

GREAT BRITAIN'S PRESENT JOYS AND HOPES ;

DISPLAYED

IN TWO SERMONS,

PREACHED IN CHESTER.

THE FORMER ON THE NATIONAL THANKSGIVING DAY, DECEMBER 31, 1706. THE LATTER THE DAY FOLLOWING, BEING NEW-YEAR'S DAY.

PSALM lxy. 11.

Thou crownest the year with thy goodness.

AMONG other feasts of the Lord, which the Jewish church was appointed to observe, (and many annual feasts they had for one fast,) one is called, *The feast of in-gathering at the end of the year*;^a according to the civil computation of their year. The feast we are, this day, solemnizing with joy, in communion with all the religious assemblies of our land, being appointed by authority on the last day of the year, according to the vulgar reckoning, may be looked upon as our feast of in-gathering: in it we appear before the Lord, in whom all our joys must terminate, and to whom all our trophies must be consecrated. Remember therefore the law of those feasts, that none must appear before the Lord empty: if our hearts be here empty, what will it avail us that our congregation is full? It is the soul that appears before God: if that be empty of holy joy in God, and holy concern for the welfare of the public, which ought to fill us on such occasions, it is but the carcass and shell, without the life and kernel, of a Thanksgiving-day.

Let this feast at the end of the year be kept to the honour of that God who is the *Alpha* and *Omega*, the *First* and the *Last*; both the spring, and the centre, of all our glories. As we must begin every day and year with him, so with him we must end both. *For of him, and through him, and to him are all things.*

Praise is waiting for God this day in our English Zion, and to him must the vow be performed;^b the vow of thanksgiving to God for his mercies to

the land of our nativity; in the peace whereof we have our share; and in the praises whereof we are unworthy of the name of Englishmen, if we do not cheerfully bear our part. And how can we sum up our acknowledgments of God's favours to our nation, in more proper words than those of my text, *Thou crownest the year with thy goodness*. Common providence crowns every year with the goodness of God; but special providences crown some years more than others with it.

I. Every year is crowned with God's goodness. We of this land have as much reason to say so as any other people; for, like Canaan, it is a land which the eyes of the Lord our God are always upon, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.^c He who appoints the bounds of men's habitations, has appointed very well for us: *The lines are fallen to us in such pleasant places*, as forbid us to envy the situation of any of our neighbours, or of any nation under heaven.

As we have *daily* mercies to give thanks for, in the close of every day; so we have *yearly* mercies to give thanks for, in the close of every year, even the blessings of "Heaven above," and the "Earth beneath;" for both which we are indebted to him who made heaven and earth, and continues the ordinances of both for the benefit and comfort of that mean, unworthy creature,—man.

1. The annual revolutions of the heavenly bodies, and the benefit we receive by their light and influences, in the several seasons of the year. Summer and winter crown the year; God made both, and both for the service of men,—as well as night and day.^d The shadows of the evening are not more acceptable to the weary labourer,^e than the winter

^a Exod. xxiii. 16.

^b Ps. lxy. 1.

^c Deut. xi. 12.

^d Ps. lxxiv. 16.

^e Job vii. 2.

quarters of refreshment are to fatigued armies; and then the spring, that time when kings go forth to war,^f is as welcome to the bold and faithful soldier, as the morning is to the honest and industrious husbandman, who then goes forth to his work and to his labour.^g

And he who made summer and winter, has made both very easy and comfortable to our land. So very temperate is our climate, and so well secured from both extremes, that the inconveniences neither of the heat in summer, nor of the cold in winter, are intolerable, nor such obstructions to business and intercourse as they are in some other countries, no farther north than Russia, nor south than Spain. So that if our land produce not such furs as the north does, and such silks as the south, we ought not to complain: nature did not provide them, because it had better provided that we should not need them. We can bid both summer and winter welcome; each are beautiful in their season, and neither are a terror to us. May the happy temper of our climate be infused into our minds, and our moderation be known unto all men!

God's covenant with Noah and his sons, by which the seasons of the year were re-settled after the interruption of the deluge, is the crown and glory of every year: and the constant and regular succession of summer and winter, seed-time and harvest,^h in performance of that promise, is an encouragement to our faith in the covenant of grace, which is established firmly as those ordinances of heaven!ⁱ

2. The annual fruits and products of the earth, grass for the cattle, and herbs for the service of men,^k with these the earth is every year enriched for use; as well as beautified and adorned for show. The harvest is the crown of every year, and the great influence of God's goodness to an evil and unthankful world. And so kind and bountiful is the hand of providence herein, that we are supplied not only with necessary food, for the support of nature, and the *holding of our souls in life*; but with a great variety of pleasant things for ornament and delight. Our soul is as happy as our climate, and like that of Asher, yields royal dainties.^l

Though all years are not alike plentiful, yet—through the wise disposal of Providence, that great house-keeper of the universe—one year serves to help out another, and so to bring in another; so that when we gather much, it proves there is not much over, and when little, there is no great lack. Or, one country supplies another; so that the extremities of famine have never sent us from our *Canaan* to sojourn in any *Egypt* for bread, but either we have had it among us, or have been able to fetch it.

It is from the goodness of God that we have our yearly corn, and out of that our daily bread, which

even after a plentiful harvest we might come short of, if when we *bring it home* God did *blow upon it*.^m In these things God does good to all, and gives them witnesses of his being and providence, his power and bounty, sending rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.ⁿ And these witnesses to us, will be witnesses against us, if we serve not the Lord our God with joyfulness and gladness of heart, in the abundance of the good things he gives us; but make those things the food and fuel of our lusts, which were given us to be oil to the wheels of our obedience.

Let us thank God for all the blessings of this kind, with which every year of our lives has been crowned; and let not the commonness of them lower their value with us, nor lessen our grateful sense of God's goodness to us in them; nor because they have been hitherto constant, let us therefore imagine that they come of course, or that to-morrow must needs be as this day, and much more abundant: but let the praise of all those blessings which we enjoy by the constant course of nature, be given to the God of nature; to him let us own our obligations for what is past, and on him let us own our dependence for the future, lest we provoke him to *take away our corn in the season thereof*.

II. Some years are, in a special manner, crowned with the goodness of God more than other years; *Thou wilt bless the crown of the year with thy goodness*, so the Seventy read it. This year, in which by extraordinary instances, not to be paralleled in the events of former years, thou hast made known thy goodness; things which the former years expected not, and which the following years cannot forget, and will reap the benefit of. This year, which thou hast made—to excel other years, and to out-shine them in the historian's annals as much as crowned heads transcend common persons—by *reviving the work in the midst of the years*,^o when we were ready to ask, *Where are all the wonders which our fathers told us of?*^p And to speak of the *years of the right hand of the Most High*,^q as what we have heard and read of, and what our fathers have told us of, but which we expected not to see in our time.

Every year was crowned with God's goodness, but not so as the sixth year was, when God made the earth to bring forth fruit three years,^r which were to live upon the products of that. Every year was not a year of release, much less a year of jubilee. The great God never does any thing mean or little; even the common works of nature, and the common course of providence, give proofs of the infinite power and goodness of the Creator and Director of the universe: but sometimes the arm of Omnipotence is in a special manner made bare, and the treasures of divine bounty opened, in which, though

^f 2 Sam. xi. 1.

^g Jer. xxxi. 35.

^h Ps. civ. 23.

^k Zech. ix. 17.

ⁱ Gen. viii. 22.

^l Gen. xlix. 20.

^m Hag. i. 9.

^p Judg. vi. 13.

ⁿ Acts xiv. 17.

^q Lev. xxv. 21.

^o Hab. iii. 2.

^r Ps. lxxvii. 10.

God never out-does himself, (as men are sometimes said to do upon extraordinary occasions,) he out-does what he used to do, that he may awaken a stupid and unthinking world, to see the goings of our God, our King, in his sanctuary,^a and may proclaim himself glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, working wonders.^b

Some expositors apply the year, here said to be crowned with God's goodness, to the year of gospel grace, in which redemption was purchased for, and published to, a poor captive world, which is called, *The acceptable year of the Lord.*^c That was indeed the year of God's goodness, when the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward men appeared so clear, so bright; that was indeed a crowned year, not to mention the crowns of common years, the fruitful fields and flowery meads. Even the glory of that year in which Israel was brought out of Egypt, and received the law from God's mouth, all the glory which crowned the top of Sinai's mount, was not to be compared with the glory of the everlasting gospel, that glory which *excelleth*, that crown of glory, *which fadeth not away*.

But the occasion of the day leads me to apply the text to those fruits and gifts of the divine goodness, with which our land has been crowned this year past, which the house of peers in their address have called, "A WONDERFUL YEAR;" and therefore we may take leave to call it so, who must form our ideas of public affairs very much by the sentiments of those, who are better acquainted than we can be with the particular motions of them, and have a clearer insight into their secret springs and tendencies than it is fit for us to pretend to. I know present things are apt to affect us most, and will allow for that; remembering many a thing, which we called a great and mighty thing when it was in the doing, but it afterwards dwindled, and looked very little: but not undervaluing what God has wrought for us formerly, as if there had never been the like before, nor prejudging what may yet be in the womb of a kind providence, as if we were never to expect the like again, but only giving it its due weight, and what we think it will hold to, it cannot be denied, but that God has of late done great things for us;^d so *they say among the heathen*, and shall not we say it among ourselves?

Blessed be God for the many testimonies borne this day, by better hearts and better tongues than mine, to the glory of God's goodness; but into the great treasury of the nation's offering, into which the great men cast in of their abundance, we are here out of our poverty to cast in our mite: and the righteous acts of the Lord must be rehearsed at the *places of drawing water*,^e which were the rendezvous of the meaner sort of people, as well as in the *palaces*

of Jacob, where the princes of our people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham.^f And we trust it shall please the Lord better than hecatombs of drink-offerings and sacrifices.

In this plain and short acknowledgment, let us therefore all join with thankful hearts, *Lord, thou crownest the year—THIS year with thy goodness*. Observe,

1. God and his providence must be owned in all the blessings of the year. Whatever has been or is our honour, our joy, our hope, comes from God's hand, and he must have the praise of it. We are very unthinking and unwise if we know not, and very unjust and ungrateful if we own not, that God *gives us our corn, our wine, our oils*,^g our victories, our wealth, our peace, our all: *Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?*^h whatever it is we glory in: *Let him that glories, therefore, glory in the Lord.*ⁱ

It is fit instruments should have their due praise; and the sense the nation has expressed of its obligations to those whom God has honoured in the public service, is a very good indication. It was a sign that Israel remembered not the Lord their God, when they showed not kindness to the house of Gideon;^j but we must lift up our eyes above the hills, as high as heaven, for from thence cometh our help,^k and our salvation. It is not from our own sword or bow, but from God's right hand and his arm, that our kingdom is great, our power victorious, and our glory bright; and therefore to him must the kingdom, the power, and the glory, be ascribed. *Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel*; for without him it never had been done, how willingly soever the people offered themselves.^l

We believe there is a Providence that governs the world, and rules in all the affairs of it; and good men have the comfort of it every day. Even a heathen could say, *Οὐκ ἔστι ζῆν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ κενὸν θεὸν καὶ κενὴ προνοία*—*There were no living in this world without God and his providence*. If Providence be our support in the day of our distress, let Providence have our praise in the day of our triumph. It watches us particularly, let us watch it filially; and since every creature is that to us that God makes it to be, let our thanks pass through the instruments to the great Author of all our salvation.

2. The goodness of God must in a particular manner be acknowledged, as that in which all our springs are, and from which all our streams flow. We must take notice, not only of his wisdom and power in effecting things great and admirable in themselves, but his goodness and mercy in doing that which is happy and advantageous for us; and make that the burthen of all our songs, *For he is good, and his mercy endureth for ever*; a short song,

^a Ps. lxxviii. 24.

^b Exod. xv. 11.

^c Luke iv. 19.

^d Ps. xxvi. 2, 3.

^e Judg. v. 11.

^f Ps. xlvii. 9.

3 B

^g Hos. ii. 8.

^h Job xii. 9.

ⁱ 1 Cor. i. 31.

^j Judg. viii. 34, 35.

^k Ps. cxxi. 1.

^l Judg. v. 2.

but highly honoured, when it was upon the singing of these words, that the glory of the Lord took possession of Solomon's temple.*

When we consider what an unworthy people we are, how ungrateful we have been for God's former favours, and what unsuitable returns we have made, we have reason to admire God's goodness, above all his attributes, in the repetition and progress of his blessings; for he is good to the evil and unthankful. If England's God and Saviour had not been a God of infinite mercy, God and not man, in pardoning sin, we had been ruined long since: but his goodness is his glory, and it is ours; in it, the power of the Lord is great, according as he hath spoken.¹

Acts of justice to the church's enemies are acts of goodness to her friends. When *he that is mighty doth great things, and scatters the proud in the imagination of their hearts*, it is in remembrance of his mercy,—and his mercy therein is on them that fear him from generation² to generation. O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness! *Lord, thou art good, and dost good*, and thou, therefore, dost good, because thou art good, not for any merit of ours, but for the honour of thy own mercy.

3. These blessings which flow from the goodness of God have crowned this year; he in them has crowned it. That word shall lead us into the detail of those favours, which we are this day to take notice of, with thankfulness, to the glory of God. A crown signifies three things, and each will be of use to us. (1.) It dignifies and adorns. (2.) It surrounds and encloses. And, (3.) It finishes and completes. And accordingly this year has been dignified, surrounded, and finished with the blessings of God's goodness.

(1.) God hath dignified this year with his goodness. A crown denotes honour. Heaven itself, which is perfect holiness in everlasting honour, is often represented by a crown; *a crown of glory which fadeth not away*: and a year of honour this has been to our land; the children that shall be born will call it so.

Surely the English nation never looked greater, nor made a better figure, among the nations than it does at this day. Never did it appear more formidable to its enemies, nor more acceptable to its friends; never were the eyes of Europe more upon its counsels; never was its alliance more courted and valued, nor its influences upon all its confederates more powerful and benign; never was English conduct and English courage more admired, nor our English Jerusalem more a praise in the earth. Would to God our goodness grew in proportion to our greatness; (and that would be both the advancement and security of our greatness;) and that when God, as he promised Israel, *makes us high in praise, and*

in name, and in honour, this might be the fruit of it, *that* (as it follows there) *we might be a holy people to the Lord our God*;† that while our forces, and those of our allies, are triumphing over the common enemy of Europe abroad, giving us occasion for one thanksgiving-day after another, virtue and serious godliness might triumph—over vice and profaneness, impiety and immorality, those common enemies of mankind—at home; that the pious proclamation of our gracious queen, and her other endeavours for the suppression of vice, and the support of religion, may not be frustrated; that all our other glories may be made substantial, and may be established—to us, and those that shall come after us, by that righteousness which exalteth a nation; and may not be withered by sin, which is a reproach to any people, especially to ours.

Two crowns are at this day the honour of our English nation, and for both we are highly indebted to the divine goodness: The imperial crown of government at home; and the triumphal crown of victory abroad.

[1.] The imperial crown of government at home is our honour and joy, and that by which we have a great deal of reason to value ourselves, and for which we have no less reason to be thankful to God, who because he loved our land,¹ and his thoughts concerning us were thoughts of good, and not of evil, to give us an expected end,² set such a government over us.

Which of all the crowns of Europe can pretend to outshine the English diadem at this day, which is as the sun when it goes forth in its strength? The flowers of our crown are not—like his on the other side of the water, who would be called *the king of glory*—gathered out of the spoils of ruined rights and liberties of the subjects, nor stained, like his, with *righteous blood*. The jewels of our crown are not got by fraud and rapine from injured neighbours; not, like his, seized by an unrighteous war, and a deceitful peace, in a bold and impudent defiance of all that is honourable, just, and sacred: no, the flowers and jewels of our crown are *its own* against all the world; none of all our neighbours has any demand upon us. Mercy and truth are the splendour of our crown, and justice and righteousness the never-failing supporters of our throne. The globe and sceptre, that is, the wealth and power, of the English sovereign, are both equitable beyond dispute,—who, therefore, may justly assume that motto, and abide by it, *Je mien tiendrai—I will hold my own*.

How happy, how very happy, is the constitution of our government! such as effectually secures both the just prerogatives of the prince, and the just properties of the subject; so that no good prince can

* 2 Chron. v. 13. † Numb. xiv. 17. ‡ Luke i. 49, 50.

1 Deut. xxvi. 19. 2 Chron. ix. 1. 3 Jer. xxix. 11.

desire to be greater, nor any good subject desire to be easier, than the constitution of our government provides; for which, we may justly be the envy of all our neighbours; and in which, we ourselves ought to take the greatest satisfaction, sitting down with delight under the shadow of it. If there be any who are *given to change*, I am sure we have no reason to *meddle with them*. *O my soul, come not thou into their secret*. The ancient landmarks, which our fathers have set, and which the patriots of our own age have confirmed, are so well placed, that in kindness to posterity, as well as in honour to antiquity, we have reason to pray they may never be removed.

Thus bright does the crown of England shine:—yet this is not all the honour of our day. We have further to add, that the head that wears this crown, reflects more honour to it, than it borrows from it. A true Deborah, a mother in Israel, a prudent, careful, tender mother to the Israel of God; one who entirely *seeks the welfare of our people, speaking peace to all their seed*; who is herself a great pattern of virtue and piety, and a pattern of it in her realms; whose conduct is as pure and unexceptionable, as her title is clear and incontestable. It is with very good reason that we do so often in our religious assemblies bless God “for her, and for her wise and good government, and the tranquillity we enjoy under the protection and influences of it.”

Far be it from me to *give flattering titles unto man* any where, especially in this place; in so doing *my Maker would soon take me away*;† but from a deep conviction of God’s goodness to us, and to our land, in the present government, I think it is my duty, as a minister, to stir up myself and you, thankfully to acknowledge it to the glory of our Lord Jesus, the eternal wisdom of the Father, *by whom kings and queens reign, and princes decree justice*; and as the performance of that promise which is made to the gospel church, *Kings shall be her nursing-fathers, and queens her nursing-mothers*. Faithful is he who has promised.

I find it related concerning that holy, good man, Mr. Richard Greenham, who lived and died in the glorious reign of Queen Elizabeth, that “He much rejoiced and praised God for the happy government of that princess, and for the blessed calm and peace of God’s church and people under it; and spake often of it both publicly and privately, as he was occasioned, and stirred up the hearts of all men what he could, to pray, and to praise God with him for it continually; yea, this matter so affected him, that the day before he died his thoughts were much troubled, for that men were so unthankful for her happy deliverance from the conspiracies of the papists against her.” And I am sure we have no

less reason to be thankful for the good government we are under, but much more; so far does the copy go beyond the original.

The happiness of the nation in the present ministry, the prudence of our counsellors, the confessed fidelity of those in public trusts, the harmony and good understanding between the queen and the two Houses, and their mutual confidence in each other, and that between the Houses, with the triumphs of catholic charity over bigotry on all sides, ought to be taken notice of by us with all thankfulness, to the glory of that God who has thus crowned us with the blessings of goodness.

And, lastly, the project set on foot for the uniting of the two imperial crowns in one, that England and Scotland, like Judah and Ephraim,‡ may become one stick in the hand of the Lord, which our wise men think will add greatly to the strength, wealth, and honour of this land, is one of the blessings with which this year has been crowned; though the perfecting of it is reserved to be the crown of another year, as we hope the good effects of it will crown the years of many generations, and posterity will for it call this reign blessed.

[2.] The triumphal crown of victory abroad is likewise the honour and joy of our land at this day. What a series of successes has this year been crowned with! and how glorious will the history of it appear in the book of the wars of the Lord, what he did in Flanders, what in Spain, what in Italy! However it shall please God for the future to deal with us, here we must set up our Ebenezer, and say, *Hitherto the Lord hath helped us*.

It was a clear and glorious victory which opened the campaign in Flanders, when we scarce knew that the armies had taken the field, and which, through the good hand of our God upon us, was well improved. It was a happy turn that was given to our affairs at Barcelona, which if it might have been better improved afterwards, ought not to make us unthankful to God for the good footing then and there gotten. In these and other instances, the righteous God has pleaded our righteous cause, and given judgment for us.

And a righteous cause it is; it is requisite that we be clear in this, that we may make our prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, for its prosperity and success, in faith. Something it may not be improper for me to say to make it out, for the help of those of you who are not capable of getting better information.

Judge therefore within yourselves;

(1.) Is not that a righteous war, which is undertaken for the asserting the rights of injured nations, and the securing of the common interests of Europe? It is in the necessary defence of these that we

† Job xxxii. 22.
3 = 2

‡ Ezek. xxxvii. 19.

= Numb. xxi. 14.

appear, and act at this day, in conjunction with our allies, against the exorbitant power and boundless ambition of France, which must be reduced, which must be repressed, or we and our neighbours, we and our posterity, cannot be safe.

When proud and haughty men will aim at an universal monarchy, will oblige every sheaf to bow to theirs, will command the territories and treasures of all their neighbours; that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth;^a it is necessary to the public safety, and is for the honour of God, as King of nations, that a check be given to their rage, *Here shall thy proud waves be stayed*, which by aiming at universal monarchy, threaten an universal deluge. He who, like Ishmael, has his hand against every man, must have every man's hand against him, and can expect no other.

War among the nations, is like the administration of justice in a particular community, it is a revenger to execute wrath upon him who does wrong;^b it is a terror to evil-doers, and a protection of right. There are no courts of justice in which an unrighteous king and kingdom may be impleaded, and by whose sentence restitution may be awarded, the injured righted, and wrong-doers punished: the court of Heaven therefore must be appealed to by the drawing of the sword of war, when gentler methods have been tried in vain: for it must be the *ratio ultima regum*,—the *dernier resort of injured nations*. In this supreme court Jephtha thus lodges his appeal, *The Lord, the Judge, be Judge this day between the children of Israel and the children of Ammon*.^c And the final determination of these appeals, no doubt, will be according to equity; for he who sits in the throne judgeth right: though the righteous cause is not always crowned with victory at first, witness the war between Israel and the Benjamites,^d yet great is the truth, and will prevail at last. See Job xx. 15.

The expense of blood and treasure must not be grudged, when it is necessary for the settling the balance of power, the securing of the just rights of nations, and the cutting off of those horns with which they have been wounded and scattered.^e

And the case is very much strengthened, when acts of violence and injustice are maintained by treachery, and a perfidious violation of oaths and leagues; when the public faith of princes and states is pawned in vain, and the most sacred cords by which conscience should be held, are snapt in sunder like Samson's bonds, only because a man thinks himself a Samson for strength: and this not once or twice, but often, then it is time to draw the sword to avenge the quarrel of the covenant. If a man despise an oath, and break through that, when lo, he hath given his hand, *As I live*, says the Lord, he

shall not escape, but it shall surely be recompensed upon that faithless head.^f War is an appeal to God's providence, as the Lord of hosts, against those who would not abide by an appeal to his ordinance, as the God of truth.

(ii.) Is not that a righteous war, which is undertaken in defence of the particular interests of our nation? If we had not helped our neighbours to quench the fire in their borders, we know not how soon it might have been kindled in our own bowels, and it might have been out of the power of our hands to extinguish it, and to prevent the ruin of all that is dear to us. It is for our people, and the cities of our God, that we engage in this war; self-preservation requires it.

How can we be safe, how can we sit still unconcerned, while so formidable a neighbour as France has been, not only harbours, but espouses, the cause, and aims at the establishment, of one who pretends to our crown, sets up a title, and makes an interest against the best of governments, and manifestly designs the ruin of our religion, rights, and liberties, and all we have that is valuable? How can we do otherwise, who must write after a *French copy*, and be governed by *French counsels*?

Did the wisdom of the nation find it requisite to oblige us, by an oath, not only to be faithful to the present government, but to maintain the succession as it is established in the protestant line; (which we pray God late to bring in, but long to continue, that it may prove a successful expedient, for the extinguishing of the hopes of our popish adversaries, and all their aiders and abettors;) and is it not the duty, as well as interest, of the nation, in pursuance to that engagement, to take all possible precaution for the fortifying our bulwarks against every attempt upon that establishment? There is no man that has sincerely abjured the Pretender, but he must in good earnest pray against his supporters.

Well! this is the cause, the just and honourable cause, in which our banner is displayed; for the prosperity of which we have often prayed; and in the good success of which we are this day rejoicing, as that which is very much the honour of *this year*. If in any places which we are concerned for, there have been some losses, and disappointments,—or advances not so quick as we were apt to promise ourselves,—those need not surprise or perplex us: in general, the progress of our arms has been very considerable, beyond what we could reasonably have expected, and likely to turn greatly to our advantage.

2. God has *surrounded* this year with his goodness, *compassed and enclosed it* on every side. So we translate the same word, (Ps. v. 12.) *With favour wilt thou compass* (or crown) *him as with a shield*. He has

^a Isa. v. 8.

^b Rom. xiii. 4.

^c Judg. xi. 27.

^d Judg. xx.

^e Zech. i. 21.

^f Ezek. xvii. 18, 19.

given us instances of his goodness in every thing that concerns us ; so that turn which way we will, we meet with the tokens of his favour ; every part of the year has been enriched with the blessings of heaven, and no gap has been left open for any desolating judgment to enter by. A hedge of protection and peculiar enclosure has been made about us on every side, and has been to us as the crown to the head ; so entirely have we been begirt by it, and comforted on every side.¹

Let us observe some instances of that goodness which has *gone through* the year.

(1.) It has been a year of peace and tranquillity at home, even while we have been engaged in war abroad ; as, thanks be to God, the years past have been. The God of peace makes peace in our borders ;² securing us from foreign invasions upon our borders, and domestic insurrections within our borders ; and blessing the care of those, who under him are the conservators of our peace. We ought to be so much the more sensible of this mercy, and thankful for it, because so many other countries in Europe are at this time the seat of war. When we read in the public intelligences of the ruin of cities by long sieges, the putting of all to the sword, and the devastations made in those countries where armies are encamped, let us take occasion to bless God that it is not so in our land. We hear, indeed, of wars, and rumours of wars, in other countries ; but at so great a distance, that they create no horror or inconvenience to us. What a consternation was the prophet Jeremiah himself put into by the noise of war ? *My bowels, my bowels, I am pained at my very heart, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.*³ Thanks be to God, we are not acquainted with those frights, we see not those desolations of fire and sword, we hear not the thundering noise of the instruments of war, that breathe threatenings and slaughter.⁴ How pleasant is the noise of yonder great guns, now they are proclaiming our victories, and celebrating our triumphs, and as it were discharging war out of our kingdom ! But how dreadful would it be, how would it make our ears to tingle, and our hearts to tremble, if the noise came from the batteries of an enemy, and every shot carried with it a messenger of death flying swiftly !

The peace we enjoy is the comfort of our lives, the security of our estates, and the protection both of the civil and sacred administrations. War is an interruption to the course of justice, and a disturbance to its courts, an obstruction to the progress of the word of God, and a terror to religious assemblies : but, blessed be God, both are held among us *without fear* ; on all our glory this is a defence ;⁵ and

this makes our English Jerusalem a quiet habitation, and the cities of our solemnities doubly pleasant to us.⁶ To this we owe it, that the highways are not unoccupied, that the plains are not deserted, and that our cities remain in their strength. We are *delivered from the noise of archers, at the places of drawing water : here, therefore, let us rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord, even his righteous acts towards the inhabitants of his villages in Israel.*⁷

Thanks be to God, it is with us at this day, as it was with Judah and Israel in Solomon's time, when they dwelt safely, every man under his own vine, and under his own fig-tree,⁸ and the property of them not questioned or invaded ; what we have we can call our own ; and the enjoyment of them not disturbed or embittered to us. God grant, that security and sensuality may not be the ill effects of so good a cause, as our long peace and tranquillity !

(2.) It has been a year of plenty, and abundance of the increase of the earth. Though we of this country were threatened, and somewhat incommoded, by unseasonable and excessive rains in the time of harvest, (and it has been observed, that our land, unlike to Canaan, is in danger of suffering by too much rain more than by too little,) yet in wrath God remembered mercy, and our corn was not *taken away*, as it might have been, *in the season thereof* ; but our markets are full, and a kind Providence does abundantly bless our provisions, and satisfies our poor with bread,⁹ if any thing will satisfy them. It is a pity this should be complained of as a grievance by the seller, which is so great a blessing to the buyer ; and that some expedient or other is not found out, in imitation of Joseph's prudence, to keep the balance somewhat even between them ; that he who sells his corn, may neither have cause to complain of plenty, nor he who buys the bread, of scarcity.

Whatever complaints bad hearts may make of bad times, the scarcity of money, and the burthen of taxes, and the like ; those who know the world better than I do, observe, " that whatever there are in France, in England there are no visible marks of poverty ; nor any sign to be seen, either in building or furniture, either in food or clothing, no, nor in the alehouse or the tavern, (where, one would think, money, if scarce, should first be spared,) of the decay of our trade, and the expense of the war being insupportable."

(3.) It should seem to have been a year too of more trade than one would have expected, considering the war. Numerous fleets of merchantmen are come in, and our surrounding ocean is not only as a strong wall to us, but as a rich mine ; so that, with Zebulun, we *suck of the abundance of the seas, and of*

¹ Ps. lxxi. 21.

² Ps. cxlviii. 14.

³ Jer. iv. 19.

⁴ Just as these words were spoken, it happened that the cannon of the castle began to be discharged in honour of the day,

within hearing of our assembly, which occasioned the following remark.

⁵ Isa. iv. 5.

⁶ Isa. xxxiii. 20.

⁷ Judg. v. 11.

⁸ 1 Kings iv. 25.

⁹ Ps. cxxxi. 15.

treasures hid in the sand.^b If it be complained of that we lose more ships of trade to the enemy than they to us, it must be considered, that suppose the matter of fact be so, the reason is because we have more to lose, abundantly more, and more valuable.

May our merchandise, and our hire, be holiness to the Lord,^c that a blessing may rest upon it, as it will if we consecrate our gain unto the Lord, and our substance to the Lord of the whole earth.^d

(4.) It has been a year of constant opportunities for our souls, and plenty of the means of grace. This, this is that which crowns the year with God's goodness more than any thing. The greatest honour of our land is, that God's tabernacle is among us, the Lord is known, his name is great. This makes it *beautiful for situation, and the joy of the whole earth*, and to us whose lot is cast in it, a *pleasant land* indeed: that we are a Christian nation, a protestant nation; That we have plenty of Bibles in a language we understand, and not only that we may read them without danger of the inquisition, but that we have them read to us, have stewards of God's house among us, to break to us this bread of life. *Our eyes see our teachers*, and they are not removed into corners; and the word of the Lord is not, in respect of scarcity, precious in our days; but we have *open vision*. God makes known his statutes and judgments to us, and has not dealt so with other nations. Our fleece is wet with the dew of heaven, while theirs is dry. It is our religion that is our glory; it is the fear of the Lord that is our treasure; it is God himself that is our crown and diadem of beauty.^e

The sabbaths of the year are the crown of it. The Jews called the sabbath their *Queen*: and the crown of our sabbaths is our solemn assemblies, which we have had the comfort of throughout the year, throughout the land, without interruption, in the stated times appointed for them; it is that we have Moses and the prophets, Christ and the apostles, *read in our synagogues* every sabbath day.^f It is a comfort to us, when we come together to worship God, that we do it not only in the fear of God, and in the faith of Christ, but in a *spiritual communion*, with all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours; that we worship the same God, in the same name, by the same rule of the written word, under the conduct of the same spirit, and in expectation of the same blessed hope. But our communion with the religious assemblies of our own land, both those by the legal establishment, and those by the legal toleration, is, in a particular manner, comfortable to us. Our brethren's services to God and his church who move in a higher and larger sphere, we rejoice in, and heartily wish well to; and think we have a great deal of reason to be

thankful also, both to God and the government, for the continuance of our own liberties and opportunities, which we desire always to be found quiet and peaceable, humble and charitable, in the use of, and diligent and faithful in the improvement of, for the glorifying of God, and the working out of our own salvation.

Thus has the year been surrounded with the fruits of God's goodness, and we have been compassed with songs of deliverance. In consideration whereof, let us be constant and universal in our obedience to God, *steady and uniform* in our returns of duty to him, whose compassions to us are so, and *never fail*.

3. God has crowned, that is, he hath finished, this year with his goodness. The happy issue of an affair we call the crown of it; and the close of this year's actions may well be looked upon as the beauty of the whole year, the crown of the whole work; of which his favour has both laid the foundation, and brought forth the top-stone with shouting.

In the beginning of the year, God did remarkably precede us with the blessing of his goodness;^g met us with a victory early in the morning of the campaign, before we were well awake, which left room for the doing of a good day's work in prosecution of it. Yet we rendered not according to the benefit done unto us; for which he might justly have turned his hand against us, and have made the latter end of the year, by some fatal disgrace or disappointment, to have undone what had been done so gloriously in the beginning of the year, so that we might have been obliged to conclude the year with a fast: but he has not dealt with us according to our sins; the same powerful and gracious hand that went before us then, crowns us now with honour and joy; the end of the year is of a piece with the beginning; and, in answer to our prayers on the last thanksgiving day, he has favoured us with *another* feast and a good day, in which we have light, and gladness, and joy, and honour. Thus is God known by his name Jehovah, a finishing God, a Rock whose work is perfect; and thus are we admonished, when we have begun in the spirit, not to end in the flesh.

Two things crown this year, and make the conclusion of it great; and both must be attributed to the goodness of God:

(1.) The successes of our allies abroad; the wonderful relief of Turin, and the restoration of that excluded prince to his capital, when his affairs were reduced to the last extremity, and the enemy was confident of carrying the day. And that this should be but one day's work, but two or three hours' action. This is such a loss and mortification to our adversaries, and the consequences of it, in Italy, of such

^b Deut. xxxiii. 19.^c Isa. xxiii. 18.^d Mic. iv. 13.^e Isa. xxviii. 5.^f Acts xlii. 27.^g Ps. xxi. 3.

vast advantage to our allies, and likely to be more so; that the year must be acknowledged to end as honourably and happily as it began. *This is the Lord's doing!*

That which magnified the mercy in the beginning of the year, was, that our expectations were in it anticipated; that which magnifies this in the end of the year, is, that our expectations in it were far outdone. In that, God was better to us than our hopes; in this, than our fears; in both, than our deserts.

(2.) The unanimity of our counsels at home. The presence of God is as much to be observed and owned in the congregation of the mighty, and judging among the gods,^a as in the high places of the field, determining the issues of war, and turning the hovering scale of victory. It is he who gives a spirit of judgment to them who sit in council, as well as strength to them that turn the battle to the gate:^b and in this matter, he who has all hearts in his hands, who made man's mouth, the hearing ear and the seeing eye, has done well for us, and crowned the year.

All who undertake to give the sense of the nation, or of any part of it, the lords, the commons, the convocation, all agree to admire the present happy posture of our affairs, and the flourishing state of the kingdom under this government, and in this conjuncture. Never did the English nation appear to be so universally easy, so pleased, so entirely satisfied in the public management and administration. *Happy art thou, O England, who is like unto thee, O people?* Never was such a hearty zeal discovered for the common cause of our religion and liberties, against the threatening power of France; nor were ever the necessary supports of that cause given so speedily, so cheerfully, and with such expressions of a willingness to continue them, till it be in our power to oblige that perfidious foe to such a just and honourable peace, as it shall not be in his power to violate. In a word, the temper and good affection of the nation at this day, seems not unlike that of the people of Israel, when Solomon dismissed them from the feast of dedication, *They blessed the king, and went unto their tents, joyful and glad of heart, for all the goodness that the Lord had done for David his servant, and for Israel his people,* 1 Kings viii. 66. Long—and ever—may it be so!

Ministers (I know) are the unfittest persons, and the pulpit the unfittest place, in the world, to talk of state affairs in. You know it is not my practice; and I am sure I am most in my element when I am preaching Jesus Christ and him crucified. But I would endeavour to do the work of every day in its day, according as the duty of the day requires; and on such occasions as these, one had as good say nothing, as nothing to the purpose; and therefore,

though I am not so well versed in the public affairs as to be particular in my remarks, nor such a master of language as to be fine in them; yet the hints I have given you of God's favours to our land at this day, and the great goodness with which the year we are now concluding has been crowned, will serve to answer in some measure my intention, (and it is no other than what becomes a minister of the gospel,) which is, to excite your thankfulness to so good a God, and to confirm your affections to, and satisfaction in, so good a government: and therefore, I hope, you will neither think them impertinent, nor find them altogether unprofitable.

III. APPLICATION.

That which remains, is to make some improvement of our observations concerning that goodness with which God has crowned this year, that we may go away (as we should aim to do from every sermon) some way wiser and better.

1. Has God thus crowned the year? Let us cast all the crowns of it at his feet, by our humble, grateful acknowledgments of his infinite wisdom, power, and mercy. What we have the joy of, let God have the praise of. The blessed spirits above cast their crowns before the throne,^c and that is the fittest place for all our crowns. Let praise continue to wait on him, who, though he be attended with the praises of angels, yet is pleased to inhabit the praises of Israel.^d Let our closets and families witness to our constant pious adorations of the divine greatness, and devout acknowledgments of the divine goodness to us, and to our land; that every day may be with us a thanksgiving day, and we may live a life of praise, that work of heaven. David did so, *Every day will I bless thee*; ^e nay, almost every hour in the day, *Seven times a day will I praise thee*.^f

God must have the glory, particularly of all our victories; and every monument of them must be sacred to the ETERNAL LORD, rather than to the eternal memory of any man: nor ought the most meritorious and distinguished actions of the greatest heroes to be registered, without some acknowledgment to that supreme Numen—Deity, whose universal and overruling providence, guided their eyes, strengthened their arms, and covered their heads. *All people will thus walk in the name of their God,*^g and shall not we? If Amalek be subdued, the memorial of it is an altar, not a triumphal arch; and is inscribed to the honour not of Moses or Joshua, but of God himself, *Jehovah nissi—The Lord my banner*.

In this, both our illustrious sovereign, and her great general, are examples to the nation; (and, as much as in other things, do real honour to it by doing honour to the religion of it;) That from him in the

^a Ps. lxxxii. 4. ^b Isa. xxviii. 6. ^c Rev. iv. 10. ^d Ps. xxiii. 3.

^e Ps. cxlv. 2.

^f Ps. cxix. 164.

^g Mic. iv. 5.

camp, immediately upon the obtaining of a victory, and from her in the church, in due time after, and from both, in the most solemn manner, the incense of praise ascends to the glory of God, as the God of our salvation. These, who thus honour God, no doubt, he will yet further honour; and make those crowns, those coronets, to shine yet more bright, which are thus laid at his feet, with *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name give glory.*

If we be remiss to ascribe the praise of our achievements to God, we provoke him to turn his hand against us, and by some judgment or other to distract for the rent which is not duly paid. When Samson had with the jaw-bone of an ass laid a thousand Philistines dead upon the spot, he seems to take the praise of the performance too much to himself, and to overlook the arm that strengthened him, when he called the place *Ramath-lehi—the lifting up of the jaw-bone*; ^p and, therefore—by a very afflictive thirst which seized him immediately after, and drove him to his prayers—God reduced his pride, and made him know his own weakness, and dependence upon God, and obliged him to give a new name to the place, *Enhakkore—the well of him that cried*,^q not of him that conquered. The more thankful we are for former mercies, the better prepared we are for further mercies.

2. Has God thus crowned the year? Let not us then profane our crown, nor lay our honour in the dust, by our unworthy walking. Let the goodness of God lead us to repentance, and engage us all to reform our lives and families, to be more watchful against sin, and to abound more in the service of God, and in every thing that is virtuous and praiseworthy. Then, and then only, we offer praise, so as indeed to glorify God, when we order our conversation aright; and then shall we be sure to see his great salvation, and be for ever praising him.

It does indeed give both a damp to our joy, and a shock to our hopes, at this day, that notwithstanding the great things God has done for us there is yet so much wickedness to be found among us; so much impiety, so much immorality; and both arising from practical atheism and infidelity, and accompanied with a contempt of religion and sacred things. What shall we say to these things? It is some encouragement to us to hear, as we do by some, that through the pious care of the general, there is a manifest reformation of manners in the army; vice discountenanced, and virtue in reputation; God grant it may be more and more so! it would be the happiest omen of any other. It is likewise to be rejoiced in, that there are national testimonies borne against vice and profaneness, and national endeavours used for the suppressing of it; which we heartily pray God both to give success to, and graciously to accept

of, that the wickedness which is not *prevented*, yet may not be laid to the charge of the land, nor bring judgments upon the community.

But it is our duty to lament *the wickedness of the wicked*; to sigh and cry for the abominations that are found among us; to witness against them in our places; and, so, to *keep ourselves pure* from them, and to do our utmost by our prayers and endeavours to bring the wickedness of the wicked to an end. And thus we may prevent the mischief of it to the nation, and empty the measure which others are filling, that there may be a *lengthening out of our tranquillity.*

Now we are reviewing with thankfulness the mercies of the year past, let us at the same time reflect with sorrow and shame upon the sins of the year past; our own sins, I mean, for it is enough for us to judge ourselves. The year has been full of goodness on God's part, but very empty on ours. He has not been as a barren wilderness to us, or as waters that fail; but we have been so to him, very careless and defective in our duty, and in many instances we have come short.

Our time has been mispent, our opportunities not improved; God has come this year *seeking fruit* among us, but how little has he found! God brings our years to an end, as a HISTORY THAT IS WRITTEN, so substantial and valuable are the gifts of his favour to us; but we bring our years to an end as a tale that is told,^r so idle, and trifling, and insignificant are we in our carriage toward him.

4. Let God's goodness to us engage, and increase, our goodness to one another: it is justly expected, that they who obtain mercy should show mercy, and so reflect the rays of the divine goodness upon all about them; being herein *followers of God as dear children*; ^s *followers of him that is good*,^t in his goodness.

Let God's goodness to us constrain us, as we have opportunity, to do good to all men; to do good with what we have in the world, as faithful stewards of the manifold grace of God; (charity must crown a thanksgiving day;) to do good with all the abilities God gives us, remembering that the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

Let it particularly incline us to do good to those from whose sentiments ours differ in the less weighty matters of the law. This I would take all occasions to press upon myself and others, pursuant to the great royal law of charity. There is an infinite distance between God and us, and a just controversy he has with us, and yet he is kind to us, and does us good; and cannot we then be kind to one another, and do all good offices one to another, notwithstanding the matters in variance between us? How ill does it become us to bear a grudge to any of the

^p Judg. xv. 17.

^q Judg. xv. 19.

^r Ps. xc. 9.

^s Eph. v. 1.

^t 1 Pet. iii. 13.

children of our people, or wish ill to any, who are every day and every year crowned with the goodness of God, and are, and hope to be, forgiven of him! Let not our eye be evil one toward another, when God's eye is so good toward us all, and he does things for us, which we all come in for a share of the benefit of, and are all this day giving thanks for. Let our common success against our enemies abroad, help to stay all enmities at home; and let all our consciences be able to witness for us, that we *walk in love, and keep the unity of the spirit.*

4. *et ult.* Let this year's experience help to support and encourage next year's expectations. Has God crowned us with his goodness this year? let us thence infer, that if we approve ourselves faithful to God, surely goodness and mercy shall still follow us. And our hopes ought to be the matter of our praises as well as our joys. *Unto thee do we give thanks, (says the Psalmist,) unto thee do we give thanks; for that thy name is near, thy wondrous works declare.*^a The wondrous works we are this day giving thanks for, are upon this account the more valuable, that they give us ground to hope, that *God's name is near*,—the advancement of his kingdom,—and, in that, the accomplishment of his promise. That comprehensive prayer, *Father, glorify thy name*, has already obtained an answer from heaven,—which true believers may apply to themselves,—*I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it again.*^b Amen, so be it. Hallelujah.

ENGLAND'S HOPES;

A SERMON.

PREACHED

JANUARY THE FIRST, 1706-7.

ISAIAH lxiii. 4.

The year of my redeemed is come.

A new year is now come. The common compliment of the morning is, "I wish you a good new year;" and it is well; hearty well-wishers we ought to be to the welfare one of another. God by his grace make us all wiser and better, and give us to live better every year; better this year than we did the last,—and then it will be indeed a good new year. Good hearts will make good times and good years.

Have any of you had any good purposes and resolutions in your minds, the prosecution whereof has hitherto been delayed? put it off no longer. Is

the house of God yet to be set up in your hearts, the work to be begun? begin it to-day; as Moses did, who, on the first day of the first month, set up the tabernacle.^a Are there things amiss with you to be amended, corruptions to be purged out, and things wanting to be set in order? begin this day to reform; as Hezekiah did, who, on the first day of the first month, began to sanctify the house of the Lord:^b so will you make this day in the best manner remarkable, and this year comfortable.

But that which at present I aim at, is to direct you—in wishing a good year—to the church of God, and the kingdom of Christ in the world; and, particularly, to the land of our nativity; to the prosperity of which, in all its interests, I hope every one of us bears a very hearty good-will, that in the peace thereof we may have peace. *For we are members one of another.*

My text would easily lead me to *foretell* a good year: but I am no prophet, nor prophet's son, nor dare I ever pretend to prediction; nor indeed, can I give heed to any other but the most sure word of prophecy in the written word, which is a light shining in a dark place.^c Christ's parting words to his disciples at his ascension, is sufficient to silence all bold inquiries, and much more all presumptuous determinations, concerning future events; it is *not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.*^d Astrological predictions I utterly condemn; I hope you know better things than to have any regard to them. The prophet Isaiah speaks of the astrologers, the star-gazers, and the monthly prognosticators, in his time, as great cheats, that imposed upon the world. *The heavens declare the glory of God;*^e and magnify the *το γινωσκοντες Θεον*,—that which is, and MAY BE, known of God; but were never intended to declare the will of God,^f or any of those *secret things which belong not to us.*^g Scripture prophecies I have a profound veneration for, and of admirable use they are to give us a general idea of the methods of Providence concerning the church, and to furnish us with a key to many of the difficulties of it, and thereby to assist our faith and hope in the worst of times. But the particular intention and application of them, till the event unfolds them, though I greatly value the labours of those who searched into them, yet to me it seems *higher than heaven, what can we do? deeper than hell, what can we know?* It is what we cannot by *searching find out to perfection*, or to satisfaction.

My design therefore, in the choice of this text to-day, is not to gratify your curiosity with prognostications of what *shall be*; but to direct your prayers for the church of God, and to offer something for the assistance of your faith in those prayers. *For we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying.* I

^a Ps. lxxv. 1.

^b Exod. xl. 2.

^c John xii. 28.

^d 2 Chron. xxix. 17.

^e 2 Pet. i. 19.

^f Rom. i. 19.

^g Acts i. 7.

^h Ps. xix. 1.

ⁱ Deut. xxx. 28.

remember the rule long since given me, with reference to the prospects of public affairs, and shall still abide by it, "Pray, pray; and do not prophesy." We may be sure of an answer to the prayers of faith, but not of the accomplishment of the predictions of fancy.

Our Lord Jesus has taught us to pray: *Our Father who art in heaven! thy kingdom come.* And it is fit we should take our instructions in prayer from him, on whose intercession we depend for the success of our prayers. Now when we pray, *Father, let thy kingdom come*, this is one thing included in it, and intended by it, *Father, let the year of the redeemed come.* Let this therefore be our heart's desire, and our prayer to our heavenly Father, every day.

My text is part of that account which the victorious Redeemer gives of his glorious appearances against his and his church's enemies, represented by the Edomites, whom he *treads down in his anger, and tramples upon in his fury;*^h and, therein, appears *more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey.*ⁱ Come, and with an eye of faith see the Lord Jesus, by his grace, triumphing—over sin and corruption, and all the powers of Satan—in the souls of believers, under whose feet he will shortly tread that great enemy,^k and make him *their foot-stool,*^l as he has made them *his own.* Come, and see him, by his providence, triumphing over all antichristian powers and factions in the world; and all the maintainers and upholders of the devil's kingdom; Pagan formerly, and Mahometan and papal now: putting down all oppressing rule, principality, and power, till he has completed his whole undertaking. And upon the sight of this, let every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. And if you ask, why Michael and his angels push on this war so vigorously, and at such a vast expense of blood and treasure? Michael himself shall answer you in the text, *The year of my redeemed is come*; even the day appointed of the Father for this great performance; that day at which, as Mr. Norris expresses it in his paraphrase on this passage, "Fate folded down the iron leaf." Now the day prefixed is come, the work designed must be done, whatever it costs: *The Lord shall arise and have mercy upon Sion; for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come.*^m

Let us observe here,

1. That the church and people of God are Christ's redeemed,—*the ransomed of the Lord*; so they are called in the promise, Isa. xxxv. 10.—*the redeemed of the Lord*; so they are called upon to praise him, Ps. cvii. 2. They are his own; *he is entitled to them*, as his own; and as his own, *they are very dear to him.* He formed them for himself. He bought them for himself, and paid dear for them; shed his blood,

his precious blood, to purchase them, and purify them to himself; gave his life, an invaluable price, a ransom for them. They were sold by the guilt of sin, to the justice of God; had sold themselves, by their affection to it, unto the dominion of Satan; but out of both these bonds Christ has effectually provided for their discharge and deliverance.

He calls them, here, *his redeemed*—though as yet their redemption was not wrought out, and obtained, by the bringing in of the everlasting righteousness—because he had undertaken to redeem them, and the work would as surely be effected, in the fulness of time, as if it were done already. Thus, when the gospel was first preached in Corinth, and but few of that place were effectually called, yet Christ said, *I have much people in this city.*ⁿ They are mine already; for *the Lord knoweth them that are his*, and will lose none of them.

It is the honour of good people that they belong to Christ: they are his, and shall be owned as his in that day when he makes up his jewels; but they have no reason to be proud of this honour, for, by this, boasting is for ever excluded; That they had not been his, if he had not bought them: they must be redeemed ere they could be preferred. Where is boasting then? We are bought, and therefore still bound; bought with a price, and therefore must not be our own, but his who bought us; to him we must live, and not to ourselves.

2. That there is a time fixed, concerning them, which is the year of the redeemed; when their Redeemer will do great things for them. A year which shall introduce a bright and glorious scene; which shall be crowned with their salvation. A year of jubilee to them, (to which it seems to allude,) when they shall be discharged from their servitude, and restored to the *glorious liberty* and inheritance *of the children of God*; which will be indeed to them *the acceptable year of the Lord.*

This is fixed, in the council and decree of God; which he has *purposed in himself*; and in which he has *determined all the times before appointed*; particularly the times concerning his church, which is his garden enclosed, his Segullah, his peculiar treasure in the world, about which his providence, through all the revolutions of time, is in a special manner conversant; and therefore his purposes from eternity were so. The affairs of the church were not left to the disposal of blind chance. The wheels on which it moves are animated by *the spirit of the living creature*; and there are *eyes in the wheels*, a wise providence that directs all for the best, according to the divine will, and the settled counsels of that will. The Eternal Mind never makes a transition to *new measures*, never takes up *new resolves*; *known unto God are all his works*, and all ours too,

^h Deut. xxix. 3
^k Rom. xvi. 2.

ⁱ Ps. lxxvi. 4.
^l Ps. cx. 1.

^m Ps. cii. 13.
ⁿ Mark ix. 41.

^o Acts xviii. 10.
^p Ezek. i. 20.

the events themselves, and the times of them, *from the beginning of the world*. Which yields an unspeakable satisfaction to all those who have but so much reason and religion as to believe, that God knows what is fit to be done, and when, better than we do, and that his time is, without doubt, the best time.

The providences of God concerning Israel of old, as well as their ordinances, were typical; and *things happened to them for ensamples or patterns of the great salvation to be wrought in and for the gospel-church*. Many a time was Israel afflicted, from their youth up; many a time in the house of bondage; but still there was a year fixed for their redemption, when their warfare or appointed time should be accomplished,¹ and deliverance should be wrought for them. The year was fixed for their redemption out of Egypt; and God kept time to a day; *At the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the self-same day, they went out triumphantly.*² The year was likewise fixed for their return out of their captivity in Babylon; when seventy years were accomplished in the desolations of Jerusalem.³ And the distresses of the New-Testament church are in like manner limited to a time, times, and half a time; which, if we know not how to compute with any certainty or exactness, yet, we may with the greatest assurance infer from it, that Infinite Wisdom has fixed the time, though it is not for us to know it. *Times are not hidden from the Almighty*, though *they that know him do not as yet see his day*,⁴ nor foresee it.

3. That the year of the redeemed *will come*; though it may be long first, long wished for, long waited for, yet it will come at last. Concerning the thing itself, we may be clear, we may be confident, though concerning the time we may be in doubt, and in the dark. Though many years intervene between this, and the year of the redeemed, and those, perhaps, dark, and cloudy, and melancholy years, years in which we see evil,⁵ yet the days of affliction and captivity will be numbered and finished, and the years of servitude will come to an end; hitherto it shall come, but no further; so long it shall last, but no longer. God will *have mercy on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, though he has had indignation against them threescore and ten years*; and he will *make them glad with the joys of his salvation*, in some proportion to the *days wherein he has afflicted them*.

Observe with what an air of triumph and exaltation the Redeemer himself here speaks of this great day; as one who longed to engage the enemy, and rescue the beloved of his soul, and who almost grew impatient of the delay. He cannot anticipate the

time. The divine counsels are as mountains of brass,⁶ which can neither move nor moulder; but when the wheels of his chariot, which have been so long in coming, arrive at last, how welcome are they! *Now the year of my redeemed is come; it is come.* And, *Lo, I come*. With this shout does the Lord himself descend from heaven, ride upon the wings of the wind,⁷ and make the mountains flow at his presence.⁸ With this does the Lord awake himself as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine;⁹ *The year of my redeemer is come.* Now, *Χρονος ουκ εστι εν*—Time, that is, delay, shall be no longer.¹⁰ Now will I arise; now shall the everlasting arm be made bare. *Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh.*

Now for the more distinct improvement of this, let me apply it, both to the universal church of the redeemed, the whole family, in every age; and to particular churches, and the interests of the kingdom of Christ, in some special time and place.

(1.) Let me briefly apply it to the whole mystical body of Christ, the universal church of the redeemed; in which we have cast our lot; and hope to have a place and a name in the general assembly of all who belong to it. And understanding it of this, there are two which above all the rest may be called the years of the redeemed; one long since past, the other yet to come.

[1.] The year of Christ's dying was the great year of the redeemed, and that on which all the rest depend; from the salvation then wrought, the foundation was laid on which all the other more particular salvations of the church are built. Therefore, in the Apocalypse, the Lamb that was to *make war with the beast*, and to *overcome him*, appeared as a Lamb that *had been slain*.¹¹ And it is *by the blood of the Lamb* that the victory is said to be obtained.¹² And many understand the text of *that year of the redeemed*, when Christ by *death destroyed him who had the power of death*; trod the winepress of his Father's wrath alone, and *stained all his raiment*, both with his own blood, and with the blood of his enemies.

Then was the price paid down; upon the undertaking of which, the great Redeemer was trusted with the salvation of all the Old-Testament saints; and for which all who in every age believe in him should be justified and accepted. Then the chosen remnant was purchased, and eternal life purchased for them; then principalities and powers were spoiled, and a show made of them openly;¹³ the strong man armed disarmed, stript, and triumphed over. To that victory all the victories of faith are owing; for we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

The time was fixed for this great and glorious

1 Isa. xl. 2. 2 Exod. xii. 41. 3 Dan. ix. 2.
4 Job xxiv. 1. 5 Ps. xc. 15.
6 Zech. i. 12. 7 Zech. vi. 1.

8 Ps. xviii. 9, 10. 9 Isa. lxiv. 3. 10 Ps. lxxviii. 65.
11 Rev. x. 6. 12 Rev. v. 6. 13 Col. ii. 15.
14 Rev. xii. 11.

achievement; fixed in that determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, by which that sacrifice was *delivered up*; fixed in the Old-Testament predictions, from that of the "*Seed of the woman, which should break the serpent's head,*"^c to that of "*Messiah the Prince, who at the period of the seventy weeks should finish transgression, and make an end of sin, by making reconciliation for iniquity, and bringing in an everlasting righteousness.*"^d It was fixed to a day, it was fixed to an hour: how often did Christ speak of it with that exactness: *Mine hour is not yet come*, and when it was come, *This is your hour*.

Long was it looked for by them who *waited for the redemption*; ^e and more earnestly by him that was to *work out* the redemption, who, having this baptism to be baptized with, was even *straitened till it was accomplished*.^h It came at last: *Blessed is he that cometh*. And of all the years that God has crowned with his goodness, that was, without doubt, the greatest of all that every day and night measured since the clock of time was set in motion. And though they who were to have the benefit of the redemption slumbered and slept, and were not duly sensible of the vast importance of what was then doing till afterwards, when the Spirit was poured out upon them, yet he that was to be at the expense of it, and foresaw how the great affair of man's redemption—and, perhaps, the angel's confirmation—was to turn upon that mighty hinge, triumphed and was transported, when he said in the beginning of the battle, *Now is my soul troubled, but now is the judgment of this world; now is the prince of this world cast out*; ⁱ and in the close of the battle, when he knew what an irreparable blow he had given to the devil's kingdom, *It is finished*.^k This was that *year of the redeemed* which we frequently celebrate the memorial of with joy, at the table of the Lord.

[2.] The year of Christ's second coming to judge the world, is that *great year of the redeemed* which is yet to come; that true Platonic year, which will be, though not the repetition, yet the review and retribution, of all that is past. And as in our observance of the great institution of the Eucharist, that *proprium*—*appropriate rite*, of our holy religion, and peculiar badge of our Christianity, we look *as far back* as that year of the redeemed which is past, showing forth the Lord's death; so we look *as far forward* as that year of the redeemed which we are yet in expectation of, showing it forth *till he come*.

This year of the redeemed, which will be crowned with the *greatness* of God, as other years have been with his *goodness*, is fixed in the divine counsels; unalterably fixed, fixed to a day; for *he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in*

righteousness; ^l and a great and terrible day it will be. God, by his grace, make us all ready for it, that he who shall then appear may appear to our joy. It is fixed, but it is not revealed; it is not fit it should, nor agreeable to that state of probation and expectation we are now in. It is fixed, and it will come, it will certainly come, to the unspeakable confusion of all those who slight the warnings of it, and the everlasting consolation of all those who embrace the promise of it. As sure as this year *is* come, that year *will* come, and you and I shall see it; *in our flesh* resumed *we shall see it*; shall see the terrors, shall see the triumphs, of that day, and, according as we are found then, shall certainly and eternally share either in the one or in the other.

That, that will be the year of the redeemed; in which all our hopes and prospects, which in our present state are still kept moving forward, one event serving only to raise our expectation of the next, will come to a full period. Then we shall see the final end of all those things, which here we are so solicitous and inquisitive about.^m And a blessed end it will certainly be to all the redeemed of the Lord; who will in that day lift up their heads and hearts with joy, never to despond or be dejected again, knowing that their redemption in its open declaration, and full perfection, draweth nigh.ⁿ

All the redeemed who are now scattered and dispersed over the face of the whole earth, will then be gathered together into one body; and a great and glorious body it will be; to be presented to the Father *without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing*; and to grace their Redeemer's triumphs, as the trophies of his victory over the powers of darkness, that had held them captive, that he may be *glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe*.^o A general rendezvous it will be of all that ever approved themselves good soldiers of Jesus Christ, when the Captain of our salvation ^p shall produce all who were given him; they shall every one answer to their names, and not one be missing.

All the enemies of the redeemed will then be conquered and brought down, and death itself, that last enemy, shall be destroyed, and swallowed up in victory. The devil, with all those whom he has decoyed into his interest, will then, by the almighty power of that God, *whose the deceived and the deceiver are*,^q be *cast into the lake of fire*,^r and the redeemed will be set for ever out of the reach of all their enemies. Then shall the redemption of the soul be perfected, in the redemption of the body from the power of the grave, and *that captivity led captive*.^s

But that which, above all, will denominate it the year of the redeemed, is, that then *the ransomed of*

^a Gen. iii. 15. ^f Dan. ix. 24. ^g Luke ii. 38. ^h Luke xlii. 50.
ⁱ John xii. 27. ^k John xii. 31. ^l Acts xvii. 31.

^m Dan. xii. 8. ⁿ Luke xxi. 28. ^o 2 Thess. i. 10. ^p Heb. ii. 10.
^q Job xii. 16. ^r Rev. xx. 10. ^s Rom. viii. 23.

the Lord shall return, and come to Sion with songs of praise; everlasting joy shall fill their hearts, and crown their heads; and sorrow and sighing, those clouds which in this world are still returning after the rain, shall be finally dismissed, and flee away for ever.¹ The redeemed of the Lord, by virtue of their union with the Redeemer, will then sit down with him upon his throne, as he overcame, and is set down with his Father upon his throne, and reign with him for ever.

This is the year of the redeemed; for it is the year which their hearts are upon, which, according to the promise, they look for, and have an eye to, in all their present services, sufferings, and struggles. It will be the crown and satisfaction of their faith and hope, and the perpetual perfection of all their joys and honours.

Think, my brethren, think seriously, what that year of the redeemed will be to you. How will the archangel's trumpet sound in *your ears*? will it be a joyful or a dreadful sound? To them that obey the gospel, and live up to it, it will proclaim liberty and honour; but against them who are unbelieving and disobedient, it will denounce war and ruin. That great day will be coronation day to the former, but execution day to the latter. We none of us know but this year of which we now see the beginning may be the year of our death; if it should be so, will it be the year of our redemption? And can we, as such, bid it welcome, and heartily say farewell to this world? *Work out your salvation with fear and trembling*, and then you may look for death and judgment with joy and rejoicing. Spend your time well, and then no doubt but you shall spend your eternity well; and the year of the redeemed will be the year of your eternal redemption.

(2.) Let me more largely apply it to the militant church; and the particular parts and branches of Christ's kingdom in the world, and their states and interests, those especially with which we are best acquainted, and in which we are most nearly concerned.

I was yesterday endeavouring, as well as I could, to excite your holy joys and thankful praises for the great things God has of late done for us, and our allies, whom he crowned, the last year, with his goodness: I would to-day say something for the encouragement of your faith and hope in God, concerning the events of the year ensuing, and of your earnest prayers to God that it may prove one of the years of the redeemed.

It is no new thing for the church of Christ upon earth to be in distress and bondage, and to stand in need of redemption, notwithstanding the great redemption from sin and hell, which the Lord Jesus has wrought out. It is always militant, it is often

afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted; and Sion constrained to dwell with the daughters of Babylon." *Israel* had many enemies, was often in the hands, often under the feet, of their enemies; and the redemption of *Israel* was often prayed for, and often promised; much more reason has the *gospel church* (that never had so many promises made to it, relating to the life that now is, as the Old-Testament church had) to expect trouble in this world; to be fought against, and to suffer persecution; in conformity to the example of its head.

The book of the Revelations gives us intimation enough of troublesome times that were to pass over the Church; and though it should be allowed doubtful who the enemy is that is there described, yet it is past dispute, that there should arise an enemy, a powerful and dangerous one, who should make war with those that keep the commandments of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ:² so that we are not to think it strange, no, not concerning the fiery trial, if the best of God's saints and servants be called out to it, as though some strange thing happened. Behold, Christ has told us before, that when it comes it may be no surprise or offence to us.

But there will come a year of redemption for those who suffer in the cause of Christ; God *will* not, and men *shall* not, contend for ever; nor shall the rod of the wicked rest *always* upon the lot of the righteous, though it may rest *long* there. It is the state of some of the reformed churches abroad, especially those of France, that I have upon my heart, and had in my eye in the choice of this text. The year of their deliverance, whenever it comes, I must call the year of the redeemed.

The excellent Archbishop Tillotson, in a sermon, on Rev. xiv. 13. plainly intimates his suspicion, that the French king is that second beast described (Rev. xiii. 11.) with two horns, France and Navarre, speaking like a dragon, which (says he) may point at a particular sort of armed soldiers called dragons, or *dragoons*: and the number six hundred sixty-six in the name LUDOVICUS: and that the persecution of the French protestants, in that last and great persecution, is there foretold. And in another sermon before King William and Queen Mary in the year 1692, makes him the present great supporter of the mystical Babylon. And if so, a deliverance from under his tyranny may well be prayed and hoped for, in the year of the redeemed.

[Since the preaching of this, I have with much pleasure received encouragement to my hopes, and been confirmed in my choice of this subject, for an appendix to the thanksgiving, by that excellent discourse of the worthy Bishop of Sarum, before the Queen and both Houses of parliament, on the Thanksgiving-day, in which he lays so much stress

¹ Isa. xxxv. 10.

² Zech. ii. 7.

³ Rev. xii. 17.

upon the French king's barbarous usage of his protestant subjects, in his description of him as an oppressor, whom it will be the glory of a good prince to help to break in pieces: and he tells that august assembly, "That till the exiles are recalled, till the prisoners are set at liberty, till the edicts that were their inheritance are revived, and compensation is made for the precious blood that has been shed among them; till the oppressor is so bounded, that his own people are secured from oppression, and his neighbours from invasion; till this is done, it is reasonable to hope, that man will say as God has said, *There is no peace to the wicked.*" God keep that word always in the imagination of the thoughts of their hearts, to whom it was spoken, and establish their way before him.]

Four things it will be proper for us to inquire into, concerning the year of the redeemed which we are hoping, and praying, and waiting for. I. What the year of the redeemed will be, and what we expect to be included in it. II. What ground we have to believe that it *will come*, some time. III. What encouragement we have to hope that it will come quickly. IV. What is our duty in reference hereto.

I. What we may expect the year of the redeemed will be, which according to his promise we may look for. You shall see it in three things:

1. The year of recompence for the controversy of Sion, will be the year of the redeemed. Such a year we read of, (Isa. xxxiv. 8.) and it is parallel to this here, for it explains the day of vengeance, which is here said to be in the heart of the victorious Redeemer. Therefore *the sword that is bathed in heaven, shall come down upon Idumea, the people of God's curse*, because it is the year of recompence for the controversy of Sion.

God espouses Sion's cause, does and will plead it with jealousy:^w his church is dear to him as the apple of his eye,^x and, therefore, he has a controversy with those who are injurious to his people; and sooner or later he will reckon with them, and will avenge his own elect, who cry day and night to him, though he bear long.^y He has a righteous quarrel with them, and he will avenge that quarrel. Barbarous and unrighteous wars fill the measure of a nation's sins; and are that *fourth transgression*, for which, when it is added to *other three*, God *will not turn away the punishment* of a people, as is intimated, (Amos i. 6, 9, 11, 13.) where for three transgressions, and then this as the fourth, God will reckon with Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, and Moab, because they had *delivered up the whole captivity, had pursued with the sword, and cast off all pity, particularly had ript up the women with child*: would not God visit for these things, should not his soul be avenged on such a nation as this? But barbarous

persecutions for righteousness' sake, are yet more provoking: all innocent blood is precious to God, and inquisition will be made for it; but the blood of the saints, and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus, is in a special manner precious to him, and not a drop of it shall be shed but it shall be reckoned for.

The great day of recompence for Sion's controversy will be at the end of time, *in the valley of decision*,^a when the long depending controversy, after many struggles, will at length be determined; when everlasting tribulation shall be recompensed by the Lord Jesus, to them that troubled his church, and to them who were troubled, everlasting rest.^b The Lord hasten that glorious day, and make us ready for it!

But we may expect that it will be done, in part, in this world. When God shall have performed his whole work upon mount Sion, and upon Jerusalem, his humbling, reforming work *upon* them, he will then perform his saving work *for* them, and will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks:^c the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this. All the wrongs done to Sion will be returned to those who did them, and the cup of trembling will be taken out of the hand of the oppressed, and put into the hand of the oppressor.^d The arm of the Lord will awake as in the days of old, and will put on strength; that mighty arm that humbled Pharaoh, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Herod, Julian, and other the proud enemies of his church, will be made bare, in our day, against the successors of these sons of pride and violence. The papal kingdom in general, that has for many ages been so barbarously oppressive to the faithful worshippers of God, and the French tyranny in particular, that has been remarkably so in our days, are the enemies, with whom, I think, God has a controversy on Sion's behalf, and the day will come that he will plead it.

His controversy is,

(1.) *For* the sons of Sion, whom they [the persecutors] have abused; the precious sons of Sion, comparable to fine gold; who have not only been despised and thrown by as vessels in which there is no pleasure, but trodden down and broken to pieces as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter.^d How many excellent ministers and Christians have been sacrificed to the pride and malice of the church of Rome, and with a rage reaching up to heaven, *numbered to the sword* as sheep for the slaughter! and the survivors either miserably enslaved in the galleys, and there *dying daily*, or buried alive in dungeons, or forced to beg their bread in strange countries: and shall not this be recompensed?

(2.) *For* the songs of Sion, which they have pro-

^w Zech. i. 14.
^y Luke xviii. 7.

^x Zech. ii. 8.
^y Joel iii. 14.

^a 2 Thess. i. 6, 7.
^c Isa. li. 22, 23.

^b Isa. x. 12.
^d Lam. iv. 2.

faned. This head is suggested by that instance of the Babylonians' insolence, and contempt of the Jews and their religion, when they upbraided them in their captivity with the songs of Sion: and, for this, it follows, *Daughter of Babylon, thou art to be destroyed.*^a The contempt cast upon the pure worship of God as heretical, and the jest made of sacred things, is what God will reckon for.

(3.) For the powers of Sion's king, which they have usurped. All the anointed offices of our Lord Jesus are boldly invaded by the papacy. His prophetic office, by setting up an infallibility in pope or councils; his kingly office, by setting up the supremacy of the bishop of Rome over all churches, and giving him the power of Christ's vicar, or his rival rather, upon earth; and his priestly office, by making the mass a propitiatory sacrifice for sin, and saints and angels mediators between God and man. And shall not the crown of the exalted Redeemer be supported against these usurpations?

(4.) For the pleasant things of Sion's palaces which they have laid waste. God will reckon for the many churches they have demolished, the solemn assemblies they have scattered, the administration of ordinances they have restrained, and the fountains of living water they have stopped up. God keeps an account of all the mischief of this kind done at any time by the papal power and its adherents, and will bring it all into the reckoning when the year of recompences comes.

2. The year of release for God's captives, will be the year of the redeemed; and this is the year we are waiting for. While we enjoy our liberties and opportunities, in peace and without check, we ought to remember them who are in bonds, and to pray for the *turning again of their captivity as the streams in the south.*

(1.) Oppressed consciences, we long to hear of the release of. Of the many that through the force of persecution have been brought to put forth their hands unto iniquity, we hope there are some who have not put forth their hearts to it; but if the force were taken off, would return to the true religion, which they have in word renounced. The triumphs of tyranny over those pretended converts cannot be thought of by any good Christian, without the utmost indignation; for the worst of tyranny is theirs, who take a pride in saying to men's souls, *Bow down, that we may go over*; ^f insulting over conscience, and pretending to command that: and though the utmost point they can gain by all their violence, is that, as it follows there, *men lay their body as the ground, and as the streets to them that go over*, by external compliances, while the soul remains unbended; yet this being a most grievous affliction, (as it is there spoken of,) the freeing of the oppressed from this force will

be a most glorious deliverance. We long to hear of the breaking off the yoke from off their necks, that they may no longer be compelled to give that honour to the creature that is the Creator's due, against the conviction of their consciences; but may be brought up out of that Egypt, to sacrifice unto the Lord with freedom, though it were in a wilderness. For, Is Israel a servant? Is conscience a home-born slave, that it is thus spoiled,^g thus imposed upon? No; it is God's Son, it is his first-born, and he will maintain its privileges. *Lord, bring their souls out of prison, that they may praise thy name.*^h

(2.) Oppressed confessors, we also long to hear of the release of. Humanity obliges us much, and Christianity much more, to pity the distressed state of those who are in bonds and banishment, in dungeons and in galleys, *for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.* When will the time come that the house of the prisoners shall be opened, and every man's chains fall from his hands, that a spirit of life from God shall enter into the dry bones, that they may live? The account we had some years ago of the brave and daring struggles of the Sevennois, was such a *noise and a shaking*, as we thought portended the *return of bone to his bone*, and a glorious resurrection of God's witnesses; but that affair, for aught we hear, is now asleep: God himself revive that work in the midst of the years, and so hasten the year of the redeemed!

3. The year of the revival of primitive Christianity in the power of it, will be the year of the redeemed. This we wish, we hope, we long to see, both at home and abroad; not the establishment and advancement of any party, but the extinguishing and swallowing up of all parties in the prevalence of *pure religion, and undefiled*, and the dominion of serious godliness in the hearts and lives of all who are called by the Christian name.

When the bounds of the church will be enlarged by the conversion of Pagan and Mahometan nations to the faith of Christ, and the spreading of the gospel in foreign parts; when the enlargement of trade and commerce shall be made serviceable to the interests of Christianity, as it is to our secular interests, and the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ, and the Redeemer's throne shall be set up where Satan's seat is, then will the year of the redeemed come.

When what is amiss in the churches of Christ shall be amended, mistakes rectified, corruptions purged out, and every plant that is not of our heavenly Father's planting, shall be rooted up, and the plants that are, shall be fruitful and flourishing; when the Lord of the temple shall sit as a refiner, and shall purify the sons of Levi, and all the seed of Israel, then shall the year of the redeemed come.ⁱ

^a Pa cxxxvii. 3. 8.

^f Isa. li. 23.

^g Jer. li. 14.

^h Ps. cxlii. 7.

ⁱ Mal. iii. 3.

When the word of the Lord shall have a free course; when vice and profaneness shall be suppressed, and all iniquity shall stop her mouth;^k when virtue and piety shall be not only generally praised, but generally practised; when in every place the spiritual incense shall be offered, and a pure offering with pure hands, and the principles of our holy religion shall be copied out into men's hearts and lives, then shall the year of the redeemed come.

When the divisions of the church shall be healed, and the unity of the Spirit kept entirely in the bond of peace, so that Ephraim shall no longer envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim; when all shall agree to love one another, though they cannot agree in every thing to think with one another; when the Lord shall be one, and his name one, and all who profess his name one in Christ, the great centre of unity, then shall the year of the redeemed come.

In a word, when the Spirit shall be poured out upon us from on high,^l so that knowledge shall triumph over ignorance, truth over error, devotion over profaneness, virtue over all immoralities, justice and truth over treachery and all unrighteousness, and Christian love and charity over schism, bigotry, and all uncharitableness; then shall the year of the redeemed come. But alas! *Who shall live when God doeth this?* The Lord hasten it in its season.

II. What ground we have to believe that the year of the redeemed, even the year of recompences for the controversy of Sion, will come some time, whether we live to see it or no.

That which I build upon is,

1. The justice and righteousness of that God who governs the world, and whose kingdom ruleth over all. If men are unrighteous, they shall find to their cost that God is not. If men make nothing of their word, God makes something of his; and the unbelief of men shall not make it void and of none effect. Though clouds and darkness are round about him,^m so that we know not the way that he takes, verily he is a God who hideth himself; yet judgment and justice are the habitation of his throne; and so will it appear when the mystery of God shall be finished, and the heavens shall declare his righteousness, and neither earth nor hell shall have any thing to object against it. Sooner or later the Lord will be known by the judgment which he executes.

Look up, (my brethren,) look up with an eye of faith to heaven above, and see the Lord God Omnipotent upon a throne, high and lifted up;ⁿ the throne of glory, the throne of government, which he has prepared in the heavens,^o and established there, though the heathen rage, and the floods lift up their waves;^p and hence let us take encouragement to hope, that in due time we shall see an effectual check given to

the "boundless ambition of France," as the proclamations often call it. The universal Monarch will not suffer himself to be rivalled and insulted by a bold pretender to an universal monarchy; nor will he, who alone is absolute, have the flowers of his crown plucked by a pretender to absolute sovereignty. The humbling and abasing of such proud men, treading them down, and hiding them in the dust together, by which the great Jehovah proves himself to be God; and in which he glories, above any thing, in his discourse with Job, out of the whirlwind: *Do thou do so (says he) and then will I also confess unto thee.*^q And will he not do it in our day?

Look abroad, (my brethren,) look abroad with pleasure upon this earth, and see it, as wild as it is, and as bad as it is, under the government of a righteous God, whose eyes run to and fro through it, and who does according to his will, not only in the armies of heaven, who are not too high to be above his control; but among the inhabitants of the earth, who are not too mean to be below his cognizance. They are mistaken who think God has forsaken the earth,^r and that he cannot judge through the dark cloud;^s who say in their hearts, *God hath forgotten*, and, *Thou wilt not require it*. The day is coming when it shall be so evident, that every man will own it: *verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth.*^t

Suppose we could not read the doom of the papacy, and the French tyranny, out of the depths of the Apocalypse, we may read it out of the Proverbs of Solomon, the plainest book in all the Bible; for there we are told, *men's pride will bring them low; wealth gotten by vanity will be diminished; he that seeketh mischief it shall come upon him; and whose doth violence to innocent blood, shall flee to the pit, and no man shall stay him*. And no word of God shall fall to the ground.

The tender concern God has for his church and people. His redeemed are very dear to him, and he is jealous for them, as his portion, and peculiar treasure; he takes pleasure in their prosperity, and in all their afflictions he is afflicted; and he takes what is done against them as done against himself: and shall not he avenge his *own elect*, because they are *his own*? He who purchased *the soul of his turtle dove* with the blood of his Son, will not deliver it into the *hand of the multitude of its adversaries.*^u

Especially, considering how much his own honour is interested in the concerns of his church and people. If they be abandoned and cast out of his care what will the Egyptians say; it will for ever disgrace the throne of his glory, and be the reproach of his government; so that how mean soever they are, and unworthy he should do any thing for them; yet,

^k Pa. cvi. 42.

^l Isa. xxxii. 15.

^m Pa. xcvi. 2.

ⁿ Pa. i. 6.

^o Isa. vi. 1.

^p Pa. ciii. 19.

^q Pa. xciii. 2, 3.

^r Job xl. 12-14.

^s Ezek. ix. 9.

^t Job xxii. 13.

^u Pa. lviii. 11.

^v Pa. lxxiv. 19.

no doubt, he will work for his own name, his own great name, that that may not be polluted among the heathen.

The many exceeding great and precious promises which he has made in his word concerning his church, and on which he has caused us to hope: on these our faith must build, and we shall find them a firm and never failing foundation. God has spoken in his holiness,^v and we will rejoice in what he has promised, it is all our own. He has promised, that *he will judge for his people, and repent himself concerning his servants, when he sees that their strength is gone.*^z *That for the oppression of the poor, and the righting of the needy, he will arise and set them in safety.*^y *That the Redeemer shall come to Sion, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob.*^x That there shall be no more *any pricking brier or grieving thorn, nor any to hurt or destroy in all the holy mountain.*^a

It was shown in vision to the prophet Daniel what great havoc would be made, by persecuting powers of the church in the latter times of it; but at the same time, the deliverance of the church and the destruction of its enemies is foretold. *Antiochus shall be mighty, and shall wonderfully destroy the people of the Holy One: and through his policy he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand, and he shall magnify himself in his heart; and by peace (more than by war) he shall destroy many, (who can avoid thinking of the French king at the reading of this?) but he shall be broken without hand;*^b or, as it is in a parallel place, *he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.*^c And of another great enemy, arising out of the fourth kingdom, which seems to be the papacy, it is said, that he shall *wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws by an unlimited power; and they shall be given into his hand, by the divine permission, for wise and holy ends, until a time, times, and the dividing of time.*^d But what will come of him at last? Shall he reign thus for ever, because he clotheth himself with cedar?^e No, the judgment shall sit, and they shall *take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end.* The God of truth has said it, and shall stand firm, *He that leadeth into captivity, shall go into captivity; and he that killeth with the sword, shall be killed by the sword, when his day shall come to fall:* and in the mean time, here is the patience and the faith of the saints.^f

2. The performance of these promises to the church in all ages: God has often delivered, always delivered at last, and, therefore, we trust he does and will deliver. After Israel's long affliction in Egypt, that house of sore bondage, at length God came down to deliver them, and gave an emblem of their condition in a bush that burned, and yet was not consumed. In the times of the judges, first one

enemy, and then another, mightily oppressed them, for so many years; but in due time God raised them up a deliverer, and sent from heaven to save them. The captivity in Babylon came to an end at the set time. The treading under foot of the sanctuary, by Antiochus, was limited to a certain number of days, and then the sanctuary was cleaned.^g Thus the Jewish nation, as long as it continued the church of God, though often distressed, was still delivered, till by rejecting Christ and his Gospel, they threw themselves out of the church; and now they wait in vain for redemption from their present dispersion, and cannot expect it till they shall look unto him whom they pierced.

The Christian church has been often afflicted from its youth up, groaned long under the yoke of the pagan powers; but in Constantine's time the year of the redeemed came, when the great red dragon was cast out, and his angels who adored him were cast out with him; when idolatry was abolished, and persecution came to an end, and that voice was heard in heaven, *Now is come salvation, and strength, the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ.*^h—Many have been the troubles of the followers of Christ; but the Lord has delivered them out of them all. Now, God is the same *yesterday, to-day, and for ever*; he is God, and changes not; his arm is not shortened, his ear is not heavy, his love is not spent, nor are his counsels changed: and, therefore, we are sure, the year of the redeemed will come in due time, and though it tarry we will wait for it; for *the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, and shall not lie.*

III. What encouragement we have to hope that the year of the redeemed will come shortly; that the rescue of the oppressed and the ruin of the oppressor is not far off; that the progress and advancement of the protestant religion in Europe, with the reviving and flourishing of serious piety in all the churches of Christ, are blessings at the door.

As to this, let me premise, that we ought to be very sober and modest in our conjectures concerning the time of the accomplishment of Scripture prophecies. Buxtorf, I remember, somewhere quotes a saying of the Jewish rabbins, *Rumpatur spiritus eorum qui supputant tempora*—*Calculating the times breaks the spirit.* They have so long and so often looked for the coming of the Messiah, and been disappointed, that they curse him who fixes the time of his coming. We despair not of the things themselves that God has promised; but we *presume not* to limit the Holy One of Israel, or to set him his time; we wrong the promise by doing so, and are tempted to think, when Providence breaks our measures, it is the breaking of God's word,—and nothing tends more to the breaking of our spirits: whereas

^v Pa. ix. 6.
^f Rom. xi. 26.

^z Deut. xxxii. 36.
^a Isa. xl. 8.
3 c

^y Pa. xli. 5.
^b Dan. viii. 24, 25.

^g Dan. xi. 45.
^f Rev. xlii. 10.

^h Dan. vii. 25, 26.
^g Dan. viii. 14.

^e Jer. xxii. 15.
^h Rev. xli. 9, 10.

he that believeth doth not make haste. Many who have been peremptory in foretelling the time when the year of the redeemed would come, have had the mortification of living to see themselves mistaken.

If we look into ourselves, we shall find a great deal to discourage us, and make us fear that this glorious year is yet a great way off; so conscious are we to ourselves of a frame and disposition of soul that renders us utterly unmeet to share in the joys of such a day. Our faith is weak; our spirits are narrow; our prayers are cold and customary; our conversation loose and careless; and the *things which remain among us are ready to die.* Iniquity abounds, and the love of many is waxen cold. Our own private interests, it is to be feared, lie nearer our hearts than the great and general interests of the kingdom of God among men. Our divisions are very threatening, especially the mismanagement of them: these are ill omens, and occasion many a melancholy thought to those who seek the good of the gospel Jerusalem. We now think ourselves within sight of Canaan: but how justly might God for our unbelief and murmuring hurry us back into the wilderness again, and swear in his wrath that we should never enter into his rest? We should have the more reason to fear these fatal consequences of our present distempers, but that it is intimated to us, that the Son of man will come at a time when he shall find little faith on the earth,¹ that the divine fidelity be the more magnified.

But for all this, we are not altogether without hope, that the year of the redeemed may come shortly: who knows but that this year, which we are now brought to the beginning of, may in some instances go far toward it? Though if it should set us back, and prove a year of disappointment, we must own that God is righteous; yet if it should set us forward, and make large advances towards it, we shall have this to add to the comfort of it, that it will be the answer of our prayers, and the crown of our hopes in God at the beginning of the year.

I dare not build much upon the opinion of Mr. Joseph Mede, and other learned men, (though I have a great value for their judgment,) who compute the period of 1260 days, that is, years, so often spoken of in the Revelation, which should end in the resurrection of the witnesses, and the downfall of Babylon, to fall not many years hence. However that be,

1. It is plain that the measure of the iniquity of the church's enemies fills apace: the powers we are contesting with, after all the mortifications they have been under, as if they had bid defiance to repentance, seem to grow more and more false and treacherous, cruel and barbarous; which cannot but ripen their vintage apace for the great wine-press of the wrath of God.² That which hastened the descent

of the king of Babylon down to the sides of the pit, was, not only that he had made the earth to tremble, and shaken kingdoms; that he had made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; but, which was worst of all, he opened not the house of his prisoners,³ that is, God's Israel, whom he detained in captivity, those poor to whom Daniel counselled him to show mercy, that it might have been a lengthening of his tranquillity.⁴

Well, when he who *spoileth* though he *was not spoiled*, and *dealt treacherously* with those who *dealt fairly* with him, shall *cease to spoil*, and shall *make an end to deal treacherously*;⁵ not in a way of reformation, that we have more reason to pray for than hope for, but so as that his measure shall be full; then expect that he shall be spoiled, and men shall deal treacherously with him, that is, shall show him that he has wretchedly deceived himself. Babylon's doom is, *Reward her as she rewarded you.*⁶

2. The present posture of affairs gives us a very hopeful prospect. The pride of the French king has been much humbled of late, and his power broken; and (which is very encouraging) the great things done against him, have been done chiefly by protestant armies, which, we hope, will animate protestant princes and states to unite for the support of the reformation, that it may recover the ground which in many places it has lost, and may gain more; for many, we hope, will join themselves to us, when they see that God favours our righteous cause, and that he is with us of a truth.

For our future safety, Manoa's wife shall be my prophetess: *If the Lord had been pleased to kill us*, he would not thus have accepted and answered our prayers, *nor would he, as at this time, have showed us such things as these.*⁷

And for our further success and victory, even Haman's wife shall be my prophetess: *If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall*, there is no remedy; the seed of the Jews will without fail be victorious, whenever the scale turns in their favour; *thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him.*⁸ As for God, his work is perfect; when he begins he will make an end. What we have received from God emboldens us to expect more; when God *brake the heads of Leviathan in pieces*, he gave him to be meat to the faith and hope of his people *inhabiting the wilderness*, and so encouraged them to expect, that they should inhabit Canaan shortly. God is plainly selling *Sisera into the hand of a woman.*

IV. Nothing remains now, but to tell you in a word or two, what is our duty in reference hereto. Have we all this reason to think that the year of the redeemed will come, that surely it will come quickly?

¹ Luke xviii. 8.

² Rev. xiv. 19.

³ Isa. xiv. 17.

⁴ Dan. iv. 27.

⁵ Isa. xxxiii. 1.

⁶ Rev. xviii. 6.

⁷ Esth. vi. 13.

⁸ Judg. xlii. 23.

⁹ Ps. lxxiv. 14.

1. Then let us be very earnest with God in prayer, to hasten this glorious year. When Daniel understood by books that the seventy years of Jerusalem's desolations were just expiring, then he set his face with more than ordinary fervour and fixedness to seek the Lord God by prayer and supplication, with fasting.* When we see mercies coming toward us, let us go forth to meet them, with so much the more cheerfulness, by our prayers. *Men ought always to pray, and not to faint;*† but, especially, at such a time, that when God's beloved is delivered, and he saves with his right hand, we each of us may have the pleasure of saying, with the Psalmist, God has there-
answered me.‡

Let our closets and families witness for us, that we pray, that we pray daily, that we pray earnestly, for the peace of Jerusalem, as those who prefer it before our chief joy. Pray for the uniting of protestants at home, and for protestant princes and states abroad; pray for the prosperity of our armies and navies, and those of our allies; pray for the pouring out of the Spirit upon us from on high, and then the year of the redeemed would soon come.

2. Let us prepare ourselves for the comfort of those great things, which we hope God will do for his church in our days, by bringing every thought within us into obedience to those two royal laws of holiness and love. When we expect God to do wonders among us, it concerns us to sanctify ourselves. Let us carry on the holy war in our own bosoms against sin and Satan, the world and the flesh, with vigour, and pursuant to our baptismal vow, fight manfully under the banner of the Lord Jesus; then may we hope that our prayers for the prosperity of the war our nation is engaged in, will be acceptable, and prevalent in heaven. But what joy can we have of our triumphs over the French, if we suffer our own lusts to triumph over us? If indeed we desire the progress of the reformation in the churches of Christ, let us show it by carrying on

the reformation of our own hearts and lives and families. Remember that law of Moses, *When the host goeth forth against the enemy, then keep thyself from every wicked thing, lest you undo by your sins what they do by their swords.*

3. Let us with patience wait for the year of the redeemed. If the days of our brethren's affliction should yet be prolonged, and their deliverance be deferred, yet let us not be weary, nor faint in our minds. Though the year of the redeemed come not in our time, the time we looked for it, yet believe, it will come in the best time, the time that infinite wisdom has appointed; and when it does come, it will abundantly recompense us for all our waiting. The longest voyages make the richest returns; and the church's triumphs are the most welcome, when they are the crown of great and long expectations: *So, this is our God, we have waited for him.*‡ Let us not upon every disappointment, arraign either the providence of God, or the conduct of those in public trusts. Leave it to God to govern the world, and to the queen and her councils under him, to govern the realm; and let us in our obscurity be easy and satisfied, and believe that all will end well at last.

But if the year of the redeemed should not come in our days; if the carcasses of this generation should fall in this wilderness, as justly they may for our unbelief and murmuring, and we should not go over Jordan to see that goodly mountain, and Lebanon: yet let it suffice us, that those who shall come after us shall enter into that rest. Joseph dies in Egypt, but lays his bones in confidence that God will surely visit Israel. Let us give all diligence to make sure our eternal redemption, and then we shall be happy, though we live not to see the glories of the year of the redeemed on earth; and may depart in the prophet Daniel's dismissal, *Go thou thy way till the end be, for thou shalt rest*; and, whatever thy lot be on earth, thou shalt stand in thy lot, (and it shall be a blessed lot,) in the end of the days.*

* Dan. ix. 2.

† Luke xviii. 1.

‡ Ps. cxviii. 6.

* Josh. iii. 4.

† Isa. xxv. 9.

‡ Dan. xii. 13.