

Joseph Lathrop

THE

PROPHECY

OF

DANIEL,

RELATING TO THE TIME OF THE END,

OPENED, APPLIED AND IMPROVED,

IN TWO DISCOURSES

DELIVERED ON A

PUBLICK FAST,

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SERMON I.

DANIEL, XII. 10.

— NONE OF THE WICKED SHALL UNDER-
STAND, BUT THE WISE SHALL UNDERSTAND.

THIS observation may be applied generally. The difficulty of understanding religious truths arises not from the obscurity of the truths themselves, but from the perverseness of men's hearts. "He that doth evil, hateth the light."

But Daniel makes this observation with particular reference to a preceding prophecy. He had foretold some important events which were to be accomplished in a time called *the time of the end*. These events would be highly interesting to the people who should live in that time. He therefore describes them, not in symbols and figures, but in plain historical language. And no history of past events, written in so concise a manner, could be more easily understood, than this prophecy of future events; at least when the events come into existence. Hence the prophet says, "The wicked will do wickedly, and none of the wicked will under-

stand"—none who are fully determined to pursue their wicked designs, will so attend to this prophecy and its correspondent events, as to see its accomplishment. "But the wise," who are purified from the corruptions of their hearts, "will understand."

Our Saviour reproved the Jews for their inattention to, and ignorance of the prophecies which related to the then present times. This inattention was one principal cause of their general infidelity and subsequent ruin. A disregard to the prophecies describing the events of *our own* times will involve us in similar guilt and danger.

As we are undoubtedly in, or near the time to which the prophecy before us refers, every man who is wise will wish to understand it. And you will think it my duty to assist your enquiries by giving you the result of my own.

My subject will not lead me to a discussion of party politicks, but to an elucidation of the sacred scriptures. And I shall strictly follow the example of Christ and his apostles, who opened the prophetic scriptures relating to their own times; referred to existing facts in which the prophecies were fulfilled; and from thence made such religious and moral deductions, as were appropriate to the times.

Some preliminary observations will be necessary to the introduction of our main subject.

You well know, that Daniel and John have foretold a general apostacy in the Christian church, which would be accompanied with great oppression and persecution, and would continue 1260 years. Such an apostacy, you know, has already existed for many ages, and still exists under the name of *popery*. When 1260 years from its commencement shall have expired, it will then come to its end. It is generally supposed to have begun in the year 606, when, by an edict of the eastern tyrant *Phocas*, the bishop of Rome was made *universal* bishop, and the

saints were delivered into his hands. If we compute from that time according to our present calendar, the end of this period will be in the year 1866. If we compute, as perhaps we ought, according to the calendar in use in the times of the prophets, popery will come to its end in the year 1842. On either computation we are very near the time of the end, and may expect to see, as we actually do see, great and tremendous events.

Not only Daniel and John, but Paul and Peter, and indeed many of the prophets, expressly declare, that at the time, when the papacy is fast declining to its end, there will be a daring and awful eruption of atheism and infidelity, and that this will be accompanied with an unusual corruption of morals, and with horrible wars among the nations of the earth.

The most particular account which we have of this and its concomitant events, is in the preceding prophecy of Daniel. To this therefore I now request your serious and candid attention.

At the 36th and following verses of the preceding chapter, Daniel foretels and describes a *king*, who shall do according to his will. I wish you to bear in mind, that, in the prophetic style, a *king* signifies, not a *particular man*, but a *kingdom*, a *state*, or a *nation* under any form of government.

This king, who shall appear near the time of the end, is described by several remarkable characters—by characters, all of which can never be supposed to exist in two different nations; and cannot possibly exist in two nations at or near the same time.

“He shall do according to his will, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished.” He will be a warlike power; will extend his conquests with unusual rapidity; will exercise a capricious sovereignty over the nations which fall under his domination; will make his own pleasure, not any

law human or divine, the rule and measure of his conduct ; and will prosper till the end of those perilous times, which shall come on the guilty nations.

“ He shall exalt himself and shall magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods.” He shall openly renounce the supreme God with blasphemous expressions of contempt, denying that there is any God in the universe, or any invisible power, which men need to worship or to fear.

“ Neither shall he regard the God of *his fathers*.” This abolition of religion will be accomplished *suddenly*, by an act of the existing government ; not, as in other instances, by a gradual declension in a succession of generations. The people, by a decree of their own constituted rulers, will at once reject the God, who was acknowledged by their fathers and immediate predecessors.

“ Neither shall he regard the desire of women, nor regard any God.” This *desire of women* being connected with *any God*, must signify some wonderful person, who had been an object of expectation and desire among the Jewish women. And we all know that the women among the Jews were remarkably desirous of being the mothers of children, and each wished to be the mother of the promised seed of the woman. The Messiah therefore must be here intended. He was eminently the desire of women. The meaning of this expression is, that the infidel power foretold would not regard the Redeemer, or the religion which he taught, but would contemptuously trample on all his doctrines and institutions, and “ would magnify himself above all.”

“ But in his estate,” or instead of the Messiah, “ he shall honour the god of forces ;” or gods protectors ; certain tutelary gods. “ He shall honour them with gold and silver and precious stones and pleasant things ; thus shall he do in the strong holds

with a strange or foreign god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory, and he shall cause them to rule over many.” Though he shall worship no *real* God, yet he will introduce from *another nation* an imaginary god, and will set up a fanciful representation of it in a place of publick resort, will bestow upon it costly ornaments, and, in mockery of the worship of the true God, will pay to this phantom a kind of divine honour. In conjunction with this, he shall contrive other allegorical gods. And the supporters of this mock worship he shall exalt to places of authority, and shall give them power to spread this impiety as far as their influence can extend.

“ And he shall divide the land for gain,” or for a price. He shall assume into his hands the estates, which had been held by others, and shall dispose of them for a price to such men as will be subservient to his views.

These are the characters of that remarkable power, which shall appear in the last days. If all these characters are to be found, or have lately been found in any power or state now existing, this indubitably is the wonderful king or kingdom intended in the prophecy.

A writer of our own,* in some late “conjectures on the prophecies,” says, “From the present time to the complete destruction of the *popish* powers, infidelity and wickedness will abound, and divine judgments will be poured on the inhabitants of the world ; and it is not unreasonable to suppose, that the tremendous scenes described by the prophet (Daniel) have, some of them, in a remarkable manner, been accomplished in the *French revolution*.”

Mr. Faber, an English writer on the prophecies, has particularly and luminously applied Daniel’s description of the infidel king to revolutionary France.

I shall give you a concise view of his illustrations on the subject.

The French revolution coincides with the time marked in the prophecy, “the time of the end ;” the time when we were to expect, and when many did expect some great change in the political state of Europe.

France has done “according to her will ;” has stretched her conquering hand over many nations ; has been successful in her enterprizes, and has paid no regard to the laws of God, or to the rights of men, or to treaties of her own.

The French republick, in a national convention, chosen by the people and consisting of nearly 700 men, “exalted herself above every God,” openly denied the existence of a Deity and the immortality of the soul, and proclaimed a God to be a phantom, and death an eternal sleep. Such was the atheistical rage of the times, that for a man to mention the name of God, unless it were in a way of contempt, would expose him, not only to be insulted as a fool, but to be arrested and punished as a fanatic.

They regarded not *him* who was the “*desire* of women,” the Messiah, but declared him to be an impostor, shut up the churches, made it penal to open them for religious worship, and even altered the calendar, that the Lord’s day might no longer be known.

This revolution was effected *suddenly*, by national authority in a representative assembly, so that it might properly be said, “they regarded not the God of their fathers”—the God of their immediate predecessors.

Yet they “honoured a *strange god*.” The Romans deified liberty ; and are said to be the only ancient nation that placed this among the objects of worship. Republican France introduced this foreign god, and in contempt of the worship of the De-

ity, paid religious honours to this phantom of divinity.

In conjunction with this, they honoured with public festivals several other allegorical gods, such as reason, the country, the constitution, the virtues. And in their list of tutelary gods they enrolled several dead men, who had been distinguished in life by their atheism and their vices ; as Voltaire, Rousseau, Murat and others. Churches were converted into repositories for the remains of such men ; and these remains were placed on the high altar ; and to them incense was offered.

France has caused the supporters of these fantastic, tutelary gods “ to rule over many.” It has been her avowed principle to spread anarchy and atheism among other nations, and thus prepare them for submission to her power. For this purpose cunning and deceitful emissaries have been employed, secretly to sow the seeds of revolution.

France has honoured these imaginary gods “ with gold and silver and precious stones.” The ornaments of ancient churches were taken by force, and conferred in rich abundance on the tutelary gods of infidelity. The images and treasures of the churches in Italy were conveyed by the French army into France, to be deposited in the temples of the strange gods.

The republican government “ divided the land for a price.” The lands of the crown, the nobility and the church were taken from their former possessors and sold for a price, but for a moderate price, to the adherents of the new government, to preclude the possibility of a counter revolution. It has not been uncommon for successful invaders to distribute conquered lands gratuitously among favourite officers. But to sell them for a price is so singular a measure, that it was worthy of being

pointed out in prophecy, as a discriminating mark of this wonderful power.

Such were the characteristic marks of revolutionary France, during the existence of what was called a republican government, as every one knows, who has been in the least acquainted with the transactions of that period.

Since the present emperor has risen to the supreme authority, an alteration has been made in a remarkable consonance to prophecy.

St. John in the revelation, speaking of the present period, says, “ Three unclean spirits went forth out of the mouth of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet, to gather the kings of the earth together to the battle of the great day of God Almighty.” The dragon is that old serpent the devil, who is the prime mover in the awful scene of destruction. The beast is a tyrannical civil power. The false prophet is the papal hierarchy. The two latter, under the influence of the devil, cooperate in gathering the kings to the battle of the great decisive day. The present emperor has, in some respects, meliorated the condition of France. He has replaced the ancient calendar, permitted divine worship, and restored the papal hierarchy ; but restored it in a state of dependance upon, and subservience to the civil power ; so that infidelity and popery—the civil and the ecclesiastical powers will act in conjunction, and will continue so to act in future wars, according to John’s prediction.

I have now given you a view of this remarkable prophecy concerning a king or kingdom which should arise in the last days, and have pointed out the characters in a modern nation, which are supposed to correspond to the prophet’s description. You will judge whether the application be just.

What follows, in this and the next chapter, is chiefly future, but so plainly expressed, that there

is little difficulty in understanding the most prominent events.

The prophet, speaking of this mighty king or nation, says, "At the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him, and the king of the north shall come against him, like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen and many ships."

Mr. Faber is in doubt, who can be intended by the king of the *south*. The king of the *north* he supposes to be *Russia*. But Russia, lying out of the papal territory, does not seem to come within the scheme of prophecy. Nor do I find that any nation, not existing in the time when the prophecy was uttered, is so particularly and distinctly mentioned.

Why may we not suppose, that Spain with Portugal is the king of the south, and Britain the king of the north? If France be the infidel power described, the present opposition made to her designs by Britain and Spain may be the event intended by the pushing from the south and the whirlwind from the north. There is no continental power south of France, but Spain and Portugal. Britain lies in a northern direction from France, and she hath many ships.

What will be the event of the conflict with respect to these two powers, the prophet has not said. But if these be the powers intended by the kings of the south and of the north, they probably will survive the conflict. Other nations, as Prussia, Austria, Holland, Switzerland, have pushed at France; but have soon fallen, and been trampled under her feet. Those therefore are not mentioned in the prophecy. If these two kings were, in like manner, to be subjugated, I see no reason why they should be named rather than the other. If Spain should fall, probably it will rise again, for there must, before the end comes, be somewhere a king of the south.

Be this as it may, it is very certain, the power of France is not now to be broken, and the efforts of these two kings will have no other effect, than to check her progress and divert her course. For the prophet immediately adds, “And he,” or *yet he*, i. e. this victorious king “shall enter into the countries and shall overflow and pass over.”

To understand this we must observe, that prophecy foretels the existence of the *mahometan* apostacy, and its duration for 1260 years. History informs us, that this began about the same time with the establishment of popery, and consequently will come to its end about the same time. Both appear now to be fast tending to their fall. The Ottoman empire, as well as the papal hierarchy, is feeble and tottering. Within a few years past a formidable and armed insurrection has appeared in Turkey against its established religion and government.

It is probable, that, as soon as the operations in Spain shall cease, whether by conquest or disappointment, the emperor of France, with his confederate papal kings, will send an army into Turkey. By the subjugation of Austria the way is completely open for such an expedition. And this is probably intended by the prophet, when he says, “The king shall enter into the countries and shall overflow and pass over.” He shall bear down all opposition and shall bring that region under his dominion.

“He shall pass over.” He is described as moving by land.* But here he shall pass over some water or narrow straight. This can be no other

* It is remarkable, that Daniel’s wilful king carries on all his operations by land. And though mention is made of a power which shall come against him with many ships, yet he is never described as meeting his enemy or doing his work by ships. We may hence probably conclude, that he never will possess a formidable navy, nor spread his conquests into any transmarine regions. If then we fall under his dominion, it will be in consequence of our own infatuation.

than the straight of Constantinople ; for we immediately find him in Palestine. “ He shall enter into the glorious land,” the land of Judea. “ And many shall be overthrown.” He shall obtain possession of that land and make great destruction in it.

“ He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries,” in the neighbourhood of Judea ; “ and the land of Egypt shall not escape. But Edom, Moab and the chief of the children of Ammon shall escape out of his hand.” The countries anciently called by those names shall escape his ravages, because they lie wholly out of his course in his march from Palestine to Egypt. “ But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver and over all the precious things of Egypt.” And some other nations in the African territory near Egypt, called “ Libyans and Ethiopians, or Cushites, shall be at his steps”—or shall afford him all the assistance which he demands in his expedition.

While he is in Egypt, “ tidings from the east and from the north shall trouble him.” What these tidings will be the prophet has not informed us. But from what follows we may conclude, they will announce the approach of some unexpected enemy, and perhaps dangerous insurrections and a general revolt in Judea ; for it is added, “ Therefore shall he go forth” out of Egypt “ *with great fury* to destroy and utterly to make away many.” He will suppress the opposition, destroy great multitudes and recover possession of the country.

“ And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain ;” or in Jerusalem, which stands on a mountain between two seas, the dead sea and the Mediterranean.

Though he plants his tents and his palace here in full confidence of the continuance of his former successes, yet “ he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.” By what means he shall come to

his end, the prophet has not said. As in other great events, so in this, human agency will doubtless be employed. But the manner of expression leads us to suppose, that there will be some grand and awful display of divine power, against which no human efforts will avail to defeat the concluding catastrophe of this mighty Drama. Paul, foretelling the destruction of the man of sin, says, "The Lord will consume him with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy him with the brightness of his coming."

If we were to judge only from the history of former nations, we should naturally conclude, that the gigantic power of the French empire, which has grown so fast and spread so wide, must, sooner or later, fall into ruins. This has been the fate of all mighty empires in ages past. And if this is the empire predicted by Daniel, we then have the word of prophecy, in addition to the analogy of providence, to assure us that it is destined to the same fate.

This event cannot be very remote. It may be within about 30 years, or it may be at the distance of half a century.

Daniel proceeds in detailing the great events of this momentous period.

"At that time," or about the time when the before mentioned events shall be accomplished, "shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of *thy* people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation to that time; and at that time shall the children of *thy* people be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the books."

Michael was considered as the guardian angel of the Jewish nation. The Jews were the children of Daniel's people. These kept, and many of them still keep, a register of their tribe and families, in expectation of repossessing their ancient inheri-

sances. These, at the time of the end, will be delivered from their present dispersions and oppressions, brought home to their own country and resettled in a national and converted state. This will be a time of unprecedented trouble ; but in the general convulsions, they will be delivered.

By what means their conversion and restoration will be effected, other prophets have foretold. “ A great nation, shadowing the sea with the wings of their ships, having converted them to the faith by the labours of their missionaries, shall bring them as a present to the Lord of hosts, even to mount Zion.”

“ And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.” These are the ten tribes, or the house of *Israel* in distinction from the house of *Judah*. The ten tribes have long been considered as lost and swallowed up in other nations ; as “ sleeping in the dust of the earth.” But many of the prophets foretel their final restoration. “ They shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” They will generally be found, and will acknowledge their descent from Jacob. Many of them will embrace the gospel and obtain everlasting life. But some will retain their infidelity to their shame and everlasting contempt. Exactly parallel to this prophecy is Ezekiel’s vision of the dry bones in the valley, which were brought together, bone to its bone, covered with flesh and sinews, animated with breath, and made to stand on their feet, an exceeding great army. “ These,” says the Almighty, “ are the *whole* house of *Israel*. Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and will bring you to the land of *Israel*.”

There are now great researches making by foreign missionaries for the ten tribes. And there have been discovered, in the East Indies, considerable

bodies of people, who call themselves the sons of *Israel*, and who possess those parts of the old Testament, which were written before the captivity of the ten tribes ; but not those parts which were written later. These were captivated about 150 years before the kingdom of *Judah*, and therefore could not have had much of the old Testament besides the books of Moses. That portion of the Bible, which they have, is written in an ancient Hebrew character.

The prophet next foretels, that the conversion of the *Jews* and *Israelites*, as well as of heathens, will be effected by the labours of missionaries. “ They that be *wise*,” or they that be *teachers*, “ shall shine as the brightness of the firmament ; and they that *turn many to righteousness* as the stars for ever and ever.—And many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.”

The gospel, we all know, was first spread in the world by missions ; and we are assured by prophecy, that the diffusion of it in the last days, and the conversion of Jews and Heathens will be effected by similar means. And, indeed, it can be effected in no other way. “ Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. How shall men believe in him, of whom they have not heard ? how shall they hear without a preacher ? and how shall men preach, except they be sent ?”

The missionary spirit of the present day bears a striking resemblance to the tenor of prophecy. Such a zeal for the spread of the gospel, as now appears, has never been known since the apostolic age. This is a new era in the Christian church. There are in our nation many missionary societies, and the greater part of them lately instituted. Besides these, there are many tract, and bible societies recently formed for supplying the poor with the holy scriptures and other religious books. There is a remark-

able spirit of liberality, patriotism and piety, prompting *Christians* to contribute to the important and noble purposes of these institutions.

The exertions in our nation, tho' they seem great, are small in comparison with those, which have been made, and are still making in Europe, especially in Great Britain. In that nation, notwithstanding the prodigious expenses of the war, and the support of a great number of charitable institutions for the benefit of the poor, immense sums are contributed for the spreading of the glorious gospel by the labors of missionaries and by the translation, printing and distribution of the inspired writings. Missionaries are sent into Africa and Asia as well as into the unenlightened parts of Europe. The inhabitants of India, China, Turkey and Arabia, begin to read in their own tongue the wonderful works of God. The Bible, in whole or in part, is translated and printed in ten of the Eastern languages, and is already commenced in the Chinese language. The good work is remarkably progressing. This is a substitute for that gift of tongues, by which the gospel was published in the Apostles' times. As the art of printing was then unknown the gift of tongues was necessary. This was both a mean of conveying the gospel, and, at the same time, an evidence of its truth. We have new evidence of its divinity from the fulfilment of prophecy, and means of spreading it by the happy invention of printing.

No sensible and serious person, who considers what has been done and is still doing to enlighten ignorant nations and spread among them the tidings of salvation, can doubt but that it is a work of God which he will make to prosper.

Such a work the prophet foretels. It may meet with opposition, but it will prevail. As one says, "Let infidels despise the passion for missions, and

laugh at the heroic passion for saving souls, we know assuredly, that it is the very same passion, which moved the breast of the Saviour, when he wept over Jerusalem ; and which inspired the holy fishermen of Judea, and the zealous tent maker of Tarsus, when they went forth accompanied by the divine presence to spread abroad in every place the sweet savor of the Redeemer's name."

I have now opened to you a most interesting prophecy, relating to the times in which we live.

The improvement of it you may expect in another discourse.

SERMON II.

DANIEL, XII. 10.

— NONE OF THE WICKED SHALL UNDER-
STAND, BUT THE WISE SHALL UNDERSTAND.

THESE words refer to a preceding prophecy, in which Daniel predicts certain great events to be accomplished in the last times, or towards the end of that period of 1260 years, in which the papacy shall exist. These events he describes in such a familiar manner, that he says, 'Though men resolved to do wickedly will not understand them, the wise, who seriously attend to them, will understand them, and will see their accordance to his description, whenever they shall come to pass.

The events, which are the subject of the prophecy contained in this and a part of the preceding chapter, I have in a former discourse endeavored to illustrate. I shall now lead your minds to an improvement of the subject.

I. We have before us a clear and decisive evidence of the truth and divinity of the holy scriptures.

“The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” They who lived in the days of miracles had evidence, which we have not, of the truth of revelation. But from the fulfilment of many prophecies since their days we have evidence which they had not. When, in the scriptures, events are foretold,

which human sagacity could not have conjectured ; and when we see in history the exact accomplishment of these events, we must conclude, that the predictions were uttered by divine inspiration, and the events brought to pass by divine providence.

Some infidels, to confute the evidence from prophecy, have foolishly alledged, that the prophecy was written after the event. This has been objected particularly against Daniel's prophecies. To this objection we need no other answer than what we see with our own eyes. The prophecies are now fulfilling. Many events foretold in them have been accomplished in our own days and in the days of our fathers. And we well know the prophetic books to be of great antiquity. *Josephus* made this allegation in the third century. We have his testimony to their ancient existence. We must therefore allow them to be given by divine inspiration ; for by the concession of infidels they have accurately described the predicted events.

The predictions now fulfilling must convince every man of ordinary intellect and common candour, that the scriptures are divine. Infidelity, in such a day as this, indicates an awful depravity of heart. The wise will understand. They, who will not understand, are bent on doing wickedly. Such men are not easily reclaimed. If an honest man has doubts concerning the authority of the scriptures, he certainly will wish his doubts removed ; he will apply himself to diligent and prayerful enquiry, and in this way they will be removed. The man, who labours to strengthen his doubts, and to infuse them into others, will wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived ; but " the meek God will guide in judgment, and the meek he will teach his way."

II. The prophecies, which we opened in our former discourse, clearly show us the times in which we live. And they are certainly momentous

times. We ought to realize our situation, learn our duty and attend to the means of our safety.

Calculation from the era, in which the papacy commenced, brings *us* down nearly to the time of its end. And the events of the present day are undeniably such, as the scripture assures *us* will appear at that time.

A power has arisen bearing all the discriminating signatures of that wonderful kingdom which was to appear in the last days. Its character, exploits and successes are the same.

Daniel and John, Peter and Paul have all described the last days as distinguished by the prevalence of infidelity in the Christian world. They have spoken of atheism as increasing with the decline of popery, until both coalesce into one. This we see verified. Atheism stands forth in Europe with greater effrontery than in preceding ages. The mummeries of the papal superstition are, indeed, more generally despised ; but with them the pure and rational religion of the gospel is more generally rejected. Popery is declining, not so much from a regard to true religion, as from a disregard to all religion.

If we can form an opinion from credible information ; from the open avowal of sentiments ; from the zealous circulation and ready reception of licentious publications, and from the immoral lives of many, on this side of the Atlantic, we may conclude that our own country is deeply tainted with the corruptions, which have brought down divine judgments on a great portion of Europe. Many who would not choose to be called atheists, and who perhaps ought not to be called such, maintain and endeavour to defend the principles, which lead to atheism. There are those who say, " If a man acts according to his opinion, whatever that opinion may be, he acts morally right." What is this but to

prostrate the difference between truth and falsehood—between right and wrong? It is implicitly to say, “There is no God, or he has no moral character, every man’s opinion is the standard of truth and rectitude for himself, and no man is accountable to any but himself.” On this principle religion is banished and society will be dissolved.

It is not uncommon to hear men say, “Religion and civil government have no connexion, and consequently religion does not concern men as rulers, or concern men in the choice of rulers.” What is this less than to say, “There is no such thing as religion?” For if it does not concern men in the relation of rulers, neither does it concern them in the relation of parents, or children, or tradesmen, or citizens. Whom then does it concern? Religion consists in a regard to all the duties of our various relations. If we exclude it from the relations of life, we exclude it from the world.

How many advocate the sentiment, that there is no future punishment, but good and bad men, if they exist at all, will be alike happy after death? The basis of this sentiment must be either that there is no difference between moral good and evil, or that God is not a moral governor, and has no right to punish. If this be a truth, we may all believe it, and may all act upon it; for we may be governed by truth. But if all men should act on this sentiment, we could not live in society. That cannot be a truth, which, in its direct influence, would depopulate the world.

The Apostle Peter, speaking of the scoffers, who should come in the last days, says, “They will deny Moses’ account of the flood, by which the world, being overflowed with water, perished.” And we know that, in the present day, there are such scoffers both in conversation and writing. And these certainly must be infidels. Isaiah, Jesus

Christ, Paul, Peter and the evangelists affirm a general deluge, which swept away the inhabitants of the earth. The man therefore who denies this, denies the authority of the whole scriptures.

Among the gloomy signs of the last days, one breaks forth of a different complexion. We see a wonderful zeal to spread the gospel by sending missionaries among unenlightened nations, as Daniel, John and others have foretold. We hear of their success in remote regions. We hear of new movements among the Jews, and of the discovery of people bearing strong marks of the ten tribes, who had for ages, been buried in obscurity.

From these appearances we must conclude that the end of popery and infidelity is swiftly advancing. There may be an awful conflict; but truth will prevail.

The end of these corruptions is what all Christians have expected, because it is expressly foretold; but concerning the *manner* in which it would come, many have entertained incorrect ideas. They have supposed, that papal and infidel nations would be reformed by rational conviction—that light, breaking in upon them, would discover to them their errors, and turn them from the power of satan unto God.

But nations, having sunk into deep corruption under the advantages of revelation, are seldom reclaimed merely by gentle means. There will be a concurrence of divine judgments. By these a great portion of the enemies of truth are destroyed; “and the remnant are affrighted and give glory to God.”

III. If we are now in the last times, great troubles are to be expected. These will fall with greatest weight on the open enemies of the truth.

Daniel, speaking of the present day, says, “There shall be a time of trouble such as never was since

there was a nation." St. Paul also warns us, that "in the last days perilous times will come." And he tells how they will come. "Men shall be lovers of themselves, proud, blasphemers, incontinent, fierce, covenant-breakers, disobedient to authority, despisers of good men, false accusers, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God."—"They shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy."

Such a state of religion and morals is in its nature perilous. It subverts government, or renders it capricious and oppressive. It destroys all confidence in government, and mutual confidence among citizens. When the Jews regarded not God, but proceeded from evil to evil, the prophet warned them, "Take ye heed every man of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother."

Another cause of troublous times will be the malignant influence of insidious emissaries in disseminating licentious principles, in setting nation against nation, and in creating divisions and inflaming animosities in the same nation. John foretels, that in this period the spirits of devils will go forth to gather the kings of the earth together to the battle of the great day. In reference to the same period Peter says, "There shall be *false teachers* among you, who *privily* shall bring in damnable heresies, denying the Lord who bought them, and bringing on themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. Presumptuous are they, self-willed, despisers of government, and not afraid to speak evil of dignities."

You will observe, that Peter speaks of these emissaries, not only as opposing religion and government, but as carrying on their nefarious designs *privily* and with *secret artifice*, so that many will

unsuspectingly follow their pernicious ways, until destruction comes upon them swiftly. They will profess to respect rational religion and constitutional government; they will say, "There is no increase of infidelity or of anarchy, as some whimsical or dishonest men pretend; but only an increase of knowledge and liberality." Thus they will conceal the hand, that, when matters are prepared, they may more effectually strike the blow. But discerning men will see through the disguise and perceive the danger. Paul says of them who resist the truth, "The time will come, when they shall proceed no further, for their folly shall be made manifest to all men."

Those will be times of great trouble by reason of unusual wars and convulsions in the earth. A king will stretch forth his hand on the countries, and many shall be overthrown. The kings of the earth will be gathered together to battle. The mighty power which has cast down many, will, in his turn, come to his end. His dying convulsions and expiring throws will shake many nations.

The *present* is a time of uncommon trouble. Such extensive wars, numerous revolutions, wanton spoliations, and national distresses have seldom, if ever, been experienced.

But the end is not yet. Many countries are still to be overthrown. I fear that greater troubles than the past are yet to come; these may fall on nations which have hitherto escaped; perhaps on us.

The administration of government in the papal territories of Europe has long been rigorous and oppressive. We have expected a change. We have hoped that the change would be effected in an easy way, by increasing light and virtue among the people. We have sometimes, in our national pride, flattered ourselves, that by our example of virtue and liberty, union and happiness, we should con-

tribute to a reform in the corrupt and despotic governments of the old world. But we now see our error. There is danger that our example will fail. The old corrupt governments will not be reformed by any example. They will be, or rather have been subverted by an invading power, and succeeded by governments more absolute and despotic. The latter probably will continue till the time, when a general reformation in religion begins. The gospel, when it has its proper influence, will meliorate the condition of men. Then they will lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty.

The spirit of prophecy, when it warns us of troublous times, kindly informs us what it is that makes the times troublous. It is the wickedness of mankind. They who would escape the troubles, must avoid that wickedness, which is the cause of them, and use their influence to correct the false sentiments and reform the corrupt manners of all around them.

This leads us to add,

IV. If we, as a people, hope to escape the evils, which are come and coming on guilty nations, we must avoid an adoption of their licentious principles, and an imitation of their corrupt manners; and must cautiously shun all such connexion with them, as would naturally tend to introduce those principles and manners.

The angel says to Daniel, "There shall be a time of trouble, such as never was—but the children of thy people shall be delivered." If the converted Jews will be delivered, we may believe that Christian nations, who maintain the purity of their religion, will be delivered also.

John, describing the awful judgments of the last times, stops in the midst of his subject, to interpose an exhortation from the great head of the church. "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is

he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame." And foretelling the catastrophe of mystical Babylon, he addresses an admonitory caution to the church ; " I heard a voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues ; for her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities."

If there be in the world an antichristian power which is soon to fall, (and we all know there is such a power,) it is our wisdom to stand at such a cautious distance from her, as not to be crushed by her fall, and involved in her ruin. It is certain, that they who come into her embraces, will share in her catastrophe. On this subject the scripture is so plain and explicit, that every one who regards its authority, will feel the solemn importance of its warnings.

The warnings of prophecy are repeated and enforced by the voice of providence. The dreadful calamities of the times have fallen on that part of the world which is nominally Christian ; and fallen with accumulated weight on the *papal* nations.

The heathen nations are comparatively in a state of tranquility. Hence they are in a condition to receive the messengers sent to carry the gospel among them. Such was the state of the world in the times of the Apostles. While the tumults and persecutions in Judea rendered their residence there unsafe, peace among the gentiles encouraged their visits to them and facilitated their success.

I have said, the calamities of the times have fallen with principal severity on the *papal* nations. Some states *called protestant* have, indeed, shared in these calamities ; as the United Provinces, the Cantons of Switzerland and the dominions of Prussia. But it is the religion, not the name of *protes-*

antism, which will be a security. Some portions of those states have been professedly *papal* ; and here have been the hot beds of atheism and illuminism. “ Holland has been the grand asylum of the infidelity of the north. Its polluted presses have teemed with the blasphemous productions of Voltaire and his associates. The Helvetic Confederacy was in name partly papal and partly protestant, but in reality tainted with atheism to its very core. And Voltaire boasted, that in Calvin’s own town, Geneva, there were only a few beggarly fellows, who believed in Christ ; and from thence to Berne there was not a christian to be found.” Frederick the great, the king of Prussia, patronized Voltaire, and cooperated with him in spreading the principles of atheism in his dominions. It is therefore no wonder, that the judgments of God have fallen in so awful a manner on those countries.

A writer of our own* observes, “ that the French nation are made strong, as the Chaldeans were of old, to execute God’s judgments on a guilty world. Though *they* mean not so, yet they appear at this day to be instruments in God’s hand for this purpose.”

It is remarkable, that *that* nation, which first openly renounced the Deity, was the first to feel his judgments, and then to be the principal executioner of his judgments on others ; and that she has all along been a principal sufferer.

It will be natural to enquire, what *our* nation must expect in these troublous times. But I cannot tell, unless I am first told, how she will conduct.

Our nation is no where a *distinct* subject of prophecy. This country was unknown in the days of the prophets. If it was then inhabited, it was not in a state of civilization. The prophecies which respect us must be general, and the same which respect others of similar character.

* Bacon.

We are a people who enjoy the gospel. God makes a difference between *heathen* nations, and *apostate* nations. So he evidently does at this day—so he has ever done in former days. He said to his ancient people, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.” If we put the gospel from us in principle and practice—if we so intimately associate with corrupt and infidel nations, as to be contaminated with their licentious principles and assimilated to them in their vicious manners, we shall most certainly share with them in the plagues, which are come and coming on them. But if, according to the express command of our Lord, we come out from among them, and are careful to preserve the purity and extend the influence of the gospel, we shall enjoy a happy exemption from those dreadful calamities.

If, in this favoured and enlightened land, the time should come, when the people are content to live without a stated ministry ; or when the necessary support of the ministry is publicly withdrawn ; or when men of despicable education, licentious principles or corrupt morals are put in the place of gospel ministers ; or when open infidels and despisers of the gospel fill the several departments of government ; then we may be assured, that the judgments of God are coming upon us, and they will not linger.

Our government is constitutionally republican. The maintenance of such a government depends on the virtue of the people ; and national virtue depends on the influence of religion. And the national character is in nothing more clearly demonstrated, than in the choice which the people make of men to rule over them.

We are, by divine direction, to “look out from among us able men, men of truth, men who fear

God and hate covetousness, and appoint *them* to be rulers.”—“He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.” And it is the character both of a good ruler and a good citizen, that “in his eyes a vile person is contemned, but he honoureth them who fear the Lord.”

If we believe the gospel to be true, and feel it to be important, let us openly profess and obey it, and declare to the world that we are not ashamed of it. This you will all acknowledge to be your duty, because you all know it to be expressly commanded. If I now call upon you to profess your faith in the gospel, I only lay before you a divine requirement. Why then do you neglect—why do you delay to do this?

You can assign no sufficient reason. You intend to perform the duty. But when? Is it not a *present* duty? If you delay to do that, which you ought to do without delay, you live in continued disobedience.

But, then, “let every one, who nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.” If you call Christ your Lord, and eat and drink in his presence, and still are workers of iniquity, he will appoint you your portion with unbelievers.

God’s judgments are abroad in the earth; learn righteousness. His judgments threaten our land; prepare to meet him. He still suspends the execution of his severest wrath. In the mean time, he hearkens and hears, whether any man speak aright; whether any man repent of his wickedness, saying, what have I done?

A general reformation will certainly prevent our ruin. A few good men by their prayers may prevail to avert divine anger, and by their example may do much to restrain the progress of iniquity. At least they will save their own souls.

When you hear from the word of prophecy, that times of great trouble are before us, you feel for your children, who probably are to live in troublous times. What then ought you to do ?

Maintain religion in your houses ; command your children to keep the way of the Lord ; instruct them in this way ; walk before them in it. Thus you will best prepare them for the times, in which they are to live, whether they may be troublous or prosperous. Thus you will best assist them in preparing for that world, where no adversity can come. Encourage them in the practice and in the profession of religion ; warn them against the instructions which cause to err from the words of knowledge ; guard them against the connexions which would seduce them from the ways of virtue.

My young friends ; we fear that evil days are before you. The times in which you live are corrupt ; those in which you are to live may be more perilous. “ Walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil,” and may be more so. Be ye well established in the principles of religion, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, nor moved from the hope of your calling.

Whatever may be the state of the country in future years, one thing is certain ; Death and eternity are before you. Therefore attend immediately to the work of your salvation. This is what first concerns you. It concerns you on this very day. Let this be a day of repentance—a day of salvation. Now, before you leave this house, make a dedication of yourselves to God ; form a humble resolution of future piety and virtue ; lift up a petition to God for his grace to confirm this resolution, and to assist your execution of it ; encourage one another, in time to come, in pursuing a religious life ; shun the company of the impious and profane ; become the companions of them who fear God ; join your-

selves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, which shall not be forgotten.

If we could see you of the rising generation generally devoting yourselves to God, we might conclude, that there is a blessing in store for the land. God spared Nineveh in behalf of the children, who were too young to discern between good and evil. Much rather would he spare a guilty nation, whose children, as soon as they could discern between good and evil, chose the good and refused the evil; for then there would be a prospect, not only of the existence of religion for one generation more, but of the transmission of it to many future generations. In such a pleasing appearance we might apply the promise of God communicated to the people of Israel by the prophet Isaiah, "Thus saith the Lord, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it; so will I do for my servants' sake, that I may not destroy them all. And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my holy mountain, and mine elect shall long inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there."

AMEN.