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ON THE UNIVERSAL SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL,

A

S E R M O N,

Delivered January 4th,

THE FIRST SABBATH IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY
OF THE CHRISTIAN ÆRA.

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ON THE UNIVERSAL SPREAD OF THE
GOSPEL.

PSALM ii. I—12.

WHY do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?—The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying,—Let us break their bands afunder, and cast away their cords from us.—He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.—Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.—Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.—I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.—Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.—Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.—Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth.—Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.—Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

THE passing of ages continually brings into more clear view truth which is interesting to divine glory and to the Church of Christ. It unfolds many counsels of God, which were hid in his infinite and eternal wisdom, until declared by the event. It explains many prophecies, which were but imperfectly under-

NOTE.—The extreme cold of the day, occasioned some parts of the following discourse to be omitted in the delivery, which are now committed to the press.

stood by those, who have given the most painful and prayerful attention to know the things, which were spoken by the ancient prophets, and placed on divine record, that their fulfilment might be a growing evidence for the truth of the scriptures; and a standing consolation to the children of God, under the trials they must meet from the enemies of religion.—It is a great support to pious believers, to see the truth of God in the fulfilment of his own word; and to observe how he is progressively enlarging his kingdom, displaying his character, and preparing the way for a glorious state of his Church on earth, as well as for its final consummation in glory.—The conclusion of the greater divisions, by which men have marked the succession of time, that they might be able to compute its lapse, naturally calls our attention to the things which have taken place; and awakes up our curiosity to enquire into those which are soon to come.

THE commencement of a new century, is such an event as we never saw before and shall never see again. It is an event which not a fourth part of mankind, who are born into the world, do ever see; and being such, it is calculated to excite many serious and interesting reflections on the departure of time; on our gradual but steady approach to the consummation of all earthly things, when the whole that have lived, or shall live hereafter, will be embosomed in eternity; on the progress of natural and moral science in the period of a century; on the revolutions that have happened in nations, which are most wonderfully conformable to the predictions of the holy prophets; and on the past, present and future state of the Christian Church. On each of these topics, much might be thought and said, that is interesting to the cause of morality and human happiness.—But I shall confine myself to the last thing which was mentioned, some remarks on the past, the present, and future state of the Christian Church. If the present state of things among the nations, and

the changes that have happened in the past century, are a train of events, that do, in a most astonishing degree, prepare for the fulfilment of the divine promise, that the kingdom of Christ shall fill the world ; and if viewed on a large scale, they have a most propitious aspect for the gospel, then surely pious minds will rejoice ; and as surely infidels ought to tremble for themselves, and for the vain contest in which they are engaged with the king in Zion.

I **T**H E rather introduce such a subject at this time, from knowing that many, who think lightly of the Christian religion and scriptures, have been disposed to exult in their own folly, from thinking the aspects of Christianity are altogether gloomy.—Some have gone so far into this idea, as to reveal their persuasion, that after a few years more, a Christian profession, Christian Churches, and Christian teachers will be wholly discarded in the world. In this they may speak as they deludedly think, nor shall I dispute that the thoughts are pleasant to them ; but such an issue of things is contrary to probability, judging from the events of the past century and the existing state of things in the world. Although there is a great want of piety and much corruption in the professing Church, and many infidels are intermingled with Christian believers, and also a great part of the world is still under the darkness of heathenism ; yet those who believe the word of God, and are accustomed to consider the operation of things in the divine government, see much to console them, and to raise their expectations of an approaching blessed day in the Church and in the whole world. In those very events, which infidels suppose to be their strength, and which make them so sanguine that the desire of their hearts is soon to be satisfied ; the observing and humble Christian finds evidence that his Redeemer is on the throne ; that he is giving up his enemies to be their own destroyers ; and that the more calamities abound in the earth, at this pe-

riod, the nearer is the glorious coming of the peaceful kingdom of order, truth and righteousness.—Thus, the faith of Christians is upheld in a period of great difficulties, which was one chief reason, that a revelation of future events was given to the Church. Observing a natural preparation for the fulfilment of the promises promotes the spirit of prayer; and animates them, in the use of means, to spread the gospel of Jesus to the uttermost ends of the earth.

BUT while the friends of Christianity are enabled to discover the prophetic signs of the times, there is every reason to suppose, that the eyes of its enemies will be closed. Infidels, and those who reject piety, will not see what God is doing in the earth. While he is using them as instruments in his hand, to fulfil his word and destroy each other, intent on their own purposes, they will think they are prospered. While in a series of revolutions, in the old world, he is scourging licentiousness by its own devices, and breaking down the ancient governments of oppression, by those who hate all law and order, he is preparing the way for a state of things, in which licentious men will have no influence; government will be established on the firm base of moral virtue and religion; and law and righteousness and subordination will be more firmly established in the earth, than ever before.—While he is purifying a corrupt Church by judgments; he is so far from forsaking the gospel of his Son, that this is the direct means to give it the greatest influence in the world; so that his Church may become fair as the sun, clear as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners, to all licentious people.

ALL this is sealed from the knowledge of the enemies of God. Their unholy minds cannot see the beauty of holiness and of moral order and subordination; so that it doth not appear desirable to them, that the Governor of the universe should produce such a state of things. They cannot bear the

apprehension of a God, who will bear down their lusts and passions.—As they reject his word, they have not the evidence of the prophecies and divine promises to direct their opinions. They have no conception of the nature, reality and power of goodness in the heart. As their whole delight is in the indulgence of sensuality and pride, if they have power in their hands, they are wholly absorbed in the pursuits of sensual gratification, and never reflect on the infinite fountain of natural and moral perfection. If they are destitute of power, they still conjecture how they should conduct if they possessed it; and suppose that those, who fortunately attain it, will see the same desirableness in vice and impiety which is discovered by themselves.—Such is the blindness of these persons, that they cannot see their own faces in the glass of description. With such a state of the heart as they possess, and denying the word of God, it is not possible they should see the moral signs of the times, and discern the overruling influence of God, in executing his promises and threatenings. They will not know themselves to be both the instruments and the sufferers of divine vengeance. It is an old remark “that God permits those to be infatuated and blinded, whom he wills to destroy.” This hath always been true of particular sinners, sinful nations, and sinful Churches; and the previous remarks show why it is the case. It hath been thus with all the great civil and religious systems of impiety and oppression, which the holy providence of God hath brought to ruin, in the past ages of the world; and it will continue so, until the earth is purified according to the promise.

It is therefore, no evidence, against the truth of what is predicted on the ground of divine testimony, that it is ridiculed by disbelievers. Their blindness and ridicule must be expected; but let not Christians be blind also; let not those for whose consolation God hath revealed the seasons be indifferent; let not

those, who are daily praying that Christ would come in the glory of his kingdom here on earth, cease to search the holy word, and to mark the signs in providence that their prayer is heard, and their Lord hath arisen from his place, and is going through the earth to overthrow and beat down, until he hath prepared a glorious place for his throne.

THE time of our Saviour's appearance on earth was most eventful in the fulfilment of ancient prophecies; but it was not seen by his enemies, and on this subject he thus reprov'd them, "O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but ye cannot discern the signs of the times!" He considered their ignorance of a plain fulfilment of ancient prophecies, as an evidence of great impiety. And we may observe, that it was the Sadducees, who were the infidels of that age; whom he thus reprov'd, which shows how blind they were to the great work which God was doing. Let not Christians be guilty of a similar impiety, at a time the most eventful in the fulfilment of ancient prophecy, of any since our Redeemer's appearance on earth.

WHILE it is said, that there is an evident natural preparation, for a general spread of the gospel through the world, it is not meant, that Christianity hath not many evils and much opposition to meet; nor that its professors will not be tried and punished for their lukewarmness, and perhaps in some instances, be persecuted for the gospel's sake. But true Christians will not by this be terrified and turned away from the faith, for they are the followers of a Saviour who suffered; and it appears to have been the design of infinite wisdom, that during the humiliated state of the Church, his followers should through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of heaven. As their Redeemer gives them grace to live; so they humbly hope, that if called to such an event, he will furnish strength to die triumphantly, in what-

ever manner, and at whatever time, his wisdom sees will most promote the cause of truth.—The raised expectations of irreligious men, that Christianity is on the wane, do not decide the point; neither do they disprove what I have said, that the general state of things in the world exhibits a wonderful natural preparation, for the fulfilment of holy prophecy, that the gospel of Christ shall become universal, and that measuring time on the large scale of centuries, the period is very near.

IN bringing this subject before you, I shall,

I. MENTION sundry divine promises, that in due time, the gospel and the Christian Church shall fill the world, to the exclusion of Heathen ignorance and of all false religion.

II. I SHALL endeavor to describe, as may be collected from the sacred prophecies and the fulfilment of them recorded in history, what appears to have been the scheme of divine counsel in this matter; what progress the gospel should make; the hindrances which should arise; and how and when the promise should be gloriously fulfilled.

III. I SHALL take a view of the present state of the world and of the nations, with respect to Christianity, by which we may see an amazing preparation for the fulfilment of the gracious and glorious promise.

I. I AM to mention sundry divine promises, that in due time, the gospel and the Christian Church shall fill the world, to the exclusion of Heathen ignorance and of all false religion.

THE explicit predictions of such an event, and those in which it is plainly implied, are far more than I can mention; and they were expressed in every age of revelation; by all the divine prophets under

the Mosaic dispensation; by Christ himself, and by the apostolical writers who completed the sacred canon. The early promise to Abraham, that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed, predicted this event, and it was abundantly repeated to the Hebrews, that in the days of the Messiah, their expected prince, all the Gentiles should obey him; and that the glory of all the kingdoms should be given to Zion and to Jerusalem, which were typical names for the true Church of God, which now subsists under the Christian form.

THE suffering and the exalted state of the Redeemer; also, the suffering and glorious state of his Church in the world, were both matter of prediction in the ancient prophets. Not attending to these different states, and how exactly they are described in the prophetic writings, hath produced many false opinions, both among Jews and Christians. Inattention to the clear prophecies, of the humiliation and the suffering state of Christ in the world, was one reason that the Jews denied him to be the expected Messiah. In the same manner, by not attending to the prophetic description of the first periods of the Christian Church; how it should be agitated by errors, corrupted with immorality, and opposed by infidelity, both in an Heathen and Antichristian form; how long and dreadful the struggle should be; what an opportunity it would furnish to develope the wickedness of the human heart, and to display the justice of God in the punishment of apostacy: some Christians have been led to despair of so blessed a state to come in the Church on earth, as is very explicitly promised in the prophets. They have spiritualized, in an application to the sanctification and comforts of particular Christians, many things that were written descriptive of the general glory and peace and increase of the Church. Thus to lose sight of this future glory of Zion hath many bad effects. It is departing from that general view of his counsels, which

God saw it best to reveal ; it disheartens the sincere, and makes them ready to yield before infidelity ; it lowers their apprehensions of that degree of personal holiness and joy, which by faithfulness, good men may attain in this world ; it exposes them to assimilate with the sentiments and practices of the ungodly ; and it cools their desires and exertions for the conversion of the Heathen nations, and for purifying the Christian Church from the errors and impurities into which it hath fallen.

A LARGE part of the book of Psalms is prophetic. The whole of the psalm from which I am discoursing is a prophecy, concerning the Saviour, and the Christian state of the Church ; and contains many promises and threatenings. It was written about 1040 years before the birth of Christ ; and though penned at that vast distance of time, it gives a general view of the state of things under the Christian dispensation. A considerable part of it hath been already fulfilled, and a natural preparation for the completion is most apparently hastening, as we shall see in the end of this discourse. The anointed of the Lord, of whom the prophet speaks hath been born. The kings of the earth, and the rulers of the Jews and of the Heathen Roman empire, took counsel against him and his cause, saying, " Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us." The event hath demonstrated, " that he who sitteth in the heavens laughed and had them in derision. He spake unto them in his wrath and vexed them in his fore displeasure." Although they were permitted, for a short season, to prosper, and crucified the Lord's anointed according to his fore-determined counsel, wrath was coming upon them to the utmost. The Jewish state and rulers, in about forty years from that event, were vexed and broken by the most memorable judgments, which continue to this day. God hath preserved them a separate people, in all their dispersions thro' the earth, to be, in

the first instance monuments of his vengeance, and secondly, that in the end of desolations, he may show his great power, grace, and the truth of his prophetic word, by converting and bringing them into the land of their fathers.

THE Heathen Roman empire, for three hundred years, persecuted the Church of Christ. During all this period, Christianity increased in the face of persecution, the most dreadful tortures, and all earthly discouragements. Although he, who sitteth in the heavens, permitted this to try the faith and patience of his faints, and to show that he could spread his truth and increase his Church against all human opposition; yet he was laughing at the folly of his enemies and holding them in derision. The vital strength of the persecuting power was failing. In proportion as Christianity was persecuted, by a multitude of operating causes, by judgments from abroad and by intestine divisions, Heathen Rome was sinking to an utter ruin. God had set the ascended Redeemer as king in Zion and through the earth, and committed the times and the seasons, and his Church and the kingdoms of the nations to his control. He wrought out of the sight of his enemies, and beyond the expectation of his friends, and his victory was great.

THE last general persecution under Heathen Rome, which was principally directed by the emperor Dioclesian, was extensive, bloody and cruel beyond all which had preceded. It commenced about the year 300, and continued for ten or twelve years. Innumerable martyrs were sacrificed with all conceivable torments; Churches and places of worship were demolished; and the scriptures and those who possessed or read them were proscribed, that a knowledge of the gospel might be banished from the earth. The enemies of Christianity triumphed greatly, and openly declared, that the name and cause of Christ were banished from the world. It hath not

been uncommon for the ungodly to be thus deluded, in the moments immediately preceding their own downfall. It was thus, when the Egyptians pursued and inclosed the Israelites on the banks of the Red Sea ; when the Jews crucified Christ ; and at the period of which I have been speaking ; and it is thus that disbelievers triumph at the present day. In this dark time, the king in Zion was preparing the means for an unexpected and glorious light. By a remarkable concurrence of circumstances, too many to be here mentioned, in twenty years from the beginning of that most awful persecution, Constantine, having obtained the empire, declared himself a Christian ; and from that period, it has generally been said, that the empire became Christian. This was a visible triumph worthy of the Redeemer, and delivered the Church from persecution ; still it is not probable that it added to the love, faith and purity of professors. Prosperity often corrupts while afflictions purify.

NOTWITHSTANDING the government was now propitious to a Christian profession, the wrath of God rested upon it, the blood of martyrs cried against it, and the divine curse must have its course. To show divine indignation against a persecuting power, and to chastise Christians now growing formal and voluptuous, a train of most desolating judgments followed. The seat of government in 330 was removed from Rome to Constantinople, and the Northern barbarous nations desolated and broke the empire in pieces. The same Almighty power, which fulfilled the first part of prophecy in this psalm, will accomplish the whole ; will execute the remaining threatenings and glorify the promise. “ ask of me, and I shall give thee the Heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” Every thing in Heathen nations that opposes an accomplishment of the promise, “ he will break with a rod of iron and dash in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”

To such a threatening as this, the exhortation that follows is admirably adapted, "Be wise, now, therefore, O ye kings, be instructed ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little."

To recite all the prophecies, of the spread of the gospel through the world in the latter days, would include a large portion of the sacred volume; and to enter into a detail of their fulfilment, so far as it hath taken place, as I have done in the last instance, would be endless. I shall recite a sufficient number of those prophetic promises with only a few remarks. From psalm xlv. to l. is a general description of the state of the Church. It begins with the possession of Canaan by the Hebrews; then represents the low state of God's people under the oppression of their enemies; describes the majesty of the Redeemer; the spiritual beauty of the Church; and the confidence of his people in their king; and ends with a description of awful judgments on the enemies of the Lord, and the spread of peace and truth through the earth.—"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the sea: Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. There is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early. The Heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Come behold the works of the Lord, what desolation he hath made in the earth." This work of great desolation he is now beginning. Then follows the glorious issue of these commotions, by which the

kingdoms had been moved and the earth melted. "He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow and cutteth the spear in funder; he burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the Heathen, I will be exalted in the earth."* The time in which war is to cease and God be exalted to the ends of the earth is yet future.—"All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's and he is governor among the nations."† This is promised in consequence of the sufferings of Christ which are described in the first part of the psalm.—Under the type of Solomon's prosperity, the kingdom of Christ is thus described, "In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him, and his enemies shall lick the dust. Yea all kings shall bow down before him; all nations shall serve him."‡

God was pleased to give to his servant Daniel, in prophetic vision, a description of the state of the Church and of the nations, from his own time to the end of the world. His prophecies have astonished mankind, and given great trouble to disbelievers, in every age. Porphyry and other infidels, who lived in the third and fourth centuries, observing his exactness in the description of events, and in the computation of times expressed in prophetic language, made a vain pretence, that the book of Daniel was written after such events had happened; but he was then amply refuted, and the later fulfilment of his predictions are a continued refutation.—Daniel lived, and came to a great age, under the Babylonian mon-

* Psalm xlvii.

† Psalm xxii. 27, 28.

‡ Psalm lxxii.

archy, which was the first of the four great dominions, of which his prophecy spake; and was an actor in very interesting scenes, from about six-hundred to five-hundred forty years before Christ's birth. He not only prophesied of Christ, but foretold, with great exactness, the time of his incarnation and death. He announced the speedy destruction of the Babylonian empire, which was then in its glory; the rise of the Medo-persian dominion, and its destruction before the Grecian or Macedonian. He foretold the division of the Macedonian, at the death of Alexander, into four great kingdoms, and gave a particular account of the bitter woes, by which they punished themselves and destroyed mankind. He also foretold the Roman empire which was to rise, by describing its character, both in its Heathen and Antichristian form; its vast extension and long continuance; its wonderful policy and strength; its oppression of the rights and consciences of men; its bitterness against the uncorrupted truths of Christianity and its bloody persecutions; its Papal idolatry; and its modern division into the principal states of Europe.—He limits the time of its continuance in the Antichristian form, to a “time, times, and the half or dividing of time.” Three years and an half in prophetic; and counting a day for a year, twelve hundred and sixty in common computation. After this he says, “the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it to the end.”* Then he adds the promise, that the kingdom of Christ shall fill the earth. “I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages, should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his

* Daniel vii. 26.

kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.—And the kingdom and dominion, and greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the faints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.”*

IN the second chapter of the same prophecy, the four great dominions, which have been mentioned, are in prophetic vision represented by an image of various composition, which stood and prospered until “a stone, which was cut out without hands, smote the image upon its feet, which were of iron and clay, and broke it in pieces. And the stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the earth.”—The explanation of the vision given by the prophet is, that “in the days of these kings, shall the God of heaven set a kingdom that shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all those kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.”—This universal dominion of Christianity, shall take place immediately on the subversion of the Roman Antichrist.

SINCE the beginning, the world hath been filled in every part, with a succession of worldly dominions, some Heathen and some Antichristian. They have risen in succession and devoured each other.—These, which reigned in parts of the earth, where God was pleased to reveal himself and place his Church, have been noticed in scripture history and prophecy, and others, without these limits, were mostly unnoticed in the sacred volume. The greatest part of these governments have been formed and executed on the principles of pride and violence, and without the fear of God the sovereign king. They have been filled with the “tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their

* Daniel vii. 13, 14. 27.

oppressors was power, but they had no comforter." These prophecies of Daniel promise us a time to come, when the kingdom, and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdom, under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High. By this we do not wish to understand, that civil government, either in the legislative or executive branches, shall be committed to the Church in its ecclesiastical capacity, for Christ's kingdom never was and never will be of this world. But the meaning of the prophecy is, that men shall generally be pious and sincere professors in the Church of Christ, and by the direction of providence and the choice of mankind, those will be raised to the highest places in civil trust, who are eminent for their obedience to the truth.—Disbelievers will lose all their influence in society.—Civil laws will be in consistency with Revelation.—The state will encourage religion; and the prevalence of religion will dispose the people to maintain government, order, subordination and justice. This will be giving the kingdom and the greatness of the kingdom, to the people of the saints of the Most High. Nothing like this hath been general in the world. Although it be the nature of Christianity to ameliorate the condition of mankind, and spread peace, its blessed effects have been, in a great measure, limited by the wicked passions of Men; and the Christian name destitute of the reality, by Antichristian perversion, hath for ages, tormented a large portion of the earth.

Of all the ancient prophets, Isaiah writes in the most evangelical strain. He gave the most clear description of the humiliation of Christ, and his glory which was to follow; of the Christian doctrines, temper and practice; and of the amplitude and blessedness of the Church. when all nations should become obedient to the gospel. In the second chapter of his prophecies, we find the following remarkable description, "And it shall come to pass in the latter 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 many people shall go and say, come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plow-shares and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." This is a promise, that all nations shall flow to the house of the Lord, and the world be filled with Christian knowledge and peace.—In the fourth chapter of the prophecy of Micah is a similar prediction. In the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, where there is a promise of the Redeemer, and a description of his kingdom and its blessed effects on the state and moral character and conduct of men, the promise ends in these wonderful words, "For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the seas." From the beginning of the twenty-fourth chapter to the end of the twenty-sixth, is a prophecy of the awful destructions, which are to precede the peaceful state of the Church, interspersed with promises of glory and peace and universal knowledge, to succeed the execution of divine judgments, "And in this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations."—"At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord, and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord to Jerusalem, neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart.*

* Jeremiah iii. 17.

IN all the prophets of the Old Testament we find similar representations, too numerous to be here repeated, describing the peace, the glory, the universal extent of the visible Church and kingdom. The qualities of this kingdom are described to be, an high degree of knowledge ; abounding in the services of worship and praise ; purity of obedience to the divine law ; delight in God, in his salvation, and in his glory ; universal peace ; so that war shall be no more known ; a righteous government thro' the earth, under which licentious men and disbelievers shall not again disturb mankind ; and a communion between all the tribes of men in a spiritual and general happiness. The extent of this kingdom is, also, described by such universal expressions as the following ; all nations ; all people ; to the ends of the earth ; all the ends of the earth ; all flesh together ; under the whole Heaven ; with many others most significant of a general spread of the gospel through the world.

JESUS CHRIST represented the same glorious truth in a number of his parables, when describing the kingdom of God or the Christian Church. This was the special design of the parables of the mustard seed and of the leaven whereby the whole lump was leavened. He declared that his gospel should be preached in all the world. His commission to his disciples, and through them to his ministers of the following ages, was that they should go and teach all nations through the world. The Apostle Paul prophesies, that the blindness which hath happened to Israel must continue, until the period appointed for the fulness of the Gentiles to come in.

THE Apostle and prophet John, with whose Revelations the sacred canon is completed, after he had, in the language of prophecy, described the preceding periods, in the beginning of the twentieth chapter, says, " And I saw an angel come down from Heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a

great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled."— After this binding of satan he describes a peaceful and glorious state of the Church.—Although there have been great, extensive and wonderful effects of the gospel, for many ages; yet these and a multitude of similar promises have never been fulfilled. There hath been no period of universal peace; of a world filled with divine knowledge and holiness; of freedom from the errors and temptations of satan and wicked men; and of praise and obedience to God through the earth. The accomplishment is yet to come, and there is more in the holy scriptures leading us to expect it, than Christians generally suppose, who have not given themselves to examine the subject. We therefore expect, on the ground of a divine promise, that the gospel and the Christian Church shall fill the earth, to the exclusion of Heathen ignorance and of all false religion. Although infidels may suppose, that a Christian profession and the means of instruction will soon cease from among men, they have a desperate and hopeless battle to fight; they have all the glorious promises to subvert; the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, and his power and grace shall fulfil!

II. I SHALL endeavor to describe, as may be collected from the sacred prophecies and the fulfilment of them recorded in history, what appears to have been the scheme of divine counsel in this matter; what progress the gospel should make; the hindrances which should arise; and how and when the promise should be gloriously fulfilled.

THE prophecies and the promises of God concerning the future state of things in the world and

in his Church, were designedly so expressed, that men should not understand them minutely until they were fulfilled ; and in some instances, they are unable to form any right apprehension of them, before the accomplishment begins. The general representations given are sufficient to preserve the hope and patience of the Church under fore trials, and to warn the wicked, the atheistical and the apostate, of the dreadful judgments, with which, in due time, they shall be visited ; while a more minute description of events and times would, on many accounts, have been improper to be communicated to the world.

SOME have attempted to ridicule the figurative imagery, which is used in the prophetic diction ; but hereby they show their weakness as well as the disbelief of their hearts. By the use of this figurative imagery, the divine Spirit was enabled to give a general view of the state and periods of things, without discovering the particular men and nations, who should be the actors under providence, and this, in most instances, was not designed ; also to express many minute circumstances, which ought not to be previously known, in such figures as might be exactly traced after the accomplishment, thereby becoming a mighty evidence for the truth of the holy scriptures. Whoever justly considers the principal design of the prophecies, and the difficulty there was in describing the great events of futurity, without making a discovery of many things that had better be secreted from the knowledge of men, until after the fulfilment ; will see the infinite wisdom of God in adopting the figurative imagery of prophetic diction, and find herein an argument for the truth of divine revelation.

IT was clear to the first Christians, that a future state of great prosperity to the Church was promised ; but a sufficient number of events had not happened, in the fulfilment of prophecy, to instruct them in the

periods of times which were described, in prophetic language. Some expected that the thousand years of prosperity would commence soon; while others placed them, in expectation, at a greater distance. It was, also, clear to the ancient Christians, that an Antichrist would arise, which should be a persecuting power, and that he should be awfully destroyed by the brightness of the Redeemer's spiritual coming; but when and where he should arise they formed no true apprehensions. They generally seemed to suppose Antichrist would be some external power, which rejected the Christian name, and they were ready to give this title to every persecuting prince or nation, which raged against the truth for the short season of a single life of man.

LEAST of all was there any general idea among ancient Christians, that Antichrist would arise in the very bosom of the Church; that the Catholic Church itself would become Antichrist; that the ministers of a religion, which required humility, would put themselves in the place of God; and that Christian temples would be filled with rites and images and the worship of departed saints, but little different from the pomp and superstition and demon worship of Heathenism, which seemed to be dying before Christianity. The rolling away of eighteen centuries, and the events which have happened, serve as a key to unlock the mystic page of prophecy. A great part of the mystery is fully unfolded by the events, which have taken place in the earth. Other things are happening by the most astonishing means; and we see a natural preparation for the accomplishment of things future, which are foretold; and among these, for the spread of the gospel through the earth.

THE plan of divine counsel respecting the opposition to Christianity, its spread, and its final triumph and filling of the earth, which was foretold in the

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prophetic page, may be seen in the four following scenes, or successive states of things ;—the two first of which have been fulfilled, according to the divine prediction ; the third is now fulfilling ; for the fourth a preparation is making, and it will soon take place.

1. **THE** early struggle which Christianity had with Jewish and Heathen opposition, and its success and final triumph by the destruction of those opposing powers.

I GAVE some account of this under the last branch of discourse. Christianity appeared to obtain a fair introduction, in every part of the old Roman empire ; and in the borders of several other nations, its allies and tributaries, where the Roman laws were never introduced. The early opposition of the Heathen empire ; the persecutions it effected ; and the divine judgments by which it was sinking, through the agency of him, who ruleth the rebelling nations with a rod of iron, and dasheth in pieces those who oppose him like a potters vessel, are represented by the opening of the six first seals, in the sixth chapter of John's Revelation.—The opening of the sixth seal, by prophetic images, describes the mighty concussion there was in the empire at the fall of Heathenism. The quaking of the earth is an emblem of great commotion and war.—The sun, moon, stars and visible heavens, are emblematic of earthly powers and those who possess and execute them. Thus, the wars of Constantine ; his victories and his suppression of all the persecuting authorities, are represented by an eclipse of the whole firmament of Heathen power. The earth quaked ; the sun became black as sackcloth of hair ; the moon became as blood ; the stars of heaven fell ; the heavens departed as a scroll ; every mountain and island were moved ; the kings, the great men and the rich men called on the mountains and rocks, to fall and hide them from the face of him who sitteth on the throne, and from

the wrath of the Lamb. Thus awful and sublime, is the prophetic description of God's judgments on the empire, when Heathenism was ejected from power; and the history of that period compares well with the description.

THE judgments by which the ancient imperial Roman power was still further reduced, after it took the name of Christian and by which corrupt Christians were punished, are prophetically signified, by the founding of the six first trumpets, in the eighth and ninth chapters of St. John's Revelation.—In this period the empire was wholly dashed in pieces; and the Christian Church, into which many corruptions in doctrine and practice were introduced, was punished by awful judgments.

THE way was prepared for the

2d STATE of things, the rise of Antichrist.

A NEW species of oppression arose, in many respects different from any thing which had preceded. Civil pride and power, and ecclesiastical oppression, superstition, avarice, hypocrisy and cruelty combined to scourge mankind, to darken counsel and fill the world with misery. Those, who were expecting an Antichrist from without the Church, become an Antichrist themselves. They lost the faith in its purity.—They departed from the simplicity, the humility, and the holiness of Christian practice, as they were enjoined by Christ and his apostles.—The power of godliness was departed from the Church, which still gloried in the name of Christian and Catholic.—The clergy left their place of diligent and exemplary instructors in the house of Christ, and watchmen for the souls of men, and comforters of the meek and lowly brethren.—A hierarchy of various grades was forming.—Power and wealth and luxurious indulgences were sought, instead of piety and a good conversation.—At first general councils, and afterwards a Papal head claimed infallibility. The con-

sciences of men were oppressed ; their right to believe for themselves was denied ; and the blood of conscientious martyrs began to flow.—The scriptures were denied to the people.—The sacred fathers assumed the power of pardoning sins for money ; and by this, with the dispensations which they granted to commit the most horrid crimes, collected enormous sums from the misguided people.—Institutions were every where founded, for both sexes, under the vows of celibacy, which became nurseries of impurity cloaked under the pretext of religion.—Civil power was assimilated with pontifical holiness.—All liberty, civil and religious was abrogated, and kings, nations and a world enslaved by the will of wicked men, under the name of vicegerents of God and of the meek and lowly Jesus !—All this arose within the bosom of the Church, and it was Antichrist indeed, with more fearful features, than divine prophecy itself had painted !—This state of things began gradually to draw on in the sixth century ; and in the seventh and eighth centuries the limbs of the Antichristian beast manifestly displayed their shape. In the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, this tyranny, idolatry and blasphemy were at their height ; for truth was obscured, and it was the reign of crimes. History gives such information concerning this period !

SUNDRY of the prophets predicted this apostacy and its destruction. It is noticed in the ancient prophecy of Daniel, chap. vii. under the image of the little horn, in which were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things, which he describes, verse 21, “the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them.”—Verse 25, “He shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws : and they shall be given into his hand until a time, and times and the dividing of time.”—This great system of civil and

religious oppression is also noticed, in many other places of the same prophecy, which it would be tedious to mention on this occasion.

THE apostle Paul predicts the same apostacy.—In his first epistle to the Thessalonian Church, he had given a description of the final day of judgment. Some passages in this description, they misunderstood, as an intimation of that day being near at hand, and to correct that mistake, he tells them in the second chapter of his second epistle, not to be troubled and shaken in mind on that account, because great events must take place in the world before the consummation of time. “Let no man deceive you by any means : for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition : Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped ; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.—Whose coming is after the working of satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie : that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” Of the nature of this apostacy he speaketh further in his first epistle to Timothy the fourth chapter.—“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils ; speaking lies in hypocrisy ; having their consciences seared with a hot iron ; forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats, which God created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.”—These passages are a very marked description of the Antichristian character, and some of its errors and crimes. The apostle Peter,

also, in the third chapter of his second epistle, predicts that in the *last days*, scoffers shall arise, walking after their own lusts, and saying, where is the promise of his coming? Meaning men, who have no sense of moral obligation, of a holy God and his just judgments on sin. By the *last* and *latter* days, the prophets appear uniformly to mean the period of Antichristian apostacy, especially its concluding scenes.

BUT the state of things under the apostacy, is most particularly described by the prophet John, in his visions, of the two witnesses prophesying in sackcloth 1260 days; of the dragon persecuting the woman, and driving her into the wilderness for the same time; of a beast with seven heads and ten horns; of a second beast with two horns like a lamb, but speaking as a dragon; and of an impure woman, sitting upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns; and upon the woman's forehead written, mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.—This is the second state of things described by prophecy, and it hath been accomplished, under the name of Christian, such an idolatrous, blasphemous and oppressive power over the properties, bodies and souls of men hath arisen and troubled the earth.

THE period of time assigned by the prophets Daniel and John, for the duration of this oppressive power, is expressed three ways; by a time, times and the dividing of time, or three years and an half; by forty-two months; and by twelve hundred and sixty days. All these amount to the same, and taking a day for a year, which is the most common prophetic measure, are twelve hundred and sixty years. The great difficulty, in knowing when the twelve hundred and sixty years will expire, is to find from what time we must begin to count. The oppressive system grew by a gradual acquisition of power and exercise of tyranny. Paul tells us even in

his time, " For the mystery of iniquity doth already work, only he who now letteth, will let, until he be taken out of the way, and then shall that wicked one be revealed.*—What let or hindered, was the Roman empire in its Heathen form, which prohibited all power to Christians. After the empire became Christian, the mystery of iniquity was rapidly working, as a preparation for the man of sin to be revealed. In view of the prophecies, good men have been divided in opinion ; some counting the 1260 years from the year of Christ, 606, when the Bishop of Rome assumed the name and was permitted to exercise the power of universal Bishop over the whole Christian Church. Others have counted them from the year of Christ 756, when the Bishop of Rome, by an investiture of the Exarchate of Ravenna, became a civil prince, in all respects independent of any foreign power.—Counting from 606, the twelve hundred and sixty years will end in 1866. Counting from 756, they will terminate in the year 2016.—It is probable they ought not to be counted, in all respects, from either of these or any other period. It will appear by examination, there hath been, in a great number of instances, 1260 years between events propitious to the rise of Antichrist, and which furnished to him great accessions of power ; and other events, which were humbling and bringing him low.—His decay will be progressive as his rise. By usurping the power of universal Bishop he became a complete tyrant over the Church, and it is probable, that in twelve hundred and sixty years from that time, or by the year 1866, the whole system of religious oppression and heresy in doctrine, and idolatry in practice, will be swept away by the just and purifying judgments of God.

THE accession of temporal dominion, to the Bishop of Rome, opened a scene new and interesting. Those who had before tyrannized over the Church,

* 2 Thessalonians ii. 7.

were now enabled to become tyrants among the nations. This union, of civil and ecclesiastical power, made them terrible to the surrounding kingdoms; and what could not be effected by civil negotiation was carried by pontifical anathemas.—So long as princes poured their riches into the ecclesiastical treasury, the earthly head of the church assisted them, to bind heavier chains on their subjects; and thus the civil oppression on mankind was tenfold increased. It is probable, that all civil institutions of oppression will be removed by the providence of God, before the year 2016, which completes the 1260 years, counting from 756, when temporal dominion was annexed to the Roman Church.

THIS amelioration of the civil state of mankind, must be effected by the prevalence of a pure Christianity, and a holy morality, in the hearts and practice of men; for no other means are adequate to so great an effect. The latter day glory of the Church is necessary for universal freedom in the nations.—As an Antichristian Church hath been an instrument of oppression; so a Church formed on the principles of our Redeemer, and practising on gospel precepts, is the only possible instrument of giving and preserving freedom among men. This the Church will do, not by assuming any degree of civil power into its own hands; but preparing men to act wisely and justly, in the civil departments allotted to them. Religion will prepare men to rule, to ordain wise laws, and execute them faithfully when called to high office.—It will prepare them to obey, to be friends of order and government, and act right in the place allotted them by divine providence.—It will, at once, banish oppression and licentiousness; and in this way, the Church of Christ is necessary for the freedom of the nations, and to bring society into such a state that men can enjoy equal rights. Some beginning, of the millennial purity of the Church, in doctrine, discipline, a holy practice, and a fervent

love of God and men, is necessary to banish all civil oppression and establish order thro' the earth.

To hear men philosophising on systems of freedom, and on the reign of natural and equal rights, and at the same time, discarding the Christian religion, which contains all the moral principles and duties, by which society can be united and made orderly; shows, that they are either deceitful above all things, or deeply ignorant of the subjects they discuss, and wholly unqualified to give an opinion. Although the gospel decides not the question of preference, among the many forms of government in the world; yet it forbids all oppression public and private, in nations and in individuals; and its principles tend to freedom, justice, beneficence and order. If Christianity were banished from the world all hope of universal civil freedom would be lost forever; but there will be such a day of freedom, and Christianity will be the means of its production.

PERHAPS it may be inquired, why did the wisdom of God permit such a corruption of Christianity, and such awful consequences, as have been described in this discourse, to arise in the world?

To such an inquiry it is certainly a true answer, that his counsels are above human wisdom, and he can bring the greatest good, temporal and eternal, from the greatest sins of men. But some of the reasons we may doubtless see. It hath been a high display of the total depravity of men by nature, and a much higher, in many respects, than was ever made by their opposition to the ancient Jewish dispensation. To see the Heathen world, all departing from God; serving their own lusts; worshipping the host of Heaven, stocks and stones, fourfooted beasts and creeping things; and filling the earth with violence.—To see the Jewish people, for many ages under the Mosaic œconomy, falling into idolatry and every kind of error and vice, and kept in any kind

of order, only by the rod.—To see that nation opposing, blaspheming and crucifying the meek and benevolent Jesus, who came in conformity to the descriptions of their own prophets, and who did them nothing but good ; and after God had by special revelations and miraculous powers imparted to his servants, which continued for a century of years, caused the gospel to be planted in its purity, meekness and holiness, and Churches had been formed and organized in many lands ; after myriads of martyrs had died by Heathen hands to preserve the purity of faith and practice ; after men had beheld those persecuting powers brought to awful ruin to punish their cruel impiety ; after all these things, to see the Christian Church falling into idolatry, blasphemy, and civil and religious oppression, and even its ministers assuming the powers and prerogatives of God, and placing crimes on sale, was certainly the highest display of the nature of sin, that hath ever been made in the world. It shows, that a sinful heart is always disposed to rebel and depart from God ; and that neither the terrors of the law, nor the compassions of redeeming love will renew the soul in holiness.—It shows that a dispensation of grace, which is most glorious for God and beneficial to the world, is not too sacred to be profaned by sinful men—It proves the influences of the Spirit to be necessary for renewing the heart, in a love of the Lord and his holy institutions ; and that the regal power of Jesus Christ is as much needed, to preserve the Church from destruction by its own corruptions ; as to restrain the violence of its external enemies.

3. THE next state of things, which is the subject of prophecy, is the destruction of that Antichristian apostacy, of which the rise and continuance have already been described.

THIS is represented in the prophecies of John, by the pouring out on men, in this kingdom and feat

of the beast, seven vials or cups of the wrath of God, containing the seven last plagues; and by the fall of Babylon, with the awful circumstances of commotion, misery, spoil and ruin attending it. We find this described from the fifteenth to the nineteenth chapter of his Revelation. Babylon is the same Antichrist, and it hath been a long time falling. It is probable we are now at the conclusion of the sixth vial or cup, and beginning of the seventh. By intestine commotion and bloody wars, arising from their own pride and avarice; and by divers other judgments, the Antichristian nations had been forely scourged before the year 1500. Soon after this, it indeed appeared that the king in Zion was arising to punish apostacy, according to his solemn predictions, and to restore to the Church some degree of primitive truth, evangelical piety, and simplicity and holy fervor in worship and practice.

IN the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Protestant reformation began. The patience of the oppressed people was exhausted, and God raised up faithful ministers to expose the corruptions of the times and of the Church, and cloathed them with fortitude to meet the thunders and the tortures of Roman and Papal tyranny. Several nations revolted from the yoke. Sundry kings and princes broke the fetters with which the pretended vicars of heaven had bound them. A new light seemed to break forth on men, teaching them how far they had been led, and how fervilely they had been held, by the self-originated powers of a blasphemous apostacy.—Dreadful wars and cruel persecutions succeeded; but in the end, through a large and respectable part of Europe, the tyranny over conscience and good morals was greatly broken, and the state of men ameliorated. The protestant and reformed Churches obtained a large establishment; some features of the genuine religion of Christ began to appear; and those, who still adhered to the kingdom of the beast, gnawed their tongues for pain.—These events were

predicted, by the running of the fifth cup of divine wrath on the seat of the beast, whereby his kingdom was filled with darkness. From that time down to the present, the general train of events in the political world, hath been drying up the mystical Euphrates, or diminishing the power wealth and influence of the Antichristian Babylon. Rome has become an insignificant name, and scarcely is a thunder left in her vatican. The old institutions of error and oppression are vanishing, fast as the nature of things permits ; and the present quaking of Europe, together with all places which have, either proximity or intimate relations with it, is a signal that the battle of the great day of God Almighty is begun, which will not end, until the world is purged of whatever is offensive to the pure, holy, humble and fervent religion of Jesus Christ.

In this purgation infinite wisdom is making great use of infidelity ; but let not infidels glory in this, as any evidence of their own rectitude, or that their character is pleasing in the sight of the Lord. Let them not hence think, that they are not themselves a part, even of the most distorted limb of the beast ; a horn, which speaketh against God more stoutly than any of its fellows, or any that have gone before it, prepared by an avenging providence to destroy the beast, which had two horns like a lamb but spoke like a dragon. Infidelity is the last stage of apostacy, commissioned to eat the flesh and burn the body of the idolatrous system, which had gone before it. Paul's description of the man of sin, evidently points out the modern atheistical principles, " Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped ; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."—The last part of this description, " so that he as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God," may fairly apply to the Roman Church, in the adoration offered to the sove-

reign pontiff, and in the claim of power to pardon sin, which is the prerogative of God only. This is as God sitting in the temple of God. But the first part of the description, "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped," is peculiarly applicable to the principles of atheism, which deny all moral obligation, the spiritual existence and perfections of Deity, and all worship whatever. Let not infidels glory because they are permitted to be destroyers. They are raised up by the wrath of God, and their office is not to comfort, but to desolate and punish a wicked world. Let not men of loose principles, who are unfriendly to vital and experimental piety, and to order and justice, think that either God or wisdom or nature are on their side. Let them not suppose that the holy Bible is going into obscurity; for by a fulfilment of the divine threatenings, it is now becoming more than ever conspicuous and venerable. Let them not think that the king in Zion hath forsaken his Church, because he is purifying it, and punishing an apostate Antichrist. Let them not think, that in a few years, a gospel profession, Christian Churches and teachers will cease; for they ought rather to know, that God is making preparation for more abundant instruction, more frequent, more pure and spiritual seasons of worship, and for the more general influence of that kind of religion, which gives the greatest offence to all impenitent hearts.

4th. THE fourth period or state of things, of which prophecy speaks, is the general spread of the gospel to the exclusion of Heathen ignorance and false religion from the earth; when the world shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the seas. The scriptural proof of such a day I have already adduced, and therefore proceed to the next general branch of discourse.

III. To show by a view of the present state of mankind and of nations, that there is an amazing natural preparation, for a fulfilment of the glorious promise, and that it is near at hand.

WE are not to expect any miraculous preparation for this event. It will be made in the natural order and course of things, and by natural means of extensive operation. The natural preparation for such an event must, principally, consist in two things. First, unfettering the human mind from superstition, and from the power of religious oppression; and secondly, the general spread of doctrinal knowledge through the earth.

It is very evident, that in most lands, where there is any degree of civilization, the human mind is in a great measure unfettered from the power of superstition.—This is done by an increased communication between men; and the advance of human science. This appears to be the case, by the advance of a free and friendly toleration between the several denominations of Christians, which never takes place under the reign of superstition. It, also, appears from the abounding of infidelity, and the most loose, unreasonable and impious sentiments concerning the most sacred things. People of piety, when free from superstition, are governed by principle; they love order and justice both public and private; are willing to allow to God and the Redeemer their just rights; and to keep the divine word and institutions. But when men of evil hearts, great pride, and little sound knowledge, are loosened from superstition, they have no moral principles to govern them; and they run into infidelity and strange notions concerning the justice and mercy which govern a universe; concerning God himself; concerning, nature, reason, and the creature's uncontrouled right to direct his own moral sentiments and practice; and concerning sin, or rather the impossibility that there should be any such thing as sin in rational creatures, whom they

suppose capable of infinite perfectability, without the direction of divine wisdom and solely by the fortuitous concurrence of material atoms. Such persons, judging from their own licentious desires and feelings, imagine that Christianity, its holy laws, its organs of instruction and government are about to cease from the world. The abounding of these things shows that the reign of superstition, which is a great impediment to rational religion, is in a measure ceasing; and tho' infidelity may speak with triumph for a moment, proves that there is a natural preparation of the human mind, for the gospel to spread through the earth.

FARTHER, it is also evident, that those oppressive powers, which tied up the faith and persecuted the consciences of men, are expiring by the just judgments of God and a growing acquaintance with human rights. Dreadful will be the battle, bitter the revolutions, tyrant will follow tyrant, for a season, under a pretext of friendship for human freedom; but through the direction of infinite wisdom, the period will terminate in the expulsion of civil and religious oppression on the one hand; and of Atheism, infidelity and a disposition to anarchize on the other.

SECONDLY, There is an amazing preparation to spread a doctrinal knowledge of the gospel through the world.

WE may learn this at once by looking on the character and state of the nations. The greatest difficulties in christianizing men, are to gain access to them, and to plant the beginnings of gospel knowledge and doctrine. Let us survey the several quarters of the world. Christianity is known through the whole of Europe; and when the remains of Antichristian apostacy are consumed, which God is now doing, by instruments prepared to go any lengths, that the most awful vindictive justice will permit, the religion of Christ will be left in its doctrinal purity. Thro'

all the north of Asia, Russian conquest and colonization is planting the principles of the Greek Church; and through a large part of its southern shores and the great islands on its coast, are colonies from Christian nations. Through the vast Ottoman Empire, which is situate in the heart of the old world, spreading into Europe, Asia and Africa, are innumerable Christians of the Greek communion. By oppression and poverty, for several ages, these Christians have been almost wholly unnoticed. When that empire, which is now benumbed with the lethargy of approaching death, comes to its end without being helped by any man, as it directly will, a multitude of little collections of Christians, will be found planted in every part of it, who will come into immediate union with their brethren in other lands. The science which fled from them before the Ottoman conquest, to enlighten the western and northern parts of Europe, and prepare the way for the protestant reformation; after the Turkish power is dissolved, will return back to them with modern improvements, to wake them from the imbecility and superstition, into which they have been sunk by a most severe despotism. Through the shores of Africa are colonies from Christian nations, a natural preparation of providence to communicate the gospel, among the numerous tribes, with which the interior of that great quarter of the world is populated. In all the eastern shores of America, from north to south, Christianity is planted; and that tide of men, which is rolling westward, with an unparralleled velocity of population, long before the present century is finished, will carry the gospel of Christ across to the Pacific ocean and the eastern shores of Asia. Enterprize, commerce and navigation are in the hands of those, who, if they have any religion are Christians. Science, which is favorable to Christianity, is diffusing every where. One prophetic description of this time is "many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall be increased." The pious, in

all the Christian nations, in a manner unexampled before, have recently awoke to a sense of their obligation, to transmit the gospel to their Heathen fellow-creatures. Even the considerate part of the Jews are looking with wonder on the scene. Thus the king of Zion is spreading a natural preparation around the world to have his gospel become universal! Yet infidels, in their blindness, think that Christianity is near the moment of its extinction! The Lord of all the earth is working unseen by them. Think not, my readers, that I suppose the whole world of mankind is become Christian at once, for it is far different from this. The world is yet filled principally with wicked men and with error; but Christ is preparing to have it otherwise. When we view this natural preparation in connection with the divine promises, we may, without an imaginary faith, believe, that within two centuries from this time, there will be a favorable change in the state of mankind and the Church, that in many respects will surpass all present apprehension.—When he hath punished and purified an apostate Church by his judgments and prepared the state of the nations; according to his promise he will pour out his Spirit on them, who have a doctrinal knowledge, exciting their most zealous endeavors to make this knowledge universal; the events of providence will be propitious to the spread of truth, and Christianity will be spread over the face of the whole earth, in a manner, sudden beyond the conjecture of men. It is the way of infinite wisdom, to have a long continued, and previous preparation for great events which is unseen by men. Revolutions, which fill our minds with deep surprise at the moment of execution, on being coolly reviewed, are seen to be the consequence of a thousand operating causes, which were wholly unnoticed, before the event broke from the womb of providence upon an astonished world. When the general state of things is prepared, and circumstan-

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ces are propitious, a few instruments, formed and raised by divine providence, are able to take hold of the public feelings, and impel men to exertions and to changes in the political and moral state of things, which would have been thought incredible. And when we consider the promise, that the spirit of the Lord shall descend like floods of water on a dry and parched ground; let us not think the fulfilment of the prediction improbable. By the breath of his nostrils, the Lord can consume the wicked; or by the power of his grace he can make them his friends; cloath them with zeal to act and fortitude to endure, in the service and patience of his kingdom.

LET us hail the beginning of a century, which will do more to prepare for the glory of the latter days, than any which have preceded.

THE probable events of this century are, a complete population, and the establishment of the Christian religion, in every part of America.—The continuance of the commotions, which are exhausting Europe, until all the remains of Antichristian apofatcy are consumed, and the institutions of civil and religious oppression destroyed; and we may hope, that before the conclusion of the century, the Church of Christ will be renovated, in that part of the world, in the purity, simplicity, humility and holy zeal of the gospel.—The Ottoman Empire will be dissolved and the gospel appear to be rising in purity and influence, in all those lands, which were once the chief theatre of Christian action; but for ages, have been held in the chains of Mahometan ignorance and ferocity.—The eyes of the Jews, will begin to open on the madness of their infidelity, in rejecting their own Jesus; and providence will prepare the way, for their collection in the land once possessed by their fathers; for such an event is plainly foretold in the prophets.—Accompanying those

events, the greater powers of Asia, which now impede the gospel progress, will through some means now unforeseen by us, be so broken and changed, that they will no longer stop the progress of Christian knowledge.

“THE commotion and earthquake of the nations will be great, such as was not since men were on the earth, so mighty an earthquake and so great!” — From the cruelties of men, the faithless ambition of nations, and the violent efforts of infidelity and heathenism, there will be great distress on the earth; and it will appear, that Satan hath great wrath, because he knoweth that the time is short before his binding; but we may hope, that in those places where the preparation is nearest completed, a standard will be set up by the Spirit of the Lord against the enemy, and that there will be joyful refreshings from his presence. That his people will be waked up to come to the help of Zion, and to pray for its increase; that many sinners will be awakened and converted; divine knowledge increase; the communion between different denominations of Christians be enlarged; and a spirit of humble Godliness prevail more and more among professors of the truth.

BEFORE I conclude this subject, I ought to advert to one part of the psalm, which contains national instruction to all people under Heaven. “Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings, be instructed ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.” If there be any governments in the earth, which despise Christ and his scriptures; let them fear the rod of iron that is in his hand, for he will surely remember and humble them. If there be any nation or parts of nations, who wish to throw off his yoke and the spirituality of religion; let them

remember they must have a part in the cup of his anger. The present is not like other times ; for the king of Zion hath arisen to make a full end of all the powers that oppose him ; to judge the nations of the earth ; and the nation that will not serve him, shall be dashed in pieces, like a vessel that is marred in the hands of the potter.

THE extent of Babylon, that is devoted to drink the cup of divine wrath, may be much greater than many suppose.—The feat of the beast is in many respects different from his kingdom. The influence and vices of his kingdom, are far spread from the place where he arose and hath exercised chief power. They have traversed oceans and planted themselves in remote regions ; but wherever they have gone, the jealousy of the Lord will find them out and execute the woe. In the eighteenth chapter of St. John's Revelation, there is an enumeration of the merchandise of Babylon, which ends with these two remarkable articles, "and slaves and the souls of men."—Let men of all nations and places inquire, whether, if the merchandise of Babylon be found with them, they are not parts of that body, which is to be given to the burning flame of revolution ? Whether they do not see among themselves, the growth of principles, which tend to anarchize the multitude, and to put daggers for spilling their own and their children's blood, into the hands of men fiercely awaking from the most oppressive bondage. Wherever the practice of slavery exists, there is a natural preparation to execute the threatenings of God on those, who deal in "slaves and the souls of men." Especially this appears to be the case, where that kind of infidelity is introducing itself, which justifies any means, however immoral, to obtain an end, which is supposed to be right. These dealers in the merchandise of Babylon are doubtless guilty and worthy of divine punishment ; and it is surprising, how

a holy God is permitting many of them, to fall into principles, which being disseminated among those whom they have oppressed, are speedily to wake up the vengeance of injured millions. Gracious heaven, if possible avert the scene; nevertheless thy will must be done, and if the parents must expiate their sin, let the babes and children be spared of thy sovereign mercy! He that hath an ear let him hear!—

LET infidels and the irreligious of every description remember, that a full warning is given in the word of God; and that although they reject the warning, they must meet the execution. They have entered into a vain contest with the King of kings, and there cannot be a higher proof of their eventual destruction than this, “the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” If such have no care for themselves, still let them have compassion on their offspring. “The Lord our God is a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the father upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him.” There is great reason to believe, that the offspring of those, who reject Christ and his word, however fair and blooming their present prospects may be, shall all be cut off before the day of millennial glory, and when that blessed time commences they will be written childless.

LET professing Christians, who are in a state of coldness and backsliding, remember there is the same danger for their posterity. If through their failure in duty, their own children grow up in impiety and fail of eternal life; there is reason to fear all their offspring will be cut off before the millennial peace of the Church on earth. The arrows in the quiver of the Lord are many, and he can execute his judgments!

LET all the humble and holy wait for the coming of the Lord in his earthly kingdom; let them

cease not to pray, that Zion may become a praise in the whole earth. Blessed are all they that trust in the Lord and keep his commandments. THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE SAY COME. HE WHOSE TESTIMONY IS THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY, SAITH, SURELY I COME QUICKLY: AMEN. EVEN SO COME LORD JESUS: AMEN.



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