

AN

# HUMBLE ATTEMPT

TO PROMOTE

# EXPLICIT AGREEMENT

AND

# *VISIBLE UNION*

OF

GOD'S PEOPLE

IN

# EXTRAORDINARY PRAYER

FOR THE REVIVAL OF RELIGION AND THE ADVANCEMENT OF  
CHRIST'S KINGDOM ON EARTH, PURSUANT TO SCRIPTURE  
PROMISES AND PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE  
LAST TIME.

# UNION IN PRAYER.

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## PART I.

*The Text opened, and an Account given of the Affair proposed in the Memorial from Scotland.*

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ZECH. viii. 20, 21, 22.

THUS SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS, IT SHALL YET COME TO PASS, THAT THERE SHALL COME PEOPLE, AND THE INHABITANTS OF MANY CITIES ; AND THE INHABITANTS OF ONE CITY SHALL GO TO ANOTHER, SAYING, LET US GO SPEEDILY TO PRAY BEFORE THE LORD, AND TO SEEK THE LORD OF HOSTS : I WILL GO ALSO. YEA, MANY PEOPLE AND STRONG NATIONS SHALL COME TO SEEK THE LORD OF HOSTS IN JERUSALEM, AND TO PRAY, BEFORE THE LORD.

IN this chapter we have a prophecy of a future glorious advancement of the church of God ; wherein it is evident, something further is intended than ever was fulfilled to the nation of the Jews under the Old Testament. For here are plain prophecies of such things as never were fulfilled before the coming of the Messiah : Particularly what is said in the two last verses in the chapter, of *many people and strong nations worshipping and seeking the true God*, and of so great an accession of Gentile nations to the church of God, that by far the greater part of the visible worshippers of God should consist of this new accession, so that they should be to the other as *ten to one* ; a certain number for an uncertain. There never happened any thing, from the time of the Prophet Zechariah to the coming of Christ, to answer this prophecy : And it can have no fulfilment but either in the calling of

the Gentiles, in and after the days of the apostles, or in the future glorious enlargement of the church of God in the *latter ages* of the world, so often foretold by the prophets of the Old Testament, and by the Prophet Zechariah in particular, in the latter part of this prophecy. It is most probable, that what the Spirit of God has chief respect to, is that *last* and greatest enlargement and most glorious advancement of the church of God on earth ; in the benefits of which especially, the Jewish nation were to have a share, and a very eminent and distinguishing share. There is a great agreement between what is here said, and other prophecies, that must manifestly have respect to the church's latter day glory : As that in Isa. lx. 2, 3, 4. " The Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee : And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see ; all they gather themselves together, they come to thee." That whole chapter, beyond all dispute, has respect to the most glorious state of the church of God on earth. So chap. lxvi. 8. " Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day ? Shall a nation be born at once ?" Ver. 10. " Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her." Ver. 12. " I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream." Micah. iv. at the beginning, " But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and people shall flow unto it ; and many nations shall come and say, come, and let us go up unto the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off ; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks ; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." See also, Isa. ii. at the beginning..... There has been nothing yet brought to pass, in any measure to answer these prophecies. And as the prophecy in my text and the following verse does agree with them, so there is reason to think it has a respect to the same times. And

indeed there is a remarkable agreement in the description given throughout the chapter, with the representations made of those times elsewhere in the prophets ; as may be seen by comparing ver. 3, with Isa. lx. 14. Ver. 4, with Isa. lxy. 20, 22, and xxxiii. 24. Ver. 6, 7, 8, with Ezek. xxxvii. 2, 11, 12, 21. Ver. 7, with Isa. xliii. 5, 6, and xlix. 12, and lix. 19. Ver. 12, 13, with Hos. ii. 21, 22, and Ezek. xxxiv. 22. ...29. Ver. 8, 12, 13, with Ezek. xxxvi. 28,...30. Ver. 13, with Zeph. iii. 20, and Isa. xix. 24. Ver. 19, with Isa. lxi. 3, and Jer. xxxi. 12, 13, 14.

So that however the prophet, in some things that are said in this chapter, may have respect to future smiles of Heaven on the nation of the Jews, lately returned from the Babylonish captivity, and resettled in the land of Canaan, in a great increase of their numbers and wealth, and the return of more captives from Chaldea and other countries, &c. yet the Spirit of God has doubtless respect to things far *greater* than these, and of which these were but faint resemblances. We find it common in the prophecies of the Old Testament, that when the prophets are speaking of the favors and blessings of God on the Jews, attending or following their return from the Babylonish captivity, the Spirit of God takes occasion from thence to speak of the incomparably greater blessings on the church, that shall attend and follow her deliverance from the spiritual or mystical Babylon, of which those were a type ; and is, as it were, led away to speak almost wholly of these latter, and vastly greater things, so as to seem to forget the former.

And whereas the prophet in this chapter, speaks of God's *bringing his people again from the east and west to Jerusalem* (ver. 7, 8.) *And multitudes of all nations taking hold of the skirts of the Jews* ; so far as we may suppose that this means literally that nation of the posterity of Jacob, it cannot have chief respect to any return of the Jews from Babylon and other countries, in those ancient times before Christ ; for no such things as are here spoken of, attended any such return : But it must have respect to the great calling and gathering of the Jews into the fold of Christ, and their being received to the bless-

ings of his kingdom, after the fall of Antichrist, or the destruction of mystical Babylon.

In the text we have an account *how* this future glorious advancement of the church of God should be brought on, or introduced ; viz. By great multitudes in different towns and countries taking up a *joint resolution*, and coming into an express and visible *agreement*, that they will, by united and extraordinary *prayer*, seek to God that he would come and manifest himself, and grant the tokens and fruits of his gracious presence.

Particularly we may observe,

1. The *duty*, with the attendance on which the glorious event foretold shall be brought on ; viz. The duty of prayer. Prayer, some suppose, is here to be taken *synecdochically*, for the whole of the worship of God ; prayer being a principal part of the worship of the church of God, in the days of the gospel, when sacrifices are abolished : And so that this is to be understood only as a prophecy of a great revival of religion, and of the true worship of God among his visible people, the accession of others to the church, and turning of multitudes from idolatry to the worship of the true God. But it appears to me reasonable to suppose, that something more special is intended, with regard to the duty of prayer ; considering that prayer is here expressly and repeatedly mentioned ; and also considering how parallel this place is with many other prophecies, that speak of an extraordinary spirit of prayer, as preceding and introducing that glorious day of revival of religion, and advancement of the church's peace and prosperity, so often foretold (which I shall have occasion to mention hereafter) and particularly the agreeableness of what is here said, with what is said afterwards by the same prophet, of the *pouring out of a spirit of grace and supplications*, as that with which this great revival of religion shall begin, ch. xii.10.

2. The *good*, that shall be sought by prayer ; which is God himself. It is said once and again, *They shall go to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts*. This is the good they ask for and seek by prayer, the Lord of hosts himself. To seek God, as the expression may perhaps be some-

times used in scripture, may signify no more than seeking the favor or mercy of God. And if it be taken so here, *praying before the Lord*, and *seeking the Lord of Hosts*, must be looked upon as synonymous expressions. And it must be confessed to be a common thing in scripture, to signify the same thing repeatedly, by various expressions of the same import, for the greater emphasis. But certainly that expression of *seeking the Lord*, is very commonly used to signify something more than merely in general, to seek some mercy of God : It implies, that God himself is the great good desired and sought after ; that the blessings pursued are God's gracious presence, the blessed manifestations of him, union and intercourse with him ; or, in short, God's manifestations and communications of himself by his holy Spirit. Thus the Psalmist desired God, thirsted after him, and sought him. Psal. lxxiii. 1, 2, 8. " O God thou art my God ; early will I seek thee. My flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is, to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. My soul followeth hard after thee." Psal. lxxiii. 25. " Whom have I in heaven but thee ? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." The Psalmist earnestly pursued after God, *his soul thirsted after him, he stretched forth his hands unto him*, &c. Psal. cxliii. 6. And therefore it is in scripture the peculiar character of the saints, that they are those that seek God. Psal. xxiv. 6. " This is the generation of them that seek Him." Psal. lxxix. 32. " Your heart shall live that seek God ;" and in many other places. If the expression in the text be understood agreeably to this sense, then by *seeking the Lord of Hosts*, we must understand a seeking, that God who had withdrawn, as it were hid himself, for a long time, would return to his church, and grant the tokens and fruits of his gracious presence, and those blessed communications of his Spirit to his people, and to mankind on the earth, which he had often promised, and which his church had long waited for.

And it seems reasonable, to understand the phrase, *seeking the Lord of Hosts*, in this sense here ; and not as merely signifying the same thing with praying to God : Not only be-

cause the expression is repeatedly added to *praying before the Lord*, in the text as signifying something more ; but also because the phrase, taken in this sense, is exactly agreeable to other parallel prophetic representations. Thus God's people's seeking by earnest prayer, the promised restoration of the church of God, after the Babylonish captivity, and the great apostasy that occasioned it, is called their *seeking God, and searching for him* ; and God's granting this promised revival and restoration is called his being found of them. Jer. xxix. 10.....14. " For thus saith the Lord, that after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you and perform my good word towards you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye go and call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you ; and ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart ; and I will be found of you, saith the Lord, and I will turn away your captivity." And the prophets from time to time, represent God, in a low and afflicted state of his church, as being withdrawn and hiding himself. Isa. xlv. 15. " Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour." Chap. lvii. 17. " I hid me, and was wroth." And they represent God's people, while his church is in such a state, before God delivers and restores the same, as *seeking Him, looking for Him, searching and waiting for Him, and calling after Him*. Hos. v. 15. " I will go and return unto my place, until they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face : In their affliction they will seek me early." Isa. viii. 17. " I will wait upon the Lord that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for Him." And when God, in answer to their prayers and succeeding their endeavors, delivers, restores and advances his church, according to his promise, then he is said to answer, and come, and say, Here am I, and to shew Himself ; and they are said to find Him, and see Him plainly. Isa. lviii. 9. " Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer ; and thou shalt cry, and he shall say, here I am." Isa. xlv. 17. " But Israel shall be saved in

the Lord, with an everlasting salvation." And ver. 19. "I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain." Chap. xxv. 8, 9. "The Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces, and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off the earth. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us : This is the Lord, we have waited for him ; we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation." Together with the next chapter, ver. 8, 9. "Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, we have waited for thee : The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night ; yea with my spirit within me will I seek thee early. For when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." Isa. lii. 6, 7, 8. "Therefore my people shall know my name : Therefore they shall know in that day, that I am He that doth speak : Behold, it is I. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, thy God reigneth ! Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice ; with the voice together shall they sing ; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion."

3. We may observe who they are, that shall be united in thus seeking the Lord of Hosts : *The inhabitants of many cities*, and of many countries, *yea, many people, and strong nations* ; great multitudes in different parts of the world shall conspire in this business. From the representation made in the prophecy, it appears rational to suppose, that it will be fulfilled something after this manner ; first, that there shall be given much of a spirit of prayer to God's people in many places, disposing them to come into an express agreement, unitedly to pray to God in an extraordinary manner, that he would appear for the help of his church, and in mercy to mankind, and pour out his Spirit, revive his work, and advance his spiritual kingdom in the world as he has promised ; and that this disposition to such prayer, and union in it, will gradually spread more and more, and increase to greater de-



grees ; with which at length will gradually be introduced a revival of religion, and a disposition to greater engagedness in the worship and service of God, amongst his professing people ; that this being observed, will be the means of awakening others, making them sensible of the wants of their souls, and exciting in them a great concern for their spiritual and everlasting good, and putting them upon earnestly crying to God for spiritual mercies, and disposing them to join with God's people in that extraordinary seeking and serving of God, which they shall see them engaged in ; and that in this manner religion shall be propagated, until the awakening reaches those that are in the *highest stations*, and until *whole nations* be awakened, and there be at length an accession of many of the chief nations of the world to the church of God. Thus after the inhabitants of many cities of Israel, or of God's professing people, have taken up, and pursued a joint resolution, to go and pray before the Lord, and seek the Lord of Hosts, others shall be drawn to worship and serve Him with them ; until at length *many people* and *strong nations* shall join themselves to them ; and there shall, in process of time, be a vast accession to the church, so that it shall be ten times as large as it was before ; yea, at length, all nations shall be converted unto God. Thus *ten men shall take hold, out of all languages of the nations, of the skirt of him that is a Jew* (in the sense of the apostle, Rom. ii. 28, 29) *saying, We will go with you ; for we have heard that God is with you.* And thus that shall be fulfilled, Psal. lxxv. 2. " O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.

4. We may observe the mode of their union in this duty. It is a visible union, an union by explicit agreement, a joint resolution declared by one to another, come into by being first proposed by some, and readily and expressly fallen in with by others. The inhabitants of one city shall apply themselves to the inhabitants of another, saying, *Let us go, &c.* Those to whom the motion is made, shall comply with it ; the proposal shall take with many, it shall be a prevailing, spreading thing ; one shall follow another's example, one and another shall say, *I will go also.* Some suppose that those words, *I will go also,*

are to be taken as the words of him that makes the proposal ; as much as to say, I do not propose that to you, which I am not willing to do myself, I desire *you* to go, and I am ready to go *with you*. But this is to suppose no more to be expressed in these latter words, than was expressed before in the proposal itself ; for these words, *let us go*, signify as much, as that I am willing to go, and desire you to go with me. It seems to me much more natural, to understand these latter words as importing the *consent* of those to whom the proposal is made, or the *reply* of one and another that falls in with it. this is much more agreeable to the plain design of the text, which is to represent the concurrence of great numbers in this affair ; and more agreeable to the representation made in the next verse, of one following another, many *taking hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew*. And though, if the words are thus understood, we must suppose an ellipsis in the text, something understood that is not expressed, as if it had been said, *Those of other cities shall say* I will go also ; yet this is not difficult to be supposed ; such ellipses are very common in scripture. We have one exactly parallel with it in Jer. iii. 22. "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings : Behold we come unto thee ; for thou art the Lord our God," i. e. the backsliding children shall say, "Behold, we come unto thee," &c. And in Cant. iv. last, and v. 1. "Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits. I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse," i. e. her beloved shall say, "I am come into my garden." We have the like throughout that Song. So Psal l. 6, 7. "The heaven shall declare his righteousness ; for God is Judge himself. Hear, O my people, and I will speak," i. e. the judge shall say, "Hear, O my people," &c. So Psal. lxxxii. 1, 2. The Psalms and prophets abound with such figures of speech.

5. We may observe the *manner of prayer* agreed on, or the manner in which they agree to engage in and perform the duty. Let us go *speedily* to pray ; or as it is in the margin, Let us go *continually*. The words literally translated are, *Let us go in going*. Such an ingemination or doubling of words

is very common in the Hebrew language, when it is intended that a thing shall be very strongly expressed ; it generally implies the superlative degree of a thing ; as the *Holy of Holies* signifies the most holy : But it commonly denotes, not only the utmost degree of a thing but also the utmost certainty ; as when God said to Abraham, *In multiplying, I will multiply thy seed*, Gen. xxii. 17, it implies both that God would certainly multiply his seed, and also multiply it exceedingly. So when God said to Adam, *In the day that thou eatest thereof, in dying thou shalt die* (as the words are in the original) it implies both that he should *surely* die, and also that he should die most *terribly*, should utterly perish, and be destroyed to the utmost degree. Yea, sometimes it seems to imply something else still : And in short, as this ingemination of words in the Hebrew, in general denotes the strength of expression, so it is used to signify almost all those things that are wont to be signified by the various forms of strong speech in other languages : Sometimes it signifies the utmost degree of a thing ; sometimes certainty ; sometimes the peremptoriness and terribleness of a threatening, or the greatness and positiveness of a promise, the strictness of a command, and the earnestness of a request. When God says to Adam, *Dying thou shalt die*, it is equivalent to such strong expressions in English as, *thou shalt die indeed*, or, *thou shalt die with a witness*. So when it is said in the text, *let us go in going, and pray before the Lord*, the strength of the expression represents the earnestness of those that make the proposal, their great engagedness in the affair ; and with respect to the duty proposed, it may be understood to signify, that they should be speedy, fervent, and constant in it ; or, in one word, that it should be *thoroughly* performed.

6. We may learn from the tenor of this prophecy, together with the context, that this union in such prayer is foretold as a *becoming* and *happy* thing, and that which would be acceptable to God, and attended with glorious success.

From the whole we may infer, that it is a very *suitable* thing, and *well pleasing to God*, for many people, in different parts of the world, by express *agreement*, to come into a *visible*

*union*, in extraordinary, speedy, fervent and constant *prayer*, for those great effusions of the *Holy Spirit*, which shall bring on that *advancement* of Christ's church and kingdom, that God has so often promised shall be in the *latter ages* of the world.

And so from hence I would infer the *duty* of God's people, with regard to the *memorial* lately sent over into America, from Scotland, by a number of ministers there, proposing a *method* for such an *union* as has been spoken of, in extraordinary prayer for this great mercy.

And it being the special design of this discourse, to persuade such as are friends to the interests of Christ's kingdom, to a *compliance* with the proposal and request made in that memorial, I shall first give a short *historical* account of the *affair* it relates to, from letters, papers and pamphlets, that have come over from Scotland ; to which I shall annex the *memorial* itself : And then I shall offer some *arguments* and *motives*, tending to induce the friends of religion to fall in with what is proposed : And lastly, make answer to some *objections* that may possibly be made against it.

As to the *first* of these things, viz. an historical account of the concert, which the memorial relates to, the following observations may give a sufficient view of that affair.

In October, A. D. 1744, a number of ministers in Scotland, taking into consideration the state of God's church, and of the world of mankind, judged that the providence of God, at such a day, did loudly call such as were concerned for the welfare of Zion, to *united, extraordinary* applications to the God of all grace, suitably acknowledging Him as the fountain of all the spiritual benefits and blessings of his church, and earnestly praying to Him, that he would *appear in his glory*, and favor Zion, and manifest his compassion to the world of mankind, by an abundant effusion of his *Holy Spirit* on all the churches, and the whole habitable earth, to revive true religion in all parts of Christendom, and to deliver *all nations* from their great and manifold spiritual calamities and miseries, and bless them with the unspeakable benefits of the kingdom of our glorious Redeemer, and *fill the whole earth with His glory*. And con-

sulting one another on the subject, they looked on *themselves*, for their own part, obliged to engage in this duty ; and, as far as in them lay, to persuade *others* to the same : And to endeavor to find out and fix on some *method*, that should most effectually tend to promote and uphold such extraordinary application to heaven among God's people. And after seeking to God by prayer for direction, they determined on the following method, as what they would conform to in their own practice, and propose to be practised by others, for the *two years* next following, viz. to set apart some time on Saturday evening and Sabbath morning, every week, for the purpose aforesaid, as other duties would allow to every one respectively ; and more solemnly, the first Tuesday of each quarter (beginning with the first Tuesday of November then next ensuing) either the whole day, or part of the day, as persons find themselves disposed, or think their circumstances will allow : The time to be spent either in *private* praying societies, or in *public* meetings, or alone in *secret*, as shall be found most practicable, or judged most convenient, by such as are willing, in some way or other, to join in this affair : But not that any should make any promises, or be looked upon as under strict bonds in any respect, constantly and without fail to observe every one of these days, whatever their circumstances should be, or however other duties and necessary affairs might interfere ; or that persons should look upon themselves bound with regard to these days in any wise as though the time were holy, or the setting them apart for religious purposes were established by sacred authority : But yet, as a proper guard against negligence and unsteadiness, and a prudent preservative from yielding to a disposition, that persons might be liable to, through the prevalence of indolence and listlessness, to excuse themselves on trivial occasions, it was proposed, that those that unite in this affair, should resolve with themselves, that if, by urgent business, or otherwise, they were hindered from joining with others, on the very day agreed on, yet they would not wholly neglect bearing their part in the duty proposed, but would take the first convenient day following, for that purpose.

The reason why Saturday evening and Lord'sday mornings were judged most convenient for the *weekly* seasons, was, that these times being so near the time of dispensing *gospel ordinances* through the Christian world, which are the great means, in the use of which God is wont to grant his Spirit to mankind, and the principal means that the Spirit of God makes use of to carry on his *work of grace*, it may well be supposed that the minds of Christians in general will at these seasons be especially disengaged from secular affairs, and disposed to pious meditations and the duties of devotion, and more naturally led to seek the communications of the Holy Spirit, and success of the means of grace. And as to the *quarterly* times, it was thought helpful to memory, that they should be on one or other of the *first* days of each quarter: Tuesday was preferred to Monday, because in some places people might have public prayers and sermon on the stated day, which might not be so convenient on Monday, as on some day at a greater distance from the Sabbath.

It was reckoned a *chief use* of such an agreement and method as this, that it would be a good expedient for the maintaining and keeping up, amongst the people of God, that great Christian duty of *prayerfulness* for the *coming of Christ's kingdom*, in general, which Christ has directed his followers to be so much in, that it may not be out of mind, and in a great measure sunk. Things, that we are too little inclined to, through sloth, carnality, or a fulness of our own worldly and private concerns, and that are to be attended at some seasons or other, and have no special seasons stated for them, are apt to be *forgotten*, or *put off* from time to time, and as it were adjourned *without day*; and so, if not wholly neglected, yet too little attended. But when we fix certain seasons, that we resolve, unless extraordinarily hindered, to devote to the duty, it tends to prevent forgetfulness, and a settled negligence of it. The certain returns of the season will naturally refresh the memory; will tend to put us in mind of the precept of Christ, and the obligations that lie on all his followers, to abound in such a *duty*, and renewedly engage us to the consideration of the importance and necessity and unspeakable value of the

*mercy* sought ; and so, by frequent renovation, to keep alive the consideration and sense of these things at *all times*. Thus the first promoters of this agreement judged, that it would be subservient to more abundant prayerfulness for effusions of the Holy Spirit, at all times through the year, both in secret and social worship ; particularly as to this last, in congregations, families, and other praying societies. And then they also judged, that such an *agreed union* would tend to *animate* and *encourage* God's people in the duty proposed ; and that particular persons and societies, knowing that great multitudes of their fellow Christians, in so many distant places, were at the same time (as a token of the union of their hearts with them in this affair) by agreement engaged in the same holy exercise, would naturally be enlivened in the duty by such a consideration.

It was not thought best, to propose at first a longer time for the continuance of this precise method, than two years : It being considered, that it is not possible, before any trial, so well to judge of the expedience of a particular method and certain circumstances of the managing and ordering such an affair, as after some time of experience. And it was not known, but that after longer consideration, and some trial, it might be thought best to alter some circumstances ; or whether others, that had not yet been consulted, might not propose a better method. The time first agreed on, though but short, was thought sufficient to give opportunity for judgment and experience, and for such as were disposed to union in an affair of such a nature, in distant places, mutually to communicate their sentiments on the subject.

The way, in which those that first projected and came into this agreement, thought best for the giving notice of it and proposing it to others, was not by any thing published from the press ; but by personal conversation with such as they could conveniently have immediate access to, and by private correspondence with others at a distance. At first it was intended, that some formal paper, proposing the matter, should be sent about for proper amendments and improvements, and then concurrence : But on more mature deliberation, it was

considered how this might give a handle to objections (which they thought it best, to the utmost, to avoid in the infancy of the affair) and how practicable it was, without any such formality, to spread the substance of the proposal by private letters, together with a request to their correspondents, mutually to communicate their thoughts. Therefore this was fixed on, as the method that was preferable at the beginning. Accordingly, they proposed and endeavored to promote the affair in this way ; and with such success, that great numbers in Scotland and England fell in with the proposal, and some in North America. As to Scotland, it was complied with by numbers in the four chief towns, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Dundee, and many country towns and congregations in various parts of the land : One of the ministers, that was primarily concerned in this affair, in a letter to one of his correspondents, speaks of an explicit declaration of the concurrence of the praying societies in Edinburgh, which they had made in a letter. The number of the praying societies in that city is very considerable : Mr. Robe of Kilsyth, (in a letter to Mr. Prince of Boston, dated November 3, 1743) says, there were then above thirty societies of young people there newly erected, some of whom consisted of upwards of thirty members. As to Glasgow, this union was unanimously agreed to by about fortyfive praying societies there ; as an eminent minister in that city informs, in a letter.

The two years, first agreed on, ended last November. A little before this time expired, a number of ministers in Scotland agreed on a memorial to be printed, and sent abroad to their brethren in various parts, proposing to them and requesting of them to join with them in the continuance of this method of united prayer, and in endeavors to promote it.... Copies of which memorial have lately been sent over into Newengland, to the number of near five hundred, directed to be distributed in almost every county in this province of the Massachusetts Bay, and also in several parts of Connecticut, Newhampshire, Rhodeisland, Newyork, Newjersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, Carolina, and Georgia.... The most (I suppose) of these were sent to one of the congre-



gational ministers in Boston, with a letter subscribed by twelve ministers in Scotland, about the affair : Many of them to another of the said ministers of Boston ; and some to a minister in Connecticut. It being short, I shall here insert a copy of it at length. It is as follows :

### MEMORIAL

*From several Ministers in Scotland, to their brethren in different places, for continuing a Concert for Prayer, first entered into in the year 1744.*

WHEREAS it was the chief scope of this Concert, to promote more abundant application to a duty that is perpetually binding, *prayer that our Lord's kingdom may come*, joined with *praises* : And it contained some circumstantial expedients, apprehended to be very subservient to that design, relating to stated times for such exercises, so far as this would not interfere with other duties ; particularly a part of Saturday evening, and Sabbath morning, every week ; and more solemnly of some one of the first days of each of the four great divisions of the year, that is, of each quarter ; as the first Tuesday, or first convenient day after : And the concert, as to this circumstance, was extended only to two years ; it being intended, that before these expired, persons engaged in the concert should reciprocally communicate their sentiments and inclinations, as to the prolonging of the time, with or without alteration, as to the circumstance mentioned : And it was intended by the first promoters, that others at a distance should propose such circumstantial amendments or improvements, as they should find proper : It is hereby earnestly intreated, that such would communicate their sentiments accordingly, now that the time first proposed is near expiring.

II. To induce those already engaged to adhere, and others to accede to this concert ; it seems of importance to observe, that declarations of concurrence, the communicating and spreading of which are so evidently useful, are to be understood in such a latitude, as to keep at the greatest distance

from entangling men's minds: Not as binding men to set apart any stated days from secular affairs, or even to fix on any part of such and such precise days, whether it be convenient or not; nor as absolute promises in any respect: But as friendly, harmonious resolutions, with liberty to alter circumstances as shall be found expedient. On account of all which latitude, and that the circumstantial part extends only to a few years, it is apprehended, the concert cannot be liable to the objections against periodical religious times of human appointment.

III. It is also humbly offered to the consideration of ministers, and others furnished with gifts for the most public instructions, whether it might not be of great use, by the blessing of God, if short and nervous scriptural *persuasives* and *directions to the duty in view*, were composed and published (either by particular authors, or several joining together; which last way might some times have peculiar advantages) and that from time to time, without too great intervals; the better to keep alive on men's minds a just sense of the obligations to a duty so important in itself, and in which many may be in danger to faint and turn remiss, without such repeated incitements: And *whether it would not also be of great use, if ministers would be pleased to preach frequently on the importance and necessity of prayer for the coming of our Lord's kingdom; particularly near the quarterly days, or on these days themselves, where there is public worship at that time.*

IV. They who have found it incumbent on them to publish this memorial at this time, having peculiar advantages for spreading it, do intreat that the desire of concurrence and assistance contained in it, may by no means be understood as restricted to any particular denomination or party, or to those who are of such or such opinions about any former instances of remarkable religious concern; but to be extended to all, who shall vouchsafe any attention to this paper, and have at heart the interest of vital Christianity, and the power of Godliness; and who, however differing about other things, are convinced of the importance of fervent prayer, to promote that common interest, and scripture persuasives to of promote such prayer.

V. As the first printed account of this concert was not a proposal of it, as a thing then to begin, but a narration of it, as a design already set on foot, which had been brought about with much harmony, by means of private letters ; so the farther continuance, and, it is hoped, the farther spreading of it seems in a promising way of being promoted by the same means ; as importunate desires of the renewing the concert have been transmitted already from a very distant corner abroad, where the regard to it has of late increased : But notwithstanding of what may be done by private letters, it is humbly expected, that a memorial spread in this manner, may, by God's blessing, farther promote the good ends in view ; as it may be usefully referred to in letters, and may reach where they will not.

VI. Whereas in a valuable letter, from the corner just now mentioned as a place where regard to the concert has lately increased, it is proposed, that it should be continued for seven years, or at least for a much longer time than what was specified in the first agreement ; those concerned in this memorial, who would wish rather to receive and spread directions and proposals on this head, than to be the first authors of any, apprehend no inconvenience, for their part, in agreeing to the seven years, with the latitude above described, which reserves liberty to make such circumstantial alterations, as may be hereafter found expedient : On the contrary it seems of importance, that the labor of spreading a concert, which has already extended to so distant parts, and may, it is hoped, extend farther, may not need to be renewed sooner, at least much sooner ; as it is uncertain but that may endanger the dropping of it ; and it seems probable, there will be less zeal in spreading of it, if the time proposed for its continuance be too inconsiderable. Mean time, declarations of concurrence for a less number of years may greatly promote the good ends in view : Though it seems very expedient, that it should exceed what was first agreed on ; seeing it is found on trial, that that time, instead of being too long, was much too short.

VII. If persons who formerly agreed to this concert, should now discontinue it ; would it not look too like that fainting in prayer, against which we are so expressly warned in scrip-

ture ? And would not this be the more unsuitable at this time, in any within the British dominions, when they have the united calls of such public chastisements and deliverances, to more concern than ever about public reformation, and consequently about that which is the source of all thorough reformation, the regenerating and sanctifying influence of the Almighty Spirit of God ? August 26, 1746.”

The minister in Boston forementioned (to whom most of the copies of this memorial were sent) who, I suppose, has had later and more full intelligence than I have had, says, concerning the proposal, in a letter ; the motion seems to come from above, and to be wonderfully spreading in Scotland, England, Wales, Ireland, and North America.

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## PART II.

### *Motives to a Compliance with what is proposed in the Memorial.*

I NOW proceed to the second thing intended in this discourse, viz. to offer to consideration some things, which may tend to induce the people of God to comply with the proposal and request, made to them in the memorial.

And I desire that the following things may be considered.

1. It is evident from the scripture, that there is yet remaining a great advancement of the interest of religion and the kingdom of Christ in this world, by an abundant outpouring of the Spirit of God, far greater and more extensive than ever yet has been. It is certain, that many things, which are spoken concerning a glorious time of the church's enlargement and prosperity in the latter days, have never yet been fulfilled. There has never yet been any propagation and prevailing of religion, in any wise, of that extent and universality, which the prophecies represent. It is often foretold and signified, in a great variety of strong expressions, that there should a time come, when all nations through the whole

habitable world, should embrace the true religion, and be brought into the church of God. It was often promised to the Patriarchs, that in their seed all the nations, or (as it is sometimes expressed) all the families of the earth should be blessed. (See Gen. xii. 3.....xviii. 18.....xxii. 18.....xxvi. 4, and xxviii. 14.) Agreeably to this, it is said of the Messiah Psal. lxxii. 11. That "all nations shall serve him; and in Ver. 17, men shall be blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed." And in Isa. ii. 2, it is said, that "all nations shall flow unto the mountain of the house of the Lord." And Jer. iii. 17. That "all nations shall be gathered unto the name of the Lord to Jerusalem, and shall walk no more after the imagination of their evil heart." So it is said, That *all flesh shall come and worship before the Lord*, Isa. lxvi, 23. And that *all flesh should see the glory of God together*, Isa. xl. 5. And that *all flesh should come to him that hears prayer*, Psal. lxx. 2. Christ compares the *kingdom of Heaven in this world to leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened*, Mat. xiii. 33. It is natural and reasonable to suppose, that the whole world should finally be given to Christ, as one whose right it is to reign, as the proper heir of him, who is originally the king of all nations, and the possessor of heaven and earth: And the scripture teaches us, that God the father hath constituted his son, as Godman, and in his kingdom of grace, or mediatorial kingdom, to be the heir of the world, that he might in this kingdom have the heathen for his inheritance, and the utmost ends of the earth for his possession; Heb. i. 2, and ii. 8. Psal. ii. 6, 7, 8. Thus Abraham is said to be the heir of the world, not in himself, but in his seed, which is Christ; Rom. iv. 13. And how was this to be fulfilled to Abraham, but by God's fulfilling that great promise, that *in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed*? For that promise is what the apostle is speaking of; which shews, that God has appointed Christ to be the heir of the world in his kingdom of grace, and to possess and reign over all nations, through the propagation of his gospel, and the power of his spirit communicating the blessings of it. God hath appointed him to this universal dominion by a most

solemn oath ; Isa. xlv. 23. " I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." Compared with Phil. ii. 10, 11. Though this solemn oath of God the father is to be understood in so comprehensive a sense, as to extend to what shall be accomplished at the day of judgment, yet it is evident by the foregoing and following verses, that the thing most directly intended, is what shall be fulfilled by the spreading of the gospel of his salvation, and power of the spirit of grace, bringing " all the ends of the earth to look to him that they may be saved, and come to him for righteousness and strength, that in him they might be justified, and might glory." God has suffered many earthly princes to extend their conquests over a great part of the face of the earth, and to possess a dominion of vast extent, and one monarchy to conquer and succeed another, the latter being still the greater : It is reasonable to suppose that a much greater glory in this respect should be reserved for Christ, God's own son and rightful heir, who has purchased the dominion by so great and hard a service : It is reasonable to suppose, that his dominion should be far the largest, and his conquests vastly the greatest and most extensive. And thus the scriptures represent the matter, in Nebuchadnezzar's vision, and the prophet's interpretation, Dan. ii. " There the four great monarchies of the earth, one succeeding another, are represented by the great image of gold, silver, brass, iron and clay ; but at last a stone cut of the mountain without hands, smites the image upon his feet, which breaks the iron, clay, brass, silver and gold in pieces, that all becomes as the chaff of the summer threshing floors, and the wind carries them away, that no place is found for them ; but the stone waxes great, becomes a great mountain, and fills the whole earth ; signifying the kingdom which the Lord God of heaven should set up in the world, last of all, which should break in pieces and consume all other kingdoms." Surely this representation leads us to suppose, that this last kingdom shall be of vastly greater extent than any of the preceding. The like representation is made in the 7th chap. of Daniel ; there the four monarch-

ies are represented by four great beasts that arose successively, one conquering and subduing another ; the fourth and last of these is said to be dreadful, and terrible, and strong exceedingly, and to have great iron teeth, and to devour and break in pieces, and stamp the residue with his feet ; yea it is said, ver. 23, that the kingdom represented by this beast shall devour the whole earth ; but last of all one like the Son of Man appears, *coming to the ancient of days, and being brought near before him, and receiving of him a dominion, and glory, and a kingdom that all people, nations, and languages should serve him.* This last circumstance, of the vast extent and universality of his dominion, is manifestly spoken of as one thing greatly distinguishing his holy kingdom from all the preceding monarchies : Although of one of the former it was said, that it should devour the whole earth, yet we are naturally led, both by the much greater emphasis and strength of the expressions, as well as by the whole connexion and tenor of the prophecy, to understand the universality here expressed in a much more extensive and absolute sense : And the terms used in the interpretation of this vision are such, that scarcely any can be devised more strong, to signify an absolute universality of dominion over the inhabitants of the face of the earth ; ver. 27. “ And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the most high God. Agreeably to this the gospel is represented as *preached unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and tongue, and kindred, and people,* Rev. xiv. 6. The universality of the prevalence of true religion in the latter days, is sometimes expressed by its reaching to “ the utmost ends of the earth,” Psal. ii. 8. “ To all the ends of the earth, and of the world,” Psal. xxii. 27..... lxxvii. 7.....xcviii. 3. Isa. xiv. 22. “ All the ends of the earth, with those that are far off upon the sea,” Psal. lxxv. 5. “ From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same,” Psal. cxiii. 3. Mal. i. 11. “ The outgoings of the morning and of the evening,” Psal. lxxv. 8. It seems that all the most strong expressions, that were in use among the Jews to signify the habitable world in its utmost extent, are made use of to sig-

the extent of the church of God in the latter days : And in many places, a variety of these expressions is used, and there is an accumulation of them, expressed with great force.

It would be unreasonable to say, these are only bold figures, used after the manner of the eastern nations, to express the great extent of the Christian church, at and after the days of Constantine : To say so would be in effect to say, that it would have been impossible for God, if he had desired it, plainly to have foretold any thing that should absolutely have extended to all nations of the earth. I question whether it be possible to find out a more strong expression, to signify an absolute universality of the knowledge of the true religion through the habitable world, than that in Isa. xi. 9. "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the seas." Which is as much as to say, As there is no place in the vast ocean where there is not water, so there shall be no part of the world of mankind where there is not the knowledge of the Lord ; as there is no part of the wide bed or cavity possessed by the sea, but what is covered with water, so there shall be no part of the habitable world that shall not be covered with the light of the gospel, and possessed by the true religion. Waters are often in prophecy put for nations and multitudes of people : So the waters of the main ocean seem sometimes to be put for the inhabitants of the earth in general ; as in Ezekiel's vision of waters of the sanctuary (Ezek. xlvi.) which flowed from the sanctuary, and ran east, until they came to the ocean, and were at first a small stream, but continually increased until they became a great river ; and when they came to the sea, the water even of the vast ocean was healed (ver. 8.) representing the conversion of the world to the true religion in the latter days. It seems evident, that the time will come, when there will not be one nation remaining in the world, which shall not embrace the true religion, in that God has expressly revealed, that no one such nation shall be left standing on the earth ; Isai. lx. 12. "The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish ; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted." God has declared that heathen idolatry and all the worship of false



gods shall be wholly abolished, in the most universal manner, so that it shall be continued in no place under the heavens, or upon the face of the earth ; Jer. x. 11. " The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens." Ver. 15. " They are vanity, and the work of errors, in the time of their visitation they shall perish." This must be understood as what shall be brought to pass while this earth and these heavens remain, i. e. before the end of the world. Agreeable to this is that, Isa. liv. 1, 2. " Sing, O barren, and thou that didst not bear ; for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord ; enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitation ; spare not ; lengthen thy cords, strengthen thy stakes." Ver. 5. " For thy Maker is thy husband ; the Lord of Hosts is his name ; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel ; the God of the whole earth shall he be called."

The prophecies of the New Testament do no less evidently shew, that a time will come when the gospel shall universally prevail, and the kingdom of Christ be extended over the whole habitable earth, in the most proper sense. Christ says, John xii. 32. " I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." It is fit, that when the son of God becomes man, he should have dominion over all mankind : It is fit that since he became an inhabitant of the earth, and shed his blood on the earth, he should possess the whole earth : It is fit, seeing here he became a servant, and was subject to men, and was arraigned before them, and judged, condemned and executed by them, and suffered ignominy and death in a most public manner, before Jews and Gentiles, being lifted up to view on the cross upon an hill, near that populous city Jerusalem, at a most public time, when there were many hundred thousand spectators, from all parts, that he should be rewarded with an universal dominion over mankind ; and it is here declared he shall be. The apostle, in the 11th of Romans, teaches us to look to that great outpouring of the Spirit, and ingathering of souls into Christ's kingdom, that was in those days, first of the Jews, and then of the Gentiles, to be

but as the first fruits of the intended harvest, both with regard to Jews and Gentiles, and to look on the ingathering of those first fruits as a sign that all the remainder both of Jews and Gentiles should in due time be gathered in; ver. 16. "For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches." And in that context, the apostle speaks of the fullness of both Jews and Gentiles, as what shall hereafter be brought in, as distinct from that ingathering from among both, that was in those primitive ages of Christianity: In ver. 12, we read of the fulness of the Jews, and in the 25th of the fulness of the Gentiles: And there in ver. 30, 31, 32, the apostle teaches us to look upon that infidelity and darkness, that first prevailed over all Gentile nations, before Christ came, and then over the Jews after Christ came, as what was wisely permitted of God, as a preparation for the manifestation of the glory of God's mercy, in due time, on the whole world, constituted of Jews and Gentiles. *God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.* These things plainly shew, that the time is coming when the whole world of mankind shall be brought into the church of Christ; and not only a part of the Jews, and a part of the Gentile world, as the first fruits, as it was in the first ages of the Christian church; but the fullness of both, the whole lump, all the nation of the Jews, and all the world of Gentiles.

In the last great conflict between the church of Christ and her enemies, before the commencement of the glorious time of the church's peace and rest, *The kings of the earth, and the whole world, are represented as gathered together*; Rev. xvi. 14, and then the "seventh angel pours out his vial into the air," which limits that kingdom that Satan has, as god of this world, in its utmost extent; and that kingdom is represented as utterly overthrown, ver. 17, &c. And in another description of that great battle, chap. xix. Christ is represented as riding forth, having on his head many crowns, and on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, *King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.* Which we may well suppose signifies, that he is now going to that conquest, whereby he shall set up a kingdom, in which he shall be King of Kings, in a far more extensive manner

than either the Babylonish, Persian, Grecian, or Roman monarchs were. And in ver. 17, and following, "an angel appears standing in the sun, that overlooks the whole world, calling on all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, to come and eat the flesh of kings," &c. And in consequence of the great victory Christ gains at that time, *an angel comes down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand, and lays hold on the devil, and binds him, and casts him into the bottomless pit, and shuts him up, and sets a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more.* Satan, being dispossessed of that highest monarchy on earth, the Roman empire, and cast out in the time of Constantine, is represented chap. xii. by his being cast down from heaven to the earth : But now there is something far beyond that ; he is cast out of the earth, and is shut up in hell, and confined to that alone, so that he has no place left him in this world of mankind, high nor low.

Now will any be so unreasonable as to say, that all these things do not signify more than that one third part of the world should be brought into the church of Christ ; beyond which it cannot be pretended that the Christian religion has ever yet reached, in its greatest extent ? Those countries, which belonged to the Roman empire, that were brought to the profession of Christianity, after the reign of Constantine, are but a small part of what the habitable world now is ; as to extent of ground, they all together bear, I suppose, no greater proportion to it, than the land of Canaan did to the Roman empire. And our Redeemer in his kingdom of grace has hitherto possessed but a little part of the world, in its most flourishing state, since arts are risen to their greatest height ; and a very great part of the world is but lately discovered, and much remains undiscovered to this day.

These things make it very evident, that the main fulfilment of those prophecies, that speak of the glorious advancement of Christ's kingdom on earth, is still to come.

And as there has been nothing as yet, with regard to the flourishing of religion, and the advancement of Christ's kingdom, of such extent as to answer the prophecies, so neither

has there been any thing of that duration, that is foretold.... The prophecies speak of Jerusalem's being made *the joy of the whole earth*, and also *the joy of many generations* (Psal. xlviii. 2. Isa. lx. 15.) That *God's people should long enjoy the work of their hands*, (Isa. lxxv. 22.) That they should *reign with Christ a thousand years* (Rev. xx.) by which we must at least understand a very long time. But it would be endless to mention all the places, which signify that the time of the church's great peace and prosperity should be of long continuance : Almost all the prophecies that speak of her latter day glory, imply it ; and it is implied in very many of them, that when once this day of the church's advancement and peace is begun, it shall never end, till the world ends ; or, at least, that there shall be no more a return of her troubles and adversity for any considerable continuance ; that then *the days of her mourning shall be ended* ; that her tribulations should then be as *the waters of Noah unto God*, that as he has sworn that *the waters of Noah should no more pass over the earth*, so he will swear that he will no more be wroth with his people, or rebuke them ; that *God's people should no more walk after the imagination of their evil heart* ; that *God would hide himself no more from the house of Israel*, because he has poured out his Spirit upon them ; that *their sun should no more go down, nor the moon withdraw itself* ; that *the light should not be clear and dark* (i. e. there should be no more an interchange of light and darkness, as used to be) but that it should be all one continued day ; not day and night (for so the words are in the original in Zech. xiv. 7) alternately, but it shall come to pass, that at evening time (i. e. at the time that night and darkness used to be) it shall be light ; and that *the nations should beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, and that nation shall not lift up sword against nation, nor learn war any more* ; but that there should be abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. And innumerable things of this nature are declared.

But the church of Christ has never yet enjoyed a state of peace and prosperity for any long time ; on the contrary, the times of her rest, and of the flourishing state of religion, have ever been very short. Hitherto the church may say as in Isa.

lxiii. 17, 18. "Return, for thy servants sake, the tribes of thine inheritance; the people of thy holiness have possessed it but a little while." The quietness that the church of God enjoyed after the beginning of Constantine's reign, was very short; the peace the empire enjoyed, in freedom from war, was not more than twenty years, no longer nor greater than it had enjoyed under some of the heathen emperors. After this the empire was rent in pieces by intestine wars, and wasted almost every where by the invasions and incursions of barbarous nations, and the Christian world was soon all in contention and confusion, by heresies and divisions in matters of religion. And the church of Christ has never as yet been for any long time, free from persecution; especially when truth has prevailed, and true religion flourished. It is manifest, that hitherto the people of God have been kept under, and Zion has been in a low afflicted state, and her enemies have had the chief sway.

And another thing, that makes it exceeding manifest that that day of the church's greatest advancement on earth, which is foretold in scripture, has never yet come, is, that it is so plainly and expressly revealed that this day should succeed the last of the four monarchies, even the Roman, in its last state, wherein it is divided into ten kingdoms, and after the destruction of Antichrist, signified by the little horn, whose reign is contemporary with the reign of the ten kings. These things are very plain in the 2d and 7th chapters of Daniel, and also in the Revelation of St. John. And it is also plain by the 11th chapter of Romans, that it shall be after the national conversion of the *Jews, which shall be as life from the dead to the Gentiles*, and the *fulfillment of both Jews and Gentiles should be come in*, and all the nation of the Jews and all other nations shall obtain mercy, and there shall be that general ingathering of the harvest of the whole earth, of which all that had been converted before, either of Jews or Gentiles, were but the first fruits. And many other evidences of this point might be mentioned, which for brevity's sake I omit.

And thus it is meet, that the last kingdom which shall take place on earth, should be the kingdom of God's own Son and

hair, whose right it is to rule and reign ; and that whatever revolutions and confusions there may be in the world, for a long time, the cause of truth, the righteous cause, should finally prevail, and God's holy people should at last inherit the earth, and reign on earth ; and that the world should continue in tumults and great revolutions, following one another, from age to age, the world being as it were in travail, until truth and holiness are brought forth ; that all things should be shaken, until that comes which is true and right, and agreeable to the mind of God, which cannot be shaken ; and that the wisdom of the Ruler of the world should be manifested in the bringing all things ultimately to so good an issue. The world is made for the Son of God ; his kingdom is the end of all changes, that come to pass in the state of the world of mankind ; all are only to prepare the way for this ; it is fit therefore that the last kingdom on earth should be his. It is wisely and mercifully ordered of God that it should be so, on this account, as well as many others, viz. that the church of God, under all preceding changes, should have this consideration to encourage her, and maintain her hope, and animate her faith and prayers, from generation to generation, that God has promised, her cause should finally be maintained and prevail in this world.

LET it now be considered,

2. The future promised advancement of the kingdom of Christ is an event unspeakably happy and glorious. The scriptures speak of that time, as a time wherein God and His Son Jesus Christ will be most eminently glorified on earth ; a time, wherein God, who until then had dwelt between the cherubims, and concealed himself in the holy of holies, in the secret of his tabernacle, behind the vail, in the thick darkness, should openly shine forth, and all flesh should see his glory, and God's people in general have as great a privilege as the high priest alone had once a year, or as Moses had in the mount ; a time, wherein *the temple of God in heaven should be opened, and there should be seen the ark of His testament* ; (Rev. xi. 19) a time, wherein both God will be greatly glorified, and

his saints made unspeakably happy in the view of his glory ; a time, wherein God's people should not only once see the light of God's glory, as Moses, or see it once a year with the high priest, but should dwell and walk continually in it, and it should be their constant daily light, instead of the light of the sun, (Isa. ii. 5. Psal. lxxxix. 15. Isa. lx. 19) which light should be so much more glorious than the light of the sun or moon, that *the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts should reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem before his ancients gloriously ;* Isa. xxiv. 23.

It is represented as a time of vast increase of knowledge and understanding, especially in divine things ; a time wherein God would " destroy the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail spread over all nations," Isa. xxv. 7. wherein " the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun seven fold," Isa. xxx. 26. " And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the heart of the rash shall understand knowledge," Isa. xxxii. 3, 4. " And they shall no more teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord, because they shall know him from the least to the greatest," Jer. xxxi. 24. And a time of general holiness, (Isa. lx. 30. " Thy people shall be all righteous.") And a time of a great prevailing of eminent holiness, when little children should, in spiritual attainments, be as though they were " an hundred years old," Isa. lxv. 20. And wherein " he that is feeble among God's people should be as David," Zech. xii. 8. A time wherein holiness should be as it were inscribed on every thing, on all men's common business and employments, and the common utensils of life, all shall be dedicated to God, and improved to holy purposes ; (Isa. xxiii. 18. " And her merchandize and hire shall be holiness to the Lord." Zech. xiv. 20, 21. " In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord ; and the pots in the Lords house shall be like the bowls before the altar ; yea every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of Hosts.") A time wherein religion and true Christianity shall in every respect be uppermost in the world ; wherein God will cause his church to *arise and*

*shake herself from the dust, and put on her beautiful garments, and sit down on a throne ; and the poor shall be raised from the dust, and the beggar from the dunghill, and shall be set among princes, and made to inherit the throne of God's glory : A time wherein vital piety shall take possession of thrones and palaces, and those that are in most exalted stations shall be eminent in holiness. Isa. xlix. 23. " And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers." Chap. lx. 16. " Thou shalt suck the breasts of kings." Isa. xlv. 12. " The daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift, the rich among the people shall entreat thy favor." A time of wonderful union, and the most universal peace, love and sweet harmony ; wherein the nations shall *beat their swords into ploughshares, &c.* and God will cause, *Wars to cease to the ends of the earth, and break the bow, and cut the spear in sunder, and burn the chariot in the fire ; and the mountains shall bring forth peace to God's people, and the little hills by righteousness ; wherein the wolf should dwell with the lamb, &c.* and wherein *God's people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and quiet resting places ;* (Isa. xxxii. 17, 18, and xxxiii. 20, 21) a time wherein all heresies and false doctrines shall be exploded, and the church of God shall not be rent with a variety of jarring opinions. Zech. xiv. 9. " The Lord shall be king over all the earth : In that day there shall be one Lord, and his name one." And all superstitious ways of worship shall be abolished, and all agree in worshipping God in his own appointed way, and agreeable to the purity of his institutions ; Jer. xxxii. 39. " I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for the good of them and their children after them ;" a time wherein the whole earth shall be united as one holy city, one heavenly family, men of all nations shall as it were dwell together, and sweetly correspond one with another, as brethren and children of the same father ; as the prophecies often speak of all God's people at that time as the children of God, and brethren one to another, all *appointing over them one head, gathered to one house of God, to worship the King, the Lord of hosts ;* a time wherein this whole great society shall appear in glorious*



beauty, in genuine amiable Christianity, and excellent order, *as a city compact together, the perfection of beauty, an eternal excellency, shining with a reflection of the glory of Jehovah risen upon it*, which shall be attractive and ravishing to all kings and nations, and it shall appear *as a bride adorned for her husband*; a time of great temporal prosperity; of great health, (Isa. xxxiii. 24. "The inhabitants shall not say, I am sick") of long life; Isa. lxxv. 22. "As the days of a tree, are the days of my people;" a time wherein the earth shall be abundantly fruitful; (Psal. lxxvii. 6, Isa. xxx. 23, 24, Amos ix. 16, and many other places.) A time wherein the world shall be delivered from that multitude of sore calamities that before had prevailed, (Ezek. xlvii. 20) and there shall be an universal blessing of God upon mankind, in soul and body, and in all their concerns, and all manner of tokens of God's presence and favor, and *God shall rejoice over them as the bridegroom rejoiceth over his bride, and the mountains shall as it were drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk*; Joel iii. 18. A time of great and universal joy through the earth, *when from the utmost ends of the earth shall be heard songs, even glory to the righteous*, and God's people shall with joy draw water out of the wells of salvation, and God shall prepare in his holy mountain, a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the Lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the Lees well refined, which feast is represented, Rev. xix. *as the marriage supper of the Lamb*. Yea, the scriptures represent it not only as a time of universal joy on earth, but extraordinary joy in heaven, among the angels and saints, the holy apostles and prophets there; Rev. xviii. 20, and xix. 1.....9. Yea, the scriptures represent it as a time of extraordinary rejoicing with Christ himself, the glorious head, in whom all things in heaven and earth shall then be gathered together in one; Zech. iii. 17. "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save; he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing." And the very fields, trees and mountains, shall then as it were rejoice, and break forth into singing; Isa. lv. 12. "Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace; the mountains

and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." Isa. xlv. 23. "Sing, O heavens, for the Lord hath done it; shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains; O forest, and every tree therein; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.

Such being the state of things in this future promised glorious day of the churches prosperity, surely it is worth praying for. Nor is there any one thing whatsoever, if we viewed things aright, which a regard to the glory of God, a concern for the kingdom and honor of our Redeemer, a love to his people, pity to perishing sinners, love to our fellow creatures in general, compassion to mankind under its various and sore calamities and miseries, a desire of their temporal and spiritual prosperity, love to our country, our neighbors and friends, yea, and to our own souls, would dispose us to be so much in prayer for, as for the dawning of this happy day, and the accomplishment of that glorious event.

It may be worthy to be considered,

3. How much Christ prayed and labored and suffered, in order to the glory and happiness of that day.

The sum of the blessings Christ sought, by what he did and suffered in the work of redemption, was the *Holy Spirit*. So is the affair of our redemption constituted; the Father provides and gives the Redeemer, and the price of redemption is offered to him, and he grants the benefit purchased; the Son is the Redeemer that gives the price, and also is the price offered; and the Holy Spirit is the grand blessing obtained by the price offered, and bestowed on the redeemed. The Holy Spirit, in his indwelling, his influences and fruits, is the sum of all grace, holiness, comfort and joy; or in one word, of all the spiritual good Christ purchased for men in this world: And is also the sum of all perfection, glory and eternal joy, that he purchased for them in another world. The Holy Spirit is that great benefit, that is the subject matter of the promises, both of the eternal covenant of redemption, and also of the covenant of grace; the grand subject of the prom-

ises of the Old Testament, in the prophecies of the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom ; and the chief subject of the promises of the New Testament ; and particularly of the covenant of grace delivered by Jesus Christ to his disciples, as his last will and testament, in the xiv. xv. and xvi. chapters of John ; the grand legacy that he bequeathed to them in that his last and dying discourse with them. Therefore the Holy Spirit is so often called the spirit of promise, and emphatically the promise, the promise of the Father, &c. Luke xxiv. 49. Acts i. 4, and ii. 33, 39. Gal. iii. 14. Eph. i. 13, and iii. 6. This being the great blessing Christ purchased by his labors and sufferings on earth, it was the blessing he received of the Father, when he ascended into heaven, and entered into the holy of holies with his own blood, to communicate to those that he had redeemed. John xvi. 7. " It is expedient for you, that I go away ; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come ; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." Acts ii. 33. " Being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." This is the sum of those gifts, which Christ received for men, even for the rebellious, at his ascension. This is the sum of the benefits Christ obtains for men by his intercession ; John xiv. 16, 17. " I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever ; even the Spirit of Truth." Herein consists Christ's communicative fullness, even in his being full of the Spirit, and so full of grace and truth, that we might of this fulness receive, and grace for grace. He is anointed with the Holy Ghost ; and this is the ointment that goes down from the head to the members. God gives the Spirit not by measure unto him, that every one that is his might receive according to the measure of the gift of Christ. This therefore was the great blessing he prayed for in that wonderful prayer, that he uttered for his disciples and all his future church, the evening before he died, John xvii : The blessing he prayed for to the Father, in behalf of his disciples, was the same he had insisted on in his preceding discourse with them : And this doubtless was the blessing that he pray-

ed for, when, as our High Priest, he offered up strong crying and tears, with his blood, Heb. v. 6, 7. The same that he shed his blood for, he also shed tears for, and poured out prayers for.

But the time that we have been speaking of, is the chief time of the bestowment of this blessing ; the main season of the success of all that Christ did and suffered in the work of our redemption. Before this the Spirit of God is given but very sparingly, and but few are saved ; but then it will be far otherwise ; wickedness shall be rare then, as virtue and piety had been before : And undoubtedly, by far the greatest number of them that ever receive the benefits of Christ's redemption, from the beginning of the world to the end of it, will receive it in that time. The number of the inhabitants of the earth will doubtless then be vastly multiplied ; and the number of redeemed ones much more.

If we should suppose that glorious day to last no more than (literally) a thousand years, and that at the beginning of that thousand years the world of mankind should be but just as numerous as it is now, and that the number should be doubled, during that time of great health and peace and the universal blessing of heaven, once only in an hundred years, the number at the end of a thousand years would be more than a thousand times greater than it is now ; and if it should be doubled once in fifty years (which probably the number of the inhabitants of Newengland has ordinarily been, in about half that time) then, at the end of the thousand years, there would be more than a million inhabitants on the face of the earth where there is one now. And there is reason to think that through the greater part of this period at least, the number of saints will, in their increase, bear a proportion to the increase of the number of inhabitants. And it must be considered, that if the number of mankind at the beginning of this period be no more than equal to the present number, yet we may doubtless conclude, that the number of true saints will be immensely greater ; when instead of the few true and thorough Christians now in some few countries, every nation on the face of the whole earth shall be converted to Christianity, and every

country shall be full of true Christians ; so that the successive multiplication of true saints through the thousand years, will begin with that vast advantage, beyond the multiplication of mankind ; where the latter is begun from units, the other doubtless will begin with hundreds, if not thousands. How much greater then will be the number of true converts, that will be brought to a participation of the benefits of Christ's redemption, during that period, than in all other times put together ? I think the foregoing things considered, we shall be very moderate in our conjectures, if we say, it is probable that there will be an hundred thousand times more, that will actually be redeemed to God by Christ's blood, during that period of the church's prosperity that we have been speaking of, than ever had been before, from the beginning of the world to that time.

That time is represented in scripture, as the proper appointed season of Christ's salvation ; eminently the elect season, *the accepted time, and day of salvation* (Isai. xlix. 8, and so on to ver. 23, and chap. lxi. 2, taken with the context, in that and the preceding and following chapters.) *The year of Christ's redeemed*, Isa. lxiii. 4. This period is spoken of as the proper time of the dominion of the Redeemer, and reign of his redeeming love, in the 2d and 7th Chapters of Daniel, and many other places ; the proper time of his harvest, or ingathering of his fruits from this fallen world ; the appointed day of his triumph over Satan, the great destroyer ; and the appointed day of his marriage with his elect spouse ; Rev. xix. 7. The time given to the Sun of righteousness to rule, as the day is the time God has appointed for the natural Sun to bear rule. Therefore the bringing on of this time is called Christ's coming in his kingdom ; wherein *he will rent the heavens and come down, and the Sun of righteousness shall arise*. Mal. iv. 2, and Isa. lx. 1.

The comparatively little saving good there is in the world, as the fruit of Christ's redemption, before that time, is, as it were, granted by way of anticipation ; as we anticipate something of the sun's light by reflection before the daytime, the proper time of the sun's rule ; and as the first fruits are gath-

ered before the harvest. Then more especially will be the fulfilment of those great promises, made by God the father to the son, for his pouring out his soul unto death, Isa. liii. 10, 11, 12 ; then “ shall he see his seed, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand ; then shall he see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied, and shall justify many by his knowledge ; then will God divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong ;” then shall Christ in an eminent manner obtain his chosen spouse, that “ he loved and died for, that he might sanctify and cleanse her, with the washing of water, by the word, and present her to himself a glorious church.” He will obtain “ the joy that was set before him, for which he endured the cross, and despised the shame,” chiefly in the events and consequences of that day : That day as was observed before, is often represented as eminently the time of the rejoicing of the bridegroom. The foreknowledge and consideration of it was what supported him, and that which his soul exulted in, at a time when his soul had been troubled at the view of his approaching sufferings ; as may be seen in John xii. 28, 24, 27, 31, 32.

Now therefore, if it be so, that this is what Jesus Christ, our great Redeemer and the head of the church, did so much desire, and set his heart upon, from all eternity, and which he did and suffered so much for, offering up strong crying and tears, and his precious blood to obtain it ; surely his disciples and members should also earnestly seek it, and be much and earnest in prayer for it.

Let it be considered,

4. The whole creation is, as it were, earnestly waiting for that day, and constantly groaning and travailling in pain to bring forth the felicity and glory of it. For that day is above all other times, excepting the day of judgment, the day of the manifestation of the Sons of God, and of their glorious liberty : And therefore that elegant representation the apostle makes of the earnest expectation and travail of the creation, in Rom. viii. 19.....22, is applicable to the glorious events of this day : “ The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the Sons of God. For the creature

was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." This visible world has now for many ages been subjected to sin, and made as it were a servant to it, through the abusive improvement that man, who has the dominion over the creatures, puts the creatures to. Thus the sun is a sort of servant to all manner of wickedness, as its light and other beneficial influences are abused by men, and made subservient to their lusts and sinful purposes. So of the rain, and fruits of the earth, and the brute animals, and all other parts of the visible creation ; they all serve men's corruption, and obey their sinful will ; and God doth in a sort subject them to it ; for he continues his influence and power to make them to be obedient, according to the same law of nature whereby they yield to men's command when used to good purposes. It is by the immediate influence of God upon things, acting upon them, according to those constant methods that we call the laws of nature, that they are ever obedient to man's will, or that we can use them at all. This influence of God continues, to make them obedient to men's will, though wicked. Which is a sure sign that the present state of things is not lasting : It is confusion ; and God would not suffer it to be, but that he designs in a little time to put an end to it, when it shall no more be so. Seeing it is to be but a little while, God chooses rather to subject the creature to man's wickedness, than to disturb and interrupt the course of nature according to its stated laws : But it is, as it were, a force upon the creature ; for the creature is abused in it, perverted to far meaner purposes than those for which the author of its nature made it, and to which he adapted it. The creature therefore is as it were unwillingly subject ; and would not be subject, but that it is but for a short time ; and it, as it were, hopes for an alteration. It is a bondage the creature is subject to, from which it was partly delivered when Christ came, and the gospel was promulgated in the world ;

and will be more fully delivered at the commencement of the glorious day we are speaking of ; and perfectly at the day of judgment. This agrees with the context ; for the apostle was speaking of the present suffering state of the church. The reason why the church in this world is in a suffering state, is that the world is subjected to the sin and corruption of mankind. By vanity, in scripture, is very commonly meant sin and wickedness ; and also by corruption, as might be shewn in very many places, would my intended brevity allow.

Though the creature is thus subject to vanity, yet it does not rest in this subjection, but is constantly acting and exerting itself, in order to that glorious liberty that God has appointed at the time we are speaking of, and as it were reaching forth towards it. All the changes that are brought to pass in the world, from age to age, are ordered in infinite wisdom in one respect or other to prepare the way for that glorious issue of things, that shall be when truth and righteousness shall finally prevail, and he, whose right it is, shall take the kingdom. All the creatures, in all their operations and motions continually tend to this. As in a clock, all the motions of the whole system of wheels and movements, tend to the striking of the hammar at the appointed time. All the revolutions and restless motions of the sun and other heavenly bodies, from day to day, from year to year, and from age to age, are continually tending hither ; as all the many turnings of the wheels of a chariot, in a journey, tend to the appointed journey's end. The mighty struggles and conflicts of nations, and shakings of kingdoms, and those vast successive changes that are brought to pass, in the kingdoms and empires of the world, from one age to another, are as it were travail pangs of the creation, in order to bring forth this glorious event. And the scriptures represent the last struggles and changes that shall immediately precede this event, as being the greatest of all ; as the last pangs of a woman in travail are the most violent.

The creature thus earnestly expecting this glorious manifestation and liberty of the children of God, and travelling in pain in order to it, therefore the scriptures, by a like figure,



do very often represent, that when this shall be accomplished, the whole inanimate creation shall greatly rejoice : *That the heavens shall sing, the earth be glad, the mountains break forth into singing, the hills be joyful together, the trees clasp their hands, the lower parts of the earth shout, the sea roar and the fulness thereof, and the floods clasp their hands,* Isa. xliv. 23....xlix. 13. Psal. lxxix. 34, 35....xcvi. 11, 12, and xcvi. 7, 8.

All the intelligent elect creation, all God's holy creatures in heaven and earth, are truly and properly waiting for, and earnestly expecting that event. It is abundantly represented in scripture as the spirit and character of all true saints, that they set their hearts upon, love, long, wait and pray for the promised glory of that day ; they are spoken of as those that prefer Jerusalem *to their chief joy*, Psal. cxxxvii. 6. *That take pleasure in the stones of Zion, and favor the dust thereof*, Psal. cii. 13, 14. *That wait for the consolation of Israel*, Luke ii. 25, and v. 38. It is the language of the church of God, and the breathing of the soul of every true saint, that we have in Psal. xiv. 7. " O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion ! when the Lord bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad." And Cant. ii. 17. " Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn my beloved, and be thou like a roe, or a young heart upon the mountains of Bether." And chap. viii. 14. " Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe, or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices." Agreeable to this, was the spirit of old Jacob, which he expressed when he was dying, in faith in the great promise made to him and Isaac and Abraham, that " in their seed all the families of the earth should be blessed, Gen. xlix. 18. " I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." The same is represented as the spirit of his true children, or the family of Jacob, Isa. viii. 17. " I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth himself from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him." They that love Christ's appearing, is a name that the apostle gives to true Christians, 2 Tim. iv. 8.

The glorious inhabitants of the heavenly world, the saints and angels there, that rejoice when one sinner repents, are earnestly waiting, in an assured and joyful dependence on

God's promises of that conversion of the world, and marriage of the Lamb, which shall be when that glorious day comes ; and therefore they are represented as all with one accord rejoicing and praising God with such mighty exultation and triumph, when it is accomplished, in Rev. xix.

5. The word of God is full of precepts, encouragements, and examples, tending to excite and induce the people of God to be much in prayer for this mercy.

The Spirit of God is the chief of the blessings, that are the subject matter of Christian prayer ; for it is the sum of all spiritual blessings ; which are those that we need infinitely more than all others, and are those wherein our true and eternal happiness consists. That which is the sum of the blessings that Christ purchased, is the sum of the blessings that Christians have to pray for ; but that as was observed before, is the Holy Spirit : And therefore when the disciples came to Christ, and desired him to teach them to pray, Luke xi. and he accordingly gave them particular directions for the performance of this duty, the conclusion of his whole discourse in the 13th verse plainly shews that the Holy Spirit is the sum of the blessings that are the subject matter of that prayer about which he had instructed them. " If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him ?" From which words of Christ, we may also observe, that there is no blessing that we have so great encouragement to pray for, as the Spirit of God ; the words imply that our heavenly Father is especially ready to bestow his Holy Spirit on them that ask him. Of the more excellent nature any benefit is that we stand in need of, the more ready God is to bestow it in answer to prayer : The infinite goodness of God's nature is the more gratified, and the grand design and aim of the contrivance and work of our redemption is the more answered, and Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, has the greater success in his undertaking and labors ; and those desires that are expressed in prayer for the most excellent blessings are the most excellent desires, and consequently such as God most approves, and is most ready to gratify.

The scriptures do not only direct and encourage us in general to pray for the Holy Spirit above all things else, but it is the expressly revealed will of God, that his church should be very much in prayer for that glorious outpouring of the Spirit that is to be in the latter days, and the things that shall be accomplished by it. God, speaking of that blessed event, Ezek. xxxvi. under the figure of "cleansing the house of Israel from all their iniquities, planting and building their waste and ruined places, and making them to become like the garden of Eden, and filling them with men like a flock, like the holy flock, the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts." (wherein he doubtless has respect to the same glorious restoration and advancement of his church that is spoken of in the next chapter, and in all the following chapters to the end of the book) he says, ver. 37. "Thus saith the Lord, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." Which doubtless implies that it is the will of God that extraordinary prayerfulness in his people for this mercy should precede the bestowment of it.

I know of no place in the Bible, where so strong an expression is made use of to signify importunity in prayer, as is used in Isa. lxii. 6, 7, where the people of God are called upon to be importunate for this mercy: "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, until he establish, and until he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." How strong is the phrase! And how loud is this call to the church of God, to be fervent and incessant in their cries to him for this great mercy! How wonderful are the words to be used, concerning the manner in which such worms of the dust should address the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity! And what encouragement is here, to approach the mercy seat with the greatest freedom, boldness, earnestness, constancy and full assurance of faith, to seek of God this greatest thing that can be sought in Christian prayer!

It is a just observation of a certain eminent minister of the church of Scotland, in a discourse of his, lately published on social prayer, in which, speaking of pleading for the success of

the gospel, as required by the Lord's prayer, he says, " That notwithstanding of its being so compendious, yet the one half of it, that is, three petitions in six, and these the first prescribed, do all relate to this great case : So that to put up any one of these petitions apart, or all of them together, is upon the matter, to pray that the dispensation, of the gospel may be blessed with divine power." That glorious day we are speaking of is the proper and appointed time, above all others, for the bringing to pass the things requested in each of these petitions ; As the prophecies every where represent that as the time, which God has especially appointed for the hallowing or glorifying his own great name in this world, causing his glory to be revealed, that all flesh may see it together, causing it openly to be manifested in the sight of the heathen, filling the whole world with the light of his glory to such a degree that the Moon shall be confounded and Sun ashamed before that brighter glory : The appointed time for the glorifying and magnifying the name of Jesus Christ, causing every knee to bow, and every tongue to confess to him. This is the proper time of God's kingdom's coming, or of Christ's coming in his kingdom : That is the very time foretold in the 2d of Daniel, when the Lord God of heaven shall set up a kingdom, in the latter times of the last monarchy, when it is divided into ten kingdoms : And that is the very time foretold in the 7th of Daniel, when there should be given to one like to the son of man, dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve him ; and the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the Saints of the most high God, after the destruction of the little horn, that should continue for a time, times, and the dividing of time. And that is the time wherein God's will shall be done on earth, as it is done in heaven ; when heaven shall as it were be bowed, and come down to the earth, as God's people shall be all righteous, and holiness to the Lord shall be written on the bells of the horses, &c. So that the three first petitions of the Lord's prayer are in effect no other than requests for the bringing on this glorious day. And as the

Lord's prayer begins with asking for this, in the three first petitions, so it concludes with it, in these words, *For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever. Amen.* Which words imply a request that God would take to himself his great power, and reign, and manifest his power and glory in the world. Thus Christ teaches us that it becomes his disciples to seek this above all other things, and make it the first and the last in their prayers, and that every petition should be put up in a subordination to the advancement of God's kingdom and glory in the world.

Besides what has been observed of the Lord's prayer, if we look through the whole Bible, and observe all the examples of prayer that we find there recorded, we shall find so many prayers for no other mercy, as for the deliverance, restoration and prosperity of the church, and the advancement of God's glory and kingdom of grace in the world. If we well consider the prayers that we find recorded in the book of Psalms, I believe we shall see reason to think, that a very great, if not the greater part of them, are prayers uttered, either in the name of Christ, or in the name of the church, for such a mercy : And undoubtedly the greatest part of that book of Psalms, is made up of prayers for this mercy, prophecies of it, and prophetical praises for it.

The prophets, in their prophecies of the restoration and advancement of the church, very often speak of it as what shall be done in answer to the prayers of God's people. Isa. xxv. 9.....xxvi. 9, 12, 13, 16, 17, to the end. Chap. xxxiii. 2. Psal. cii. 13.....22. Jer. iii. 21. Isa. lxv. 24.....xli. 17. Hos. v. 15, with vi. 1, 2, 3, and xiv. 2, to the end. Zech. x. 6.....xii. 10, and xiii. 9. Isa. lv. 6, with verse 12, 13. Jer. xxxiii. 3. The prophecies of future glorious times of the church are often introduced with a prayer of the church for her deliverance and advancement, prophetically uttered ; as in Isa. li. 9, &c. Chap. lxiii. 11, to the end, and lxiv. throughout.

In order to Christ's being mystically born into the world, in the advancement and flourishing of true religion, and great increase of the number of true converts, who are spoken of as having Christ formed in them, the scriptures represent it as

requisite, that the church should first be in travail, crying, and pained to be delivered ; Rev. xii. 1, 2, 5. And one thing that we have good reason to understand by it, is her exercising strong desires, and wrestling and agonizing with God in prayer, for this event ; because we find such figures of speech used in this sense elsewhere ; so, Gal. iv. 19. " My little children of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you." Isa. xxvi. 16, 17. " Lord, in trouble have they visited thee ; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them. Like 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." And certainly it is fit, that the church of God should be in travail for that, which (as I before observed) the whole creation travails in pain for.

The scriptures do not only abundantly manifest it to be the duty of God's people to be much in prayer for this great mercy, but it also abounds with manifold considerations to encourage them in it, and animate them with hopes of success. There is perhaps no one thing that so much of the Bible is taken up in the promises of, in order to encourage the faith, hope and prayers of the saints, as this ; which at once affords to God's people the clearest evidences that it is their duty to be much in prayer for this mercy (for undoubtedly that which God does abundantly make the subject of his promises, God's people should abundantly make the subject of their prayers) and also affords them the strongest assurances that their prayers shall be successful. With what confidence may we go before God, and pray for that, of which we have so many exceeding precious and glorious promises to plead ! The very first promise of God to fallen man, even that in Gen. iii. 15. It shall bruise thy head, is a promise that is to have its chief fulfilment at that day. And the whole Bible concludes with a promise of the glory of that day, and a prayer for its fulfilment. Rev. xxii. 20. " He that testifieth these things, saith, surely I come quickly : Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

The scriptures give us great reason to think, that when once there comes to appear much of a spirit of prayer in the church of God for this mercy, then it will soon be accomplished. It is evidently with reference to this mercy, that God makes that promise, Isa. xli. 17, 18, 19. "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them ; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them ; I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys ; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water ; I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle and the oil tree, I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together." Spiritual waters and rivers are explained by the Apostle John, to be the Holy Spirit, John vii. 37, 38, 39. It is now a time of scarcity of these spiritual waters ; there are as it were none : If God's people, in this time of great drought, were but made duly sensible of this calamity, and their own emptiness and necessity, and brought earnestly to thirst and cry for needed supplies, God would doubtless soon fulfil this blessed promise. We have another promise much like this, in Psal. cii. 16, 17. "When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory ; he will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer." And remarkable are the words that follow in the next verse, "This shall be written for the generation to come ; and the people which shall be created, shall praise the Lord." Which seems to signify, that this promise should be left on record to encourage some future generation of God's people to pray and cry earnestly for this mercy, to whom he would fulfil the promise, and thereby give them, and great multitudes of others, that should be converted through their prayers, occasion to praise his name. Who knows but that the generation here spoken of may be this present generation ? One thing mentioned in the character of that future generation, is certainly true concerning the present, viz. that it is destitute ; the church of God is in very low, sorrowful and needy circumstances : And if the next thing there supposed, were also verified in us, viz. that we

were made sensible of our great calamity, and brought to cry earnestly to God for help I am persuaded the third would be also verified, viz. That our prayers would be turned into joyful praises, for God's gracious answers of our prayers. It is spoken of as a sign and evidence, that the time to favor Zion is come, when God's servants are brought by their prayerfulness for her restoration, in an eminent manner, to shew that they favor her stones and dust ; in the 13th and 14th verses of this Psalm, " Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion ; for the time to favor her, yea, the set time is come ; for thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof.

God has respect to the prayers of his saints in all his government of the world ; as we may observe by the representation made, Rev. viii. at the beginning. There we read of seven angels standing before the throne of God, and receiving of him seven trumpets, at the sounding of which, great and mighty changes were to be brought to pass in the world, through many successive ages. But when these angels had received their trumpets, they must stand still, and all must be in silence, not one of them must be allowed to sound, until the prayers of the saints are attended to. The angel of the covenant, as a glorious High Priest, comes and stands at the altar, with much incense, to offer with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar, before the throne ; and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascends up with acceptance before God, out of the angel's hand : And then the angels prepare themselves to sound. And God, in the events of every trumpet, remembers those prayers : As appears at last, by the great and glorious things he accomplishes for his church, in the issue of all, in answer to these prayers, in the event of the last trumpet, which brings on the glory of the latter days, when these prayers shall be turned into joyful praises. Rev. xi. 15, 16, 17. " And the seventh angel sounded ; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty Elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell



upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art and wast and art to come, because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned." Since it is thus, that it is the pleasure of God so to honor his people, as to carry on all the designs of his kingdom in this way, viz. by the prayers of his saints, this gives us great reason to think, that whenever the time comes that God gives an extraordinary spirit of prayer for the promised advancement of his kingdom on earth, (which is God's great aim in all preceding providences, and which is the main thing that the spirit of prayer in the saints aims at) then the fulfilling this event is nigh.

God, in wonderful grace, is pleased to represent himself as it were at the command of his people, with regard to mercies of this nature, so as to be ready to bestow them whenever they shall earnestly pray for them ; Isa. xlv. 11. " Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, ask of me concerning things to come, concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands, command ye me." What God is speaking of in this context, is the restoration of his church ; not only a restoration from temporal calamity and an outward captivity, by Cyrus ; but also a spiritual restoration and advancement, by God's commanding the heavens to *drop down from above, and the skies to pour down righteousness, and causing the earth to open and bring forth salvation, and righteousness to spring up together*, Ver. 8. God would have his people ask of him, or inquire of him by earnest prayer, to do this for them ; and manifests himself as being at the command of earnest prayers for such a mercy : And a reason why God is so ready to hear such prayers is couched in the words, viz. Because it is prayer for his own church, his chosen and beloved people, his sons and daughters, and the work of his hands ; and he cannot deny any thing that is asked for their comfort and prosperity.

God speaks of himself as standing ready to be gracious to his church, and to appear for its restoration, and only waiting for such an opportunity to bestow this mercy, when he shall hear the cries of his people for it, that he may bestow it in

answer to their prayers. Isa. xxx. 18, 19. "Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious to thee ; and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you : For the Lord is a God of judgment : Blessed are all they that wait for him. For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem. Thou shalt weep no more ; he will be very gracious unto thee, at the voice of thy cry : When he shall hear it, he will answer thee." The words imply as much as that when God once sees his people much engaged in praying for this mercy, it shall be no longer delayed. Christ desires to hear the voice of his spouse, that is in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs ; in a low and obscure state, driven into secret corners : He only waits for this, in order to put an end to her state of affliction, and cause the day to break, and the shadows to flee away. If he once heard her voice in earnest prayer, he would come swiftly over the mountains of separation between him and her, *as a roe, or young hart* ; Sol. Song ii. 14, to the end. When his church is in a low state, and oppressed by her enemies, and cries to him, he will swiftly fly to her relief, as birds fly at the cry of their young ; Isa. xxxi. 5. Yea, when that glorious day comes, that I am speaking of, *before they call, he will answer them, and while they are yet speaking, he will hear* ; and in answer to their prayers, he will make the *wolf and the lamb feed together*, &c. Isa. lxxv. 24, 25. When the spouse prays for the effusion of the Holy Spirit, and the coming of Christ, by granting the tokens of his spiritual presence in his church, saying, Cant. iv. 16. *Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south, blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out ; let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits* ; there seems to be an immediate answer to her prayer, in the next words, in abundant communications of the Spirit, and bestowment of spiritual blessings ; *I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse ; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice ; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey ; I have drunk my wine with my milk. Eat, O friends ; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.*

Scripture instances and examples of success in prayer give great encouragement to pray for this mercy. Most of the remarkable deliverances and restorations of the church of God, that we have account of in the scripture, were in answer to prayer. So was the redemption of the church of God from the Egyptian bondage ; Exod. ii. 23, and iii. 7. The great restoration of the church in the latter day, is often spoken of as resembled by this ; as in Isa. lxiv. 1.....4.....xi. 11, 15, 16.....xlili. 2, 3, 16.....19.....li. 10, 11, 15.....lxiii. 11, 12, 13. Zech. x. 10, 11. Hos. ii. 14, 15. It was in answer to prayer, that the Sun stood still over Gibeon, and the Moon in the valley Aijalon, and God's people obtained that great victory over their enemies ; in which wonderful miracle, God seemed to have some respect to a future more glorious event to be accomplished for the Christian church, in the day of her victory over her enemies, in the latter days ; even that event foretold, Isa. lx. 20. " Thy Sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy Moon withdraw itself. It was in answer to prayer, that God delivered his church from the mighty host of the Assyrians, in Hezekiah's time ; which dispensation is abundantly made use of, as a type of the great things God will do for the Christian church in the latter days, in the prophecies of Isaiah. The restoration of the church of God from the Babylonish captivity, as abundantly appears both by scripture prophecies and histories. was in answer to extraordinary prayer ; see Jer. xxix. 10.....14, and l. 4, 5. Dan. ix. throughout. Ezra. viii. 21, &c. Neh. i. 4, to the end.....iv. 4, 5, and Chap. ix. throughout. This restoration of the Jewish church, after the destruction of Babylon, is evidently a type of the glorious restoration of the Christian church, after the destruction of the kingdom of Antichrist ; which (as all know) is abundantly spoken of in the Revelation of St. John, as the antitype of Babylon. Sampson, out of weakness, received strength to pull down Dagon's temple, through prayer. So the people of God, in the latter days, will out of weakness be made strong, and will become the instruments of pulling down the kingdom of Satan, by prayer.

The Spirit of God was poured out upon Christ himself, in answer to prayer ; Luke iii. 21, 22. " Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove, upon him ; and a voice came from heaven which said, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased." The Spirit descends on the church of Christ, the same way in this respect, that it descended on the Head of the church. The greatest effusion of the Spirit that ever yet has been, even that which was in the primitive times of the Christian church, which began in Jerusalem on the day of pentecost, was in answer to extraordinary prayer. When the disciples were gathered together to their Lord, a little before his ascension, *he commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which (saith he) ye have heard of me,*" i. e. the promise of the Holy Ghost ; Acts i. 4. What they had their hearts upon was the restoration of the kingdom to Israel : *Lord (say they) wilt thou, at this time, restore again the kingdom to Israel ?* ver. 6. And according to Christ's direction after his ascension, they returned to Jerusalem, and continued in united fervent prayer and supplication. It seems they spent their time in it from day to day, without ceasing ; until the Spirit came down in a wonderful manner upon them, and that work was begun which never ceased, until the world was turned upside down, and all the chief nations of it were converted to Christianity. And that glorious deliverance and advancement of the Christian church, that was in the days of Constantine the great, followed the extraordinary cries of the church to God, as the matter is represented in Rev. vi. at the opening of the fifth seal. The church in her suffering state is represented crying with a loud voice, " How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge, and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth ?" And the opening of the next seal brings on that mighty revolution, in the days of Constantine, compared to those great changes that shall be at the end of the world.

As there is so great and manifold reason from the word of God, to think that if a spirit of earnest prayer for that great ef-

fusion of the Spirit of God which I am speaking of prevailed, in the Christian church, the mercy would be soon granted ; so those that are engaged in such prayer might expect the first benefit. God will come to those that are seeking him and waiting for him ; Isa. xxv. 9. and xxvi. 8. When Christ came in the flesh, he was first revealed to them who were “waiting for the consolation of Israel, and looking for redemption in Jerusalem.” Luke i. 25, 33. And in that great outpouring of the Spirit that was in the days of the apostles, attended with such glorious effects among Jews and Gentiles, the Spirit came down first on those that were engaged in united, earnest prayer for it. A special blessing is promised to them that love and pray for the prosperity of the church of God, Psal. cxxii. 6. “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. They shall prosper that love thee.”

7. We are presented with many motives in the dispensations of divine Providence, at this day, to excite us to be much in prayer for this mercy.

There is much in providence to shew us our need of it, and put us on desiring it. The great outward calamities, in which the world is involved ; and particularly the bloody war that embroils and wastes the nations of Christendom, and in which our nation has so great a share, may well make all that believe God’s word, and love mankind, earnestly long and pray for that day, when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the nations shall beat their swords into ploughshares, &c. But especially do the spiritual calamities and miseries of the present time, shew our great need of that blessed effusion of God’s Spirit : There having been, for so long a time, so great a withholding of the Spirit, from the greater part of the Christian world, and such dismal consequences of it, in the great decay of vital piety, and the exceeding prevalence of infidelity, heresy and all manner of vice and wickedness ; and especially in our land and nation ; of which a most affecting account has lately been published in a pamphlet printed in London, and reprinted in Scotland, entitled “Britain’s Remembrancer ;” by which it seems that luxury, and wickedness of

almost every kind, is well nigh come to the utmost extremity in the nation ; and if vice should continue to prevail and increase for one generation more, as it has the generation past, it looks as though the nation could hardly continue in being, but must sink under the weight of its own corruption and wickedness. And the state of things in the other parts of the British dominions, besides England, is very deplorable. The church of Scotland has very much lost her glory, greatly departing from her ancient purity, and excellent order ; and has of late been bleeding with great and manifold wounds, occasioned by their divisions and hot contentions. And there are frequent complaints from thence, by those that lament the corruptions of that land, of sin and wickedness, of innumerable kinds, abounding and prevailing of late, among all ranks and sorts of men there. And how lamentable is the moral and religious state of these American colonies ? Of Newengland in particular ? How much is that kind of religion that was professed and much experienced and practised, in the first, and apparently the best times of Newengland, grown and growing out of credit ? What fierce and violent contentions have been of late among ministers and people, about things of a religious nature ? How much is the gospel ministry grown into contempt ? And the work of the ministry, in many respects, laid under uncommon difficulties, and even in danger of sinking amongst us ? How many of our congregations and churches rending in pieces ? Church discipline weakened, and ordinances less and less regarded ? What wild and extravagant notions, gross delusions of the devil, and strange practices have prevailed, and do still prevail, in many places, under a pretext of extraordinary purity, spirituality, liberty and zeal against formality, usurpation, and conformity to the world ? How strong and deeply rooted and general are the prejudices that prevail against vital religion and the power of godliness, and almost every thing that appertains to it, or tends to it ? How apparently are the hearts of people, every where, uncommonly shut up against all means and endeavors to awaken sinners and revive religion ? Vice and immorality, of all kinds, withal increasing and unusually prevailing ? May not an at-

tentive view and consideration of such a state of things well influence the people that favor the dust of Zion, to earnestness in their cries to God for a general outpouring of his Spirit, which only can be an effectual remedy for these evils ?

Besides the things that have been mentioned, the fresh attempts made by the antichristian powers against the Protestant interest, in their late endeavors to restore a Popish government in Great Britain, the chief bulwark of the Protestant cause ; as also the persecution lately revived against the Protestants in France, may well give occasion to the people of God, to renewed and extraordinary earnestness in their prayers to him, for the fulfilment of the promised downfall of Antichrist, and that liberty and glory of his church that shall follow.

As there is much in the present state of things to shew us our great need of his mercy, and to cause us to desire it ; so there is very much to convince us that God alone can bestow it, and shew us our entire and absolute dependance on him for it. The insufficiency of human abilities to bring to pass any such happy change in the world as is foretold, or to afford any remedy to mankind, from such miseries as have been mentioned, does now remarkably appear. Those observations of the apostle, 1 Cor. i. " The world by wisdom knows not God, and God makes foolish the wisdom of this world," never were verified to such a degree as they are now. Great discoveries have been made in the arts and sciences, and never was human learning carried to such a height, as in the present age ; and yet never did the cause of religion and virtue run so low in nations professing the true religion. Never was an age wherein so many learned and elaborate treatises have been written, in proof of the truth and divinity of the Christian religion ; yet never were there so many infidels, among those that were brought up under the light of the gospel. It is an age, as is supposed, of great light, freedom of thought, and discovery of truth in matters of religion, and detection of the weakness and bigotry of our ancestors, and of the folly and absurdity of the notions of those that were accounted eminent divines in former generations ; which notions, it is imagined,

did destroy the very foundations of virtue and religion, and enervate all precepts of morality, and in effect annul all difference between virtue and vice ; and yet vice and wickedness did never so prevail, like an overflowing deluge. It is an age wherein those mean and stingy principles (as they are called) of our forefathers, which (as is supposed) deformed religion, and led to unworthy thoughts of God, are very much discarded, and grown out of credit, and supposed more free, noble and generous thoughts of the nature of religion, and of the Christian scheme, are entertained ; but yet never was an age, wherein religion in general was so much despised and trampled on, and Jesus Christ and God Almighty so blasphemed and treated with open, daring contempt.

The exceeding weakness of mankind, and their insufficiency in themselves for the bringing to pass any thing great and good in the world, with regard to its moral and spiritual state, remarkably appears in many things that have attended and followed the extraordinary religious commotion, that has lately been in many parts of Great Britain and America. The infirmity of the human nature has been manifested, in a very affecting manner in the various passions that men have been the subjects of, and innumerable ways that they have been moved, as a reed shaken with the wind, on occasion of the changes and incidents, both public and private, of such a state of things. How many errors and extremes are we liable to ? How quickly overtopped, blinded, misled, and confounded ? And how easily does Satan make fools of men, if confident in their own wisdom and strength, and left to themselves ? Many, in the late wonderful season, were ready to admire and trust in men, as if all depended on such and such instruments, at least did ascribe too much to their skill and zeal, because God was pleased to improve them a little while to do extraordinary things : But what great things do the skill and zeal of instruments do now, when the Spirit of God is withdrawn ?

As the present state of things may well excite earnest desires after the promised general revival and advancement of true religion, and serve to shew our dependence on God for it, so there are many things in Providence, of late, that tend



to encourage us in prayer for such a mercy. That infidelity, heresy and vice do so prevail, and that corruption and wickedness are risen to such an extreme height, is that which is exceeding deplorable ; but yet, I think, considering God's promises to his church, and the ordinary method of his dispensations, hope may justly be gathered from it, that the present state of things will not last long, but that a happy change is nigh. We know that God never will desert the cause of truth and holiness, nor suffer the gates of hell to prevail against his church ; and that it has usually been so from the beginning of the world, that the state of the church has appeared most dark, just before some remarkable deliverance and advancement : *Many a time may Israel say, had not the Lord been on our side, then our enemies would have swallowed us up quick.... The waters had overwhelmed us.* The church's extremity has often been God's opportunity for the magnifying his power, mercy and faithfulness towards her. The interest of vital piety has long been in general decaying, and error and wickedness prevailing ; It looks as though the disease were now come to a crisis, and that things cannot remain long in such a state, but that a change may be expected in one respect or other. And not only God's manner of dealing with his church in former ages, and many things in the promises and prophecies of his word, but also several things appertaining to present and late aspects of divine Providence, seem to give reason to hope that the change will be such, as to magnify God's free grace and sovereign mercy, and not his revenging justice and wrath. There are certain times, that are days of vengeance, appointed for the more special displays of God's justice and indignation ; and God has also his days of mercy, accepted times, chosen seasons, wherein it is his pleasure to shew mercy, and nothing shall hinder it ; they are times appointed for the magnifying of the Redeemer and his merits, and the triumphs of his grace, wherein his grace shall triumph over men's unworthiness in its greatest height. And if we consider God's late dealings with our nation and this land, it appears to me that there is much to make us think that this day is such a day : Particularly God's pre-

preserving and delivering the nation, when in so great danger of ruin by the late rebellion ; and his preserving Newengland, and the other British colonies in America, in so remarkable a manner, from the great armament from France, prepared and sent against us the last year ; and the almost miraculous success given to us against our enemies at Cape Breton the year before, disappointing their renewed preparations and fresh attempt against these colonies, this present year, 1747, by delivering up the strength of their fleet into the hands of the English, as they were in their way hither. And also in protecting us from time to time from armies by land that have come against us from Canada, since the beginning of the present war with France. Besides many strange instances of protection of particular forts and settlements, shewing a manifest interposition of the hand of heaven, to the observation of some of our enemies, and even of the savages. And added to these, the late unexpected restoring of the greater part of our many captives in Canada, by those that held them prisoners there. It appears to me that God has gone much out of his usual way, in his exercises of mercy, patience and long suffering in these instances. God's patience was very wonderful of old, towards the ten tribes, and the people of Judah and Jerusalem, and afterwards to the Jews in Christ's and the apostle's times ; but it seems to me, all things considered, not equal to his patience and mercy to us. God does not only forbear to destroy us, notwithstanding all our provocations and their aggravations, which it would be endless to recount ; but he has in the forementioned instances, wrought great things for us, wherein his hand has been most visible, and his arm made bare ; especially those two instances in America, God's succeeding us against Cape Breton, and confounding the armada from France the last year ; dispensations of Providence, which, if considered in all their circumstances, were so wonderful, and apparently manifesting an extraordinary divine interposition, that they come perhaps, the nearest to a parallel with God's wonderful works of old, in Moses', Joshua's, and Hezekiah's time, of any that have been in these latter ages of the world. And it is to my present purpose to observe, that

God was pleased to do great things for us in both these instances, in answer to extraordinary prayer. Such remarkable appearances of a spirit of prayer, on any particular public occasion, have not been in the land, at any time within my observation and memory, as on occasion of the affair of Cape Breton. And it is worthy to be noted and remembered, that God sent that great storm on the fleet of our enemies the last year: that finally dispersed, and utterly confounded them, and caused them wholly to give over their designs against us, the very night after our day of public fasting and prayer, for our protection and their confusion.

Thus, although it be a day of great apostacy and provocation, yet it is apparently a day of the wonderful works of God; wonders of power and mercy; which may well lead us to think on those two places of scripture, Psal. cxix. 126. "It is time for thee, Lord, to work, for they have made void thy law." And Psal. lxxv. 1. "That thy name is near, thy wondrous works declare." God appears as it were loth to destroy us, or deal with us according to our iniquities, as great and aggravated as they are; and shews that mercy pleases him. As corrupt a time as it is, it is plain by experience, that it is a time wherein God may be found, and stands ready to shew mercy in answer to prayer. He that has done such great things, and has so wonderfully and speedily answered prayer for temporal mercies, will much more give the Holy Spirit if we ask him. He marvellously preserves us, and waits to be gracious to us, as though he chose to make us monuments of his grace, and not his vengeance, and waits only to have us open our mouths wide, that he may fill them.

The late remarkable religious awakenings, that have been in many parts of the christian world, are another thing that may justly encourage us in prayer for the promised glorious and universal outpouring of the Spirit of God. "In or about the year 1732 or 1733, God was pleased to pour out his Spirit on the people of Saltzburg in Germany, who were living under Popish darkness, in a most uncommon manner; so that above twenty thousand of them, merely by reading the bible, which they made a shift to get in their own language,

were determined to throw off Popery, and embrace the reformed religion ; yea, and to become so very zealous for the truth and gospel of Jesus Christ, as to be willing to suffer the loss of all things in the world, and actually to forsake their houses, lands, goods and relations, that they might enjoy the pure preaching of the gospel ; with great earnestness, and tears in their eyes, beseeching Protestant ministers to preach to them, in places where they (when banished from their own country) came, in different places." In the years 1734 and 1735, there appeared a very great and general awakening, in the county of Hampshire, in the province of the Massachusetts Bay in Newengland, and also in many parts of Connecticut. Since this, there has been a far more extensive awakening of many thousands in England, Wales and Scotland, and almost all the British provinces in North America. There has also been something remarkable of the same kind, in some places in the United Netherlands : And about two years ago, a very great awakening and reformation of many of the Indians, in the Jerseys, and Pennsylvania, even among such as never embraced Christianity before : And within these two years, a great awakening in Virginia and Maryland. Notwithstanding the great diversity of opinions about the issue of some of these awakenings, yet I know of none that have denied that there have been great awakenings of late, in these times and places, and that multitudes have been brought to more than common concern for their salvation, and for a time were made more than ordinarily afraid of sin, and brought to reform their former vicious courses, and take much pains for their salvation. If I should be of the opinion of those that think, these awakenings and strivings of God's Spirit have been generally not well improved, and so, as to most, have not issued well, but have ended in enthusiasm and delusion, yet, that the Spirit of God has been of late so wonderfully awakening and striving with such multitudes, in so many different parts of the world, and even to this day, in one place or other, continues to awaken men, is what I should take great encouragement from, that God was about to do something more glorious, and would, before he finishes, bring things to a greater

ripeness, and not finally suffer this work of his to be frustrated and rendered abortive by Satan's crafty management ; and that these unusual commotions are the forerunners of something exceeding glorious approaching ; as the wind, earthquake and fire, at Mount Sinai, were forerunners of that voice, wherein God was, in a more eminent manner ; although they also were caused by a divine power, as it is represented that these things were caused by the Lord passing by, 1 Kings xix. 11, 12.

8. How condecant, how beautiful, and of good tendency would it be, for multitudes of Christians, in various parts of the world, by explicit agreement, to unite in such prayer as is proposed to us.

Union is one of the most amiable things, that pertains to human society ; yea, it is one of the most beautiful and happy things on earth, which indeed makes earth most like heaven. God has made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth ; hereby teaching us this moral lesson, that it becomes mankind all to be united as one family. And this is agreeable to the nature that God has given men, disposing them to society ; and the circumstances God has placed them in, so many ways obliging and necessitating them to it. A civil union, or an harmonious agreement among men in the management of their secular concerns, is amiable ; but much more a pious union and sweet agreement in the great business for which man was created, and had powers given him beyond the brutes ; even the business of religion ; the life and soul of which is love. Union is spoken of in scripture as the peculiar beauty of the church of Christ, Cant. vi. 9. " My dove, my undefiled is but one, she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her ; the daughters saw her and blessed her, yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her." Psal. cxxii. 3. " Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together." Eph. iv. 3.....6. " Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit ; even as ye are called in one hope of your calling ; one Lord,

one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Ver. 16. "The whole body fitly framed together and compacted, by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying itself in love."

As it is the glory of the church of Christ, that she in all her members, however dispersed, is thus one holy society, one city, one family, one body ; so it is very desirable, that this union should be manifested, and become visible ; and so, that her distant members should act as one, in those things that concern the common interest of the whole body, and in those duties and exercises wherein they have to do with their common Lord and head, as seeking of him the common prosperity. It becomes all the members of a particular family, who are so strictly united, and have in so many respects one common interest, to unite in prayer to God for the things they need : It becomes a nation, in days of prayer, appointed by national authority, at certain seasons, visibly to unite in prayer for those public mercies that concern the interest of the whole nation : So it becomes the church of Christ, which is one holy nation, a peculiar people, one heavenly family, more strictly united, in many respects, and having infinitely greater interests that are common to the whole, than any other society ; I say, it especially becomes this society, visibly to unite, and expressly to agree together in prayer to God for the common prosperity ; and above all, that common prosperity and advancement that is so unspeakably great and glorious, which God hath so abundantly promised to fulfil in the latter days.

It is becoming of Christians, with whose character a narrow selfish spirit, above all others, disagrees, to be much in prayer for that public mercy, wherein consists the welfare and happiness of the whole body of Christ, of which they are members, and the greatest good of mankind. And union or agreement in prayer is especially becoming, when Christians pray for that mercy, which above all other things concerns

them unitedly, and tends to the relief, prosperity and glory of the whole body, as well as of each individual member.

Such an union in prayer for the general outpouring of the Spirit of God, would not only be beautiful, but profitable too. It would tend very much to promote union and charity between distant members of the church of Christ, and a public spirit, and love to the church of God, and concern for the interest of Zion ; as well as be an amiable exercise and manifestation of such a spirit. Union in religious duties, especially in the duty of prayer, in praying one with and for another, and jointly for their common welfare, above almost all other things, tends to promote mutual affection and endearment. And if ministers and people should by particular agreement and joint resolution, set themselves, in a solemn and extraordinary manner, from time to time, to pray for the revival of religion in the world, it would naturally tend more to awaken in them a concern about things of this nature, and more of a desire after such a mercy ; it would engage them to more attention to such an affair, make them more inquisitive about it, more ready to use endeavors to promote that which they, with so many others, spend so much time in praying for, and more ready to rejoice and praise God when they see or hear of any thing of that nature or tendency : And in a particular manner, would it naturally tend to engage ministers (the business of whose lives it is, to seek the welfare of the church of Christ, and the advancement of his kingdom) to greater diligence and earnestness in their work : And it would have a tendency to the spiritual profit and advantage of each particular person. For persons to be thus engaged in extraordinarily praying for the reviving and flourishing of religion in the world, will naturally lead each one to reflect on himself, and consider how religion flourishes in his own heart, and how far his example contributes to the thing that he is praying for.

9. There is great and particular encouragement given in the word of God, to express union and agreement in prayer. Daniel, when he had a great thing to request of God, viz.

That God by his Holy Spirit would miraculously reveal to him a great secret, which none of the wise men, astrologers, magicians or soothsayers of Babylon could find out, he goes to Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, his companions, and they agree together, that they will unitedly desire mercies of the God of heaven, concerning this secret ; and their joint request was soon granted ; and God put great honor upon them, above all the wise men of Babylon, to the filling their mouths with praise, and to the admiration and astonishment of Nebuchadnezzar ; insomuch that that great and haughty monarch, as we are told, fell upon his face and worshipped Daniel, and owned that *his God was of a truth, a God of Gods*, and greatly promoted Daniel and his praying companions in the province of Babylon. Esther, when she had a yet more important request to make, for the saving of the church of God, and whole nation of the Jews; dispersed through the empire of Persia, when on the brink of ruin, sends to all the Jews in the city Shushan to pray and fast with her and her maidens ; and their united prayers prevail ; so that the event was wonderful : Instead of the intended destruction of the Jews, the Jews enemies are destroyed every where, and they are defended, honored and promoted, and their sorrow and distress is turned into great gladness, feasting, triumph and mutual joyful congratulations.

The encouragement to explicit agreement in prayer is great from such instances as these ; but it is yet greater from those wonderful words of our blessed Redeemer, Mat. xviii. 19. “ I say unto you, that if any two of you shall agree on earth, touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.” Christ is pleased to give this great encouragement to the union of his followers in this excellent and holy exercise of seeking and serving God ; an holy union and communion of his people being that which he greatly desires and delights in, that which he came into the world to bring to pass, that which he especially prayed for with his dying breath, John xvii. that which he died for, and which was one chief end of the whole affair of our redemption by him ; Eph. i. “ In whom we



have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace, wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence ; having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself : That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him."

## PART III.

### OBJECTIONS *Answered.*

I COME now, as was proposed, in the third place, to answer objections, that some may be ready to make against the thing that has been proposed to us.

OBJECT. I. Some may be ready to say : That for Christians, in such a manner to set apart certain seasons, every week, and every quarter, to be religiously observed and kept for the purposes proposed, from year to year, would be in effect to establish certain periodical times of human invention and appointment, to be kept holy to God ; and so to do the very thing, that has ever been objected against, by a very great part of the most eminent Christians and Divines among Protestants, as what men have no right to do ; it being for them to add to God's institutions, and introduce their own inventions and establishments into the stated worship of God, and lay unwarrantable bonds on men's consciences, and do what naturally tends to superstition.

ANSWER. To this I would say : There can be no justice in such an objection against this proposal, as made to us in the forementioned memorial. And indeed that caution and prudence appears in the projection itself, and in the manner in which it is proposed to us, that there is not so much as any color for the objection. The proposal is such, and so well guarded, that there seems to be no room for the weakest

Christian that well observes it, so to mistake it, as to understand those things to be implied in it, that have indeed been objected against, by many eminent Christians and Divines among Protestants, as entangling men's consciences, and adding to divine institutions, &c. Here is no pretence of establishing any thing by authority ; no appearance of any claim of power in the proposers, or right to any regard to be paid to their determinations or proposals, by virtue of any deference due to them, in any respect, any more than to every individual person of those that they apply themselves to. So far from that, that they expressly mention that which they have thought of, as what they would propose to the thoughts of others, for their amendments and improvements, declaring that they chose rather to receive and spread the directions and proposals of others, than to be the first authors of any. No times, not sanctified by God's own institution, are proposed to be observed more than others, under any notion of such times being, in any respect, more holy, or more honorable, or worthy of any preference, or distinguishing regard ; either as being sanctified, or made honorable, by authority, or by any great events of divine Providence, or any relation to any holy persons or things ; but only as circumstantially convenient, helpful to memory, especially free from worldly business, near to the times of the administration of public ordinances, &c. None attempts to lay any bonds on others, with respect to this matter ; or to desire that they should lay any bonds on themselves ; or look on themselves as under any obligations either by power or promise ; or so much as come into any absolute determination in their own minds, to set apart any stated days from secular affairs ; or even to fix on any part of such days, without liberty to other circumstances, as shall be found expedient ; and also liberty left to a future alteration of judgment, as to expediency, on further trial and consideration. All that is proposed is, that such as fall in with what is proposed in their judgments and inclinations, while they do so, should strengthen, assist and encourage their brethren that are of the same mind, by visibly consenting and joining with them in the affair. Is here any thing

like making laws in matters of conscience and religion, or adding men's institutions to God's ; or any shew of imposition, or superstitious esteeming and preferring one day above another, or any possible ground of entanglement of any one's conscience ?

For men to go about by law to establish and limit circumstances of worship, not established or limited by any law of God, such as precise time, place and order, may be in many respects of dangerous tendency. But surely it cannot be unlawful or improper, for Christians to come into some agreement, with regard to these circumstances : For it is impossible to carry on any social worship without it. There is no institution of scripture requiring any people to meet together to worship God in such a spot of ground, or at such an hour of the day ; but yet these must be determined by agreement ; or else there will be no social worship, in any place, or any hour. So we are not determined by institution, what the precise order of the different parts of worship shall be ; what shall precede, and what shall follow ; whether praying or singing shall be first, and what shall be next, and what shall conclude : But yet some order must be agreed on, by the congregation that unite in worship ; otherwise they cannot jointly carry on divine worship, in any way or method at all. If a congregation of Christians do agree to begin their public worship with prayer, and next to sing, and then to attend on the preaching of the word, and to conclude with prayer ; and do by consent carry on their worship in this order from year to year ; though this order is not appointed in scripture ; none will call this superstition. And if a great number of congregations, through a whole land, or more lands than one, do by common consent, keep the same method of public worship ; none will pretend to find fault with it. But yet for any to go about to bind all to such a method, would be usurpation and imposition. And if such a precise order should be regarded as sacred, as though no other could be acceptable to God, this would be superstition. If a particular number of Christians shall agree, that besides the stated public worship of the sabbath, they will, when their circumstances allow,

meet together, to carry on some religious exercises, on a sabbath day night, for their mutual edification ; or if several societies agree to meet together in different places at that time ; this is no superstition ; though there be no institution for it. If people in different congregations, voluntarily agree to take turns to meet together in the house of God, to worship him and hear a public lecture, once a month, or once in six weeks ; it is not unlawful ; though there be no institution for it : But yet to do this as a thing sacred, indispensable, and binding on men's consciences, would be superstition. If Christians of several neighboring congregations, instead of a lecture, agree on some special occasion to keep a circular fast, each congregation taking its turn in a certain time and order, fixed on by consent ; or if instead of keeping fast by turns, on different days, one on one week, and one on another, they should all agree to keep a fast on the same day, and to do this either once or frequently, according as they shall judge their own circumstances, or the dispensations of divine Providence, or the importance of the mercy they seek, do require ; neither is there any more superstition in this than the other.

OBJECT. II. Some may be ready to say, There seems to be something whimsical in its being insisted on that God's people in different places should put up their prayers for this mercy at the same time ; as though their prayers would be more forcible on that account ; and as if God would not be so likely to hear prayers offered up by many, though they happened not to pray at the same time, as he would if he heard them all at the same moment.

Ans. To this I would say, if such an objection be made, it must be through misunderstanding. It is not signified or implied in any thing said in the proposal, or in any arguments made use of to enforce it that I have seen, that the prayers of a great number in different places will be more forcible, merely because of that circumstance of their being put up at the same time. It is indeed supposed, that it will be very expedient, that certain times for united prayer should be agreed on : Which it may be, without supposing the thing supposed in the objection, on the following accounts.

1. This seems to be a proper expedient for the promoting and maintaining an union among Christians of distant places, in *extraordinary prayer* for such a mercy. It appears, from what was before observed, that there ought to be extraordinary prayers among Christians for this mercy ; and that it is fit, that God's people should agree and unite in it. Though there be no reason to suppose that prayers will be more prevalent, merely from that circumstance, that different persons pray exactly at the *same time* ; yet there will be more reason to hope that prayers for such mercy will be prevalent, when God's people are very much in prayer for it, and when many of them are united in it. And therefore if agreeing on certain times for united and extraordinary prayer, be a likely means to promote an union of many in extraordinary prayer, then there is more reason to hope, that there will be prevalent prayer for such a mercy, for certain times for extraordinary prayer being agreed on. But that agreeing on certain times for united, extraordinary prayer, is a likely and proper means to promote and maintain such prayer, I think will be easily evident to any one that considers the matter. If there should be only a loose agreement or consent to it as a duty, or a thing fit and proper, that Christians should be much in prayer for the revival of religion, and much more in it than they used to be, without agreeing on particular times, how liable would such a lax agreement be to be soon forgotten, and that extraordinary prayerfulness, which is fixed to no certain times, to be totally neglected ? To be sure, distant parts of the church of Christ could have no confidence in one another, that this would not be the case. If these ministers in Scotland, instead of the proposal they have made, or any other ministers or Christians in any part of the Christian world, had sent abroad only a general proposal, that God's people should, for time to come, be much more in prayer for the advancement of Christ's kingdom, than had been common among Christians heretofore ; and they should hear their proposal was generally allowed to be good ; and that ministers and people, in one place and another, that had occasion to speak their minds upon it, owned that it was a very proper thing, that Christians

should pray more for this mercy than they generally used to do ; could they from this only, have in any measure the like grounds of dependence, that God's people in various parts of the Christian world, would indeed henceforward act unitedly, in maintaining extraordinary prayer for this mercy, as if they should not only hear that the duty in general was approved of, but also that particular times were actually fixed on for the purpose, and an agreement and joint resolution was come into, that they would, unless extraordinarily hindered, set apart such particular seasons to be spent in this duty, from time to time, maintaining this practice for a certain number of years ?

2. For God's people in distant places to agree on certain times for extraordinary prayer, wherein they will unitedly put up their requests to God, is a means fit and proper to be used, in order to the *visibility* of their union in such prayer. Union among God's people in prayer is truly beautiful, as has been before observed and shewn ; it is beautiful in the eyes of Christ, and it is justly beautiful and amiable in the eyes of Christians. And if so, then it must needs be desirable to Christians that such union should be visible. If it would be a lovely sight in the eyes of the church of Christ, and much to their comfort, to behold various and different parts of the church united in extraordinary prayer for the general outpouring of the Spirit, then it must be desirable to them that such an union should be visible, that they may behold it ; for if it be not visible, it cannot be beheld. But agreement and union in a multitude in their worship becomes visible, by an agreement in some external visible circumstances. Worship itself becomes visible worship, by something external and visible belonging to the worship, and no other way : Therefore union and agreement of many in worship becomes visible no other way, but by union and agreement in the external and visible acts and circumstances of the worship. Such union and agreement becomes visible, particularly by an agreement in those two visible circumstances, *time* and *place*. When a number of Christians live near together, and their number and situation is convenient, and they have a desire visibly to unite in any acts of worship, they are wont to

make their union and agreement visible by an union in both these circumstances. But when a much greater number of Christians, dwelling in distant places, so that they cannot unite by worshipping in the same place, and yet desire a visible union in some extraordinary worship ; they are wont to make their union and agreement visible, by agreeing only in the former of those circumstances, viz. that of time : As is common in the appointment of public fasts and thanksgivings ; the same day is appointed, for the performance of that extraordinary worship, by all those Christians, in different places, that it is intended should be united therein, as a visible note of their union. This the common light and sense of God's people leads Christians to, in all countries. And the wisdom of God seems to dictate the same thing, in appointing that his people, through the world, in all ages, in their stated and ordinary public worship, every week, should manifest this union and communion one with another, in their worship, as one holy society, and great congregation of worshippers, and servants of God ; by offering up their worship on the same day ; for the greater glory of their common Lord, and the greater edification and comfort of the whole body.

If any yet find fault with the proposal of certain times to be agreed on by God's people in different places, in the manner set forth in the memorial, I would ask whether they object against any such thing, as a visible agreement of God's people, in different parts of the world, in extraordinary prayer, for the coming of Christ's kingdom ? Whether such a thing being visible would not be much for the public honor of God's name ? And whether it would not tend to Christians' assistance, quickening and encouragement in the duty united in, by mutual example, and also to their mutual comfort, by a manifestation of that union which is amiable to Christ and Christians, and to promote a Christian union among professing Christians in general ? And whether we have not reason to think, from the word of God, that before that great revival of religion foretold, is accomplished, there will be a visible union of the people of God, in various parts of the world, in extraordinary prayer, for this mercy ? If these things are

allowed, I would then ask further, whether any method can be thought of or devised, whereby an express agreement, and visible union of God's people, in different parts of the world, can be come into, and maintained, but this, or some other equivalent to it? If there be any express agreement about any extraordinary prayer at all, it must first be proposed by some, and others must fall in, in the manner as is represented in my text. And if extraordinary prayer be agreed on and maintained by many in different places, visibly one with another, then it must be agreed in some respect, and with regard to some circumstances, what extraordinary prayer shall be kept up; and it must be seen and heard of, from one to another, what extraordinary prayer is kept up. But how shall this be, when no times are agreed upon, and it is never known nor heard, by those in different parts, nor is in any respect visible to them, when or how often, those in one town or country, and another, do attend this extraordinary prayer? And the consequence must necessarily be, that it can never be known how far, or in what respect others join with them in extraordinary prayer, or whether they do it at all; and not so much as one circumstance of extraordinary prayer will be visible; and indeed nothing will be visible about it. So that I think that any body that well considers the matter, will see that he that determines to oppose such a method as is proposed to us in the memorial, and all others equivalent to it, is in effect determined to oppose there ever being any such thing at all, as an agreed and visibly united, extraordinary prayer, in the church of God, for a general outpouring of the Spirit.

3. Though it would not be reasonable to suppose, that merely such a circumstance of prayer, as many people's praying at the same time will directly have any influence or prevalence with *God*, to cause him to be the more ready to hear prayer; yet such a circumstance may reasonably be supposed to have influence on the minds of *men*; as the consideration of it may tend to encourage and assist those in praying, that are united in prayer. Will any deny, that it has any reasonable tendency to encourage, animate, or in any respect to help the mind of a Christian in serving God in any



duty of religion, to join with a Christian congregation, and to see an assembly of his dear brethren around him, at the same time engaged with him in the same duty ? And supposing one in this assembly of saints is blind, and sees no one there ; but has by other means ground of satisfaction that there is present at that time a multitude of God's people, that are united with him in the same service ; will any deny, that his supposing this and being satisfied of it, can have any reasonable influence upon his mind, to excite and encourage him, or in any respect to assist him, in his worship ? The encouragement or help that one that joins with an assembly in worshipping God, has in his worship, by others being united with him, is not merely by any thing that he immediately perceives by sight, or any other of the external senses (for union in worship is not a thing objected to the external senses) but by the notice or knowledge the mind has of that union, or the satisfaction the understanding has that others, at that time, have their minds engaged with him in the same service : Which may be, when those unitedly engaged, are at a distance one from another, as well as when they are present. If one be present in a worshipping assembly, and is not blind, and sees others present, and sees their external behavior ; their union and engagedness with him in worship, is what he does not see : And what he sees encourages and assists him in his worship, only as he takes it as an evidence of that union and concurrence in his worship, that is out of his sight. And persons may have evidence of this, concerning persons that are absent, that may give him as much satisfaction of their union with him, as if they were present. And therefore the consideration of others being at the same time engaged with him in worship, that are absent, may as reasonably animate and encourage him in his worship, as if they were present.

There is no wisdom in finding fault with human nature, as God has made it. Things that exist now, at this present time, are in themselves no more weighty or important, than like things, and of equal reality, that existed in time past, or are to exist in time to come : Yet it is evident that the consideration of things being present (at least in most cases) does

especially affect human nature. As for instance, if a man could be certainly informed, that his dear child at a distance, was now under some extreme suffering ; or that an absent most dear friend, was at this time thinking of him, and in the exercise of great affection towards him, or in the performance of some great deed of friendship ; or if a pious parent should know that now his child was in the act of some enormous wickedness ; or that, on the contrary, he was now in some eminent exercise of grace, and in the performance of an extraordinary deed of virtue and piety ; would not those things be more affecting to the human nature, for being considered as things that are in existence, at the present time, than if considered as at some distance of time, either past or future ? Hundreds of other instances might be mentioned, wherein it is no less plain, that the consideration of the present existence of things, gives them advantage to affect the minds of men. Yea, it is undoubtedly so with things in general, that take any hold at all of our affections, and towards which we are not indifferent. And if the mind of a particular child of God is disposed to be affected by the consideration of the religion of other saints, and with their union and concurrence with him in any particular duty, or act of religion, I can see no reason why the human mind should not be more moved by the object of its affection, when considered as present, as well in this case, as in any other case : Yea, I think we may on good grounds determine there is none.

Nor may we look upon it as an instance of the peculiar weakness of the human nature, that men are more affected with things that are considered as present, than those that are distant : But it seems to be a thing common to finite minds, and so to all created intelligent beings. Thus, the angels in heaven have peculiar joy, on occasion of the conversion of a sinner, when recent, beyond what they have in that which has been long past. If any, therefore, shall call it silly and whimsical in any, to value and regard such a circumstance, in things of religion, as their existing at the present time, so as to be the more affected with them for that ; they

must call the host of angels in heaven a parcel of silly and whimsical beings.

I remember, the Spectator, (whom none will call a whimsical author) somewhere speaking of different ways of dear friends mutually expressing their affection, and maintaining a kind of intercourse, in absence one from another, mentions such an instance as this, with much approbation, viz. That two friends, that were greatly endeared one to another, when about to part, and to be for a considerable time necessarily absent, that they might have the comfort of the enjoyment of daily mutual expressions of friendship, in their absence ; agreed that they would, every day, precisely at such an hour, retire from all company and business, to pray one for another. Which agreement they so valued, and so strictly observed, that when the hour came, scarce any thing would hinder them. And rather than miss the opportunity, they would suddenly break off conversation, and abruptly leave company they were engaged with. If this be a desirable way of intercourse of particular friends, is it not a desirable and amiable way of maintaining intercourse and fellowship between brethren in Christ Jesus, and the various members of the holy family of God, in different parts of the world, to come into an agreement, that they will set apart certain times, which they will spend with one accord, in extraordinary prayer to their heavenly father, for the advancement of the kingdom and glory of their common dear Lord and Saviour, and for each other's prosperity and happiness, and the greatest good of all their fellow creatures through the world ?

OBJECT. III. Some perhaps may object, that it looks too much like Pharisaism, when persons engage in any such extraordinary religious exercises, beyond what is appointed by express institution, for them thus designedly to make it manifest abroad in the world, and so openly to distinguish themselves from others.

Ans. 1. All open engaging in extraordinary exercises of religion, not expressly enjoined by institution, is not Pharisaism, nor has ever been so reputed in the Christian church. As when a particular church or congregation of Christians

agree together to keep a day of fasting and prayer, on some special occasion ; or when public days of fasting and thanksgiving are kept throughout a Christian province or country : And though it be ordinarily the manner of the civil magistrate to lead in the setting apart such days ; yet that alters not the case : If it be Pharisaism in the society openly to agree in such extraordinary exercises of religion, it is not less Pharisaism, for the heads of the society leading in the affair. And if that were now the case with the Christian church, that once was, for about three hundred years together, that the civil magistrate was not of the society of Christians, nor concerned himself in their affairs ; yet this would not render it the less suitable for Christians, on proper occasions, jointly and visibly, one to another, to engage in such extraordinary exercises of religion, and to keep days of fasting and thanksgiving by agreement.

Ans. 2. As to the latter part of the objection, there can be no room for it in this case. It cannot be objected against what is proposed in the memorial, that if persons should comply with it, it would look like affecting singularity, and open distinction from others of God's professing people, in extraordinary religion, such as was in the Pharisees of old : Because it is evident, the very design of the memorial, is not to promote singularity and distinction, but as much as possible to avoid and prevent it. The end of the memorial is not to confine and limit the thing proposed, that it may be practised only by a few, in distinction from the generality ; but on the contrary to extend it, and make it as general among professing Christians as possible. Some had complied with the extraordinary duty proposed, and therein had been distinguished from others, for two years, before the memorial was published ; and they were more distinguished than they desired ; and therefore send abroad this memorial, that the practice might be more spread, and become more general, that they might be less distinguished. What they evidently seek, is to bring to pass as general a compliance as possible of Christians of all denominations, *intricating that the desire of concurrence and assistance, contained in the memorial, may by no means*

*be understood, us restricting to any particular denomination or party, or those who are of such or such opinions about any former instances of remarkable religious concern ; but to be extended to all, who shall vouchsafe any attention to the proposal, and have at heart the interest of vital Christianity, and the power of godliness ; and who, however differing about other things, are convinced of the importance of fervent prayer, to promote that common interest, and of scripture persuasives, to promote such prayer.*

OBJECT. IV. Another objection, that is very likely to arise in the minds of many against such extraordinary prayer as is proposed for the speedy coming of Christ's kingdom, is that we have no reason to expect it, until there first come a time of most extreme calamity to the church of God, and prevalence of her Antichristian enemies against her ; even that which is represented, Rev. xi. by the slaying of the witnesses ; but have reason to determine the contrary.

ANS. It is an opinion that seems pretty much to have obtained, that before the fulfilment of the promises relating to the church's latter day glory, there must come a most terrible time, a time of extreme suffering, and dreadful persecution of the church of Christ ; wherein Satan and Antichrist are to obtain their greatest victory over her, and she is to be brought lower than ever by her enemies. Which opinion has chiefly risen from the manner of interpreting and applying the forementioned prophecy of the slaying of the witnesses. This opinion, with such persons as retain it, must needs be a great restraint and hinderance, with regard to such an affair as is proposed to us in the memorial. If persons expect no other, than that the more the glorious times of Christ's kingdom are hastened, the sooner will come this dreadful time, wherein the generality of God's people must suffer so extremely, and the church of Christ be almost extinguished, and blotted out from under heaven ; how can it be otherwise, than a great damp to their hope, courage and activity, in praying for, and reaching after the speedy introduction of those glorious promised times ? As long as this opinion is retained, it will undoubtedly ever have this unhappy influence on the

minds of those that wish well to Zion, and favor her stones and dust. It will tend to damp, deaden and keep down, life, hope and joyful expectation in prayer; and even in great measure, to prevent all earnest, animated and encouraged prayer, in God's people, for this mercy, at any time before it is actually fulfilled. For they that proceed on this hypothesis in their prayers, must, at the same time that they pray for this glorious day, naturally conclude within themselves, that they shall never live to see on the earth any dawning of it, but only to see the dismal time that shall precede it, in which the far greater part of God's people, that shall live until then, shall die under the extreme cruelties of their persecutors. And the more they expect that God will answer their prayers, by speedily bringing on the promised glorious day, the more must they withal expect themselves, to have a share in those dreadful things, that nature shrinks at the thoughts of, and also expect to see things that a renewed nature shrinks at and dreads; even the prevailing of God's enemies, and the almost total extinguishing the true religion in the world. And on this hypothesis, these discouragements are like to attend the prayers of God's people, until that dismal time be actually come: And when that is come, those that had been prophesying and praying in sackcloth, shall generally be slain: And after that time is over, then the glorious day shall immediately commence. So that this notion tends to discourage and hinder all earnest prayer in the church of God for that glorious coming of Christ's kingdom, until it be actually come; and that is to hinder its ever being at all.

It being so, this opinion being of such hurtful tendency, certainly it is a thousand pities it should prevail and be retained, if truly there be no good ground for it.

Therefore in answer to this objection, I would, with all humility and modesty, examine the foundation of that opinion, of such a dreadful time of victory of Antichrist over the church, yet to be expected: And particularly shall endeavor to shew that the slaying of the witnesses, foretold Rev. xi. 7... 10, is not an event that remains yet to be fulfilled. To this end, I would propose the following things to consideration.

1. The time wherein the *witnesses lie dead in the streets of the great city*, doubtless signifies the time wherein the true church of Christ is lowest of all, most of all prevailed against by Antichrist, and nearest to an utter extinction ; the time wherein there is left the least visibility of the church of Christ yet subsisting in the world, least remains of any thing appertaining to true religion, whence a revival of it can be expected, and wherein all means of it are most abolished, and the state of the church is in all respects furthest from any thing whence any hopes of its ever flourishing again might arise. For before this, the witnesses prophecy in sackcloth ; but now they are dead : Before this, they were kept low indeed, yet there was life, and power to bring plagues on their enemies, and so much of true religion left, as to be a continual eye sore and torment to them ; but now their enemies rejoice and feast, and have a general public triumph, as having obtained a full victory over them, and having entirely extirpated them, and being completely delivered from them, and all that might give them any fear of being ever troubled with them any more..... This time, wherever it be fixed, doubtless is the time, not only, wherein fewest professors of true religion are left in the world ; but a time wherein the truth shall be farthest out of sight, and out of reach, and most forgotten ; wherein there are left fewest beams of light or traces of truth, fewest means of information, and opportunities of coming to the knowledge of the truth ; and so a time of the most barbarous ignorance, most destitute of all history, reliques, monuments and memory of things appertaining to true religion, or things, the knowledge of which hath any tendency to bring truth again to light ; and most destitute of learning, study and inquiry.

Now, if we consider the present state of mankind, is it credible, that a time will yet come in the world, that in these respects exceeds all times that were before the reformation ? And that such a time will come before the fall of Antichrist, unless we set that at a much greater distance, than the farthest that any have yet supposed ? It is next to impossible, that such a change should be brought about in so short a time : It cannot be without a miracle. In order to it, not on-

ly must the Popish nations so prevail, as utterly to extirpate the Protestant religion through the earth ; but must do many other things, far more impossible for them to effect, in order to cover the world with so gross and confirmed a darkness, and to bury all light and truth in so deep an oblivion, and so far out of all means and hopes of a revival. And not only must an vast change be made in the Protestant world, but the Popish nations must be strangely metamorphosed ; and they themselves must be terribly persecuted by some other power, in order to bring them to such a change : Nor would persecution without extirpation be sufficient for it. If there should be another universal deluge, it might be sufficient to bring things in the world to such a pass ; provided a few ignorant barbarous persons only were preserved in an ark : And it would require some catastrophe, not much short of this, to effect it.

2. In the reformation, that was in the days of Luther, Calvin and others, their contemporaries, the threatened destruction of Antichrist, that dreadful enemy, that had long oppressed and worn out the saints, was begun ; nor was it a small beginning, but Antichrist hath fallen, at least, half way to the ground, from that height of power and grandeur, that he was in before. Then began the vials of God's wrath to be *pour'd out on the throne of the beast*, to the great shaking of its foundations, and diminution of its extent ; so that the Pope lost near half of his former dominions : And as to degree of authority and influence over what is left, he is not now possessed of what he had before. God now at length, in answer to the long continued cries of his people, awaked as one out of sleep, and began to deliver his church from her exceeding low state, that she had continued in for many ages, under the great oppression of this grand enemy, and to restore her from her exile and bondage in the spiritual Babylon and Egypt.... And it is not agreeable to the analogy of God's dispensations, that after this, God should desert his people, and hide himself from them, even more than before, and leave them more than ever in the hands of their enemy, and all this advantage of the church against Antichrist should be entirely given up and



lost, and the power and tyranny of Antichrist be more confirmed, and the church brought more under, and more entirely subdued than ever before, and further from all help and means to recover. This is not God's way of dealing with his people, or with their enemies : His work of salvation is perfect : When he has begun such a work he will carry it on : When he once causes the day of deliverance to dawn to his people, after such a long night of dismal darkness, he will not extinguish the light, and cause them to return again to midnight darkness : When he has begun to enkindle the blessed fire, he will not quench the smoking flax, until he hath brought forth judgment unto victory. When once the church, after her long labor and sore travail, has brought forth her man child, and wrought some deliverance, her enemies shall never be able to destroy this child, though an infant ; but it shall ascend up to heaven, and be set on high out of their reach.

The destruction that God often foretold and threatened to ancient Babylon (which is often referred to in the Revelation, as a great type of the Antichristian church) was gradually accomplished, and fulfilled by various steps, at a great distance of time one from another : It was begun in the conquest of Cyrus, and was further accomplished by Darius, about eighteen years after, by a yet greater destruction, wherein it was brought much nearer to utter desolation ; but it was about two hundred and twentythree years after this, before the ruin of it was perfected, and the prophecies against it fully accomplished, in its being made an utter and perpetual desolation, without any human inhabitant, becoming the dwelling place for owls, dragons and other doleful creatures. But yet when God had once begun to destroy her, he went on until he finished, and never suffered her any more to recover and establish her former empire. So the restitution of the Jewish church, after the Babylonish captivity, was gradual, by various steps ; there were several times of return of the Jews from captivity, and several distinct decrees of the Persian emperors, for the restoring and rebuilding Jerusalem, and reestablishing the Jewish church and state ; and it was done in turbulent times ; there were great interruptions and checks, and violent

oppositions, and times wherein the enemy did much prevail : But yet, when God had once begun the work, he also made an end ; he never suffered the enemies of the Jews to bring Jerusalem to such a state of desolation as it had been in before, until the promised restoration was complete. Again, the deliverance of God's church from the oppression of Antiochus Epiphanes, (another known type of Antichrist) was gradual ; they were first holpen with a little help, by the Maccabees ; and afterwards the promised deliverance was completed, in the recovery of Jerusalem, the restoration of the temple, the miserable end of Antiochus, and the consequent more full deliverance of the whole land. But after God once began to appear for the help of his church in that instance, after it seemed dead and past all hope, he never suffered Antiochus to prevail against his people, to that degree, again ; though the utmost strength of this great monarch was used, from time to time, in order to it, and his vast empire was engaged against an handful that opposed them : God never forsook the work of his own hand ; when he had begun to deliver his people, he also made an end. And so Haman, that proud and inveterate enemy of the Jews, that thought to extirpate the whole nation, who also was probably another type of Antichrist, when he began to fall before Esther and Mordecai, never stayed, until his ruin, and the church's deliverance were complete. Haman's wife speaks of it, as an argument of his approaching inevitable full destruction, that he had begun to fall, Esth. vi. 15.

3. If it should be so that Antichristian tyranny and darkness should hereafter so prevail against the Protestant church, and the true religion, and every thing appertaining to it, as to bring things to the pass forementioned, this would hardly so properly answer the prophecy of slaying the two witnesses ; for doubtless, one reason why they are called two witnesses, is that the number of the remaining witnessess for the truth, though sufficient, was yet very small. Which was remarkably the case, in the dark times of Popery : But since the reformation, the number of those appearing on the side of true religion, has been far from being so small. The visible

church of Christ has been vastly large, in comparison of what it was before : The number of Protestants has sometimes been thought nearly equal to that of the Papists ; and doubtless the number of true saints has been far greater than before.

4. It seems to be signified in prophecy, that after the reformation Antichrist should never prevail against the church of Christ any more, as he had done before. I cannot but think, that whoever reads and well considers what the learned Mr. Lowman has written on the five first vials, Rev. xvi. in his late exposition on the Revelation, must think it to be very manifest, that what is said ver. 10, of the pouring out of the fifth vial *on the throne of the beast*, (for so it is in the original) is a prophecy of the reformation. Then the vial of God's wrath was poured out on the throne of the beast, i. e. according to the language of scripture, on his authority and dominion, greatly to weaken and diminish it, both in extent and degree. But when this is represented in the prophecy, then it is added, *and his kingdom was full of darkness, and they gnawed their tongues for pain*. If we consider what is commonly intended by such like phrases in the scripture, I think we shall be naturally, and as it were necessarily led to understand those words thus : Their policy, by which heretofore they have prevailed, shall now fail them ; their authority shall be weakened, and their dominion greatly diminished, and all their craft and subtilty shall not avail them to maintain and support the throne of the beast, or ever again to extend his authority so far as it had been before extended, and to recover what it lost ; but all their crafty devices to this end shall be attended with vexatious, tormenting disappointment ; they that have the management of the affairs of the beast's kingdom, shall henceforward grope as in the dark, and stumble, and be confounded in their purposes, plots and enterprizes ; formerly their policy was greatly successful, was as a light to guide them to their ends, but now their kingdom shall be full of darkness, and their wisdom shall fail them in all their devices to subdue, and again to bring under the church of God.

The scripture takes notice of the great policy and subtilty of the powers that support this kingdom, Dan. vii. 8. " And

behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man." So it is said of Antiochus Epiphanes, that great type of Antichrist, Dan viii. 23. "A king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up." Verse 25. "And through his policy also, shall he cause craft to prosper in his hand." This understanding and policy is the light of this kingdom, as true wisdom is the light of the spiritual Jerusalem. And therefore when this light fails, then may the kingdom of this spiritual Egypt be said to be full of darkness. God henceforward will defend his people from these mystical Egyptians, as he defended Israel of old from Pharaoh and his host, when pursuing after them, by placing a cloud and darkness in their way, and so not suffering them to come nigh. So he will protect his church from the men of that city that is spiritually called Sodom, as Lot's house, wherein were the angels, was defended from the men of Sodom, by their being smitten with darkness or blindness, so that they wearied themselves to find the door. and as God defended the city in which was Elisha the prophet and witness of the Lord, from the Syrians, when they compassed it about with horses and chariots and a great host to apprehend him, by smiting them with blindness. The scripture teaches us, that God is wont in this way to defend his church and people from their crafty and powerful enemies; Job. v. 11, &c. "To set up on high those that be low, that those which mourn may be exalted to safety: He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprize: He taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong: They meet with darkness in the day time, and grope in the noon day as in the night; but he saveth the poor from the sword, from their mouth, and from the hand of the mighty." Psal. xxxv. 4, 6. "Let them be confounded and put to shame, that seek after my soul; let them be turned back, and brought to confusion, that devise my hurt....Let their way be dark and slippery."

Such defence of God's Protestant church, and disappointment and confusion of all the subtle devices, deep laid schemes, and furious attempts of their Antichrist-

ian enemies, to bring them under, and root them out, and their seeing them still maintaining their ground, and subsisting in an independency on them, in spite of all that they do, makes them as it were gnash their teeth, and bite their tongues for mere rage and vexation ; agreeable to Psal. cxii. 9, 10. " His righteousness endureth forever, his horn shall be exalted with honor : The wicked shall see it and be grieved, and gnash with his teeth and melt away : The desire of the wicked shall perish."

Hitherto this prophecy has been very signally fulfilled ; since the reformation, the kingdom of Antichrist has been remarkably filled with darkness in this respect. Innumerable have been the crafty devices, and great attempts of the church of Rome, wherein they have exerted their utmost policy and power, to recover their lost dominions, and again to subjugate the Protestant nations, and subdue the northern heresy, as they call it. They have wearied themselves in these endeavors for more than two hundred years past. But have hitherto been disappointed ; and have often been strangely confounded. When their matters seemed to be brought to a ripeness, and they triumphed as though their point was gained, their joy and triumph was suddenly turned into vexation and torment. How many have been their politic and powerful attempts against the Protestant interest in our nation, in particular ? And how wonderfully has God disappointed them from one to time ! And as God has hitherto so remarkably fulfilled his word in defending his Protestant church from Antichrist, so I think we have ground to trust in him, that he will defend it to the end.

5. The hypothesis of those that suppose the slaying of the witnesses is a thing that yet remains to be fulfilled, makes the prophecies of the Revelation to be inconsistent one with another. According to their hypothesis, that battle Rev. xi. 7, wherein the beast makes war with the witnesses, and overcomes them, and kills them, is the last and greatest conflict between Antichrist and the church of Christ, that is to precede the utter overthrow of the Antichristian kingdom. And they must suppose so ; for they suppose, that immediately

after the sufferings the church shall endure in that war, she shall arise, and as it were ascend into heaven ; i. e. as they interpret it, the church shall be directly advanced to her latter day rest, prosperity and glory. And consequently, this conflict must be the same with that great battle between Antichrist and the church, that is described chap. xvi. 13, to the end, and more largely chap. xix. 11, to the end. For that which is described in these places, is most evidently and indisputably the greatest and last battle or conflict that shall be between the church and her Antichristian enemies ; on which the utter downfall of Antichrist, and the church's advancement to her latter day glory, shall be immediately consequent. And so the earthquake that attends the resurrection of the witnesses chap. xi. 13, must be the same with that great earthquake that is described, chap. xvi. 18. And the falling of the tenth part of the city must be the same with that terrible and utter destruction of Antichrist's kingdom, chap. xvi. 17, to the end.

But these things cannot be. The battle chap. xi. 7, cannot be the same with that last and great battle between the church and Antichrist described, chap. xvi. and xix. For the things that are said of one and the other, and their issue, are in no wise consistent. In that battle, chap. xi. the church of God conflicts with her enemies in sorrow, sackcloth and blood : But in the other the matter is represented exceedingly otherwise ; the church goes forth to fight with antichrist, not in sackcloth and blood, but clothed in white raiment, Christ himself before them, as their captain, going forth in great pomp and magnificence, upon a *white horse, and on his head many crowns, and on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords* ; and the saints that follow so glorious a Leader to this great battle, follow him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, in garments of strength, joy, glory and triumph ; in the same kind of raiment. that the saints appear in, when they are represented as triumphing with Christ, with palms in their hands, chap. vii. 9. And the issue of the latter of these conflicts, is quite the reverse of the former. In that battle, chap. xi. 7. "The beast makes war

with the witnesses, and overcomes them and kills them.<sup>23</sup> The same is foretold, Dan. vii. 21. "I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them." And Rev. xii. 7. "And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them." But in the issue of that last and great battle, which the church shall have with her Antichristian enemies, the church shall overcome them, and kill them; Rev. xvii. 14. "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them; for he is Lord of Lords, and King of Kings; and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful," compared with chap. xix. 16, and following verses, and chap. xvi. 16, 17. In the conflict that the beast shall have with the witnesses, the "Beast kills them and their dead bodies lie unburied;" as though they were to be meat for the beasts of the earth, and fowls of heaven: But in that last great battle, it is represented that Christ and his church shall *slay their enemies, and give their dead bodies to be meat for the fowls of heaven,*" chap. xix. 17, to the end. There is no manner of appearance, in the descriptions that are given of that last great battle, of any advantages gained in it, by the enemies of the church, before they themselves are overcome; but all appearance of the contrary. Be sure the descriptions in the 16th and 19th chapters of the Revelation will by no means allow of such an advantage, as the overcoming of God's people, and slaying them, and their lying dead for some time, and unburied, that their dead bodies may be for their enemies to abuse, and trample on, and make sport with. In chap. xvi. we read of their being gathered together against the church, a mighty host, into the place called Armageddon; and then the first thing we hear of, is the pouring out of the seventh vial of God's wrath, and a voice saying *It is done.* And so in the 19th chapter, we have an account of "the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, being gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army." And then the next thing we hear of, is, that "the Beast is taken, and with him the false prophet; and that these are both cast alive into the lake of fire; and that the remnant

of the vast army are slain, and all the fowls filled with their flesh. The issue of the conflict of the beast with the witnesses is the triumph of the church's enemies over God's people, looking on them as entirely vanquished, and their interest utterly ruined, past all possibility of recovery : *They that dwell on the earth shall see the dead bodies of the saints lying in the streets of the great city, and shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and send gifts one to another.* But the issue of that great and last battle is quite the reverse ; it is the church's triumph over her enemies as being utterly and forever destroyed.

Here if any one shall say, That the ascension of the witnesses into heaven in the sight of their enemies, may, as has more generally been supposed, signify the church's last victory and triumph over her Antichristian enemies, and final deliverance from them, and yet the battle between Antichrist and the witnesses, spoken of Rev. xi. 7, wherein the witnesses are slain, may not be the same with that last and greatest battle between Antichrist and the church, chap. xvi. and xix. that immediately precedes and issues in the church's final victory and deliverance ; there may be two great battles, soon following one another, though both are not mentioned in the same place ; one, a conflict wherein Antichrist prevails against the witnesses, and overcomes them, and kills them, and another, that great battle described chap. xvi. and xix. after the witnesses' resurrection, before their ascension into heaven, wherein they shall prevail and overcome their enemies, and kill them : I say, if any one shall say thus, they will say that which the prophecies give no reason for, nor allow any room to suppose. That last battle between the church and Antichrist, wherein Christ and his people obtain a complete victory, is evidently one of the greatest and most remarkable events foretold in all the Apocalypse : And there is no one thing, unless it be the consummation of all things, in the two last chapters, that is described in so solemn and august a manner. And the description shews that it is an event which, with its circumstances, must take up much time. There is vast preparation made for it by the church's enemies : The



devils, in order to stir men up, and gather them together, to this *battle of that great day of God Almighty, go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world*, to propagate various kinds of delusions, far and wide, all over the world ; which undoubtedly must take up many years' time ; chap. xvi. 13, 14. And then great preparation is made in the church of God, to make opposition ; chap. xix. 11.....17. Now can any reasonably suppose, that in what is represented, chap. xi. of a great conflict between Antichrist and God's people, wherein the latter are overcome and slain, and lie dead three days (or three years) and an half, and their enemies triumphing over them, but God's people rising again from the dead in the midst of this triumph of their enemies, and ascending into heaven, while their enemies stand astonished and amazed spectators.....that the manner of the description leaves fair room for us to suppose, that after this resurrection of God's people, they continue long before they ascend, to encounter with Antichrist in a new conflict, wherein their enemies after long time to prepare, should engage with them with vastly greater preparation, strength, and violence than before, and should wage war with them with the mightiest army that ever was gathered against the church, and in the greatest battle that ever was fought ?

And besides, the witnesses ascending into heaven in the sight of their enemies, spoken of chap. xi. cannot be the same with the church's gaining a glorious ascendant over her enemies, in her final victory over Antichrist, spoken of chap. xvi. and xix. because the descriptions of the events that attend the one and the other do by no means answer each other. For, observe, it is said that when the witnesses *arose, and stood on their feet, and ascended into heaven, the same hour there was a great earthquake* : But this does not seem to answer to what is described chap. xvi. 13. " And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings, and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great." It is said that at the time of the first earthquake, chap. xi. 13. " The tenth part of the city fell : " But how far does this fall short of what is described, as

attending the great earthquake ? Chap. xvi. 19, 20. “ And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell ; and great Babylon came into remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath ; and every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.” It is said of the earthquake, chap. xi. “ And in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand : But how far is this from answering the slaughter described chap. xix. 17, &c. ? Which is represented as a general slaughter of the kings, captains, mighty men, horses, and armies of the earth, and of the whole world ; so that all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, as far as the sun shines, are filled with the flesh of the dead carcases, it being the *flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great* : (Compare chap. xvi. 14.) Who can think, that this great slaughter that is thus represented, should in chap. xi. be only called a *slaying seven thousand men* ?

If we read this very eleventh chapter through, we shall see that the falling of the tenth part of the city, and the witnesses rising and ascending into heaven, are entirely distinct from the final destruction of Antichrist, and that advancement of the church to her latter day glory, that is consequent upon it. The judgments here spoken of, as executed on God’s enemies, are under another *woe* ; and the benefits bestowed on the church, are under another *trumpet*. For immediately after the account of the rising and ascending of the witnesses, and the tenth part of the city’s falling, and the slaying of the seven thousand men, and the affrighting of the rest, and their giving glory to the God of heaven, follow these words in the 14th and 15th verses, “ The second woe is past ; and behold the third woe cometh quickly. And the seventh angel sounded ; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.” And in the following verses, we have an account of the praises sung to God on this occasion. And then in the last verse, we have a brief hint of that same earthquake, and that great hail, and those thunders and lightnings and voices, that we have an ac-

count of in the latter part of chap. xvi. So that the earthquake mentioned in the last verse of chap. xi. is that great earthquake that attends the last great conflict of the church and her enemies ; and not that mentioned ver. 13.

The three woes are the woes of God on Antichrist and his subjects ; and the third and last of them evidently signifies the terrible judgments of God on Antichrist, by which God's wrath upon him shall be fulfilled in his utter destruction : But the calamities on Antichrist spoken of as attending the rising and ascending of the witnesses, such as the falling of the tenth part of the city, and slaying seven thousand men, do not belong to this last woe, and therefore do not signify the final destruction of Antichrist : For the words of ver. 14, will by no means allow of such a supposition ; for there, immediately after giving an account of these calamities, it is added, " The second woe is past ; and behold the third woe cometh quickly : " Making a most plain and express distinction between these calamities that had already been mentioned, and especially these that were just then mentioned in the very last words, and the calamities that belong to the third woe, that yet remain to be mentioned : For by being passed, the prophet is to be understood no otherwise than passed in the declaration and representation ; it was not past in any other respect : It is as much as to say, Thus an account has been given of the calamities upon Antichrist that belong to the second woe ; now I proceed to give an account of those dispensations of Providence that belong to the third and last woe, which shall prove Antichrist's final destruction, and end in the kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ.

What was fulfilled in the reformation, well answers the representation made concerning the witnesses, Rev. xi. 11, 12. Of " the Spirit of Life from God entering into them, and their standing on their feet, and ascending up to heaven, in the sight of their enemies. A little before the reformation, the state of the church of God, and of true religion was lowest of all, and nearest to utter extinction. Antichrist had, after great and long struggles, prevailed against the Waldenses,

Albigenses and Bohemians. The war with the Albigenses seems especially to be intended by the war of the beast with the witnesses spoken of, ver. 7. These were witnesses to the truth, that were the most numerous and considerable, and those that most tormented the church of Rome. And the war that was maintained against them, was by far the greatest that ever Antichrist had against any of the professors of the truth, before the reformation; and was properly the war of the beast; it was the Pope that proclaimed the war, and that raised the soldiers by his emissaries and priests, preaching the cross, gathering innumerable multitudes of pilgrims from all parts of Christendom, and raising one crusade after another, which were conducted and managed by the Pope's legates; and it was the Pope that paid the soldiers with pardons, indulgences, promises of paradise, and such like trumpery. When Antichrist had gradually prevailed against these witnesses, with much difficulty, and long continued violent struggling, and after innumerable vexatious disasters and disappointments; the church of God, in the time of Luther and other reformers, on a sudden, in a wonderful manner revives, when such an event was least expected, (to the surprise and amazement of their Antichristian enemies) and appears in such strength, that the reformed are able to stand on their own legs, and to withstand all the power and rage of the church of Rome. Presently after this revival, the people of God are set on high, having the civil magistrate in many countries on their side, and henceforward have the power of many potent princes engaged for their protection: And this, in sight of their enemies, and greatly to their grief and vexation; who, though they from time to time exert their utmost, never are able to prevail against them, to bring them under any more, as they had done in former wars. Oftentimes in scripture, God's church's dwelling in safety, out of the reach of their enemies, is represented by their dwelling on high, or being set on high; as Psal. lix. 1, lxix. 29, xci. 14, cvii. 41. Prov. xxix. 25. Isa. xxxiii. 16. The children of Israel, in their deliverance out of Egypt, from their cruel task masters, that would fain have brought them into bondage again, were said

to be carried on eagle's wings, that is lofty in its flight, flies away towards heaven ; so that the Egyptians could not come at them : And they were protected by the cloud that went with them ; as the witnesses are said to be caught up to heaven in a cloud. Compare this with Isa. iv. 5. " And the Lord will create upon every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night ; for upon all the glory shall be a defence.

I shall not pretend to explain the mystery of the three days and half of the witnesses lying dead, or to determine the precise duration signified by that mystical representation. Possibly no particular measure of time may be intended by it ; and yet it not be without significancy.\* As no particular number of persons is intended by the two witnesses ; but in general, it intends a small number, and yet a sufficient number ; and as small as might be, and yet be sufficient ; as, less than two witnesses was not sufficient : So perhaps no particular duration of that low state that the church was in before the reformation, may be intended by three days and half ; but in general it may be hereby signified, that this time of the triumphing of the wicked, and extremity of God's church, should be but short. And possibly three days and half may be mentioned, because that is the utmost space of time that a dead body can be ordinarily supposed to lie without putrefaction ; signifying that at this time the church should be brought to the very brink of utter ruin, and yet should be preserved and revive again. And half a day may be mentioned to signify the particular care of Providence in exactly determining this time of

\* Mr. Lowman, in the preface to his Paraphrase on the Revelation, page 8, observes as follows : " Prophetic numbers do not always express a determinate duration or space of time, any more than they always express a certain number. Prophecy, I acknowledge, uses numbers sometimes as other expressions, in a figurative meaning, as symbols and hieroglyphics. Thus the number seven, sometimes does not denote the precise number seven : But figuratively denotes perfection, or a full and complete number : And the number ten, sometimes does not mean precisely ten in number, but many in general, or a considerable number."

the church's extremity. And probably there may be some reference to the three times (or three years) and an half of the witnesses prophecying in sackcloth ; the more apparently to shew the disproportion between the time of the church's welfare, and the time of her enemies victory and triumph : The time of the church's affliction and conflict may be long ; and in the issue she may be overcome ; but the time of this victory shall be but short ; in comparison with the other, but as a day to a year : She may as it were be killed, and lie dead, until she comes to the very brink of utter and hopeless ruin, but yet God will not suffer her to see corruption ; but at that very time, when her enemies expected that she should putrify, she shall rise ; and be set on high, out of their reach, greatly to their astonishment.

The grand objection against all this, is, that it is said, that *the witnesses should prophesy twelve hundred and sixty days clothed in sackcloth ; and when they have finished their testimony, the beast should make war against them and kill them, &c.* and that it seems manifest, that after this, they are no longer in sackcloth, for henceforward they are in an exalted state in heaven : And that therefore, seeing the time of their wearing sackcloth, is twelve hundred and sixty days, which is the time of the continuance of Antichrist ; hence their being slain and rising again, must be at the conclusion of this period, and so at the end of Antichrist's reign.

In answer to which I would say, that we can justly infer no more from this prophecy than this, viz. that the twelve hundred and sixty days is the proper time of the church's trouble and bondage, or being clothed in sackcloth ; because it is the appointed time of the reign of Antichrist. But this does not hinder but that God, out of his great compassion to his church, should, in some respect, shorten the days, and grant that she should, in some measure, anticipate the appointed great deliverance that should be at the end of those days. As he has in fact done in the reformation ; whereby the church has had a great degree of restoration granted, from the darkness and power of Antichrist, before her proper time of restoration, which is at the end of the twelve hundred and sixty days.....

Thus the church of Christ, through the tender mercies of her Father and Redeemer, in some respects, anticipates her deliverance from her sorrows and sackcloth : As many parts of the church are hereby brought from under the dominion of the Antichristian powers, into a state of power and liberty ; though in other respects, the church may be said to continue in sackcloth, and in the wilderness, until the end of days ; many parts of it still remaining under grievous persecution.

What we render, *when they shall have finished their testimony*, Mr. Lowman, from Mr. Daubuz, renders, *while they shall perform their testimony* ; and observes, that the original may mean the time of their testimony, as well as the end of it.

I might here observe that we have other instances of God's shortening the days of his church's captivity and bondage, either at the beginning or end, very parallel with what has been now supposed in the case of the witnesses. Thus the proper time of the bondage of the posterity of Abraham in Egypt, was four hundred years ; Gen. xv. 13. But yet God in mercy deferred the beginning of their bondage ; whereby the time was much shortened at the beginning. So the time wherein it was foretold that the *whole land of Israel should be a desolation and an astonishment, and the land should enjoy her sabbaths*, by the *Babylonish captivity, was seventy years* ; Jer. xxv. 11, 12, and these seventy years are dated in 2 Chron. xxxvi. 20, 21, from Zedekiah's captivity ; and yet, from that captivity to Cyrus's decree, was but fiftytwo years ; though it was indeed seventy years before the more full restoration of the Jewish church and state by Darius's decree, Ezra vi. So the proper time of the oppression and bondage of the Jewish church under Antiochus Epiphanes, wherein *both the sanctuary and host should be trodden under foot by him*, was *two thousand three hundred days* ; Dan. viii. 13, 14. The time from Antiochus's taking Jerusalem and polluting the sanctuary, to Antiochus's death, seems to have been about so long : But God shortened the days, by granting remarkable help to his people by means of the Maccabees, before that time : Yea the temple and sanctuary were restored, and the altar rebuilt and dedicated before that time.

Upon the whole, I think there appears to be no reason from the prophecy concerning the two witnesses, Rev. xi. to expect any such general and terrible destruction of the church of Christ, before the utter downfall of Antichrist, as some have supposed ; but good reason to determine the contrary. It is true, there is abundant evidence in scripture, that there is yet remaining a mighty conflict between the church and her enemies, the most violent struggle of Satan and his adherents, in opposition to true religion, and the most general commotion that ever was in the world, since the foundation of it to that time ; and many particular Christians, and some parts of the church of Christ, may suffer hard things in this conflict : But in the general, Satan and Antichrist shall not get the victory, nor greatly prevail ; but on the contrary be entirely conquered, and utterly overthrown, in this great battle. So that I hope this prophecy of the slaying of the witnesses, will not stand in the way of a compliance with the proposal made to us in the memorial, as a prevalent objection and discouragement.

OBJECT. 5. A late very learned and ingenious expositor of the Revelation, viz. Mr. Lowman, sets the fall of Antichrist, and consequently the coming of Christ's kingdom at a great distance ; supposing that the twelve hundred and sixty years of Antichrist's reign did not begin until the year seven hundred and fifty six ; and consequently that it will not end until after the year two thousand, more than two hundred and fifty years hence ; and this opinion he confirms by a great variety of arguments.

Ans. 1. If this objection be allowed to be valid, and that which ought to determine persons in an affair of this nature, and those things, concerning God's people praying for this glorious event, be also allowed to be true, which before were shewn to be the will of God abundantly revealed in his word, then the following things must be supposed ; viz. that it is the will of God that his people be much in prayer for this event, and particularly that it is God's revealed will and purpose, that, a little before the accomplishment of it, his people be earnestly seeking and waiting, and importunately and incessantly



santly crying to God for it ; But yet that it was God's design, that before this time comes of extraordinary prayer and importunity of his church, for the bringing on this glorious event, his church should have it given them to understand precisely when the appointed time should be ; and that accordingly he has now actually brought the fixed time to light, by means of Mr. Lowman. But is it reasonable to suppose, that this should be God's manner of dealing with his church, first to make known to them the precise time which he has unalterably fixed for the shewing this mercy to Zion, and then make it the duty of his church, in an extraordinary manner, to be by prayer inquiring of him concerning it, and saying, *How long, Lord !* And waiting for it, day and night crying to him with exceeding importunity that he would bring it on, that he would come quickly, that he would hide himself no longer, but would arise and have mercy upon Zion, and awake as one out of sleep, openly manifest himself, and make bare his holy arm for the salvation of his people ? That *they that make mention of the Lord, should not keep silence, nor give him any rest, until he establish, and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth ?* And that the church should then say to Christ, *Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart on the mountains of Spices ?*

It may be many ways for the comfort and benefit of God's church in her afflicted state, to know that the reign of Antichrist is to be no more than 1260 years : And some things in general may be argued concerning the approach of it, when it is near : As the Jews could argue the approach of Christ's first coming, from Daniel's prophecy of the seventy weeks, though they knew not precisely when that seventy weeks would end. But it is not reasonable to expect that God should make known to us beforehand, the precise time of Christ's coming in his kingdom. The disciples desired to know this, and manifested their desire to their Lord ; but he told them plainly that *it was not for them to know the times and seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power ;* Acts i. 6, 7, and there is no reason to think that it is any more for us than for them ; or for Christ's disciples in these days any more than for his

apostles in those days. God makes it the duty of his church to be importunately praying for it, and praying that it may come speedily ; and not only to be praying for it, but to be seeking of it, in the use of proper means ; endeavoring that religion may now revive every where, and Satan's kingdom be overthrown ; and always to be waiting for it, being in a constant preparation for it, as servants that wait for the coming of their Lord, or virgins for the coming of the bridegroom, not knowing at what hour he will come. But God's making known beforehand the precise time of his coming, does not well consist with these things.

It is the revealed will of God, that he should be inquired of by his people, by extraordinary prayer, concerning this great mercy, to do it for them, before it be fulfilled. And if any suppose, that it is now found out precisely when the time is to be, and (the time being at a considerable distance) that now is not a proper season to begin this extraordinary prayer, I would, on this supposition, ask, when we shall begin ? How long before the fixed and known time of the bestowment of this mercy comes, shall we begin to cry earnestly to God that this mercy may come, and that Christ would make haste and be like a roe, &c ? For us to delay, supposing that we know the time to be far off, is not agreeable to the language of God's people in my text, *Come, let us go speedily, and pray before the Lord, and seek the Lord of hosts.*

Ans. 2. I acknowledge that Mr. Lowman's exposition of the Revelation is, on many accounts, excellently written, giving great light into some parts of that prophecy, and an instance of the fulfilment of that prediction, Dan. xii. 4. " Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased : " And especially in his interpretation of the five first vials (which he supposeth already poured out) exceeding satisfying. But yet the opinion of Mr. Lowman, with regard to the particular time of the beginning and end of the time, times and an half of Antichrist's reign, and of all others that pretend to fix the time, is the less to be regarded, because it is clearly revealed, and expressly declared by God, that that matter should be sealed up and hid, and not known until the time of the end of

this time, times and an half. Daniel, in the last chapter of his prophecy, gives us an account, how the angel told him of a future time of great trouble and affliction to the church of God, and then said to him, ver. 4. "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end." And then the prophet proceeds to give an account of a vision that he had of one earnestly inquiring of the angel of the Lord, how long it would be to the end of this remarkable and wonderful time of the church's trouble, saying, *How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?* Ver. 5, 6. The answer was, that *it should be for a time, times and an half*, and that when so long a time was past, then this wonderful affliction and scattering of the holy people should be finished, ver. 7. But then Daniel tells us, in the next verse, that *he heard, but he understood not*, and said, *O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?* He did not understand that general and mystical answer, that those things should have an end at the end of a time, times and an half; he did not know by it, when this period would have an end: And therefore he inquires more particularly what the time of the end was. But the angel replies, ver. 9. "Go thy way, Daniel, the words are closed and sealed up, until the time of the end." I do not know what could have been more express. The angel gently rebukes this over inquisitiveness of Daniel, very much as Christ did a like inquisitiveness of the disciples concerning the same matter, when he said to them, *It is not for you to know the times and seasons, that the Father hath put in his own power.* I think there can be no doubt but that this space, of a time, times and half of the church's great trouble, about the end of which Daniel inquires, is the same with that time, times and half, that is spoken of Chap. vii. 25, and Rev. xii. 14, as the time of Antichrist's reign, and the church's being in the wilderness; and not merely the time of the church's troubles by Antiochus Epiphanes. But we see, when Daniel has a mind to know particularly when this time would come to an end, he is bid to go away, and rest contented in ignorance of this matter: For, says the man clothed in linen, *the words are closed up, and sealed, until the time of the end.* That is, very plainly,

the matter that you inquire about, when the end of this time, and times and half shall come, shall not be known, but kept a great secret, until the time of the end actually comes, and all attempts to find it out before that shall be in vain. And therefore when a particular divine appears, that thinks he has found it out, and has unsealed this matter, and made it manifest with very manifold and abundant evidence, we may well think he is mistaken, and doubt whether those supposed evidences are truly solid ones, and such as are indeed sufficient to make that matter manifest, which God has declared should be kept hid, and not made manifest before it is accomplished.

Mr. Lowman's own words in his preface, page 24, 25, are here worthy to be repeated: "It will (says he) ever be a point of wisdom, not to be over busy, or over confident in any thing, especially in fixing periods of time, or determining seasons; which it may be are not to be determined, it may be are not fit to be known. It is a maxim of greater wisdom than is usually thought, *Seek not to know what should not be revealed.* Such are many future events. The precise time of our Saviour's coming to judgment, was not revealed, because not fit to be revealed. The uncertainty of his appearance was of greater service to preserve a care of religion, than the revelation of it would have been: For the uncertainty itself gives many useful exhortations; *Watch, for ye know not what hour the son of man cometh.* Suppose then some of the events described in this prophecy should be of doubtful application, suppose the precise time of the downfall of the beast, the slaying and resurrection of the witnesses, and the beginning of a thousand years happy state of the church, should not be so determined. but it would admit of different calculations; may it not be wise, and therefore fit it should be so? The certainty of those events in a proper time, though that time should not be precisely determined, will answer the greater ends of useful instruction. And if the revelation should go no further than this, it would yet be a revelation, of great benefit and advantage; as the certainty of the day of judgment in its proper time surely is, though of that day and hour knoweth no man."

Ans. 3. Though it is not for us to know the precise time of the fall of Antichrist, yet I humbly conceive that we have no reason to suppose the event principally intended in the prophecies of Antichrist's destruction to be at so great a distance, as Mr. Lowman places it ; but have reason to think it to be much nearer. Not that I would set up myself as a person of equal judgment with Mr. Lowman in matters of this nature. As he differs from most others of the most approved expositors of the Apocalypse, in this matter, so I hope it will not appear vanity and presumption in me, to differ from this particular expositor, and to agree with the greater number. And since his opinion stands so much in the way of that great and important affair, to promote which is the very end of this whole discourse, I hope it will not look as though I affected to appear considerable among the interpreters of prophecy, and as a person of skill in these mysterious matters, that I offer some reasons against Mr. Lowman's opinion. It is surely great pity, that it should be received as a thing clear and abundantly confirmed, that the glorious day of Antichrist's fall is at so great a distance (so directly tending to damp and discourage all earnest prayers for, or endeavors after its speedy accomplishment) unless there be good and plain ground for it. I would therefore offer some things to consideration, which I think may justly make us look upon the opinion of this learned interpreter, of this happy event's being at so great a distance, not so certain and indubitable, as to hinder our praying and hoping for its being fulfilled much sooner.

The period of Antichrist's reign, as their author has fixed it, seems to be the main point insisted on in his exposition of the revelation ; which he supposes a great many things in the scheme of prophecies delivered in that book do concur to establish. And indeed it is so with respect to the scheme of interpretation of these prophecies, which he goes into, and finds it requisite to maintain, in order to confirm this point. But there are several things in that scheme, that appear to me justly liable to exception.

Whereas it is represented, Rev. xvii. 10, 11, that there are seven different successive heads of the beast ; that five were past, and another was to come, and to continue a short space, that might on some accounts be reckoned a seventh ; and that Antichrist was to follow next after this, as the eighth ; but yet the foregoing not being properly one of the heads of the beast, he was properly the seventh ; Mr. Lowman does not think with others, that by the seventh that was to continue a short space which would not be properly one of the heads of the beast, is meant Constantine and the other Christian emperors ; (for he thinks they are reckoned as properly belonging to the sixth head of the beast) but that hereby is intended the government that Rome was subject to under the Gothic princes, and the exarchate of Ravenna, after the imperial form of government in Rome ceased in Augustulus, until the Pope was invested with his temporal dominion, called St. Peter's patrimony, by Pipin, King of France, in the year 756. And he supposes, that that wounding of one of the heads of the beast with a sword unto death, that we read of chap. xiii. 3, and 14, was not fulfilled in the destruction of the Heathen empire, and the giving the imperial power unto Christians, but in the destruction of the imperial form of government, by the sword of the Goths, in the time of Augustulus. But it seems to me to be very unlikely, that the spirit of God should reckon Constantine and the Christian emperors as proper members, and belonging to one of the heads, of that monstrous, wild and cruel beast, that is compared to a leopard and a bear, and a devouring lion, and that had a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and that rules by the power and authority of the dragon, or the devil ; † which beast is represented in this very 17th chapter, as full of names of blasphemy, and of a bloody color, denoting his exceeding cruelty in persecuting the Christian Church. For Constantine, instead of this, was a member of the Christian church, and set by God in the most eminent station in his

† The word *Therion* signifies a wild savage beast, as Mr. Lowman himself observes, page 127.

church ; and was honored above all other princes that ever had been in the world, as the great protector of his church, and her deliverer from the persecuting power of that cruel scarlet colored beast. Mr. Lowman himself styles him a Christian prince, and protector of the Christian religion. God is very careful not to reckon his own people among the Gentiles, the visible subjects of Satan ; Num. xxiii. 9. "The people shall not be reckoned among the nations." God will not enrol them with them ; if they happen to be among them, he will be careful to set a mark upon them, as a note of distinction ; Rev. vii. 3, &c. when God is reckoning up his own people, he leaves out those that have been noted for idolatry. As among the tribes that were sealed Rev. viii. those idolatrous tribes of Ephraim and Dan are left out, and in the genealogy of Christ, Matth. i. those princes that were chiefly noted for idolatry, are left out. Much more would God be careful not to reckon his own people, especially such Christian princes as have been the most eminent instruments of overthrowing idolatry, amongst idolaters, and as members and heads of that kingdom that is noted in scripture as the most notorious and infamous of all, for abominable idolatry, and opposition and cruelty to the true worshippers of God. And especially not to reckon them as properly belonging to one of those seven heads of this monarchy, of which very heads it is particularly noted that they had on them the names of blasphemy ; (Rev. xiii. 1.) which Mr. Lowman himself supposes to signify idolatry. It was therefore worthy of God, agreeable to his manner, and what might well be expected, that when he was reckoning up the several successive heads of this beast, and Constantine and his successors came in the way, and there was occasion to mention them, to set a mark, or note of distinction on them, signifying that they did not properly belong to the beast, nor were to be reckoned as belonging to his heads ; and therefore are to be skipped over in the reckoning ; and Antichrist, though the eighth head of the Roman Empire, is to be reckoned the seventh head of the beast. This appears to me abundantly the most just and natural interpretation of Rev. xiii. 10, 11. It is reasonable to

suppose that God would take care to make such a note in this prophetic description of this dreadful beast, and not by any means to reckon Constantine as belonging properly to him. If we reckon Constantine as a member of this beast, having seven heads and ten horns, described chap. xvii. and as properly one of his heads, then he was also properly a member of the great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, that warred with the woman, chap. xii. For the seven heads and ten horns of that dragon, are plainly the same with the seven heads and ten horns of this beast. So that this makes Constantine a visible member of the devil: For we are told expressly of that dragon, ver. 9, that he was "that old serpent, called the devil and Satan." And to suppose that Constantine is reckoned as belonging to one of the heads of that dragon, is to make these prophecies inconsistent with themselves. For here in this 12th chapter we have represented a war between the dragon and the woman clothed with the sun; which woman, as all agree, is the church; but Constantine, as all do also agree, belonged to the woman, was a member of the Christian church, and was on that side in the war against the dragon, yea, was the main instrument of that great victory that was obtained over the dragon, there spoken of, ver. 9....12. What an inconsistency therefore is it, to suppose that he was at the same time a member and head of that very dragon which fought with the woman, and yet which Constantine himself fought with, overcame, and gloriously triumphed over! It is not therefore to be wondered at, that God was careful to distinguish Constantine from the proper heads of the beast: It would have been a wonder if he had not. God seems to have been careful to distinguish him, not only in his word, but in his providence, by so ordering it that this Christian emperor should be removed from Rome, the city that God had given up to be the seat of the power of the beast and of its heads, and that he should have the seat of his empire elsewhere.

Constantine was made the instrument of giving a mortal wound to the heathen Roman empire; and giving it a mortal



wound in its head, viz. the heathen emperors that were then reigning, Maxentius and Licinius. But more eminently was this glorious change in the empire owing to the power of God's word, the prevalence of the glorious gospel, by which Constantine himself was converted, and so became the instrument of the overthrow of the heathen empire in the east and west. The change that was then brought to pass, is represented as the destruction of the heathen empire, or the old heathen world ; and therefore seems to be compared to that dissolution of heaven and earth that shall be at the day of judgment, Rev. vi. 12, to the end. And therefore well might the heathen empire under the head which was then reigning, be represented as wounded to death, chap. xiii. 3. It is much more likely that the wound the beast had by a sword, in his head, spoken of ver. 14, was the wound that the heathen empire had in its head, by that sword that we read of chap. i. 16, and xix. 15, that proceeds out of the mouth of Christ, than the wound that was given to the Christian empire and emperor by the sword of the heathen Goths. It is most likely that this deadly wound was by that sword with which Michael made war with him, and overcame him, and cast him to the earth, chap. xii. 9, and that the deadly wound that was given him, was given him at that very time. It is most likely, that the sword that gave him this deadly wound, after which he strangely revived, as though he rose from the dead, was the same sword with that which is spoken of, as what shall at last utterly destroy him, so that he shall never rise more, chap. xix. 15, 19, 20, 21. This wounding of the head of the beast by the destruction of the heathen empire, and conversion of the emperor to the Christian truth, was a glorious event indeed of divine Providence, worthy to be so much spoken of in prophecy. It is natural to suppose, that the mortal wounding of the head of that savage, cruel beast, that is represented as constantly at war with the woman, and persecuting the church of Christ, should be some relief to the Christian church : But on the contrary that wounding to death that Mr. Lowman speaks of, was the victory of the enemies of the

Christian church over her, and the wound she received from them.

It is said of that head of the empire that shall be next after the sixth head, and next before Antichrist, and that is not reckoned as properly one of the number of the heads of the beast, that *when it comes, it shall continue a short space*, chap. xvii. 10. By which we may well understand, at least, that it shall be one of the shortest in its continuance, of the successive heads. But the government seated at Ravenna, in the hands of the Goths, or of the deputies of the Greek emperors, (which Mr. Lowman supposes to be meant by this head) continued, as Mr. Lowman himself takes notice, very near 300 years. And if so, its continuance was one of the longest of the heads mentioned.

And besides, if the government that Rome was under, from the time that Augustulus abdicated, to the time when the Pope was confirmed in his temporal dominion, was meant by that seventh head that was to be between the imperial head and the papal, there would doubtless have been two different heads mentioned, instead of one, between the emperor and the Pope ; viz. First, the Gothic princes, which reigned near an hundred years : Secondly, the Exarchs of Ravenna, which governed for about 185 years. The Gothic kingdom was much more properly a distinct government from the imperial, than the Exarchate of Ravenna. For during the Exarchate, Rome was under the government of the emperor, as much as it was in Constantine's time.

In Rev. xvii. 12, it is said, the "ten horns are ten kings, which are to receive power as kings one hour with the beast, or (as Mr. Lowman says it ought to have been translated) "the same hour or point of time with the beast." This will not allow the time when Antichrist first receives power as king, to be so late as Mr Lowman supposes. This division of the empire into many kingdoms, denoted by the number ten, was about the year 456, after Gensericus had taken the city of Rome : But Mr. Lowman places the beginning of the reign of Antichrist in the year 756, which is 300 years later. I know, such an expression as in one hour, or the same hour,

may allow some latitude ; but surely not such a latitude as this. This is a much longer time, than it was from the time of the vision to Constantine ; much longer than the space of all the first six seals ; longer than it was from Christs' ascension to Constantine ; and near as long as the time of all the reigns of the heathen emperors put together, from Augustus Cæsar to Constantine. An hour is every where, in the other places in this book of Revelation, used to signify a very short time ; as may be seen in places cited in the margin.\* And the expression, the same hour, every where else in the Bible, intends near the same point of time.† The phrase one hour is used several times in the next chapter, speaking of the downfall of Antichrist :‡ And each time, evidently signifies a very short space of time. And there is no reason why we should not understand the same phrase in the same sense, when it is used here concerning the rise of Antichrist.

Mr. Lowman greatly insists upon it, that what is spoken as continuing 1260 days, is not so much any spiritual authority or ecclesiastical power of the Pope, over the nations of Christendom, as his temporal government and dominion in that individual city of Rome ; and therefore to determine when these 1260 days or years began, and when they will end, we must consider when the Pope first received this his temporal power over this city of Rome, and the neighboring regions, called St. Peter's Patrimony. But I can see no good reason for this. Indeed it is strange, if it be so. God has been pleased in these revelations and prophecies, which he has given for the benefit of his church in general, to speak much concerning an Antichristian power that should arise, that should persecute the saints, and scatter the power of the holy people, and be an occasion of great affliction to the church of Christ ; and in these revelations, in both old Testament and new, has declared, and often repeated it, that his dominion shall continue so long, and no longer ; and for the comfort of his church in

\* Rev. xviii. 10, 17, 19. Chap. xi. 3.....iii. 10.....viii. 3.....ix. 15.....xiv. 7.—† Dan. iii. 6.....iv. 33. v. 5. Mat. viii. 13.....x. 19. Luke vii. 21.....xii. 12.....xx. 19.....xxiv. 33. John iv. 53. Acts xvi. 18, 33.....xxii. 13. Rev. xi. 13.—‡ Verse 10, 17, 19.

general, Christ hath sworn with great solemnity, that the continuance of this persecuting power shall be thus limited ; Dan. xii. 7.

Now it would be strange, if in all this the thing principally intended is not that dominion of this Antichristian power that chiefly concerns the church of Christ in general, but merely his temporal dominion over one province in Italy, called St. Peter's patrimony. Doubtless that dominion of Antichrist which the prophecies insist upon and describe, is the dominion whose duration and limits those prophecies declare. But the dominion of Antichrist which the prophecies insist upon and describe, is not any dominion over a particular province in Italy, but the dominion by which he succeeds the four great monarchies of the world ; Dan. vii. The dominion by which he succeeds the dragon in his power, throne and great authority ; Rev. xiii. 2. The dominion in which he has power given him over all kindreds, tongues and nations ; ver. 7. The dominion by which the great whore sits on many waters ; (chap. xvii. 1.) which the angel explains to be *peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues* ; (ver. 15) and the dominion in which he reigns over the ten kings, into which the Roman empire is divided ; Rev. xiii. 1, and xvii. 3, 12, 13. The beast that had ten horns, is not the city of Rome and the neighboring region, but the Roman empire ; they are the horns or the kings, not of the city, but of the empire. If we consider what is expressed in the passages themselves, which speak of the three years and half of Antichrist, they will lead us to understand something very diverse from the duration of his temporal dominion over St. Peter's patrimony. In Dan. vii. 25, the time, times and an half, of the little horn, is expressly the continuance of time wherein *it shall be given to him to change times and laws, and wear out the saints of the Most High* : And in chap. xii. 7, it is spoken of as *the time of his scattering the power of the holy people* : In Rev. xi. 2, the forty and two months is spoken of as *the time of Antichrist's treading under foot the court of the temple and the holy city* ; i. e. the external or visible Christian church abroad in the world, or the nations of Christendom. In ver. 3, the twelve hundred and sixty days

of Antichrist are spoken of as the time of the *witnesses prophesying in sackcloth* ; and in chap. xii. 6, and 14. the time of the *woman's being in the wilderness*, which was through the great power that Antichrist had over the Christian world, and not his small temporal dominion in Italy.

It is true, some regard is had in the prophecies to the city of Rome, the city built on seven hills : Which, being the fountain of all rule and authority in the Roman monarchy, and the capital city of the empire, from whence the whole empire was denominated, and the place where the head of the empire usually resided, was properly made use of by the angel, Rev. xvii. 9, 18, to shew what empire Antichrist should rule over, and what city he should usually reside in. And this is all that can be meant by the words of the angel ; and not that those streets and walls, and that very ground, were such main and essential things in what the prophecy intended by the beast ; that when Antichrist's dominion began in that place, then the beast ceases. For if so, then it will follow, that the beast had his head wounded to death a second time, and ceased to be, when the Popes resided at Avignon in France, for the best part of a century ; when not only the Popes did not reside at Rome, nor in any part of St. Peter's patrimony, nor any part of Italy ; but some of them were neither Romans, nor Italians. Though the angel says of the great whore, Rev. xvii. 18. " The woman which thou sawest, is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth : Yet by the city, in this case, is not meant so much what was contained within those Roman walls, as the Roman empire ; as is evident by chap. xi. 8. " And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt." Here, by the great city, neither Mr. Lowman himself, nor I suppose any other Protestant interpreter, understands the city of Rome, strictly speaking, but the Roman monarchy.

And though it be true, as Mr. Lowman observes, the Pope's ecclesiastical monarchy, and power, and influence, through Christendom, was greatly established and advanced by Pepin's making him a temporal prince over the exarchate of Ravenna ; yet, I would ask, whether the Pope's power and influence in

the world, and his ability to disturb the quiet of the nations of Christendom, and (as it is expressed in Daniel) *to change times and laws*, and to carry his own designs, in the various countries and kingdoms of Europe, was not greater before Pepin, than it is now, and has been for a long time ? And yet Mr. Lowman supposes that now is properly the time of Antichrist's reign, that the twelve hundred and sixty years of his reign continues, and will continue for about two hundred and seventy years longer ; though his power be now so small, and has been declining ever since the reformation, and still declines continually.

One thing that Mr. Lowman supposes confirms his opinion of so late a beginning of the twelve hundred and sixty years of the reign of the beast, is the order of the several periods of this prophecy, and the manner of their succeeding one another.

As to his particular scheme of the seven periods, so divided and limited, and so obviously ranked in such order, and following one another in such direct and continued succession, and each ending in a state of peace, safety and happiness to the church of God, it seems to me to be more ingenious than solid, and that many things might be said to demonstrate it not to be founded in the truth of things, and the real design of the divine Author of this prophecy. But now to enter into a particular and full examination of it, would be to lengthen out this discourse far beyond its proper limits. I would only observe (which directly concerns my present purpose) that to make out this scheme, Mr. Lowman supposes that the fifth and sixth trumpets, that bring on the two first woes, and the whole 9th chapter of the Revelation, altogether respects the Saracens. But it appears to me not very credible that the Saracens should have so much said of them in this prophecy, as to have a whole chapter taken up about them, and not a word in the whole prophecy be said about the Turks, who immediately succeeded them \* in the same religion, and pro-

\* For though it be true, that the reign of Othman, or Ottoman, who began what they call the Ottoman empire, was a long time after this ; yet the Turks

ceeding on the same principles, and were so much more considerable, and brought vastly greater calamities on the Christian world, and have set up and long maintained one of the greatest, strongest and most extraordinary empires that ever the world saw, and have been the most terrible scourge to Christendom, that ever divine providence made use of, and one of the greatest of all God's plagues on the world of mankind.

Mr. Lowman, in pursuance of his scheme, also supposes, (which is yet more incredible) this period of the trumpets ends *in a state of safety, peace and happiness to the church of God*; so that, on that occasion, *there are great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ*, chap. xi. 15.\* And yet he supposes, that it issues in setting up the kingdom of Antichrist; and that about that very time, when these heavenly voices so joyfully proclaimed this, the beast was enthroned, and the time, times and half, or twelve hundred and sixty days of his reign began, which is spoken of every where, as the time of the church's greatest darkness and trouble, the time wherein *the little horn should wear out the saints of the Most High*, Dan. vii. 25. *The time appointed for his scattering the power of the holy people*, Dan. xii. 7. *The time of the woman's being in the wilderness*, Rev. xii. 6, 14. *The time of treading under foot the court of the temple*, chap. xi. 2. And the time of *the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth*, chap. xi. 3.

However, I do not deny that the time when Mr. Lowman supposes the reign of the beast began, even the time when Pepin confirmed to the Pope his temporal dominions in Italy, was a time of the great increase and advancement of the power of Antichrist in the world, and a notable epoch. And if I may be allowed humbly to offer what appears to me to be the

themselves, under other princes in the government they set up in territories that had formerly been possessed by Christians, and in their overrunning and ravaging Christian countries, immediately succeeded the Saracens; and from thenceforward have been a terrible, and almost continual scourge to the church.

\* Preface of his Paraphrase, &c. p. 12, 14, and 16.

truth with relation to the rise and fall of Antichrist ; it is this. As the power of Antichrist, and the corruption of the apostate church, rose not at once, but by several notable steps and degrees ; so it will in the like manner fall : And that divers steps and seasons of destruction to the spiritual Babylon, and revival and advancement of the true church, are prophesied of under one. Though it be true, that there is some particular event, that prevails above all others in the intention of the prophecy, some one remarkable season of the destruction of the church of Rome and papal power and corruption, and advancement of true religion, that the prophecies have a principal respect to.

It was certainly thus with regard to the prophecies of the destruction of old Babylon, and the church's deliverance from captivity and oppression by that city and kingdom ; which is abundantly alluded to in these prophecies of the Revelation, as a noted type of the oppression of the church of Christ by the church of Rome, calling the latter so often by the name of Babylon, and the church of Christ Jerusalem. The captivity of the Jews by the Babylonians was not perfected at once, but was brought on by several notable steps. So neither was the restoration of the Jewish church, after the captivity, perfected at once. It was several times foretold, that the duration of the captivity should be seventy years ; and also, that after seventy years were accomplished, God would destroy Babylon ; Jer. xxv. 11, 12, &c. But this period had manifestly several different beginnings, and several endings. Thus from Jehoiakim's captivity to Cyrus's decree, for the return of the Jews, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem, was seventy years. And from Zedekiah's captivity to Darius's decree, Ezra vi. seventy years. And from the last carrying away of all, Jer. lii. 30, to the finishing and dedication of the temple, was also seventy years. So also the prophecies of Babylon's destruction were fulfilled by several steps. These prophecies seem to have a principal respect to that destruction that was accomplished by Cyrus, at the end of the first seventy years forementioned : But there were other things in the very same prophecies, that were not fulfilled until the 4th year of Darius ; when what remained



of Babylon was subject to another dreadful destruction ; which in a great measure completed its desolation ; which was at the end of the second seventy years, and at the same time that the restoration of the Jews was perfected by the decree of Darius.\* But yet, there were many other things contained in the same prophecies of Babylon's destruction, rendering it thenceforward perfectly and perpetually desolate, and the haunt of serpents and wild beasts, that were not fulfilled until more than two hundred years after, in the time of Seleucus king of Syria.† So also it was with respect to the prophecies of the destruction of Tyre, in the xxvith, xxviith and xxviiiith chapters of Ezekiel ; from which many of the expressions used in the revelation, concerning the destruction of the kingdom of Antichrist, are taken, and which is evidently made use of in scripture as a type of the latter. These prophecies of the destruction of Tyre were fulfilled by various steps. Many things were fulfilled in the destruction of the old city by Nebuchadnezzar ;‡ and yet other parts of the same prophecy were fulfilled by Alexander ;§ which was about two hundred and forty years afterwards. And yet both these desolations are prophesied of under one.

And thus it seems to me very probable, that it will prove, with respect to the prophecies of the destruction of mystical Babylon. It is I think pretty manifest by the prophecies, that this Antichristian hierarchy and apostate church will at last be so destroyed, that there shall be no remainders of it left, and shall have as perfect a desolation, before God has done with her, as old Babylon had ; there shall be no such thing as Pope or church of Rome in the world.|| It seems also pretty manifest that after that event that is chiefly intended in the prophecies of Antichrist's destruction, there will be some remains of the Romish church. This appears by that most particular and large description of that destruction, Rev. xviii. There it seems to be implied, not only that many shall yet

\* Prideaux's *Connexion*, Part I. p. 183, 184, and 267, 268, 269. Edit. 9, and p. 271, and 272.—† Ibid. 808 .... 812.—‡ Ibid. 128, 129, 130. § Ibid. p. 693.—|| See Rev. xviii. 21, .... 23, .... and xix. 20, 21. Dan. vii. 26, 27.

remain of the church of Rome, that shall bewail her overthrow, of her people and clergy ; ver. 11, 15, 17, 18, but that there should be some princes among them, kings of the earth, that have committed fornication, and lived deliciously with her ; ver. 9, 10. And it is exceeding improbable in itself, that every Papist, in each quarter of the world, should be destroyed, or cease from the world, at one blow. And as long as so considerable a number remains, as may be gathered from the prophecy, they will doubtless have an hierarchy ; and there will be one among them that will bear the name of a Pope. Although the church of Rome shall be mainly destroyed, and the interest of Popery shall be sunk very low in the world ; so that there will yet remain such a thing as a Papal church and hierarchy in the world, to be wholly extirpated at another period, sometime after that great overthrow principally insisted on in the prophecies. And this second destruction of Antichrist, or rather extirpation of his remains, together with the complete extirpation of all the remains of Mahometanism, Heathenism and Heresy through the world, and the finishing stroke towards the overthrow of Satan's visible kingdom on earth, and so the beginning of the Millennium or spiritual rest of the world, may, for ought I know, be about the time Mr. Lowman speaks of ; agreeable to the opinion of the ancient Jews, and many Christian divines that have followed them, that the world would stand six thousand years ; and then, the seventh thousand years should be the world's rest or Sabbath. The ruin of the Popish interest is but a small part of what is requisite, in order to introduce and settle such a state of things, as the world is represented as being in, in that Millennium that is described, Rev. xx. wherein Satan's visible kingdom is every where totally extirpated, and a perfect end put to all heresies, delusions and false religions whatsoever, through the whole earth, and Satan thenceforward deceives the nations no more, and has no place any where but in hell. This is the sabbatism of the world ; when all shall be in a holy rest, when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and there shall be nothing to hurt or offend, and there shall be abundance of peace, and the earth shall be full of the knowl-

edge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea, and God's people shall dwell in quiet resting places. There is not the least reason to think, that all this will be brought to pass as it were at one stroke, or that from the present lamentable state of things, there should be brought about and completed the destruction of the church of Rome, the entire extirpation of all infidelity, heresies, superstitions and schisms, through all Christendom, and the conversion of all the Jews, and the full enlightening and conversion of all Mahometan and Heathen nations, through the whole earth, on every side of the globe, and from the north to the south pole, and the full settlement of all in the pure Christian faith and order, all as it were in the issue of one battle, and by means of the victory of the church in one great conflict with her enemies. This would contradict many things in scripture, which represent this great event to be brought to pass by a gradual progress of religion; as leaven that gradually spreads, until it has diffused itself through the whole lump; and a plant of mustard, which from a very small seed, gradually becomes a great tree; Mat. xiii. 31, 32, 33, *and like seed which a man casts into the ground, that springs and grows up, night and day; and first brings forth the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.* And especially would this contradict the prophetic representation in Ezek. xlvii. where the progress of religion is represented by the gradual increase of the waters of the sanctuary; being first a small spring issuing out from under the threshold of the temple; and then, after they had run a thousand cubits, being up to the ankles; and at the end of another thousand cubits, up to the knees; and at the end of another thousand, up to the loins: and afterwards a great river, that could not be passed over; and being finally brought into the sea, and healing the waters even of the vast ocean.

If the Spirit of God should be immediately poured out, and that great work of God's power and grace should now begin, which in its progress and issue should complete this glorious effect; there must be an amazing and unparal-  
 lelled progress of the work and manifestation of divine power to bring so much to pass, by the year two thousand. Would it not be a great

thing, to be accomplished in one half century, that religion, in the power and purity of it, should so prevail, as to gain the conquest over all those many things that stand in opposition to it among Protestants, and gain the upper hand through the protestant world? And if in another, it should go on so to prevail, as to get the victory over all the opposition and strength of the kingdom of Antichrist, so as to gain the ascendent in that which is now the Popish world? And if in a third half century, it should prevail and subdue the greater part of the Mahometan world, and bring in the Jewish nation, in all their dispersions? And then in the next whole century, the whole heathen world should be enlightened and converted to the Christian faith, throughout all parts of Africa, Asia, America and Terra Australis, and be thoroughly settled in Christian faith and order, without any remainders of their old delusions and superstitions, and this attended with an utter extirpation of the remnant of the church of Rome, and all the relics of Mahometism, heresy, schism and enthusiasm, and a suppression of all remains of open vice and immorality, and every sort of visible enemy to true religion, through the whole earth, and bring to an end all the unhappy commotions, tumults, and calamities occasioned by such great changes, and all things so adjusted and settled through the world, that the world thenceforward should enjoy an holy rest or sabbatism?

I have thus distinguished what belongs to a bringing of the world from its present state, to the happy state of the Millennium, the better to give a view of the greatness of the work; and not, that I pretend so much as to conjecture, that things will be accomplished just in this order. The whole work is not the less great and wonderful, to be accomplished in such a space of time, in whatever order the different parts of it succeed each other. They that think that what has been mentioned would not be swift progress, yea amazingly swift, do not consider how great the work is, and the vast and innumerable obstacles that are in the way. It was a wonderful thing, when the Christian religion, after Christ's ascension, so prevailed, as to get the ascendant in the Roman empire in about three hundred years; but that was nothing to this.

Ans. 4. There are, as I apprehend, good reasons to hope, that that work of God's Spirit will begin in a little time, which, in the progress of it, will overthrow the kingdom of Antichrist, and in its issue destroy Satan's visible kingdom on earth.

The prophecy of the 6th vial, Rev. xvi. 12.....16, if we take it in its connexion with the other vials, and consider those providential events, by which the preceding vials have manifestly been fulfilled, I humbly conceive, affords just ground for such a hope.

It is very plain from this whole chapter, as also the preceding and following, that all these seven vials are vials of God's wrath on Antichrist ; one is not poured out on the Jews, another on the Turks, another on Pagans, another on the church of Rome ; but they all signify God's successive judgments or plagues on the beast and his kingdom, which is in this chapter and almost every where in this book, called great Babylon. And therefore undoubtedly, when it is said, *The sixth Angel poured out his vial on the river Euphrates, and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the Kings of the east might be prepared ;* by the river Euphrates is meant something some way appertaining to this mystical Babylon ; as that river that ran through Chaldea, called Euphrates, was something appertaining to the literal Babylon. And it is very manifest, that here is in the prophecy of this vial an allusion to that by which the way was prepared for the destruction of Babylon by Cyrus ; which was by turning the channel of the river Euphrates, which ran through the midst of the city, whereby the way of the kings of the east, the princes of Media and Persia, was prepared to come in under the walls of the city, at each end, where the waters used to run, and destroy it ; as they did that night wherein Daniel interpreted the hand writing on the wall, against Belshazzar, Dan. v. 30. The prophecies of Babylon's destruction, do from time to time take notice of this way of destroying her, by drying up the waters of the river Euphrates, to prepare the way for her enemies ; Isa. xlv. 27, 28. *That saith to the deep, be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers ; that saith of Cyrus, he is my servant,*

*and shall perform all my pleasure.* Jer. li. 31, 32. *One post shall run to meet another, to shew the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end, and that the passages are stopp'd, and the reeds they have burnt with fire, and the men of war are affrighted.* And verse 36. *I will dry up her sea, and make her springs dry.* The Medes and Persians, the people that destroyed Babylon, dwelt to the eastward of Babylon, and are spoken of as coming from the east to her destruction; Isa. xli. 11. *Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel, from a far country.* And the princes that joined with this ravenous bird from the east, in this affair of destroying Babylon, are called kings, Jer. li. 11. *The Lord hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes; for his device is against Babylon to destroy it.* Ver. 28. *Prepare against her the nations, with the kings of the Medes, the captains thereof, and the rulers thereof.*—The drying the channel of the river Euphrates, to prepare the way for these kings and captains of the east, to enter into that city, under its high walls was the last thing done by the besiegers of Babylon, before her actual destruction: As this sixth vial is the last vial of God's wrath but one, on the mystical Babylon; and the effect of it, the drying up the channel of the river Euphrates, is the last thing done against it, before its actual destruction by the seventh vial, and opens the way for those that fight in a spiritual war against it, speedily to bring on its ruin.

Hence I think it may without dispute be determined, that by the river Euphrates in the prophecy of this vial, is meant something appertaining or relating to the mystical Babylon, or the Antichristian church and kingdom, that serves that, or is a benefit to it, in a way answerable to that in which the river Euphrates served old Babylon, and the removal of which will in like manner prepare the way for her enemies to destroy her. And therefore what we have to do in the first place, in order to find out what is intended by the river Euphrates, in this prophecy, is to consider how the literal Euphrates served old Babylon. And it may be noted, that Euphrates was of remarkable benefit to that city in two respects: It served the city as a supply: it was let through the midst of

the city by an artificial canal, and ran through the midst of the palace of the king of Babylon ; that part of his palace called the old palace, standing on one side, and the other part called the new palace, on the other ; with communications from one part to another, above the waters, by a bridge, and under the waters, by a vaulted or arched passage ; that the city, and especially the palace, might have the convenience of its waters, and be plentifully supplied with water. And another way that the waters of Euphrates served Babylon, was as an impediment and obstacle in the way of its enemies, to hinder their access to it to destroy it. For there was a vast moat round the city, without the walls, of prodigious width and depth, filled with the water of the river, to hinder the access of her besiegers : And at each end of the city, the river served instead of walls. And therefore when Cyrus had dried up the river, the moat was emptied, and the channel of the river under the walls left dry ; and so his way was prepared.

And therefore it is natural to suppose, that by drying up the waters of the river Euphrates, in the prophecies of the destruction of the new Babylon, to prepare the way of her enemies, is meant the drying up her incomes and supplies ; and the removal of those things that hitherto have been the chief obstacles in the way of those that in this book are represented as at war with her and seeking her destruction, spoken of Rev. xix. 11, to the end, and Chap. xii. 7, that have hindered their progress and success, or that have been the chief impediments in the way of the Protestant religion. The first thing is the drying the streams of the wealth of the new Babylon, the temporal supplies, revenues and vast incomes of the Romish church, and riches of the Popish dominions. Waters in scripture language very often signify provision and supplies, both temporal and spiritual ; as in Prov. ix. 17. Isa. xxxiii. 16....xlili. 20....lv. 1....and lviii. 11. Jer. ii. 13 and 18. xvii. 8 and 13, and in other places innumerable. The temporal supplies of a people are very often in scripture called waters ; as Isa. v. 13. *Therefore my people is gone into captivity, and their honorable men are furnished, and their multitude*

*dried up with thirst.* i. e. deprived of the supports and supplies of life. And the drying up the waters of a city or kingdom, is often used in scripture prophecy, for the depriving them of their wealth, as the scripture explains itself, Hos. xiii. 15. "His spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up ; he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels." Isa. xv. 6, 7. "The waters of Nimrim shall be desolate ; for the hay is withered away ; the grass faileth ; there is no green thing. Therefore the abundance they have gotten, and that which they have laid up, shall they carry away to the brook of the willows." By the brook of the willows there seems to be a reference to the waters of Assyria or Chaldea, whose streams abounded with willows (compare Psal. cxxxvii. 2.) So that the carrying away the treasures of Moab, and adding of them to the treasures of Assyria, is here represented by the figure of turning away the waters of Nimrim from the country of Moab, and adding them to the waters of Assyria, as the prophecy explains itself. Yea, even in the prophecies of the destruction of Babylon itself, the depriving her of her treasures, seems to be one thing intended by the drying up of her waters. This seems manifest by the words of the prophecy in Jer. l. 37, 38. "A sword is upon her treasures, and they shall be robbed ; a drought is upon her waters, and they shall be dried up." Compared with chap. li. 15. "O thou that dwellest upon many waters, abundant in treasures ;" with ver. 36. "I will dry up her sea, and make her springs dry." The wealth, revenues and the vast incomes of the church of Rome, are the waters by which that Babylon has been nourished and supported ; these are the waters which the Popish clergy and the members of the Romish hierarchy thirst after, and are continually drinking down, with insatiable appetite ; and they are waters that have been flowing into that spiritual city like a great river ; ecclesiastical persons possessing a very great part of the Popish dominions : As this Babylon is represented as vastly rich, in this prophecy of the Apocalypse, especially in the 17th and 18th chapters. These are especially the waters that supply the palace of the king of this new Babylon, viz. the Pope ; as the river Euphrates ran



through the midst of the palace of the king of old Babylon. The revenues of the Pope have been like the waters of a great river, coming into his palace, from innumerable fountains, and by innumerable branches and lesser streams, coming from many various and distant countries.

This prophecy represents to us two cities very contrary the one to the other ; viz. New Babylon and the New Jerusalem, and a river running through the midst of each. The new Jerusalem, which signifies the church of Christ, especially in her best estate, is described as having a river running through the midst of it, Rev. xxii. 1, 2. This river, as might easily be made most evident, by comparing this with abundance of other scriptures, undoubtedly signifies the divine supplies, and rich and abundant spiritual incomes and provision of that holy city. Mr. Lowman, in his late exposition, says, *It represents a constant provision for the comfortable and happy life of all the inhabitants of this city of God.* And in his notes on the same place, observes as follows ; “ Water, (says he) as necessary to the support of life, and as it contributes in great cities, especially in hot eastern countries, to the ornament of the place, and delight of the inhabitants, is a very proper representation of the enjoyment of all things, both for the support and pleasure of life.” As the river that runs through the new Jerusalem, the church of Christ, that refreshes that holy spiritual society, signifies their spiritual supplies, to satisfy their spiritual thirst ; so the river that runs through the new Babylon, the Antichristian church, that wicked carnal society, signifies, according to the opposite character of the city, her worldly, carnal supplies, to satisfy their carnal desires and thirstings.

This new Jerusalem is called in this book the paradise of God ; and therefore is represented as having the tree of life growing in it, Chap. ii. 7, and xxii. 2. And it being described, as though a river ran through the midst of it, there seems to be some allusion to the ancient paradise in Eden, of which we are told that there ran a river through the midst of it to water it ; Gen. ii. 10. i. e. to supply the plants of it with nourishment. And this river was this very same river Euphrates, that afterwards ran through Babylon. And in one and the other,

it represented the divers supplies of two opposite cities : In Eden, it represented the spiritual supplies and wealth of the true Christian church, in her spiritual advancement and glory ; and seems to be so made use of Rev. xxii. 1, 2. In the other it represented the outward carnal supplies of the false Antichristian church, in her worldly pomp and vain glory, chap. xvi. 12.

When the waters that supply this mystical Babylon, come to be dried up in this sense, it will prepare the way for the enemies of Antichristian corruption, that seek her overthrow. The wealth of the church of Rome, and of the powers that support it, is very much its defence. After the streams of her revenues and riches are dried up, or very greatly diminished, her walls will be as it were broken down, and she will become weak and defenceless, and exposed to easy ruin.

When Joab had taken that part of the city of Rabbah, that was called the city of waters, whence the city had its supply of water, the fountains of the brook Jabbok being probably there ; and which was also called the royal city, probably because there the king had his palace and gardens, on the account of its peculiar pleasantness ; I say, when he had taken this, the conquest of the rest of the city was easy ; his message to David implies that the city now might be taken at pleasure, 2 Sam. xii. 27, 28. It is possible that by the pouring out of the sixth vial to dry up the river of the mystical Babylon, there may be something like the taking the city of waters in Rabbah ; some one of the chief of the Popish powers, that has been the main strength and support of the Popish cause, or from whence that church has its chief supplies, may be destroyed, or converted, or greatly reduced. But this, events must determine.

In the prophecies of Egypt's destruction, it is signified, that when their rivers and waters should be dried up, in that sense, that the streams of their temporal supplies should be averted from them, their defence would be gone ; Isa. xix. 4, &c. " The Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord ; and the waters shall fail from the sea, and the river shall be wasted and dried up, and the brooks of defence shall be emp-

tied and dried up, and the reeds and flags shall wither ; every thing sown by the brooks shall wither : The fishers also shall mourn."

Those whose way was prepared to come in and destroy Babylon, by the drying up the river of Euphrates, were the army that was at war with Babylon, Cyrus the king, and his host, that sought her overthrow : So there seems to be all reason to suppose, that those whose way will be prepared to come in and destroy mystical Babylon, by drying up the mystical Euphrates, are that king and army that are in this book of Revelation represented as at war with Antichrist. And what king and army that is, we may see in chap. xii. 7, and xix. 11, to the end : Michael the king of angels, and his angels ; he whose name is called the word of God, and that has on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords ; and the heavenly armies that follow him, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. Cyrus the chief of the kings of the east, that destroyed Babylon, and redeemed God's church from thence, and restored Jerusalem, seems in that particular affair very manifestly to be spoken of as a type of Christ ; God calls him his shepherd, to perform his pleasure, to say to Jerusalem, thou shalt be built, and to the temple, thy foundation shall be laid, Isa. xlv. 28. God calls him his Messiah ; chap. xlv. 1. " Thus saith the Lord to his anointed (in the original, to his Messiah) to Cyrus." He is spoken of as one that God had raised up in righteousness, that he might build his city, and freely redeem his captives, or let them go without price or reward, chap. xlv. 13. He is said to be one whom God had loved, chap. xlviii. 14. In like manner as the Messiah is said to be God's elect, in whom his soul delighteth. As by Babylon, in the Revelation, is meant that Antichristian society that is typified by old Babylon ; so by the kings of the east, that should destroy this Antichristian church, must be meant those enemies of it that were typified by Cyrus and other chieftains of the east, that destroyed old Babylon ; viz. Christ, who was born, lived, died and rose in the east together with these spiritual princes that follow him, the principalities and powers in heavenly places, and those minis-

ters and saints that are kings and priests, and shall reign on earth ; especially those leaders and heads of God's people, those Christian ministers and magistrates, that shall be distinguished as public blessings to his church, and chief instruments of the overthrow of Antichrist.

As the river Euphrates served the city of Babylon as a supply, so as it also was before observed, it served as an impediment or obstacle to hinder the access of its enemies : As there was a vast moat round the city, filled with the water of the river, which was left empty when Euphrates was dried up. And therefore we may suppose that another thing meant by the effect of the sixth vial, is the removal of those things which hitherto have been the chief obstacles in the way of the progress of the true religion, and the victory of the church of Christ over her enemies : Which have been the corrupt doctrines and practices that have prevailed in Protestant countries and the doubts and difficulties that attend many doctrines of the true religion, and the many divisions and contentions that subsist among Protestants. The removal of those would wonderfully prepare the way for Christ and his armies, to go forward and prevail against their enemies, in a glorious propagation of true religion. So that this vial which is to prepare the way for Christ and his people, seems to have respect to that remarkable preparing the way for Christ, by levelling mountains, exalting valleys, drying up rivers, and removing stumbling blocks, which is often spoken of in the prophecies, as what shall next precede the church's latter day glory ; as Isa. xlii. 13, &c. " The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man ; he shall stir up jealousy as a man of war ; he shall prevail against his enemies. I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs ; and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools ; and I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not, and I will lead them in paths that they have not known ; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight : These things will I do unto them and not forsake them." Chap. xl. 3, 4, 5. " Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert an highway for our God : Every valley shall be exalted, and

every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight and rough places plain ; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." Chap. xi. 15, 16. " And the Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea, and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams thereof, and make men go over dry shod : And there shall be an high way for the remnant of his people which shall be left, from Assyria, like as it was to Israel, in the day that he came out of the land of Egypt." Chap. lvii. 14. " Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling block out of the way of my people." And chap. lxii. 10. " Go through, go through the gates ; prepare ye the way of the people ; cast up, cast up the high way ; gather out the stones ; lift up a standard for the people." Zech. x. 10, 11, 12. " I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria ; and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon ; and place shall not be found for them. And he shall pass through the sea with affliction, and shall smite the waves of the sea ; and all the deeps of the river shall dry up : And the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart away : And I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the Lord." And it is worthy to be remarked that as Cyrus' destroying Babylon, and letting go God's captives from thence, and restoring Jerusalem, is certainly typical of Christ's destroying mystical Babylon, and delivering his people from her tyranny, and gloriously building up the spiritual Jerusalem in the latter days ; so God's preparing Cyrus's way, by drying up the river Euphrates, is spoken of in terms like those that are used in those prophecies that have been mentioned, to signify the preparing Christ's way, when he shall come to accomplish the latter event. Thus God says concerning Cyrus, Isa. xlv. 2. " I will go before thee, and make crooked places straight." And ver. 13. " I will direct, or make straight (as it is in the margin) all his ways." This is like chap. xl. 2, 4. " Prepare ye the way of the Lord ; make straight in the desert an highway

for our God. The crooked things shall be made straight." Chap. xlii. 16. "I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight."

If any should object against understanding the river Euphrates in Rev. xvi. 12, as signifying what has been supposed, that when mention is made of the river Euphrates, in another place in this prophecy, it is manifestly not so to be understood, viz. in chapter ix. 14. "Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates ; and that there is no reason to understand the river Euphrates in the vision of the sixth vial, as signifying something diverse from what is meant by the same river in the vision of the sixth trumpet ;

I answer, That there appears to me to be good reason for a diverse understanding of the river Euphrates in these two different places : The diversity of the scene of the vision, and of the kind of representation, in those two divers parts of this prophecy, naturally leads to it, and requires it. It is in this book as it is in the Old Testament ; when the river Euphrates is spoken of in the Old Testament, both in the histories and prophecies, it is mentioned with regard to a twofold relation of that river ; viz. 1st. With regard to its relation to Babylon. And as it was related to that, it was something belonging to that city, as its defence and supply, as has been represented. Thus the river Euphrates is spoken of in many places that have been already observed, and others that might be mentioned. 2dly. This river is spoken of with regard to its relation to the Land of Israel, God's visible people. And as it was related to that, it was its eastern boundary. It is so spoken of Gen. xv. 18. Exod. xxiii. 31. Deut. i. 7, and xi. 24. Josh. i. 4. 2 Sam. viii. 3. 1 Chron. xviii. 3. 1 Kings iv. 21. Ezra iv. 20. Agreeable to this diverse respect or relation of this river, under which it is mentioned in the Old Testament, so must we understand it differently in different parts of the prophecy of this book of revelation, according as the nature and subject of the vision requires. In the 16th chapter where the prophecy is about Babylon, and the vision is of God's plagues on Babylon, preparing the way for her de-

struction, there, when the river Euphrates is mentioned, we are naturally and necessarily led to consider it as something belonging to Babylon, appertaining to the mystical Babylon, as Euphrates did to old Babylon. But we cannot understand it so in the 9th chapter, for there the prophecy is not about Babylon. To mention Euphrates there, as something belonging to Babylon, would have been improper ; for the nature of the vision, and prophetic representation, did not lead to it, nor allow it. John had had no vision of Babylon ; that kind of representation had not been made to him ; there is not a word said about Babylon until we come to the second part of this prophecy, after John had the vision of the second book, and Christ had said to him, *Thou must prophesy again before peoples, and nations, and kings*, chap. xi. The scene of the vision, in the former part of the prophecy, had been more especially the land of Israel ; and the vision is concerning two sorts of persons there, viz. Those of the tribes of Israel that had the seal of God in their foreheads, and those wicked apostate Israelites that had not this mark. Compare chap. vii. 3.....8, and chap. ix. 4. The vision in this 9th chapter is of God's judgments on those of the tribes of Israel, or in the land of Israel, which had not the seal of God in their foreheads. And therefore when mention is made, ver. 14, of a judgment coming on them from the river Euphrates, this river is here spoken of in the former respect viz. with regard to its relation to the land of Israel, as its eastern border ; and thereby we must understand that God would bring some terrible calamity on Christendom from its eastern border, as he did when the Turks were let loose on Christendom.

If these things that have been spoken of, are intended in the prophecy of the sixth vial, it affords, as I conceive, great reason to hope that the beginning of that glorious work of God's Spirit, which, in the progress and issue of it, will overthrow Antichrist, and introduce the glory of the latter days, is not very far off.

Mr. Lowman has, I think, put it beyond all reasonable doubt, that the fifth vial was poured out in the time of the reformation. It also appears satisfyingly, by his late exposi-

tion, that take one vial with another, it has not been two hundred years from the beginning of one vial to the beginning of another, but about one hundred and eighty years. But it is now about two hundred and twenty years since the fifth vial began to be poured ; and it is a long time since the main effects of it have been finished. And therefore if the sixth vial has not already begun to be poured out, it may well be speedily expected.

But with regard to the first thing that I have supposed to be signified by the effect of this vial, viz. The drying up the fountains and streams of the wealth and temporal incomes and supplies of the Antichristian church and territories, I would propose it to consideration, whether or no many things that have come to pass within these twenty years past, may not be looked upon as probable beginnings of a fulfilment of this prophecy. Particularly what the kings of Spain and Portugal did some years since, when displeased with the Pope, forbidding any thenceforward going to Rome for investitures, &c. thereby cutting off two great streams of the Pope's wealth, from so great and rich a part of the Popish world ; and its becoming so frequent a thing of late for Popish princes, in their wars, to make bold with the treasure of the church, and to tax the clergy within their dominions, as well as laity ; or, which is equivalent, to oblige them to contribute great sums, under the name of a free gift ; and also the late peeling and impoverishing the Pope's temporal dominions in Italy, by the armies of the Austrians, Neapolitans and Spaniards, passing and repassing through them, and living so much at discretion in them, of which the Pope has so loudly complained, and in vain ; receiving nothing but menaces, when he has objected against giving liberty for the like passage, for the future. These things make it hopeful that the time is coming when the princes of Europe, the ten horns, shall hate the whore, and make her desolate and naked, and eat her flesh ; as Rev. xvii. 16, which will prepare the way for what next follows, her being burnt with fire ; even as the sixth vial poured out, to consume the supplies of Antichrist, and strip him naked of his wealth, and as it were to pick his flesh off from his



bones, will make way for what next follows, the seventh vial, that will consume Antichrist by the fierceness of God's wrath.

Besides these things that have been already mentioned, are also worthy to be considered the things that have lately happened to dry up the fountains and streams of the wealth of the Antichristian dominions : As, the so far ruining the trade of France and Spain, that are the two chief Popish kingdoms, the main support of the Popish cause, and from whence the kingdom of Antichrist has had of late its main supplies. The almost miraculous taking of Cape Breton, in the year 1745, whereby was dried up one of the main sources of the wealth of the kingdom of France ; and the no less, but yet more wonderful disappointment of the French, in their great attempt to repossess themselves of it, and the confounding of their great Armada, under the duke D'Anville, by a most visible hand of God against them, the last year ; and in now again baffling a second attempt of our obstinate enemies, this year, by delivering up their men of war, with their warlike forces and stores, in their way to America, into the hands of the English Admirals, Anson and Warren : The strange and unaccountable consuming of the great magazines of the French Eastindia company, at Port L'Orient, with their magnificent buildings, the last year ; and its so wonderfully coming to pass, that scarce any thing of the great stores there laid up, was saved out of the flames ; the awful destruction, by an earthquake, the last year, of that great and rich city of Lima, the centre of the South sea trade, and the capital of Peru, the richest country in the world, from whence comes more of its silver and gold than any other country, from whence Spain is principally supplied with its wealth, and where the French had a great trade ; the destruction of the city being attended with the destruction of all the ships in the harbor, which were dashed in pieces as it were in a moment, by the immediate hand of God ; many of which were doubtless laden with vast treasures. I might have mentioned the taking of Porto Bello, not long before this, by a very small force, though a place of very great strength, where the Spanish galleons used principally

to go, to carry the wealth of Peru to Spain. Besides the taking from the French and Spaniards so many of their ships, laden with vast riches, trading to the south seas, the East and Westindies, and the Levant.

And here it is especially worthy of notice, that when the French seemed to have gotten so great an advantage of the English factory at Madrass, they were so frustrated of the benefit and gains they expected by it, by the hand of heaven against them, immediately pursuing the conquerors with tempest, wrecking their ships laden with our spoils ; and after that, delivering up into the hands of the English their East-india fleet, with their stores and immense treasures, intended for the confirming to themselves the advantage they seemed to have gained by the forementioned conquest : At the same instant, also delivering into our hands their strong force intended for the regaining that great fountain of their wealth, which they had lost at Cape Breton. And since that, delivering into the hands of Sir Peter Warren so great a part of their vast and rich fleet from the Westindies.

And one thing with relation to the taking of Cape Breton, though it may seem trivial, yet I do not think to be altogether inconsiderable in the present case ; and that is, that hereby the Antichristian dominions are deprived of a very great part of their fish, which makes no small part of the food and support of Popish countries ; their superstition forbidding them to eat any flesh for near a third part of the year. This they were supplied with much more from Cape Breton, than any place in the world in the possession of Papists. And the contention of France with the Dutch, deprives them of most of their supply of this sort, which they had elsewhere. When the prophet Isaiah foretells the depriving Egypt of its wealth and temporal supplies, under the figure of drying up their rivers, this is particularly mentioned, that they should be deprived of their fish. Isa. xix. 4, &c. “ And the Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel Lord. And the waters shall fail from the sea, and the rivers shall be wasted and dried up ; and they shall turn the rivers far away, and the brooks of defence shall be emptied and dried up. The fishers also

shall mourn, and all they that cast angle into the brooks shall lament, and they that spread nets upon the waters shall languish." This is expressed in the prophecies of drying up the waters, i. e. the supplies of Egypt ; and this probably is implied in the prophecies of drying up the waters of that city that is spiritually called Egypt. And it may be noted, that this is not only a supply that the church of Antichrist has literally out of the waters, but is that part of their temporal supply which is eminently the supply and food of their Antichristian superstition, or which their Popish religion makes necessary for them.

These things duly considered, I imagine afford us ground to suppose, not only that the effect of this sixth vial is already begun, but that some progress is already made in it, and that this vial is now running apace. And when it shall be finished, there is all reason to suppose that the destruction of Antichrist will very speedily follow ; and that the two last vials will succeed one another more closely than the other vials. When once the river Euphrates was dried up, and Cyrus's way was prepared, he delayed not, but immediately entered into the city to destroy it. Nor is it God's manner, when once his way is prepared, to delay to deliver his church and shew mercy to Zion. When once impediments are removed, Christ will no longer remain at a distance, but will be like a roe or a young hart, coming swiftly to the help of his people. When that cry is made, Isa. lvii. 14. " Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, &c. The high and lofty one that inhabits eternity, is represented as very near to revive the spirit of the contrite, and deliver his people with whom he had been wroth," Ver. 15, to the end. When that cry is made Isa. xl. " Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert an highway for our God ; every valley shall be exalted," &c. God tells his church, *that her warfare is accomplished, and the time to comfort her is come, and that the glory of the Lord now shall be revealed, and all flesh see it together, ver. 1.....5.* And agreeably to these things, Christ, on the pouring out the sixth vial, says, *Behold I come.* Rev. xvi. 15. The sixth vial is the forerunner of the seventh and last, to prepare its way.

The angel that pours out this vial is the harbinger of Christ ; and when the harbinger is come, the king is at hand. John the Baptist, that was Christ's harbinger, who came to level mountains and fill up valleys, proclaimed, *The kingdom of heaven is at hand ; and when he had prepared Christ's way, then the Lord suddenly came into his temple, even the messenger of the covenant*, Mal. iii. 1.

It is true, that we do not know how long this vial may continue running, and so Christ's way preparing, before it is fully prepared : But yet if there be reason to think the effect of this vial is begun, or is near, then there is reason also to think that the beginning of that great work of God's spirit, in reviving of religion, which, before it is finished, will issue in Antichrist's ruin, is not far off. For it is pretty manifest, that the beginning of this work will accompany the sixth vial. For the gathering together of the armies on both sides, on the side of Christ and Antichrist, to that great battle that shall issue in the overthrow of the latter, will be under this vial ; (compare Rev. xvi. 12, 13, 14, with chapter xix. 11, to the end) And it is plain that Christ's manifesting himself, and wonderfully appearing after long hiding himself to plead his own and his people's cause, and riding forth against his enemies in a glorious manner, and his people's following him in pure linen, or the practice of righteousness and pure religion, will be the thing that will give the alarm to Antichrist, and cause him to gather that vast host to make the utmost opposition. But this alarm and gathering together is represented as being under the sixth vial. So that it will be a great revival, and mighty progress of true religion under the sixth vial, eminently threatening the speedy and utter overthrow of Satan's kingdom on earth, that will so mightily rouse the old serpent, to exert himself with such exceeding violence, in that greatest conflict and struggle that ever he had with Christ and the Church, since the world stood.

All the seven vials bring terrible judgments upon Antichrist ; but there seems to be something distinguishing of the three last, the fifth, sixth and seventh, viz. That they more directly tend to the overthrow of his kingdom, and accordingly

each of them is attended with a great reviving of religion. The fifth vial was attended with such a revival, and reformation, that greatly weakened and diminished the throne or kingdom of the beast, and went far towards its ruin. It seems as though the sixth vial should be much more so; for it is the distinguishing note of this vial, that it is the preparatory vial, which more than any other vial prepares the way for Christ's coming to destroy the kingdom of Antichrist, and set up his own kingdom in the world. A great outpouring of the Spirit accompanied that dispensation that was preparatory to Christ's coming in his public ministry, in the days of his flesh: So, much more, will a great outpouring of the Spirit accompany the dispensation that will be preparatory to Christ's coming in his kingdom.

And besides those things which belong to the preparation of Christ's way, which are so often represented by levelling mountains, drying up rivers, &c. viz. The unravelling intricacies, and removing difficulties attending Christian doctrines, the distinguishing between true religion and its false appearances, the detecting and exploding errors and corrupt principles, and the reforming the wicked lives of professors, which have been the chief stumbling blocks and obstacles that have hitherto hindered the progress of true religion; I say, these things, which seem to belong to this preparatory vial, are the proper work of the Spirit of God, promoting and advancing divine light and true piety, and can be the effect of nothing else.

And that the beginning of that glorious work of God's Spirit, which shall finally bring on the church's latter day glory, will accompany that other effect of this vial, viz. The turning the streams of the wealth of the world, the bringing its treasures, and the gains of its trade and navigation, into the true Protestant church of Christ, seems very manifest, because this very effect is spoken of as that which shall be at the beginning of this glorious work. Isa. lx. 8, 9. "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows? Surely the Isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish, *first*, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God. and to the holy one of Israel,

because he hath glorified thee." So that it is to be hoped that before this effect of this vial, which is now probably begun, is at an end, the Spirit of God will so influence the hearts of Protestants, that they will be disposed to devote to the service of God the silver and gold they take from their Popish enemies, and the gains of their trade and navigation, both to the East and Westindies, so that their merchandize and hire shall be holiness to the Lord.

Agreeably to what has been supposed, that an extraordinary outpouring of the Spirit of God is to accompany this sixth vial ; so the beginning of a work of extraordinary awakening has already attended the probable beginning of this vial ; and has been continued in one place or other, for many years past ; although it has been, in some places, mingled with much enthusiasm, after the manner of things in their first beginnings, unripe, and mixed with much crudity. But it is to be hoped a far more pure, extensive and glorious revival of religion is not far off, which will more properly be the beginning of that work, which in its issue shall overthrow the kingdom of Antichrist, and of Satan through the world. But God will be inquired of for this, by the house of Israel, to do it for them.

ANS. 5. If notwithstanding all that I have said, it be still judged that there is sufficient reason to determine that the ruin of Antichrist is at a very great distance, and if all that I have said, as arguing that there is reason to hope that the beginning of that glorious revival of religion, which in its continuance and progress will destroy the kingdom of Antichrist is not very far off, be judged to be of no force ; yet it will not follow that our complying with what is proposed to us in the late memorial from Scotland, will be in vain, or not followed with such spiritual blessings, as will richly recompense the pains of such extraordinary prayer for the Holy Spirit, and the revival of religion. If God does not grant that greatest of all effusions of his Spirit, so soon as we desire, yet we shall have the satisfaction of a consciousness of our having employed ourselves in a manner that is certainly agreeable to Christ's will and frequent commands, in being much in prayer for this mercy, and much more in it than has heretofore been com-

mon with Christians : And there will be all reason to hope, that we shall receive some blessed token of his acceptance. If the fall of mystical Babylon, and the work of God's Spirit that shall bring it to pass, be at several hundred years distance, yet it follows not that there will be no happy revivals of religion before that time, that shall be richly worth the most diligent, earnest and constant praying for.

I would say something to one Objection more, and then hasten to the conclusion of this discourse.

OBJECT. VI. Some may be ready to object, That what is proposed in this memorial is a new thing, such as never was put in practice in the church of God before.

Ans. If there be something circumstantially new in it, this cannot be a sufficient objection. The duty of prayer is no new duty : For many of God's people expressly to agree, as touching something they shall ask in prayer, is no new thing : For God's people to agree on circumstances of time and place for united prayer, according to their own discretion is no new thing : For many, in different places, to agree to offer up extraordinary prayers to God, at the same time as a token of their union, is no new thing ; but has been commonly practiced in the appointment of days of fasting and prayer for special mercies. And if the people of God should engage in the duty of prayer, for the coming of Christ's kingdom, in a new manner in that respect, that they resolve they will not be so negligent of this duty, as has been common with professors of religion heretofore, but will be more frequent and fervent in it ; this would be such a new thing as ought to be, and would be only to reform a former negligence. And for the people of God in various parts of the world, visibly, and by express agreement, to unite for this extraordinary prayer, is no more than their duty, and no more than what it is foretold the people of God should actually do, before the time comes of the church's promised glory on earth. And if this be a duty, then it is a duty to come into some method to render this practicable : But it is not practicable (as was shewn before) but by this method, or some other equivalent.

## THE CONCLUSION.

AND now, upon the whole, I desire every serious Christian, that may read this discourse, calmly and deliberately to consider whether he can excuse himself from complying with what has been proposed to us and requested of us, by those ministers of Christ in Scotland, that are the authors of the late memorial. God has stirred up a part of his church, in a distant part of the world, to be in an extraordinary manner seeking and crying to him, that he would appear to favor Zion, as he has promised. And they are applying themselves to us, to join with them ; and make that very proposal to us, that is spoken of in my text, and in like manner and circumstances. The members of one church, in one country, are coming to others, in other distant countries, saying, " Let us go speedily and constantly to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts." Will it not become us readily to say " I will go also" ? What these servants of Christ ask of us, is not silver or gold, or any of our outward substance, or that we would put ourselves to any cost, or do any thing that will be likely to expose us to any remarkable trouble, difficulty or suffering in our outward interest ; but only that we would help together with them, by our prayers to God, for the greatest mercy in the world ; and that a mercy which as much concerns us as them ; for the glory of their Lord and ours, for the great advancement of our common interest and happiness, and the happiness of our fellow creatures through all nations ; a mercy, which, at this day especially, there is great need of ; a mercy, which, we in this land do stand in particular need of ; a mercy which the word of God requires us to make the subject matter of our prayers, above all other mercies, and gives us more encouragement to pray earnestly and unitedly to him for, than any other mercy ; and a mercy, which the providence of God towards the world of mankind, at this day, does loudly call the people of God to pray for. I think, we cannot reasonably doubt but that these ministers have acted a part becoming disciples of the great Messiah.



and ministers of his kingdom, and have done the will of God, according to his word, in setting forward such an affair at this day, and in proposing it to us. And therefore I desire it may be considered, whether we shall not really sin against God, in refusing to comply with their proposal and request, or in neglecting it, and turning it by, with but little notice and attention ; therein disregarding that which is truly a call of God to us.

The ministers that make this proposal to us are no Separatists or schismatics, promoters of no public disorders, nor of any wildness or extravagance in matters of religion ; but are quiet and peaceable members and ministers of the church of Scotland, that have lamented the late divisions and breaches of that church. If any shall say, that they are under no advantage to judge of their character, but must take it on trust from others, because they conceal their names ; in answer to this, I would say, that I presume that no sober person will say that he has any reason to suspect them, to be any other than gentlemen of honest intention. Be sure there is no appearance of any thing else, but an upright design in their proposal : And that they have not mentioned their names, is an argument of it. It may well be presumed, from the manner of their expressing themselves, in the memorial itself, that they concealed their names from that, which perhaps may be called an excess of modesty ; choosing to be at the greatest distance from appearing to set forth themselves to the view of the world, as the heads of a great affair, and the first projectors and movers of something extraordinary, that they desire should become general, and that God's people in various distant parts of the world should agree in. And therefore, they are moreover careful to tell us, that they do not propose the affair, as now setting it on foot, but as a thing already set on foot ; and do not tell us who first projected and moved it. The proposal is made to us in a very proper and prudent manner, with all appearance of Christian modesty and sincerity, and with a very prudent guard against any thing that looks like superstition, or whatsoever might entangle a tender conscience ; and far from any appearance of a design to promote

any particular party or denomination of Christians, in opposition to others ; but with all appearance of the contrary, in their charitable request, that none would by any means conceive of any such thing to be in their view, and that all, of all denominations, and opinions concerning the late religious commotions, would join with them, in seeking the common interest of the kingdom of Christ. And therefore I think, none can be in the way of their duty, in neglecting a proposal in itself excellent, and that which they have reason to think is made with upright intentions, merely because the proposers modestly conceal their names. I do not see how any serious person, that has an ill opinion of late religious stirs, can have any color of reason to refuse a compliance with this proposal, on that account : The more disorders, extravagancies and delusions of the devil have lately prevailed, the more need have we to pray earnestly to God, for his Holy Spirit to promote true religion, in opposition to the grand deceiver, and all his works ; and the more such prayer as is proposed, is answered, the more effectually will all that is contrary to sober and pure religion, be extirpated and exploded.

One would think that every one that favors the dust of Zion, when he hears that God is stirring up a considerable number of his ministers and people, to unite in extraordinary prayer, for the revival of religion and advancement of his Kingdom, should greatly rejoice on this occasion. If we lay to heart the present calamities of the church of Christ, and long for that blessed alteration that God has promised, one would think it should be natural to rejoice at the appearance of something in so dark a day, that is so promising a token. Would not our friends that were lately in captivity at Canada, that earnestly longed for deliverance, have rejoiced to have heard of any thing that seemed to forebode the approach of their redemption ? And particularly may we not suppose that such of them as were religious persons, would greatly have rejoiced to have understood that there was stirred up in God's people an extraordinary spirit of prayer for their redemption ? And I do not know why it would not be as natural for us to rejoice at the like hopeful token of the redemption of Zion,

if we made her interest our own, and preferred Jerusalem above our chief joy.

If we are indeed called of God to comply with the proposal now made to us, then let me beseech all that do sincerely love the interest of real Christianity, notwithstanding any diversity of opinion, and former disputes, now to unite in this affair, with one heart and voice : And let us go speedily to pray before the Lord. There is no need that one should wait for another. If we can get others, that are our neighbors, to join with us, and so can conveniently spend the quarterly seasons with praying societies, this is desirable ; but if not, why should we wholly neglect the duty proposed ? Why should not we perform it by ourselves, uniting in heart and practice, as far as we are able, with those who, in distant places, are engaged in that duty at that time ?

If it be agreeable to the mind and will of God, that we should comply with the memorial, by praying for the coming of Christ's kingdom, in the manner therein proposed, then doubtless it is the duty of all to comply with the memorial, in that respect also, viz. in endeavoring, as far as in us lies, to promote others' joining in such prayer, and to render this union and agreement as extensive as may be. Private Christians may have many advantages and opportunities for this ; but especially ministers, inasmuch as they not only are by office overseers of whole congregations of God's people, and their guides, in matters of religion, but ordinarily have a far more extensive acquaintance and influence abroad, than private Christians in common have.

And I hope that such as are convinced that it is their duty to comply with, and encourage this design, will remember that we ought not only to go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek this mercy, but also to go constantly. We should unite in our practice those two things, which our Saviour unites in his precept, *praying and not fainting*. If we should continue some years, and nothing remarkable in Providence should appear, as though God heard and answered, we should act very unbecoming believers, if we should therefore begin to be disheartened, and grow dull and slack, in our seeking of

God so great a mercy. It is very apparent from the word of God, that God is wont often to try the faith and patience of his people, when crying to him for some great and important mercy, by withholding the mercy sought, for a season, and not only so, but at first to cause an increase of dark appearances ; and yet, without fail, at last, to succeed those who continue instant in prayer with all perseverance, and will not let God go except he blesses. It is now proposed that this extraordinary united prayer should continue for seven years, from November, 1746. Perhaps some that appear forward to engage, may begin to think the time long, before the seven years are out ; and may account it a dull story, to go on, for so long a time, praying in this extraordinary method, while all yet continues dark and dead, without any dawns of the wished for light, or new promising appearance in Providence of the near approach of the desired mercy. But let it be considered, whether it will not be a poor business, if our faith and patience is so short winded, that we cannot be willing to wait upon God one seven years, in a way of taking this little pains, in seeking a mercy so infinitely vast. For my part, I sincerely wish and hope that there may not be an end of extraordinary united prayer, among God's people, for the effusions of the blessed Spirit, when the seven years are ended ; but that it will be continued, either in this method, or some other, by a new agreement, that will be entered into, with greater engagedness, and more abundant alacrity, than this is ; and that extraordinary united prayer for such a mercy will be further propagated and extended, than it can be expected to be in one seven years. But yet at the same time I hope God's people, that unite in this agreement, will see some tokens for good, before these seven years are out, that shall give them to see, that God has not said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain ; and shall serve greatly to animate and encourage them to go on in united prayers for the advancement of Christ's kingdom, with increasing fervency. But whatever our hopes may be in this respect, we must be content to be ignorant of the times and seasons, which the father hath put in his own power ; and must be willing that

God should answer prayer, and fulfil his own glorious promises, in his own time ; remembering such instructions, counsels and promises of the word of God as these, Psal. xxvii. 14. "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart ; wait I say on the Lord." Hab. ii. 3, 4. "For the vision is yet for an appointed time ; but in the end it shall speak and not lie : Though it tarry, wait for it ; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." Mich. vii. 7. "I will look unto the Lord, I will wait for the God of my salvation : My God will hear me." Isa. xxv. 8, 9. "God will wipe away tears from off all faces, and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth ; for the Lord hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God ! We have waited for him, and he will save us : This is Jehovah ! We have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." AMEN.