



THE  
DANGERS  
OF THE  
TIMES.



A  
S E R M O N,  
ON THE  
DANGERS OF THE TIMES,  
FROM  
INFIDELITY AND IMMORALITY,  
AND  
ESPECIALLY FROM A LATELY DISCOVERED  
*CONSPIRACY*  
AGAINST  
RELIGION AND GOVERNMENT,  
DELIVERED AT  
WEST-SPRINGFIELD,  
AND AFTERWARD  
AT SPRINGFIELD.

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BY JOSEPH LATHROP, D. D.

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SPRINGFIELD:

PRINTED BY FRANCIS STEBBINS

SEPTEMBER—1796.

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# S E R M O N.

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## REVELATION, XII. 12.

WO TO THE INHABITERS OF THE EARTH, AND OF THE SEA : FOR THE DEVIL IS COME DOWN UNTO YOU, HAVING GREAT WRATH, BECAUSE HE KNOWETH THAT HE HATH BUT A SHORT TIME.

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**T**HAT there are evil spirits acting invisibly on the passions and imaginations of mankind, and thus producing vice and misery among them, is a doctrine plainly taught in scripture, and agreeable to the sentiments of almost all nations, in all ages of the world.

Among these spirits there is a principal agent and leader called the devil and satan, and sometimes the serpent or dragon.

In the machinery of the grand prophetic drama contained in this book, these spirits make a frequent appearance ; but they always are subject to the controul of Jesus, the great head of the Christian church.

In the passage before us, and throughout the scriptures, the devil is represented as maintaining a constant opposition to true religion ; both to the power of it in the heart, and to the progress of it in the world.

Soon after the first human pair were placed on trial, this enemy, by his serpentine arts, endeavored to seduce them from their allegiance with God, and bring them under his

own government : And too well he succeeded in his design.— They hearkened to his temptation, transgressed God's law, and fell under a sentence of death.

God was pleased to respite the offenders, assign them a new trial, and encourage their hopes by the promise of a SAVIOUR, who should destroy the works of the devil. To defeat this gracious dispensation the adversary, from the beginning, has employed all his subtilty.

For many ages, his attempts were chiefly directed to the introduction and support of *idolatry*. And the idolatry propagated by his influence has been of such a nature as to turn men from the worship of the only true God ; or, at least, to divert their faith and hope from the promised Mediator. The imaginary divinities, whom the heathens worshipped, were generally considered, not as independent beings, but rather as intermediate agents, by whose ministry God conferred favors on men, and by whose influence they obtained blessings from him. Idolatry was, indeed, more gross among many of the vulgar, who paid their devotions directly to the idol or imaginary deity : but among the more speculative and philosophical, it was refined and subtilized into a medium of approaching the invisible power.

CONCERNING the state of religion before the flood, we have only a short and general account ; and this not much to the honor of human nature. In a few generations after the flood, we find that idolatry had almost overspread the world. In the family of Abraham true religion was restored, and, for a time, maintained in a tolerable degree of purity. But his posterity were much corrupted by their long residence in Egypt, where science and learning were perverted to magic and superstition ; and soon after their emigration from that country, they discovered an extreme fondness for the forms and objects of devotion, which they had seen there.

AFTER their settlement in Canaan, they frequently apostatized from the divine institutions of religion, and, with a strange infatuation, ran after the gods of the nations around them.

The miraculous displays of the power and goodness of JEHOVAH, and the solemn ministrations of his prophets among them, effected no more than a partial and temporary reformation ; and often not so much as this ; until they had suffered a long captivity in Babylon. This, though it did not extirpate

all their errors and iniquities, yet cured them of their attachment to idolatry.

WHEN the gospel was published in the world, it met with violent opposition from the avarice and pride of Jewish rulers and priests—from the licentiousness and self-conceit of Gentile philosophers—and from the ignorance and superstition of the vulgar among both Gentiles and Jews.

WHEN the idolatry of the pagans was overthrown, and the religion of Jesus was established by civil authority in the Roman empire, various new corruptions sprang up, which deformed the beauty and consumed the vitals of this divinely excellent religion.

AFTER some time, idolatry was revived by the incursions and conquests of the northern barbarians. When these heathen invaders embraced and professed the gospel, it was soon attacked in a new form. In the place of the ancient idolatry, the papal superstition was introduced, which, in reality, was idolatry modified under a new and specious name.

THE reformation gave a violent shock to popery, which has ever since been sickening and decaying. But the adversary has never seemed to be discouraged. He opposes the gospel still; but has again varied his method of attack.—The increase of learning, while it has gradually dissipated the clouds of popery, has introduced a licentious philosophy, out of which have grown deism, materialism, atheism, and every species of infidelity. These are the instruments, which long have been, and still are employed to vitiate the morals, and subvert the faith of those who profess the gospel.

THUS, from the beginning, religion has, in various ways, been opposed and resisted.

THIS opposition the scripture ascribes to the *devil*, the great adversary of CHRIST and men. The native corruption of men's hearts opposes the truth as it is in JESUS. "He that doth evil, hateth the light." But the tempter, by exciting and inflaming this corruption, increases the mischief. Hence the scripture ascribes to him, as an instigator and prompter, those errors, vices and abominations, which are immediately the works and actions of men. He is said "to enter into and fill men's hearts,—blind their minds—and take them from the simplicity that is in CHRIST." And on account of his great in-

fluence among the ungodly and unbelieving, he is called  
 “ the prince and the god of this world.”

Our text teaches us, that the power of satan is under divine limitations.

It was early foretold, that the promised seed of the woman should “ bruise the serpent’s head.” They on whom God places his love are described as “ treading the dragon under their feet.” When the SAVIOUR appeared, “ satan fell before him like lightning from heaven.” And his disciples announced with joy, that “ the devils were subject to them through his name.” “ By his word he commanded unclean spirits, who were constrained to obey him.” By his death he destroyed him who had the power of death—“ On the cross he triumphed over principalities and powers”—“ By his resurrection and ascension he led captivity captive.” Our text signifies, that when the devil goes forth in great wrath, his time is limited, and his power restrained.

And there are seasons when he is under unusual restraints. What is said of the wrath of man, may be said of the wrath of satan ; “ This shall praise God,” as far as it can be made subservient to that end, “ and the remainder will be restrained.”

God has glorious designs to accomplish in this world.—For their accomplishment he often permits wicked men and evil spirits to act out their malignant passions ; for what they mean for evil, he can turn to good. But so far as their inclinations cannot be overruled to the wise purposes of his government, he restrains them. We are not to imagine, that God, for his own glory and praise, creates or excites the wrath of men or of satan ; for there is sometimes more of this wrath, than can be made to praise him. There is a part, at least, which must be restrained. But he often turns the wrath of both to the furtherance of the great designs of his Providence : Thus he displays his wisdom, goodness and power.

Hence it follows, that wicked men and wicked spirits may be under stricter limitations at some times, than at others, according as the glory of God and the safety of the church require. The church in Pergamos is said to “ dwell where satan’s seat is.” And in the days, when she suffered persecution, satan was said to “ dwell there.” There were times when, and places where, satan was laid under closer restrictions, than what he then felt in Pergamos.

THE text leads us farther to observe, that when satan apprehends himself soon to be laid under special restraints, he exerts himself with greater activity and rage.

THE history of the prophecy before us will illustrate this observation.

SAINT JOHN saw in heaven, or in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, crowned with stars, and having the moon under her feet : a striking emblem of the holiness, beauty and glory of the christian church. The increase of the church is expressed by the woman's travailing in birth, ready to be delivered. At this time there stood before her a great red dragon, waiting to devour her offspring, as soon as it was born. This dragon is afterward called the serpent, the devil and satan, who, by the agency of the pagan Roman empire, carried on a violent persecution against the church. Hence the dragon is said to have " seven heads and seven crowns," in allusion to the seven hills on which Rome was built, and to the seven forms of government, which successively took place in the empire :— and he is said to have " ten horns," typifying the ten kingdoms into which the empire was afterward divided. Thus the scenery is explained to John by an angel. John says, There was war in heaven between Michael and his angels on the one part, and the dragon and his angels on the other, in which the latter were defeated and cast down to the earth. This signifies the long and severe conflict between christianity and paganism, and the final victory and triumph of the former. On this victory there was sung in heaven an anthem of praise, importing the great happiness which from this event resulted to the church. The happiness, however, was neither complete, nor permanent. Her enemies were indeed defeated ; but they were not destroyed. For it is added, " The devil came down having great wrath." The rage of mortification and disappointment prompted him to excite new troubles. " For he knew he had but a short time." This partial overthrow of idolatry led him to expect its *total* overthrow. Hence he became more active to create new mischiefs, and more studious to devise new arts for the subversion of the Christian cause.

THIS prophecy is, by the best interpreters, supposed to have been accomplished in the change, which took place in the Roman empire, about 300 years after Christ, when Constantine was raised to the imperial throne. Before this event, the church, for the greater part of her time, had been in a state of persecution and distress. There were some peaceful intervals ;

but these were usually short. While the heathen philosophers exercised all their wit to discredit, the heathen emperors employed all their power to suppress, the religion of the gospel. In every persecution, besides vast numbers condemned to prison, exile, slavery and the mines, multitudes suffered torture and death. But of all the persecutions, the last, before the reign of Constantine, was the most violent and severe. Every method which malice and cruelty could devise, was taken to extirpate Christianity from the empire. Bibles and other religious books, wherever they could be found, were seized and committed to the flames. Christians were condemned to death without the formality of a trial, and given up to general massacre without distinction of sex or age. Houses of worship were set on fire, and whole assemblies consumed in them. The numbers that perished by the hand of violence, by the fatigues of slavery, and by the miseries of banishment, are beyond calculation, or even conception. The devil, as if he knew his time was short, went forth with unusual fury.

THE time of deliverance drew near. The Romans, wearied with a succession of intolerable tyrants, turned their eyes to Constantine, from whose character they entertained hopes of a juster and milder government. They invited him to the throne. He accepted the imperial purple, and, reigning in righteousness, he became a hiding place from the wind, a covert from the storm, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. He patronised the Christian religion, abolished idolatry, destroyed the images, and banished the priests of the pagan temples, and protected and encouraged the ministers of Christ. Thus satan, whose throne had been exalted to the skies, fell to the earth, like lightning from heaven.

BUT his fall, though it weakened his power, increased his wrath. He devised new means of working mischief. He soon began to scatter the poisonous seeds of heresy, excite angry disputes and contentions, and foment ruinous schisms and divisions. Afterward he brought on the church the floods of northern barbarians, which, he imagined, would sweep Christianity from the earth, and prepare it for the restoration and growth of the ancient idolatry. He, in some measure, succeeded for a time : But ultimately these incursions contributed to the spread of the gospel ; for the victorious pagans, in great numbers, embraced the gospel, and thus some rays of light were reflected back to the dark corners from whence they issued.



THE voice from heaven proclaims, "Wo to the inhabitants of the earth, for the devil is come down, having great wrath."

THE time when satan most vigorously employs his corrupting and seducing arts, is usually a time of great perplexity and distress.

THE time, which nearly preceded the downfall of satan, predicted in the text, was a woeful period. Persecution raged with augmented violence. There was no safety to any who were known to join the assemblies, or were even suspected to favour the cause of the Christians. Such multitudes were destroyed, and with such cruel tortures, that the malice of their enemies was glutted with blood, and the hands of the executioners were wearied with slaughter. And though the fall of satan gave a respite to the church, yet the rage of his disappointment soon excited new vexations and distresses. The empire was embroiled in a civil war by the competitors for the throne. The different parties into which the church was split, as they alternately prevailed, exercised toward each other much of the same spirit, though not all the same cruelty, as they had experienced from the common enemy. And when these party-animosities subsided, the irruption of the barbarous nations spread through the christian world such desolations and miseries, as seldom had been known before.

IN the view of the calamities, which preceded the expected fall, and which followed the disappointed malice of the great dragon, the prophet exclaims "Wo to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea; for the devil is come down having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time."

THE present time exhibits a scene so similar to the description in the text, that I cannot forbear to improve this passage for the warning of my fellow christians in this dangerous period.

SAINT JOHN foretels, that satan will be bound and imprisoned for a thousand years, and no more go forth to deceive the nations, until that time is expired. The calculations of the learned, and the aspects of providence may lead us to apprehend that this important period is hastening on. If, in the age of Constantine, the devil knew that he had but a short time, he must now know, that his time is much shorter. If the diminution of his dominion, when he fell to the earth, a-

wakened his wrath: how great will be his rage, when he sees that he is soon to lose his dominion, and be cast into the bottomless pit? If the restraint of his power, and the limitation of his season for mischief, increase his efforts, he will not be indolent at such a time as this, when his power is tending to its exit. And, indeed, if we look on the state of the world, we see evidence enough, that he is gone forth having great wrath; and by the vigour of his efforts, and the variety of his arts, one would imagine, that he apprehended his time was short.

I beg your candour and patience, while I give you a brief view of our dangers, and point out the duties, which the aspect of the times urges upon us.

In these American States, there has, for many years, and more especially since our late revolution, been a visible tendency to infidelity, and an observable growth of impiety and immorality. Family religion is falling into disuse; the ancient strict observance of the sabbath is mightily relaxed; social worship in the church, as well as in the family, is sinking into neglect, not to say, contempt; a public profession of religion is by few made a matter of conscience; and, in most places, the number of open professors is by much the smaller part of the community. Many, who choose to treat the gospel with civility, decline to take upon them the character of its friends. A sense of decency and propriety may restrain them from insulting it; but they have not that regard to its interest which should excite them to defend it. In this state of general indifference, the barriers against infidelity are fallen down, and the way is open for its swift and easy progress. And probably there never was a time, when more pains were taken, or taken with greater success, to extend its baneful influence, than at the present day.

The increased advantages of education have diffused a taste for reading; and the interesting events of the times have awakened a spirit of enquiry. Thus a door is opened for literary and moral improvements; or for a corruption of sentiments and manners, according to the means which are applied. And many, distinguished by learning and genius, who ought to have consecrated their superior talents to the former object, have prostituted them to the latter. And the natural depravity of the human heart has favoured their success. Books of the most licentious tendency have been multiplied without bounds, and circulated without modesty. Social libraries, which in themselves are useful institutions, have, in too many

instances, admitted books of this kind ; and thus become the vehicles of corruption and infidelity. Hence the young and unprincipled have imbibed a poison without an antidote.

No pains have been spared to banish the fear of future punishment, and to take off from men's minds that awful restraint from vice. The doctrine of happiness for all men, without distinction of characters, has been industriously propagated ; but on grounds so heterogeneous and incompatible, that one scheme subverts another ; and yet there are those who admire them all ; not because either of them is convincing to reason, but because all are pleasing to their lusts, and flattering to their hopes.

DIRECT attacks are made on the bible, not in a way of candid reason and fair discussion ; but in a way of indecent ridicule and malignant satire. Thus many uninstructed minds are prejudiced against revelation before they have examined it, and fortified against the means of conviction before they are applied.

THE singular prosperity of this country, for some years past, has contributed not a little to a corruption of sentiments and manners. Certain peculiar circumstances, perhaps unavoidable, have encouraged schemes of speculation. And the arts of speculation very soon degenerated into tricks of fraud to acquire property without earning it, and to swindle money from the unsuspecting without giving an equivalent. The prospect of growing rich in a day, and of making a fortune at a stroke, has led many to despise the sober paths of regular industry and honorable commerce.

THE great accession of foreigners has had a most unfriendly effect on the religion of the country. Many of these are men of fortune, learning and address, but of licentious principles and dissolute morals. Their distinction gives them ability, and their licentiousness gives them a disposition, to spread among our citizens the corruptions which they brought from their native soil.

THERE have sprung up in one place and another, without previous concert, but probably from the influence of a combination in the dark regions, various sects and societies, which agree in avowing the corruptest opinions, and in adopting the vilest practices.

IN the northern parts of this state, as I am well informed, there has lately appeared, and still exists under a licentious leader, a company of beings, who discard the principles of religion and the obligations of morality, trample on the bonds of matrimony, the separate rights of property, and the laws of civil society, spend the sabbath in labour or diversion, as fancy dictates; and the nights in riotous excess and promiscuous concubinage, as lust impels. Their number consists of about forty, some of whom are persons of reputable abilities, and, once, of decent characters. That a society of this description, which would disgrace the natives of *Caffraria*, should be formed in this land of civilization and gospel light, is an evidence that the devil is, at this time, gone forth, having great influence, as well as great wrath.

THE long and wide-spread war in Europe, the changes which have there taken place, the effects which these changes have had on religion and morals, and the probability that we may soon be deeply involved in the common calamity, all conspire to increase our danger.

FRANCE is filled with atheists. At least the governing and influential men in the nation are openly of this character. And their morals are consentaneous to their principles. As they are extending their conquests, they will doubtless disseminate their abominable principles, which other nations, unless the hatred of a conquering foe should be their guard, are but too well prepared to receive. Infidelity, for some years, has been gaining ground in most parts of Europe. It had overspread France before her late revolution. Among the people of high distinction, there were few, who, in companies where restraint was removed, did not laugh at religion. The revolution has made a change in the visible appearance rather than in the real state of religion in that nation. Revolutions in other nations may perhaps be followed with similar consequences. The war seems likely to continue; and from its past, we have reason to fear, what may be its future effects.

AN awful conspiracy against religion has lately been detected, and proved by documents, which appear authentic and uncontrovertible. Of this an account has been published by Mr. JOHN ROBISON, Professor of Natural Philosophy, and Secretary to the Royal Society of Edinburgh. By original papers and correspondencies, which, by various means, have fallen into his hands, he makes it evident, that there has existed a combination among certain societies, which are become numerous and widely dispersed.

“to root out all the religious establishments, and to overturn all the existing governments of Europe.” These societies have assumed the name of *THE ILLUMINATED*. He asserts, that they grew out of the lodges of *Free Masons*. He says, The masonic lodges, which, it seems, began in England some time in the last century, were originally innocent in their design; and those which retain their first simplicity, are so still; being meetings for social amusement and friendly conviviality. He is himself one of the order, and in his early years was an active and distinguished member. He considers the order rather as frivolous, than mischievous. Its affected secrecy and mysticism he marks as the greatest fault in the institution; but still a fault, because secret societies, however frivolous in the beginning, may become mischievous in the end. These masonic lodges, passing from England to the continent of Europe, soon assumed a new form; and in the hands of the French, who give a tinsel glitter to every thing, they were refined and sublimated from the English simplicity to a number of degrees unknown before; each superior degree possessing secrets not to be communicated to any of the subordinate grades. These refinements passed from France to other countries on the continent, and have returned to England the probable birth-place of simple masonry. The restraints laid on social conversation by the despotism of the government and the bigotry of the church in most countries, induced many to join these lodges, that they might there enjoy that liberty of speech which was denied them in other companies. And in their hours of convivial freedom and friendly security, they would naturally introduce those topics, which it was dangerous to touch elsewhere. Hence the tyranny of government and the superstition of the hierarchy became favorite subjects, which they pursued, until, in their abhorrence of those real evils, they began to form nefarious schemes for the total abolition of Christianity and every kind of religion, and the utter subversion of civil government in all its forms. Thus have arisen the societies of the *Illuminated*, which first appeared in Germany, and from thence have spread into all the countries of Europe.

THEIR leading principles are such as these; that there is no Supreme independent being, no moral government of the universe, no future existence, nothing to be hoped or feared after this life, and consequently no such thing as religion—that the miseries of mankind spring from superstition and tyranny—or what priests and rulers call *religion* and *government*—that human reason, left to itself, will produce the greatest happiness which men can enjoy—that all morality consists in benevo-

lence, or a regard to the general happiness ; and every thing which tends to increase the happiness or abate the misery of man, whether it be fraud, murder, suicide, or any thing else, is, for that reason, right and good—that men are to judge of the goodness of actions by their tendency to a good end ; for the end consecrates the means—that as *their* order is calculated for the good of mankind, they are to hesitate at no measures for its increasing influence and extension—that the obligations of the social, conjugal, parental and filial relations, are to be discarded, when they are supposed to interfere with this end—that it is necessary to abolish all the existing governments, and therefore necessary to abolish the Christian religion, because this contributes to the support of government—that as the gospel teaches a perfect morality, men who feel the obligations of morality, will, of course, revere and appreciate the gospel ; and therefore to effect the abolition of the gospel, it will be necessary gradually to eradicate from men's minds the sentiments of moral obligation, which, they say, have been infused only by false education, and are retained only by prejudice.

THEY endeavor to introduce into their societies men of learning and genius, especially men of captivating address in conversation, and of enchanting talents in writing. The new members are not admitted, at once, to all the secrets of the order, but brought on from one grade to another, as they are found to be prepared. They are put under a discipline, which may gradually divest them of the tender feelings of nature, and form them to a hardness for bold, cruel and ferocious deeds. In order to spread their anarchical and atheistical sentiments, they by every secret artifice in their power, introduce their own members into all places of influence, as courts, academies, universities, post-offices, printing-offices, book-stores ; and take under their direction the manufacture, review, and sale of books ; by which means their own writings are surreptitiously circulated among the people, and the writings in opposition to them are suppressed or restrained.

To facilitate and ensure the success of their design, they have established, in various parts of Germany, and other places, *reading societies*, or library companies, which are under the direction of their own dissolute members, and supplied with books from their own polluted fountain. These books, written with the arts of fascination, and recommended by the embellishments of wit, communicate their poisonous principles under disguise, and insinuate them into the minds of the simple, unperceived.

THESE societies, the author says, have had great influence in raising and continuing the troubles of France. The revolution itself he does not condemn. The oppressions of the old government were such, that, he allows, a change in principle and administration was greatly to be desired. And the revolution, had it stopped in season, might have been happy. But these societies, of which there were numbers in France, as well as in Germany, intending to prostrate all government, have, by concert, kept alive the spirit of revolution and anarchy, until the nation is enslaved to a military despotism. Reforms may be necessary elsewhere, but the principles of these societies, continuing to operate, will either prevent reforms, or turn them into confusion.

Of these societies, the author says, there are great numbers scattered over the continent of Europe ; some in England and Scotland ; several in America. His statement is made, as the societies stood in the year 1786. In what parts of America they are formed, he gives no intimation. We choose to believe, not in the United States. But if we, any where, see library companies industrious to collect and circulate deistical and other licentious books—if we, any where, see men openly and boldly opposing the religion of the gospel, and these standing foremost among the candidates for public offices—if we, any where, see attempts made to change our happy constitution, either by weakening its proper energy, or by diminishing its native liberality—by detaching the people from their own constituted authorities, or by benumbing republican vigilance into the torpor of blind obedience—by exciting disaffection to our late revolution, or by sowing the seeds of a new one ; there, we may conclude, that, if not the members, yet, at least, the principles of these societies are deeply at work.

I WOULD not detain you long on this disagreeable narrative. But you will naturally enquire, how the discovery was made ? One of the principal societies, overacting its part, excited suspicions, in consequence of which an examination was instituted, and such a scene opened, that the society was suppressed. Many papers of the society were found, which led to farther discoveries. Some correspondencies were intercepted or betrayed. Some members, either through compunction or disgust, deserted the societies, and made communications, which gave a clue to a fuller developement of this mystery of iniquity.



**BUT** notwithstanding the discovery, the author fears, the principles of these societies are so widely spread, and so deeply rooted, that it will be no easy task to eradicate them.

**THE** horror and detestation, which this discovery has excited in the minds of the uncorrupted masons, and the disgrace and suspicion brought on them by this abuse and perversion of their order, have induced many of the lodges in Germany to dissolve themselves, and abandon their ancient profession.

**THIS** plan of infidelity is an artifice of satan, equal in subtlety, but, I presume, not so long in duration, as popery itself.

**WHEN** idolatry was abolished by the powers of government, the devil introduced, under the mask of christianity, a new and refined species of idolatry, which has continued for more than a thousand years. As light has been increasing, the papal idolatry has declined : And at this period, when popery seemed near its exit, the devil has adopted, in its stead, this new artifice to undermine the credit, and defeat the influence of the gospel. The same light which has chased away the clouds of papal superstition, he is perverting into the means of spreading infidelity under the specious names of liberty, reason and philosophy.

**BUT** though infidelity is increasing, and perhaps will still increase for a time ; yet, if I judge aright, the serious and inquisitive mind will hence derive new evidence of the truth of the gospel.

**THE** scripture has foretold this very circumstance, as what will accompany the great events of the present period.

**IT** announces the downfall of the papal power ; and this, if not fully accomplished, is probably near its accomplishment.

**IT** has predicted, that the destruction of this power will be effected by some of those very kingdoms, which were once its principal supporters. France has been one of its chief defenders ; and France is now the great agent in its overthrow.

**IT** expressly declares, that at the time when the angels shall pour out their vials on the sun, and on the throne of the beast, men will not repent of their deeds, or give glory to the



God of heaven; but will blaspheme his name. The expressions clearly import an unusual prevalence of licentious morals and atheistical principles. And was there ever a time to which these characters apply more strongly than to the present? The societies, of which we have spoken, not only indulge, but avow blasphemy and impenitence, atheism and immorality, and propagate them systematically. And there are many who follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth is evil spoken of.

It is foretold, that when the devil sees his time to be short, he will go forth with great wrath. So he has done in former times, when his kingdom was tottering: so he does now, when the word of prophecy imports, that he hath but a short time.

WHEN the devil came down to the earth in wrath, a warning voice from heaven proclaimed, "Wo the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea." This wo, which has been realized before, has again returned, and been deeply and extensively felt. To the nations which dwell on the continent of Europe, and to the people who inhabit the islands in the sea, this is a period of unusual calamity. The war has involved in its horrors a great part of the old continent, it has raged with brutal ferocity; it has wasted immense treasures; it has consumed millions of the human race; it has overturned states, and changed times and seasons. France has spread conquest and terror among her neighbors; and, in the mean while, she herself has been a principal sufferer. The West-Indian islands, from invasion, conquest, insurrection, civil war, famine and conflagration, have experienced horrors unknown before. The flames of war begin to flash towards this continent; and when, or where they will be extinguished, heaven only knows.

UNDER the sixth vial, John says, "I saw three unclean spirits, like frogs, come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils working miracles," or doing wonders, "which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God almighty."

THE *dragon*, *beast*, and *false prophet* are in this book the grand enemies of the christian church. These spirits, like frogs, which issue from their mouths, are called *unclean*, and said to go forth unto the kings of the earth to *gather them to war*. They must therefore denote some atheistical and turbulent

emissaries from the enemies of the gospel, sent forth to corrupt the principles, and disturb the peace of mankind.

WHETHER we are now under this particular vial, I pretend not to determine. Be this as it may ; there are multitudes of this noxious breed of frogs, (more pestiferous than those which plagued old Egypt) now scattered over the earth, croaking and spawning in every lake and fen, vexing the air with their noise, and poisoning the waters with their slime. These spirits of devils are gone into all the world, corrupting the religious principles, and breaking the political peace of the nations, and directly instigating, or indirectly constraining the kings and powers of the earth to gather themselves to the battle. But let us remember, “ It is the battle of the great day of God Almighty,” who, while he permits it as the means of punishing the wickedness of a degenerate world, will overrule it as the occasion of enlarging the bounds and exalting the glory of the Christian church.

If this is not the time intended in the prophecy, there is reason to fear, a time is coming, when the prophetic description will be more fully realized.

“ THE testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”— This testimony to the truth of the gospel Jesus is now giving. Let us receive his testimony, and hold fast his word, till he comes.

If satan is most active in works of mischief, when he sees that his time is short, let us, with equal assiduity, employ our short time in counterworking his hellish devices.

SINCE there is an infernal combination against the gospel of Christ—against its heavenly doctrines and holy precepts, let us, who call ourselves its friends, unite our influence in its support.

In such a time as this, all who are, in heart, friends to the gospel, ought to stand forth, and openly declare their full belief of it, and determined obedience to it. A spirit of indifference to it is, at any time, inexcusable ; but at a time when its enemies are active to subvert it, indifference becomes peculiarly criminal. “ Of those who are ashamed of CHRIST and his gospel in an evil and adulterous generation, he will also be ashamed when he shall come in the glory of his Father.”

As CHRIST has instituted social worship to be the means of knowledge and faith, let all with constancy and zeal attend on this ordinance, keeping in view the end for which it was appointed. Think it not sufficient that you appear in God's house, now and then, on some special occasion, or in a pleasant afternoon ; but let your attendance on this, as on your secular duties, be regular and constant. A neglect of divine worship leads to indifference ; and this to infidelity. Hence the apostle, when he exhorts Christians to " hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering," immediately subjoins a caution, that they " forsake not the assembling of themselves together." When people forsake the worship which the gospel enjoins, it is but one step more to forsake the gospel itself.

If we would maintain the faith, let us practise the morality of the gospel. They who put away a good conscience, will easily make shipwreck of the faith. The societies of the *Illuminated*, sensible of the close connexion between a virtuous life and a religious faith, make it a primary object to corrupt men's moral sentiments, that they may thus prepare them to renounce the gospel.

To say that a virtuous man can have no doubts concerning the divinity of the gospel, might be going too far. But thus much I may safely say ; a man who loves virtue in his heart, and wishes to promote it among his fellow-citizens, cannot be an enemy to the gospel ; for this teaches the purest and sublimest virtue. And whatever doubts he may feel concerning its heavenly origin, he will admire its precepts and instructions, and wish that they may be embraced and obeyed.—Will this man oppose the gospel ?—will he treat it with ridicule ? will he vex honest minds with captious objections against it ? will he labour to unsettle his virtuous neighbours from a faith which has so happy an influence on them ? will he weaken his own motives to virtue by reading, or subvert the faith of others by spreading books of immoral or deistical tendency ?—He never will. The man who does this is an enemy to virtue and to human happiness. He is corrupt and has done abominable works. If he preserves a decent conduct among men, he is conscious of inward guilt, the keen stings of which he is labouring to blunt.

LET us live agreeably to the gospel ; then we shall feel no temptation to reject it. In this case, we have nothing to fear from it : it never will hurt us. Only let our conversation be, as it becometh the gospel, and we shall have no objections a-

gain it of our own; and shall exhibit a powerful answer to all objections made by others. For if we cannot by arguments prove its heavenly inspiration, we shall, at least, by our lives demonstrate its divine excellence.

In such a time as this, great attention should be paid to the education of youth, that their minds may be early imbued with religious principles and virtuous sentiments, and thus guarded against the instructions which cause to err. The combined infidels in Europe corrupt the minds of the young and uninformed, by circulating licentious books. We should put into the hands of such those books which contain safe and wholesome instructions.

LIBRARIES, in the present day, are multiplied to the great improvement of knowledge; and generally, I suppose, the books are well chosen: but, I believe, not always so. If we admit into our social libraries books of deistical or immoral tendency, to be read in our families—to be thrown out among our youth—and to be handed round among our neighbors, we are acting in perfect concert with those dangerous *Illuminators*, and are aiding them in their nefarious work.

I HAVE observed, that it is their great aim, for effectuating their plan, to introduce the members of their fraternity into all places of power and influence. Certainly we ought to adopt the opposite system. We are so happy as to enjoy an elective government. And in all elections to office, whether in towns, or in states, or in the nation at large, we ought to give a decided preference to men of strict virtue and exemplary morality—to the known friends of the gospel and the regular observers of its plain institutions. Let a man's abilities or political sentiments be what they may, if he is an enemy to the gospel—if he treats it with marked disrespect—if he contemptuously neglects its institutions—if he wishes and seeks the dissolution of all religious societies—if he is studious to embarrass all measures for their support and continuance; this man is not to be promoted in civil society; for his civil promotion increases his opportunities and abilities to injure the cause of Christ and of mankind.

THERE can be no freedom and happiness in society without the influence of religion—There is no religion more excellent in its nature, or more friendly to society than the Christian; and the man who is an enemy to this, cannot be safely trusted to guard the liberty and pursue the interest of his

**Yellow citizens.** If we admit that he may have honest intentions, yet he has at least mistaken the means. And I esteem it a happiness, especially at such a day as this, that there is, at the head of our government, a magistrate, who is not ashamed to profess himself a Christian, and who, by his example, honours his profession.

It concerns us all to have the religion of Christ formed in our hearts. Thus shall we best be secured against the fiery darts of the wicked one, when he comes down having great wrath. This is our surest defence against temptations—our firmest support in afflictions—our sweetest consolation in the prospect of death and eternity. We may try a hundred artifices to fortify ourselves against the terrors of futurity—we may labour to persuade ourselves, that death will terminate our existence; or that all men will be happy after death; or, if there is a future punishment, that it will be moderate and short; or that a life of pleasure, if it is not very mischievous, will never offend the Deity; or that the goodness of God will find some unknown way to save men from, or deliver them out of the misery of the world to come.

BUT after all we can say and do, none of these artifices will satisfy us. They all want solidity—want proof. They leave the mind restless, anxious, fearful. The gospel, and this alone comes home to human wants—comes home to our impotent, guilty condition. The man who fully believes it and heartily consents to it, is relieved, contented, satisfied. He sees no other refuge to which he can resort—he wishes for no other; here are the words of eternal life.

My testimony, feeble as it is, I wish to leave in favour of that gospel, which I have preached to my fellow mortals, for more than 40 years. In the near contemplation of another world, I see no hope, I feel no support, but what is derived from this divine source: I can find no way of pardon, but that which is here marked out. I can obtain no assurance of immortality, but what rests on the basis of the divine promises here declared: I know not where to look for succour amidst the temptations of the world, or for assistance under the weakness of nature, but to that grace, which is here revealed. While I lament in myself a thousand infirmities—a thousand deviations from legal perfection—a thousand humbling proofs of vast unworthiness, I must esteem, love and admire the plan here opened for human relief. To this I resort; on this I rely.

Here is my support in the view of death—here is my consolation in the prospect of judgement. And the Lord grant, that we may all find mercy in that day.

—ERRATA—

*In the bottom line of page 5th, for "allegiance with God," read "allegiance TO God."*

*In page 7th, the 2d line from the bottom, for "take" read "corrupt."*