

TWO SERMONS,

DELIVERED ON WEDNESDAY, THE 30th DAY
OF NOVEMBER, 1808.

BEING A DAY APPOINTED BY THE

PRESBYTERY OF WASHINGTON

FOR THE EXERCISES OF

FASTING, HUMILIATION, AND PRAYER,

ON ACCOUNT OF THE ALARMING ASPECT OF DIVINE
PROVIDENCE TO OUR COUNTRY.



BY ALEXANDER PROUDFIT, A. M.

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL SALEM.



PUBLISHED AT THE SPECIAL REQUEST OF HIS SESSION.



*If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall pre-
pare himself to the battle?.....I. COR. XIV. 8.*

SALEM:

PRINTED BY DODD & RUMSEY.....1808.

OUR
DANGER, &c.

JEREMIAH v. 29.

SHALL NOT MY SOUL BE AVENGED ON SUCH A NATION AS THIS.

THIS prophet appeared in a very degenerate period of the Jewish church. Every order of that people, from the humble peasant to the prince on the throne, had apostatized from the true God, and had lost that simplicity in his worship, and that zeal for his name which were their former characteristic and glory. The mass of the people, *forfaking the Lord God of their fathers*, had mingled in all the absurdities of the idolatry of the nations around them : their princes *did evil in the sight of Jehovah*, and no longer ruled for his glory, or the good of their subjects : even those who were called to minister at the altar degraded both themselves and their office by a servile, corrupt, mercenary spirit : *The sun had also gone down upon their prophets ; these lights of Israel* were now darkened through error of principle, and licentiousness of practice ; instead of stemming the torrent of general defection by exposing with a holy heroism the iniquities of all classes, they rolled along with the stream, and rather tended to swell and infuriate it by *prophecying a false vision, and the deceit of their own hearts*. There is not a more awful presage of speedy

destruction to a nation than when, as the prophet expresses it, *there is like people, like priest* ; when corruption of manners generally prevails, and the messengers of the Lord of hosts have neither firmness nor fidelity to make an open opposition.

THE Lord God, grieved and provoked with these abominations, gently, yet severely reminds Israel of her former zeal for his glory, and his delight in her as his peculiar people. *I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, and the love of thine espousals : Israel was holiness to the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase.* He then appeals to heaven and earth, whether an example of such ingratitude and obstinacy could be found in any other nation. *Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done : she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot : and I said after she had done all these things, turn thou unto me, but she returned not : their transgressions are many, and their backslidings are increased, how shall I pardon thee for this ?* At last worn out with their iniquities, and resolved to make a full end of them as a people altogether incorrigible, Jehovah calls upon Jeremiah to arise and at the peril of his own soul not to refuse denouncing their doom ; *Thou therefore gird up thy loins and arise and speak unto them all that I command thee ; be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. Shall not I visit for these things saith the Lord ; “ Is not my wrath revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of*

man ? Can I consistently with the purity and rectitude of my nature ; can I consistently with my character as the moral governor of the world pass by with impunity these wanton, these repeated, these gross violations of my law ? *Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this ?*

You will readily notice that the expression, *shall not my soul be avenged*, is rather uncommon ; it is used after the manner of men and represents the great God as earnestly and unalterably bent on his purpose ; it is designed to express both the certainty and the severity of the judgments to be executed on infatuated Israel.

THIS day was set a part for the solemn exercises of fasting, humiliation and prayer on account of the alarming aspect of providence to our country. We are not called merely to deprecate that wrath which apparently hangs over our nation ; they are greatly mistaken who imagine that this should be our only, or even our principal exercise : we ought to be deeply impressed that our national offences are the cause of our national calamities ; we ought impartially to examine what transgression on our part has kindled *this hot displeasure* ; to acknowledge the righteousness of Jehovah in all the judgments with which we are threatened ; to improve by faith the atonement of his Eternal Son as the only mean of our reconciliation ; to return to him in the exercise of unfeigned repentance, and then earnestly to plead with an offended God that *in the midst of wrath he would remember mercy*.

IN order to assist you in these important exercises it may be proper,

I. To consider those crimes with which as a nation we are obviously chargeable—and

II. THOSE evidences of divine *vengeance* which we have occasionally felt and under which we now suffer.

i. As a nation, we are chargeable with shameful ingratitude for privileges enjoyed. It must be fresh in your own recollection when the spot where we now worship was ravaged by the incursions of a formidable, unpitying foe; when the murderous savage with his tomahawk and scalping knife prowled around your dwellings, often piercing your souls with his terrific yells; when the doors of your sanctuary were shut up; when your habitations* were left desolate; when the son, torn from the arms of his mother, and the husband from the embraces of his wife, were exposed to the toils and dangers of the

** The British army under the command of General Burgoyne, in their descent from Canada, marched along the Hudson river, about sixteen miles to the west of Salem; but small detachments of the enemy penetrated that and the neighboring towns, plundering the inhabitants: Parties of Indians also sallied out through these settlements, and murdered a whole family in the vicinity of Salem; and the town was almost entirely evacuated in August of 1777, when the inhabitants, through apprehension of the enemy, fled for shelter into the interior of the country.*

field; and you were driven to strangers for a miserable shelter from the inclemency of the season. In that hour of peril and panic, the avenger of wrongs interposed in your behalf; disconcerted the adversary; crowned with victory equally unexpected and signal* your feeble exertions, and restored you to the peaceful possession of your own habitations. Since the revolutionary war, which terminated in the independence of our country, we have enjoyed a degree of prosperity without a parallel in the history of any nation; We are favored with a constitution probably the most mild, the most equitable, and, while supported by public virtue, the most diffusive of general happiness that was ever framed by man. While our ears have often heard the thunder of distant war; while almost every arrival upon our coasts has brought the intelligence of the murderous battle fought; of other wives made widows, and other children fatherless; of old kingdoms convulsed, and new empires erected on their ruins, our peace has been uninterrupted: *We have eat every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drank every one of the waters of his cistern,* without any to annoy or alarm: While famine has waved her scourge over other countries and driven thousands of the inhabitants to the necessity of begging their bread, we have literally rolled in worldly afflu-

* *The memorable defeat and capture of General Burgoyne took place about the 17th of October, when the inhabitants returned to their own possessions.*

ence ; our soil, under the husbandman's cultivation, has yielded a rich profusion of fruits, and our commerce has wafted upon our shores the productions of every foreign clime. These outward privileges have been crowned with the infinitely more precious means of salvation. We have enjoyed the *oracles of the living God* in our own language, and the various ordinances of his worship in their native simplicity and purity. When privileges so pre-eminent are bestowed on a person or a people, returns of thanksgiving, and obedience are expected in proportion ; but the blessings heaped upon us as a nation have been equalled only by our ingratitude and impiety. Have we as individuals, been walking in the fear of the Lord, regulating ourselves by his word as the rule, and consulting his glory as the highest end of our lives ? As families have we been offering up the tribute of praise to the common Author of our mercies ; has each been encouraging the other to the performance of every civil, and social, and religious duty ; have we been *thus teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs* ? Have we as a nation exceeded all others in gratitude, as we have been elevated above them in privilege ? As citizens, as ministers, as magistrates have we advanced hand in hand, each aiming at the good of the whole ; and all promoting the glory of Him who raised us to a rank so exalted among the nations of the earth ? How reverse have been our character, and conduct ? More ungrateful, more infatuated than *Jeshurun* we have

waxed fat ; we have forgotten the God that made us, who redeemed us in the hour of jeopardy, and lightly esteemed the rock of our salvation. The distinguishing goodness of God instead of leading us to repentance, to reformation of life has produced pride, presumptuousness, licentiousness of principle, and profligacy of manners. Our affluence, which ought to have flowed in supplying the wants of the indigent ; in supporting the ordinances of religion ; in propagating the gospel through the frontier settlements ; and in conveying to the perishing heathen the means of salvation, has been prostituted to luxury of living ; to extravagance of dress ; to the aggrandizement of our families ; or in adding house to house and farm to farm. Our language has corresponded with that of the presumptuous monarch of Egypt, *Who is the Lord that we should obey him ?* “ Our gold, our silver, our possessions are our own, and for the gratification of our own appetites they shall be employed.” Our ingratitude is thus a sin of high aggravation, and is one cause why the Lord God is pleading his controversy with our land. *Hear O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken ; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. They have forsaken the Lord ; they have provoked the holy one of Israel to anger, they have gone away backward.* Might he not in righteous indignation have added, *Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries ; I will avenge me of mine enemies ?*

2. OUR daring impiety manifested by a contempt

of God, and his ordinances, is another cause of his controversy ; one for which we ought this day to exercise humiliation in his sight. How is his infinitely venerable name profaned in the unnecessary, irreverend use of it by some, and in the impious oaths and imprecations of others ? Are not his ordinances neglected and despised by many, who live within reach of the sanctuary, and who, by their parents, were early devoted to his service in baptism ? Is not that precious *volume* the bible ; *that volume* which affords the most reviving expressions of Jehovah's love, and constitutes the broad charter of all our privileges and prospects ; is not that volume regarded by some with neglect and indifference ; by others has it not been derided as the offspring of superstition, or priestcraft ? Does not a licentious infidelity obviously pervade the higher orders of society in our country ? Was not that man who has appeared as one of the most open, bold, unblushing champions in this cause ; who has exhausted his talents in the derision of every thing sacred ; who has uttered the foulest blasphemies, which a polluted imagination could conceive, against the Son of God, against his Person, against the mysteries of his gospel, and the ministers of his religion ; has not that man been invited to this country by the leading men of our nation ; has he not been corresponded with, and cared for since his arrival ? If this circumstance does not avow their real enmity to the saviour's cross, it at least betrays an alarming indifference to its interests : And I am bold to assert that those who are hostile to our re-

ligion cannot be the real friends of our liberty, whatever be their political pretensions. Divine revelation is the great charter of our rights as men, no less than of our privileges and prospects as christians; it proclaims to man his dignified origin, as *created after the image of God*; it inspires the individual with the most exalted sense of his own importance, by declaring that *the Lord God hath made of one blood all men to dwell upon the earth*, and consequently that all are naturally possessed of certain, equal, unalienable rights: This constitutes the greatest possible security for social order among men by enjoining us *to live soberly, righteously and Godly; to do justly, to love mercy, and walk humbly with our God*. These are not the sentiments merely of the divine; they are maxims firmly believed and openly avowed by the most accomplished legislators that ever adorned the world.— Suffice it to mention the observations* of Him whom

* *His Excellency GEORGE WASHINGTON, in his last address to the citizens of the United States.*—“Christianity,” says Montesque, a celebrated French writer, “has prevented the establishment of despotism in Ethiopia, notwithstanding its situation in the midst of African despotic states.” And Hume, although a malignant enemy to religion, has acknowledged that “the precious sparks of liberty were kindled by the puritans in England, and to them the English owe the whole freedom of their constitution.” I cannot help remarking that the observations of these authors are literally exemplified in New-England. There is no part of the christian world where pure religion more eminently flourished than in those states for generations after their first settlement; and

all revered as equally the Statesman, the Hero, the Patriot ; on whom the eyes of every American citizen were fastened as the brightest ornament of our country ; our pride in peace ; our shield in war ; and, under God, the instrument of incalculable blessings to our nation. “ Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness ; these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens : The mere politician equally with the pious man ought to respect, and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity.”

AGAIN, is not the holy sabbath, *that rest which is ordained for the people of God ; that institution which is calculated to secure health to the body, no less than happiness to the soul ; that institution which is a lively memorial of the resurrection of our crucified Lord, and furnishes a constant pledge of our own resurrection, is not this day openly prostituted without a blush, and without remorse ? Is it not profaned by some in idleness and amusements ; by others in unnecessary visits, and by many in the deli-*

there is perhaps no part of the globe, where the principles of rational liberty are better understood, or more zealously vindicated. On the other hand, what probably paved the way for the easy introduction of despotism in France than the general infidelity and licentiousness of the people.

berate prosecution of their secular employments ? Is not the peaceful worshiper often interrupted and insulted as he repairs to, or retires from the temple of his God, by the wanton transgressors of that sacred institution ? And does it not render our guilt more aggravated, and expose us to severer *vengeance*, that this profanation of the Sabbath is permitted in part by public authority ? Our Legislature* has explicitly provided that no man “removing his family, or household furniture” shall be detained on that day. Does not this toleration virtually *make void* the command of Jehovah who had enjoined, TAKE HEED TO YOURSELVES, AND BEAR NO BUR-

* *During the discussion of a bill relating to the Sabbath, which was brought before the Legislature some years since, a member was heard in the street to “damn the Sabbath and all its advocates.” I mention this circumstance merely, to shew that in the election of the unprincipled, indecent man to public office, we not merely evince a want of zeal for God, a want of concern for the interests of morality, but a great want of respect to ourselves. Petitions in support of that bill were poured in from various parts of the state, and a single copy of the petition from the city of New-York, as was stated in a public paper, had eighteen hundred names annexed to it. As citizens of a free government we possess the right in a respectful manner to petition our legislative bodies, and our petitions, especially when presented by a large and respectable part of the state, are entitled to respectful attention. But in the instance of the member above mentioned, the maxim holds true, that he who does not fear God will not regard man, not even his constituents from whom all his little importance is derived.*

DEN ON THE SABBATH DAY, *nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem ; neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day, neither do ye any work, but hallow the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers.* Have we not reason to fear that the Lord God, provoked by our impiety, will execute upon us the vengeance denounced against the nation of Israel, *I will draw out a sword after you, and make your cities waste. Then shall the land enjoy her Sabbaths as long as it lieth desolate, and ye shall be in your enemies country ; even then shall the land rest and enjoy her Sabbaths.*

3. THE general, and very gross corruption of public morals is another cause of the divine displeasure with us as a nation. May not the records of our courts of justice testify how common are the crimes of false swearing, and forgery ; crimes peculiarly offensive to Jehovah ; and which tend to sap the very foundation of social order among men ? Do not our daily prints announce the very alarming increase of bankruptcies in our country ? Probably one thousand instances of private failure occur now, where not one occurred twenty years ago. This fact evinces the corruption of public morals, as these failures must ordinarily proceed either from a concealment of property with a view to defraud the creditor, or from a mode of living utterly beyond our ability. Is not that most unnatural, most horrid of all crimes, self-murder, become mournfully prevalent among us ? Is it not also a fashionable thing ;

is it not considered the test of real heroism, the characteristic of the man of honor to take, or to aim at taking the life of another in dueling? and is not this murderous* practice publicly sanctioned by the advancement of such offenders to stations of emolument and honor? Have we not this moment some standing high in office in our own state, and in the United States, whose consciences are stained with the guilt, and whose hands are encrimsoned with the blood of their fellow-men? Can we expect that our country, in over-looking with impunity this daring offence, will escape the vengeance of him who has solemnly ordained that, WHOSO SHEDDETH MAN'S BLOOD BY MAN SHALL HIS BLOOD BE SHED, FOR IN THE IMAGE OF GOD MADE HE HIM.

How common among us are the vices of intemperate drinking, of rioting, of gambling and swearing? Are there not some men presiding on the bench

** Is this epithet pronounced harsh; it is supported by the judicial testimony of an honorable gentleman of our own age and country; by one whose benevolence of heart must excite the affection, and whose integrity and capacity in his office command the esteem of all who know him. "As murder in contemplation of law essentially consists in deliberately killing a fellow creature, it is obvious where death ensues in a duel, that it is generally speaking the most aggravated species of murder, because it is accompanied with every species of cool premeditation that a spirit of envy could dictate."*
—Charge to the Grand Jury of Reading, by the Honorable JACOB RUSH, Esq.

of civil justice who are grossly profane in their conversation ; who have lived in repeated acts of uncleanness ; who are devoted to gambling, and by whom the Lord's day is often spent in their worldly occupations ? This dissipation of conduct is offensive in any man but accompanied with peculiar aggravations in the magistrate who explicitly is pronounced a MINISTER OF GOD FOR GOOD to others : it is a direct prostitution of his sacred function, and renders him a *terror not to evil works, but to the good*. Civil government is as really an ordinance of Jehovah, as ecclesiastical government ; he, therefore, who sustains an office in the state ought to aim at purity of conversation, no less than he who sustains an office in the church ; and when they who *rule* in either capacity lose sight of the solemnity of their station, they degrade both themselves and their office. It is the uniform, the upright, the dignified deportment of the man which gives majesty to the minister : it is no less the uniform, the upright, the dignified deportment of the man which gives majesty to the magistrate. Besides, a wanton dissipated conduct in those who sustain the office of the civil magistracy has a tendency to demoralize society at large. When the root of a tree is rotten, the branches cannot remain verdant, and flourishing ; if the fountain itself be polluted, we cannot expect the stream to be pure, and when the head of the body politic becomes disordered the deadly contagion necessarily spreads through all parts of the system.

There is another evidence of public corruption which I dare not pass over unnoticed : I mean the obvious prostitution of the *right of suffrage*. In our free government the choice of all rulers either immediately or remotely depends on the people. This right of electing our own representation is the great privilege for which our fathers fought, and which is bequeathed to us, sealed with the blood of thousands ; this is a privilege for which *many* of you fought, and for the purchase of which *some* of you bled : It is the full enjoyment of this right which distinguishes the citizen from the subject ; which exalts the freeman in one country above the abject, insulted, degraded slave in another country : But is not this right criminally prostituted among us ? What is the primary qualification which is ordinarily sought in the candidate for public office ? Do we attend to the admonition prescribed by Eternal truth, *He that RULETH over men must be JUST, RULING in the FEAR of Jehovah* ? Have we pursued the maxim delivered by the wisest of men, and the most magnificent, prosperous of Princes, *RIGHTEOUSNESS EXALTETH A NATION*, and offered our suffrages for those who in private life were patterns of righteousness, and as rulers would probably use their influence for promoting it among others ? Have we not more generally enquired, “ where is the decided, ardent partizan ; the man who will most zealously adhere to that political section to which we belong,” without regard to moral, or religious, or even intellectual quali-

fications? In the warmth of party-spirit have we not contributed to the advancement of those who were the known enemies of religion, and have allowed themselves in falsely flandering its ministers? On this day of humiliation as the messenger of the Lord of hosts, and as I desire to be found faithful to my trust when the storm is blackening over us, I bear my testimony against the promotion of unprincipled, immoral, impious men as a most aggravated iniquity in our land; and I believe, as firmly as I believe my existence, that without speedy and special repentance on our part, this insult to the Lord of hosts will bring wrath upon our nation, *until both our ears will tingle*. Has he not most solemnly forewarned us that, *when righteous men are in authority the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule the land mourneth*? Besides, the election of men to public office who are destitute of moral rectitude, is impolitic in the extreme, and puts in jeopardy our most important interests as citizens. Hear the sentiment of a reverend member who adorned our counsels during the struggle with Great-Britain; one in whom were united the eminent divine, the enlightened statesman, and the uncorrupted, ardent patriot. “Those who wish well to the state ought to choose to places of trust men of inward principle, justified by exemplary conversation. Is it reasonable to expect wisdom from the ignorant; fidelity from the profligate; or application to public business from men of dissipated life? Is it reasonable to commit the public revenue to one who has wasted his own nat-

mony ? Those therefore who pay no respect to religion and sobriety in those whom they send to the Legislature of any state, are guilty of the greatest absurdity, and will soon pay dear for their folly. Let a man's zeal, professions, or even principles as to political measures be what they may, if he is without personal integrity and private virtue, he is not to be trusted. I think we have had some instances of men who have roared in taverns for liberty, and been most noisy in public meetings, who have become traitors in a little time. Suffer me on this subject to make another remark. With what judgment will laws against immorality be made, or with what vigor will they be executed by those who are profane and immoral in their own practice. Let us suppose a magistrate on the bench of justice, administering an oath to a witness or passing sentence of death upon a criminal and putting him in mind of a judgment to come. With what propriety, dignity, or force can any of these be done by one who is known to be a blasphemer, an infidel, or by whom in his convivial hours everything serious or sacred is treated with scorn."*

PERMIT me to notice as another cause of the divine displeasure those bitter contentions, those mutual reproaches which abound among us. What are our seasons of election but seasons of detraction, and defamation, by which the passions of each other are in-

** Dr. Witherspoon, in his sermons, delivered on a general fast at the commencement, and a general thanksgiving, at the conclusion of the late revolution.*

named ? What liberties are frequently taken in reproaching public men, and misrepresenting public measures. Does not the living God explicitly forbid the indulgence of *haired, variance, emulations, wrath and heresies* ? An untender, unforbearing spirit between man and man is always inexcusable, but it is peculiarly offensive when cherished by those who are citizens of the same commonwealth ; whose civil and social interests are intimately blended together. In republican forms of government, where public virtue is the great pillar on which the *government* rests, a degree of party spirit may be profitable ; one portion of the community thus proves a “ watch-tower ” to the other ; but when this spirit becomes outrageous and infuriated, when jealousy pervades every class of society, and extinguishes almost every spark of mutual confidence, it proves equally reproachful, and ruinous.

THESE are a few of those provocations with which we are chargeable as a people, and for which without sincere repentance on our part, the scourge of a righteous God will unavoidably overtake us. For such provocations were his judgments formerly denounced against even his favorite Israel, and owing to their obstinate impenitence were finally executed in their utter destruction. *If ye will not hearken unto me, saith Jehovah, and do all my commandments : and if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments ; I also will do this unto you ; I will appoint unto you terror, consumption, and the*

burning ague that shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart ; and ye shall sow your seed, and your enemies shall eat it ; and I will make your cities waste and bring your sanctuary into d. solation. Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies land, even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her sabbaths. Again, If ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day ; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem and it shall not be quenched.

BRETHREN, when we read these fearful denunciations, and then contemplate our own conduct, who must not tremble for his country ? Was the holy sabbath more generally, or wantonly profaned in Judea, than in America ? Were the streets of Jerusalem more frequently polluted by the unhallowed buyer and seller on that day, than are the streets of our own settlements and villages and cities ? Must we not rationally expect *that the soul of our offended sovereign will be avenged on such a nation as ours ?* Is the violation of his law less aggravated among us whose light is more clear, whose privileges are more exalted than among them ; or is the Lord God less righteous to avenge the quarrel of his covenant ? Nay, have not our judgments already commenced ?

To consider the evidences of divine wrath which we have occasionally experienced, and under which we now suffer, was the second part of our subject, and demands our attention.

1. **HAS not a Holy God often plead his controversy with our land by a fearful pestilence ?** Receiving its commission from on high, has not this scourge gone abroad through our country, and visited in their turn our cities from the northern to the southern extremities of the union ? In its hostile career has it not desolated for a season the sanctuaries of God ; driven from their abodes thousands of our citizens, and mingled in sudden promiscuous ruin the babe, the youth and the hoary head ?

As another mark of his indignation, and another mean of reclaiming an ungrateful apostatizing people, has he not commissioned the fire to become the avenger of his quarrel ? Has not this devouring element laid waste in some degree many of our cities, and reduced from affluence to poverty hundreds of their inhabitants ? The messengers of Jehovah's wrath have not been confined to our cities, but have occasionally visited all parts of the country. The insect, an army small, imperceptible, yet irresistible, has marched through the land, and cut down in its progress, the staff of life. Before it our fields were cloathed with verdure, and flourishing *as the garden of Eden*, but behind it *a desolate wilderness*. Did he not in one year *shut up the windows of heaven*, refusing to us *the early and latter rain in their season* ; and by intemperate rains in another year did he not destroy the fruits of the earth, blast the hopes of the husbandman, and alarm with apprehensions of *cleanness of teeth* ? Such are the scourges which we have occasionally felt in

years that are 'past ; such the expressions of divine indignation under which our land has often trembled : Natural causes have been ingeniously assigned for all these calamities : Presumptuous, impious mortals would fondly exclude Jehovah from all agency in the world, as they extinguish every generous impulse of his fear and love in their own hearts : Every occurrence, whether prosperous or adverse, is ascribed by them to secondary means ; but *the man of wisdom* will consider them *as coming forth from the Lord of hosts*, and as visitations either of his mercy or wrath. *Is there evil in the city ; is there evil in the country, and the Lord hath not done it ?* Does the pestilence consume the persons of our citizens, or the fire devour their property ? Does the rain prove our scourge in one year, or the draught in another, or the *mildew* in another without his permission and appointment. They are alike the ministers of almighty God ; they come only at his call, and they continue to fulfil the high commission received from his hand. Thus he declared to Israel formerly, and thus he may declare to America now, *I have withholden the rain from you when there were yet three months to the harvest : I have smitten you with blasting and mildew : I have sent among thee pestilence after the manner of Egypt : I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.*

For all these his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. Is not our nation trembling at this moment under awful appearances of the divine

displeasure ? Has not the cloud collected, and spread, and darkened every part of our horizon, and is seemingly ready to burst forth in our destruction ? Are we not now assembled in this sanctuary for the very purpose of deprecating the displeasure of our God ; of confessing and mourning over our national guilt as the procuring cause, and to implore his return in loving kindness to our land ? *The anger of the Lord hath divided us as a people ; he no longer regards us.* Does not a diversity of sentiment ; does not alienation of affection almost universally prevail ? Has not mutual confidence departed from our fellow-citizens, and the fell demon of discord succeeded in its room ? Is not the brother alienated from his brother ; the son from his father ; the neighbor from his neighbor ; the citizen from the magistrate ? Nay, has not mutual confidence departed in some instances from the spiritual pastor and the people of his charge ? Is it not a notorious fact that if the servants of the cross remain faithful to their trust ; if they expose *without partiality and without hypocrisy* the corruptions of men and magistrates, they are immediately slandered in public houses and public prints ; they are represented as rallying under the standard of party, and as converting their pulpits into political engines. Have not these jealousies, these contentions diffused their deadly influence through every part of the community ? Do they not tend to distract the proceedings of every assembly, from the petit-jury up to the highest deliberative counsel in the nation ? Has it not become a

matter of course that a measure proposed by one class of the community will be opposed and reprobated by the other ? Although we are citizens of the same commonwealth, and united by the dearest social connections ; although we have all that is interesting to us in time, our property, our liberty, our religion, our lives embarked on the same bottom, yet we mark the movements of each other with all the suspicion of the avowed, irreconcilable enemy. This alienation of heart ; those bitter revilings I formerly mentioned as our sin ; I would now mention them as a most deplorable calamity, and as an evident, very awful proof of the Lord's controversy with us. It is an old proverb, uttered by an infallible teacher, that *a house divided against itself cannot stand*. When we see a particular family split up into factions ; each member torturing the feelings, crucifying the character, and opposing the interests of the other, we conclude without hesitancy that the Lord has departed from that house, and that its desolation is near. It is not less true of nations than of particular families, unite and you establish ; divide and you destroy.—When Jehovah denounced the overthrow of Egypt for their contempt of his name, and the cruelties which they had perpetrated upon his people, he declares, *I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians, and they shall fight every man against his brother, and every man against his neighbor ; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom*. May we not therefore consider our internal dissensions and distractions as coming forth

from the Lord of hosts, and as his righteous judgment upon our guilty land ? Are we not constrained to deplore in the plaintive language of the prophet, The anger of Jehovah hath divided us ; Manasseh against Ephraim, and Ephraim against Manasseh, and they together shall be against Judah.

FOR all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. We are now pressed down under a general and heavy calamity : our commerce, the chief source of wealth to the individual, and of revenue to the government, is in a great measure destroyed, and even our peace is endangered by the hostile appearance of foreign nations. More than a year have we suffered under these complicated evils, and their effects have produced embarrassment among all classes of society. No longer is employment offered as formerly to the laborer ; no longer is the toil of the husbandman rewarded by an equal compensation for his produce ; no longer is the merchant animated to enterprise by success in his trade ; no longer are our harbors enlivened by a race of hardy, generous seamen ; no longer does our canvass whiten the ocean ; no longer do our ships return wafting upon our shores the wealth, and the luxuries of every clime : Different causes are assigned for this sudden, calamitous reverse of our situation : by some it is attributed to the want of wisdom and energy in our administration ; by others to the intollerant, oppressive measures of Britain ; by others to the ambition, intrigues, and corrupting influence of France, but this

also must be considered as coming forth from the Lord of hosts, and by this he is avenging his quarrel with our country. It is his blessing which maketh rich ; that crowns with prosperity the individual, or the community, and it is his displeasure which blasts their enterprize ; his displeasure causes citizen to become alienated from citizen ; wisdom to depart from our rulers ; commerce to quit our shores, and that is threatening to muster the hosts to the battle. Behold the Lord maketh the earth empty, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof, because they have transgressed the laws ; changed the ordinance and broken the everlasting covenant : The new wine mourneth ; the vine languisheth ; all the merry hearted do sigh : He stretched out his hands against the sea ; the Lord hath given a commandment against the merchant city, to destroy the strong holds thereof.

I must trespass on your patience by noticing another evidence of the divine displeasure with our country ; it is one which must peculiarly interest and alarm the hearts of all who realize our dependance on the God of nations, that our attention has never been directed to the real source either of our miseries, or relief. A spirit of lethargy, of slumber when the great God is shaking his rod over a nation is not merely their sin, but a fearful presage of a more dreadful visitation. *Because they consider not the works of the Lord, nor regard the operations of his hand ; therefore the Lord will destroy them and not build them up.* There is probably not a more awful evidence that an

individual, or a nation is abandoned of God, and marked as victims for his wrath than to be given up to themselves ; to be permitted to remain unawakened and unconcerned amidst the alarming dispensations of his providence. When *the cup of the iniquity of Israel was nearly full*, and the decree for their destruction had irreversibly passed, how awful is the commission given to the prophet, *Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes : lest they see with their eyes, see my judgments which are already gathered and lowering over their heads ; and hear with their ears, hear my voice of warning in my word, by my messengers, in the movements of my providence ; and understand with their heart*, be really affected with their own abominations as the meritorious cause of their miseries, *and be healed*. The prophet melted at hearing the doom of his deluded country affectionately replies, *Lord, how long ?* He is answered by the oracle, *Until the cities be waste without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate*.

BRETHREN, does not our situation as a nation obviously and awfully correspond with that of deluded Israel ? Can we imagine that they were more stupid, more infatuated amidst the terrors of the Almighty than are we in America ? Much time has been occupied in devising the means of safety ; much treasure has been expended in fortifying our harbors : message after message has been transmitted to foreign courts representing our grievances and demanding redress ;

but during all our alarms, all these exertions for maintaining our rights has the Lord of hosts been acknowledged by us as a nation ; have we been called by our civil Rulers to ask the interposition of him by whom *kings reign, and princes decree justice ; by whom princes rule, and nobles even all the judges of the earth ?* Nay, I mention it with the most profound emotions of regret, and of trembling ; of humiliation for the past and apprehensions for the future, that during eight years we have not been recommended in a national capacity to acknowledge the Ruler of nations : no tribute of thanksgiving has ascended to his throne in the season of prosperity ; neither have we in adversity been directed to the confession of guilt, nor to ask the interference of that arm which works salvation. Was such the example exhibited by our illustrious patriots of 1776 ; by those who then directed our counsels, marshalled our armies in the field, and were, under God, the instruments of our national glory ? On the 17th of May in that year, a day that must remain memorable while the love of liberty is cherished in our country, the oppressed millions of America at the call of their rulers approached the mercy-seat, laid a history of their grievances before the avenger of wrongs ; implored his interposition in their behalf, and his ear was graciously open to their cry.

From this doctrine, thus explained, it is obviously suggested,

1. **THAT** *verily there is a God who judgeth in the earth.* Vain, impious mortals frequently ask, *Who is Jehovah that we should obey him ?* In the infatuation and madness of their hearts, they often challenge, *How doth God know, and is there knowledge in the most high ?* In the enthusiasm of their impiety, they may be resolving, *Let us break his bands asunder and cast his cords from us.* But notwithstanding all their presumption and self-confidence, *their judgment lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.* He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh at them ; the Lord shall hold them in derision : Then shall he speak to them in his wrath and vex them in his sore displeasure. Though hand join in hand his soul will be avenged sooner or later on the wanton, incorrigible person or people.—What is the history of the world, but a history of Jehovah's judgments in the overthrow of haughty, licentious nations ? Where are now the once mighty, magnificent empires of Egypt, of Assyria, of Greece, of Rome ? Where are now their splendid cities, their adamantine walls towering towards heaven ; their disciplined armies ; *their gates of brass, their chariots of iron* which promised an invincible defence against every assault from without ? We behold them in their turn receding from the earth, and *their memorial has nearly perished with them :* there remains nothing but their name feebly written on the historian's page.—How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished ? What crashing of thrones and kingdoms have we witnessed with our own eyes ? Where is now the

antient, august monarchy of France ; that which stood for ages, and apparently defied even the hand of time ? Have we not seen it and many others totter to their foundations, and hundreds and thousands of the inhabitants lost in the general wreck ? Is it argued “ that these kingdoms, having grown old, decayed and mouldered away of course, as every thing created naturally tends to dissolution ;” or is it argued, “ that internal causes may be assigned for all these effects ; that violent insurrections convulsed the empire of Rome, and that Babylon was taken during the licentious rioting of her princes and nobles ?” These objections do not in the least militate against the argument. The sovereign ruler of nations accomplishes his purposes by secondary causes ; by means he protects the righteous, and by means he executes vengeance on the deluded, insolent opposers of his government.— As a proof, for instance, that the conquest of Babylon and the destruction of the empire was of God, this event was foretold ages before its accomplishment ; the instrument of its overthrow was mentioned by name ; the very manner in which he should execute his purpose was minutely expressed ; and yet all was represented as the effect of divine vengeance against the Assyrians. *Come down, saith Jehovah by his prophet to that impious city, come down and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon ; sit on the ground ; For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness ; thou hast said, none seeth me : Therefore shall evil come upon thee ; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth ;*

and mischief shall fall upon thee ; thou shalt not be able to put it off ; and destruction shall come upon thee suddenly which thou knowest not. Through the anger of almighty God these fearful desolations are spread among the nations of the earth : A flood of impiety, of licentiousness on their part is succeeded by a flood of wrath on his part.

2. WE learn from this doctrine who are the enemies of a country ; who disturb her peace, who interrupt her prosperity and endanger her very existence ; they are those who live in the contempt of God, and the violation of his righteous law. These are the *Achans in the camp* who bring wrath upon the nation of Israel. The immoral, impious man ; the swearer, the sabbath-breaker, the insolent scoffer of religion and its institutions ; the parent who is undutiful in his station, who is not diligent in educating his offspring for God and his service ; the magistrate who does not *rule in the fear of Jehovah*, but pollutes the land by a loose, licentious deportment and conversation : These are the persons, by whatever political name they are known, or under whatever mask they appear among their fellow-citizens, who bring down the judgments of heaven on settlements, and cities and nations : These are the persons who occasionally shut up the windows of heaven, suspending *the early and later rain in their season* ; who dry up the streams of commerce ; who give commission to *the pestilence wasting its thousands in our streets* ; who unsheath the sword of war, and drench a land in the

blood of its inhabitants. *Hear the word of the Lord ye children of Israel : hear his word, ye citizens of America, for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God. By swearing and lying, and killing, and committing adultery they break out, and blood toucheth blood. Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish with the beasts of the field and the fowls of heaven.* They, on the other hand, are the true patriots who fear God ; who work righteousness ; who render to all their due, giving unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's ; who keep holy the Sabbath by " spending it in the public and private exercises of divine worship ;" who visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction, and preserve themselves unspotted from the world : parents who are devout in their habitations ; who early infuse into the hearts of their children the principles of religion and virtue ; magistrates who feel the solemnity and responsibility of their station, being *minister's of God for the good of society* ; who assume the important office, not from motives of interest, or honor, but that they may rule for the glory of him by whose authority they act, and to whose bar they are accountable ; who by the blamelessness of their conversation, and by the impartial discharge of every official duty become a terror to evil doers and a praise to them that do well ; ministers who abound in the work of the Lord ; who are not lured from their sacred function by con-

siderations of worldly ease, or emolument, but actuated by the same spirit with their divine master, *go about doing good* : such persons, such magistrates, such ministers are the genuine patriots and friends of their country. Contemplating such I may freely exclaim in the language of a Jewish king to the prophet of Jehovah, *my Father, my Father, the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof*. They are the massy pillars which give stability to a nation within ; they are the broad shield which renders her invincible and impenetrable by any opposition without. Their prayers, their intercessions, their alms are of more importance towards her defence than all the speculations of the vain philosopher ; than all the schemes of the self-confident statesman ; than all the martial prowess of either the soldiery or navy. For the sake of these, judgments are often averted and days of calamity are shortened. The waters never gushed upon *the old world* until Noah was secured in the ark ; the arm of the destroying angel was stayed from the destruction of Sodom until *Lot had escaped to the mountains*, and when *Phineas arose*, and, as a faithful magistrate, *executed righteousness* the plague was instantly arrested *in the camp of Israel*. Run, saith Jehovah to the prophet his messenger, *run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and seek ye in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man ; if there be any that executeth judgment ; that seeketh truth, and I will pardon it*.

3. WE learn from this doctrine the suitable ex-

exercises of a people in the season of impending judgments ; they ought diligently to enquire into the cause of the Lord's controversy ; they should aim at discovering those national sins which are the procuring cause of national calamities. We hear the prophet complaining with respect to the people of Israel, *O Lord, thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved ; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction : When thy hand is lifted up they will not see, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord.* This complaint is mournfully applicable to us amidst the present alarming appearances of divine providence. Our attention is chiefly confined to the instruments, one party is disposed to throw the censure upon the other ; the citizen reprobates the ruler, and one portion of the rulers reproach the other as the cause of our evils. But whatever formal instrumentality men have in involving our country in the present state of embarrassment and alarm, the Lord God has a sovereign, righteous agency ; he is avenging his quarrel with an ungrateful, disobedient nation : and until we become sensible of his displeasure as manifested in our judgments ; until we discover our own iniquities as justly provoking this displeasure ; until we are sincerely humbled on account of our iniquities, and led to the blood of reconciliation as our only remission, I shall entertain little hopes that the rod will be removed. Let all, on this day of humiliation, turn their eyes upon their own hearts and impartially examine their particular exercises ; are they cordially melted for their

own iniquities and for the abominations *that prevail in the land* ? Are they sincerely humbled before the Lord that ordinances are so generally neglected ; that Jesus and his great salvation are despised, that the holy sabbath is wantonly prostituted by all classes in our nation ? Such were the exercises of the church formerly in the season of her calamity, and such, if we have received an unction of the same spirit, will be our exercises this day. *O Lord, to us belong confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers because we have sinned against thee ; yea, all Israel have transgressed thy laws ; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written.* With confession of former sins let us connect earnest resolutions of amendment in the time to come. Would to God that henceforth all classes of our citizens *were going hand in hand, and weeping as they go ; saying, with penitent Israel, let us return to the Lord, for he hath torn and he will heal ; he hath smitten and he will bind us up : come and let us join ourselves to Jehovah in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.* Such exercises would be the surest presage of future peace and felicity and glory to our nation : They might be considered an infallible pledge that the cloud which now darkens our horizon will shortly vanish, and that the sun of prosperity will revisit with his cheering beams our long favored land.

O Lord, receive thy work in the midst of the years ; in the midst of the years make known : in wrath remember mercy. AMEN and AMEN.

OUR DUTY, &c.

Sermon H.

AMOS iv. 12.

AND BECAUSE I WILL DO THIS UNTO THEE ; PREPARE
TO MEET THY GOD, O ISRAEL.

THE holy scriptures are admirably adapted to man in his present, imperfect, militant state. They forewarn him of approaching calamities ; they afford direction in every perplexity ; they inspire with confidence in the hour of surrounding peril, and impart consolation amidst the various adversities of life.—The admonition contained in our text must appear peculiarly seasonable to Israel, when we realise her awful and interesting situation at the time of its delivery. It was uttered by the inspired messenger *in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.* The visitation of the Jewish nation by an earthquake is noticed only in this place, and by the prophet Zechariah. The latter as the messenger of divine wrath declares, *I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle ; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled : and ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains ; yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled before the earthquake**

* This event is particularly mentioned by Josephus in his “ *Antiquities of the Jews* ;” he relates that “ *Jereboam*

in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. The Lord God never wants instruments for avenging his quarrel with the enemies of his government : All elements are subject to his sovereign controul, and all agents, visible and invisible, rational and irrational, from the least insect which moves on the earth to the loftiest angel who walks the streets of heaven are at his disposal, and stand ready to perform his pleasure either of mercy or wrath : Yet HE is infinitely *slow to anger*, and displays his *exceeding, abundant* compassion in giving previous intimations of approaching calamities. *The cloud* usually makes its first appearance *small as a man's hand* ; it gradually rises higher and becomes darker, before it bursts forth upon the object devoted to destruction. The great God warns the wicked by his word, raising up messenger after messenger ; by his providence, inflicting lesser judgments as a mean of reclaiming and saving them from more awful visitations. He thus proves to the satisfaction of every rational spectator, *that he is merciful, and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth ; that he has no pleasure in the temporal destruction of nations, or in the everlasting ruin of individuals, but would rather that both should repent, and return and*

the son of Joash was a prince most dissolute and licentious in his practices, by which he brought almost innumerable calamities upon the people of Israel ;" that " in his days there was a terrible earthquake ;" that " the roof of the temple opened with the shocks of it, and one half of the mountain Ebroge was torn from the other."—Jos. ant. 145. 6. N. Y. ed. 1792.

live. Before he *opened the fountains of the deep*, and brought the flood *upon the old ungodly world*, he raised up Noah a preacher of righteousness, and warned them year after year ; previous to the overthrow of *Nineveh, that great city*, he commissioned Jonah to go forth and proclaim *in the streets, yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed* ; and before he pours out the fury of his anger upon Israel, his once favorite people, the offspring of Abraham his servant, he addresses them in the admonition which you have heard, *prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.*

IN the preceding verses of this chapter, the prophet, in the name of his God, recapitulates to this deluded, obstinate nation the various methods which had been employed for their reformation. *And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord : And I have also withholden from you the rain, when there were yet three months to the harvest, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord : I have smitten you with blasting and mildew, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord : I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord : I have overthrown some of you, as the Lord overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a fire-brand plucked out of the burning, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.* Who that has noticed, in the most superficial manner, the dispensations of Jehovah toward us as a people, must not read in our punishments

a counterpart of the punishments formerly inflicted on Israel? Did not a righteous God, year after year, *withhold from us the rain of heaven*, causing the pastures to fail in the field, and the corn to languish in the valley? Has he not occasionally *smitten us with blasting* and mildew*? Has he not sent among us *again and again the pestilence* after the manner of Egypt? And is not the accusation, which was brought against Israel, at least as applicable to us, *Yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord*? Where is there any evidence that either our mercies or our judgments have proved effectual for reclaiming or reforming us? Are the living oracles more generally read, or more deeply revered? Is the sanctuary attended *now* by those who *formerly* lived in the neglect of its ordinances? Are the praises of God resounding now in houses where that celestial melody was formerly unheard? Is the holy Sabbath more conscientiously

* *In the summer of 1802, just as the fields began to whiten for the harvest, a mildew pervaded the northern and western parts of this state, and blasted in its course two thirds, perhaps three fourths of the wheat, the staple commodity of this country.*

§ *Not to mention those malignant, mortal epidemics, which have fearfully scourged our principal cities, the influenza, a species of the pestilence, has taken a general course through almost every state in the Union. So generally did it prevail in the autumn of 1807 that scarcely a family in this town escaped it; and on a particular Sabbath, through the almost universal indisposition of ministers and people, various churches were laid desolate.*

sanctified through our land, or does the power of Godliness shine more illustrious in the lives of those who possess the form ? Is the charge of pride, extravagance, injustice between man and man, and ingratitude to the God of our mercies less applicable now than in years that are past ? Nay, has not the tide of our impiety and profligacy risen with the tide of our prosperity, and when the divine hand has been stretched out for our correction *we have not seen it*, neither have we trembled under these displays *of the majesty of Jehovah*. Is such the fact, beloved brethren, then I cannot address you in language more appropriate than the admonition of the prophet to his nation, *prepare to meet thy God, O Israel*.

THE people to whom the warning is directed are *Israel*, the visible church of God. The fire of divine jealousy burns peculiarly awful around his altar : *There* the light shines most clear ; *there* the voice of admonition is most frequently heard ; *there* the privileges are most exalted, and consequently *there the consumption determined* usually commences its career.— Those who rank first in point of privilege are ordinarily made the first and most fearful monuments of divine indignation. *Judgment must begin at the house of God*. Rebellion in a son is both more unnatural and inexcusable, than in a servant : Our abhorrence is much more excited by an act of treachery in a pretended friend, than in the open, avowed enemy ; upon the same principle the crimes of a professing people are most offensive to God, and expose to the

severest marks of his displeasure. *You only have I known of all the families of the earth ; I will therefore punish you for your iniquities.* The history of the world fully confirms the truth of these denunciations.— Those very parts of the earth which were long, and singularly favored with a pure dispensation of the gospel, have been afterwards as singularly the seat of judgments, both temporal and spiritual. Turn your eyes for a moment to Jerusalem, once the most distinguished spot of the earth ; that city where the temple was erected ; where the living oracles were proclaimed ; where the morning and evening sacrifice, this lively pledge of our Great Propitiation, was offered up ; where the incense arose in sacred columns from the center of Aaron the type of *the high priest of our profession* ; where the ministry of our Lord was chiefly accomplished ; where miracles the most sublime were frequently wrought by his hands, and celestial truth flowed from his lips : Behold also Corinth,* Sardis, Smyrna, and Thyatira, cities where

* *A modern traveller represents, in a most affecting light, these once distinguished parts of the world. Sardis, according to his account, "was overthrown by a most terrible earthquake, and is now only a poor habitation of shepherds, living in low and humble cottages : hœsœver," he elegantly adds, "the antient pillars and ruins lift up their heads, as unwilling to lose the memory of their former glory :"* and Corinth which the Roman orator pronounced "*lumen totius Græciæ,*" the light of all Greece, was burnt to ashes for its insolence to the legates of Rome.—See CALMET's Dic. on Jer. and WELI's Geog. of the Old and New Test. v. ii. 259, 60. 275, 6.

flourishing churches were early planted by the Evangelists and Apostles of our Lord. How has their external importance sunk, and their spiritual glory departed? Just in proportion as evangelic light formerly shone clear around, a cloud dark and impenetrable envelopes them, and the wretched inhabitants are debased by ignorance, by superstition, by every species of abomination.

THIS verse, thus explained, presents to our consideration,

1. A SOLEMN event, *a meeting with our God* ; and
2. OUR duty in the prospect of this event, *prepare to meet thy God*.

EACH individual of the human kind must *meet* Jehovah at death : The immortal spirit, immediately after its separation from the body, is summoned to the tribunal of its judge ; then it is called to render a solemn account of its stewardship, and afterwards, according to its works, is adjudged to an unchanging destiny, either of glory or of shame. *It is appointed unto all men once to die, and after death the judgment : Again, we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive according to the things done in his body, whether they be good or evil.*

ALL mankind collectively must *meet* Jehovah in the hour of general retribution. *The Lord God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained. The trump of the archangel shall sound ; the great white throne shall be erected ; the sign of the son*

of man shall appear ; the judge shall descend ; all the living shall be instantly changed, and all the dead arise : then the kindreds of the nations shall flock to the judgment seat of their common Lord, and receive one general irreversible sentence, *When the son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory ; and before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them the one from the other : the deeds done in the present life must then undergo a review the most minute, the most impartial, and the countless myriads of the human family be awarded to everlasting life, or everlasting perdition.*

BUT the *meeting with God* to which the prophet alludes, and for which he admonishes *Israel to prepare*, is an event materially different ; it belongs to particular communities, or nations, in their public, social capacity. There are periods of national retribution, no less than of personal retribution ; *periods* when the adorable Ruler of the universe rises from his throne, and comes forth to reckon with the inhabitants of a country ; when he takes a review of all the privileges bestowed upon them ; of all the deliverances wrought from time to time in their behalf ; of the duration of their national peace ; of the degree of their national prosperity, and then chastises them for the abuse of their privileges. *Hear, all ye people ; hearken, O earth and all that therein is : For behold the Lord cometh forth out of his place, and will come and tread on the high places of the earth : For the transgression of Jacob*

is all this, and for the iniquity of the house of Israel.

THE dealings of a sovereign God toward individuals and nations obviously correspond. He spares the particular person notwithstanding numerous provocations ; he affords him the means of repentance, and the offers of life ; he alternately alarms and allures ; he tries him *now* with mercies, *then* with judgments, before he gives commission *to cut him off* as utterly incorrigible : And such also is his conduct toward nations in general. He admonishes them for their impiety ; he forewarns them *now* by his messengers, *again* by the movements of his providence of calamities that are approaching ; he executes one threatening as a mean of awakening them to repentance, and saving them from other and severer scourges : He thus entreated with *the old world* one hundred and twenty years by the ministry of Noah ; he thus reprov'd *the cities of the plain* by Lot as his messenger, before *he turned them into ashes*, making them public monuments of his vengeance. With what long-suffering did he expostulate with the nation of the Jews before he finally marked them out as *the people of his wrath* ? *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim ? How shall I deliver thee, Israel ? How shall I make thee as Admah ? How shall I set thee as Zeboim ? My heart is turned within me : my repentings are kindled together.* And upon their partial reformation in the days of Samuel, of Aza, of Josiah he immediately suspended the execution of his judgments, and wrought salvation in their behalf.

WHEN an individual wilfully closes his eyes against the light of the gospel ; when he shuts his ears against its pointed and repeated admonitions ; when he tramples with deliberate hardihood on mercies and judgments Jehovah in awful sovereignty leaves him *to his own delusions* ; he ceases to reprove him either by his word, or spirit, or providence ; and pronounces him *a vessel of wrath filled for destruction* : His condition then becomes utterly and everlastingly desperate : All his prayers, all his tears, all his remorse for past transgressions, or resolutions of amendment in future are unavailing. *He that being often reprov- ed and hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy.* As it is with individuals, it is also with nations. They have *their accepted time,* and, if the expression be allowed, *their day of political salvation* : But if this be misimproved ; *if they fill up their cup of iniquity,* by ingratitude for national mercies, and by a spirit of slumber and impenitence amidst the scourges of his providence, the Lord God abandons them as altogether incorrigible, and irreversibly decrees *their consumption* : All the intercessions of righteous individuals, and even a general reformation will be unavailing for the removal of divine vengeance : *Though Noah, and Daniel, and Job* should interpose and supplicate, *spare thy people,* their prayers may rest in blessings upon their own heads, but will not stay the hand that is stretched out for correcting the nation. The sovereign Ruler of the world either pours upon them a spirit of discord and confu-

sion, making one part of the community the instrument of destruction to the other, or he surrenders them up an easy prey to some foreign foe. What an example of his vengeance against the disobedient, incorrigible nation do we behold in the final overthrow of the Jews and their city. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not : Behold your house is left unto you desolate. If thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day the things which belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes,*

Is there not reason to apprehend that such a meeting with our God is awaiting us as a nation ; that it is near at hand ? The signs of the times are peculiarly ominous and deserve the attention of all : *The Lord God has come out of his place, and in a manner unusually awful is punishing the inhabitants of the earth. With our own eyes we have beheld him shaking all nations ; we have seen the sword of war unsheathed in almost every part of the globe ; we have seen her crimson flag unfurled by land, and on the ocean ; the earth has been reddened, and the very waters of the deep have been tinged with the blood* of the slain ;*

* *The battles of Marengo and Jena by land, and the naval engagements at the Nile, in the Channel and at Trafalgar, whether we regard the obstinacy with which they were fought or the numbers that were slain, probably stand without a parallel either in ancient or modern history.*

we have seen the most ancient and stately empires shook to their center ; crowns tottering on the heads of princes ; princes hurled from their thrones and princes and peasants mingled in promiscuous ruin. *Nation has been rising up against nation, and the Lord of hosts has mustered the hosts of the battle.* Hitherto, through his tender mercies, we have escaped the all devouring vortex ; our peace, with a few inconsiderable exceptions, has been uninterrupted, and our immunities as an independant nation have been uninfinged. But the period of our public tranquility, we have reason to apprehend, has nearly expired. Are not our natural rights at present wantonly violated, and our commerce invaded ; has not the property of our citizens been violently wrested from their possession on the high seas, and sold at foreign markets, and their persons laid in chains, and doomed to languish in cheerless dungeons : Every effort used for the restoration of our neutral rights, and the redress of our grievances has hitherto failed, and the cloud is daily spreading and blackening over our heads.

AMIDST these dangers from abroad, how humiliating is our situation at home ? Instead of harmony in concerting measures for our national defence, is there not universal distrust and distraction ? No longer rallying around one center, and blending ourselves in the common name of AMERICANS, are we not assuming different names, and flocking to different standards, as if we neither regarded each o-

ther as children of the same family, nor members of the same community? Does not a spirit of discord pervade from New-Hampshire to Georgia? Have not the different parties become so intollerant, so infuriated, that seemingly they want only an opportunity to rise up in open hostilities? And remember, of all wars, that of citizen against citizen is the most to be deplored: This flame when once kindled, is the most inextinguishable in its nature, and the most wasteful in its progress: It is *like a torch in a sheaf*, and usually consumes a nation both root and branch. O my country! unless the Lord of hosts speedily interpose in thy behalf; unless he restore mutual confidence among thy sons, and harmony to thy public counsels, **AN END, THINE END MUST COME**: *The sword without, and terror and confusion within must destroy thee.*

Is such our situation; are such our apprehensions, then the enquiry must appear equally appropriate and important, how shall we *prepare for meeting with our God*?

THIS was our second proposition, and to it your attention is now invited.

1. ALL should prepare for this event, by fleeing without delay to Jesus-Jehovah as their *city of refuge*. He is a *hiding place from every storm, and a covert from the tempest*; sheltered beneath *this rock* by a living faith; having our consciences sprinkled with his atoning blood, and our souls adorned with his immaculate righteousness, we may sit secure when the cloud

has actually bursted, and the storm is exhausting its fury. The believer, with the lively exercise of all his graces, is like a rock in the midst of the ocean, unmoved, immovable by all the dashing of either wind or wave : But, *where, ah, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear*, when the wrath of Almighty God has gone forth ; when it consumes the earth with her increase ; when it sets on fire the foundations of the mountains, and burns to the lowest hell ? *Where, ah, where will appear the empty professor ; the man who possesses merely the mask of christianity, and is an utter stranger to its power, where will he appear when Jehovah in his jealousy will search Jerusalem as with lighted candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees ; that say in their hearts, the Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil. Where, ah, where will then appear the gay, the thoughtless, wanton youth ; those who put far away the evil day ; “ who crown themselves with rose buds ;” who chant to the sound of the viol, and remain deaf to all the entreaties of friends, and parents, and ministers, where will they flee for help, where will they leave their glory, when the whirlwind of divine wrath shall sweep terribly the earth ; when the fierce anger of the Lord shall come upon them, when the day of the Lord’s anger shall come upon them ? To all such every temporal scourge is only a pledge of that hour when the son of man shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire ; when the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the world and the things that are therein shall be dissolved.* But they who are reconciled to God by the blood of the Infinite Surety, are

secured, infallibly secured from avenging wrath : here the thunders of a broken law cannot reach to alarm, no lightnings pour their terrors, and therefore they may sit unruffled amidst all the agitations of the world.— *Being justified by faith they have peace with God, and if God be for them who can be against them ?* With his wisdom to direct ; his omnipotence to defend ; his all-sufficiency to supply, and his mercy to sympathise, they enjoy *a peace which passeth understanding* amidst every outward storm.

2. We ought to prepare for meeting our God by walking circumspectly and keeping our garments unspotted from every pollution. Upon all occasions it is our duty to be sober and vigilant ; to keep our hearts with all diligence ; to walk worthy of him who is calling us to glory and virtue, but this is pre-eminently our duty and our interest in the hour of impending judgment. True it is, there is nothing meritorious in the services of the creature ; our most perfect performances fall infinitely short of the pure law of Jehovah ; yet the reflection that we have walked circumspectly before him ; that we have not willingly deviated from the paths of righteousness to the right hand or to the left, inspires with confidence and joy when his rod is stretched out to scourge a nation and we must participate in the common calamity. While conscious guilt then stands appalled ; while it startles at the shaking of every leaf, the righteous is bold as a lion ; looking for protection to that God whom he has served ; to whose glory his life has been honestly devoted, he bids defiance to all external danger ; he

considers that all the afflictions of time are short and inconsiderable when compared with the glories of eternity ; he contemplates death itself as stripped of every terror, and no more than a dark entry to the regions of unclouded, everlasting day. With what consolation in the depth of distress ; with what holy heroism in danger, did a consciousness of their integrity inspire the three Israelites in Babylon ; it extinguished in their bosoms every impulse of fear ; it enabled them to behold undismayed the majesty of the princely throne, and the horrors of the fiery furnace ; O, *Nebuchadnezar*, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter : If it be so, “ if we must resist even unto blood in adhering to our religion and our God ; if our tortures are even aggravated by a furnace seven-fold hotter than usual, we are not alarmed at the prospect, nor anxious about the issue ;” our God whom we serve is able to deliver from this burning, fiery furnace ; and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O King.

3. We ought to prepare for meeting our God by awakening to greater diligence in the discharge of every duty, and abounding more eminently in the work of the Lord. When the tumult of war is heard, and the enemy appears in view, the prudent soldier instantly arises ; he collects his armor ; he fastens every part of it in its proper place ; he arranges himself in order for battle, and thus stands ready every moment for the arduous onset : When a storm is expected on the ocean ; when the clouds collect and blacken ; when the distant thunder is heard and the lightnings begin to blaze around, the vigilant mariner takes the alarm,

and makes the requisite preparation. Such should be the christian's conduct when the judgments of Almighty God are commissioned to pass through a nation. Of whatever kind the calamity be, *whether war or famine, or pestilence* ; on whatever that he esteems precious the assault may be made, whether on his liberty, or religion, or life, he should aim at standing prepared ; at shaking off his spiritual sloth ; *at having his lamp* carefully trimmed and replenished with oil, from Jesus Jehovah *the anointed one*, burning with the purest flame ; he ought to become more *fervent* in prayer ; more edifying in his conversation ; more sincere in repentance for his own iniquities, and the iniquities of the nation with which he is connected ; more abundant in all the duties which are incumbent upon him as a man and a christian. This is the best possible preparation for all the calamities of life. To all such the Lord God will become a *little sanctuary* when the sword of his vengeance is drawn, and his wrath consumes a guilty land. The angel spreads his pavilion around the pious Lot, *when the cities of the plain are turned into ashes* ; the houses of the Israelites were passed over without injury, when *the first born* was slain in every family of the Egyptians, and the minister of justice never disclosed his commission against Jerusalem, *until a mark was set upon the forehead of the men that sighed and cried for all the abominations that were done in the midst of the land*. The providence of God has even miraculously interposed for the protection of his faithful followers ; he has proved a wall of fire around the individual, the fami-

lies, the settlements that have cleaved to him in the hour of general apostacy.

THE application suitable for this subject will be readily suggested by your own minds.

1. LET all be exhorted to improve their distinguishing privileges while they are yet enjoyed. You have long sat undisturbed under the means of salvation ; the heavenly manna has been descending in showers around your tents and you have been entreated again and again to partake this divine provision ; the river of life has been rolling plenteously around you its refreshing waters, and you have been urged again and again to draw near and *drink and live for ever.*—Whether these golden opportunities will be long continued, is altogether uncertain ; it depends on the mere sovereignty of Jehovah : I would therefore most solemnly admonish you to *walk in the light while you have it : Give glory to the Lord your God, lest he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains :* Let the drunkard abandon his cups ; let the swearer cease from his impious oaths ; *let him that stole steal no more, but render to all their due ;* let those who have indulged themselves in sensual gratifications *crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts ;* let the covetous remember *that neither their gold nor their silver will deliver them in the day of the Lord's anger ;* let every prayerless person awake from his unconcern, and *arise calling upon his God ;* let those who have wasted the precious sabbath in idleness, or worldly employments, hereafter *keep holy that day to the Lord our God by not finding their own pleasure, nor speak-*

ing their own words ; let the secure, impenitent hearers break off their sins by righteousness, and their iniquities by turning to the Lord. Are there any present who, through the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, or the influence of ungodly associates, have departed from the holy commandment, and thrown off their christian profession, let them be impressed with the danger of their situation, and return in the exercise of repentance to the Living God : let the vain and the thoughtless youth remember their Creator, lest they mourn at the last when their flesh and their body are consumed, saying, how have we hated instruction and our hearts despised reproof ? By all that is dreadful in the wrath of Almighty God, by all that is desirable in his loving kindness I exhort sinners of every age, of every condition to turn this day to the strong holds while they are prisoners of hope. The door of the city of refuge is now open, and Jehovah Triune, Father, Son and Holy Ghost are inviting you to enter in. The door of the city of refuge is now open, and all the redeemed on earth, and all the redeemed in heaven, and all the angels of light will hail with transports of joy your entrance and your escape from the avenger of blood. Hasten, hasten to Jesus Christ, to his sacrifice, to his righteousness as your only security from the wrath that is to come. The Lord God of gods in whose presence I now stand, whom I serve in the gospel of his Son bears me witness that I have aimed on this day of humiliation at espousing you all to one husband, and thus preparing you to meet your God : to meet him now as he is coming forth to a-

venge his quarrel with our country ; *to meet him hereafter in the hour of final, irreverfible retribution. But if ye will not hear it, my foul fhall weep in fecret places for your pride, and mine eye fhall weep fore and run down with tears, becaufe the Lord's flock is carried away captive.*

2. BE exhorted to live at peace among yourfelves, and whatfoever ye do, whether in word or in deed, do all in the name of our Lord Jefus Chrift. Let the Saviour's crofs be the only point around which you rally in all your deliberations, whether civil or religious ; let it never be mentioned to the reproach of the christian name ; *let it not be told in Gath, let it not be heard in the ftreets of Afkelon* that an avowed enemy of the dear Redeemer, who coincides with you in political fentiment, fhould lie nearer your hearts ; fhould poffefs a greater, or an equal fhare in your confidence and affection with a Brother in grace, whose political views may be different from your own : And I am bold to affirm that while you live habitually *on the Son of God* ; while you derive from him daily that *wifdom which is pure, and peaceable, and gentle, and eafy to be entreated*, all your diverfity of fentiment refpecting public meafures will not alienate your hearts from each other. This f acred *unction* will excite to the exercife of mutual forbearance wherein you differ. A variety of political opinions muft be expected. In this ftate of imperfection *where we fee but in part, and know but in part* ; where we are actuated by different motives, and look through different mediums, it is rare that our views fully harmonize on any fubject :

This very diversity of sentiment affords a greater opportunity for exercising the most illustrious graces, *charity, patience and forbearance*. At a moment so critical to our own country, so eventful to the world in general, I cannot therefore address you more suitably than in the language of Joseph to his brethren, *see that ye fall not out by the way*. Every citizen possesses an equal right to the enjoyment of his own sentiments, and in this free government he has liberty to communicate his views on public men, and public measures: but let this freedom be always exercised with moderation and prudence. Liberty of speech, when used with discretion, proves a public blessing, but when indulged in a manner intemperate and indiscreet, it becomes a political curse. *Finally, brethren, be perfect; be of good comfort; be of one mind; live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you*. Should those sparks of dissention, which are already kindled in every part of the community, burst into an open flame, it will be a consolation to reflect, in the general calamity, that I never added fuel to the fire by irritating the passions of my fellow-citizens.

I SHOULD feel chargeable with the omission of a very important duty did I conclude these solemn exercises without directing your attention to *the signs of the times*. A cloud is seemingly collecting over the church and the nations more gloomy than has been witnessed for ages. It is the general opinion of commentators,*

* *The calculations of expositors, both ancient and modern, relative to the slaying of the witnesses, have been lately*

who have made prophecy the subject of particular investigation, that *the two witnesses*, mentioned in scripture, are yet to be slain, and that the religion of papal Rome will obtain a universal diffusion through the earth. The remarks of a learned expositor,* who appeared in the last century, are so interesting that you must readily excuse me in quoting them at large.—“The light of the gospel will be wholly withdrawn for a while; the slaying of the witnesses is yet to come; it will make a dismal night, and be accompanied with the universal spread of popery.” A late and most profound divine,† in the church of Scotland, was so deeply impressed with the same sentiment, that he is said to have collected every fragment which has been written in opposition to that heresy, and circulated it to his correspondents in different countries. Do not the present appearances of the world obviously correspond with the opinions of these commentators? Probably in no period of time did the anti-christian religion extend its influence more rapidly than in the present. It is now the established worship of France. There is a decree of that government, that “no church-book, no psalm book, nor catechism shall be published without the permission of the bishop of the diocese.” It is virtually established in Holland and Switzerland, as the regulation of all ecclesiastical concerns is committed to their sovereigns who are *exhibited by the author, at considerable length, in two lectures, which he designs to offer to the public.*

* Dr. Gill in a sermon delivered in 1750.

† Dr. John Erskine.

pists : This religion has recently obtained a rapid spread through Germany, and other countries adjacent : Bills, at different times, have been brought before the parliament of Great-Britain for securing to the votaries of Antichrist privileges in common with the protestants. If we turn our eyes from Europe to our own country, how very alarming is the prospect ? In several of our capital cities the churches, professing the religion of Rome, are more flourishing than those of any other communion ; and three Bishops* have lately been consecrated to superintend the papal interests in the United States. When we add to these things the open infidelity of some, the abject ignorance and utter indifference of others, there is little, humanly speaking, to prevent the general spread of that *abomination* through our country.

AMIDST these realities and apprehensions our duty is obvious. Let every man look to his own interest, by *making his calling and election sure* : Let every parent look to the dearest interests of his children, by *bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord* ; let him consider a profound education in the doctrines of christianity as the most impenetrable shield against the assaults of either superstition or error : Let every master look to the dearest interests of those committed to his charge, by recommending Jesus and his salvation as, beyond comparison, their most enriching portion : Let every magistrate, as he

* *This fact was stated in a public print during the last summer, and was since confirmed to the author in a letter from a respectable correspondent.*

regards his peace in the hour of peril, execute with unremitting vigilance and unshaken fidelity, the duties of his office : *Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, awake to double diligence in their vocations ; let them weep between the porch and the altar, saying, spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thy heritage to reproach. Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, what shall I say more ? To you it is the call of Jehovah in his word ; it is his call by the very awful movements of his providence, Come, my people ; enter thou into thy chambers ; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity ; the earth also shall disclose her blood and shall no more cover her slain.*

O Lord, thou sittest upon the floods, thou sittest king forever, look with a compassionate eye, on our guilty miserable world, and shorten these days of calamity ; proclaim to every scourge that has desolated our earth, it is enough, stay thine hand ; may the thunder of war expire ; may the sword of slaughter return to its scabbard, no more to be bathed in the blood of man ; let not nation any longer rise up as the destroyer of nation, but may the peaceful banner of Messiah wave in triumph around the globe ; hasten the period when creation shall become one sanctuary, and men of all kindreds one assembly, in doing homage to the God of Israel. AMEN, even so come LORD JESUS.