the same moment, the most bitter of the vials of God's judgment began to run. Infidelity was the consummation of this apostacy; it is, also, the foredetermined instrument of executing the threatened judgments of God, on all those nations, and people, and countries, where

the doctrines of the Gospel have been corrupted into idolatry, where the name of Jesus hath been denied, where the blood of the martyrs hath been spilt, where a holy Providence hath been forgotten, and where the spirit of war and shedding of blood, hath risen superior to the peaceful spirit of the kingdom of Christ.

God hath said, in his word of unerring truth, concerning this present time; *They have shed blood, and I will give them blood to drink.* All those nations, who put forth their hands and invite this cup, shall drink their fill of the bloody element.

It hath been a question, often proposed by American Christians, How far this country is to share in those judgments, by which the old world is now desolated?

That we are sinners, and deserve all manner of evil at the hand of a holy God, no serious man can doubt. But the question hath been, How far must we share in the desolations threatened as the punishment of the great apostacy?

The time is now come in which experience will determine the question. War with its desolations is the evil threatened. If we chuse the cup, a holy God will not deny it to us; if we have vice enough within ourselves to make this choice, we certainly deserve it.

Many of the learned have been speculating on the prophecies, and predicting how they will be accomplished ; but the time is now come, in which every plain Christian, from what he sees and feels, will be able to determine the extent of the prophetic threatenings.

My Brethren, we have many years since forewarned you of the commencement of this day of God's reckoning with that part of the world, which hath been called Christian. We have prayed together that we and our posterity might be preserved, and covered in this season. The infinite wisdom of God hath guided us strangely for a number of years ; and he hath now brought it to our own determination.—By the ordering of Providence, we are placed at a distance from the burning Babylon, in a land which may be quiet, if our own folly doth not prevent. As he said to ancient Israel, he is by his Providence saying to us : “ See, I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil, chuse which ye will have.” If we chuse death, there is death enough in the stores of his vengeance, yet to sweep us away with the other ruined nations. If we chuse death, under such signs as are held forth in his Providence, and against the plainest denunciations written in his word ; the very act of chusing to enter into the field, where God himself is dispensing vengeance, will be such a defiance of the Omnipotent and holy arm of the King in Zion, as will deserve all the pains he shall inflict.

Moses was the first of the prophets. His prophecies were not confined to that people of whom he was the appointed lawgiver. In him the spirit of vision looked forward to the end of the world. In the 32d chapter of Deuteronomy, there is a denunciation of God's anger, which is now falling on those who have had his word, but have not believed nor obeyed it. "They have moved me (saith the Lord) to jealousy, with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities; and I will move them to jealousy, with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn to the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend mine arrows upon them. They shall be burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction: I will also send the teeth of beasts [great tyrannical powers] upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust. The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of grey hairs." These words are taken from the song of Moses, which was not peculiarly designed for his own people, but looked forward to the Christian day, praising the Lord for his blessings on the church, and denouncing his judgments on all unbelieving and idolatrous sinners.—They describe that day in which we now live, and they are an implied challenge from his holy throne,

whether we will see and give glory to his governing Providence, or whether we will tempt his Almighty arm by friendly alliance with the seat of the beast, and with the man of sin.

That the description I read to you, though written at an early day, looked forward to the present time; we learn from the book of Revelations. The same prophet, who wrote that awful prediction is again mentioned in the Revelations, chapter xv. as joining in a heavenly song, called the song of Moses and the Lamb, adoring God for the execution of these very judgments which he had foretold. "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall worship before thee: for thy judgments are made manifest." Immediately after the words of this song in heaven, it is added, "And I looked, and behold the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened; and the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles."

My Brethren, look above! Attend to the Providence of God! The temple of the tabernacle is there opened, the angels having the seven last plagues have come out, and are traversing the earth. They have war, desolations and plagues in their hands.

Do you wish to draw near, and taste the contents of their vials? We hope better things of you; we believe you are now praying for that spirit of peace, which is the spirit of your Lord's kingdom: And when you ask what shall Christians do, for your instruction, we direct you to your Lord's words in the text: "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins and receive of her plagues."— These words have been a directory to millions of Christians who lived before you, and who are now joining above in the triumphant song of Moses and the Lamb. They directed Christians what to do at the great Reformation from Popery. They directed your forefathers when thousands fled from various nations in Europe, for the peaceful enjoyment of liberty and religion in the American wilderness.

But the time is now come, for which the spirit of prophecy more particularly designed this exhortation. It was intended to direct Christians what they should do, and what their duty is, at the very moment when Babylon is falling; in the time of the vintage and harvest of the earth, (as it is figuratively expressed in prophecy;) and this vintage and harvest are now begun. This is the time in which the wine press is trodden, and blood comes out of the wine press even unto the horses' bridles, by the space of a thousand six hundred furlongs.

What shall Christians do at such a time? Certainly if they have the spirit their Master showed

when here on earth; they will, if possible, stand at a distance, and adore a righteous God in the execution of his vengeance. To stand for their lives in case of defensive war, they will think lawful and honourable; but offensive war, they will know to be an invasion of his rights who is the avenger of blood in the earth. This work may do for infidels, for God hath permitted and raised them up for the very purpose of punishing the world. This work is congenial to the temper of those who feel not the power of the Gospel; who deal in slaves and the souls of men; who bear the marks of the beast both in their principles, and in that forehead of assurance with which they can cry freedom and rights, while they hate those principles of freedom and religion for which our Christian forefathers bled.

But the question returns with irresistible force, What shall Christians do at such a time?—Take, my Brethren, the direction of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of your Lord, *Come out of her, that ye receive not of her plagues.*

It is next incumbent on me to mention a few things, that are implied in the exhortation, “*Come out of her.*”

But, first, the body ought to be defined.

It is a very difficult thing, by any local limits, to define that body from which Christians are to sepa-

rate themselves. It is a body to be described by principles, or rather the want of principles, than by any local limits whatever. The prophet John describes this body by the following name, **MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.** In another place it is called **THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY.** It is iniquity so complicated, so deceitful, so destitute of all moral principle, that an honest mind cannot conceive it until known by its effects. Language cannot furnish any suitable name for it but **MYSTERY.** The seat of this body is doubtless in ancient Europe, and in those states where Romish idolatry, in its consummation, hath passed into infidelity; infidelity, armed with more deceitful arts, and dreadful powers of oppression, than a sin-avenging God ever permitted to arise on earth before.

But we may find many branches of this body without the limits of Europe. They may be found in Goa of Asia, and in Brazil of America, where the Inquisition reigns. They may be found in every State, where the unalienable rights of any intelligent creature in the family of God are denied, and slavery is supported by law; they may be found where infidels, by common suffrage, are raised to be rulers, and the outrages of bloody war are preferred to the amities of peace.—The body of this beast is known, on the land, by its blood stained path, and the deprivation of all civil rights; and on the ocean, by the flames which many waters do not quench.

How shall Christians come out of this body? First of all they must renounce its principles. Its principles which began in superstition and idolatry, are now matured into infidelity. That it may confound common sense and common honesty, some degree of which are found even in the breasts of savages, it hath adopted the motto, "*It is right to do evil that good may come; the end justifies the means.*" Of such the apostle Paul said, "*their damnation is just.*" It is not strange that the apostle said this, for the apostle was a Christian; but these are of Anti-christ. These principles of infidelity, adopted into the policy of nations, within the last twenty years, have reduced the fairest portions of earth to the deepest slavery; stained many kingdoms with blood; and slain, either directly in war, or by its consequences, more than twenty millions of mankind. It is these principles which have travelled from court to court, and in too many nations corrupted armies, palaces and sanctuaries. The word of God tells us of those, *who sell themselves to work evil*; and we may always depend, if men will sell themselves, Babylon will find the price.

To comply with the exhortation, Christians must refrain from all alliances with this Babylon, whether they may be under the name of policy or religion.

The danger of all such intercourse and alliance is wonderfully represented for our warning, by the

24 10 88

