

SERMON XI.*

CHRIST'S KINGDOM

AND THE

MAGISTRATE'S POWER.

I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things.—Dan. vii. 15, 16.

WHAT there is of concernment for the right understanding of these words, in that part of the chapter which goes before, may be considered in the opening of the words themselves, and therefore I shall immediately attend thereunto.

There are in them four things considerable.

First. The state and condition which Daniel, the penman of this prophecy, expresseth himself to be in, wherein he hath companions in the days wherein we live: 'He was grieved in his spirit in the midst of his body.'

Secondly, The cause and means whereby he was brought into this perplexed frame of spirit: 'The visions of his head troubled him.'

Thirdly, The remedy he used for his delivery from that entangled condition of spirit wherein he was: 'He went nigh to one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this.'

Fourthly, The issue of that application he made to that one, that stood by for redress: 'He told him, and made him know the interpretation of the things.'

All these I shall briefly open unto you, that I may lay a foundation for the truth which the Lord hath furnished me with, to hold out unto you this day.

First, In the first, the person spoken of is Daniel himself: 'I Daniel.' He bears this testimony concerning himself, and his condition was: 'He was grieved in his spirit.'

* This sermon was preached to the parliament, Oct. 13, 1652, being a day of solemn humiliation.

The person himself was a man highly favoured of God, above all in his generation: so richly furnished with gifts and graces that he is once and again brought forth as an example, and instanced in by God himself, upon the account of eminence in wisdom and piety. Yet all this preserves him not from falling into this perplexed condition, Dan. i. 17. 20. Ez. ix. 24. xxviii. 3. Now as the principal work of all the holy prophets, which have been since the world began, (Luke i. 70. 1 Pet. i. 10—12.) was to preach, set forth, and declare the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messias, who was for to come; so some especial concerns of his person, righteousness, and kingdom, were in especial manner committed unto them respectively. His passion and righteousness to Isaiah, the covenant of grace in him to Jeremiah, and to this Daniel most eminently the great works of the providence of God, in the shaking and overturning of kingdoms and nations, in a subserviency to his kingdom; with the revelation hereof for the consolation of the church in all ages, did the Lord honour him of whom we speak.

For the present he describes himself in somewhat a perplexed condition. His spirit (mind and soul) was grieved, sick, troubled, or disquieted in the midst of his body; that is, deeply, nearly, closely: it sets out the greatness of his trouble, the anxiety of his thoughts within him: like David when he expostulated with his soul about it. 'Why art thou so sad, my soul? and why art thou so disquieted within me?' Psal. xliii. 5. he knew not what to say, what to do, nor wherewith to relieve himself. He was filled with sad thoughts, sad apprehensions of what was to come to pass, and what might be the issue of the things that had been discovered unto him. This, I say, is the frame and temper he describes himself to be in: a man under sad apprehensions of the issues and events of things, and the dispensations of God, as many are at this day: and upon that account closely and nearly perplexed.

Secondly, The cause of this perturbation of mind and spirit was from the visions of his head: 'The visions of his head troubled him.'

He calls them 'visions of the head,' because that is the seat of the internal senses, and phantasy whereby visions are

received. So he calls them 'a dream,' ver. 1. 'and visions of his head upon his bed.' Yet such visions, such a dream it was, as being immediately from God, and containing a no less certain discovery of his will and mind, than if the things mentioned in them had been spoken face to face; he writes them by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, ver. 2. for the use of the church.

I shall not take the advantage of going forth unto any discourse, of dreams, visions, oracles, and those other diverse ways and manners, Heb. i. 1. of revealing his mind and will, which God was pleased to use with his prophets of old; Numb. xii. 6—8. My aim lies another way: it sufficeth only to take notice, that God gave him in his sleep a representation of the things here expressed, which he was to give over, for the use of the church in following ages. The matter of these visions, which did so much trouble him, falls more directly under our consideration. Now,

1. The subject of these perplexing visions is a representation of the four great empires of the world, which had, and were to have dominion, in and over the places of the church's greatest concerns, and were all to receive their period and destruction by the Lord Christ, and his revenging hand.

And these three things he mentions of them therein: (1.) Their rise; (2.) Nature; (3.) Destruction.

(1.) In ver. 2. he describes their rise and original: it was 'from the strivings of the four winds of the heavens, upon the great sea;' he compares them to the most violent, uncontrollable, and tumultuating things in the whole creation: winds and seas! What waves, what horrible storms, what mixing of heaven and earth, what confusion and destruction must needs ensue the fierce contest of all contrary winds upon the great sea! Such are the springs of empires and governments for the most part amongst men, such their entrances and advancements. In particular, such were the beginnings of the four empires here spoken of. Wars, tumults, confusions, blood, destruction, desolation, were the seeds of their greatness; 'vastitiem ubi fecerunt, pacem vocant.' Galgac. apud Tacit. Seas and great waters do in the Scripture represent people and nations. Rev. xvii. 15. 'The waters which thou sawest where the whore sitteth, are peo-

ple, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues;' as 'waters,' they are unstable, fierce, restless, tumultuating, and when God mingleth his judgments amongst them, they are as 'a sea of glass mingled with fire;' brittle, uncertain, devouring, and implacable. It is a demonstration of the sovereignty of God, that he is above them; Psal. xciii. 3, 4. 'The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.' Now from these, tossed with the winds of commotions, seditions, oppressions, passions, do flow the governments of the world, the Spirit of God moving upon the face of those waters, to bring forth those forms and frames of rule which he will make use of.

(2.) Unto ver. 9. he describes them in order, as to their nature and kind: one of them being then ready to be destroyed, and the other to succeed, until the utter desolation of them all, and all power rising in their spirit and principle.

I shall not pass through their particular description, nor stay to prove that the fourth beast, without name or special form, is the Roman empire, which I have elsewhere* demonstrated; and it is something else which at this time I aim at. This is that which troubles and grieves the spirit of Daniel in the midst of his body. He saw what worldly powers should arise, by what horrible tumults, shakings, confusions, and violence they should spring up, with what fierceness, cruelty, and persecution, they should rule in the world, and stamp all under their feet.

(3.) Their end and destruction is revealed unto him, from ver. 10. unto ver. 12, 13. And this,

[1.] By the appearance of 'the ancient of days,' the eternal God in judgment against them: which he sets out with that solemnity and glory, as if it were the great judgment of the last day: God indeed thereby giving a pledge unto the world, of that universal judgment he will one day exercise 'towards all, by the man whom he hath ordained;' Acts xvii. 31. And this increaseth the terror of the vision, to have such a representation of the glory of God, as no creature is able to bear: God also manifests hereby his immediate actings, in the setting up, and pulling down the powers of this

* Sermon on Heb. xii. 27.

world, which he doth as fully and effectually, as if he sat upon a throne of judgment, calling them all by name to appear in his presence; and upon the evidence of their ways, cruelties, and oppression, pronouncing sentence against them: 'Be wise therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth: serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling;' Psal. ii. 11, 12. 'He changeth the times and seasons;' Dan. ii. 21. 'He ruleth in the kingdom of men, and setteth over it whom he pleaseth;' chap. v. 21.

And this is the first thing in this vision, at which the prophet was perplexed.

2. There is the approach of the Lord Christ unto the Father, with his entrance into his kingdom and dominion, 'which is everlasting, and passeth not away;' ver. 14.

This being the end of the vision, I must a little insist upon it; not that I intend purposely to handle the kingdom of Christ as Mediator, but only a little to consider it, as it lies here in the vision, and is needful for the right bottoming of the truth in our intendment.

Various have been the thoughts of men about the kingdom of Christ in all ages. That the Messiah was to be a King, a Prince, a Ruler, that he was to have a kingdom, and that the 'government was to be on his shoulders,' is evident from the Old Testament. That all this was, and is accomplished in Jesus of Nazareth, whom God exalted, made a Prince and a Saviour, is no less evident in the New. But about the nature of this kingdom, its rise, and manner of government, have been, and are, the contests of men.

The Jews to this very day expect it, as a thing carnal, and temporal, visible, outwardly glorious, wherein, in all manner of pleasure, they shall bear rule over the nations at their will; such another thing of all the world as the popedom, which the Gentile, or idolatrous worshippers of Christ set up for his kingdom: and of some such thing it may be supposed the apostles themselves were not without thoughts, until they had conversed with the Lord after the resurrection; Luke ix. 46. Acts ii. 6. Neither are all amongst us free from them at this day.

Those who with any simplicity profess the name of Christ, do generally agree, that there are three parts of it.

(1.) First and principally; in that which is internal and

spiritual, in and over the souls of men, over spirits both good and bad, in reference unto the ends which he hath to accomplish upon them. Of that which is direct and immediate upon the hearts and souls of men, there are two parts.

[1.] That which he exerciseth towards his elect, who are given unto him of his Father, converting, ruling, preserving them, under and through great variety of dispensations internal and external, until he brings them unto himself: 'He stands and feeds them in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God;' Micah v. 4. 'Even he who is the ruler of Israel;' ver. 2. 'He is exalted and made a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance to Israel, for the forgiveness of sins;' Acts v. 31. 'He makes his people a willing people in the day of his power;' Psal. cx. 3. Sending out his Holy Spirit to lead them into all truth, and making his word and ordinances 'mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds in their hearts, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God; and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of himself;' 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. He takes possession of their hearts by his power, dwelling in them by his Spirit, making them kings in his kingdom, and bringing them infallibly into glory. Oh, that this rule, this kingdom of his, might be carried on in our hearts! We busy ourselves about many things, we shall find at length this one thing necessary: this is that part of the kingdom of Christ, which we are principally to aim at in the preaching of the gospel: 'We preach Christ Jesus the Lord;' 1 Cor. iv. 5. Him to be Lord and King though others have had dominion over us: they are the grains of Israel which the Lord seeks for in his sifting the nations by his word, as well as by his providence; and we are in the work of the gospel to 'endure all things for the elect's sake;' 2 Cor. ii. 10.

[2.] In the power which he exerciseth towards others, to whom the word of the gospel doth come, calling, convincing, enlightening, hardening many, who yet being not his sheep, nor of his fold, he will never take to himself: but leaves to themselves, under aggravations of condemnation, which they pull upon themselves by the contempt of the gospel; 2 Cor. ii. 16. Heb. x. 29. He sends his Spirit to convince even the perishing 'world of sin, righteousness, and judgment;' John

xvi. 8. He sendeth 'sharp arrows into the very hearts of his enemies,' Psal. xiv. 5. making them stoop, bow, and fall under him: so bounding their rage, overbearing their lusts, leaving them without excuse in themselves, and his people, oftentimes not without profit from them: with some dealing even in this life more severely, causing the witnesses of the gospel to torment them by the preaching of the word; Rev. xi. 10. yet giving them up to strong delusions, that they may 'believe lies, and be damned;' 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12. &c.

[3.] In carrying on of this work towards the one and the other, he puts forth the power, rule, and dominion, which he hath of his Father over spirits, both good and bad.

1st. Being made head of principalities and powers, and exalted 'far above every name in heaven or earth,' being made the 'first-born of every creature,' and all the angels of God being commanded to worship him, Heb. i. 6. and put in subjection under his feet; he sends them forth, and uses them as 'ministering spirits for them who shall be heirs of salvation,' ver. 14. appointing them to behold the face of his Father, ready for his command on their behalf, Matt. xviii. 10. attending in their assemblies, 1 Cor. xi. 10. and to give them their assistance in the time of danger and trouble, Acts xii. 9. 'destroying their adversaries,' ver. 23. with innumerable other advantageous administrations, which he hath not thought good to acquaint us withal in particular, that our dependance might be on our King himself, and not on any of our fellow-servants, though never so glorious and excellent; Rev. xxii. 9.

2dly. For Satan, as he came to 'bind the strong man armed, and to spoil his goods,' Matt. ii. 29. 'to destroy him that had the power of death;' Heb. ii. 14. And being made 'manifest to this end, that he might destroy his works,' 1 John iii. 8. in the souls of men in this world; 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. so, having in his own person conquered these 'principalities and powers of darkness, making an open show of them in his cross, and triumphing over them,' Col. ii. 15. he continues overruling and judging him and them, in their opposition to his church, and will do so until he bring them to a full conquest and subjection, that they shall be judged and sentenced by the poor creatures, whom in this world they continually pursue with all manner of enmity; 1 Cor. vi. 3.

And this looketh to the inward substance of the kingdom of Christ, which is given him of his Father, and is not of this world, though he exercise it in the world to the last day: a kingdom which can never be shaken nor removed: 'the government of it is upon his shoulders, and of the increase of it there shall be no end.'

(2.) That rule or government, which in his word he hath appointed and ordained for all his saints and chosen ones to walk in, to testify their inward subjection to him, and to be fitted for usefulness one to another. Now of this part the administration is wrapt up in the laws, ordinances, institutions, and appointments of the gospel, and it is frequently called the 'kingdom of God.' That Jesus Christ doth not rule in these things, and is not to be obeyed as a king in them, is but a late darkness, which though it should spread as a cloud over the face of the heavens, and pour forth some showers and tempests, yet it would be as a cloud still, which will speedily scatter and vanish into nothing.

And this is that, whose propagation, as the means of carrying on the former spiritual ends of Christ, you desire strength and direction for this day. Men may gather together unto Christ, and say, with heads full of hopes, poor souls, and eyes fixed on the right hand and left, 'Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' Take you his answer and be contented with it: 'It is not for you to know the times and seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power,' Acts i. 6, 7. but do your work faithfully. I know in this thing, it is far easier to complain of you for not doing, than to direct you what to do; the Lord be your guide, and give you straw wherever bricks are required of you.

(3.) In the universal judgment, which the Father hath committed to him over all, which he will most eminently exercise at the last day; rewarding, crowning, receiving some to himself, judging, condemning, casting others into utter darkness; John v. 22. 27. Acts ii. 36. Rom. xiv. 9. Acts xvii. 31. And of this universal righteous judgment, he giveth many warnings unto the world, by pouring forth sundry vials of his wrath upon great Nimrods and oppressors; Psal. cx. 6. Micah iv. 3. Rev. xix. 11—13. And in the hold-

ing forth these three parts of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus, doth the Scripture abound.

But now, whether over and beyond all these the Lord Christ shall not bear an outward, visible, glorious rule? setting up a kingdom like those of the world, to be ruled by strength and power? and if so; when, or how it shall be brought in, into whose hands the administration of it shall be committed, and upon what account, whether he will personally walk therein or no, whether it shall be clearly distinct from the rule he now bears in the world, or only differed by more glorious degrees and manifestations of his power? endless and irreconcilable are the contests of those that profess his name. This we find by woful experience; that all who, from the spirituality of the rule of Christ, and delight therein, have degenerated into carnal apprehensions of the beauty and glory of it, have for the most part, been given up to carnal actings, suited to such apprehensions, and have been so dazzled with gazing after temporal glory, that the kingdom which comes not by observation, hath been vile in their eyes.

3. Now because it is here fallen in my way, and is part of the vision at which the prophet was so much troubled, I shall give you some brief observations of what is clear and certain from Scripture relating hereunto, and so pass on. It is then certain,

(1.) That the interest of particular men as to this kingdom of Christ, is to look wherein the universal concernment of all saints, in all ages, doth lie. This undoubtedly they may attain, and it doth belong to them: now certainly this is in that part of it which comes not by observation, Luke xvii. 20. but is within us, which 'is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;' Rom. xiv. 17. This may be possessed in a dungeon, as well as on a throne. What outward glory soever may be brought in, it is but a shadow of this: this is the kingdom that cannot be moved, which requires grace in us 'to serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear;' Heb. xii. 28. Many have failed in gasping after outward appearances: never any failed of blessedness, who made this their portion. Oh, that this were more pursued and followed after! Let not any think to set up the king-

dom of Christ in the world, while they pull it down in their own hearts by sin and folly : in this let the lines fall to me, and let my inheritance be among those that are sanctified. Yet,

(2.) This is certain, that all nations whatever, which in their present state and government, have given their power to the dragon and the beast, to oppose the Lord Christ withal, shall be shaken, broken, translated, and turned off their old foundations and constitutions, into which the antichristian interest hath been woven for a long season. God will shake the heavens and the earth of the nations round about, until all the Babylonish rubbish, all their original engagements to the man of sin, be taken away.

This I have fully demonstrated elsewhere.^a All those great wars which you have foretold, wherein the saints of God shall be eminently engaged, are upon this account.

(3.) That the civil powers of the world, after fearful shakings and desolations, shall be disposed of into a useful subserviency to the interest, power, and kingdom of Jesus Christ : hence they are said to be 'his kingdoms;' Rev. xi. 15. that is, to be disposed of for the behoof of his interest, rule, and dominion : of this you have plentiful promises, Isa. lx. and elsewhere ; when the nations are broken in opposition to 'Zion, their gain must be consecrated to the Lord, and their substance to the Lord of the whole earth;' Micah iv. 13. Even judges and rulers, as such, must kiss the Son, and own his sceptre, and advance his ways. Some think, if you were well settled, you ought not in any thing, as rulers of the nations, to put forth your power for the interest of Christ : the good Lord keep your hearts from that apprehension. Have you ever in your affairs received any encouragement from the promises of God, have you in times of greatest distress been refreshed with the testimony of a good conscience, that in godly simplicity, you have sought the advancement of the Lord Christ ; do you believe that he ever owned the cause as the head of his church ? Do not now profess you have nothing to do with him : had he so professed of you and your affairs, what had been your portion long since !

(4.) Look what kingdom soever the Lord Christ will ad-

^a Sermon on Heb. xii. 27.

vance in the world, and exercise amongst his holy ones, the beginning of it must be with the Jews ; they are to be ' caput Imperii,' the head and seat of this empire must be amongst them ; these are the ' saints of the Most High,' mentioned by Daniel : and therefore in that part of his prophecy, which he wrote in the Chaldean tongue, then commonly known and spoken in the east, being the language of the Babylonish empire, he speaketh of them obscurely, and under borrowed expressions ; but coming to those visions which he wrote in Hebrew, for the sole use of the church, he is much more express concerning the people of whom he spake. The rod of ' Christ's strength goes out of Zion,' and thence he proceeds to rule those that were his enemies ; Psal. cx. 2. All the promises of the glorious kingdom of Christ are to be accomplished in the gathering of the Gentiles, with the glory of the Jews. ' The Redeemer comes to Zion, and to them that turn from transgression' (that great transgression of unbelief) ' in Jacob ;' Isa. lix. 20. ' Then shall the Lord rise upon them, and his glory shall be seen upon them, the Gentiles shall come to their light, and kings to the brightness of their rising ;' Isa. lx. 2, 3. I dare say there is not any promise any where of raising up a kingdom unto the Lord Christ in this world, but it is either expressed, or clearly intimated, that the beginning of it must be with the Jews, and that in contradistinction to the nations : so eminently in that glorious description of it, Micah iv. 7, 8. ' I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast afar off a strong nation, and the Lord shall reign over them in mount Zion, from henceforth even for ever : and thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion, the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.' When the great hunter Nimrod set up a kingdom, the beginning of it was Babel, Gen. x. 10. and when the great Shepherd sets up his kingdom, the beginning of it shall be Zion ; so farther it is at large expressed, Micah v. 7, 8. Nothing is more clear to any, who, being not carried away with weak, carnal apprehensions of things present, have once seriously weighed the promises of God to this purpose : what the Lord Christ will do with them, and by them, is not so clear ; this is certain, that their return shall be marvellous, glorious, as

life from the dead. When then Euphrates shall be dried up, Turkish power, and popish idolatry be taken out of the world, and these 'kings of the east' are come, when the seed of Abraham being multiplied like the stars of heaven, and the sands of the sea shore, shall possess the gates of their enemies, and shall have peace in their borders, we may lift up our heads towards the fulness of our redemption: but whilst these things are, or may be, for any thing we know, afar off, to dream of setting up an outward, glorious, visible kingdom of Christ, which he must bear rule in, and over the world, be it in Germany, or in England, is but an ungrounded presumption. The Jews not called, antichrist not destroyed, the nations of the world generally wrapped up in idolatry and false worship, little dreaming of their deliverance: will the Lord Christ leave the world in this state, and set up his kingdom here on a molehill?

(5.) This is a perpetual antithesis, and opposition that is put between the kingdoms of the world and the kingdom of Christ; that they rise out of the strivings of the winds upon the sea, he comes with the clouds of heaven: they are brought in by commotions, tumults, wars, desolations, and so shall all the shakings of the nations be, to punish them for their old opposition, and to translate them into a subserviency to his interest. The coming in of the kingdom of Christ shall not be by the arm of flesh, nor shall it be the product of the strifes and contests of men which are in the world: it is not to be done 'by might or power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts;' Zech. iv. 6. great wars, desolations, alterations, shall precede it; but it is not the sons of men that by outward force shall build the new Jerusalem; that comes down from heaven adorned as a bride for Christ, fitted and prepared by himself: certainly the strivings of men about this business shall have no influence into it. It shall be by the glorious manifestation of his own power, and that by his Spirit subduing the souls of men unto it; not by the sword of man setting up a few to rule over others. Hence it is everywhere called a creating of 'a new heaven, and a new earth,' Isa. lxv. 17. a work doubtless too difficult for the worms of the earth to undertake. There is nothing more opposite to the spirit of the

gospel, than to suppose that Jesus Christ will take to himself a kingdom by the carnal sword and bow of the sons of men. The raising of the 'tabernacle of David which is fallen down, and the setting up the decayed places of it,' Acts xv. 16. is done by his visiting the people with his Spirit and word, ver. 14. It is by the pouring out of his Spirit in a covenant of mercy; Isa. lix. 21. Thus the Lord sets up one 'shepherd of his people, and he shall feed them, even,' saith he, 'my servant David, he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd, and the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them;' Ezek. xxxiv. 24, 25. He brings in the kingdom of his Son, by making the children of Israel seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and to fear the Lord and his goodness;' Hos. iii. 5. Who now can fathom the counsels of the Almighty, who hath searched his bosom, and can by computation tell us, when he shall pour out his Spirit for the accomplishment of these things?

This then is the last thing in this vision, whose consideration brought the prophet into so great perplexity and distress of spirit.

Thirdly, There is the means that Daniel used for redress in that sad condition, whereunto he was brought by the consideration of this vision: 'He drew near to one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this.'

This also was done in vision. There is no mention of his waking before his making this address: but the vision continuing, he draws nigh in the same manner to one of them that stood by; one of those angels, or holy ones, that stood ministering before the throne of God, who was commissioned to acquaint him with the mind and will of God in the things represented to them. This then is the remedy he applies himself unto; he labours to know the mind and will of God, in the things that were to be done: this it seems he pitched on, as the only way for quieting his grieved and troubled spirit; and hereupon,

Fourthly, He is told and made to know the interpretation of the things, so far at least as might quiet his spirit in the will of God.

Not that he is clearly instructed in every particular, for he tells them in the close of the chapter, that he had trouble-

some thoughts about the whole; 'his cogitations troubled him, and his countenance changed,' ver. 28. but having received what light God was willing to communicate to him, he inquires no farther, but addresses himself to his own duty.

Take then from the words thus opened in these propositions; some whereof I shall do little more than name unto you.

Observation I. In the consideration of God's marvellous actings in the world, in order to the carrying on of the gospel and the interest of the Lord Jesus Christ, the hearts of his saints are oftentimes filled with perplexity and trouble.

They know not what will be the issue, nor sometimes what well to do. Daniel receives a vision of the things which in part we live under: and if they fill his heart with astonishment, is it any wonder if they come close to us, and fill us with anxious perplexing thoughts, upon whom the things themselves are fallen?

Observation II. The only way to deliver and extricate our spirits from under such perplexities and entanglements, is to draw nigh to God in Christ, for discovery of his will.

So did Daniel here; he went to one of them that ministered before the Lord to be acquainted with his will, otherwise thoughts and contrivances will but farther perplex you; like men in the mire, whilst they pluck one leg out, the other sticketh faster in; whilst you relieve yourselves in one thing, you will be more hampered in another. Yea, he that increaseth wisdom, increaseth sorrow; the larger the visions are, the greater will be their troubles; until being consumed in your own fears, cares, and contrivances, you grow useless in your generation; those who see only the outside of your affairs, sleep securely; those who come nigher to look into the spirits of men, rest is taken from them; and many are not quiet, because they will not; the great healing of all is in God.

Observation III. When God makes known the interpretations of things, it will quiet your spirits in your walking before him, and actings with him.

This was that which brought the spirit of Daniel into a settlement. How God reveals his mind in these things, by

what means, how it may be known by individual persons, for their quiet and settlement, how all God's revelations are quieting, and tend to the calming of men's spirits, not making them foam like the waves of the sea, should be handled on this observation.

But I begin with the first observation.

Observation I. In the consideration of God's marvellous actings in the world, in order to the carrying on of the gospel, the hearts of his saints are oftentimes filled with perplexity and trouble.

When John received his book of visions in reference to the great things that were to be done, and the alterations that were to be brought about, though it were sweet in his mouth, and he rejoiced in his employment, yet it made 'his belly bitter;' Rev. x. 9, 10. It filled him with perplexity, as our prophet speaks, in the midst of his body; he saw blood and confusion, strife and violence; it made his very belly bitter.

Poor Jeremiah, upon the same account, is so oppressed, that it makes him break out of all bounds of faith and patience, to curse the day of his birth, to wax quite weary of his employment; chap. xv.

Our Saviour describing such a season, Luke xxi. 26. tells us, 'that men's hearts shall fail them for fear, and for looking after those things that are coming upon the earth:' they will be thinking what will become of them, and what will be the issue of God's dispensations; fearing that the whole frame of things will be wrapped up in darkness and confusion. Hence our Saviour bids his disciples not be troubled when they hear of these things, Matt. xxiv. 6. intimating that they will be very apt so to be.

Now the causes and occasions (which are the reasons of the point) arise,

1. From the greatness and astonishableness of the things themselves, which God will do; 'even great and terrible things which men looked not for;' Isa. lxiv. 2, 3. When he comes to make his name known to the nations, that his adversaries may tremble at his presence, and doth terrible things, quite above and beyond the expectation of men, which they never once looked for; no wonder if their hearts

be surprised with amazement. It hath of late been so with this nation; all professors at the beginning of these days, joined earnestly in that prayer, Isa. lxiii. 17—19. lxiv. 1. God in answer hereunto, 'comes down and rents the heaven, and the mountains flow down at his presence,' according to the desire of their souls; yet withal he doth terrible things, things that we looked not for. How many poor creatures are turned back with astonishment, and know not how to abide with him? When our Saviour Christ came in the flesh, who had been the desire of all nations for four thousand years, and most importunately sought after by the men of that generation wherein he came, yet doing great and unexpected things at his coming, who was able to abide it? This, says Simeon, will be the issue of it, 'He shall be for the fall and rise of many; and the thoughts of many hearts shall be revealed;' Luke ii. 34, 35. Hence is that exclamation, Mal. iii. 2. 'Who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth?' His coming is desired indeed, but few can bear it; 'his day will burn as an oven, as a furnace,' chap. iv. 1. some are overheated by it, some consume in it; blessed are they that abide: this is one cause of the perplexing of the spirits of men. The consideration of the things themselves that are done, being above and beyond their expectations; and this even many of the saints of God are borne down under, at this day; they little looked for the blood and banishment of kings, change of government, alteration of nations, such shakings of heaven and earth as have ensued; not considering that he who doth these things, weighs all the nations in a balance, and the rulers of them are as the dust thereof before him.

2. From the manner whereby God will do these things. Many perplexing, killing circumstances attend his dispensations; I shall instance only in one, and that is darkness and obscurity, whereby he holds the minds of men in uncertainty and suspense, for his own glorious ends; such he tells us shall his day, and the works thereof be. 'And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark. But it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night; but it shall come to pass that at evening-time it shall be light;' Zech. xiv. 6, 7. Men shall not know what

to make of it, nor what to judge; he brings not forth his work all at once, but by degrees, and sometimes sets it backward, and leads it up and down, as he did his people of old in the wilderness, that none might know where they should fall or settle; and he that believeth will not make haste. When God is doing great things, he delights to wrap them up in the clouds, to keep the minds of men in uncertainties, that he may set on work all that is in them, and try them to the utmost, whether they can live upon his care and wisdom, when they see their own care and wisdom will do no good. Men would fain come to some certainty, and commonly by the thoughts and ways whereby they press unto it, they put all things into more uncertainty than ever, and so promote the design of God, which they so studiously endeavour to decline. Hence is that description of the presence of the Lord in his mighty works, Psal. xviii. 9. 11. 'Darkness was under his feet;' men could not see his paths, &c. He hath ends of surprisal, hardening, and destruction towards some, for which they must be left unto their own spirits, and led into many snares and by-paths, for their trial, and the exercise of others, which could not be accomplished, did he not come in the clouds, and were not darkness his pavilion, and his secret place; on this account is that cry of men of profane and hardened spirits, Isa. v. 19. 'Let him make speed and hasten his work that we may see it, and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh that we may know it.' They know not what to make of what they see; of all that is yet done or accomplished, they would have the whole work out, that they might once see the end of it, and so know what to judge; they would be at a point with him, and not always kept at those perplexing uncertainties; and this is another cause of the trouble of men's spirits, in consideration of the dispensations of God. God still keeps a cloud hanging over, and they know not when it will fall, nor what will be done in the issue of things: this makes some weary of waiting on him, and with the profane king of Israel to cry, 'This evil is of the Lord, there is no end, confusion will be the issue of all, why should I abide any longer?'

3. The lusts of men do commonly under such dispensa-

tions, fearfully and desperately tumultuate, to the disturbance of the most settled and weighed spirits: Satan takes advantage to draw them out in such a season to the utmost, both in spirituals and civils. What will be the constant deportment of men of corrupt minds in such a time, our Saviour sets forth, Matt. xxiv. 8. They shall 'come in the name of Christ to deceive, and shall deceive many, and cause iniquity to abound.' In such a day Edom will appear an enemy,^a and Ephraim with the son of Remaliah will join with Syria for the vexing of Judah: hence are perplexities, and swords piercing through the very souls of men. Take an instance in the days wherein we live. From the beginning of the contests in this nation, when God had caused your spirits to resolve, that the liberties, privileges, and rights of this nation wherewith you were intrusted, should not, by his assistance, be wrested out of your hands by violence, oppression, and injustice; this he also put upon your hearts, to vindicate and assert the gospel of Jesus Christ, his ways and his ordinances, against all opposition, though you were but inquiring the way to Zion, with your faces thitherward. God secretly intertwining the interest of Christ with yours, wrapt up with you the whole generation of them that seek his face, and prospered your affairs on that account: so that whereas causes of as clear a righteousness among the sons of men as yours, have come to nothing, yet your undertaking hath been like the sheaf of Joseph, in the midst of the nations, which hath stood up, when all the others have bowed to the ground: being then convinced that your affairs have fallen under his promises, and have come up to an acceptance before him, solely upon the account of their subserviency to the interest of Christ; God hath put it into your hearts to seek the propagation of his gospel. What now by the lusts of men is the state of things? say some, there is no gospel at all: say others, if there be, you have nothing to do with it: some say, Lo here is Christ; others, Lo there: some make religion a colour for one thing; some for another: say some, the magistrate must not support the gospel; say others, the gospel must subvert the magistrate: say some, your rule is only for men, as men, you have nothing to do with the interest of Christ

^a Obad. xii. 13. Isa. vi.

and the church: say others, you have nothing to do to rule men, but upon the account of being saints. If you will have the gospel, say some, down with the ministers of it, chemarims, locusts, &c. and if you will have light, take care that you may have ignorance and darkness: things being carried on as if it were the care of men, that there might be no trouble in the world, but what the name of religion might lie in the bottom of. Now those that ponder these things, their spirits are grieved in the midst of their bodies; the visions of their heads trouble them, they looked for other things from them that professed Christ; but the summer is ended, and the harvest is past, and we are not refreshed. Again, God had so stated your affairs, that you were the mark of the antichristian world to shoot at in the beginning; and their terror in the close: and when you thought only to have pursued Sheba the son of Bichri, the man of your first warfare, behold one Abel after another undertakes the quarrel against you: yea such Abels as Scotland and Holland; of whom we said in old times, we will inquire of them, and so ended the matter: and there is not a wise man or woman amongst them, that can dissuade them. Strange! that Ephraim should join with Syria to vex Judah their brother, that the Netherlands, whose being is founded merely upon the interest you have undertaken, should join with the great antichristian interest, which cannot possibly be set up again, without their inevitable ruin. Hence also are deep thoughts of heart, men are perplexed, disquieted, and know not what to do.

I could mention other lusts, and tumultuatings of the spirits of men, that have an influence into the disturbance of the hearts of the most precious in this nation, but I forbear.

4. Men's own lusts disquiet their spirits in such a season as this. I could instance in many, I shall name only four. (1.) Unstableness of mind; (2.) Carnal fears; (3.) Love of the world; (4.) Desire of pre-eminence.

(1.) Unstableness of mind, which makes men like the waves of the sea that cannot rest: the Scripture calls it *ἀκαταστασίαν*, 'tumultuatingness' of spirit: there is something of that which Jude speaks of, in better persons than those he describes, 'raging like waves of the sea, and foam-

ing out their own shame ;' ver. 13. If God give men up to a restless spirit, no condition imaginable can quiet them, still they think they see something beyond it that is desirable. Hannibal said of Marcellus, that he could never be quiet conqueror nor conquered. Some men's desires are so enlarged, that nothing can satiate them. Wise men that look upon sundry godly persons in this nation, and beholding how every yoke of the oppressor is broken from off their necks, that no man makes them afraid, that they are looked on as the head, not as the tail, enjoying the ordinances of God according to the light of their minds, and desires of their hearts, no man forbidding them, are ready to wonder (I speak of private persons), what they can find to do in their several places and callings, but to serve the Lord in righteousness and holiness, being without fear all the days of their lives. But alas ! when poor creatures are given up to the power of an unquiet and unstable mind, they think scarce any thing vile, but being wise unto sobriety : nothing desirable, but what is without their proper bounds, and what leads to that confusion, which themselves in the issue are least able of many to undergo. It is impossible but that men's hearts should be pierced with disquietness and trouble, that are given up to this frame.

(2.) Carnal fears. These even devour and eat up the hearts of men : what shall we do, what shall become of us ; Ephraim is confederate with Syria, and the hearts of men are shaken, as the trees of the wood, that are moved with the wind ? What ! new troubles still, new unsettlements ! This storm will not be avoided, this will be worse than all, that hath befallen us from the youth of our undertakings. God hath not yet won upon men's spirits to trust him in shakings, perplexities, alterations : they remember not the manifestations of his wisdom, power, and goodness in former days ; and how tender hitherto he hath been of the interest of Christ, that their hearts might be established. Could we but do our duty, and trust the Lord with the performances of his promises, what quietness, what sweetness might we have ?

I shall not instance in the other two particulars : it is too manifest, that many of our piercing and perplexing thoughts are from the tumultuating and disorder of our own

lusts. So that what remains of the time allotted to me, I shall spend only in the use of this point, and proceed no farther.

Use. Of instruction, to direct you into ways and means of quietness, in reference unto all these causes and occasions of piercing, dividing thoughts, in such a season as this. The good Lord seal up instruction to your souls, that you may know the things that belong to your peace, and what Israel ought to do at this, even at this time: for my brethren's and companions' sake I wish you prosperity: though my own portion should be in the dust, for the true spiritual, not imaginary, carnal interest of the church of God in this nation, and the nations about, I wish you prosperity.

(1.) First then, in reference to the things that God is doing, both as to their greatness, and their manner of doing; whose consideration fills men with thoughts, that grieve their spirits in the midst of their bodies: would you have your hearts quieted in this respect? take my second *Observation* for your direction: the only way to extricate and deliver our spirits from under such perplexities and entanglements, is to draw nigh to God in Christ, for the discovery of his will. So did Daniel here in my text: I fear this is too much neglected. You take counsel with your own hearts, you advise with one another, hearken unto men under a repute of wisdom; and all this doth but increase your trouble, you do but more and more entangle and disquiet your own spirits. God stands by and says, 'I am wise also;' and little notice is taken of him: we think we are grown wise ourselves, and do not remember we never prospered but only when we went unto God, and told him plainly we knew not what to do. Public fastings are neglected, despised, spoken against; and when appointed, practised according as men's hearts are principled to such a duty, coldly, deadly, unacceptably. Life, heat, warmth is gone, and shall not blood and all go after? The Lord prevent it. Private meetings are used, to shew ourselves wise in the debate of things, with a form of godly words; sometimes for strife, tumult, division, disorder. And shall we think there is much closet inquiring after God, when all other actings of that principle, which should carry out

thereunto, are opposed and slighted? when we do sometimes wait upon God, do not many seem to ask amiss, to spend it on their lusts, not waiting on him, poor, hungry, empty, to know his will, to receive direction from him; but rather going full, fixed, resolved, settled on thoughts, perhaps prejudices of our own, almost taking upon us to prescribe unto the Almighty, and to impose our poor, low, carnal thoughts upon his wisdom and care of his church? Oh where is that holy, and that humble frame, wherewith at first we followed our God into the wilderness, where we have been fed, and clothed, preserved and protected for so many years? Hence is it that the works of God are become strange and terrible, and dark unto us: and of necessity, some of us, many of us, must shut up all with disappointment and sorrow. We fill our souls boldly, confidently, with cross and contrary apprehensions of the intendments of God, and of the mediums whereby he will accomplish his ends; and do not consider, that this is not a frame of men, who had given up themselves to the all-sufficiency of God. Some perhaps will say, this belongs not unto them, they have waited upon God, and they do know his mind, and what are the things he will do, and are not blind also, nor in the dark as other men. But if it be so, what means this 'bleating of sheep and oxen in mine ears?' Yea, what means that roaring and foaming of unquiet waves, which we hear and see: hard speeches, passionate reproaches, sharp revilings of their brethren, in boundless confidence, endless enmity, causing evil surmises, biting, tearing, devouring terms and expressions, casting out the names of men upright in their generations, saying, the Lord be praised? When the Lord discovers his mind and will, it settleth the heart, composeth the mind, fills the soul with reverence and godly fear, conforms the heart unto itself, fills it with peace, love, meekness, gentleness. And shall we be thought to have received the mind, the will of God, when our hearts, words, ways, are full of contrary qualities? Let it be called what it will, I shall not desire to share in that, which would bring my heart into such a frame. Well then, beloved, take this for your first direction: Be more abundant with God in faith and prayer, deal with him in public and private, take counsel of him, bend your hearts through his grace to your old frame, when it was your joy

to meet in this place, which now I fear to many is their burden : seek the Lord and his face, ' seek him while he may be found.' And hereby,

[1.] You will empty your hearts of many perplexing contrivances of your own, and you will find faith in this communion with God, by little and little working out, killing, slaying these prejudices and presumptions which you may be strong in, that are not according to the will of God ; so you be sure to come not to have your own lusts and carnal conceptions answered, but to have the will of God fulfilled. When men come unto the Lord to have their own visions fulfilled, it is righteous with God to answer them according to those visions, and confirm them in them, to their own disturbance, and the disturbance of others.

[2.] You shall certainly have peace in your own hearts in the all-sufficiency of God. This he will give in upon your spirits, that whatever he doth, all his ways shall be to you mercy, truth, faithfulness, and peace ; yea, the discoveries which you shall have of his own fulness, sweetness, suitableness, and the excellency of things which are not seen, will work your hearts to such a frame, that you shall attend to the things here below, merely upon the account of duty, with the greatest calmness, and quietness of mind imaginable.

[3.] You shall surely know your own particular paths, wherein you ought to walk in serving God in your generation. Those that wait upon him he will guide in judgment, he will not leave them in the dark, nor to distracted, divided, piercing thoughts. But whatever others do, you shall be guided into ways of peace : this you shall have when the lusts of men will neither let themselves, nor others be at quiet. Oh, then return to your rest, look to him from whom you have gone astray ; take no more disturbing counsel with yourselves, or others ; renew your old frame of humble dependance on God, and earnest seeking his face ; you have certainly backslidden in this thing. Is not the Lord the God of counsel and wisdom, as well as the God of force and power, that you run to him when in a strait in your actions ; but when your counsels seem sometimes to be mixed with a spirit of difficulty and trouble, he is neglected ? Only come with humble depending hearts, not every one to bring

the devices, imaginations, opinions, prejudices, and lust of their own hearts before him.

(2.) For the troubles that arise from the lusts of other men, and that about the gospel, and the propagation thereof (the tumultuating of the lusts of men in reference whereunto I gave you an account of formerly), there are many piercing thoughts of heart. What extremes, I had almost said extravagancies, men have in this matter run out into, I shall now not insist upon: only I shall give you a few directions, for your own practice.

If once it comes to that, that you shall say, you have nothing to do with religion as rulers of the nation, God will quickly manifest that he hath nothing to do with you as rulers of the nation. The great promise of Christ is, that in these latter days of the world he will lay the nations in a subserviency to him, the kingdoms of the world shall become his; that is, act as kingdoms and governments no longer against him, but for him. Surely those promises will scarcely be accomplished in bringing commonwealths of men professing his name, to be of Gallio's frame, to take care for none of those things: or as the Turk, in an absolute indifferency what any profess; I mean, that are not his own, for in respect of them he changes not his God. Not that I would you should go and set up forms of government, to compel men to come under the line of them, or to thrust in your sword to cut the lesser differences of brethren: not that I think truth ever the more the truth, or to have any thing the more of authority upon the conscience, for having the stamp of your authority annexed to it, for its allowance to pass in these nations. Nor do I speak a word of what is, may, or may not be incumbent on you, in respect of the most profligate opposers of the truths of the gospel; but only this, that, not being such as are always learning, never coming to the knowledge of the truth, but being fully persuaded in your own minds, certainly it is incumbent on you, to take care that the faith, which you have received, which was once delivered to the saints, in all the necessary concernments of it, may be protected, preserved, propagated to and among the people which God hath set you over. If a father, as a father, is bound to do what answers this in his family, unto his children; a master, as a master, to his ser-

vants ; if you will justify yourselves as fathers, or rulers of your country, you will find in your account this to be incumbent on you. Take heed of them that would temper clay and iron, things that will not mingle ; that would compound carnal and fleshly things with heavenly things and spiritual, that they may not entangle your spirits. The great design of grasping temporal power, upon a spiritual account, will prove at last to be the greatest badge of anti-christ. Hitherto God hath appeared against it, and will no doubt to the end ; if either you, by the authority God hath given you in the world, shall take upon you to rule the house of God, as formerly such, as his house, though you rule the persons, whereof it is made up, or those who are, or pretend to be of that house, to rule the world on that account, your day and theirs will be nigh at hand.

Now because you wait on God for direction in reference to the propagation of the gospel, and the preventing that which is contrary to sound doctrine and godliness, I shall

[1.] Shew you very briefly what God has promised concerning magistrates to this end.

[2.] Give you some principles whereon you may rest in your actings. And,

[3.] Lay down some rules for your direction : and so draw to a close.

[1.] Take in the first place what God hath promised concerning magistrates, kings, rulers, judges, and nations, and their subserviency to the church. What God hath promised they shall do, that is their duty to do : he hath not measured out an inheritance for his people, out of the sins of other men. Let us a little view some of these promises, and then consider their application to the truth we have in hand, and what is cleared out unto us by them : there are many ; I shall instance in the most obvious and eminent. ' I will restore their judges and priests and counsellors as at the beginning ; Isa. i. 26. It is to Zion redeemed, purged, washed in the blood of Christ, that this promise is made. Isa. xlix. 7. ' Kings shall see and arise, and princes shall bow down themselves.' The Jews being for the greatest part of them rejected upon the coming of Christ, this promise is made unto him upon his pouring out of the Spirit, for the bringing in of the Gentiles : as it is farther enlarged,

ver. 22, 23. 'Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers.' Isa. lx. looks wholly this way : taste of the nature and intendment of the whole. 'And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Therefore thy gates shall be open continually, they shall not be shut day nor night, that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings, and thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty one of Jacob. For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron : I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness;' ver. 3. 11. 16, 17. To which add the accomplishment of all those promises mentioned, Rev. xi. 15. 21. 24.

You see here are glorious promises, in the literal expression looking directly to what we assert concerning the subserviency of rulers to the gospel, and the duty of magistrates in supporting the interest of the church. Let us concerning them observe these three things : as,

1st. To whom they are made.

2dly. On what occasion they are given.

3dly. What is the subject or matter of them in general.

1st. Then they are all given and made to the church of Christ after his coming in the flesh, and his putting an end to all ceremonial, typical, carnal institutions. For,

(1st.) They are every way attended with the circumstances of calling the Gentiles, and their flowing into the church; which were not accomplished till after the destruction of the Jewish church. So is the case in that which you have, Isa. xlix. 20. 'The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell.' It shall be when the church shall have received the new children of the Gentiles, having lost the other of the Jews : which he expresseth more at large, ver. 22. 'Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders.' So also are the rest,

When God gives the nations to be the inheritance of Christ, the Holy Ghost cautions rulers, and judges to kiss the Son, and pay the homage due to him in his kingdom; Psal. ii. 10, 11.

(2dly.) Because these promises are pointed unto, as accomplished to the Christian church in that place of the Revelation before mentioned. 'And the seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever;' chap. xi. 15. 'And the nations of them which are saved, shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it;' chap. xxi. 24. So that there are plainly promises of kings and princes, judges and rulers to be given to the church, and to be made useful thereunto, and kingdoms and nations, people in their rules and governments to be instrumental in the good thereof: so that these promises belong directly to us, and our rulers, if under any notion, we belong to the church of Christ.

2dly. For the occasion of these promises; it is well known what a trust by God's own appointment there was invested in the rulers, judges, kings, and magistrates of the judicial state and church under the Old Testament, in reference unto the ways and worship of God. The prosecution and execution of the laws of God, concerning his house and service being committed to them; farther when they faithfully discharged their trust, promoting the worship of God according to his institutions, encouraging, supporting, directing, reproving others, to whom the immediate and peculiar administration of things sacred were committed, destroying, removing whatever was an abomination unto the Lord, it was well with the whole people and church, they flourished in peace, and the Lord delighted in them, and rejoiced over them to do them good: and on the other side, their neglect in the discharge of their duty, was then commonly attended with the apostacy of the church, and great breakings forth of the indignation of the Lord: this the church found in those days and bewailed. To hold out therefore the happy state of his people, that he would bring in, he promises them such rulers, and judges as he gave at first, who faithfully discharged the trust committed

to them: not that I suppose them bound to the Mosaical rules of penalties in reference to transgressions and offences against gospel institutions, but only that a duty in general is incumbent on them in reference to the church and truth of God, which they should faithfully discharge; of which afterward.

This then being the occasion of those promises, and their accomplishment being as before, in a peculiar manner pointed at, upon the shaking, calling, and new moulding of the kingdoms and nations of the world, which had given their power to the beast, and thereupon framed anew into a due subserviency to the interest of Christ, here is not the least shadow or colour left, for the turning off, and rejecting the sweetness of all these promises, upon an account of their being merely metaphorical, and shadowing out spiritual glories: neither their beginning nor ending, neither their rise, or fall, will bear any such gloss or corrupting interpretation.

3dly. As to the matter of these promises, I shall only assert this in general: that the Lord engageth, that judges, rulers, magistrates, and such like, shall put forth their power, and act clearly for the good, welfare, and prosperity of the church. This is plainly held out in every one of them: hence kingdoms are said to serve the church; that is, all kingdoms; they must do so, or be broken in pieces and cease to be kingdoms: and how can a kingdom as a kingdom (for it is taken formally, and not materially, merely for the individuals for it, as appears by the threatening of its being broken in pieces) serve the church, but by putting forth its power and strength in her behalf; Isa. lx. 12. and therefore, upon the accomplishment of that promise, they are said to become the kingdoms of the Lord Christ; Rev. xi. 15. because, as kingdoms, they serve him with their power and authority; having before, as such, and by their power, opposed him to the utmost. They must nurse the church not with dry breasts, nor feed it with stones and scorpions, but with the good things committed to them. Their power and substance in protection and supportment, are to be engaged in the behalf thereof: hence God is said to give these judges, rulers, princes, kings, queens to the church, not setting them in the church, as officers thereof,

but ordering their state in the world, Rev. xi. 15. to its behoof. In sum, there is not any one of the promises recited, but holds forth the utmost of what I intend to assert from them all; viz. that the Lord hath promised, that the magistrates whom he will give, own and bless, shall put forth their power, and act in that capacity, wherein he hath placed them in the world, for the good, furtherance, and prosperity of the truth and church of Christ. They shall protect them with their power, feed them with their substance, adorn them with their favour, and the privileges wherewith they are intrusted: they shall break their forcibly oppressing adversaries, and take care, that those who walk in the truth of the Lord, may lead a peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. If then you are such magistrates as God hath promised (as, woe be unto you if you are not), know that he hath undertaken for you, that you shall perform this part of your duty, and I pray that you may rule with him therein, and be found faithful.

[2.] The second ground that I would point unto, as a bottom of your actings in this thing, ariseth from sundry undoubted principles, which I shall briefly mention. And the first is,

1st. That the gospel of Jesus Christ hath a right to be preached and propagated in every nation, and to every creature under heaven. Jesus Christ is 'the Lord of lords, and King of kings;' Rev. xvii. 14. The nations are given to be his inheritance, 'and the utmost parts of the earth to be his possession;' Psal. ii. 8, 9. He is appointed the 'heir of all things;' Heb. i. 2. God hath set 'him over the works of his hands, and put all things in subjection under his feet;' Psal. viii. 7. And upon this account he gives commission to his messengers, to preach the gospel to all nations, Matt. xxviii. 19. or, to every creature under heaven; Mark xvi. 17. The nations of the world, being of the Father given to him, he may deal with them as he pleaseth, and either, 'bruise them with a rod of iron, and break them in pieces as a potter's vessel;' Psal. ii. 9. 'He may fill the places of the earth with their dead bodies, and strike in pieces the heads of the countries;' Psal. cx. 6. or, he may make them his own, and bring them into subjection unto himself; which towards some of them he will effect; Rev. xi. 19. Now the

gospel being the rod of his power, and the sceptre of his kingdom, the grand instrument whereby he accomplisheth all his designs in the world, whether they be for life or for death; 2 Cor. ii. 16. he hath given that a right to take possession, in his name and authority, of all that he will own in any nation under heaven. And indeed, he hath in all of them, some that are his peculiar purchase; Rev. v. 9. whom in despite of all the world, he will bring in unto himself. To have free passage into all nations, is the undoubted right of the gospel; and the persons of Christ's good-will have such a right to it, and interest in it, that look from whomsoever they may claim protection in reference unto any other of their most undoubted concerns amongst men, of them may they claim protection in respect of their quiet enjoyment, and possession of the gospel.

2dly. That wherever the gospel is by any nation owned, received, embraced, it is the blessing, benefit, prosperity, and advantage of that nation. They that love Zion shall prosper; Psal. cxxii. 6. 'Godliness hath the promise of this life, and is profitable unto all;' 1 Tim. iv. 8. The reception of the word of truth, and subjection to Christ therein, causing a people to become willing in the day of his power, entitleth that people to all the promises, that ever God made to his church; they shall be established in righteousness, they shall be far from oppression, and for fear and terror, they shall not draw nigh unto them; 'whosoever contends against such a people, shall fall thereby. No weapon that is formed against them shall prosper; every tongue that shall rise against them in judgment, they shall condemn. For this is the inheritance of the servants of the Lord;' Isa. liv. 14, 15. 17.

To the prosperity of a nation, two things are required:

(1st.) That they be freed from oppression, injustice, cruelty, disorder, confusion in themselves, from their rulers, or others.

(2dly.) That they be protected from the sword and violence of them that seek their ruin from without.

And both these do a people receive, by receiving the gospel.

(1st.) For the first, they have the promise of God, that they shall have judges as at the first; Isa. i. 26. Such as

in justice and judgment shall bear rule over them and among them, as the first judges whom he stirred up, and gave to his ancient people. 'Their officers shall be peace, and their exactors righteousness;' Isa. lx. 17. even the very gospel which they do receive, is only able to instruct them to be just, ruling in the fear of the Lord, for that only effectually teacheth the sons of men, 'to live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world;' Tit. ii. 12.

(2dly.) And for the second, innumerable are the promises that are given to such a people; whence the psalmist concludes upon the consideration of the mercies they do and shall enjoy, 'happy is the people whose God is the Lord;' Psal. cxliv. 15. 'The glorious God will be to them a place of rivers and broad waters, in which no galley with oars, nor gallant ship shall pass by, the Lord will be their redeemer, lawgiver, king, and saviour;' Isa. xxxiii. 21. It will interest any people in all the promises that are made for the using of the church, to thrash, break, destroy, burden, fire, consume, and slay the enemies thereof: so far shall a people be from suffering under the hands of oppressors, that the Lord will use them for the breaking and destruction of the Nimrods of the earth, and this blessing of the nations do they receive by the faith of Abraham.

3dly. The rejection of the gospel by any people or nation to whom it is tendered, is always attended with the certain and inevitable destruction of that people or nation, which, sooner or later, shall without any help or deliverance be brought upon them, by the revenging hand of Christ.

When the word of grace was rejected and despised by the Jews, the messengers of it professedly turning to the Gentiles, Acts xiii. 46. xxviii. 28. God removing it from them, unto a nation that would bring forth fruit, Matt. xxi. 43. as it did in all the world, or among all nations, for a season, Col. i. 6. with what a fearful and tremendous desolation he quickly wasted that people, is known to all; he quickly slew, and destroyed those husbandmen, that spoiled his vineyard, and let it forth unto others, that might bring him his fruit in due season. Hence, when Christ is tendered in the gospel, the judges and rulers of the nations are exhorted to obedience to him, upon pain of being destroyed upon the refusal thereof; Psal. ii. 12. And we have the

experience of all ages, ever since the day that the gospel began to be propagated in the world. The quarrel of it was revenged on the Jews by the Romans, upon the Romans, by the Goths, Vandals, and innumerable barbarous nations; and the vengeance due to the antichristian world is at hand, even at the door. The Lord will certainly make good his promise to the utmost, that 'the kingdoms and nations which will not serve the church, even that kingdom and those nations shall utterly perish;' Isa. lx. 12.

4thly. That it is the duty of magistrates to seek the good, peace, and prosperity of the people committed to their charge, and to prevent, obviate, remove, take away every thing, that will bring confusion, destruction, desolation upon them; as Mordecai procured good things for his people, and prosperity to his kindred; Esther x. 4. And David describes himself with all earnestness pursuing the same design; Psal. ci. Magistrates are the ministers of God for the good, universal good, of them to whom they are given, Rom. xiii. 14. and they are to watch and apply themselves to this very thing; ver. 6. And the reason the apostle gives to stir up the saints of God to pray amongst all sorts of men, in special for kings, and those that are in authority, to wit, that they may in general come to the knowledge of the faith, and be saved, and in particular discharge the duty and trust committed to them (for on that account are they to pray for them, as kings and men in authority), is, that we may 'lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty;' 1 Tim. ii. 1—4. It being incumbent on them, to act even as kings and men in authority, that we may so do; they are to feed the people committed to their charge with all their might, unto universal peace and welfare.

Now the things that are opposite to the good of any nation or people, are of two sorts.

(1st.) Such as are really, directly, and immediately opposed to that state and condition, wherein they closed together, and find prosperity. In general, seditions, tumults, disorders; in particular, violent, or fraudulent breakings in upon the respective designed bounds, privileges, and enjoyments of singular persons, without any consideration of him who ruleth all things, are of this kind. If nations and rulers might be supposed to be atheists, yet such evils as these, tending to their dissolution, and not being, they would

with all their strength labour to prevent, either by watching against their commission, or inflicting vengeance on them that commit them, that others may hear, and fear, and do so no more.

(2dly.) Such as are morally and meritoriously opposed to their good and welfare; in that they will certainly pluck down the judgments and wrath of God upon that nation or people, where they are practised and allowed; there are sins for which the wrath of God will be assuredly revealed from heaven, against the children of disobedience. Sodom and Gomorrah are set forth as examples of his righteous judgment in this kind. And shall he be thought a magistrate, to bear out the name, authority, and presence of God to men, that so he and his people have present peace, like a herd of swine, cares not, though such things as will certainly first eat and devour their strength, and then utterly consume them, do pass for current; seeing that they that rule over men, must be just, ruling in the fear of the Lord, the sole reason why they sheath the sword of justice in the bowels of thieves, murderers, adulterers, is not because their outward peace is actually disturbed by them, and therefore they must give example of terror to others, who being like minded, yet are not yet actually given up to the practice of the like abomination, but also, yea principally, because he in whose stead they stand and minister to the world, is provoked by such wickedness to destroy both the one and the other. And if there be the same reason to be evidenced concerning other things, they also call for the same procedure.

To gather up now what hath been spoken: considering the gospel's right and title to be propagated, with all its concerns, in every nation under heaven, the blessing, peace, prosperity, and protection wherewith it is attended, when and where received, and the certain destruction and desolation, which accompanies the rejection and contempt thereof; considering the duty that by God's appointment, is incumbent on them that rule over men, that in the fear of the Lord they ought to seek the good, peace, and welfare, and prosperity of them committed to their charge; to prevent, obviate, remove, revenge that which tends to their hurt, perturbation, dissolution, destruction immediate from heaven, or from the hand of men, and in the whole administration to take care, that the worshippers of God in Christ may lead a

quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty. Let any one, who hath the least sense upon his spirit, of the account which he must one day make to the great King and Judge of all the world, of the authority and power wherewith he was intrusted, determine, whether it be not incumbent on him by all the protection he can afford, by all the privileges he can indulge, the supportment that he can grant, by all that encouragement, which, upon the highest account imaginable, he is required or allowed to give to any person whatsoever, to further the propagation of the gospel, which upon the matter is the only thing of concernment, as well unto this life, as that which is to come. And if any thing be allowed in a nation, which in God's esteem may amount to a contempt and despising thereof, men may be taught by sad experience what will be the issue of such allowance.

5thly. I shall only propose one thing more to your consideration. Although the institutions and examples of the Old Testament, of the duty of magistrates, in the things and about the worship of God, are not in their whole latitude and extent to be drawn into rules, that should be obligatory to all magistrates now under the administration of the gospel; and that because the magistrate then was '*custos, vindex, et administrator legis judicialis, et politiæ Mosaicæ*,' from which as most think we are freed, yet doubtless there is something moral in those institutions, which being unclothed of their Judaical form, is still binding to all in the like kind, as to some analogy and proportion: subduct from those administrations, what was proper to, and lies upon the account of the church and nation of the Jews, and what remains upon the general notion of a church and nation must be everlastingly binding. And this amounts thus far at least, that judges, rulers, and magistrates, which are promised under the New Testament, to be given in mercy, and to be of singular usefulness, as the judges were under the Old, are to take care that the gospel church may, in its concernment as such, be supported and promoted, and the truth propagated wherewith they are intrusted; as the others took care that it might be well with the Judaical church, as such. And on these, and such like principles as these are, may you safely bottom yourselves in that undertaking, wherein you seek for direction from God this day.

[3.] For the rules which I intimated, I shall but name them, having some years since delivered my thoughts to the world at large on this subject;^a and I see no cause as yet to recede from any thing then so delivered. Take then only for the present these brief directions following.

1st. Labour to be fully persuaded in your own minds, that you be not carried up and down with every wind of doctrine, and be tempted to hearken after every spirit, as though you had received no truth, as it is in Jesus. It is a sad condition, when men have no zeal for truth, nor against that which is opposite to it, whatever they seem to profess; because indeed having not taken in any truth in the power and principle of it, they are upon sad thoughts, wholly at a loss whether there be any truth or no: this is an unhappy frame indeed, the proper condition of them whom God will spew out of his mouth.

2dly. Know that error and falsehood have no right or title, either from God or man, unto any privilege, protection, advantage, liberty, or any good thing you are intrusted withal: to dispose that unto a lie, which is the right of, and due to truth, is to deal treacherously with him by whom you are employed: all the tenderness and forbearance unto such persons as are infected with such abominations, is solely upon a civil account, and that plea which they have for tranquillity, whilst neither directly nor morally they are a disturbance unto others.

3dly. Know that in things of practice, so of persuasion, that are impious and wicked, either in themselves, or in their natural and unconstrained consequences, the plea of conscience is an aggravation of the crime: if men's consciences are seared, and themselves given up to a reprobate mind, to do those things that are not convenient, there is no doubt but they ought to suffer such things, as to such practices are assigned and appointed.

Should I now descend unto particulars in all the things mentioned, and insist on them, time would wholly fail me; neither is it a work for a single sermon: and therefore in one word I shall wind up the whole matter, and end.

Know them then that are faithful and quiet in the land,

^a Discourse of Toleration.

regard the truth of the gospel; remember the days of old, what hath done you good, quieted your heart in distress, crowned your undertakings with sweetness; lose not your first love; draw not out your own thoughts for the counsel of God; seek not great things for yourselves; be not moved at the lusts of men, keep peace what in you lieth, with all that fear the Lord; let the glory of Christ be the end of all your undertakings, &c.