

THE
SIGNS OF THE TIMES,

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF A DISCOURSE
DELIVERED IN CHILLICOTHE OHIO,
IN MAY LAST :

AND ALSO IN PARIS, Ky. ON THE
LAST THURSDAY OF AUGUST 1820.

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PUBLISHED BY PARTICULAR REQUEST.

"Can you not discern the signs of the times?"
Mat. XVI: 3;

PARIS, Ky.

Printed by JOEL R. LYLE,

1821.

To the Associate Reformed Congregation in Chillicothe ; and to the Presbyterian Congregation in Paris, who heard the discourse, the substance of which is now given to the public, the following pages are with much affection inscribed. As many of you solicited its publication, some explanation for the form in which my views now appear is necessary. I have merely to state, that what is now given to the public, was nearly all written out last winter in its present form. My object then was merely to furnish a few numbers for the WEEKLY RECORDER, on "The Signs of the Times." As I proceeded I found they would be too lengthy for insertion in that paper. And as both means & disposition were wanting to influence me to intrude my views upon the public, in a printed pamphlet, I threw them, with other matter into that form in which you heard them. So that neither the form, nor all the matter, which you had from the pulpit, will be found in the following sheets. The views and sentiments are the same on the main subject, and some small additions have been made which were omitted for want of time in the delivery. Hoping that they may promote God's glory, and influence you and all who may give them a reading, to pursue the course which safely leads to worlds on high. I subscribe myself

Yours affectionately,
JOHN M'FARLAND.

PARIS, Sept. 1820.

INTRODUCTION.

As man is a creature of hope and fear; and as the principle of immortality is interwoven with his nature, he involuntarily feels a deep interest in futurity. Hence many are easily duped by fortune-tellers, by pretended prophets, and often by their own fond hopes, and calculations. The wise and better informed know that the particulars, which enter into the chequered life of man, and the great book of futurity lie open only to the omniscient God; and that it is his prerogative to "tell the end from the beginning." Such however, are habitually forming their calculations, and in a certain sense prophesying. The philosopher, acquainted with the laws of nature, and of the revolutions of the heavenly bodies; and knowing from frequent observation that certain effects are produced by certain phenomena, may, and does foretell many events in the natural world, which excite the astonishment of the unlearned. Such, also, as are acquainted with the principles of human nature; the history of God's providence and government, may foretell, with astonishing precision, the great events which are about to happen in the nations, and kingdoms whose character & circumstances are known. When to these data, the believer in divine revelation adds the knowledge of things there foretold, he may and ought to know the great events which are shortly to come to pass. God has been pleased to give to his church such a disclosure of futurity, as may enable her friends, if they be wise & attentive, to foresee the days of evil and provide for them. They are also thus prepared to meet God in the marches of his providence, and to perform their duty to him, and for his kingdom with propriety. This principle of our nature, then, which is so prevalent, and influences all to look as far into futurity as possible, is implanted for wise and salutary purposes, and ought to be particularly improved. Considering its importance, and the means which God has afforded for obtaining the necessary knowledge of his providence, & the times, in

which our lot is cast, it is criminal to be ignorant & inattentive. Our Saviour severely rebuked the Jews, who could, from the signs of the sky, foretell what was about to happen in the natural world, but could not discern those signs, which clearly indicated, under the light of their prophets, the nature of the times, and the great events about to transpire in the moral and religious world. The attempt therefore in the following pages is not only the dictate of nature, but also of duty, and when such attempts are judiciously conducted, they are at once highly interesting and useful.

The object is not to give any thing like an exposition of prophecy, or to amuse the reader with a novel, or romantic theory, but to throw light upon the *manner* and *means*, used by the Governor among the nations, for putting an end to the reign of iniquity and oppression; and for introducing the long expected Jubilee of the world, the millennium. The object is of practical influence; for if incorrect views of the *manner* and *means*, which God is using for this great and desirable purpose, be entertained by those who are wishing to be *fellow workers with him*, it must have a serious effect upon their measures and efforts.

It appears, at present to be a prevalent opinion, both in the religious, and political world, that there will be a peaceful close of the reign of ignorance, iniquity and oppression, and that the reign of light, liberty and happiness will be introduced gradually, by the dissemination of knowledge, and a pacific spirit, without any of those convulsions and effusions of blood, which have marked all the great revolutions recorded in history. Notwithstanding there be many things which are calculated to cherish such an opinion, I am constrained to consider it incorrect. In the following pages my views are first briefly expressed, and then the reasons are given, in detail, which support them. They are collected from the Scriptures, from history, & the actual state of things, at the present time. I have aimed at perspicuity and brevity, and therefore have omitted references to those writers, to whom I am indebted for my historical information. The facts of which I have made use, are so well known, that references could answer no purpose, unless to crowd the margin, and make a show of learning.

CHAPTER I.

CHRIST'S KINGDOM AND REIGN—WHAT OPPOSES IT— AND HOW THE OBSTACLES WILL BE REMOVED— AND THE MILLENNIUM INTRODUCED.

The great question which has been at issue, since the day that Adam rebelled, is, whether the creature, or God and his Messiah shall reign. There can be no dispute who ought, and will reign. God says, "I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion—I will give him the heathen for his inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession—His kingdom shall extend from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth—all the kings of the earth shall bow before, and all nations shall serve him." And accordingly we hear the Son, this universal King, saying, "the Father judgeth no man but hath committed all judgement unto the Son, that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father—all power in Heaven and in earth is given unto me, go ye therefore into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

From these, and similar declarations in the Scriptures, we learn that God the Father, whose are all things, has determined to honor, or glorify the divine perfections, in and through his Son, whom he has appointed Saviour of the world: and that as such, he has given him universal dominion, and made him heir of all things. The Heathen however, and the ends of the earth, given to him for his inheritance, were under the dominion of sin and Satan, & consequently under the curse of God's law. Hence before the Son can become actual possessor of his inheritance, he must redeem it by price and power. On this great errand he comes into the world—gives his own life as the ransom—makes an end of sin—bruises the head of the Serpent—destroys death and the grave; rises triumphantly to heaven, and thence, according to his infinite wisdom, carries on a process, which shall terminate in the expulsion of sin, Satan and the curse from the earth. To effect this he

instituted a kingdom called his Church, which is a progressive, and renovating system. As he extends the victories of his grace, this kingdom increases, and it is through the officers, the laws and ordinances, given by him, to the kingdom, that he extends his victories. And when all nations shall be subdued unto the obedience of faith in the Lord Jesus as *King*, his Church shall be as extensive as the earth, and he shall actually possess his inheritance. The language here used implies hostility to him, and his kingdom. He must *subdue* all nations. That the world has ever been hostile to the reign of God's Messiah needs no proof—and let it be recollected that the great question is respecting *Rule*. If opposition to Christ, as King, were removed, there would be no difficulty with respect to his prophetic and priestly offices. This is the fact with every renewed sinner. When he ceases to rebel, and submits to Christ's authority, all that Christ is and has is cordially received. And every believer is sanctified just so far as he conforms to the laws of Christ; and so far as he does not, he remains unholy. Now, as it has been with individual members of the Church, so has it been with the Church. They cordially submit to Christ as Priest, and as prophet, so far as his authority is not brought to bear in precept; but to submit and obey him as legislator, and Lord, has been nominally, or in profession, rather than in reality. This remark should be impressed upon the mind, as it appears to be the prevailing opinion among professing christians that the heathen and unbelieving world only are opposed to that reign of the Messiah, which is to take place in the latter days. Christ indeed has long since instituted his Church, and entered upon his reign, but the degree of submission to his legislative authority has been as limited, even in his Church, as the extent of it has been circumscribed in the world. And when he subdues the heathen, and makes his Church embrace all nations, it may be said, that he will then begin his reign. Never, until that period will the Church manifest any thing like becoming subordination to her lawgiver and King. These remarks are supported both by scripture & matters of fact. The names

and metaphors, by which the Church of Christ is exhibited in the scriptures, teach us, that she is a completely organized society, and that she has a form and government, as well defined, as any society on earth. She is called a kingdom; a city; an house; the body and the spouse of Christ. She has laws and ordinances, which can neither be changed, increased, nor diminished. She has officers, with the nature of their duties and the extent of their authority, clearly delineated. She is represented as *one*; consistent and harmonious in all her parts.—And this we are taught she actually shall be, when she arises from the dust, puts on her beautiful garments, and becomes the glory of all the earth. Then she shall be conformed to the will of her Lord, as declared in the Scriptures.

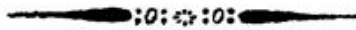
Now what is the actual state of things? So far are many sections of the Church from acknowledging the laws, order & government of Christ's house, that they deny that he has legislated at all, with respect to the organization and form of government, which he would have observed by his people. Others, who are very strenuous on the opposite side, are so far from being satisfied with the legislation of Christ, that they supply what would appear to be his deficiencies, and make laws for admission into his house, and terms of admission to his table which suit their party views and prejudices. In both these cases Christ's authority is virtually rejected. In the first, he has a Kingdom without order and form, which is an absurdity—an impossibility; and the consequence is, that the Church, instead of appearing *ONE*, is fifty, an hundred—just as many as there are congregations; and the authority brought to bear in cases of discipline is no other than human. In the other case, Christ's authority, as legislator, is usurped and prostituted to seal and sanction views and acts contrary to his word. Thus it is, that Christ is little known and recognized as King; and his church is caricatured, and cut up into jarring and discordant parties. Each of these sets up for perfection, and is to flourish as the model, to which all will conform in the days of the millennium. This is openly declared by some, and practically declared by all denominations.

Wherever Christ's authority is thus rejected, usurped, or prostituted, the hearts and lives of professing people cannot be brought into conformity, generally, with the word of God. Where his authority is not realized, or where it is prostituted, there will be a correspondent looseness in religion and morals. And hence the little personal and family religion, among those, who have by an open profession, taken Christ for their King. And hence, the worldly speculating spirit, and the gross immoralities, which disfigure and slander the Church, and dishonour her head. Can any one suppose that this state of things shall continue in that day, when the Church, as one harmonious kingdom, shall be exalted above all other kingdoms, and shall be the praise of all the earth? Or can any think, that, if all the human family were formed into such churches, and christians as we now see, that the millennium described in the Scriptures would be realized? Nay verily; we are taught to look for another state of things. And it must appear evident to all, upon the least reflection, that both the christian and heathen world must be revolutionized, and subdued to obedience to the King of kings, and Lord of lords. Rebellion against his authority, or the want of recognizing it, in the kingdoms, governments, denominations and parties, which exist, is the sum of all the opposition against his kindom and universal reign. The 'mountains' which those kingdoms and governments in their present state and form, constitute; and the "*crooked things*," of sects and denominations, which embarrass and disgrace the church, are the great obstacles to the coming of the Messiah in his millennial kingdom. How are these obstacles to be removed; and how will the millennium be introduced? This brings us to the main subject, which was to be illucidated. God's *manner* of working, and the *means* which he uses in bringing about his great purposes, are not such as human wisdom would devise. Hence, when he comes in any remarkable providences, he always comes on his people, and on the world, unexpectedly. *He takes the wise in their own craftiness and the counsel of the froward he carries headlong*; and that before they are aware of it.

One remarkable trait in all the great revolutions, which he has effected, in his church, and in the world, so far as connected with it, is a twofold process; one by which he gradually introduces the new order of things, and another by which the old order is brought to ruin. In this *manner*, it appears the millennium will be introduced. Through the increase of *light*, or knowledge, the injustice, unreasonableness and oppression of systems, and governments are exposed, and the people taught insubordination to the powers that be. They are also taught their own strength, and their rights, which, under the general influence of human depravity, eventually leads to rebellion, and civil wars. Unprincipled, aspiring adventurers at such times, become the instigators, and leaders of the people; and in rushing to eminence, or empire, turn their country into a Golgotha, & would inevitably leave it in anarchy, or despotism, were there not a counteracting process. Where increase of light is accompanied with grace, and a sufficiency of moral principle, the result is a happy revolution, although marked with all the horrors, and miseries of war. The kingdom or government appears in a new form, put under new laws and rulers. Thus all the kingdoms of the earth are to be overturned, convulsed, shaken to pieces, and reorganized.

A similar process, under the increase of light, and the influence of depravity, in various forms will bring all the sects and denominations of christians into a state of revolution and anarchy, in which *my* church and *your* church, and *our* church will be swallowed up; in which all the *crooked things*, all the errors, and peculiarities of sects, shall be lost; and from which, as the world at first out of old chaos, the church shall rise, and "put on her beautiful garments." This process may not indeed be marked with blood, but it will be at least with ink and gall; with dissensions and schisms; with the prostitution of authority by some, and the entire neglect of it, and discipline, by others. The wars and collisions will not be so much between different denominations, as between the members of each and every denomination. They shall be their own execu-

tioners. This process, in the political and religious world, would, without a counteracting process, introduce a state of things more hopeless, and distressing, than ever was experienced since the entrance of sin. And notwithstanding the counteracting process, it may be to the whole Church, and to the world, what the state of things, in the siege, and destruction of Jerusalem, was to the nation of the Jews. By the counteracting process I mean that process of grace which God is carrying on by various means, and agencies, and by which he is sowing the seed of his word throughout the earth, and preparing the whole world for the reception and right use of it, "without note or comment." This is where the Church was left when her Legislator completed his code of laws, and closed the canon of divine revelation.—Such are my views; the principal reasons in support of them will be found in the subsequent pages.



CHAPTER II.

REASONS IN SUPPORT OF THE FOREGOING VIEWS— PROPHECY—THE ANALOGY OF PRECEDING REVOLUTIONS.

It will be seen from the preceding pages, that if I differ from the most common views of christians & divines, it is with respect to the process which is to revolutionize all the kingdoms, governments, sects & denominations which exist; & to introduce in them, previous to the millennium convulsions of the most serious and desolating kind. In other words the days, a short time previous to the end of Satan's reign, will be the most distressing and perplexing, which the Church has experienced. In favour of this opinion I might quote some few authorities, from the writers on prophecy. I however shall begin first with the Scriptures,

not confining my reasons, or proof to this single point, but to my views in general.

In the prophecy of Ezekiel XXXVIII and XXXIX we have an account of the enemies of God's people in the last days, under the names of GOG and MAGOG. It is evident from the connection, and the parallel passage in the revelation of John, that they will appear in dreadful array, and be destroyed just before the millennium. God speaking to Ezekiel says, "and thou son of man, thus saith the Lord God; speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field; assemble yourselves and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh and drink blood—ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks all of them fatlings of Bashan—and ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord God. And I will set my glory among the heathen, and all the heathen shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon them. So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from that day and forward." John says, Rev. XIX. "and I saw an angel standing in the Sun, and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of Heaven, come, and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; that ye may eat the flesh of Kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them; and the flesh of all men both free and bond, both small and great." &c.

Again God says, by Joel, Chapter III. "Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say I am strong. Assemble yourselves, and come all ye heathen, and gather yourselves

round about; thither cause thy mighty ones to come down O Lord. Let the heathen be wakened and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat, for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle for the harvest is ripe; come get you down for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision, for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The Sun and the Moon shall be darkened, and the Stars shall withdraw their shining. The Lord shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall *shake*; but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel."

In H. g. II, 6, 7, we find similar language, 'For thus saith the Lord of hosts, yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come. Verse 22, and I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen: and I will overthrow the chariots and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. Of this period, Daniel, Chapter XII; 1. God appears to speak, "and at that time shall Michael stand up for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time; and at that time thy people shall be delivered; every one that shall be found written in the book."

And of this same period our Saviour speaks in the xxiv chapter of Matthew, altho' he has a primary reference to the siege, and destruction of Jerusalem. In connection with these passages, if we consider the sixteenth and nineteenth chapters inclusive of the Book of the Revelation, we may come to the following conclusions.

I. That these prophecies are not yet fully accomplished. A primary, and a partial accomplishment they may have had; as all prophecies respecting the Church have their fulfilment progressively through the series of her history. But it must be evident that if the great and terrible things

spoken of in the preceding quotations, have been accomplished the millennium ought to be introduced ; and Satan cast out of the world and shut up in the bottomless pit.

2. We learn that the last period, previous to the millennium is to be marked with blood ; with the shaking and overthrow of thrones and kingdoms ; and of the heavens & the earth, the sea and the dry land ; which expressions include all kinds of bodies, ecclesiastical and political.

3. That the Jews, God's ancient people will at this period, be restored to their own land and shall enjoy with the surviving Gentiles, the reign of their Messiah in the happy period which is to follow.

The general analogy of all the great changes and revolutions, which God has effected in the world, correspond with those prophecies, and illustrate and establish the views which have been advanced. All acquainted with the history of God's providence, respecting the Church and the world connected with it, know, that he proceeds in effecting great revolutions in the moral world, upon principles, and in a mode, as clearly ascertained, as the principles and mode, according to which he effects revolutions in the natural, or astronomical world. This principle of analogy is one of the principal keys to prophecy. For if we can ascertain how any prophecy has received its primary, and incipient accomplishment, we may ascertain how it will receive its perfect and final accomplishment ; for the former is to be considered as a sample, and pledge of the latter. Thus the coming of the Son of man for the destruction of Jerusalem, and the entire revolution of the Church, as prophesied in the xxiv chapter of Matthew, is the primary and incipient accomplishment of the prediction, and also a sample and pledge to the Church of the coming of the Son of man in the last day to destroy this world and revolutionize all things, which will be the perfect and final accomplishment of the prediction. With these remarks it will be sufficient merely to mention the deluge—the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt—and the great revolution, at, and shortly after the introduction of the New Testament dispensation. In all these the judgements of the Lord

crushed his enemies and delivered his friends. The last scene also displayed the greatest indignation, and was most replete with terrible dismay, and wide-spread ruin. The plagues of Egypt were tremendous; they desolated the kingdom of Pharaoh, but they were only the beginnings of sorrow, compared with the last scene, the Red Sea. The conflicts of the Jews with the Romans, and the miseries of the siege, horrible as they were, present no scene like the closing one, when Jerusalem sunk into heaps of ruin, by fire and sword, amidst the shouts of the victors, the clangor of arms, the spouting of blood, and the groans of the dying.

Now, if this be God's manner of working, if those instances of revolution be samples of what he will yet effect is there not a scene to be witnessed by the Church, and the world, such as never has been witnessed since men were upon the earth? We are to observe, in the above instances, that God by means and agents, instructed and prepared his own people for the new state of things and brought them into that state, through water and through fire. In a similar manner he is instructing, and preparing his Church for passing into the millennial state. Noah was 120 years preparing the Ark, and admonishing the ungodly; but then he entered the Ark, the emblem of God's Church, and she carried him gallantly amidst the wrecks of the world which perished, into that world which is in reserve for the flames of the last day. The Church prepared, and having her King at the helm, and freighted with all God's people, will as gallantly ride out the storm, and pass through that crimson deluge, which the breaking up of kingdoms and the torrents of God's wrath shall produce, previous to the age of rest, righteousness and peace.

CHAPTER III.

The subject continued—God's object to humble the pride of man by leaving him to experiments—from Creation to the flood—from the flood to Christ—from Christ to the Reformation—from the Reformation to the present day.

It appears both from the Scriptures and the history of facts, that the governor of the world has determined, in his infinite wisdom, to leave man to a full and fair experiment of his powers, in order to humble his pride, and to evince that to remove sin and all its attendant woes, is solely the work of the Messiah, through the instrumentality of the gospel. Now as this is the last age of experiment, & as the world is far from being cured of the pride of human wisdom, God must, in order to accomplish his end, overthrow all the devices, and boasted constitutions of men. The happiest, and best organized governments, civil and ecclesiastical, which have been formed by man's policy, must become the sport of human depravity, and have all their grandeur laid in the dust. Let us amplify, and illustrate this argument a little.

At first God created man, and set him up with high powers, and an extensive fund of knowledge, and materials. But he soon forsook the wisdom and counsel of the Most High, and at once became a rebel, a bankrupt and a criminal. God pitied him—taught him the way of pardon and restoration—gave him a new stock of knowledge suited to his forlorn circumstances, and said, *occupy and improve.*—And in less than sixteen centuries, “the whole earth was corrupt.” Immorality, violence and wild misrule made one general movement against the laws and government of God. To teach man wisdom—to purify the earth, and to give another fair experiment, the flood is brought in upon the world of the ungodly, and Noah, the only righteous man, with his family, is saved, and is made a new and instructive head to the human family. But man, by this awful display of divine justice, and the evil of sin, was not cured of the

love of sin and the pride of his own wisdom. He again forsook the wisdom from above—pursued the gratification of his depraved nature—commenced philosopher and poet, and lo! the world sinks into a long night of “gross darkness,” idolatry and oppressive wickedness. This dreadful reign of philosophy continued until the earth had nearly reached her fortieth century. An experiment, one might suppose, sufficiently long. It did indeed, demonstrate what is in man, and what human wisdom and human depravity can do. It brought the world to “the crisis.” The light of truth, which God had miraculously preserved in one nation, was ready to expire. The wick, or “smoking flax,” was glimmering in the socket, and the philosophising Jewish doctors were, in their wisdom, and zeal pressing the extinguisher upon it. O! it was an awful crisis! it was indeed, “the fullness of time.” A little longer, and then, hope and the world parted forever. But all hail! the Star of Bethlehem appears in the east; and the Sun of righteousness arises with healing in his rays. God’s Messiah is announced, who puts an end to the uncontrolled reign of sin, brings in by his obedience and death an everlasting righteousness; and by his resurrection, makes the light of life and immortality spring from the tomb.

Now with this cheering light, with the gospel ministry, with a perfect revelation and with free access to the fountain of wisdom and benevolence, the world is left to another experiment. God, man’s liberal and marvellously kind benefactor, says again, occupy & improve, and draw upon me for all that you need. Mark the result, again man takes the downward road, and in a few centuries is found in gross idolatry, having turned the temple of God into the synagogue of Satan, and the Church of Christ into the mother of harlots and abominations. The reign of darkness, superstition, cruelty and crime becomes again almost universal, and continues until the light from heaven bursts forth in the reformation of immortal memory.

The world thus rescued a second time, and having an additional stock of experience; the learning of all ages, the inestimable art of printing, with all former privileges, enters

the last period in the great series of experiment. This will continue to the millennium, or it will terminate in that dreadful catastrophe just before it, in which, "the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted."

As there are some circumstances and things which appear to cherish the opinion that this last age of experiment will terminate happily without any such catastrophe it will be necessary to take a retrospective view of this age, and consider in some detail the evidence it affords in favour of my views.

And here I lay it down as a well attested fact, that the mere increase of *light*, or knowledge never has, among the great mass of mankind, produced any thing, but revolution, disorder and anarchy. It requires something more than knowledge, to make such depraved creatures as men, consistent christians, or even good moral citizens. The knowledge and intellect of fallen angels, far surpass what is enjoyed by Adam's most favoured sons. They however spurn the government of God, and delight in the work of anarchy and woe. The history of man illustrates and establishes the same remark; and particularly in the period now under consideration. The light of the reformation exposed to view the impious absurdities, the abominations, tyranny and cruelties of Antichrist. The world was shocked. But alas! it was nevertheless an ignorant, depraved world, long under the tutorage of the worst of masters. And hence, the light, and the discovery made by it, naturally tended to weaken, and destroy all subordination, and respect for authority. And this was actually the case. God did indeed, by his omnipotent spirit, arrest the attention of a Luther, a Calvin, and some others, to the truth as it lies in the Bible; and he gave them a disposition to receive and obey it. But vast numbers veered off into infidelity, and atheism. The gangrene of Socinus, and all kinds of pernicious errors and lawless practices sprung from the sinks of popery when visited with light, like noxious vapours from fens and marshes under the rays of the morning sun. Such was the effect of mere light, or the increase of

knowledge at the reformation, and such, in fact, it always has been and ever must be upon depraved human nature. Our age is called, and with much propriety too, *the age of light*, but can it with the same propriety be called also the age of piety?—Are our learned and most knowing men remarkable for their zeal and devotedness to God, and personal religion? All know that it is lamentably the reverse. Multitudes of those who are active and liberal members of Bible Societies, have neither the power nor form of godliness. And it has been correctly remarked that personal piety, and family religion do not keep pace with public, or newspaper religion.

With this is connected a remarkable fact, which goes to establish the same general views, which have been advanced, viz. the decline of all authority since the reformation, and particularly in the eighteenth century. This is a fact, so far as I know which has not been noticed and applied in the development of the effects which are to flow from the present state of things; and therefore demands our particular attention.

Here it must be recollected that the *forms* in which authority is exercised, usurped, or prostituted in governments civil and ecclesiastical, are the great obstacles to the reign of the Messiah in the millennium. And it is respect for authority, which is the life and support of all order, and government. Order and subordination are Heaven's first law. And hence the law of our natures predisposing us to respect authority. How could one mortal sway the sceptre over millions, and move them at his pleasure, had not the God of law and government, clothed him with that authority, which human nature was constituted to recognize and obey? But let men, through the uncontrouled prevalence of iniquity, or through the abuse and cruel prostitution of authority, be brought to disregard, and trample upon it, and anarchy comes in like a flood, and chaos & old night brood over the ruins of human society. Now, the increase of light exposes to view the injustice, the oppression, and the deformities of governments, and renders those clothed with authority odious and detestable: and through the asso-

oration of ideas authority itself becomes hateful and intolerable. The great increase of light, therefore in the present age, which many think will gradually change, & ameliorate the state of the world, must first, in the nature of things produce a very different effect. If we reflect upon the influence of authority before and since the reformation, and upon its decline, and the causes, which have, and still are producing it, we will find that convulsions, and revolutions are awaiting all the kingdoms, governments and denominations upon earth.

Never was greater authority usurped and prostituted than some time previous to the reformation; and never was there such profound respect paid to authority in any human being. The Pope had thrust himself into the seat of God, and usurped his prerogative. Uniting in himself civil and religious authority, he held Europe in chains; and the mighty funeral piles which smoked around him, with all the dread implements of death, filled the adoring crowds with the profoundest awe. But when their eyes were opened they spurned the monster, and his authority, threw off all subordination; and as is usual, rushed to the opposite extreme. It was with great difficulty that the reformers established any thing like order and discipline in the churches. They themselves had broken the charm of authority, which had bound Europe for ages. They rebelled, and encouraged others to follow their example. This, in them, at that time, was noble and praiseworthy. But mark the result. They succeeded, and all the sectarian adventurers succeeded, in throwing off the papal yoke and in obtaining freedom from that prostituted authority. Thus they learned their own strength, and showed to the world that authority is not so sacred, and powerful but that it may be honorably, and successfully resisted when improperly exercised. From this period authority declined, both in church and state through many parts of Europe. The civil and religious wars of the 16th and 17th centuries—the various successes of conspirators, and revolutionists—the variety of church courts, independent of each other—the freedom of speech, and of the press, thro' which, often great and good

men, in authority, reviled, and exposed each other's sentiments, and acts, had the most deleterious effects upon the minds of the people respecting authority.

But in the eighteenth century authority received a blow, of which it will never recover, until it expires in that scene of revolution, and anarchy anticipated. Voltair, his associates, and the Illuminati of Germany, made one powerful movement against all authority civil and religious. Altho' they have passed away, the effects of their bold and impious attempt, have prepared the kingdoms, which were the theatre of their operations, for nothing but despotism, or the most direful convulsions and bloodshed. Of these they have already had some lamentable experience, and in them again they must soon be involved. The light which enables them to see their chains, and all the degradation of their condition they do enjoy; but being in heart infidels, and atheists, or the subjects of a detestable superstition, they must, before many years, rise in the fury of their might, and spread terrific desolation through the governments which now hold them in subjection.

Another remarkable fact which happened in the eighteenth century was the disrepute, into which systems and system-makers fell, in the learned & religious world. Until the days of Lord Bacon the learned world was burdened, perplexed and chained down, in every branch of science by the multiform systems of romantic, or low-ploding theorists. But when he dared to break the fetters, and by the force and effulgence of his genius, exposed to view the errors, and absurdities of his predecessors, an entire revolution was commenced, which was vigorously carried on by many, particularly in the eighteenth century. Authorities and theories were laid aside. The mathematics and *facts* were pursued to their clear and natural results. A spirit of research, investigation and enterprize was excited, which has and is daily astonishing the world with new discoveries, and improvements in the various arts.

This decline, and I may say almost annihilation of authority, in the schools, and all the departments of science, soon affected the political and religious world. The rights

of man, and the nature of existing governments were freely investigated. All arbitrary authority was boldly called in question. The United States of America proclaimed Independence, and set British authority at defiance. Succeeding in this, civil authority received a deadly wound; and the precedent, though noble and entitled to immortal memory, will encourage the ambitious and unprincipled to insurrections and the prostration of all law and government. It has already had powerful influence in Europe and South America.

No less extensive, and portentous is the decline of authority in the Church. Previous to the reformation, the Bible, common sense and facts were laid aside, and the decrees of counsels, and the systems of the Fathers, in folio, occupied their place. The labour and study necessary to understand these were an hundred fold more than what were requisite for understanding the sacred volume. And what was the worst of all, when mastered, they determined nothing; but left their several admirers broken up into hostile parties, engaged in endless and useless contention. The reformers were acquainted with those decrees, and the huge volumes of the Fathers, but when they attempted to wield them against the Pope and his advocates, they soon found that it was in vain; and that often equal, if not the same authorities, were produced by both parties. The reformers then had recourse to the Scriptures, and made use of the Fathers as it might answer their purpose. They found the word of God a two edged sword, and with it they spread confusion and dismay in the ranks of their adversaries. But by writing, illustrating and defending the truth in the Scriptures the reformers themselves became *Fathers*. Their works and their systems of doctrine, issued under judicial authority, became *standards* of truth. A course through them, or a selection of them became the course of theological study. The Bible was not indeed entirely neglected; but to wade through those mighty volumes, in the term generally assigned, and at the same time study the Scripture was literally impossible. It was looked at but it was thro' reflecting and distorted mirrors. This was generally the

case until within the last twenty, or thirty years. And even now Turretin, Witsius, Ridgely, Brown, Scott, &c. are *standard* authors, and command as much, if not more time in the study of divinity, than the sacred volume; and by many are quoted as of nearly equal authority. But the Governor among the nations, the infinitely wise disposer of all events, in the last century let loose infidelity, and her philosophers upon his church and thus did her immense service. For these philosophers, discarding all scriptural and human authorities, attacked christianity with objections and arguments drawn from history, from oriental literature, and the laws of nature. In other words, as they had rejected the various theories and authorities in natural science, and had recourse to facts and demonstration, they pursued this method in attacking christianity. Thus led her advocates to pursue the same course in her defence. They left their old ground, and weapons and met those philosophers on their own ground, and with their kind of weapons. The result was happy. Christianity gained much by the contest; and her advocates became much better acquainted with the Bible, with important facts, and with their own powers and resources. But this was not all. They, as it were sprung a mine fatal to all human systems, and authorities in the Church. The study of divinity is gradually undergoing a change. Systems and commentaries, are, in some measure, and in some seminaries, giving place to the investigation of the original Scriptures, and of scriptural facts, & facts in the works and providence of God. Many are cutting loose, and by ignorant daring, and vain speculation, show how low both human and divine authority has fallen in their estimation. A large number most zealously adhere to, and support the old order. The result must be contention, confusion and disorganization. This, as will appear hereafter, is the result now in a great measure.

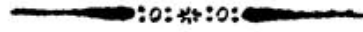
In tracing the decline of authority in the eighteenth century we cannot, with propriety, pass over the influence of George Whitefield, and John Westly, when the Church of England was arrogating to herself the sole authority of licensure and ordination, in the three Kingdoms—When

evangelical religion was apparently expiring, amidst ceremony and cold forms, these two, in defiance of all authority upon earth, issued forth as religious adventurers; endowed with zeal and talents admirably calculated to ensure success, in such circumstances. Whitefield, still professing to be a son of the Mother Church, and espousing the doctrines of grace, had free access to all who believed these doctrines; but coming under the authority of no Church, he made warm partizans, formed divisions, and undermined order & discipline in almost every congregation, which became the theatre of his irresistible eloquence. That he was instrumental in the salvation of many, is granted by his bitterest enemies. But the precedent which he set, and his great popularity and success gave a severe blow to authority and helped forward its decline.

Westly, vacillating for some time between the Calvinistic and Arminian doctrines, was determined, it is said, by the throw of a shilling, in favour of the latter. Without attempting to decide, whether, on the whole, John Calvin, or James Arminius, was the most consonant in their views, to the Apostle Paul, I would just observe that the latter was determined in favor of those religious sentiments which Adam had in a state of innocence, and which always have been congenial with our nature. With these sentiments, his zeal, and popular address he could not but succeed. But his success was much more fatal to authority and discipline than that of Whitefield. He formed a new sect; and opened the door of the sacred office to the lowest and most illiterate. The degradation of the pulpit ensued. The ministerial office, and the legitimate authority of the gospel ambassador, became contemptible; and the infidel sophist often triumphed over the man professing to be supernaturally aided to preach and defend the truths of christianity.

About the same time the Secession from the established Church of Scotland was made; which again divided, and became two hostile troops. At this period of throwing off authority, and forming new sects, different, and exclusive *communions* were introduced or became prevalent. And from that time it has been a common thing for Ministers;

and Church courts of one denomination, to debar, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, certain characters from his table, who by the Ministers, and Church courts of another denomination, and often in the same place, have been invited in the same name and by the same authority. Such monstrous and habitual prostitution of his sacred name and authority, must lay the church under great guilt, and render all ecclesiastical authority & government perfect nulities. This is a lamentable and notorious fact, which will be made appear in the following Chapter.



CHAPTER IV.

Present state of things—Insubordination in Church and State—Two sets of men in every denomination and kingdom—State, and prospect of America.

The actual state of things in the church, and in the world shows that authority is low, and that a scene of disorder, and desolation may be expected. The facts already stated respecting the divided state of the church, the different terms of debarring and inviting to the Lord's Table, has been subversive both of authority and discipline in the church. If a member grossly violates the moral law he may have something like an honest and impartial trial; but if he violates the law of sect, or does not conform to the peculiarities of his denomination, the spirit of the body is roused, and the partial and blind zeal, with which he is hunted down is so palpable, that he disregards the sentence; applies to another sect and is readily admitted. The proselyting and party spirit is still so prevalent, that every culprit knows, that if he is even justly cast out of one church, he can find refuge in another. And thus through fear of losing members, and particularly wealthy members altogether, church courts are shamefully negligent in calling

offenders to an account. These are facts so notorious, that they often excite the world's jeers, and ridicule, & do most clearly show that church authority and discipline have little more than a nominal existence. Some few ecclesiastical courts, and congregations may form exceptions, they are however rare indeed.

The same insubordinate spirit prevails in civil society. Our liberty has degenerated into libertinism. And authority is so low in families, in schools, and every department, that those in authority dare not enforce order, and the observance of the laws. Insubordination from the nursery up to the State government, in our country, is one of the remarkable, and portentous features of the times. A variety of causes is operating to bring forth a generation, as restless, impetuous, and ungovernable as the Ocean.

It is also a remarkable fact that in almost every community civil and religious there are two different sets of men—different in views, measures, and manner of action. This has always been in some measure the case, but never so extensively as at present. A pacific spirit has been manifested, of late years, among the different denominations, by a variety of the members: but this very circumstance, has contributed to the formation of two sorts of characters among them all. In the General Assembly Presbyterian Church, Hopkinsians, and Anti-hopkinsians have, for some time, been appearing in a menacing array. The Associate Reformed Church appears near dissolution, thro' the two parties on Communion and Psalmody. The Associate Church has in her bosom parties nearly similar. The Baptist church has long been divided into the Arminian, and Calvinistic parties; but of late it abounds with Socinians, and Antinomians, and in it some are for free communion, Arminianism and Socinianism have for some time divided the Methodist church, and recently they are forming into what may be termed the regular and irregular; the former opposing and prohibiting shouting and bodily exercises, the latter encouraging and supporting them. The Episcopal Church, both in this country, and in Europe, has her two parties, the one evangelical, the other Arminian. Many

of these denominations, are increasing in numbers, and many of them uniting in Bible Societies; yet it is a fact, that Popery and Socinianism are keeping pace with the truth of God's word; and not one sect has yet been sacrificed upon the altar of concord.* Bigotry, prejudice and party spirit have been denounced by many formally, but they yet hold their ground, and will never disappear so long as party and denomination exist.

Nearly all the kingdoms of the world are in the same situation. Beginning eastward with China, we learn that a new order of men, forming a powerful party, has arisen in that populous empire, and portends direful convulsions, and revolutions. Light has reached that region of despotism and oppression. And we have already learned what are the effects of light in such a state of society.

In India many kingdoms have been shaken to pieces, and made a prey, by one another, and by British influence and power. And as light, avarice, ambition, and the gospel, are all assailing that country, its kingdoms must fall, and swell the tide of revolution, and sweeping desolation. In the same, or similar condition are Persia—the Ottoman empire—and all the Kingdoms of Europe. Russia is composed of so many nations, and is rising so rapidly under an able Emperor, that the new order of men may not yet have formed, or given any alarm. But with respect to the other nations of Europe, it is well known that they are in an alarming situation. And the man who can suppose that any of them can be harmonized, and reformed, without purgation by war and the copious flow of blood, must know but little of their moral, and political character, and little of the history of human nature. France, Spain and some others, have, for several years, been in the vortex of revolution; the eddy whirl has occasionally settled into stillness, and some have thought they were about to reach a

* The Burghers and Antiburghers, the two parties of Seceders in Scotland, and Nova Scotia have united; and it is probable that in the United States they may soon be one body. It appears however to be only the breaking up of sects, not a real and happy union.

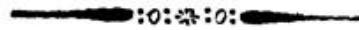
peaceful haven; but anon the circling current has seized them, and they have again run another dangerous round. Thus the late revolution in Spain is considered a glorious thing by many, whilst the crowned heads of Europe view it with dismay, as a precedent which they may be compelled to follow. But Spain is not regenerated—the two sets of men there are not amalgamated; and after a pause, they will break over that devoted country, like two bickering clouds in whirlwind and storm. And so shall it be with France, England, and others. Putrescent bodies—leaky ships, rotten beyond repair, and old mouldering walls, swelling out in various points, are their fit emblems. Their politicians—the members of their several cabinets, are now labouring like seamen at the pump. But it is in vain. The odds against them is fearful. Check, and suppress tumult, and havoc for a time, they may; but soon the receding wave will return with redoubled fury—soon shall the growing factions, enlist, and lead on the oppressed and indignant population to deeds of desperate enterprize—and having demolished thrones and trampled upon crowns—they will find themselves upon the wide ocean of anarchy; and adventurer after adventurer, pressing on for superiority or empire, shall wave the flag of death over Europe, and execute the tremendous judgements of the Lord.

The Holy Alliance in Europe, and the pacific spirit which has been manifested for sometime, may influence many to anticipate a very different state of things. But let us look at *all* the measures & conduct of the crowned heads engaged in that holy alliance. They meet; they negotiate, they covenant & all to promote and secure universal peace. They return home— issue new, and additional levies—fortify their frontiers and prepare for war, as if at the door! Such manœuvring cannot be misunderstood. And with respect to the liberal spirit which of late has prevailed among nations, sects and parties, it may be remarked, that a want of *confidence* is as conspicuous as liberality. All appear to see, and feel that all things are going on in a course which must change and break down the present order of things; and as every one has his own sect, or party, which

he still likes a little better than any other, he fears that it may fall before the general current; and hence, whilst he joins in Bible Societies, with others of every description, whilst he denounces bigotry, and extols sentiments of liberality; and whilst he is hailed, and has his harangue reciprocated by those of different sects, he is not sure that they are friendly to his peculiar views and party, and on his return home he feels more sensibly, that all things are getting afloat, and that he cannot calculate on the public liberality for the support, and protection of the bark in which he sails. And thus it is through every department of human society. Free intercourse, professed liberality, and good will have, of late, greatly increased; but for the want of moral principle in the world; and through the love of sect, and the fear that in the great and general movement, favourite party interest may be lost, confidence is reposed in none, and every one appears to be preparing for the worst. But the great want of confidence is not merely between those of different sects, but of the same sect. The two opposing sets of men in every kingdom, and denomination; and the popular spirit of liberality, and charity, having far outstripped moral, and religious principle, put general confidence out of all rational calculation. Some honorable exceptions there may be to these remarks, but their truth, I presume, all conversant with their fellow men, and acquainted with the world, will readily acknowledge, in a general point of view.

The present state of America, although happy and flattering in comparison, to that of the European nations, nevertheless affords reasons to anticipate division and internal convulsions. South America has for some time been the theatre of conflict, and revolution. But ignorance, debasing superstition, corruption, and want of moral principle must doom it, putting foreign power out of the account, to a long series of carnage and desolation. In these United States harmony has never prevailed. The two sets of men Federal and Republican which divided for many years the population, were never so inimical as to give any serious cause for alarm. But the views and sentiments manifested

in our late Congress, between members from the Eastern, Western, and Southern States; the alienation of affection, and the ideas of separate and opposing interests, indulged by many, must make every genuine lover of his country fear for the peace and stability of the Union. "United we stand, divided we fall." But let the current of opinion, and feeling, which has for some time been setting in, increase—let some Aaron Burr be chagrined, and checked in his career for Presidential pre-eminence, and a dismemberment of the Union is not only probable, but almost certain. And when this step is taken more than one aspiring Cataline will be found on each side of the mountains; and O then! the cup of the old world, is the cup of my country!—May the Governor among the nations forbid it! But considering the present, and the past—considering the fate of all human productions, and efforts, we have no good reason to believe that our country shall not be visited with that roll of God's curse, which has been flying over the nations, and in which are written "lamentations, & mourning, and woe." America as a nation has not bowed the knee to Jesus. She must be humbled to do it, for God has said it.



CHAPTER V.

*Counteracting process, by which the Church will be prepared for the crisis, and the world for the millenium—
The Gospel Ministry—Bible, Missionary Societies, &c.*

The cloud which accompanied the Israelites in the wilderness gave them light and direction; but to their enemies it was gloomy and dismaying. Such is God's word in every age; and such the nature of his providence. The view which we have taken, it must be confessed, is gloomy; and to the world affords fearful anticipations. It may also be distressing, and perplexing to the people of God, but light arises to them in darkness. It is their privilege

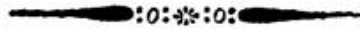
to have the Lord for their sun and shield, and to see the wonderful working of his hand, and the glorious marches of his grace, among the nations, who are about to experience the vials of his wrath. In his wise providence he carries on a process of judgment, and a process of mercy—by the one he destroys the old order of things, by the other he preserves his church and introduces the new order. In each he makes use of subordinate agencies and means. Thus in the process of mercy which so far counteracts the process of judgment, that the gates of Hell shall never prevail against the church; and that entire desolation shall not unpeuple the earth, he is pleased to make use of the gospel ministry—the ordinances of his grace; Bible, Missionary and educating Societies, Sunday Schools, &c. And so wonderful is the success and multiplication of these institutions, in our day, that many have supposed that they will soon usher in the millennium, having extinguished, gradually, the kingdom of Satan. It however has always been the case, that men have attributed more than was due to means and subordinate agents in the work of salvation. We know that it has pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. And we know that his providence has been concerned in raising up and supporting the institutions just mentioned. But it is of importance that we ascertain what God has designed they shall accomplish and what they shall not. Let God's word direct us in this, and every other similar enquiry. We are there taught that the world is Gods' harvest—that the gospel ministry are the labourers to gather it in. The word and ordinances are the constituted means with which they are to labour—and God's blessing gives the increase. These things being so, we learn the relative importance and use of Bible and Missionary Societies, and what they and other benevolent institutions are about to effect. Fill the world with Bibles, without Teachers, and you have only supplied the harvest with seed and implements of husbandry. The seed will lie unproductive, and the implements of husbandry immoveable, without labourers. Thus Bible Societies will never gather the nations to Jesus, but they will

supply the nations with the word of God, without which the labourers, when multiplied and sent forth could do nothing. When the world is therefore furnished with Bibles we are not to think that this will overthrow the kingdom of Satan and introduce the millennium. The heathen will stand as immoveable in paganism with Bibles strewed around them, as the corn or wheat in the field, with sickles at the root. Thus all the benevolent Societies which now throng the christian world are to be considered as auxiliary to the Gospel Ministry, so far as they have any bearing upon the empire of sin and misery. Detached from that ministry and unaccompanied by it, they would be utterly unavailing, were it even possible to multiply them till they literally cover the earth. Now, according to the ratio in which Ministers, and the population increase, at the end of a century, a great part of the world, called christian, would be destitute of regular, and stated preaching. This may teach us at once, that all the wonderful and encouraging efforts, and institutions of the present day, and all that we can rationally calculate on, will effect nothing more than the dissemination of the Bible, the location of a few missionaries in the heathen world, and the maintenance of the Church amidst the commotions of the earth, in the days of tribulation. Zion is lengthening her cords, and strengthening her stakes—the seed which is to spring up in the millennium is now scattered by the Bible Societies. Missionary Societies and Schools are furnishing, and will furnish many to go forth and occupy various detached posts among the heathen. Sunday schools, tracts, &c. will aid in bringing many to the church of God, and the knowledge of the truth, but all these things will scarcely enable the church to survive, when the nations are raging and instigated by her great enemy in his last and most desperate efforts. This will appear more evident when we come to consider the slaying of the witnesses, mentioned, Rev. XI. Let it therefore be distinctly marked, that the Bible Societies; the benevolent institutions; and laudable efforts of christians, which justly excite our wonder, and call for gratitude to God, appear calculated, and intended by him merely to

prepare the church to sustain the *crisis*; and to sow the seed of the word throughout the world. This is to be considered preparatory for the millennium, but it will not remove the obstacles—it will not destroy the kingdom of Satan, nor sweep out the enormous mass of corruption and hostility pervading the kingdoms and governments of the earth. This is the work of God by, and through the process of judgment. Thus when the Bible shall be given to every nation in its own language—when missionary posts shall be established throughout the heathen world—when knowledge of every kind shall be greatly increased, and the heralds of the cross multiplied, there will still be two essential requisites before the millennium can take place, *viz.* the destruction of God's enemies, and the pouring out of his spirit upon all flesh. These two things belong solely to God; and when he performs them, he will have all the glory of introducing the millennium.

Having thus ascertained the use, and what is to be accomplished by human agencies, and means in Bible Societies, &c. and having assigned them all the honour which properly belongs to them, I may without derogating from the importance of Bible Societies mention another effect which they will produce, and have already produced in some measure, namely a false and pernicious standard of christianity. I have already intimated that Bible Societies have taken the ground on which will rally those, who will survive the wrecks of all denominations, and will form the millennial Church. But then the spirit of God, being poured from on high as the spirit of regeneration, light, and holiness, will secure universal piety, and personal, and social religion. But at present the ground is occupied in common by all sects, and by high and low—holy and profane; and the irreligious and immoral find an easy passport to all the high honors of the christian, by pecuniary contribution, and anniversary harangues. We all already feel how delicate and dangerous it is to say that a man may be an active, liberal, and zealous member of a Bible Society, and yet have his back on God and Heaven, and be in reality a child of the devil; and were it not that the celebra-

ted Chalmers has dared to urge, and insist on the correctness of the idea, I could never afford to publish it to the world. Thus while Bible Societies, under God are pouring the heavenly treasure among the nations, they will thro' human depravity, give a tone, and fix a standard of religion throughout the Protestant world very little different from the tone and standard in the Papal dominion. In short the Bible cause appears at once fraught with destruction to the old order of things; and with the materials and elements of the new order. Thus all things appear to bring us to the one point, that there are to be universal revolutions, and times such as have never been experienced. When the Son of man comes he will not find fidelity, on the earth—no, not even in his own church. Hence the universal tribulation.



CHAPTER VI.

THE SLAYING OF THE WITNESSES.—Rev. xi.

This subject affords decided and satisfactory proof of my general views, and is of such a nature that it requires a more particular consideration than could be given it, in the chapter containing proof from prophecy, and therefore it is reserved for this place.

Without troubling the reader with the various opinions respecting those witnesses, I would observe that the most generally received among the judicious is, that these witnesses are the faithful followers of Jesus Christ, constituting his body the Church. There is, however, one powerful objection to this opinion, viz. that they must be literally slain, and then the gates of Hell will have prevailed against the church—and there must be also a literal resurrection, all which is repugnant to the language of prophecy and the declaration of the Saviour.

Another opinion which appears much nearer the truth,

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is, that the gospel ministry are the witnesses. Christ himself is *the faithful and true witness*—he chose his Apostles to be his witnesses—he sent them forth two, and two, and the Presbyters, who succeeded them in office are represented as composed of one class who *rule*, and of another, who rule, and also labour in word and doctrine. And our Saviour's promise, which he gave to the gospel ministry, is, "where *two*, or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them." These scriptures appear clearly to point out the gospel ministry as the *witnesses*. And this opinion is not encumbered with the difficulty attending the other. An officer may, in figurative language, be slain, when he is violently put down from the exercise of his office. And thus the slaying of the witnesses is nothing more than the violent expulsion of ministers from their offices & charges, & exposing them publicly, stripped of their authority and honours. It appears that their enemies preserve them to grace their triumph. They keep them exposed in the street of the great city three days and an half—that is, they keep them in their degraded state as trophies of victory, exposed openly for insult, three years and an half, and then they are raised up and taken to heaven, that is, they are restored, in the adorable Providence of God, to the exercise of their office, and pass into the millennial state. Now history and the prophecy respecting those witnesses teach us that they are not yet slain, and raised up. This was to take place when they had finished their testimony, at the end of a thousand two hundred and three score days. And these days, it is agreed on all hands, are not yet run out. Their testimony is the testimony of Jesus—it is against the world & in his favour. And they must prophecy, that is, hold forth the testimony, until the world will endure it no longer; and shall have arrived at that point of wickedness and outlawry against God, that all bands shall be burst asunder, and all cords—all restraints shall be cast away; and by one fell sweep all the faithful Ministers of the gospel shall be hurled from their sphere. This will be a day of darkness to the Church, but a day of rejoicing to the world. And in three years and an

half of triumphant practical atheism, anarchy and desolation shall come in like the flood upon the old world; and as the enemies of the Lord perish his witnesses will rise. The judgements of the Lord, by which he will destroy his adversaries are numerous, but in Zechariah XIV. 13, we are told they shall destroy one another. "And it shall come to pass in that day that a great tumult from the Lord shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour." This work of anarchy and carnage shall give liberty to the witnesses; and the Jews shall complete the victory. They shall fight at Jerusalem, and shall enjoy the wealth of the heathen round about; verse 14. See also Hagg. II. 22.

The order, the particular circumstances, and precise manner in which these things may take place, no man can now tell. Many judicious interpreters have laboured much to ascertain when the millennium will commence. And according to some of their calculations, it is not more than 36 or 45 years distant. And indeed, the signs of the times might, on a cursory view, influence us to conclude that the great crisis would come within that period. There are however various circumstances which render that conclusion doubtful. The commencement of Antichrist's reign is the point from which we are to calculate the 1260 years, through which the witnesses are to prophecy in sack cloth. Interpreters have differed exceedingly respecting the date of that commencement. The four following periods have been fixed upon.

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| 1. When John of Constantinople assumed
the title of <i>universal Bishop</i> . | 596 |
| 2. When Boniface 3d assumed the same | 606 |
| 3. When the Pope assumed temporal dominion | 755 |
| 4. When the worship of images was restored | 780 |

According to those several dates the millennium would commence 1856; 1866, 2015 and 2040. There is one general remark which may lead us to make a selection of one of these dates, which is, that Antichrist, or the man of sin, was in embryo long before the first of these dates, and

that in the days of John, Bishop of Constantinople, he began to appear. This was the period of his childhood, or nonage. He continued to grow and evolve his character until he could wield, and did actually combine and wield both ecclesiastical and civil authority. Then he may with propriety be said to have entered on his reign and the witnesses to have gone into mourning. This took place about 750. This added to 1260, the period of his reign, and the witnesses prophesying in sack cloth, will make about 2010. As things often exist before they appear in form and operation, ten or fifteen years may be thrown off or added to the precise time when any Pope took his formal stand and exercised the authority which gave him the open and decided character of Antichrist, without materially affecting any given date. And I presume one of the common errors of interpreters has been, that they calculated Antichrist's commencement upon the principle that he came into being at once, and not progressively through a series of years; and of gradual corruption and usurpation. Taking therefore the year 740, for the commencement of his reign, it will terminate in the year 2000. This date for the commencement of the millennium has been adopted by some, and it appears on the whole supported by better evidence than any of the others. It has the great principle of analogy in its favour, viz. that the seventh portion of time is sacred, or a period of rest, and the other six are to be spent in difficulties and labour. Under the old Testament there was not only a seventh day, but a seventh year of rest, and release; and there was also the great Jubilee at the end of seven times seven, that is, 49 years. Thus after the world has had her week, her six thousand years of hard bondage, she shall enjoy her Jubilee of one thousand.

This date of the millennium, allows sufficient time for Bible and Missionary Societies to perform their work; and for America to make a fair and full experiment of the government, which is considered sufficient with our virtue and resources to exalt us to the summit of permanent human happiness and glory. The extensive regions stretching West to the Pacific Ocean, and up Northward to the strait

connecting us with Russia, are to be occupied by a dense and civilized population. Missionary posts must be extended literally round the globe. And Western America must come to maturity and have her day before she falls in the general wreck of nations. All this, the nature of things, and the holy scriptures teach us must be, before the witnesses finish their testimony, and all things are made new. And as the only other calculation, which has any thing plausible, is that which makes the millennium commence in the year 1866, it appears that sufficient time is not allowed by it, for the great, and numerous events which must take place in the old and new world before the latter day glory can be introduced. I however candidly confess that my mind has long wavered between the dates 1866 and 2000. And the reason, I introduced any remarks, on the subject, was that I knew some would be expected. The particular times and seasons the Father hath put in his own power, and it is not given to us to know them. Hence our duty to watch, and to be always ready at our posts. This we know with certainty, that the time is now short; and that, at the longest, Messiah will come within two centuries, to revolutionize the world, to cast out Satan, and make his Church triumphant and glorious through all the earth.

CONCLUSION.

If the views advanced be supported by sufficient proof they teach us some important practical lessons. First that our nature and world are corrupt beyond all possible reform by any human means and efforts. Depravity has through a long series of experiment been demonstrating that no works, no laws, no governments can stand before it. When the Messiah came to save and to bless, it hung him on the cross and laid him in the grave. Those territories, and kingdoms which his gospel and grace subdued, and

where his Church was erected, it has desolated and transformed into the regions of darkness, wretchedness and death. And now the world, under its influence, is moving on, regardless of God and all the lessons of his providence and word, to that crisis, which shall convulse the nations, unhinge governments, demolish thrones, and bury in one common grave all the favourite productions and distinctions of men. All the efforts of God's people—all that Bible Societies and benevolent institutions can do, will be insufficient to reclaim, to purify and establish the world in righteousness and peace. This is the work of God's Son, and when he effects it man shall know it, and give him the glory. Let us therefore humble ourselves upon the account of this incurable depravity of our natures, and let us look and pray to God's Son that he would make us, and the world new Creatures in him to the praise and glory of his grace.

In the second place we learn how our means and efforts should be directed and employed for promoting God's glory, and the great interests of his kingdom in the salvation of men. We have seen, that although means and human efforts, can never effect the great Jubilee of the world, yet God is pleased to make use of them. And we have ascertained the relative importance of the various means and efforts which have been put in requisition—we have ascertained that God's great mean of salvation is **PREACHING**; and that of all the human agencies employed, none are so important as the Ministers of the gospel. Educating Societies and Theological Seminaries ought therefore to engross our means and efforts. For every cent thrown into any other benevolent fund, we ought to cast ten into their funds. The world will be supplied with Bibles long before it is with expositors, and labourers. And as all earthly things are soon to be shaken—as wealth, houses and lands will be held by a very doubtful tenure, and as the treasuries of benevolent institutions, are the treasuries of the Lord where we may deposit our money with safety; and with interest of an hundred fold; and as depositing it there will be laying up for posterity in time, and ourselves

in Heaven, where moth and rust do not corrupt, and where thieves do not break thro' and steel, we can be in no want for motives to influence us to act the wise and liberal part. *The Signs of the Times*, admonish us of the approaching storm—let all flee to Jesus the ark of safety, and give all diligence to be found in him. Let them show that they are his, by coming to his help—to the help of the Lord against the mighty. He is on his march—let friends meet him in works of righteousness and mercy; and let enemies tremble, for they shall be smitten and perish by the lightnings of his eye.

Even so come Lord Jesus.—AMEN.