

*Ettrick, March 11, 1716.*

ENCOURAGEMENT TO PRAY FOR THE CONVERSION OF THE JEWS.

SERMON XXVI.

ZECHARIAH xii. 12.

*And the land shall mourn, every family apart, the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart.*

It hath been for some time past, a time of penal mourning through the land, families, congregations, and the nation mourning under the calamities of war; and withal the very earth mourning, and the beasts, under an extraordinary storm. And though both sword and storm are removed, so severe have they been, that the cheeks of the mourners are not yet dried. God grant it may be done before the clouds return after the rain. These things call for dutiful mourning and reformation, national, family, and personal. With a view to these, I am to press two duties, family and personal fasting; the rareness of these at this day, is sad evidence that the land is in a back-going condition. We have both in the text.

The scope of the text is to shew the universal mourning that shall be among the Jews when they shall see their sins.

1. There is a general mourning foretold to be among them. *And the land shall mourn, every family apart.*

As to the time to which this refers, it is plain that this is an effect of that out-pouring of the Spirit, ver. 10. which shall make them mourn for their crucifying Christ, as that piercing is applied as literally fulfilled, John xix. 37. *They shall look on him whom they have pierced.* So that this out-pouring of the Spirit, and consequently the mourning refers to the time of the gospel, after the death of Christ. Now if it be fulfilled already, it must refer to that, Acts ii. 5, 37, 41. But as the scripture does not say that it was fulfilled then, so I judge that it was not the fulfilling of it, though it might be a pledge thereof. For this out-pouring and mourning are to be in a day, "When God will seek to destroy the nations that come against Jerusalem," ver. 9. But the out-pouring and mourning in the Acts were in a day that the Lord was about to destroy Jerusalem itself. Therefore I judge it is yet to be fulfilled, in the time of the calling of the Jews. When their deliverance, ver. 9, the out-pouring of the Spirit, ver. 10, and this mourning shall go together.

It was written for our learning. And O! but it is sweet meeting deliverance from enemies, an out-pouring of the Spirit, and national reformation. We have got something of the first, but alas the two last are not come along with it, and therefore there is the less sweetness in the first, and it is likely to be the more short lived.

God governs the world, and that according to his word, however little men regard it in their management of it; and comparing Scotland's case with the word, we have ground to think, one of three will be the fate of this land. Either,

1. That in a way of judgment, he will let us go on in our peace and ease, continuing an unsanctified deliverance with the generation; so as religion will grow weaker and weaker, and the generation more and more corrupt, till they stink in his nostrils.

Or 2. That in a way of sovereign mercy, he will with our peace send an out-pouring of the Spirit to the advancing and reviving of reformation, which will put life in our deliverance and establish it to purpose.

Or 3. That in a way of mixture of judgment and mercy, he will send on us a yet heavier stroke than any we have met with, and join reformation and deliverance together by an out-pouring of his Spirit, as in the text, producing a general mourning. Now in the text, I say there is a general mourning foretold to be among the Jews at that day. This is a mourning in the way of duty. The word properly signifies the outward gesture of mourners, such as smiting on the breast, or thigh; not that it shall be a mere outward mourning, for it is the effect of that, ver. 10. But it shall be more than that habitual mourning and tenderness to which God's people are always called: an extraordinary, solemn and stated mourning; a mourning in the way of a solemn fast and humiliation, so the word signifies, Joel ii. 12. For that duty is sometimes called fasting, sometimes mourning, Esther ix. 22, 31. Compare Zech. viii. 19. The prospect of these days were the matter of the Jews' fasting. And that this mourning is so to be understood appears from the text itself, where we find those of one family meeting together for this mourning; the whole family going together into some place apart where they might not be disturbed by their neighbours, and consequently setting apart a time for it. All this surely not to sit and gaze on one another, but to spend it in exercises suitable to a fast. Now here observe,

1. The generality of this mourning and fasting. *The land*, that is the inhabitants of the land, the body of that now unbelieving people shall set about it, not here one and there one as before. The cause of this mourning is their fathers' sin in crucifying Christ,

their own sin in approving of it, and so long rejecting him. When the Spirit is poured out on them, they will see his glory and be convinced, and then this mourning will spread over all their nation wherever they be.

2. How it shall be general or national; not by gathering together into the temple, for they shall then have none, nor yet as being enjoined by authority for public celebration. But God will stir up the spirit of families to keep it privately, every family apart. In the times when the gospel hath had more effect than ordinary, sometimes people walking the streets have been sweetly surprised to hear this and the other family, at family worship, who never used to have it before, so will it be with the Jews in that day, in respect of family mournings or fasts. Observe, they will go apart for it. Give over the business of the family for that time, shut doors and windows, refuse conversing with other families, that they may not be interrupted.

2. Particulars are condescended on. The royal family in both branches of it, Solomon's and Nathan's. These as being nearest of kin to Christ should have been most zealous for him; *but neither did his brethren believe in him*. But now their posterity shall see their own and their fathers' folly, and bitterly mourn for it. This seems to aim at their rulers, who in that day shall begin or be with the foremost in this reformation.

In both these their wives shall go apart and mourn. Whether this be meant of their going by themselves in the very time of the family mourning, as some think; or at other times, it holds forth the duty of personal fasting and humiliation, particular persons going about that duty by themselves.

There is an emphatic Hebrew mark on the wives of the house of Nathan, and the same on all the rest following. Therefore I think the true reason why the wives are singled out for instances of personal fasting and humiliation is, that being of the delicate and tender sex, they may be least fit, able, or willing, to undergo the hardship of stated fasting and mourning. But such a portion of the Spirit shall they then have, that even they shall not refuse the work; not only join in the family, but at other times go by themselves.

The family of Nathan was the top branch of the royal family in Zechariah's time, for of that branch was Zorababel, Luke iii. 27, 31. So the meaning is, that even their ladies, however delicate, shall put off their ornaments and humble themselves in personal fasting and humiliation, Verse 13. Levi's family is condescended upon, and among them that of Shimei, the son of Gershon, the son of Levi,

I Chron. vi. 17. which family seems to have been of note in the prophet's time.

In verse 14. it is shut up with a general, all the families that shall remain, shall take part in this. Thus magistrates, ministers, and people, shall all mourn, repent, and reform.

Before I enter on what I chiefly design from the text, I shall briefly handle some other useful points from this text.

*Doctrine I.* There is a day coming in which there shall be a national conversion of the Jews or Israelites. The now blinded and rejected Jews shall at length be converted into the faith of Christ, and join themselves to the Christian church. There are many promises of this in the Old Testament, but I shall confirm it from Romans, chap. xi. where the apostle purposely insists upon it.

1. Though that people hath dreadfully stumbled, the more dreadful that Christ was the stumbling stone to them, yet they have not fallen so as never to rise again, Rom. xi. 11. "Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy." Now as their stumbling by unbelief did eventually cause the Gentile world to rise to their feet, after they had lain long immersed in ignorance of God, and wickedness: so God will make use of the grace bestowed on the Gentile world, to awaken the Jews to the consideration of their true interest, by way of holy emulation, that they shall think with themselves as the prodigal, Luke xv. 17.

2. The covenant made with their fathers, particularly with Abraham, Gen. xvii. That he would be the God of his seed after him, secures the conversion of that people. It is with that covenant, in respect of them, as with some rivers of which it is observed that they run a good way above ground, and then are swallowed up in the earth, and so run many miles under ground, but at length break out again, and run above ground till they come to the sea. So that covenant runs visibly till the days of the apostles, but now its visible efficacy is interrupted, but it will break forth again in their conversion, never to be rejected more. So the apostle tells us, they are thereby still the *holy nation*, verse 16. the nation particularly dedicated to God, and he will not always want what is consecrated to himself. The national election is still their privilege, for verse 28. *as touching the election, they are beloved for the Father's sake.* And by virtue of the covenant made with their fathers, God has a love to that nation: and God's will will certainly terminate in good deeds at length: and that because the gift and calling of that nation to the adoption and covenant are irreversible, verse 29. *For the gifts and callings of God are without repentance.*

3. The apostle expressly asserts it, verses 25, 26. In these he shews that the blindness of the Jews is only in part, and to last only to a certain time, when there shall be a national conversion, and so all Israel shall be saved. This is not meant of the spiritual Israel, for their conversion could be no mystery as this is. But as the conversion of the Gentiles was a mystery to the Jews, and to Gentiles themselves under the Old Testament, Eph. iii. 3—6. So is that of the Jews, to the Gentiles and Jews themselves, under the New Testament. And as many Jews then would not believe the one, so many Christians now believe not the other.

*Use.* Believe it and help it on by your prayers. Ply the throne of grace earnestly for it. Join cordially in the public prayers for it, and remember it in your family and secret prayers. Be ashamed to say what is it to us?

*Motive 1.* They were concerned for us when we were in their case, and they in ours, and therefore it is but just that we repay them thus, Song viii. 8, 9. O remember the case seriously. What think you of Pharaoh's butler that remembered not Joseph, who was so kind to him in the prison. Brethren, we of the Gentile world, were shut up in the prison of unbelief, then they walked at liberty, but minded us. Now they are in that prison and we are let out, and shall we forget them. "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all."

2. Have you any love to our Lord Jesus Christ, to the advancing of his kingdom and glory in the world? then pray, yea, pray earnestly for this. Are you not taught to pray, thy kingdom come. O what an accession to the Mediator's glory will the conversion of the Jews be. Would you see the crown set on Christ's head in the world more solemnly and gloriously than ever it has yet been, then let us join with the great multitude, Rev. xix. 6. *Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.* And if we wish to see a great marriage day for Christ in the world, then verse 7. "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." O brethren, spread out your narrow spirits, be public spirited and show it here. True, we believe that Jesus is the Son of God, to his glory. But O! what a farther rich revenue of glory would accrue to him, if they whose countryman he was, and who crucified him as a malefactor, and justify their deed to this day, were brought to repentance and to own him to be so with us.

3. Have you any pity to a nation of perishing souls? then pray for their conversion. Common compassion should engage you to this, for such a case as theirs is, for the present, hopeless for eter-

nity. "He that believeth not shall be damned." But there is more to challenge our concern for them than for any other nation in the world.

1. God himself hath shown a peculiar concern for them, not only of old, when he took them for his peculiar people; but since, in that he hath made a particular promise of the conversion of that nation, when that of other nations has been wrapt up in a general promise.

2. All the means of grace, and acceptance through Jesus Christ, that we have now, we had originally from them. They were our masters in the knowledge of God, and first put the book, even the book of God into our hands, Isa. ii. 3. Luke xxiv. 47. It was their Moses, their prophets, their apostles, (all of them Jews) that wrote this book, by which eternal life is brought to us. Nay, it is their countryman Jesus, who is the ground of all our hope, who we believe is the Son of God. "For of them as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." It was the light that came out from among them, that enlightened our dark part of the world. And now that our teachers are blinded, will we not put up a petition for them, *Lord that they may recover their sight.*

3. The church and all the privileges thereof, which we enjoy this day were originally theirs. "For to them pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." We are well this day, and all the churches, in comparison of our fellow Gentiles, yet abiding without. And how so, but because we have got into the tents of the Jews, where the Lord shews his glory. "God shall, said Noah, enlarge Japheth and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be servant. But alas! the original possessors are out, they have left them in a fit of madness; but there is room enough for them and us both, and shall not we pray, that they may come to themselves and return. It is their olive into which we are engrafted, they are the natural branches, Rom. xi. 17—21.

4. Have you any love to, or concern for the church, for the work of reformation, the reformation of our country, the reformation of the world? Any longing desire for the revival of that work now at a stand; for a flourishing state of the church, that is now under a decay? then pray for the conversion of the Jews.

Are you longing for a revival to the churches, now lying like dry bones, would you fain have the Spirit of life enter into them? Then pray for the Jews. "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world; what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead." That will be a lively time, a time of a great out-

pouring of the Spirit, that will carry reformation to a greater height than yet has been.

Are you longing for the increase of the church, then pray. Alas! our mother that has born seven, languisheth and waxeth feeble. Dry breasts and a miscarrying womb is much her plague this day. But then she shall renew her strength and bring forth many. "For if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness?" Not only shall she be increased with the coming in of the Jews, but with more of the Gentiles. For their conversion *shall be more the riches of the world, than their fall was*; yet to that is owing all the gospel riches this day among the Gentiles. "Then shall the light of the moon be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven fold as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound."

Are you longing for a prosperous time to her members, by a full table spread for them in ordinances and they liberally fed there? then pray. Our Lord in the matter of his house-keeping brings always the best to the last course. The best wine comes at last. And his dinner which he prepares is good. The church hath been sitting at it more than seventeen hundred years, and many have been brought in to it, and sweetly filled. But the world's day is far spent, now it is near night and therefore supper-time is drawing on; and that is the best meal in our Lord's house. Now when the Jews are called in, the supper is served up. And happy they who have got a share of the dinner, but more happy they who shall share of the supper, before the marriage be consummated in heaven. "And he saith unto me, write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me these are the true sayings of God."

Are you longing for the increase of the knowledge of heavenly mysteries, then pray. At the rising again of the witnesses, that had been slain by antichrist, John saw the temple of God opened, the doctrine of the gospel clearly discovered, Rev. xi. 19. But the Jews are converted, he sees heaven itself opened, Rev. xix. 11. yet a deeper insight into these mysteries. And we have no ground to doubt, but upon that great event, there will be a greater insight into the Bible, than is now among the most knowing. That promise however begun to be fulfilled, seems not yet fully accomplished. "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

Do you ardently desire purity in the churches, the extirpation of

popery, prelacy and profanity, then pray. Whatever be done in these matters before the conversion of the Jews; we have ground to believe that event shall be accomplished with such a purity of the churches, as hath not appeared in the world, Zech. xiv. 20, 21.

Lastly, We have more encouragement to pray for this, than the generations of the people of God that have gone before us. Because we are nearer the time of the accomplishment of the promise than they were. The church hath prayed long for it. The church of Scotland hath ever had a particular concern that way, when it hath wont to be made one of the causes of our national fasts. In the first which we had after the revolution it is particularly mentioned, and I find it in one kept about the year 1653. Let us follow the footsteps of the flock; who knows but some now living may see the accomplishment of it. But though none of us should live to see it, yet let us leave prayers behind us for the conversion of that people. The sins of some live after them for evil as Jeroboam's did, and the prayers of others for good.

There are two things that stand in the way of their conversion. Let us earnestly pray for the removal of them.

1. The horrible idolatry of the papists, scandalizes that poor people at Christianity. When they see Christians sunk in the sin of idolatry, which they know was so provoking to God in their fathers, they are hardened against Christ. Now God hath promised to remove that obstacle out of the way, and it will be removed, that they may come in, Rev. xv. 10—12. O help forward by your prayers. See our Lord's prophecy to this purpose, Luke xxi. 24.

2. The prevailing power of the Turk, who has swallowed up so many Christian churches and keeps so many Christians in bondage, scandalizes them also. But God has promised to remove that obstacle likewise, Rev. xvi. 12. They possess the Jew's land, but that cruel empire will be broken in due time. Whether the Jews shall possess their own land again or not, I will not positively determine: but I confess I incline to think they will. And what sways me in that point, mainly, is, that whereas the apostle, Rom. xi. concludes their national conversion from the covenant made with their fathers, bearing that he would be their God and the God of their seed, the gift of the land of Canaan, and that for an everlasting possession to them, is comprehended in the same covenant to them, though their possession thereof, as of the visible privileges of the covenant, have been long discontinued together, Gen. xvii. 7, 8.

Great are the strivings among the Turks and the papists also at this day. And though by them terrible things may be brought to pass in the nations, for shaking of the nations and churches, in the



just anger of the Lord; who knows what God may have on the wheel of providence. Let us pray that it may prove a fatal struggle, a struggle before death, to both these kingdoms, the eminent adversaries of our Lord's kingdom.

It is usual before a great revolution in favour of the church, that there are great wrestlings in prayer, for the mercy the Lord is about to give, Dan. ix. 2. Ezek. xxvi. 37. He that has a mind to give, gives a heart to his people to ask it of him. And if there were strong cries to the Lord for these great things, at this day among his people, it would be a good sign, that the promises that have gone so long big with these mercies, were near to bringing forth.

*Doctrine II.* The out-pouring of the Spirit will make a blessed change, on the case of a people or person otherwise hopeless. The land shall mourn. Strong is the grace of God and it will prevail, when it enters the lists with corruption, whatever be the advantage on its side.

I will illustrate this from the case to which the text refers. Consider here these things shining in this case.

1. Grace can bring them back, whom their corruptions have carried quite off the foundation. So are the Jews who despise Christ as a mere man. Such a case is absolutely hopeless in itself, but grace can bring one out of it. He that hath made the rejected stone the head of the corner, can make of the rejecters lively stones built up upon him. Compare 1 Pet. ii. 5. with chap. i. 1. of that epistle.

2. Grace can overcome the strongest, and root out the deepest prejudices against religion. No people in the world are so deeply prejudiced against Christianity as the Jews are. But their prejudices an out-pouring of the Spirit will totally carry away. When the eye is ill affected, things appear in quite wrong colours; but it will cure the eye, and then the beauty of religion will recommend itself, Song v. 9. and vi. 1.

3. Grace can draw men freely out of that way, in which an erring conscience fixes them. The bond of conscience, right or wrong, is one of the strongest ties of which the soul is capable; "therefore publicans and harlots entered into the kingdom of God before the scribes and pharisees." The gospel had readier access into the hearts of pagans than of Jews. When sin is held fast as a piece of religion, it is fixed as with bars of iron. Satan is most successful when he drives a wedge of God's own wood. This he doth with the Jews at this day, who from a blinded conscience of the honour of God and his law, oppose Christ. But grace will reach, for it can do it. It did so most effectually with Paul, who verily thought with himself that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

4. There is no prescription against the grace of God. Satan by means of unbelief hath had seventeen hundred years' possession of that people as his slaves. The fathers have taught the children from generation to generation to reject Jesus Christ. Yet grace will recover them after all, and denude the fraudulent possessor, though he had so long kept possession.

5. Grace will do that, which the heaviest strokes of judgment could not do. The sin of the Jews in crucifying Christ was a sin without a parallel, so their punishment also was a matchless punishment. "It was such great tribulation, as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." They are under the weight of it till this day. But it has done them no good. O! hopeless case! But as hopeless as it is, an out-pouring of the Spirit will make a blessed change.

Lastly, It will put an end to a national obduration. A nation is blessed with light, they abuse it, God is provoked to plague them with judicial hardness and blindness. Fearful case! But an out-pouring of the Spirit looses these bands of death. Such is the case of the Jews, so has it been for seventeen hundred years, Rom. xi. 8—10.

*Use 1.* Behold here the freedom and power of the grace of God. It is matchless free, shines like the sun without hire. Blows where it listeth. O what wide steps does free grace make to catch a lost creature, what mountains does it skip over. It steps over even Paul's injuries, blasphemies, &c.

O the power of it! It is the wind of the Lord's Spirit that blows up cedars by the roots, rends the rocks, makes the iron gates of the devil's prison to give way. His strong chains wherewith he binds his prisoners become like tow that the fire has kindled upon. It tames the sinner that hath long been wild, melts the heart of adamant, and makes them, who like the leviathan, count darts as stubble, and laugh at the shaking of a spear, mourn as doves.

2. You that would fain have Christ and his grace, be not faithless but believing. Whatever your case be, do not conclude it hopeless with respect to the Physician. I think always there is a secret despair of grace, and that more than we are aware of. They say *there is no hope*. Some think Satan's bonds on them are so strong, that there is no breaking of them; their plague sore has run so very long, that it will never heal now; God has so much left them, and given up with them, that he will never more look near them. And if they be praying, that the Lord would break these bonds, Satan steps forward to them and whispers them in the ear, as Mark v. 35. "Thy daughter is dead; why troublest thou the Master." But, ver. 36. Jesus saith, *Be not afraid, only believe.*

3. If ever you would see a reformation in the land, trust more to an out-pouring of the Spirit on the land, than to judgment were it ever so severe. It is a folly to be fond of a national stroke, that is the effect of a bitter spirit, not of the Spirit of God. Jeremiah said, "As for me, I have not hastened from being a pastor to follow thee: neither have I desired the evil day, thou knowest." The most tremendous judgments will not reform a nation, without an out-pouring of the Spirit; but an out-pouring of the Spirit will do it without any outward calamity at all. Our country has got a heavy stroke within these few months, and many a family great and small are mourning under the weight of it this day. But are we any nearer reformation than we were for it all? The Lord has made death ride in triumph among us of late, at an uncommon rate. Our kirk door is beset with new graves, burials have followed fast at the heels of one another. But whoso considers the use made of these speaking dispensations of providence, and how far people are from being bettered by them, may justly fear the time cometh, when deaths shall be more frequent, but burials more rare, Amos vi. 7—11.

Lastly, Yet despair not of the reformation of the land, or of particular persons, but pray, pray for an out-pouring of the Spirit. O wrestle with God and lift up a cry for it. That is a sovereign remedy that would cure all our diseases at once. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth." The work of reformation hath long been like corn in a great drought, yellow at the root, a shower of the Spirit would make all green again, and grow fast. As much as we are divided, this would unite us. As bold faced as wickedness and profanity are, this would stop their mouths. As little good as the gospel does, this would make convincing, converting, and confirming work more frequent, and give ministers of the gospel as much to do with broken hearts, as they have now with hard and impenitent ones. As great lifelessness and untenderness as are among ministers and people, this would purify the sons of Levi, and make the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem pleasant to the Lord, as in former years. It would restore our judges as at the first, and our counsellors as at the beginning; and make nobles and gentry cease from building of Babel, and pulling down of the church and of religion; put holiness to the Lord on the bells of their horses, and willingly set their shoulder to the work of the Lord. O! pray, pray for this. And let not your hopelessness and uncharitableness, as to any ranks of people in the land, whether because of their profanity, apostacy, formality,

deadness, enmity to religion and hurtfulness to the church, shuffle them out of your prayers for good. But cry mightily for the out-pouring of the Spirit, that the whole land may mourn.

*Doctrine III.* They that share in the out-pouring of the Spirit, will bring home public, national guilt to their own doors, and mourn for it. The cause of this mourning in the text, is the crucifying of Christ, ver. 10. Their fathers did it, and many generations have since passed; but when the time comes that the Spirit is poured out, the then generation shall cry out guilty, guilty, and mourn for it, in families and alone, each by himself, as kindly as if they had been the persons that embrued their hands in his blood.

Reason 1. Because they will find then that they have smarted under it, and borne in their own persons the marks of God's indignation, against the national guilt; and in the mean time be persuaded of the justice and holiness of God's procedure; saying our fathers have sinned and are not; and we have borne their iniquities. In the natural body if one member suffer, the rest suffer with it, so it is in the political body. When God is angry with our mother, the children cannot escape to share of the frowns. And kindly children will therefore be affected with the offence, as if they had given it themselves.

2. Because however unbroken hearts may justify themselves, as to national guilt, especially that wherein they had no access to have an active hand; yet the light of God's Spirit shining into the heart, will bring in the soul guilty in that point, there being so many ways by which one person's sins may become another's, which a tender soul will not dare to purge itself of. They say each with Isaiah, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips: and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." He who hath been among the infected, would have much to do, if of a tender conscience, to swear himself clean; so hard it is, if not impossible, for sinful men to be members of a nation, and not some way or other to be tinctured with the national guilt.

3. Because God deals with those of a nation or church, as one collective body, and tender souls seeing themselves to be of a guilty body, will take it home each to himself. Hence it is that the holy men of God make confession of national guilt, as their own, being themselves of the body, and are affected with it as their sin, in particular, Dan. ix. 5—19.

*Use 1.* This shows us what is that kindly taking with national guilt, that is acceptable in the sight of God, namely, when people bring it home to their own doors, and lay it before the Lord, as

that of which they cannot cleanse themselves, but need the blood of Christ to take away their share of the guilt. He that looks abroad through the land this day, and beholds the profanity, apostacy, and crying sins of the land, in former and the present generations, and wipes his mouth, and takes up the stone to throw at the guilty, even in respect of those very sins in which he had no active hand, as the murder of the saints and the like, hath very little if any at all of the Spirit of God. They are not of the spirit of Phinehas the son of Eleazar, nor disposed to say with Jeremiah, "The crown is fallen from our head; woe unto us that we have sinned." It will never be our declaring against national guilt before men, nor complaining of it only as the sin of others before God, but bringing it home to our own doors, that will be accepted.

2. This shows what will engage all to take with their own part in the causes of wrath against the land. There is a great complaint which all ranks of persons have against one another this day, that every one hides his sin and will not take with his guilt, whereby the anger of the Lord is caused to go out against us. But O! if there were an out-pouring of the Spirit on the generation, it would make a loosening among us, as ever there was in the frozen waters by a thaw. It would set all hearts a mourning, eyes a weeping, tongues a confessing. Each one a crying, *what have I done?* It would pull off the fig leaves, wherewith people now cover their nakedness, and the patches, wherewith they cover their loathsome sores. O, pray, pray for the blessed day.

*Doctrine IV.* Family and personal humiliation and reformation, spreading through a land, is true national humiliation and reformation.

I shall confirm this point. Consider,

1. The nation is really nothing but so many families united together in one body; therefore as the curing of a man's body is nothing but the restoring of health to the several members of it; so national reformation is nothing but personal and family reformation grown universal, or at least general. Many talk of national reformation who are little solicitous about these, whether of their own or their neighbours. Deceit is wrapt up in fair generals. But this is as great a blunder in religion, as it would be in physic, to tell the physician you would have him cure your body, but as for the members of it, he may let them be as they are.

2. Consider, is not the humiliation of the several parts, the humiliation and reformation of the whole? Would not a number of reformed persons make a reformed family? Would not reformed families make a reformed congregation? Would not reformed con-

gregations make a reformed national church? How was the world corrupted? Did not one man poison the whole? Was it not profanity and wickedness, spreading from one to another, that sunk the world in wickedness. We must then begin at the fountain, if we would stop the stream. A house when it is set on fire, the fire takes hold on one part and spreads through the rest; when it is quenching one runs with his bucket to one part, another with his bucket to another part, and so it is put out; even so must it be in the case before us.

3. In what way does the influence of magistrates, ministers, and other church officers reach to national reformation, but as it reaches to families and to particular persons? If they do not endeavour to reform these, and yet pretend to national reformation, it is a contradiction, it is the building a castle in the air, where there is nothing to work on. If the disease be grown so strong that their endeavours for reformation can do nothing to reform particular persons and families, how is national reformation possible in such a case, more than it is possible for a man to build a regular house of stones that would not build for him?

4. If one hath a mind to reform his family, how can he do it, but by reforming himself and the particular members of his family; as by setting and keeping up the pure worship of God, maintaining unity and peace, and exciting the several members thereof to the duties of piety, righteousness and sobriety, and curbing sin in himself and them. Even so it is with national reformation. And therefore both the national covenant, the solemn league and covenant, condescended upon personal and family reformation as that without which national reformation cannot subsist.

5. Though public humiliation in public assemblies be very good and necessary, yet real humiliation and reformation lies here, without which all the public humiliations are but hypocritical show, Isa. lviii. 5, 6. If ever the Lord pour his Spirit in a notable measure on this church and nation, our public humiliations which have been so managed, will be grounds of public and personal humiliation afterwards, and really mourned over, as that whereby God has been dishonoured, and our own souls cheated, in so far as personal, family, and national reformation hath not been joined with them.

Lastly, Personal and family reformation, is the bond of reformation, in respect of the truth and ordinances of God. Where that is wanting, church reformation cannot last; however pure it may be, it is but like a flower set in the ground without a root that quickly withers. What a good reformation was there in Hezekiah's days, but just in the days of his son all goes, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 9, 10. So

in Josiah's days, but immediately after all goes to wreck. How could this be, but that real personal religion was still far off?

But on the other hand, family and personal reformation would make people duly concerned for obtaining truth and purity, and when they have, would cause the retaining and holding of it fast.

*Use 1.* This teaches us that there is no true national reformation without family or personal. In vain do we pretend to the one without the other. If a nation have never so much purity of truth and ordinances, God will never count them pure without reformation of life. Nay, the purity of ordinances will aggravate their condemnation. The more light, while little holiness in a church or nation, the more terrible will their judgment be. Laodicea's hypocrisy was her ruin, Rev. iii. 15. The church of Ephesus was very zealous against error, Rev. ii. 6. Discipline was vigorously exercised against the erroneous, verse 2. Yet alas! for all this she had lost the vigour of real holiness, therefore unless she speedily repented and returned to her first works she was to be visited with the heaviest judgments, verses 4, 5.

2. So many persons and families as there are in the land that will not reform, and amend their ways, so many hinderers there are of national reformation. O if these were considered, many would be found guilty of preventing national reformation, who now think themselves very far from being chargeable with it. Consider your own sins impartially, and remember that so far as you are deficient in personal holiness and reformation, so far you are guilty before God of hindering the reformation of the land. How is it the land should mourn? Is it not every family apart? While the house is on fire, you are chargeable with the ruin of it, so far as you bring not your bucket and cast it on the flame in the place nearest you.

3. Let none say they can do nothing towards a national reformation, for that is false. Every person can do something for it if they will. What we call our cannot, God calls our will not. His command is, "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions: so iniquity shall not be your ruin. But, says he, "ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." But it is not easy to get our corrupt hearts to comply with what God calls us to for that end.

The great thing some think they are to do for this end is to separate from the church. And this is very easy, because agreeable enough to corrupt nature in its passions and prejudices. Separation is very proper for Babylon that is never to be healed, Jer. li. 9. To separate from Zion's sins also is very proper; but to separate from her in her duties, and the service of God in God's own ordinances, is no mean of God's appointment to reform her of her sins,

Rev. ii. 24. compared with verse 20. It is true, church censures and the separation from the company of those, thereupon so cast out, is a mean for that end, 2 Thess. iii. 14. 1 Cor. v. 11—13. But what is all this to separating where there is no such casting out. What shall we do then when censure is neglected? Rev. ii. 34. Nay sirs, this mars reformation in congregations and through the whole church. (Alas, it is sad that offences so abound, there is a woe against them by whom they come, but a woe too against the world that is stumbled by them, and leave their duty because others leave theirs.) I am convinced the neglect of censure mars reformation in Scotland this day; for instead of making sinners ashamed, it irritates some, and sets them more against reformation than otherwise they would be; and sinks the hearts of others in the Lord's work, and will make their discharge the more easy whenever it comes: whereas would people keep their zeal for reformation and increase it, and not run out of our mother's house with it, it might do much good within the house, to warm those that are more cold-rife, 2 Cor. xi. 2. I refer it to the consciences of the heart-lovers of holiness, whether in a time of snares in our mother's house, it be a more proper mean for resisting defection and advancing reformation to stay within and struggle for these ends, than to leave it without our help.

But God's way for national reformation is not so agreeable, but we must set about it. And that is, that every one in their own sphere set about reformation. What can we do? Reform yourselves and reform your families, and labour to spread it among them with whom you have access to converse. This your own eternal interest, and that of others, require of you; and it might be of good use to the church.

1. Set about personal reformation in heart and life. Thus we find, Nehemiah, chap. iii. that every one laboured in repairing the wall over against his own house. Though then you cannot repair the whole wall, yet will you not like them repair over against your own chamber. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God." Look into the house, you will see it stands much in need of purging. There are buyers and sellers within that heart of thine, that need to be driven out in the practice of mortification. Purge the outer court of thy life, thy words and actions. See well to the inner court, the hidden man of the heart.

2. Set about family reformation. Every Christian family is or should be a church in the house, 1 Cor. xvi. 19. In it true doctrine should be maintained and propagated by reading the word and instructing the members of the family. "These words, saith God,



which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Pure worship of prayers and praises. Holy discipline and good government, for the encouragement of piety, and suppressing of sin in the family, Psalm ci. And to the advancing of these, every one is to hold hand, as they would have the Lord to dwell in the family.

3. Help forward the reformation of other persons, families, and particularly of the congregation whereof you are members. It is the commendation of the Tekoites, Neh. iii. 5—27. It seems they were resolved not to be idle, while any thing was to do. They had less encouragement than others from their nobles, but they were not the more slack. Every one is our neighbour, and we have a relation to all, to engage us to be useful to them as far as we can. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially to them that are of the household of faith." Thus you may be useful for national reformation and that two ways.

1. Thus doing, that part of it falling to your share is done, and so it is not all lying behind. God will take notice who puts his hand to the work as well as who stand back from it. Nay he notices how every one works, Neh. iii. 20. Your labour shall not be in vain. God reckons a Christian who repents of all his known sins, to repent of all his sins without exception; and he that doth what he can towards national reformation in his sphere, will be reckoned of God, one that would have reformed the whole land if he could.

2. Your example will have a native tendency to stir up others. The flame that burns the house must rise in some place, and some person must take the lead in reformation. And O! but that is an honourable post. Paul speaks most affectionately of Epinetus, as being the first fruits of Achaia unto Christ; and tells us that the zeal of the Corinthians provoked very many. When the first fruits come, the whole harvest follows. Though it should not have that effect, yet it will be your best testimony against your defection and apostacy of the day.

To excite you to family and personal reformation, Consider,

1. This is very necessary at all times, especially at this time in which God is pleading with us in such a manner, many families mourning for the loss of their relations, and we know not how soon the cup may come about to our own persons, if the Lord do not stay his hand.

It is an ordinary excuse for doing nothing that we cannot do all;

but it is a very insufficient one. In Ezra's days, the building of the temple was interrupted for many years; yet they built the altar, Ezra iii. 2. Though we cannot reform the land; we may do something towards it.

Though you cannot stop the flood of iniquity and apostacy through the land; yet you may put a stop to that part of it that is in your own course and life. You might do something to stop it in those of the same family with you and in your neighbourhood. Ay, but as are the nobles, so are the commons, they will not put their shoulder to the Lord's work. They are not their brother's keepers; though they can speak well enough in their own cause, they have not a mouth to open for the cause of God. We are all persuaded public oaths have done much mischief to this church and nation. This we cannot help, but may we not reform the common profane swearing among us, that no person imposes. They have need of a brow of brass, that will pretend a zeal against the former, and yet make no obstacle of profane swearing in their own conversation, or are at no pains to reform it in others.

Though we cannot get the land to mourn, yet we may mourn over our own family and its case. Though matters be so that we cannot get national humiliations, for all that we judge to be sins of the land, yet we may get personal and family fasts and humiliations for them. In these we may be as particular as we please. And if they put us to this course, it would be a good evidence, that the sins of the land are really heavy to us before the Lord; and that the sins of the land are not a matter of discourse, but of solemn seriousness with us. Amen.

*Note.* The remainder of this subject, on personal and family fasting was published by the author himself, in his Treatise on that subject.