

SERMON XVIII.

BY THE REV. DANIEL WILLIAMS, D.D.

WHAT REPENTANCE OF NATIONAL SINS DOETH GOD REQUIRE, AS
EVER WE EXPECT NATIONAL MERCIES?

Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.—Hosea x. 12.

THE prophet joineth counsel with threatenings. Amendment is that he calleth them to, as a means to save them. That he might induce them to this, he represents their aggravated sins, and the dangers to which they were exposed by their provocations: yet lest this call should still be uneffectual, through an opinion that repentance could avail little to a people so guilty, he addeth, that if they returned to God, their sins, though great, should not prevent mercy, and the threatened judgments, though near, might be diverted.

By this text God proclaims, not only to particular persons, but to nations, how desirable it is to him to execute his goodness; and his extreme backwardness to avenge himself on the most provoking kingdoms, unless they add impenitency under solemn warnings unto their rebellion.

God seems to address himself to Ephraim to this purpose: "Thou art a very guilty people; yet turn, that I may forgive. Thou art on the very brink of ruin. Thy obstinateness is so notorious, that it will not consist with the rules or credit of my government to spare thee longer. O, yet be persuaded to render thyself a subject capable of my kindness! I have long pleaded, and thou seemest even unpersuadable. Yet I will make one further essay; I will try thee once more. 'Sow to yourselves in righteousness.'"

First. *The words contain some of the essentials of repentance, and suppose the rest.*—Under a metaphor from tillage, God applieth himself in the description of this duty. As if he were to say,

1. *He that will repent must deal with his indisposed heart.*—"Break up the fallow ground:" whatever pain or difficulty attends so barren or obstinate a frame of soul, you must strive with yourselves; pluck up those weeds, strike at the root of your lusts, which render the fruits of righteousness impossible. This sense of that clause is more evident from those words of another prophet: "Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns." (Jer. iv. 3.)

2. *When the heart is thus prepared, we must proceed to proper acts of reformation.*—"Sow to yourselves in righteousness," *לְצַדִּיקָה אֲדַבְרֶה אֲנִי* *ad justitiam*, ["to righteousness"]. Let the rule of righteousness be observed in your hearts and ways; be just to God and men; return to

God in sincerity; be and do what may argue you to be "trees of righteousness." (Isai. lxi. 3.) Do thus "to yourselves;" that is, Leave it not to others: or, You shall reap the advantage of it yourselves, if you repent.

3. *You must also "seek the Lord."*—That is, worship God, and not idols, as hath been your way. Follow after him, who is departed from you; call upon him; crave his grace to help you. But be not satisfied with faint and short attempts; persist in this work till you find his favour in the blessed effects of it, even "till he come and rain righteousness upon you."

These heads of repentance this text affords.

Secondly. *This repentance is urged from a variety of arguments: but principally from this, that national mercies would certainly follow this national repentance.*

"Reap in mercy." לְפָנֵי חֶסֶד "Reap at the face of mercy, or immediately." It is promised more strongly, than if it had been said indicatively, "You shall reap," in the future tense. Being put thus imperatively, the import of it is this: "You have no more to do; but possess your mercies upon your repentance; mercy will of itself grow from that root. God hath provided all antecedent causes; he hath ordained the connexion; and it lies on him to make a repenting people happy. You may be assured of this; for that which was mere mercy in making the promise, is become an act of righteousness by the promise. You may now expect it from God as just;" in which sense I take that clause, "Till he come and rain righteousness upon you." That which was "mercy" in the first part of the verse, is "righteousness" in the last part. I know it is true doctrine to say, "Till God bestow on you holy inclinations, and ability to perform;" but that is not the most designed sense. He further argues from the plenty of those blessings which God would afford on their repentance: "Till he come and rain righteousness." The returns of God to a repenting people are in a fulness of blessing: "And there shall be showers of blessings." (Ezek. xxxiv. 26.)

There is one motive more, namely, the seasonableness. "It is time to seek the Lord." It is high time, and but barely so: you cannot say, "There is no hope;" (Isai. lvii. 10;) though you must repent soon, or not at all. The consideration of this paraphrase must lead any one to the case that I am to handle: Can any serious spirit think it vain to ask, "What is that national repentance, which may give a sinful people hope of mercy?" Which is the same with the case as it is given me:—

What repentance of national sins doth God require, as ever we may expect national mercies?

I have led you to it by this text, that it may not seem a melancholy fancy, a mystery not to be handled, or a needless inquiry.

It is an awful case. It is not put to satisfy your curiosity, but to guide your fears and hopes. It is not only to direct your minds to a right judgment of the matter, but to excite your hearts to that repentance which may afford us hope in the midst of our dangers and

guiltiness. It is the happiness or misery of nations [that] is concerned in it. It is the only remedy that a sinful nation can use or turn to: God is peremptory: "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," ἀπολεισθε, "utterly be destroyed." (Luke xiii. 5.)

My work is, I. *To resolve the case in general.* II. *To apply the case resolved to our own nation.*

I. I shall use this method as to the first:

(I.) *Show you what is supposed in the case as stated.*

(II.) *Explain the terms, "national sins and mercies."*

(III.) *State the case itself.*

(IV.) *Propose the difficulties that attend the resolution of it.*

(V.) *Resolve the case, which the fore-mentioned particulars will much conduce to.*

I shall, as proof to this resolution of the case,

1. *Evidence that the repentance expressed in the fifth head, doth ordinarily afford ground of our expectation of national mercies, notwithstanding national sins.*

2. *That when this repentance is not in a nation, we cannot ordinarily expect national mercies.*

(I.) *These things are supposed in the case as stated.*—Where there is sin, there ought to be repentance. There are national sins as well as personal sins: that a nation, as such, becomes guilty by national sins. There are mercies which attend a people as a community. Our national sins have removed national mercies, or at least prevent and suspend the bestowing of these mercies. God requires a repentance for national sins, and that as a means of national mercies. There may be a repentance which may be defective to this end, and from which we cannot groundedly expect such mercies. That there is a repentance for national sins, which, if we arrive at, may warrant our expectation of national mercies. These and such-like are supposed as the case is stated, and therefore I pass them by.

(II.) *I shall inquire what national sins are, and what national mercies are.*—The rest of the terms in the case will be handled under other heads.

QUESTION. "What are national sins in the question?"

ANSWER. Such gross sins as render a nation guilty, and expose it to national judgments, and forfeit national mercies. "When the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously," לַעֲוֹן לַעֲוֹן לְ "wilfully and repeatedly" against God's covenant, "then will I stretch out my hand." (Ezek. xiv. 13.) Whatsoever sins God hath threatened to destroy a body of people for, are in the question.

The answer directs us to consider these several parts of it.

First. *These sins are gross in their nature.*—They are not sins of infirmity, or sins which ordinary care, labour, and watchfulness could not prevent. They are called "bloody crimes." (Ezek. vii. 23.) You may find them enumerated, when God arraigns nations in the testimony of his prophets, when calling them to repentance; and when God justifieth the severity of his judgments against a people. I shall name some of them which defile a land:—idolatry, perjury, breaking

of covenant, blood, uncleanness, apostasy, oppression, profaneness. I need not bring proof hereof, the scriptures are full. "Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images. They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant: thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field." (Hosea x. 1, 4.) "For the land is full of adulterers; for because of swearing the land mourneth; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their force is not right." (Jer. xxiii. 10.) "He made a way to his anger; he spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence." (Psalm lxxviii. 50.) "What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor? saith the Lord God of hosts." (Isai. iiii. 15.) "And it shall be unto them as a false divination in their sight, to them that have sworn oaths: but he will call to remembrance the iniquity, that they may be taken. Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because ye have made your iniquity to be remembered, in that your transgressions are discovered, so that in all your doings your sins do appear; because, I say, that ye are come to remembrance, ye shall be taken with the hand." (Ezek. xxi. 23, 24.) "How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them." (Isai. i. 21, 23.) Yea, among such provocations are reckoned men's refusal of the gospel, silencing and obstructing the ministry, malignity against good men, divisions and enmity, lying, pride, abuse of mercies, gross formality, hypocrisy, great decays among saints, and gross backslidings. (Luke x. 10—14; 1 Thess. ii. 16; Rev. ii. 2, 3; Hosea xi. 7; Isai. lix. 13—15; Ezek. xxxv. 15; Amos viii. 9.)

Secondly. *These sins must be national.*—Such as denominate a kingdom sinful. We consider them not as the sins of particular persons, but as they affect a community, as united among themselves, and distinguished from others, by some special bonds.

We will inquire, for the clearing of this,

QUESTION. "How sins become national."

ANSWER 1. *By all, or the generality of a people, being personally transgressors, as to those crimes.*—"The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the crown of the head, there is no soundness in it." (Isai. i. 5, 6.) Thus Sodom could not afford ten innocent persons. The infection is oft propagated to the whole body, though begun in a few: as, "From the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land." (Jer. xxiii. 15.) This doth not mean, that every individual is corrupted, but the generality of all sorts: magistrates, priests, and people were profane; (Jer. xxxii. 32;) "Ye have robbed me, even this whole nation." (Mal. iii. 9.)

2. *When the governors, representatives, and influencing persons are*

transgressors.—"I will love them no more: all their princes are revoltors." (Hosea ix. 15.) Israel is become vile by the sins of Jeroboam; wrath against Judah remained, "because of the provocations that Manasseh had provoked God withal." (2 Kings xxiii. 26.) Provoking abominations by the rulers of a people, and cursed laws, defile a land and expose it. Saul brings a famine on Israel by violating the covenant with the Gibeonites. (2 Sam. xxi. 1.) What governors do may be said to be done by a nation; though, I think, when judgments take their express rise from the sins of rulers, there is some other guilt among the people ripening them for judgment, or a compliance with their rulers' sins. (Hab. iii. 8.)

3. *By the generality of a nation making itself partaker of other men's sins, though it do not actually commit them.*—Some that do not personally commit the sins, may become guilty of them, by not hindering those sins according to their power; by rejoicing in those iniquities or pleading for them; by not mourning for them; by contributing to those enormities. These ways a land may be guilty, though a few chief men act the sin. "For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." (1 Sam. iii. 13.) "In that day shalt thou not be ashamed for all thy doings, wherein thou hast transgressed against me: for then I will take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride, and thou shalt no more be haughty because of my holy mountain. I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord. The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid." (Zeph. iii. 11—13.) "And in that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth." (Isai. xxii. 12.) "In the day of our king the princes have made him sick with bottles of wine; he stretched out his hand with scorners." (Hosea vii. 5.)

Thirdly. *These sins are such as expose to judgments and forfeit national mercies.*—These are here intended, and reference to both the former heads must be had; but besides, the grossness of the sins as to the nature of them, and their extent as national; on both which accounts they become national provocations.

The case requires our observing further:—

1. *That more refined sins may expose one nation to judgments, which may not expose another land.*—This depends on the variety of advantages some people are under above others. A nation that hath gospel-helps, and professeth holiness, and worshippeth the true God, may be exposed to judgments by formality, backsliding, and more spiritual evils than other lands not so circumstantiated. Sins below gross immoralities may as truly forfeit their mercies, as injustice, blood, or idolatry, amongst ignorant Paganish countries.

2. *The provoking sins of one and the same nation may be made up by various kinds of offences, according to the different condition of the*

offenders.—Sometimes a land is polluted by the same sort of sins propagated through the body of the people. But it is not always so: the offences vary, and the national guilt results from the several offences. The sins of magistrates are of one kind, and the sins of the subjects another, according to their different talents and station. The profane part of a nation transgress by enormous crimes; and the professing part are polluted with more spiritual wickedness, as barrenness, deadness, censoriousness. The offences of the gentry and commonalty may be several. Ministers and people may fill up the measure of iniquity in a different manner. “Woe to them that lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.” (Amos vi. 4, 6.) “For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the Lord.” (Jer. xxiii. 11.) “His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter.” (Isai. lvi. 10, 11.) “And it came to pass the same year, that Hananiah the son of Azur the prophet, which was of Gibeon, spake unto me in the house of the Lord, in the presence of the priests and of all the people, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon,” &c. (Jer. xxviii. 1—17.) “The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?” (Jer. v. 31.) “Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights? For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.” (Micah vi. 11, 12.) “The best of them is a brier: the most upright is sharper than a thorn-hedge: the day of thy watchmen and thy visitation cometh; now shall be their perplexity. For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man’s enemies are the men of his own house.” (Micah vii. 4, 6.) Hence you see, that a nation may be guilty, though some remarkable villany may not be universal: it is enough if the different sorts of inhabitants grossly offend in their several kinds.

3. *Usually the sins of a nation do not bring judgments, or forfeit mercies, by the simple commission of them; but as attended with some additional aggravations.*—A land rarely is destroyed, unless sins are committed after warnings. Utter destruction comes not before lesser judgments have been tried, and prove unsuccessful. (Amos iv. 1—13.) Security and impenitency is added to rebellion before God proceeds against a people. The Lord’s goodness displays itself in his calls, and patience waiteth an answer ere he takes the advantage

against a land. Oft beside the grossness of sins, there is boldness and shamefulness: "They declare their sin as Sodom." (Isai. iii. 9.) I shall not mention antecedent aggravations, as light, convictions, covenant-bonds, &c., which add a weight to sin while committing.

You see what national sins are in the question, and when they become such as hazard the ruin of a people.

QUESTION. "What are 'national mercies' in the case before us?"

ANSWER. Such blessings as truly and considerably affect the good of a community.

They must be blessings in their nature, and national in their extent; they must have an aptitude to the common weal: the more they conduce to make a land happy, the greater the mercy is. Neither is the gracious design of God to bless a land thereby to be disregarded; for sometimes he rains snares, and gives quails in judgment. (Psalm lxxviii. 29, 31.)

These mercies regard our souls, or our bodies, or both. I shall enumerate some of them:—the pardon* of past sins, and help against the like offences; the presence of God as effective of spiritual and temporal good; gospel-ordinances; a holy, judicious, faithful ministry; a pure worship; the Spirit's energy in the gospel to the conversion of many sinners, and real edification of saints, whereby the estate of believers may be flourishing; a godly discipline, and communion of saints founded on plain gospel-terms; love and peace among churches, grounded on essential, not disputable, notions, and expressed in all the fruits of Christian love; freedom from persecution and malignity; a godly magistracy, using its power to restrain sin and promote godliness; peace in our borders; justice in our courts; learning in the schools; wisdom and sincere designs for public good among counsellors; plenty, by a blessing on our trades and labours; health in our streets; credit and influence among neighbouring countries; freedom from such judgments as waste and debase a land. These and the like constitute a happy nation: they are mercies which national sins forfeit, and without which the aspect of a land is mournful. Greater or less degrees of all or any of these are within the question, as the object of our expectations; and the sorts and degrees are oft proportioned to a nation's repentance, and determined by it.

(III.) *The case stated and distinguished from what seems like it.*—It is not, What repentance God requireth of particular persons in order to eternal life? nor, What repentance God requireth of a sinful nation as its duty? nor, What is that repentance without which a nation shall never enjoy national mercies? nor, What repentance is that on which every nation, in all cases, shall partake of national mercies? nor, What shall limit our prayers, nor yet altogether our hopes, as to the state of a land? much less, What is that repentance which will best secure national mercies? But the question connects our repentance and warrantable expectations. The scope of it is: "What is the lowest sort or degree of repentance for national sins which is requisite to warrant, and *ordinarily* direct, our expectations of national mercies?"

* By *pardon* I mean "an exemption from temporal punishments for those sins."

The reason why I add "ordinarily" will appear after: the indefiniteness of the term "national mercies," whether of this kind or of that, to this or that degree, I insist not upon; supposing that it imports at least so much and many mercies as render a nation tolerably happy, and exempted from what it esteems calamitous.

(IV.) *The difficulties of the case.*—It is not only hard to determine it, as the *minimum quod sic* * in any qualification for mercy; nor yet as a thing depending on multitudes, and relating to the providence of God as to what is future; but there are these other things that make it difficult:—

1. *Other nations are not under such express rules, with respect to God's outward dealings, as the Jewish nation was.*—That people was under a theocracy, God was their King; (1 Sam. xii. 12;) on this account the Lord chargeth them, when they were for a king, that "they rejected me that I should not reign over them." (1 Sam. viii. 7.) Idolatry also was high treason in that state: they were God's peculiar nation, and thereby to live in a more immediate dependence on him, even in civil respects, than other people. (Isai. li. 4.) The rules of their external privileges, both church and national, were express in that covenant of peculiarity whereinto they were admitted. This covenant easily determined men's expectations of God's dealings with them. But, I think, we cannot always conclude, from God's methods toward them, how he will deal with other nations that are not under the same law.

2. *There have been always great displays of sovereignty in God's dispensation of judgments and mercy toward nations.*—He waits longer on some people than on others, though no more guilty. Sometimes he granteth favour to a nation, though its sins be many; and punisheth it, when its provocations appear less. The sins of multitudes are connived at sometimes; and at other times he afflicteth for the offences of a few, as in the case of Achan. (Joshua vii. 1.)

He hath diverted judgments at the prayer of one Moses; but sometimes, "though Noah, Daniel, and Job be there, they shall deliver no more than themselves." (Exod. xxxii. 11—14; Ezek. xiv. 14.) Yea, he hath forbid his servants to pray for a people, as a thing to no purpose. (Jer. vii. 16.) God hath sorely rebuked small sins in particular persons, (as Moses, Uzzah, &c.,) to let men see, it is patience in God, not innocency in men, that he still destroys not.

There is exact wisdom and righteousness in all this variety, which the light of a higher state will discover; though now, by reason of darkness, his ways seem perplexed to us. However, this sovereign unaccountableness must abate our positiveness in judging what will be the way of God toward a people, though it hinders not the determining [of] our ordinary expectations.

3. *There are prophetic periods wherein national mercies shall not be obstructed by impenitence, but repentance shall follow them.*—Israel was not remarkably penitent, when the time of redemption from Egypt was come; yet God keeps his day. Their release from

* "The least relative proportion" of repentance.—EDIT.

Babylon found them in the like unfit posture; yet God is pacified, and brings them to repentance by their return. (Ezek. xvi. 63.) "This people is unclean, and what they offer is unclean;" yet he makes them prosper, and build the temple, even though they had not turned to him. (Haggai ii. 14, 16—18.) And it seems to be not much otherwise with the church, when it sings the praises of God for the consummating stroke against antichrist; she is not ready, nor clothed with eminent holiness. (Rev. xix. 1, 7, 8.)

4. *The desolation of a land is sometimes absolutely determined.*—When it is thus, a blessing is withheld from means that tend to make a people penitent; and what of repentance there is, becomes uneffectual to divert the misery. Manasseh repented, Josiah and the people with some solemnity humble themselves; but notwithstanding this, "the Lord turned not from the fierceness of his wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal," &c. (2 Chron. xxxiii. 12, 13; 2 Kings xxiii. 25—27.) When the utmost limits of the time of God's patience is over, ruin is unavoidable. God bemoaneth a land in this condition; as our Saviour in his tears over Jerusalem: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."* (Luke xix. 42.)

5. *God sometimes moderateth and refrains his judgments, from other considerations beside repentance.*—If executing judgments upon his people will occasion blasphemy and reproach to his name, he oft forbearth his people, though impenitent: "I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men; were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, Our hand is high, and the Lord hath not done all this." (Deut. xxxii. 26, 27.) Joshua and others knew it was a strong plea: "What wilt thou do for thy great name?" (Joshua vii. 9.) Again: when his people have been so obstinate under judgments, that if he proceeded in his wrath, they must be utterly destroyed,—rather than do so, he hath eased his hand. If the sins of his enemies be full, he conniveth at his church, while he avengeth himself on his adversaries; especially if his servants are to be executioners of his wrath. Sometimes God hath had respect to some ancestor, or some particular action, of a people, that hath been pleasing to him; and on that account, hath been favourable, though they have been otherwise obnoxious to judgments: "Yea, thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea, from that time that thine ear was not opened: for I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb. For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off." (Isai. xlvi. 8, 9.) "Thus saith the Lord God; Because the enemy hath said against you, Aha, even the ancient high places

* The figure *aposiopesis* is twice used in this verse: "Thou hadst been happy, hadst thou known in thy day;" "Thou art now undone, because they are hid from thy eyes."

are ours in possession : therefore prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord God ; Because they have made you desolate, and swallowed you up on every side, that ye might be a possession unto the residue of the Heathen, and ye are taken up in the lips of talkers, and are an infamy of the people : therefore, ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God ; Thus saith the Lord God to the mountains and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, to the desolate wastes, and to the cities that are forsaken, which became a prey and derision to the residue of the Heathen that are round about ; therefore thus saith the Lord God ; Surely in the fire of my jealousy have I spoken against the residue of the Heathen, and against all Idumea, which have appointed my land into their possession with the joy of all their heart, with despiteful minds, to cast it out for a prey. Prophecy therefore concerning the land of Israel, and say unto the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, Thus saith the Lord God ; Behold, I have spoken in my jealousy and in my fury, because ye have borne the shame of the Heathen : therefore thus saith the Lord God ; I have lifted up mine hand, Surely the Heathen that are about you, they shall bear their shame. But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel : for they are at hand to come. But I had pity for mine holy Name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the Heathen, whither they went. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God ; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the Heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the Heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them ; and the Heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes." (Ezek. xxxvi. 2—8, 21—23.)

6. *It is not very easy, at all times, to judge of national judgments or mercies.*—God may afflict in order to mercy ; he may take away lesser mercies, to make way for greater blessings : he oft lays a foundation of lasting good, by delays and astonishing struggles. On the other hand, he may forbear judgments, and bestow good things, whereby a nation is ripened for sorer plagues. He may destroy the gentry to save the vulgar ; or level his stroke against evil magistrates or ministers, and so shake the state, to make the body of a people, or his own people, at least, prosperous. Many such ways are with him. Each of these affects a community ; and yet the aspect of them is so intricate and clouded, that deep thoughts are needful to determine when we see the mercy we expect, or the judgment which we fear.

You may perceive that the case before me, though it seemeth so popular, is not so easily decided. But the greatest difficulty is, to adjust the nature of repentance, as accommodated to our expectation of national mercies : which will fall under the next head.

(V.) *The case resolved.*—And somewhat concerning the rule by which it is resolved.

THE RULE TO DECIDE THE CASE BY.

The rule by which we must determine this is hinted in the case itself, under those words, "What repentance doth God require?" Some expression of the Divine Will must guide us; we must not judge by second causes, or by vain fancy, as we are too apt to do. Neither too rigid nor yet too compassionate inclinations must decide the matter, or lead our expectations. The directions of the Sovereign Ruler of kingdoms must alone take place; what notices he hath vouchsafed must be regarded with reverence: natural principles, due inferences from his essential perfections, the nature, order, ends, and methods of his government, well considered, and an observation of his dealings with ourselves in past times, and also with other countries, do all contribute some light in the matter before us.

But our chiefest regard must be to the scriptures; especially to such parts of them as urge repentance on a people, with promises of good in case of compliance; and threatenings of ruin upon their obstinacy. Also such parts should be observed as contain instances of national repentance, which have been succeeded or accompanied with national mercies. By this rule we must determine what that repentance for national sins is, whereupon we may expect national mercies. Here we must consider repentance modified as a means to this proper end, namely, national mercies; and it is to be considered as to that lowest degree which will support our expectations of those mercies.

Having premised this, I think it may thus be determined:—

First. *A repentance short of that which is enjoined in order to eternal salvation, will suffice to warrant our expectations of national mercies.*—Eternal issues are not determined by the same rules as temporal blessings. Unregenerate persons may repent, so as to divert present judgments, and secure mercies. This is evident in Ahab and Nineveh. (1 Kings xxi. 29; Jonah iii.) If it were not so, we could not expect national mercies before the generality of a land became true converts yea, active converts; for, regenerate persons that shall possess heaven may come short in that repentance which secures blessings to a nation.

Saving repentance is the grace [which] we call sinners to by our ministry; the more of this prevaileth in a land, the more sure are the mercies of that people. Without it, a nation will soon run into new forfeitures, and bring plagues on itself at last; as Nineveh did. (Nahum ii., iii.) This saving repentance is a change of heart, as well as practice; it strikes at the root, and excludeth the dominion, of all sin, as well as national provocations. It hath a mixture of divine love reigning in the heart, as well as fear; it is excited by a sense of pardoning mercy through the blood of Christ, as well as [by] God's wrathful displeasure; it is an effect of the Spirit indwelling, and not only of its common operations; it is the fruit of the divine life, and not merely of natural principles excited by foreign impressions.

In these and the like, saving repentance exceeds that repentance of a land, which yet may afford expectations of national mercies.

Secondly. *The repentance which yields us ground to expect national mercies*, I shall describe in these following particulars:—

1. *It hath several things wherein it partakes of the nature and sincerity of a true repentance.* 2. *It must be for national sins.* 3. *The repentance must usually be national.* 4. *It must be suited to the different condition and circumstances of such as make up a nation.*

1. *It must have so much of the nature and sincerity of a true repentance as is included in these following heads:—*

(1.) *Clear convictions of the guilt and offences of a nation.*—We must believe those things to be sins, which God chargeth us with; and truly own, that we are chargeable with the faults for which God reproveth us. This God enjoineth: “Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God.” (Jer. iii. 13.) They cannot be said to repent, who plead guiltless. This plea God reproveth Israel for: “Yet thou sayest, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me.” (Jer. ii. 35.) While men plead for sin as no sin, or acquit themselves when they are criminals, sins bind on them the wrath of God, and stand in the way of a people’s good; but there is hope of a land, when it poureth out its confessions with them: “We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers: for we have sinned against thee.” (Jer. xiv. 20.)

(2.) *Shame, fear, and deep humblings of soul under the sense of the wrath of God, as provoked by our sins.*—Ahab humbled himself. “Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him?” (Joel ii. 12—14.) God will embitter sin to us, or avenge it. (1 Sam. vii. 6.) Provocations shall prevent mercy, when they are easy and pleasing; but this remorse must reach to the heart, though it do not savingly change it. The heart must tremble at the threatened wrath: God will have his anger awful to men, and their abominations shall cause a blush, at least in a sense of what miseries they expose to. Therefore while people make a mock of sin, as harmless; while they sport with the wrath kindled thereby, as a scarecrow; God will go on to strip a kingdom of its blessings, and load it with judgments: “They were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down.” (Jer. vi. 15.) But this humiliation, fear, and shame, must be from an affected soul, not bare bodily appearances, in a day of humiliation, or hanging down the head like a bulrush for a day; these the Lord despiseth, for such things he will not turn away his anger. (Isai. lviii. 3—7.) Whereas there is hope, when a people “lie down in their shame, and confusion covers them,” because they “have sinned against the Lord.” (Jer. iii. 25.) It bodes well, when men “tremble at the words of the God of Israel because of transgression.” (Ezra ix. 4.)

(3.) *Such a compliance with God's warnings and rebukes, as to put men on seeking God's favour, and resolving to forsake the national pollutions.*—There must be supplications, as well as weeping: "A voice was heard upon the high places, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way." (Jer. iii. 21.) This is God's advice to a land, and it is the constant way of a repenting people. Thus Nineveh "cried mightily unto God." (Jonah iii. 8.) Herein the dominion of God is owned, and so far men acknowledge a dependence upon him. But this must not be only with the mouth; no, it must be with the heart as to this act and occasion. A slight cry will not prevail. It is a brand on a people, that "they cried not unto me with their heart." (Hosea vii. 14.) With our prayers there should be a justification of God's threats and punishments. (Neh. ix. 33.) How hopeless, then, is the condition of a people, when that is true of them!—"We made not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth:" (Daniel ix. 13.) and as sad, whilst they arraign his ways as unequal. (Ezek. xviii. 29, 30.)

But good resolves must attend prayer; a full purpose under present convictions, though it may not always prove effectual, through want of a principle in sinners, and remains of corruption in saints. We are led to this by that place: "Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" (Hosea xiv. 2, 3, 8.) Expressive hereof was Ezra's and Nehemiah's entering the people into a covenant with God against national sins. (Ezra x. 3; Neh. ix. 38; x. 29.)

Now what hopes can there be of a land, if it neglect the Lord, as if he had nothing to do with them? yea, [if it] continue resolute in its sins? Thus did they who said, "After our idols will we go." "We will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine." (Jer. xlv. 17, 18.) Alas! such a people may lie down in fear, and look at the mercies they want as impossible; yea, consider the blessings they yet enjoy as soon to be removed.

I added, that prayer and resolves should be in compliance with God's warnings: God will have a regard to his threatenings, and some tribute of obedience rendered to him by them whom he spares. Thus Ahab yielded to Elijah's message; and Nineveh regarded the threatenings of the Lord by Jonah. Therefore it is an awful sign,

when nations "refuse to hearken," draw "away the shoulder," and "make their heart as an adamant; lest they should hear the law, and the words" of God by the prophets. When this is the frame and carriage of a people toward God, what effects follow, the following words acquaint you: "Therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts." (Zech. vii. 11, 12.) Whether the warnings are sent by the word in the mouth of his servants, or by his wonders, or by lesser afflictions, the disregard of them makes the bands of a people strong; whereas attentiveness and compliance therewith afford encouragement.

(4.) *There must be a reformation.*—All the former, without this, are too insufficient to be a prognostic of good; the other things tend to this, and must terminate therein, or repentance wants its aptitude to the designed end: "I have also sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers:" a gracious offer; but behold the obstacle to their benefit thereby: "But ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me." (Jer. xxxv. 15.) In the same manner God leaves it on this issue: "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." (Isai. i. 16—20.)

It is no repentance while gross evils are continued in, if our sins be sins of commission; it is no repentance while an express duty be not complied with, when the offence is a sin of omission: "This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles." (Zech. xiv. 19.) Let there be never so much mourning, though it rise to the covering the altar with tears; it yields but vain hopes, when men continue unreformed. (Isai. lviii. 3—8.)

But amendment carrieth with it a happy presage: it restraineth the bitter effects of past provocations; and God in mercy encourageth it in a people, though on the brink of ruin. We see an instance in Judges x.: the people, having confessed their sin, (verse 10,) accepted of their punishment, and called upon God; (verse 15;) "they put away their strange gods, and served the Lord:" then the soul of God "was grieved for their misery," and he delivered them. (Verse 16.) A parallel you have in Nineveh: the charge given by the king (which was complied with) was: "Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence

that is in their hands." Then they conclude a possibility of escape, according to the tacit reserve in the prophet's message: "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" (Jonah iii. 6—9.)

2. But yet further: *the repentance in these acts must be for national sins.*—If it be for other sins, and not for the sins of the land, it will not warrant our expectations of national mercies. God will have men direct their repentance to that which his wrath is kindled for, and which his testimony is against. It is not enough that you bewail your own personal, private sins; but these public faults. People are loathe to own, bewail, and leave these national offences. Custom fixeth them; they are commonly reputable, and by the generality of transgressors thought innocent: they are supported by interest and power; there is danger by repenting thereof. If you reform as to these, there is oft a loss of places. Men are subject to shame by leaving faults in fashion; or the reproach of having long offended in those things: and how backward are our proud hearts to acknowledge we have been in an error! But let it be never so hard, the arrow of God is levelled against these very sins; and even these shall be bewailed and forsaken, or he will proceed to embitter them.

People may think to commute with God, and amend in other matters; but this is a vain attempt, to their own delusion and ruin: "Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine. For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels; that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing: therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people." (Micah vi. 15, 16.) This leads me to answer one objection.

OBJECTION. "How may we know which be the national sins?"

ANSWER. If the same particular sins be universal. Consider the carriage of a people in general, and compare it with the word: national sins are too gross not to be seen, when the rule of a people's walking is set before us. But if you would know which are more eminently the national sins, observe what sins have the greatest influence in corrupting the land; which cleaveth fastest to a people, and [which] most (especially leading) persons are guilty of; which have been longest continued in, and in their nature and consequences are most grievous; which seem the judgments of God most directed against; what sins do the best ministers and people witness most against. By these rules you may discern what are those national sins, which the nation agree in the commission of, or connivance at. But if the national sins be by accumulation of several sorts of sins, according to the different state of people who constitute that community; you then must distinguish a nation into its constituent, or remarkably differing, parties; as magistrates and subjects, ministers and people, rich and poor, infidels and believers, &c. Compare the frame and carriage of each of these, with that which God hath

made their peculiar duty ; and, adding the former helps, those national sins will appear which are made up by complication, though the same individual crimes are not entertained by the several parties in a nation.

3. *The repentance must usually be national.*—I do not mean that every individual must repent ; but the generality, or at least some very considerable number ; and those, of such men that most represent and influence the body. A small number of private penitents may save themselves, but seldom secure a nation. I confess here I must be wary ; considering how graciously God is pleased to admit sometimes a few to personate a body, and give-in blessings for many on their mediation. Phinehas's zeal turns away wrath from all his people. (Num. xxv. 11.) God seems to conclude the unavoidable-ness of Israel's woe, from the want of one man to divert it : “ I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it : but I found none.” (Ezek. xxii. 30.) This the desolate church complains of : “ There is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.” (Isai. lxiv. 7.)

But though Sovereignty admits a very few penitents to profit many transgressors ; yet we are not usually to expect this, (whatever in extremity we may hope,) for want of better grounds : usually *a few* are called “ none ” as to this effect : “ No man repented him of his wickedness.” (Jer. viii. 6.) “ When I called, none did answer.” “ He wondered there was no intercessor.” (Isai. lxvi. 4 ; lix. 16.) There were the prophets themselves, and some others, that repented ; yet *so few* were as good as none to secure the good, which multitudes concurred to remove. His call is to the generality to return, and on that he promiseth favour : “ Hear the word of the Lord, all ye of Judah. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place.” (Jer. vii. 2, 3.) And the failure by the refusal he affixeth to the body of them : “ Thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the Lord, nor receiveth correction : truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth.” (Verse 28.) We can hardly look for good to a land, unless the repenting persons be numerous enough to vindicate the glory of God, and influence the land to reformation. The assembly of penitents must be “ solemn.” (Joel i. 14, 15.) How general was the repentance of Nineveh : from the greatest to the least ; from the king and nobles to the most abject ! (Jonah iii. 5, 6.)

Some farther light may arise from the next head.

4. *The repentance should be suited to the different condition and circumstances of those that make up a nation.*—Each must repent of the sins common to all ; yea, the gross trespasses of each sort must be bewailed by every sort. But yet there is a repentance peculiar to each, which ought eminently to appear, or at least really to be ; and this exerted according to their respective abilities. Magistrates ought to mourn for the sins of the people ; and also to repent of their own ill examples, bad laws, &c. And they must express their repentance,

by exerting that power which they have above others: they should enact good laws, restrain and punish sin, command days of humiliation, appoint good ministers, &c. So Ezra did: (Ezra x. 8, 9:) the same did Nehemiah. (Neh. xiii.) Magistrates do not repent if they do not so; and a land may perish for their neglect.

Suppose a land dividable into unbelievers and believers: these believers must repent of their own sins, as well as the sins of unbelievers; they must be humbled for their own decays, contentions, worldliness, barrenness, vanity, pride, though less gross than others', as well as for the idolatry and profaneness of the irreligious. The reason is, that these sins of theirs contribute to the bringing down [of] judgments, and obstructing of mercies, as well as the grosser sins of unbelievers; nay, in some sense, more, because they ought to be witnesses for God in a degenerate land. Their examples encourage the grosser villainies of others: they have more light and strength to keep themselves pure: yea, if the number of good men be considerable in a land, the lot of a nation is mostly determined by them; and God's regards are much more to them than others.

If you take the epistles to the seven churches to be so particular as most do, you may see how God reproveth and threatens them, though small portions of those states of which they were members in civil respects.

I think I may say, that the repentance of believers for their sins must exceed the repentance of unbelievers, in some proportion to that life, grace, and aids which they have above those unbelievers: their humiliation must be deeper and more ingenuous; their resolves stronger; their return more universal; their prayers more fervent; their reformation more extensive, spiritual, and vigorous than other men's. In this it is true, "As a man is, so too his strength." If their repentance be no greater than others', they may expose a nation, and prove its ruin.

I might proceed to gentry and commonalty, to ministers and people, but time prevents me; and the same rules may guide you in these as in the instances before described. I shall only add, that supposing a part of the land persecutors, and the other persecuted for truth's sake; these latter must be humbled for the sins of persecutors, and repent of their own sins; and that according to the advantage which their afflictions give for their humiliation and amendment.

While men throw repenting-work off from themselves to others, (as if they could acquit themselves of God's challenge: "Are there not also sins among you? are you no way guilty?") the land is likely to suffer, and the common condition to be deplorable.

It is true, if the design of God be to single out any one sort of a nation to suffer by themselves, the impenitence of that sort may not damage the body of the nation, further than their struggles with, or their loss of, that part may affect the residue. As, if God resolve to punish professors of religion only, their impenitence may affect the whole no further than the distress of such professors amounts to, except as it is an awful omen; because judgment seldom begins at

God's house, but it reacheth in woful issues to others afterwards. Or, if God hath a controversy with the gentry of a land, their impenitency may not fatally reach the ordinary people, if penitent. Or if God resolves to punish ravenous, domineering pastors or persecutors, their neglect of repentance shall not hurt the whole that repents; nay, it will be their advantage to have them blasted, if they remain impenitent, as the kingdom's plagues. It is much more so as to particular families, whether the highest, or less influencing the corruption of a commonwealth. But where God designs not a distinct respect in his judgments, the stubbornness of any one sort doth threaten the nation. Their not repenting in a way proper to them, may plunge the whole into a loss of mercies.

Thus I have, according to my small light, resolved the case.

The decision of the case proved,

1. *The described repentance doth ordinarily afford a people national mercies, notwithstanding national sins.*—In the resolution of the case, there occurred some reasons, and many scriptures, to evidence this; so that I shall need to say little more for proof: there seems to be an express rule in this matter: "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." (Jer. xviii. 7, 8.)

The repentance which God hath accepted, so as to prolong the welfare of nations, was of this sort; as you see in Nineveh, and other places. (2 Chron. xii. 7.) Should we examine the repentance of any land, it hath rarely arrived to a greater height. A defect of the repentance enjoined in the covenant of grace, is obvious in that repentance which hath yet been effectual as to national mercies. This repentance answers the great methods and ends of God's general government, as to the temporal weal of nations; and provides a foundation to proceed upon in those methods whereby his spiritual kingdom is advanced, and the eternal welfare of souls is promoted. We may expect God will continue national mercies to a people who come up to that repentance which hath preserved other nations. We have great encouragement to our hopes from many texts. (2 Chron. vii. 14; xxx. 8, 9; Jer. xxvi. 3, 13.)

2. *Where this repentance obtains not, a people cannot justly expect national mercies.*—Let a nation seem never so safe, its security is vain, and all its supports shall be blasted by impenitency. (Isai. viii. 9, 10.) What, though a people are related to God?—"I will fan them with a fan in the gates of the land; I will bereave them of children, I will destroy my people, since they return not from their *evil ways*." (Jer. xv. 7.) May not their privileges, and pledges of God's presence, secure them? No: "Trust not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by

my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? behold, even I have seen it, saith the Lord. But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it, for the wickedness of my people Israel. And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the Lord, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not; therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim." (Jer. vii. 4, 9—15.) Mock shadows of your repentance, and weak, uneffectual attempts for it, will leave men under disappointments. (Jer. xiv. 4, 7, 12; xlv. 1, 10, 11.)

When a people is given up to impenitency, and God withholds a blessing from the methods that tend to their repentance, there is just cause of fear that judgments are determined against that land: "Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate." (Isai. vi. 9—11.)

God is so positive against a land refusing to return, that their felicity is impossible: "Wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass. Yet he sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto the Lord; and they testified against them: but they would not give ear. And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the Lord, he hath also forsaken you." (2 Chron. xxiv. 18—20.) Were it otherwise, God's name would not be sanctified, no order in this lower world would be kept. But, further:

Impenitence is not only a *moral* obstacle to good, as it provokes God to withhold it, but it is a *natural* obstacle: the wickedness of men is efficient of woe to a people, and is in many senses destructive of mercies, and inconsistent therewith. Many enormities of a nation are its plagues; as bad laws, wickedness in magistracies, a corrupt ministry, oppression, &c. Its iniquity is even *materially* its ruin.

APPLICATION.

Many inferences are obvious: as, How dreadful an evil is sin! How dangerous to a land are multitudes of offenders! A nation is foolish that discountenances piety, and destroyeth the godly party; whereby it strikes at its own refuge. How good and long-suffering is God, that calls the vilest nations to return, waits long for their answer, and

destroys not till their repentance be even hopeless! What enemies to themselves, neighbours, and posterity, (bound up in their doom,) are an impenitent people! What sottish and atheistical men are they, that guide their hopes and fears of a nation's welfare by fancies or second causes, but without regard to God's favour or anger, or the influence that repentance or impenitence have upon the ways of God toward a people! What a dismal prospect is a wicked nation, sporting with their provocations and warnings! How uncertain a tenure do most nations hold their mercies by!

But I have not time to insist on these.

II. *I shall briefly apply the resolution of the case to our own nation.*—We are a nation; we have national sins; repentance of these sins is a presage of our future state, as well as others'. I know no exemption, or peculiar allowance, [that] we can expect at the hands of the Righteous Governor of the world. O that our hearts were under the power of this awful truth, that our iniquity may not be our ruin! (Ezek. xviii. 30.)

In order to this,

(I.) *I shall insist on some things in order to our repentance;*

(II.) *Inquire whether we may groundedly expect national mercies from our present frame;*

(III.) *Conclude with an use of lamentation of our national impenitency and dangers.*

(I.) *In order to our repentance,* I shall represent to you,

1. *The national sins we ought to repent of.*—Hereby you will know what we should be humbled for, resolve against, and reform. What a terror ought it to be but to mention our provocations! O, that a land of light should be chargeable with such enormities, and yet be secure, and hate to be reformed!

Where shall I begin the charge? We and our fathers for some ages have been guilty of the same sins, yet unrepented of. Against whom shall I level the indictment? Alas! we have all sinned and done wickedly as we could, magistrates and subjects, ministers and people, the unbelievers and believers. To what sorts of sins shall I confine myself? Woe is us! what sins did God ever destroy a land for, that are not national with us?

But, that the sound may not appear uncertain, I account myself bound in conscience to be more particular. My subject forceth me, not any uncharitable design. O that my own heart were more filled with zeal for God, and deepest sorrows for the nation's sin, while I am recording what may offend the guilty, though the charge be too plain to admit a denial! Let us inquire:—

Is England altogether innocent as to its laws? Do not we see that some of the terms of conformity are far other than our blessed Lord hath instituted? Are they not remote from a tendency to advance real piety, and exclusive of some things that would much conduce thereto?

Is not a diocesan bishop set up, whose sole jurisdiction bars all the other ministers from the exercise of a great part of their office; while

the bishop is utterly unable to perform it, through the largeness of his diocess ?

Is there not more than an umbrage of lying and perjury imposed on all ministers, when they must assent, subscribe, and swear to what is more than suspicious, yea, utterly false ?

Are not a heap of ceremonies and corrupt usages re-assumed, (though once cast out,) to the facilitating of the return of Popery, dividing of Protestants, and the scandal of the weak, who are too apt to place religion, yea, all their religion, in those vanities ?

How many severe laws were made against dissenters, and severely executed to the ruin of thousands !

Was it no provocation, to silence two thousand faithful ministers, when their labours were so necessary, and their places were to be filled up with many young men, who have proved fatal to serious religion ? The sacrament is made a politic engine, to further the damnation of unworthy receivers ; that all such may be kept out, whom they suspect any way hazardous to excessive pomp, and ecclesiastic pageantry.

Can the land be innocent where atheism is so professed, the most blasphemous oaths are fashionable, perjury, uncleanness, drunkenness, malignity against all credible holiness, so common, and consistent with reputation ? Was it not among us that the Covenant was burnt by the hands of the common hangman, and horrid murders committed as legal executions ?

Is not that Christian nation guilty where profanation of sabbaths is so notorious, yea, pleaded for as warrantable ? [where] most families have nothing of God's worship, the plainest essentials of religion [are] by few understood ? [where] the operations of the Spirit turned into ridicule, and religion placed in things that bear not a faint resemblance of the very form of it ; while sobriety itself is mere matter of scoff, and the fountains of learning send forth many more fitted to infect than reform the age ?

Is it to be concealed, that men enter on the ministry as apprentices on a trade, and use it as a mere means for a livelihood ? How many are pastors without the people's consent ! And too many preach, while unacquainted with the gospel as a law of faith, and rule of the recovery of apostate sinners. The labours of such have no tendency to convert or edify their hearers ; yea, alas ! conversion is judged a foolish thing to urge. All the most debauched and profane are regenerate, if they were baptized, and come to church. Many souls eternally perish by the influence of this one principle, and the ministry is diverted from its greatest end.

Have we not seen the ministry too much laid out to serve the late governments in designs of enslaving the nations, and ruining the life of the Protestant religion ? though amazing was the providence which, almost too late, opened some men's eyes, by a close attempt against their own places, and so swayed their minds, that they contributed to save the land from that ruin, which a few more sermons of non-resistance (if believed by the nation) had rendered unavoidable.

The good Lord continue that impulse, lest our miseries become greater by the beginnings of our deliverance!

I design not this account of all our public ministers. Blessed be God, there are many to whom the interests of Christ were more valuable, than to allow their labours to serve any base design. But this of late was found the way of church-preferments; wherewith too many complied, and made the pulpit a stage for a poor oration, rather than a place to testify for God, or bring souls nigher to him.

Are believers and serious Christians (whom I confine not to any sect or party) free from contributing to fill up the measure of our iniquity? O that they were! then should my soul rejoice in hope; but it is otherwise. Alas! how much have they made the vilest abominations their own, by not mourning for them, and by their carnal liberty contributing to them! "Our gold is become dross." (Isai. i. 22.) How unedifying are their discourses! How unexemplary is their walking! Each one seeks himself, and none the things of Christ: circumspectness is laid by as unfashionable: the virgins all slumber and sleep. (Matt. xxv. 5.) How few dare plead the cause of God, or do express his image! What heartless duties, froward passions, notorious pride, and neglect of education of children! Fast-days are kept without humiliation; sacraments and sermons are become lifeless; God is sensibly withdrawn, and none bemoan it; religion is dying, and none uphold it.

What a chilness on the love of saints to each other! What sordid divisions and distances! A new standard of godliness is erected, namely, a zeal for parties and selfish interests, under pretence of Christ's interests; while what is essentially and undoubtedly his recommends men little. How little do good men relish that life, light, and love which is purely divine?

Can I excuse dissenters, as such? No: to say nothing of some of them immersed in destructive errors; alas! the more orthodox have a share in polluting and exposing the nation. A vain itch hath seized much of our ministry; we study to please, rather than [to] profit. We envy one another, run into extremes, because others come not up to divine institutions. We overlook the mercy of our ease and liberty, because we abound not as others do.

Tremble, O my soul! to think, how many, even of them, persecute, by railing, lying reports, non-communion, and censuring the state of souls for non-compliance with doubtful notions.

Too many set up uninstituted terms of communion, destroy the pastoral office, promote little designs with base tricks and grossest lying, under the covert of equivocation and surmises!

Were it not that some breathe another spirit, and more suitable to the Divine nature and the gospel of Christ, I should sit down with horror, and give up the land for lost. The shadow hath sensibly eaten up the substance; we have fancied, talked, and disputed a gospel-frame, and practical holiness, almost out of the land. A dead form is that which most are content with, and carnally plead for; while they profess more purity and power than others.

Are these evils in the land, or no? Are they sins? Are they not general? Arise, O God! and convince us; embitter them to us. O, was there ever more need to crave the pourings out of thy Spirit, now its recesses are so manifest? How discernible will be its pourings out, if thou bless us therewith!

2. *I do, in the name of God, call you to this true repentance for these national sins.*—We have nothing else left to relieve us: our begun deliverance will be abortive, yea, more destructive, without repentance. What nation ever needed repentance more? Whom hath God oftener called and more expressly warned?

He hath long waited to be gracious: and must he destroy us at last, when weary of repenting? The ruins of all our neighbours cry to us, "Repent; or you will be more miserable than we are: God seems to be on his way to you with the dregs of the cup." Our sins are of the grossest nature, the longest continuance, and sorest aggravations.

How oft has God punished this land for them! and yet we hold them fast. (Jer. viii. 5.) What variety of judgments hath he essayed our reformation by, but in vain! Thou London's plague and flames, shall not they reform thee? Will not former streams of blood extinguish our lusts and divisions? shall we force God to repeat them? We were lately on the brink of ruin; and yet the same malignant, formal, and irreligious temper revives.

God hath by a train of miracles respited our woe, and begun our deliverance; but what are any sort of men amended? Methinks we should have passed our own doom, with Ezra: "Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldest not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?" (Ezra ix. 14.)

These abominations are yet more odious by our profession and advantages. To be acted by such a nation, wearing a Christian name! These villanies were tolerable among Pagans, in comparison of us; but in a place of light we have thus transgressed, in a land of uprightness we have been thus vile. (Isai. xxvi. 10.)

O the convictions, struggles, and helps we must have trampled on! the many vows we have broken in all these transgressions! Yet in the midst of our rebellion God renews his call: "Repent, O sinful nation!" Let the cry of mourners be heard in our streets! O let shame cover our face! If you have any pity for yourselves or posterity, truly repent at last.

View the national mercies you may enjoy by repenting, and that you are sure to lose by hardening your hearts against it. Read them over again where I named them: are they not valuable enough to excite your reformation? O that all would concur in their places to reform! When will magistrates restrain sin, disannul all bad laws, and state the terms of our ministry and communion; so that all may be useful, and not spoil their efficacy by guilt contracted at their admission; nor perpetuate our divisions, the consequences whereof have

been so dismal, and are likely to be more so? When will ministers engage in the reformation of the land, by faithful warnings, sharp reproofs, good examples, plain and importunate pleadings? Will the grossly scandalous gentry and people abhor their enormities, and put away their great provocations, whose cry is gone up to the heavens? Shall England's mercy be secured by a revival of strictness of life, more love and power, among professors? Will you be your country's and church's plagues? That great good, which primitive saints rejoiced in the hope of; or overwhelming judgments, which posterity will be astonished at; do depend upon the return we shall make to God's present call. Mercies of the most glorious nature are in the birth; and shall your, even your, impenitence stifle them? O return! and "if you will return, let it be to the Lord your God." (Jer. iv. 1.) All changes that amount not to this, will avail us nothing. Your prayers, your fast-days, are as water spilt on the ground, without reformation.

How can I cease till the generality be persuaded to do this, which is so necessary to our common weal? Let us all cry, "Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall" or will "be turned." (Lam. v. 21.) "Frame your doings," as men determined to turn unto the Lord. (Hosea v. 4.) Set heartily to it with all your might, for it is hard work; delay it not a moment. O God, bow our wills, that the land may jointly answer: "Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God!" (Jer. iii. 22.)

Can you pretend, "Wherein shall we return?" (Mal. iii. 7.) Alas! wherein have we not departed from him? All in a manner is out of frame; every thing, every person, considerably needs amendment. Let us all unite in this, and God will bless us with light and love for union in other things. This work needs all our hands: let us make up that wherein others will be defective; all striving to begin and outdo each other. O that all emulation and strife were reduced to this,—which of us shall first and most reform!

3. *If the generality will not be persuaded to repent of national sins, let not particular persons neglect it.*—I am loath to descend so low, yet this is better than none. Who knows how many may be convinced by the repentance of a few? At least you may preserve yourselves, and view the public calamity with more composure than other men, as having done your utmost to prevent them. (Ezra ix. 4, 6.) We know not but God may delay judgments for the sake of a few remarkable penitents; though we may not commonly expect it. Shall there be so great cause, and none set themselves to it? Hath God none among us that regard his loudest calls? Can there be so little love to his name and honour in England, that even a few will not afflict their souls; that he is so provoked, that a few will not testify against this common apostasy? Poor nation, that hast none that love thy welfare! that all will lose showers of mercy for thee, rather than sow in righteousness!

O that some would resolve this day! Let not God say, "I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand

in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none." (Ezek. xxii. 30.) Repent of your personal sins, otherwise how can you repent of national sins? Examine thyself, how far thou art infected with the national provocations. What hast thou contributed thereto? Charge thy soul therewith: say, "The measure is so much the fuller for my sake." Bewail thy share; mourn over the faults of others. Thou mayest grieve for what thou canst not reform; but be sure to reform thyself to thy utmost; reform thy family; yea, set thyself to bring all (thou art in thy place capable) to amendment.

Do not judge of faults by the common opinion; let not the example of others be thy standard; but set the divine rule before thee, and review things thereby. Resolve to stem the tide, and to judge and act in the face of it. What, though the multitude be against thee? what, though bigots rail? what, though many professors, yea, men of thy own party, condemn thee? All is nothing, while God will accept and approve thee. A man must be singular that will reform himself in a degenerate age; *he* must be resolved, *that* will attempt to reform others.

(II.) *Let us inquire, whether we may expect national mercies from our present frame and state.*—I believe, God will not forsake us, but in time he will do us good. But the inquiry is meant thus: whether mercy will be immediately enjoyed. Is the wrath of God turned away? and will his progress in a way of judgments be stopped?

Can we reasonably conclude, though the sword hath been furnished, it shall not destroy? our "warfare is accomplished;" the clouds are past; the bitterness of death is over? Dare I say?—"Rejoice, O land, in the favour of a reconciled God: for good, only good, shall presently be unto thee."

OBJECTIONS.

I shall, by way of OBJECTIONS, give you what is matter of hopes; and, in the ANSWER to those objections, give you the ground of my fears; and, in the end, declare my thoughts.

OBJECTION 1. "Are there not some testimonies of national repentance, from whence we may hope mercy is toward us? As,

"1. *Penal laws against the worship of God are as good as disannulled, and persecution is at a stop.*"

ANSWER 1. I wish the general remains of malignity argue not a sorrow for that liberty.

2. I find most of them that were guilty of persecution, instead of repenting of it, do justify it as a just prosecution; though it was an usurpation of the rights of people, as men, and as Christians.

3. Are the Sacrament-Test and Act of Uniformity removed?

"2. *We had a public fast-day, kept with outward solemnity.*"

ANSWER. I will judge of no man's heart; yet I cannot but observe,

1. The most polluting sins of the land were not solemnly owned, much less bewailed. Where was a public acknowledgment of the sinful silencing [of] two thousand ministers, because they durst not

profane their office, and plainly lie and perjure themselves? I might name many such other sins. Alas! general confessions avail little.

2. What public reformation in life and manners appears since that day? what fewer oaths? Profaneness is no way abated; men are returned with the dog to the vomit. Now, fastings without amendment are but a mockery with God, and profit not a people.

3. Men are so far from repentance, that they cannot endure to be reprov'd for their sins. They say, you irritate, if you mention their offences. They like to hear others accused; but abhor the least hint against their own faults. Tell the imposer on the church, that un-instituted terms of communion are sinful; and rage is awakened. Persuade the bitter spirit to be peaceable; and his tongue is soon envenomed; and you shall be railed on, as the great disturber.

OBJECTION II. "But a great part of the land is innocent of some of the most notorious crimes; the sober persons are many, who share not in the profaneness of the land; the persecuted and ejected cannot be guilty of the oppressions they were under; and many of the church of England never agreed thereto."

ANSWER 1. How little do such truly mourn for those sins of other men! How much more common is it to hear the better sort scoff and laugh at profaneness, than bewail it! Persecutors are more railed at, than mourned for. By this we become guilty.

2. Are not there iniquities with the soberer part of the nation, impenitently continued in to this day? Do we see backslidings healed? How much more mortified, heavenly, circumspect, charitable, or fruitful, are the hopefulest persons in the land, by all our calls? Yea, our complaints, though so general, little tend to alter us: "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee." (Isai. lxiv. 6, 7.)

OBJECTION III. "But if we consider the sovereign dealings of God with us, may not we expect mercy, though we see not repentance? As,

"1. *God hath lately wrought a great deliverance, when we were on the brink of ruin, and that by a series of miracles, when we were as unworthy as we are now.*"

ANSWER 1. Such deliverances are never completed, and seldom long continue, where repentance doth not immediately follow. Though God may command deliverance first, yet he annexeth holiness to it; and where that fails, the beginnings of safety prove a snare, and do expose to greater distress. "But upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions." (Obad. 17.) When he saved from Babylon, he cleanseth them from iniquity: "And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the Heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them: and the Heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their

eyes. For I will take you from among the Heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean : from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you : and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." (Ezek. xxxvi. 23—27.)

2. Do not we find that deliverance is at a sensible stop, for want of our amendment? Instruments to save us seem less apt; our enemies are in better heart, and a much more threatening posture. The hand of God is at a stop: those hopeful touches on the minds of men are much defaced: they that mean well are less spirited and intrusted; they who design ill are more vigorous and countenanced. What a change have a few months made in our hopes, though they were raised by the highest displays of divine power and goodness! It is almost true, "You shall conceive chaff, and bring forth stubble: your breath, as fire, shall devour you." (Isai. xxxiii. 11.) "This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth." (2 Kings xix. 3.) "Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O Lord. We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen." (Isai. xxvi. 17, 18.)

"2. *May not we hope that God will finish our salvation for his own honour; and not suffer a work, wherein he hath so immediately appeared, to be imperfect; notwithstanding we reform not?*"

ANSWER 1. God hath his honour concerned in giving national mercies to an impenitent people, as well as in not perfecting a begun deliverance. He is sanctified in afflicting a sinful land; his government is exposed in sparing an unpersuadable people. "But the Lord of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness." (Isai. v. 16.) "Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God; and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffic; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth, in the sight of all them that behold thee. All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou

shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more." (Ezek. xviii. 15—19.) Nay, we oftener find him bear the reproach of not delivering his afflicted people, than of not punishing a rebellious people. "O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever? Remember this, that the enemy hath reproached, O Lord, and that the foolish people have blasphemed thy name." (Psalm lxxiv. 10, 18.)

2. God can secure his honour in both these respects, with great consistency. He may ruin Popery in other places, while he exposeth Protestants to it here. He may perfect this begun deliverance in England as to Papists, that they may not blaspheme; and yet distress Protestants by each other, and so still punish the land for its impenitency.

OBJECTION IV. "God seems to single out some particular families for judgments, who have been most accessory to the sins of our land. He hath altered the succession; and so it is probable, he may not punish the nation for the iniquity of the throne."

ANSWER 1. God may punish a land for the sins of a former king, though the government be transferred into another family. God punished Israel with three years' famine in David's reign, "for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites." (2 Sam. xxi. 1.)

2. If others do not take warning by such judgments as are levelled against particular persons, and repent, judgments will extend beyond those persons or families. Successors, by the same neglects and provocations, will expose a land to miseries; though their title be not derived by descent from former offenders. Yea, if a new government and people purge not the land of the crimes which had their rise in a former court, the vengeance will follow to the extent of the infection, and the guilty at least be in danger of misery. David righted the injured Gibeonites, before the famine ceased.

3. How little is profaneness or irreligion restrained! How faint and few are the attempts for reforming the nation since God hath blessed us with a prognostic of good, in the change of our government! Are men spirited for this, as Josiah, Ezra, Nehemiah, &c.? To be infected by others seems easier than to reform them.

OBJECTION V. "Are we not under such accomplishment of prophecies, as may argue [that] a Protestant kingdom, begun to be delivered, shall have its deliverance perfected, notwithstanding its sinful distempers? Is not the Philadelphian state beginning, the witnesses rising, the Ottoman empire falling, and antichrist's ruin just reviving and perfecting, even to the utmost of the judgments determined against him?"

ANSWER. I am well persuaded of all this, and have declared it many years, when the contrary was more probable as to the posture of affairs here, and in the rest of Europe; yet let me tell you,

1. That, in the accomplishment of these prophecies, the Spirit will be abundantly poured out, in order to the eminent holiness of such places as share in these blessings. All the promises that refer to these

latter days are full of peace, purity of doctrine and worship, and true godliness. With the song for antichrist's fall, the church is made ready, and "clean linen, which is the righteousness of the saints," is given to her. (Rev. xix. 2, 7, 8.)

2. Almost at the entrance of fulfilling these prophecies, there will be the most shaking and astonishing dispensation toward the churches as ever befell them. Then is the "great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great." (Rev. xvi. 18.) This is that "hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world." (Rev. iii. 10.) These epistles I take to be prophetic of the most eminent periods of the church-state, from Christ's time to the end of the world; and this trial is in the beginning of the Philadelphian state. It is true indeed, this will benefit the church at last, and be fatal to its enemies and false members; but it will be terrible to all.

3. Such an awful dispensation seems necessary to purge the church, and lay a good foundation of its real and lasting glory. This will be a means to convince false and irreligious Protestants, that "said they were Jews, and were not." (Rev. iii. 9.) It will pluck up every plant out of the church which God hath not planted. Hereby all constitutions repugnant to Christ's interests will be overthrown. Without such a paroxysm, how should degenerated Christianity recover itself? how shall the power of reforming the church be rescued out of the hands of such who hate its purity and spiritual welfare?

It is next to impossible, by any calmer means, to settle peace in the church, or awaken Protestants out of that formal temper which is the epidemic crime of the Sardinian* interval. You have it expressed in those words: "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." (Rev. iii. 1.) Many are really dead, as unregenerate; others dead, in opposition to spiritual liveliness.

Thus I have represented to you what seems most considerable as to the posture of our land, with respect to national mercies.

I shall offer my own thoughts upon the whole.

I think, the repentance of England for national sins is short of that which may give us grounds to expect national mercies.

The methods of God indeed seem designed to make us a happy people; but it must be in the proper way and season. The great things God hath begun to work, the liberty he hath settled, the disposition in many young ones to return to God and comply with his designs, his manifest exposing such who were likely to obstruct a reformation,—support my hopes, that blessings are in reserve for this sinful land. But yet it is probable, that some extraordinary storm will fall upon the nation, as a means to bring us to amendment, and a testimony from heaven against our crying evils and shameful impenitency. By terrible things, God will prepare us for blessings; and introduce our happiness by that which will try our utmost faith. I can hardly account our foundations sure while men justify their sins,

* I suppose this word to be a misprint for *Sardian* or *Sardic*.—EDIT.

and persist in them. Our very reformation is impossible, while men of most influence have no heart to it; yea, hate and fear it.

Whenever I see magistrates engage in reforming us, as their great duty, and with their whole might; when men of power esteem repentance to be the truest interest of the nation; when the ministry is awakened to cry aloud, and doth impartially represent to the land all its sins and dangers, not mistaking or palliating our offences; when the body of the land, at least a considerable part of it, do crave and approve of reformation, and concur with the means [which] God shall prepare for it:—then, and not till then, shall I account our repentance hopeful, and consequently expect the blessings to be established which God seems earnest to bestow.

But “who shall live when God doeth this?” (Num. xxiv. 23.) What overturnings will effect it, when so many have failed to do us any good? It is something very amazing which can alter minds so averse, or remove men unchangeably obstinate; yet the providences of God toward England are likely to be terrible in proportion to all this.

I do not herein “limit the Holy One,” but humbly propose my thoughts, as to the usual aptitude of means to their end; not wholly neglecting the indications of present providences as to this matter; much less would I overlook scripture-prophecies.

(III.) USE OF LAMENTATION.

Let us lament the impenitency of the nation, and its forfeiture of mercies, and hazard of judgments hereby. (Jer. viii. 6.)

What can be cause of mourning equal to our obstinateness? We are guilty of bloody crimes; and most regard it not. We seem reconciled to our abominations, as if they were innocent; and are as secure as if God had not threatened to punish a people for them.

The land is full of sin, after all the means which were sent to cleanse us. The fire hath devoured, yet our dross remains. The plague hath in its rage swept away thousands, yet the provocations of England abate not. How oft hath the Lord cried, “Wilt thou not be clean? when shall it once be?” (Jer. xiii. 27.) But we have held fast our several iniquities.

It is but lately, that Popery and slavery were coming on us like a deluge, to the amazement of all that could with any zeal consider it; but the nation now seems sorry that it was at all convinced, and repents that there was the least motion in it toward amendment.

O the ferment, that hastily succeeded our fears, lest sobriety or holiness should obtain! God hath followed his rebukes with undeserved, yea, unexpected mercies; but this sunshine hath made weeds to grow, instead of rendering judgments effectual to make us holy.

What methods have been untried? But none succeed. Which is the nation that ever withstood so many and various calls to repentance? Nineveh is England’s reproach; she repented at the first warning. Sodom would have condemned us, had it been trusted with half our advantages. Can the earth show an instance of per-

verseness equal to ours? as if the gospel had extinguished natural conscience, or a Christian profession did make us more regardless than Pagans. Every thing seems to harden us; we grow worse by those things that recover others.

Alas! we have few that bemoan our want of mourning. Are all our Jeremiahs asleep, that none drop a tear for England's security? Do all think it needless, or hopeless, to return unto the Lord, that so few seem to set themselves in earnest about it? How very few symptoms have we, that we are not under a judicial hardness! Many are convinced they ought to repent, yea, many resolve it; but how abortive doth all prove! Our iniquities baffle our resolves, and Satan triumphs over the vanity of our purposes. What a hateful prospect doth our nation afford to God and angels! We are a wonder to ourselves, when a drowsy mind allows us to entertain any serious considerations.

Lord! what will the end of these things be? Wilt thou always bear, and seem to observe, our provocations, as slightly as we do? Alas! this would make us more miserable than God's sorest rebukes. Judgments more awful than any we have yet felt, are become even necessary to our happiness; but though they be needful, what heart can endure them? What terror must attend those dispensations which will separate the precious from the vile; pluck up constitutions so rooted by interest, custom, malignity, and ignorance; disable the irreligious from settling church or state; and embitter our reigning sins to careless, scornful, and resolute offenders!

How dreadful is that storm that will drive all good men together, when they are cantoned into so many parties, embittered by mutual prejudices, fond of, and valuing themselves by, fond opinions, and distances from others; especially while self-conceit and ignorance so prevail!

How hot is that fire which will purge out the dross among churches, when it is eaten even into our hearts! What is that which can awaken drowsy saints, make the selfish public-spirited; bring the careless to holy watchfulness; and revive that simplicity, savouriness, and heavenly-mindedness, which is become such a mystery, and so unfashionable?

Surely, we may expect a complication of woes, and each filled with unusual degrees of God's avenging skill and power.

What may not we awfully expect? Disappointment by the likeliest men, dissolution of the most conceited churches, a shaking of the nation's pillars, a successive change of instruments, frequent blasts on begun deliverances, revivals by the most improbable instruments, many entire overturnings and changes, opposition among the best friends, very near approaches of the most dreaded mischiefs, men's minds struck with tremblings, all carnal refuge failing us, reason put to a nonplus, probable and improbable confounded beyond conjecture, counsel hid from the wise, force and power baffled, authority become weak, all order disturbed, men at a loss what to wish or deprecate, uncertain what to hope or fear, whom to distrust, or confide in!

These and many such things seem obvious, in the constitution of

that "day of the Lord" that is likely to be upon us. And how many more awful things are in his treasures, to fill up that dispensation of which he hath so long warned the world, as strange and unusual! We cannot judge of this "great earthquake" (which will affect us as well as other nations) by what hath been; for it is to exceed all that is past.

Who knows what new sights, strange strokes upon the spirits of men, and unheard-of judgments, may be reserved for this season?

Can we love our nation, and be unmoved? Can we hate ourselves so as not to lament, that these awful things should find us impenitent; yea, carry in them displeasing rebukes for that impenitency?

Should not we all wish, that each of our eyes were fountains of tears, to bewail at once the obstinateness, and the impending dangers, of the land of our nativity? "Look away from me; I will weep bitterly, labour not to comfort me, because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people. For it is a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity by the Lord God of hosts in the valley of vision, breaking down the walls, and of crying to the mountains." (Isai. xxii. 4, 5.)

THE END OF THE FOURTH VOLUME.